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Tanzania science teachers' practices and challenges in continuous assessment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the practices and challenges of Tanzanian Science teachers' in continuous assessment (CA). Fifty participants were involved were science teachers conveniently selected from three secondary schools in Kibaha District, Tanzania. The study was guided by two core research questions: (1) what is the nature of the practices of science teachers in continuous assessment? (2) What are the challenges faced by the teachers in continuous assessment? The Science teachers understanding of the nature of instructional classroom practices in continuous assessment was elicited through semi- structured interviews (n= 6) and classroom observations (n= 3). Furthermore, Science teachers' challenges were elicited through questionnaire (n= 50) and semi-structured interviews (n= 6). Data was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative methods. The study firstly revealed that most of the Science teachers' practices in Kibaha District are based on theory approach and follow the expository inquiry type classroom instruction rather than practical work. Secondly, it was found that there is a shortage of qualified science teachers and insufficient of teaching resources which impede the effectiveness of classroom teaching instructions. Thirdly, Science teachers possess an inadequate knowledge base on how to implement formative classroom assessments. On the basis of these findings, this study recommended that Tanzanian science teachers should possesses adequate knowledge of science curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge to improve the quality of education system. Continuous assessment as an assessment tools in evaluating learners' performance which enhances teaching and learning process. For effective classroom continuous assessment, science teachers' should involves scientific investigation, open inquiry instructions and problem solving. Additionally, there is a need for Tanzania Government to have long and short plans for the preparation for science teachers' professional development through in service training, coaching, networking and mentoring. Possible further study should investigate the challenges and practices faced by science teachers' in implementing practical work in secondary schools. Also there is necessitated for Tanzania to have a national wide evaluation of practice continuous assessment in the science classroom at all education levels to improve science education.

Keywords: Assessments, continuous assessment/formative assessment, assessment of learning, assessment for learning, summative assessment, teaching instructional practices, expository and inquiry investigative.