

# The Impending Challenges of Continuous Assessment Implementation at Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

Enhancing quality of education is the ultimate goal of CA and is at the apex of the pyramid. This study attested the challenges impeding CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. To this study purpose survey research design was employed. A sample of 73 instructors and 284 students were involved in this study. The data collected through five-point Likert's scale questionnaire were analyzed using two-tailed one-sample t-test. The reliability of instruments was computed using Cronbach alpha and therefore, all instruments have had presumably acceptable liability coefficients. The study found that there were significant challenges related with instructors, students, curriculum and institution that impeded CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. Based on the findings of this study, the need to construct harmonized discipline wide CA rubric, and to re-balance assessment for grading (summative assessment) and assessment for learning (formative assessment) as well as the need to re-think the adoption of Kirkpatrick's model is recommended.

**Keywords:** assessment for learning; assessment as learning; assessment of learning; assessment rubric

## Introduction

Ethiopia has a vision of building education and training system which aims at ensuring quality and equity education by the year 2020 that could produce competent citizens. Accordingly, as pinpointed in its Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the objective of higher education is to provide an increased quality of skilled and capable human resources that meet the needs of the country in regard to its development in general, and the manufacturing industry in particular by ensuring enrolment priorities to science and technology (Bimrew, 2012). Keeping this objective in mind, the status of quality of education has to be measured and determined through continuous formal and/or informal ways of assessment. In this regard, Ethiopian Higher Education Proclamation No.650/2009 Article 22 sub-article 2 clearly pointed out that

The internal system of quality enhancement of every institution shall provide for clear and comprehensive measures of quality covering ... student evaluation, assessment and grading systems, which shall also include student evaluation of course contents together with the methods and systems of delivery, assessment, examinations and grading (FDRE, 2009, p. 4988).

Thus, it is perceivable that every Higher Education Institution (HEI) should have a system to check whether the curricula it uses the graduates it produces and teaching and learning service it delivers reach the required minimum standards. On its part, Ministry of Education outlined that, following Business Process Reengineering in Ethiopian HEIs, there is a requirement that all higher education courses now use continuous assessment of learning (MoE, 2011). Similarly, since the introduction of modular approach to curriculum implementation by the year 2005 E.C in Ethiopian public universities, continuous assessment (CA) has become the recognized way of evaluating students' learning competence (HESC, 2012). To this end, Yared (2012) has documented that, as one of the integral parts of the teaching and learning process, student assessment is given a very important place in HEIs.

In the broadest sense, CA is something that we do every time in the instructional process. While discussing about CA, it is scholarly recommended to view it in light of assessment of learning, assessment as learning and assessment for learning. This entails that student learning should be continuously assessed and timely feedback should be given so that it is possible to capitalize on the outcome of the assessment and take possible action (re-teaching and re-assessment) for better learning (HESC, 2012). However, as tremendous literatures revealed, many educators and learners view CA as merely assessment of learning (summative). For instance, Dagne (2009) cited in Abiy (2013) found out that 70% of English language teachers in Jimma university did not use CA.

Similarly, Obioma (2010) cited in Awofala and Babajide (2013) investigated that many teachers misapplied the CA instruments leading to more continuous testing instead of continuous assessment. Aytaged (2010) further asserted that judgmental role of continuous assessment is more practiced than the developmental role of the assessment. Moreover, some other scholars also suggested that current assessment practices in higher education did not equip students well for a lifetime of learning and the assessment challenges they would face in the future (HESC, 2012). It was argued that assessment practices should be judged from the point of view of whether they effectively equip students for a lifetime of assessing their own learning.

The study by Desalegn (2014) on sample Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions, for instance, found out that not all instructors used variety of instruments in assessing students learning outcomes and lack of

balance in assessment strategies used.

Similarly, some other studies also pinpointed the following findings viz., teachers practice continuous assessment as continuous tests (Abiy, 2013), assessment process is not a learning experience for most students (Abera, 2012), implementation of continuous assessment overall was found to be negative and non-frequently implemented (Gemechu, 2013), practice of the CA activities to assess students' written work is not sufficient enough to improve the learning and teaching of a writing course (Yiheyis and Getachew, 2014) and judgmental role of continuous assessment is more practiced than the development role of the assessment (Aytaged, 2013). These results have manifested the implementation problem of CA.

