

Teachers' Perceptions of the Continuous Assessment System: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Individual student achievement is strongly influenced by the assessment practices adopted by teachers, as continuous assessment—an assessment for learning—provides regular feedback that supports ongoing improvement. This study employed a qualitative research design to explore teachers' perceptions of the Continuous Assessment System (CAS) in basic-level schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four purposively selected primary-level teachers who regularly practiced CAS in their classrooms. The data were analysed thematically under two major themes: the opportunities offered by CAS and the challenges encountered in its implementation. The findings revealed that teachers perceived CAS as supportive for continuous monitoring of students' progress, identifying learning gaps, providing individualized feedback, and fostering creativity, critical thinking, and active engagement. However, teachers also faced several practical challenges, including heavy workload, large class sizes, lack of formal training, insufficient time for documentation, and limited provision for remedial teaching. The study concludes that although CAS holds strong formative and pedagogical potential for improving learning in early grades, its effective implementation requires adequate teacher training, manageable teaching loads, and stronger institutional support to align classroom practice with policy expectations.

Keywords: Basic-level education, challenges, continuous assessment system, opportunities, teachers' perceptions

Introduction

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process because it provides systematic information about students' progress and achievement. Evaluation involves assessing, analysing, and interpreting students' performance to make informed decisions about learning (Arends, 2012). It examines students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to determine the extent to which curriculum goals have been achieved. Assessment therefore refers to any procedure designed to collect information about students' learning, strengths, weaknesses, and classroom performance through both formal and informal means (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2001). Within the teaching-learning process, three major assessment purposes are commonly practiced: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning (Earl & Katz, 2009).

Assessment for learning is formative and ongoing. It helps teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses during instruction and adjust teaching accordingly. Teachers gather information through observation, questioning, worksheets, and conferencing to

refine teaching strategies and support learning (Earl, 2013). Assessment of learning, in contrast, evaluates student achievement after instruction, while assessment as learning emphasizes metacognition and learner self-regulation (Earl & Katz, 2009).

The Continuous Assessment System (CAS) is grounded in formative assessment principles and aims to improve instruction through continuous monitoring of learners' progress. CAS gathers information on students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development using diverse assessment tasks (Ahukanna et al., 2012; Dhungel, 2024). It is systematic, comprehensive, cumulative, and diagnostic (Eduwem & Tommy, 2021; Makuvire et al., 2023). CAS also supports scaffolding, interaction, participation, and individualized learning—principles rooted in social constructivism, where teachers serve as more knowledgeable others guiding learners within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Recent studies reinforce CAS as a learner-centred and formative assessment practice. Research indicates that effective implementation of continuous assessment enhances creative thinking, problem-solving ability, motivation, and student engagement (Boström & Palm, 2023). Studies conducted in Nepal and comparable contexts suggest that CAS strengthens instructional decision-making and supports differentiated instruction through observation, participation, and practical tasks (Dhungel, 2024; Onoh & Ogbozor, 2021). However, scholars caution that the effectiveness of CAS depends heavily on teachers' assessment literacy and the availability of instructional resources (Rai, 2019).

Despite its pedagogical strengths, CAS implementation remains challenging in Nepal. Government schools, particularly in rural and hilly regions, often face teacher shortages, large class sizes, and heavy workloads that limit time for assessment and feedback (Acharya, 2023; Bhatta, 2023). Although CAS is mandated in Grades 1–3 under national curriculum provisions (National Curriculum Framework [NCF], 2076 BS; Mahendra, 2022), teachers struggle to maintain portfolios, conduct remedial teaching, and apply assessment criteria consistently (Dhungel, 2024).

Given these complexities, teachers' perceptions provide critical insights into how CAS is understood and practiced in real classroom contexts. Their experiences reveal both the opportunities and the challenges of CAS implementation. Accordingly, this study aimed to:

1. explore teachers' perceptions of the opportunities offered by CAS in basic-level schools; and
2. examine the challenges teachers encounter while implementing CAS.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research design to explore teachers' perspectives on the Continuous Assessment System, particularly the opportunities it offers and the challenges encountered during implementation. A qualitative approach was appropriate because it allows researchers to capture participants' lived experiences, meanings, and interpretations in depth through rich descriptive data (Creswell, 2013).

