Exploration अन्वेषण
A Peer-Reviewed Multidisciplinary Journal
ISSN 2542-2944 (Print)
Published by the Research Management Cell
Darchula Multiple Campus, Khalanga, Darchula
Far Western University, Nepal

Teachers' Perspectives on Nepal's Continuous Assessment System: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Individual student success is influenced by the assessment system adopted by the teacher since continuous assessment, assessment for learning, provides feedback to the students for further improvement in regular classes. The study explored the opportunities offered by the CAS (Continuous Assessment System) and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the continuous assessment system of grades one to three in Nepal, pursuing a qualitative method through a social constructivist lens. Four teachers practising the continuous assessment system in their schools were purposively selected as the research participants. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews and were analysed thematically. The findings show that a continuous assessment system offers an opportunity for students' learning improvement for weak students. Diverse abilities of students are assessed through CAS since it uses different tools of evaluation, not just a paper and pencil test and is extended beyond conventional methods. In addition, it develops the students' critical thinking skills. However, CAS has different implementation challenges, such as time-consuming, a lack of training, and difficulty in managing remedial teaching for weak students.

Keywords: *CAS, creativity, critical thinking, remedial teaching, teacher perceptions*

Introduction

In education, the teaching and learning process is conducted based on predetermined competencies, goals, and objectives of the curriculum. The systematic process of assessing, analysing, interpreting, and deciding students' progress and making judgments is called evaluation (Sharma, 2025). Through this process, students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes are evaluated, and decisions and further improvements are determined. Evaluation is the process of making a judgment on the worth of a particular approach or of a student's work (Arends, 2012). It makes judgments, assigns values, and decides on worth. It is used as an essential tool to assess the students' performance and progress, or success. It is used to assess the understanding of how well an objective is met or a goal is achieved (Dhungel, 2024). According to Kellaghan and Greaney (2001), assessment in education refers to any procedure or activity that is designed to collect information about the knowledge, attitudes, or skills of a learner or group of learners.

They further mention that it is the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about a student, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths, and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy (Mann & Pellegrino, 2025). It is a tool of evaluation that usually refers to the full range of information collected and synthesised by teachers about their students and their classroom. Information on students can be collected either in informal ways, such as observation, verbal exchanges, or in formal ways, such as homework tests and written records. Therefore, assessment is the process of collecting information about students and the classroom for the purposes of making instructional decisions (Alonzo, 2023). Three purposes of assessment are practised in teaching and learning: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning (Hidayat et al., 2023).

Assessment for learning (AFL) is an ongoing assessment that teachers use while conducting teaching-learning activities and find out the strengths and weaknesses of students, thus, formative in nature. The teacher analyses information to tailor lessons to students' needs, modify classroom activities, and refine teaching methods to enhance learning outcomes. Earl (2013) posits that when teachers are doing assessments for learning, they collect a wide range of data for different purposes so that they can modify the learning work for their students. She further says that teachers use observation, worksheets, questioning in class, student-teacher conferences, or whatever mechanism is likely to give them information that will be useful for their planning and their teaching. Cognitive skills, learning-focused assessment, and reasoning to provide constructive feedback that facilitates continuous learning and academic excellence (Sankaran & Low, 2025). Therefore, assessment for learning happens in the middle of learning, often more than once, not at the end. The wide variety of information that teachers collect about their students' learning processes provides the basis for determining what they need to do next to move student learning forward. It provides the basis for providing descriptive feedback for students and deciding on groupings, instructional strategies, and resources (Earl & Katz, 2009). The next purpose of assessment includes assessment of learning (AoL) that is done after completion of the tasks or units to find out students' achievement and what

extent curriculum goals have been achieved.