Moreover, as documented by different national and international researchers, some of the problems found were that the entire practice of CA is surrounded by laxity (Birhanu, 2013), the assessment methods that instructors use are not effective in promoting good learning (Black & William, 2004 cited in Fisseha, 2010), teachers experienced difficulties in implementation of formative assessment (Israel, 2005 cited in Mpapalika, 2013), teachers are complaining that CA increases the workload for teachers (Mpapalika, 2013), etc. These all findings clearly indicated the existing deficiency in CA implementation. These problems might be caused by a variety of factors related with instructors, students, curriculum, and institution in general. Though there were abundant studies regarding the practice and challenges of CA, empirical evidence that distinguished challenging factors as instructor-based challenges, student-related challenges, curriculum-related challenges and institution-based challenges was yet insufficient. Unless the source of challenge is clearly identified, it would become difficult to set out possible solutions to maintain effective implementation of CA at institutional level.

the findings foretold that the practice of CA was incompatible with its purpose as assessment for, and as learning. Moreover, from the researchers' informal observation, instructors at Dire Dawa University seem to use CA merely for grading, because it is a yardstick to be taken out of 50%. Simply put the implementation problem of CA could have a ripple effect on the quality of education. Thus, this study sought to investigate the prevailing challenges that hampered CA implementation in Dire Dawa University, Ethiopia.

## Methods

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the prevailing challenges, the perceived educational quality enhancement opportunities and the available opportunities that foster CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. To this study purpose survey research design was employed. Survey research design is a procedure in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2012). According to Creswell (2012) survey research design helps describe school trends, determine individual opinions about policy issues, and identify important beliefs and attitudes of individuals towards certain issues.

## Participants

The total of 73 faculty and 284 students at Dire Dawa University in 2016/17 academic year were involved in this study. The participants were selected using systematic random sampling method. The distribution of participants across colleges and Institute of Technology is portrayed in the following tables.

Table 1: *Sample students involved in the study*

College	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
College of Social Science and Humanity	23	8.1	8.1	8.1
College of Natural and Computational Sciences	21	7.4	7.4	15.5
College of Business and Economics	39	13.7	13.7	29.2
College of Law	10	3.5	3.5	32.7
College of Medicine and Health Sciences	18	6.3	6.3	39
Institute of Technology	173	61	61	100.0
Total	284	100.0	100.0	

As portrayed in table 1, the large number of students involved in this study was from institute of technology (173, 61%). This is because of the fact that the Institute of Technology has huge number of students which presumably account greater than seventy five percent of university students. The percentage of students from Business and Economics College (39, 13.7%) was the second in sample contribution.

Table 2: *Sample instructors involved in the study*

College	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
College of Natural and Computational Sciences	31	42.5	42.5	42.5
College of Social Science and Humanity	9	12.3	12.3	54.8
College of Medicine and Health Sciences	5	6.8	6.8	61.6
College of Law	2	2.7	2.7	64.4
Institute of Technology	11	15.1	15.1	79.5
College of Business and Economics	15	20.5	20.5	100.0
Total	73	100.0	100.0	

As indicated in Table 2 above, from the total 73 instructors involved in this study 31(42.5%) were from the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, 15(20.5%) from College of Business and Economics, 11(15.1%) from Institute of Technology, 9(12.3%) from College of Social Science and Humanity, 5(6.8%) from College of Medicine and Health Sciences and 2(2.7%) from College of Law. Hence, large number of sample participants was from the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, and College of Business and Economics, respectively.

### Instrumentation

Instruments were adopted from the previous researches and then refined in a way that would fit the purpose of this study. All items were five-point Likert scales ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). To maintain internal consistency among items, the reliability test was computed using Cronbach alpha. The reliability measure of the undergraduate students questionnaire was acceptable and its Cronbach alpha coefficient was  $\alpha=0.89$ . Likewise, the reliability measure of the instructors questionnaire was acceptable and its Cronbach's alpha coefficient was  $\alpha=0.9$ .

To collect data about the challenges of CA, the questionnaire composed of twenty four individual items was administered to students. The items were divided as instructor-related challenge items (2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 21, 23, and 24), student-related challenge items (1, 4, 7, 8, 13, 15 and 22), both instructor and students shared item (17) and institution-related item (19). Similarly, the questionnaire composed of twenty six items was administered to instructors. Items of the questionnaire were further categorized as instructor-related challenge questions (3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, and 24), student-related challenge questions (6, 9, 14 and 15), institution-related challenge questions(1, 2, 4, and 5), curriculum-related challenge questions(22 and 23), and leadership-related challenge questions(16, 25 and 26).

