

Pathways to effective school and classroom assessment: The case of Ghana



**PROF. JOSEPH GHARTEY AMPIAH
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
CAPE COAST, GHANA**

History of Assessment in Ghana



- Ghana like many Sub-Saharan African countries has had a culture of assessing students through the traditional one shot examinations that evolved from early colonial education
- Since attaining independence from British colonial rule in 1957, Ghana has made efforts to reform its educational system to meet national aspirations.
- However, since 1987, the focus of reform changed to issues about curriculum and assessments after both had been criticized for contributing to the continued decline in the quality of the country's education



- **Based on a study conducted by a team of experts from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in some fourteen African countries, Ghana following the example of many African countries adopted the continuous assessment (CA) scheme when it introduced the 1987 Educational Reforms Programme (ERP) at all levels of the education system**

Introduction of CA



- The idea was to move from using examinations only to assess students to the inclusion of a wider range of assessment in the Ghanaian education system
- The CA policy introduced by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1987 stipulated that
 - (a) assessment should be carried out through combination of national external examinations and internal assessment by teachers, and
 - (b) a percentage of the final grade for certification should be based on the teachers' internal CA marks of 40% with external examination making up the remaining 60%.

CA cont'd



- Teachers were expected to
 - (a) give class assignments/exercises every fortnight and record the scores of four of them with a maximum score of 10 marks each;
 - (b) conduct three class tests each term with a subtotal of 40 marks,
 - (c) give pupils projects/homework each term and record the scores of four of them with a subtotal of 20 marks.
- The three assessments give a total score of 100 which should then be scaled down to 40% CA score for each pupil.
- CA was expected to play both summative and formative roles in classroom assessment.

CRT and PMT



- **1992-2002: Criterion Referenced Test (CRT) was introduced to assess how well pupils in primary schools in English language and mathematics nationally at the primary school level.**
- **1998: Performance Monitoring Test (PMT) was introduced as a tool for monitoring teaching and learning outcomes at the basic school level.**
- **PMT was a test in English language and mathematics administered to 25%-50% of pupils in public schools only**

USAID funded BECAS Project



- **Assessment of pupils in primary schools through the CRT and PMT consistently revealed a number of problems in the learning of most pupils**
- **BECAS introduced in 2004 to diagnose and fix learning problems**

Components of BECAS



- **National Education Assessment (NEA)**
- **School Education Assessment (SEA)**
- **School Based Assessment (SBA) - restructured
Continuous Assessment**
- **Abolition of PMT**

Components of SBA



- SBA is a system of using tests, quizzes, homework, exercises, projects and other assessment procedures to measure what learners have achieved through a teaching/learning process.
- SBA system consists of 12 assessments a year instead of the 33 assessments in the previous CA system

External Examinations



- The BECE examination is structured so as to ensure that approximately 60% of students each year obtain aggregate 6-30 due to limited space at the secondary level
- In 2003: Ghana participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) JHS2 students

Strengths, Weaknesses and Constraints



- The malpractice of computing and making up CA scores – reduction from 40% to 30% contribution and moderated by WAEC
- BECE gives more of a relative ranking of students since each subject test score is reported in stanines
- The 2008 SEA report could not be organised on schedule and it took more than one year for the results to be released; 18% of the reports submitted by the districts were unusable; In one district, 62% of the 13 reports submitted were unusable

Strengths, Weaknesses and Constraints



- Some districts reported cheating by pupils who took the test and in some cases teachers helped their pupils to answer the questions
- Budgetary constraints prevented more than 50% of districts from using 2006 and 2008 SEA results for improving education quality
- Results of BECE cannot be compared from year to year and hence is not a good indicator of quality of education
- Results of BECE are arranged to terminate the education of 40% of the children

Strengths, Weaknesses and Constraints



- **Ghana's participation in the 2003 and 2007 TIMSS revealed a number of problems with its mathematics and science curricula compared to what obtained in other parts of the world and what was assessed in the TIMSS**

Lessons learnt and the way forward in classroom assessment in Ghana



- 1.** The changing forms of internal assessment shows that a number of weaknesses which existed in the assessment were not corrected but rather replaced with other assessment protocols
- 2.** It seems in the practice of CA and SBA, what is to be assessed and how it is to be assessed is determined by external agencies rather than the classroom teachers
- 3.** Assessment is becoming more structured and rigid with the introduction of SBA and the use of assessment tasks which have to be administered at regular intervals irrespective of pupils' readiness for such tests as stipulated by SBA procedures

Lessons learnt and the way forward in classroom assessment in Ghana



- The expected six individual tests, three terminal tests, and six other recorded assignments in addition to formative assessment might be more than teachers can cope with, especially those with very large classes and also for children at the lower primary level.
- The SEA must be processed and analysed at the school level if indeed the purpose is diagnostic and is to help identify problems at the classroom level for remediation



Thank you