According to Earl and Katz (2009), assessment of learning refers to strategies designed to confirm what students know, demonstrate whether or not they have met curriculum outcomes or the goals of their individualised programs, or to certify proficiency and make decisions about students' future programs or placements. The third purpose, assessment as learning (AaL), deals with assessment as the process of metacognition of students (Zarepour et al., 2024). It says that learning is an active process of cognitive structuring that occurs when individuals interact with new ideas. The students are the critical connectors between assessment and learning. For students to be actively engaged in creating their own understanding, they must learn to be critical assessors who make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and use it for new learning. Nepal's government has implemented a fully continuous assessment system from grades one to three of basic education (Mahendra, 2022). In a continuous assessment system, different aspects such as student regularity, attendance, classwork, participation, project and experimental work, creative work, changes in learning behaviour, and achievement tests are included (NCF, 2076). At the basic level, students' learning should be ensured on the basis of formative/corrective evaluation rather than summative evaluation. Formative assessment is to nurture knowledge consolidation, optimise learning, and aim at fostering an educational compass.

However, Primary school teachers often struggle to complete portfolios and manage continuous assessment, which limits the practical use of portfolios, reduces classroom efficiency and affects instructional delivery. This situation highlights the need to understand how teachers view assessment processes, the challenges they face and the benefits and barriers they see in continuous assessment as a way to strengthen classroom practices (Acharya, 2023; Bhatta, 2023; Dhungel, 2024; Rai, 2019; Sharma, 2017). With this in mind, the study aims to appraise the opportunities offered by the Continuous Assessment System in Grades One to Three in Nepal and to identify the challenges teachers encounter while implementing it.

Literature Review

Continuous assessment (CA) poses validity, reliability, and dependable approaches to evaluate students' learning. It facilitates learning outcomes, reliable insights, assessing student performance, and monitoring through classroom interactions. An essential component of pedagogy is considered vital in educational practice and a crucial element of teaching for providing direction for learning activities (Dhungel, 2024). It is a mechanism through which the grading of learners' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning systematically takes account of their performance during a given period of schooling. It makes use of a variety of instruments, assessing various components of learning, not only the thinking process, but also including behaviour and personality traits (Ahukanna et al., 2012). It is a formative evaluation procedure concerned with finding out, in a systematic manner, the overall gains that a student has made in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills after a given set of learning experiences. In this process, observations are made from time to time to determine the level of students' knowledge, understanding,

and performance (Onoh & Ogbozor, 2021).

Makuvire et al. (2023), the essential features of continuous assessment are distinguished by comprehensive, structured, cumulative, and learner-centred supervision. On the other hand, Eduwem and Tommy (2021) also reflect diagnostic, systematic, holistic, and ongoing teacher-directed evaluation, comprehensiveness, and inclusivity qualities of continuous assessment. Student participation and classroom environment are necessary to prioritise meaningful learning rather than the importance of grades. It is a complex process that allows the use of different modes of assessment procedures to gather and provide information for decision-making on education-related matters. Students' learning is ensured based on the formative or corrective assessment method in classes 1-3. The main purpose of formative assessment is to improve student learning. In classes 1-3, there is a full continuous assessment system, in which information is collected by teachers about their students' progress while conducting teaching-learning activities. The teachers should provide opportunities for the students to learn.

For weak students, remedial teaching should be managed. An applied continuous assessment system has many opportunities and challenges. The students get an opportunity to improve their weaknesses through continuous assessment that is done regularly in the classroom. The students and teacher are involved in interaction and share the successes and weaknesses of the students in learning. The teacher plays the role of more knowledgeable others (MKO) and provides necessary scaffolding feedback to the students based on their learning level in school. The teacher finds the students' potential and actual level of development, and provides necessary support. The support is given in the area named Zone of Proximal Development through the findings of continuous assessment. A continuous assessment system has many implementation challenges. It is time-consuming, lacks training, and provides remedial teaching. Most of the government schools in hilly rural areas do not have sufficient teacher quotas. Since there is an insufficient quota, teachers have to teach 6/7 periods a day, which has increased the burden of work. Therefore, CAS is challenging to implement effectively.