## Results

### Result from Students involved in the Study

Table 3: *One-sample t-test result for students on the challenges of CA (N=284, df=283 & Exp. Mean=3; two-tailed test)*

Challenges	Mean	SD	SEM	t	Sig. 2-tailed)
Lack of understanding among students about CA.	3.20	1.237	.073	2.687	.008**
Instructors' lack of commitment to assess students learning progress in every class.	3.21	1.160	.069	3.018	.003**
Poor record keeping of CA results.	3.24	1.180	.070	3.469	.001**
Students' negative attitude towards CA.	2.98	1.193	.071	-3.348	.728
Instructors' negative attitude towards CA.	3.04	1.206	.072	.492	.623
Instructors' lack of using different types of CA methods.	3.19	1.253	.074	2.605	.010*
Lack of readiness among students.	3.15	1.234	.073	2.115	.035*
Irregular students' attendance.	2.94	1.207	.072	-.836	.404
Lack of uniformity in CA implementation.	3.21	1.159	.069	3.124	.002**
Instructors only use test as CA method.	2.86	1.271	.075	-1.914	.057
Instructors are unfair in CA.	3.06	1.250	.074	.807	.420
Instructors do not provide special support for low achievers.	3.32	1.244	.074	4.341	.000***
Students are careless for CA activities.	2.86	1.280	.076	-1.808	.072
Instructors have not taken remedial action based on CA result.	3.25	1.196	.071	3.473	.001**
Students who were absent do not have a chance to be assessed in another day.	3.24	1.283	.076	3.145	.002**
Instructors give zero or NG when a student have not taken one CA.	3.17	1.322	.078	2.200	.029*
Communication problem between instructors and students	3.33	1.287	.076	4.333	.000***
Instructors use CA only to give mark not to improve teaching-learning process.	3.13	1.261	.075	1.741	.083
Lack of adequate teaching-learning facilities like internet access, books, laboratory, etc	3.57	1.258	.075	7.644	.000***
Lack of appropriate preparation and plan from instructors.	3.28	1.182	.070	4.016	.000***
Lack of clear mark allocation for each question.	3.31	1.175	.070	4.444	.000***
Poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works.	3.33	1.281	.076	4.307	.000***
Lack of timely feedback from teachers about the progress and achievement of students	3.38	1.182	.070	5.474	.000***
Biased grading system of instructors.	3.04	1.194	.071	.596	.551

\*p=significant, \*\*p=very significant, \*\*\*p=extremely significant & others are not significant at  $p<0.05$ (two-tailed);

### ***Student-related challenges***

To identify student-related factors that could challenge the implementation of continuous assessment, seven five-point Likert scale items were raised. Of these, mean scores of four items (Item 1, 6, 15 & 22) subscales were significantly higher than the expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) while the remaining three items (Item 4, 8 & 13) did not have statistically significant mean difference. Accordingly, students claimed that lack of understanding among students about continuous assessment ( $M=3.20$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $t(283)=2.687$  &  $df=283$ ), lack of readiness among students ( $M=3.15$ ,  $t(283)=2.115$  &  $p=.035$ ), absence of opportunity for absentee students to be assessed in another day ( $M=3.24$ ,  $t(283)=3.145$  &  $p=.002$ ), and poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works ( $M=3.33$ ,  $t(283)=4.307$  &  $p<.001$ ) were significant student-related challenges that could hinder CA implementation. Hence, the participant students claim lack of understanding and readiness among students, absence of opportunity for absentee students to be assessed in another day, and poor participation of students in group assignment and project works as student-related challenges of CA practice.

However, as portrayed in Table 3, students claimed that their negative attitude towards continuous assessment ( $M=2.98$ ,  $t(283)=-.348$  &  $p=.728$ ), irregular attendance ( $M=2.94$ ,  $t(283)=-0.836$  &  $p=.404$ ), and their carelessness for continuous assessment activities ( $M=2.86$ ,  $t(283)=-1.808$  &  $p=.072$ ) were not statistically significant student-related challenges of CA practice. Thus, one-sample t-test results revealed that students' negative attitude towards continuous assessment, their irregular attendance and carelessness for continuous assessment activities were not significant challenges of CA practice at Dire Dawa University.

