Bridging Policy and Pedagogy: History Teachers' Implementation of Continuous Assessment in Tanzania

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Abstract
Continuous Assessment (CA) is a fundamental component of competency-based education reforms, intended to promote continuous learning, formative feedback, and the development of learners' competencies. Despite policy reforms in Tanzania requiring teachers to employ diversified assessment techniques, classroom assessment remains largely examination-oriented. This study explored the Continuous Assessment techniques used by History teachers in secondary schools in Bagamoyo District, Tanzania, and examined the extent to which these practices align with national policy intentions. An exploratory qualitative case study design was employed involving History teachers, Heads of Schools, and School Quality Assurance Officers purposively selected from five public secondary schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document review, and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic analysis. Findings revealed that History teachers predominantly relied on written tests, quizzes, and assignments, while oral questioning, although frequently used, was rarely documented as part of official CA records. Alternative assessment techniques, including debates, portfolios, historical inquiry projects, document analysis, role-play, and peer assessment, were implemented infrequently due to large class sizes, heavy workloads, examination pressure, limited resources, and inadequate professional development. Consequently, Continuous Assessment was implemented largely as a summative rather than formative process. The study recommends strengthening teachers' assessment literacy, expanding professional development, enhancing instructional leadership, and aligning national assessment systems with competency-based assessment principles.

Keywords: Continuous Assessment, History Education, Assessment Techniques, Formative Assessment, Competency-Based Curriculum, Policy Enactment

1. Introduction

Continuous Assessment (CA) has become one of the most significant educational reforms aimed at improving teaching and learning across contemporary education systems. Rather than viewing assessment as an activity conducted only at the end of instruction, CA positions assessment as an integral component of the learning process that continuously generates evidence of students' progress while informing instructional decisions (Black & Wiliam, 2018; OECD, 2023). Within competency-based education, assessment is expected to facilitate learning by enabling learners to apply knowledge and skills in authentic contexts while receiving timely feedback that supports continuous improvement (Sadler, 1989).

Globally, curriculum reforms have increasingly emphasized formative assessment as a means of developing higher-order competencies, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. Countries such as Canada, Australia, Finland, Singapore, and New Zealand have incorporated Continuous Assessment into competency-based curricula with the expectation that teachers will employ diversified assessment techniques such as portfolios, project work, presentations, debates, peer assessment, self-assessment, and performance-based tasks alongside traditional tests (Carless & Winstone, 2020; OECD, 2023). These approaches provide richer evidence of learner achievement and encourage assessment to function as a tool for learning rather than merely for certification.

Despite these policy aspirations, international evidence shows that classroom assessment remains largely dominated by conventional written tests. Black and Wiliam (2018) argue that although formative assessment is widely promoted, teachers often experience difficulties translating policy ideals into everyday classroom practice. Similarly, Shepard (2022) observes that many teachers adapt assessment reforms to fit existing examination systems instead of transforming classroom pedagogy. Studies conducted in Finland (Postareff et al., 2021), Australia (DeLuca et al., 2019), and Singapore (Leong et al., 2018) similarly report that teachers continue to depend on written examinations because they are perceived as manageable, objective, and compatible with accountability requirements.

Across Africa, Continuous Assessment has become a key strategy for improving educational quality within competency-based education systems. South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, and several East African countries have institutionalized CA through curriculum reforms that encourage continuous monitoring of learners' progress and the use of diversified assessment methods (Hayford, 2018; Kanjee, 2020; Olutola, 2015). However, implementation remains constrained by large class sizes, limited instructional resources, inadequate professional development, and examination-oriented school cultures (Ayanwale et al., 2023). Consequently, teachers frequently rely on written tests and recall-based assessments because these are easier to administer, mark, and document than authentic assessment activities. Similar findings have been reported in Ethiopia, where Moges (2018) found that although policy advocated diversified assessment, classroom practice remained dominated by written tests due to workload and contextual constraints.

Tanzania has similarly adopted Continuous Assessment as a central component of competency-based education. The Education and Training Policy (URT, 2023), the Tanzania Institute of Education (2019) curriculum framework, and the National Examinations Council

of Tanzania (NECTA, 2024) require teachers to use diverse assessment techniques that promote competency development, learner participation, formative feedback, and continuous monitoring of students' learning. These policy documents emphasize assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning, requiring teachers to integrate classroom assessment into everyday instructional practice.

Within this reform agenda, History occupies a unique position because it seeks to develop historical reasoning, critical thinking, evidence interpretation, source analysis, and argument construction rather than simple memorization of historical facts. Consequently, effective assessment in History requires a variety of techniques, including document analysis, debates, historical inquiry, essays, reflective writing, project work, source criticism, and presentations that allow learners to demonstrate disciplinary thinking and analytical competence (Carretero et al., 2020). Such techniques are consistent with the competency-based curriculum and the formative intentions of Continuous Assessment.