On the other hand, teachers have to assess the evaluation of student progress without clear knowledge of CAS since the government has not managed the training on it. Remedial teaching for the students who have not benefited from regular classes has also been restricted in the directives. Likewise, Boström and Palm (2023) discuss how continuous formative assessment enhances instructional capacity. When implemented properly, this can further promote student achievement, given that it is a well-supported practice. This study further contributes to the above-mentioned studies by writing down CAS's role in helping to find out the needs of students and support higher-order thinking skills as well. Besides that, it makes teachers evaluate students' progress in their learning after teaching. If students have problems during instruction, the teacher identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the students to support them positively. The paper mainly argues that CAS is good for early primary education and aligns with constructivist theory. It supports individualised scaffolding and active learning. The next thing is that it gives emphasis and encourages collaboration between teachers and students to support assessment for learning. We found that CAS developed creativity, problem-solving skills, and thinking among students by involving them in diverse activities. CAS has brought

cognitive development to the students. It also allowed students to address the individual differences for personalised evaluation, fostering motivation and learning outcomes. But it is found that it is challenging in implementation because it is time-consuming, especially in large classes and having limited resources and the formal training regarding CAS for the teachers. However, it is not implemented as a policy directive, although it is a crucial component for reforming teaching.

Social Constructivism as the Theoretical Framework

The purpose of my research was to examine the opportunities offered by the CAS in Grades One to Three, and to identify the challenges faced by teachers in implementing it, including resource availability, time management, and training adequacy. Therefore, social constructivist learning theory, propagated by a Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, is the central theory for discussion. More particularly, it advocates that learning takes place in a social environment supported and mediated by both social and cultural contexts of the participants (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Barksdale, 2021). Additionally, he argues that the intellect develops as individuals confront new and puzzling experiences and as they strive to resolve discrepancies posed by these experiences. In the quest for understanding, individuals link new knowledge to prior knowledge and construct the new meaning (Arends, 2012). Social constructivism focuses on collaboration, interaction, participation, regulation, zone of proximal development, internalisation, and scaffolding in learning. The teachers play the role of facilitators while evaluating students' performance and achievement, along with the teaching and learning activities, through classwork, project work, and practical work. The teachers should create a context for learning where evaluation is done continuously.

Methods and Procedures

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore teachers' perspectives on the CAS regarding the opportunities and challenges. In a qualitative research design, the researcher explores a problem and develops a detailed understanding of the central phenomenon. To maintain ethical standards, teachers' names were anonymised and identified as T1, T2, T3, and T4. Having a literature review justifies the problem and states the general and broad research questions to collect the participants' experiences. Collecting the data based on the words from a small number of individuals, participants' views are obtained to analyse the data for description and themes (Creswell, 2012). Four teachers teaching at the primary level and practising the CAS in their schools were selected using a purposive non-random sampling procedure from two different schools of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality, Doti. Following Cohen et al. (2007), in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample based on their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics sought. In this way, they build up a sample that satisfies their specific needs. For this, a semi-structured interview was conducted to collect the data. The participants shared their experiences through a

semi-structured interview based on their experience in applying CAS. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Different patterns were generated through the transcriptions used to make the findings. A thematic analysis approach was adopted to discover the pattern (themes) from the transcribed data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes the data set in (rich) detail (Clark & Braun, 2006). For ethical consideration, anonymity and confidentiality were assured in data interpretations.