### ***Instructor-related challenges***

To examine instructor-related factors that could challenge the implementation of CA at Dire Dawa University, fifteen items were raised to participant students. Accordingly, as portrayed in Table 3, the obtained mean scores of ten items (Item 2,3,6,9,12,14,16,20,21&23) were statistically and significantly greater than the expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) of subscales while the mean scores of the remaining five items (Item 5, 10, 11, 18 & 24) did not have significant difference at  $p<.05$ . Specifically, students claimed that the instructors' lack of commitment to assess students learning progress in every class ( $M=3.21$ ,  $t(283)= 3.018$  &  $p=.003$ ), poor record keeping of continuous assessment results ( $M=3.24$ ,  $t(283)=3.469$  &  $p=.001$ ), instructors' lack of using different types of continuous assessment methods ( $M=3.19$ ,  $t(283)= 2.605$  &  $p=.01$ ), lack of uniformity in continuous assessment implementation ( $M=3.21$ ,  $t(283)=3.124$  &  $p=.002$ ), instructors' failure to provide special support for low achievers ( $M=3.32$ ,  $t(283)=4.341$  &  $p<.001$ ), and instructors' failure to take remedial action based on continuous assessment result ( $M=3.25$ ,  $t(283)=3.473$  &  $p=.001$ ) were instructor-related factors that were challenging CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. All these results were statistically significant at  $p=.01$ . Hence, students reported instructors' lack of commitment to assess students learning progress in every class, poor record keeping of continuous assessment results, instructors' gap in using variety of continuous assessment methods, lack of uniformity in continuous assessment implementation, instructors' failure to provide special support for low achievers, and instructors' failure to take remedial action based on continuous assessment result as instructor-related challenges of CA implementation at Dire Dawa University.

Likewise, students reported that the instructor-related challenges of CA implementation were that the instructors gave zero or NG when a student missed one continuous assessment ( $M=3.17$ ,  $t(283)=2.200$  &  $p=.029$ ), lack of appropriate preparation and plan by the instructors ( $M=3.28$ ,  $t(283)=4.016$  &  $p<0.001$ ), lack of clear mark allocation for each question ( $M=3.31$ ,  $t(283)=4.444$  &  $p=.001$ ), and lack of timely feedback on the progress and achievement of students ( $M=3.38$ ,  $t(283)= 5.474$  &  $p<.001$ ). These one-sample t-test results show that giving zero or NG when a student missed a single CA, lack of appropriate preparation and plan, lack of clear mark allocation for each assessment question, and lack of timely feedback on the progress and achievement of students seem to be instructor-related challenges of CA implementation at Dire Dawa University.

On the other hand, one-sample t-test result of the student participants revealed that the instructors' negative attitude towards continuous assessment ( $M=3.04$ ,  $t(283)=0.492$  &  $p=.623$ ), mere use of test as continuous assessment method ( $M=2.86$ ,  $t(283)=-1.914$  &  $p=.057$ ), unfairness in continuous assessment ( $M=3.06$ ,  $t(283)=0.807$  &  $p=0.420$ ), use of continuous assessment only to give mark not to improve teaching-learning process ( $M=3.13$ ,  $t(283)=1.741$  &  $p=.083$ ), and biased grading system of instructors ( $M=3.04$ ,  $t(283)=0.596$  &  $p=.551$ ) were not instructor-related challenging factors that could hamper CA implementation. The calculated mean scores of these teacher-related factors were not statistically significant at  $p<.05$  and no statistically significant mean differences were found between calculated mean and the hypothesized population mean ( $\mu=3$ ). These results show that instructors' negative attitude towards continuous assessment, their mere use of test as continuous assessment method, unfairness in continuous assessment, use of continuous assessment only to give mark not to improve teaching-learning process, and their biased grading system were not significant challenges of CA implementation at Dire Dawa University.

The study also found that communication problem between instructors and students was the conjoint challenge related to both the instructors and students ( $M=3.33$ ,  $t(283)=4.333$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Similarly, lack of

adequate teaching-learning facilities like internet access, books, laboratory, etc was found to be significant institution-related challenge ( $M=3.57, t(283), p<.001$ ).

**Results from Instructors involved in the Study**

Table 4. One-sample t-test result for instructors on the challenges of CA implementation ( $N=72, f=71$  & Exp. Mean=3)