Four primary-level teachers implementing CAS in their classrooms were purposively selected from two public schools in Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality-7, Doti. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of information-rich participants who possessed direct experience with CAS and could provide meaningful insights (Cohen et al., 2007).

Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection. This method allowed participants to describe their experiences freely while enabling the researcher to probe for clarification and depth. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. After familiarization with the transcripts, initial codes were generated and clustered into meaningful categories. Through iterative refinement, two major themes emerged: opportunities offered by CAS and challenges encountered in its implementation.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and the data were used solely for academic purposes.

Results and Discussion

The interviews with four teachers produced two major themes: opportunities offered by the Continuous Assessment System (CAS) and challenges in its implementation. These themes illustrate how teachers experience CAS in real classroom contexts and how their perceptions align with existing scholarship on formative assessment in early grades.

Table 1 : Themes and Key Perceptions of Teachers on CAS

Themes	Core Perceptions	Illustrative Evidence (T1–T4)
Opportunities Offered by CAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps monitor students continuously and identify learning gaps early Supports weaker learners through timely feedback and remedial attention Encourages creative, critical, and activity-based learning Promotes active participation and interaction Addresses individual differences and supports personalized learning 	<p><i>“Teachers can evaluate to what extent students have learned and what aspects are to be improved.” (T1)</i></p> <p><i>“CAS allows the teacher to assess skills beyond memorization such as creative thinking and problem-solving.” (T3)</i></p> <p><i>“Every child is evaluated differently... individual differences can be measured.” (T1)</i></p>
Challenges in Implementing CAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly time-consuming and increases teacher workload Large classes and heavy teaching schedule make continuous assessment difficult Lack of formal training in CAS procedures and rating techniques Insufficient time and support for systematic remedial teaching Limited resources and unclear implementation guidelines 	<p><i>“The continuous assessment system is time-consuming... teachers have to keep records while teaching 6–7 periods a day.” (T3)</i></p> <p><i>“I have not taken any formal training on CAS... the workshop was not enough.” (T2)</i></p> <p><i>“There was no provision for remedial teaching after regular assessment.” (T1)</i></p>

Opportunities Offered by CAS

Teachers widely agreed that CAS provides meaningful opportunities for continuous learning and improvement. They perceived CAS as a formative assessment system that enables regular monitoring of student progress and early identification of learning gaps. As T1 explained, *“It can be used to improve the students’ learning because it is done continuously with teaching and learning activities.”* This aligns with Earl (2013), and Earl and Katz (2009), who describe assessment for learning as an ongoing process that helps teachers adjust instruction and students understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers also highlighted that CAS promotes creativity, critical thinking, and activity-based learning, moving assessment beyond memorization. T3 noted, *“CAS allows the teacher to assess skills beyond memorization such as creative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving.”* This finding corresponds with Boström and Palm (2023), who assert that continuous formative assessment enhances instructional capacity and supports higher-order thinking. Similarly, Eduwem and Tommy (2021) and Makuvire et al. (2023)

emphasize that continuous assessment is systematic, comprehensive, and guidance-oriented, enriching the learning process through diverse tasks.

Teachers also viewed CAS as a means to address individual differences. T1 mentioned, *“Individual differences of students can be measured through CAS... Every child is evaluated differently.”* This finding resonates with Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivist principles, where learning occurs through scaffolding and individualized support within the Zone of Proximal Development. The participants’ experiences also corroborate Dhungel (2024), who notes that CAS supports remedial strategies and helps teachers tailor interventions to students’ needs.

Collectively, these findings confirm that CAS is perceived as a powerful formative mechanism that encourages creativity, individualized assessment, and continuous feedback — themes strongly supported by the literature.

Challenges in Implementing CAS

Despite these opportunities, teachers identified several challenges that hinder effective implementation of CAS. The most frequently mentioned issue was time constraints and heavy workload. As T3 explained,

“The continuous assessment system is time-consuming. Teachers have to prepare different activities and keep records while teaching 6–7 periods a day.” This reflects concerns noted by Sharma (2017), who found that in many Nepali schools, teachers face significant workload pressure due to insufficient staffing and large class sizes.