Results and Discussion

The study found that CAS provides teachers with their strengths, enabling them to boost their teaching practices and be aware of learning progress as well. Likewise, CAS develops critical thinking, creativity, and generates ideas beyond rote learning. It supports feedback mechanisms and identifies the need for tailoring activities to each student's calibre. The primary concern is that teachers implement CAS without formal training, relying on limited workshops. We have discussed the opportunities offered by CAS and its challenges while implementing it in the classroom in Grades One to Three. The CAS provides both a summative and formative evaluation. In Grades 1 to 3 in Nepal, the CAS significantly enhances student learning. It assists in the development of higher-order skills matched with attractive pedagogical practices. However, it is found that practical challenges related to the implementation of CAS, those teachers who lack formal training face, including time constraints, limited resources, and insufficient implementation of the remedial teaching (Shah & Katuwal, 2024; Prajapati, 2024; Shrestha, 2025). Due to a lack of training, resources, and support from the government at the local level to the central level, it has brought obstacles in implementation. It offered important opportunities and challenges. So, overall, CAS provides a valuable framework for improving students' learning.

Opportunities in the Continuous Assessment System

Maximising Student Learning and Teacher Effectiveness through Continuous Assessment

The CAS gives a clue to how much knowledge a learner has acquired. It shows the learners' area of weakness and strength (Ahukanna et al., 2012), which is done along with the teaching and learning activities. One of the participant teachers (T1) said,

> A continuous assessment system is an evaluation system of students' learning. It can be used to improve the students' learning because it is done continuously with teaching and learning activities. Thus, teachers can evaluate to what extent students have learned and what aspects are to be improved, and it helps the teachers to prepare work plans as per the needs of students' learning levels. Also, it gives an opportunity to the teachers to evaluate themselves.

It advocates the assessment for learning principle, emphasising the assessment process, not only the assessment of product (Yagzaw, 2013). From this perspective, CAS emphasises

a formative assessment system that is used to find out the areas of success and weakness. Based on the weaknesses, the teachers can make further plans for teaching and learning. Both the teacher and students work collaboratively and improve the students' weaknesses. Next participant, teacher (T2) opined,

> The main good aspect of the continuous assessment system is improvement for both teachers and students. In the traditional assessment system (paper-and-pencil test), no place was given for immediate correction for the students' learning. Now, CAS is done continuously along with teaching and learning activities. Therefore, weaknesses of students are found, and additional and remedial teaching can be conducted for the students' learning improvement.

The teacher finds their students' learning level and treats them accordingly, and provides feedback. Similarly, students are also aware of their learning. As a result, students construct new knowledge based on prior knowledge. Based on these, teachers and students interact to develop knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Nissaji & Tian, 2018), knowledge is a socially accepted belief and sees social interaction as influencing individual cognitive development. No formal assessment is done in continuous assessment, which offers regular activities through interaction and collaboration in a fearless environment.

Unlocking the Skills behind Memorisation

Many teachers are seeking to help their students support reading and writing for critical thinking. They want to challenge their students not just to memorise, but to question, examine, create, solve, interpret, and debate the material in their courses (Crawford, 2005). Participant teacher (T3) stated:

> CAS allows the teacher to assess skills beyond just memorisation, such as creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. I learned in the classroom. For example, I ask you to draw a picture of your school and describe it. They try to draw creatively using different colours. They ask and interact with me. They want a grade A for their drawing.

CAS implies different activities such as project work, homework, class work, practical activities, attendance, and participation in teaching-learning activities. That develops creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills rather than merely memorisation skills. In this regard, the teacher (T2) said:

> Students are graded based on the activities they completed. They are involved in activities actively with the feeling of doing better and more than others. While involved in activities, they try to do new things, create new ideas, and, to me, if they get confused. I elaborate, clarify and sometimes demonstrate. I do not give questions just to item answers; rather, they are asked to do it in groups or pairs collaboratively.

This collaborative and activity-based approach develops creative ideas and thoughts of participants. Students work collaboratively in groups or pairs, fostering creativity and innovation in the classroom, and the teacher evaluates as the teaching and learning activities are done. Supporting the experiences of participant teacher (T2), another participant teacher (T3) remarked:

> In my experience, a continuous assessment system is better than the traditional assessment method that uses paper-and-pencil tests for a limited time. Children can forget even after a short period of time, since they need concrete materials in learning. They learn effectively as they get the opportunity to practice.