Challenges	M	SD	SEM	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Large class size.	4.33	.919	.108	12.307	.000***
Overload.	3.44	1.112	.131	3.392	.001**
Lack of teaching experience.	2.65	1.334	.157	-2.209	.030*
Absence of strict guideline about CA.	3.29	1.192	.140	2.076	.041*
Lack of professional support and training.	3.47	1.186	.140	3.377	.001**
Irregular attendance of students.	3.19	1.218	.144	1.355	.180
Instructors' feeling of CA as less important for students' learning.	3.88	1.174	.138	6.324	.000***
Lack of uniformity in CA practice within the department	3.07	1.130	.133	.521	.604
Students cheating system.	3.47	1.353	.159	2.962	.004**
Lack of understanding to align CA methods with course objectives.	2.78	1.201	.142	-1.570	.121
Instructors thought of CA as grade inflator.	2.75	1.207	.142	-1.757	.083
Lack of professional commitment and readiness.	2.78	1.236	.146	-1.526	.132
Considering CA as offering many tests.	2.89	1.251	.147	-.754	.454
Poor willingness of students for CA.	3.35	1.165	.137	2.530	.014*
Poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works.	3.69	1.158	.137	5.087	.000***
Lack of continuous follow up by the department head.	2.83	1.101	.130	-1.285	.203
Lack of understanding to use variety of assessment techniques.	2.85	1.122	.132	-1.156	.252
CA implementation gap among teachers.	3.33	1.175	.138	2.407	.019*
Lack of providing immediate CA feedback to students.	3.36	1.052	.124	2.912	.005**
Lack of providing remedial assessment for low achieving students.	3.01	1.132	.133	.104	.917
Using CA only to grade students' achievement.	3.33	1.289	.152	2.194	.032*
Breadth of my course content.	3.65	1.115	.131	4.966	.000***
Block mode of course delivery.	3.31	1.421	.167	1.825	.072
Lack of verifying the correctness of CA records.	3.13	1.186	.140	.894	.374
Exam committee's lack of commitment to inspect CA records.	3.13	1.150	.136	.922	.359
Lack of verification by heads and deans about the correctness of CA records.	2.85	1.171	.138	-1.107	.272

\*  $p$ =significant, \*\*  $p$ =very significant, \*\*\*  $p$ =extremely significant and others not significant at  $p<0.05$ (two-tailed)

The questionnaire comprised twenty six five-point Likert-scale items was administered to instructors. The questionnaire contained five categories which could be the source of challenges in CA implementation namely, institution, students, teachers, leadership and curriculum.

**Institution-related challenges**

To examine institution-related challenges of CA, four Likert-scale items were raised. In light to this, the overall obtained mean score for item 1(Large class size), item 2 (Overload), item 4(Absence of strict guideline about continuous assessment), and item 5(Lack of professional support and training) was statistically and significantly higher than the expected hypothetical mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ). Specifically, the mean difference between calculated mean score for large class size ( $M=4.33$  &  $t(71)=12.307$ ) and the hypothetical expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was extremely significant at  $p<.001$ . Likewise, the mean difference between calculated mean score for instructors' over load ( $M=3.44, t(71)=3.392$ ) and lack of professional support and training ( $M=3.47, t(71)=3.377$ ) and the hypothetical expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was very significant at  $p=.001$ . Moreover, the obtained mean score of instructors' response ( $M=3.29$ ) on the absence of strict guideline about continuous assessment was statistically and significantly higher than the expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) at  $p=.041(t(71)=2.076)$ . This result shows that the large class size, instructors' overload, absence of strict guideline about continuous assessment and lack of professional support and training on assessment issues seem to be the challenges of CA emanated from the institution.

**Student-related challenges**

It was depicted in Table 4 that the one-sample t-test revealed that, with the exception of item 6(Irregular attendance of students), the overall mean scores of item 9(Students cheating system), item 14(Poor willingness

of students for continuous assessment) and item 15(Poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works) were significantly greater than the hypothetical expected mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ). Accordingly, the difference between the calculated mean ( $M=3.47$  &  $t(71)=2.962$ ) for students cheating system and the expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was very significant at  $p=0.004$ . Likewise, the mean score for poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works ( $M=3.69$ ,  $t(71)=5.087$ ) was extremely and significantly different from hypothetically expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) at  $p<.001$ . Moreover, the difference between the mean score for poor willingness of students for continuous assessment ( $M=3.35$ ,  $t(71)=2.530$ ) and the expected hypothetical mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was statistically significant at  $p=.014$ . These findings imply that the students' cheating system, their poor willingness for continuous assessment, and poor participation in doing group assignments and project works were found to be the challenges of CA practice.

In contrast to the aforementioned findings, the obtained mean score for students' irregular attendance ( $M=3.19$ ,  $t(71)=1.355$ ,  $p=.180$ ) was not statistically and significantly different from the expected hypothetical mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ) at  $p<.05$ . This implies that the students' irregular attendance was not as such significant challenge in CA practices.