Another major challenge was lack of formal training. T2 said, *“I have not taken any formal training on CAS... I learned a few techniques from the curriculum workshop, but it was not enough.”* This echoes findings by Rai (2019) and Bhatta (2023), who report that teachers often rely on brief curriculum orientations rather than comprehensive CAS training, resulting in inconsistent implementation across schools. Without training, teachers struggle to use rubrics, maintain portfolios, or conduct remedial teaching effectively.

Participants also expressed difficulty in conducting remedial teaching, although it is mandated by policy. T1 admitted, *“There was no provision for remedial teaching after regular assessment... I try to support them in class, but not in separate sessions.”* This problem is consistent with NCF (2076 BS) and Mahendra (2022), which highlight the policy–practice gap in continuous assessment, noting that lack of time, unclear guidelines, and limited resources undermine the intended purposes of CAS.

These challenges collectively suggest that while CAS is theoretically sound and pedagogically rich, its practical implementation is constrained by workload, inadequate training, limited institutional support, and resource shortages—issues widely documented in national and international studies.

Overall, the findings reveal a dual perception: teachers recognize CAS as a valuable formative assessment tool that enhances learning, creativity, and individualized feedback, aligning with strong theoretical and empirical support (Earl, 2013; Boström & Palm, 2023; Makuvire et al., 2023). However, practical barriers such as limited training, large classes, resource constraints, and heavy workload reduce its effectiveness, echoing evidence from Nepali studies (Rai, 2019; Dhungel, 2024). For CAS to function as intended, structural and institutional reforms are essential.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that teachers perceive the Continuous Assessment System (CAS) as a pedagogically valuable approach that promotes continuous monitoring, supports weaker learners, and fosters creativity, participation, and active learning. These perceptions align with formative assessment literature, which emphasizes continuous feedback and classroom-based activities as essential for improving student learning (Earl, 2013; Earl & Katz, 2009). Teachers' experiences also resonate with constructivist perspectives, where learning is enhanced through scaffolding, interaction, and diverse activities appropriate for young learners (Vygotsky, 1978; Boström & Palm, 2023).

Despite its potential, the study identifies significant challenges that hinder the effective implementation of CAS. Teachers consistently reported excessive workload, insufficient training, limited time for remedial teaching, and unclear guidelines—issues echoed in previous research on assessment practices in Nepal (Bhatta, 2023; Dhungel, 2024). These challenges indicate a clear gap between policy expectations and classroom realities. While CAS holds strong promise for enhancing early-grade learning, its success depends on meaningful institutional support, adequate training, and practical resources that enable teachers to implement it confidently and consistently.

Overall, the study concludes that CAS is both promising and demanding. It can enhance learning and creativity when well supported, but remains difficult to sustain without structural, administrative, and pedagogical backing. Addressing these challenges is essential for improving assessment quality in Nepal's basic-level education.

Implications

The findings indicate that the Continuous Assessment System (CAS) can meaningfully enhance early-grade learning when teachers are adequately supported. Teachers in this study demonstrated that CAS promotes individualized feedback, creativity, and active participation—confirming the formative value documented in prior research. To realise these benefits consistently, teachers need opportunities for professional development that strengthen their skills in designing CAS-based activities, using rubrics, maintaining assessment records, and planning remedial support. Integrating CAS within regular

instructional planning, rather than treating it as an additional obligation, is crucial for improving classroom assessment quality.

At the systems level, the study reveals the need for clearer operational guidelines, realistic teacher workloads, and targeted administrative support. Many of the challenges teachers face—such as heavy teaching loads, lack of formal training, large class sizes, and inadequate time for documentation or remediation—stem from structural limitations rather than teacher attitudes. Schools and policymakers must therefore ensure manageable class sizes, timely training, and the provision of essential assessment resources such as checklists, portfolios, and activity templates. Establishing a supportive institutional environment will help bridge the gap between policy expectations and classroom realities, allowing CAS to function as an effective formative assessment practice across Nepal's basic-level education.

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