According to the National Curriculum Framework 2019 A.D., the age group of classes one to three is five to seven years. Following Piaget, this age group of children belongs to the preoperational stage of cognitive development (Tosolini, 2025). The pre-operational stage, which lasts approximately from 2 to 7 years of age, enables children to begin to develop language skills and symbolic contemplation. In this stage, children begin to represent the world with words, images, and drawings. Symbolic thought goes beyond simple connections of information and action (Santrock, 2005). Therefore, CAS provides an opportunity to use different creative works using different materials. The fourth participant teacher (T4) added that in the continuous assessment system, evaluation is done practically, such as observation, change behaviour, and attendance, not only through paper and pencil tests. Students have to perform activities inside and outside the classroom, which develop creative and critical thinking skills rather than mere memorisation.

Evaluation goes beyond paper-based testing and attendance checks to improve students' involvement in activities. Students are encouraged to participate to foster creativity, critical thinking, and help students develop their innovative skills and reasoning. The zone of proximal development refers to the zone between a learner's actual level of development and his/her potential level of development (Arends, 2012). While treating students individually, the teacher addresses their diversities through remedial teaching and individual support. However, remedial teaching has not been adopted in the class, which is limited to the directives only. The students are involved in different activities such as classwork, pair work, group work, project work, practical work, and problem-solving activities. These develop creative and critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills, except for memorisation.

Addressing Individual Differences

CA enables teachers to involve themselves in learning activities with students and maintain interactions. Teachers can evaluate student performance and identify their weaknesses in providing the needful learning process. These exchanges foster a pupil-teacher relationship based on individual interaction. One-to-one communication between teacher and pupil can motivate pupils to continue attending school and to work hard to achieve a higher order of mastery (Mohammedseid, 2018). To quote the teacher (T1):

> What to say! Individual differences of students can be measured through a continuous assessment system. Not all the students have the same capacities. Every child is evaluated differently. So, the teacher finds out the level of students' learning and prepares a plan for further improvement. Students are given different tasks to complete in the classroom regularly. Based on the tasks done by individual students, they are assessed separately, the weaknesses are identified, and necessary scaffolding is provided by the teacher.

Teachers should evaluate the learners' achievement based on their individual capacities and manage the records. Another participant teacher (T4) added that student evaluation is done based on specific criteria. Therefore, teachers immediately provide feedback to students, and necessary remedial teaching is conducted individually according to their interests and level of knowledge. While conducting teaching-learning activities, every student is evaluated on what extent to which he or she has learned. Therefore, the teacher finds out the current status of each student and provides feedback (Boström & Palm, 2023). The feedback is given individually, which functions as the basis for improvement in learning.

Challenges in the Continuous Assessment System

Time Challenges Consuming in CAS

In grades one to three, evaluation of students' learning is done through CAS throughout the academic year rather than relying solely on final exams; it can be time-consuming for both teachers and students. Although it is suitable to determine learners' progress, it gives a better opportunity for lower achievers to get attention from their instructors and support from their peers, consumes more time, increases the burden of instructors, and needs resources to implement it (Walde, 2016). Participant teacher (T3) remarked that:

> The continuous assessment system is a time-consuming evaluation system where teachers have to prepare different activities, such as project work, practical activities, and class work, along with teaching and learning activities. I must prepare all teaching materials and evaluation tools within a limited time. Next, we have a smaller number of teachers in school in comparison to the class size. Therefore, teachers have to teach 6/7 periods a day. As a result, it is difficult to keep records.