### ***Instructor-related challenges***

There is hypothetical possibility that the factors related with teachers might hinder the implementation of continuous assessment. In this regard, thirteen five-point Likert-scale items were administered to instructors to investigate teacher-related that could challenge CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. Accordingly, the overall mean score of instructors' response for continuous assessment implementation gap among teachers ( $M=3.33$ ), and using continuous assessment only to grade students' achievement ( $M=3.33$ .) was significantly higher than the hypothetical expected mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ). To brief further, there were statistically significant differences between the calculated mean scores for the lack of teaching experience ( $t(71)=-2.209$  &  $p=.030$ ), continuous assessment implementation gap ( $t(71)=2.407$  &  $p=.019$ ) and mere use of CA to grade students' achievement ( $t(71)=2.194$  &  $p=.032$ ) and the expected mean( $\mu=3$ ). Likewise, the overall mean score for instructors' feeling about the importance of CA for students' learning ( $M=3.88$ ) seem to be statistically greater than the hypothesized expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ). The difference between the calculated mean and the expected mean was extremely significant at  $p<.001$ ( $t(71)=6.324$ ). Moreover, the difference between mean score for the lack of providing immediate continuous assessment feedback to students ( $M=3.36$ ) and the hypothetical expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was very significant at  $p=.005$ ( $t(71)=2.912$ ). This result foretells that the instructor's lack of teaching experience, CA implementation gap among instructors, instructor's mere use of CA to grade students' achievement (summative purpose), instructor's perception of the importance of CA for students' further learning and lack of providing immediate continuous assessment feedback to students were the major teacher-related challenges in CA implementation.

Oppositely, as the results portrayed in Table 4, the overall mean scores for the lack of uniformity of continuous assessment practices within the department( $M=3.07$ ,  $t(71)=0.521$  &  $p=.604$ ), lack of understanding to align assessment methods with course objectives( $M=2.78$ ,  $t(71)=-1.570$  &  $p=0.121$ ), instructor's thought of that the continuous assessment could be a cause for grade inflation( $M=2.75$ ,  $t(71)=-1.757$  &  $p=.083$ ), and lack of professional commitment and readiness( $M=2.78$ ,  $t(71)=-1.526$  &  $p=0.132$ ) were not statistically and significantly different from the expected mean(which was  $\mu=3$ ) at  $p<.05$ . Similarly, the calculated mean score for the lack of teaching experience ( $M=2.65$ ) was statistically significantly lower than the hypothetical expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) at  $p=.03$ ( $t(71)=-2.209$ ). These results show that instructor's lack of uniformity in CA practices, understanding gap to align assessment with course objectives, thought of CA as grade inflator, lack of teaching experience and lack of professional commitment and readiness were not the significant challenges of CA implementation.

Likewise, there was no statistically significant difference between the obtained mean for item 13(Considering continuous assessment as offering many tests:  $M=2.89$ ,  $t(71)=-0.754$  &  $p=.454$ ), item 17( Lack of understanding to use variety of assessment techniques:  $M=2.85$ ,  $t(71)=-1.156$  &  $p=0.252$ ), item 20(Lack of providing remedial assessment for low achieving students:  $M=3.01$ ,  $t(71)=0.104$  &  $p=.917$ ), item 24( Lack of verifying the correctness of continuous assessment records:  $M=3.13$ ,  $t(71)=0.374$  &  $p=.894$ ). This finding foretells that considering continuous assessment as offering many tests, lack of understanding to use variety of assessment techniques, lack of providing remedial assessment for low achieving students, and lack of verifying the correctness of continuous assessment records were not critical teacher-related challenges that could inhibit CA implementation.

### ***Leadership-related challenges***

As revealed in Table 4, regarding leadership-related factors, the difference between overall mean score for item 16(Lack of continuous follow up by the department head:  $M=2.83$ ,  $t(71)=-1.285$  &  $p=0.203$ ), item 25(Exam committee's lack of commitment to inspect continuous assessment records:  $M=3.13$ ,  $t(71)=0.922$  &  $p=0.359$ )

and item 26 (Lack of verification by heads and deans about the correctness of continuous assessment records:  $M=2.85$ ,  $t(71)=-1.107$  &  $p=0.272$ ) and the expected hypothetical mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ) was not statistically significant at  $p<0.05$ . This result implies that the lack of continuous follow up by the department head, exam committee's lack of commitment to inspect continuous assessment records, and lack of verification by heads and deans about the correctness of continuous assessment records were not significant leadership related challenges to implement CA at Dire Dawa University.

### ***Curriculum-related challenges***

To explore curriculum-related challenges of continuous assessment, two key questions were forwarded to participant instructors. Accordingly, the obtained mean score for the breadth of course content ( $t(71)=4.966$ ) seem to be significantly greater than the hypothesized expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ). The difference between the observed mean ( $M=3.65$ ) and the expected mean ( $\mu=3$ ) was extremely significant at  $p<0.001$ . This result implies that the breadth of course content could possibly affect the implementation of continuous assessment. However, the mean score for the block modality of course delivery ( $M=3.31$ ,  $t(71)=1.825$  &  $p=0.072$ ) was not statistically and significantly different from the hypothetical expected mean (which was  $\mu=3$ ) at  $p<0.05$ . This result implies that the block mode of course delivery might not be possible curriculum related challenge for CA implementation at Dire Dawa University.

## **Discussion**

### ***Instructor-Related Challenges***

The present study examined instructor-related challenges that prohibit CA implementation. Accordingly, as present study revealed, instructor's lack of teaching experience, CA implementation gap among instructors, instructor's mere use of CA to grade students' achievement (summative purpose), instructor's perception of the importance of CA for students' further learning, and lack of providing immediate CA feedback to students were the major teacher-related challenges in CA implementation. Consistent with these findings, the previous studies found out failure to employ CA as a component of their teaching (Abiy & Alemayehu, 2015), majority of teachers use CA for grading system rather than for students' learning improvement (Takele, 2012), practice of CA lacks harmony and consistency (Sintayehu, 2016), misconception about CA (Abiy & Alemayehu, 2015), lack of immediate, timely and descriptive feedback provision (Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015, Yiheyis & Getachew, 2014), and orientation gap upon the merit of CA in supporting pupils learning success (Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015).

Similarly, the study found out poor record keeping of CA results, instructors' gap in using variety of CA methods, instructors' failure to provide special support for low achievers, and instructors' failure to take remedial action based on CA result as instructor-related challenges that restrain the implementation of CA. The participant students on their part also believe that lack of clear mark allocation for each assessment question, giving zero or NG when a student missed a single CA, and lack of appropriate preparation and plan are instructor-related challenges of CA implementation at Dire Dawa University. Consistently, researches indicate lesser use of variety of CA strategies (Birhanu, 2013), teachers lack skills of assessing students' performance (Birhanu, 2013), lack of awareness and readiness (Daniel, 2014), lack of appropriate preparation and plan from instructors (Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015), and lack of uniform and consistent continuous assessment result recording habits among teachers (Daniel, 2014) as teacher-related challenges of CA.

Similar to Mesfin and Abebaw's (2015) study, the present study found out communication problem between instructors and students as significant challenge of CA implementation. Teacher-student communication problem may result due to ineffective CA feedback system. If CA feedback system is effective in strengthening students' future learning and improvement students may undoubtedly recognize their teachers' contribution to their learning and respect them. Similarly, Jones (2005) stated that when CA feedback is effective, learners' value teachers' contributions and this is apparent in the quality of the learner-teacher relationship.

Unlike instructors, participant students reported lack of commitment and readiness among instructors to assess students learning progress in every class, problem in using a variety of CA methods, lack of providing remedial assessment for low achieving students, lack of verifying the correctness of continuous assessment records and lack of uniformity in CA implementation as significant instructor-related challenges of CA. This contradicting result may probably be due to instructors' fear of self-criticism. The key clients' (students') claim may possibly be considered as correct as far as CA is for their learning advantage. Nevertheless, it seems possible to deduce the existence of potential gaps that could challenge CA implementation from the instructors' side. In connection to aforementioned findings, the previous researches found out lack of commitment (Abera, 2012, Daniel, 2014, Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015), most teachers' use of tests and quizzes as the only CA techniques (Teklebrhan and Samuel, 2015), poor willingness of teachers to give tutorial and makeup classes for low achiever students (Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015).

In flipside the present study found out that instructor's lack of uniformity in CA practices,

understanding gap to align assessment with course objectives, thought of CA as grade inflator, considering CA as offering many tests, unfairness in CA, biased grading system of instructors, and lack of understanding to align assessment methods with course objectives were not significant challenges of CA implementation. Contrary to these findings, tremendous researches indicate bias of teachers based on sex, race, personality etc. (Abera, 2012), and instructors' poor awareness about CA (Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015).