Teachers consider CAS a burden and blame it that it is time-consuming and needing more time to do. Mohammedseid (2018) also found that implementing CA without an appropriate and sufficient time is found to be a considerable hindrance to proper implementation. Another participant teacher (T1) also shared the same opinion that a continuous system is applied in the classroom along with teaching and learning activities. So, a few students may study, but for a large number of students, it is not easy to evaluate all aspects of students' learning. Time is not enough. Teachers have to take 6/7 periods in a day. Participant teacher (T4) remarked that I do evaluations of students after completion of the unit, and based on specific aspects. T4 underscored that student evaluation occurs at the end of each unit, concerning learning goals to set defined criteria. Student assessments emphasised particular facets of learning and student evaluation in units at the end. Therefore, they do not have time to keep records and manage CAS. If so, what do they do?

Navigating Continuous Assessment without Formal Training

Training is a process of developing specific skills, knowledge, or abilities in

individuals that help them perform tasks or roles effectively, and through it, an individual improves competence, confidence, and performance in a particular area. According to Richards and Farrell (2005, p.3), "Training refers to activities directly focused on a teacher's present responsibilities and is typically aimed at short-term and immediate goals". However, teachers have not been given the training on the continuous assessment system. They apply continuous assessment systems in evaluation, knowingly or unknowingly.

> Participant teacher (T2) opined that I have not taken any formal training on the implementation of the continuous assessment system, except for participation in the integrated curriculum dissemination program, where I learned the evaluation system. However, the dissemination program was not entirely based on an evaluation system. I am applying the techniques for evaluating the students' learning achievement that I learned in the dissemination program, which may be wrong.

Training improves the implementation skills and essential knowledge of CAS. According to Poudel (2022), TPD training and workshops provide essential knowledge, refreshment, and updates to recent trends. In line with T2, the next participant teacher (T3) said that I have not participated in training on CAS. I was involved in a day curriculum dissemination workshop where I learned a few skills on how to evaluate the students. Here, T3 did not participate in training on CAS, but he participated in a curriculum workshop to learn skills regarding the evaluation and assessment of students in a proper way. I learned how to rate the students and who should be promoted and who should be involved in remedial teaching classes. But rubrics were not discussed there. Without a clear and detailed understanding of rubrics, I get confused. They had not received formal CAS training, and they attended curriculum dissemination to identify remedial support. The workshop focused on student assessment and remedial instruction, but the lack of discussion on rubrics left them with a dilemma, which caused uncertainty and made it unclear how to use them. So, CAS effectively depends on training to address practical and theoretical underpinnings.

Remedial Teaching: Implementation Limited to Directives

Provision of remedial teaching should be managed for those weak students who do not score =3 Or <3 Out of 4 in the rating scale after regular assessment in classes one to three (NCF 2076). However, it was found that it has not been applied in teaching and learning activities. One of the participant teachers (T1) reported that there was no provision for remedial teaching after regular assessment, but I used more activities for students after regular assessment. In reality, I do not do remedial teaching. I facilitate them as much as possible in the classroom without additional classes at a specific time. The provision of remedial teaching is neglected, and weak students in learning are supported in regular classes. The same opinion was expressed by the next teacher (T4): I do not conduct different remedial teaching for weak students. Their weaknesses are addressed in classes with suggestions.

Conclusion

The study explored teachers' perspectives on the opportunities and implementation challenges in shaping CAS in Grades 1 and 3 in Nepal. The findings showcase that CAS provides tremendous opportunities and fosters students' learning. It explicitly distinguishes supportive feedback, and CAS cultivates feedback in diverse classroom contexts. In addition, CAS fosters creative, critical, and active learning and collaboration in the learning process. Limited resources, lack of training, and workload are notable challenges in restricting the effectiveness of teaching. The findings were carried out under different limitations, such as selecting only four participants from four schools. Next, depending only on telephone interviews may not be enough to explore the total perception of teachers regarding the continuous assessment system. Implication highlights that the training and materials should be managed properly to improve the education quality. Suggestions inclined towards a continuous assessment system should be managed and applied in the classroom effectively. Finally, in terms of research sites, further research can be carried out on the solutions to the challenges of CAS visiting in different schools.

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