Moreover, Mesfin and Abebaw's (2015) study at Wolaita Sodo University College of Agriculture found out instructors' clear understanding gap between formative and summative CA, instructors' subject matter knowledge gap, and lack of clear mark allocation for each question, poor evaluation and grading system of instructors as instructor-related challenges of CA. Likewise, a study by Abiy and Alemayehu (2015) on the primary school teachers' knowledge, attitude and perceived practice of CA identify giving continuous test than CA and failure to implement CA in line with its principles and guidelines as key challenges. This difference may either be due to the educational level on which the study was conducted or because of presence of induction training on CA for beginner instructors at Dire Dawa University. In this regard, for the question "Have you taken any course or training on continuous assessment?", large number (54, 74%) of instructors reported that they have taken courses or trainings about continuous assessment. Undoubtedly, training could possibly make significant difference on instructors' practice of CA.

Contrary to Abera's (2012), Abiy and Alemayehu's (2015), Birhanu's (2013) and Mesfin and Abebaw's (2015) study findings, instructors' attitude towards CA was not significant challenge of CA implementation at Dire Dawa University.

### ***Institutional Challenges***

Similar to previous studies (e.g. Abera, 2012, Azeb, 2014, Daniel, 2014, Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015, Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015, Yiheyis & Getachew, 2014), the present study found out large class size as a great challenge in CA implementation. In contrast to this finding, relatively large number of instructors (31, 42.5%) reported that the average number of students in their class ranges from twenty five to forty. Similarly, 28(38.4%) instructors asserted that the number of students in their class was from forty one to sixty five. This result shows that more than eighty percent of the participants believe that the class size is less than or equal to sixty five. However, working to keep class size up to standard is essential if CA is to serve its purpose of enhancing students' learning and holistically that of quality of education.

The present study findings indicated that instructors' overload, absence of strict guideline about CA and lack of professional support and training as institutional challenges that CA encounter. Consistently, research evidences have showed absence of clear and adequate CA guidelines and manuals (Abera, 2012, Birhanu, 2013), lack of in-service training (Birhanu, 2013, Takele, 2012), and teachers' overload (Daniel, 2014, Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015, Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015, Yiheyis & Getachew, 2014) as critical challenges of CA. Even though the lack of training is indicated as one of challenges, most of instructors (74%) participated in this study reported that they have acquired training or course about CA.

Similarly to Abera's (2012), Daniel's (2014), and Mesfin and Abebaw's (2015) study, lack of teaching and learning facilities such as internet access, textbooks, laboratories and the like were potential challenges of CA implementation.

### ***Student-Related Challenges***

The present study also examined student-related challenges that prohibit CA implementation. Accordingly, the study results indicate that the lack of understanding and readiness among students, absence of opportunity for absentee students to be assessed in another day, cheating system, and poor participation of students in group assignment and project works as student-related challenges of CA practice were the challenges hampering CA implementation. Consistently, tremendous studies indicated poor awareness about CA (e.g. Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015, Takele, 2012, Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015), students' lack of readiness to take CA (Teklebrhan & Samuel, 2015), and poor participation among students in doing group assignments and project works (Mesfin & Abebaw, 2015, Takele, 2012) as student-related challenges of CA. Moreover, a study by Teklebrhan & Samuel (2015) on the problems and prospects of implementing continuous assessment at Adigrat University contend that significant number of students had poor knowledge and negative attitude towards CA.

Contrary to Abera's (2012), Abiy & Alemayehu's (2015), Birhanu's (2013), and Teklebrhan & Samuel's (2015) study, results of this study revealed that students' negative attitude towards continuous assessment was not potential challenge of CA. Likewise, in contrast to Abera's (2012), Daniel's (2014), Mesfin & Abebaw's (2015), and Takele's (2012) study, one-sample t-test results revealed that students' irregular attendance and carelessness for continuous assessment activities were not significant challenges of CA implementation.



### **Leadership-Related Challenges**

The leadership-related challenges raised were lack of continuous follow up by the department head, exam committee's lack of commitment to inspect continuous assessment records, and lack of verification by heads and deans about the correctness of continuous assessment records. However, the results were not statistically significant. Contrary to this finding, Teklebrhan & Samuel's (2015) study identified absence of controlling system about CA, poor communication between department heads and the exam center, absence of documentation and formal reporting systems and poor communication between department heads and Instructors.

### **Curriculum-Related Challenges**

Similar to Abera's (2012) and Daniel's (2014) study, the breadth of course content is found to be curriculum-related challenge that hampers the implementation of CA. However, as one-sample t-test result revealed, block mode of course delivery was not potential challenge for CA implementation. This may be because of the fact that each curriculum contains pre-defined assessment methods.

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