Nevertheless, studies in Tanzania suggest that classroom assessment in History continues to rely predominantly on written tests and examinations, while formative assessment strategies remain underutilized (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015; Kitta & Tilya, 2019). Oral questioning is commonly used during classroom instruction but is rarely documented as part of Continuous Assessment records. Similarly, portfolios, projects, debates, peer assessment, and historical investigations remain uncommon despite their emphasis in curriculum policy. These patterns suggest that teachers continue to privilege assessment approaches that are manageable within existing school conditions rather than those intended by policy.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Continuous Assessment has been institutionalized in Tanzania as a mandatory component of competency-based education through the Education and Training Policy (URT, 2023), the Tanzania Institute of Education curriculum framework, and the National Examinations Council of Tanzania assessment guidelines (NECTA, 2024). These policy frameworks require teachers to employ diversified assessment techniques that promote continuous learning, provide formative feedback, and assess learners' competencies using authentic classroom activities. However, available evidence indicates that implementation remains dominated by conventional written tests and examination-oriented practices, with limited use of alternative assessment strategies such as projects, portfolios, debates, historical inquiry, and peer assessment (Komba & Mwandanji, 2015; Kitta & Tilya, 2019).

Although previous studies have identified challenges such as inadequate training, heavy workloads, limited resources, and large class sizes, little attention has been given to the specific assessment techniques employed by History teachers within the framework of Continuous Assessment policy. Moreover, most Tanzanian studies have examined Continuous Assessment at a general level, with limited subject-specific evidence from History classrooms, where assessment is expected to evaluate complex competencies including historical reasoning, interpretation of evidence, and critical analysis. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence on whether the assessment techniques used by History teachers align with the competency-based intentions of national Continuous Assessment policy.

This knowledge gap limits understanding of how Continuous Assessment is enacted in History classrooms and constrains efforts to strengthen assessment practices that support meaningful learning. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the Continuous Assessment techniques used by History teachers in implementing Continuous Assessment in secondary schools in Bagamoyo District, Tanzania.

1.2 Significance of the paper

Continuous Assessment has evolved from traditional classroom testing towards a comprehensive approach that integrates assessment within teaching and learning. Contemporary assessment literature emphasizes that CA should generate continuous evidence of learner progress while simultaneously informing instructional improvement (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Within competency-based education, assessment extends beyond measuring factual knowledge to evaluating learners' ability to apply knowledge, solve problems, communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and demonstrate disciplinary competencies (OECD, 2023).

Sadler (1989) conceptualizes formative assessment as a process through which learners understand quality criteria, evaluate their own performance, and receive feedback enabling improvement. This perspective shifts assessment from judgment towards learning enhancement. Consequently, effective CA requires the use of diverse assessment techniques capable of capturing multiple dimensions of learning. Carless and Winstone (2020) argue that assessment diversification enhances learner engagement because different assessment methods provide varied opportunities for demonstrating competence. Similarly, Black and Wiliam (2018) emphasize that formative assessment is strengthened when teachers employ multiple evidence sources rather than relying exclusively on written examinations.

Literature identifies several assessment strategies particularly suitable for History education such as historical inquiry projects; document-based questions; essays; debates; source analysis; oral presentations; role-play; portfolios; reflective journals; peer assessment; classroom discussion. These approaches enable teachers to assess analytical reasoning, interpretation, communication, and evidence-based argumentation more effectively than conventional objective tests. However, empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that History teachers continue to privilege written tests because they are easier to administer, score, and document (Shepard, 2022). Examination-oriented cultures further reinforce this preference by encouraging teachers to prepare students for national examinations rather than competency development.

History education requires assessment approaches capable of evaluating historical thinking rather than simple factual recall. Carretero et al. (2020) argue that History learning involves interpreting historical evidence, evaluating competing perspectives, constructing arguments, analysing primary sources, and understanding historical causation. Consequently, assessment techniques should reflect these disciplinary competencies. Thus, this paper assessed CA techniques used by History teachers in implementing continuous assessment in Bagamoyo District secondary schools.

1.3 Main Objective

The main objective of the paper was to explore history teachers' awareness of the significance of policy-practice alignment through assessment practices in Secondary schools

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Review

Globally studies consistently show that although educational policies advocate diversified assessment, classroom implementation remains dominated by conventional techniques. In Canada, Cisse et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative multiple-case study involving secondary school teachers to examine classroom assessment within competency-based education reforms. Using interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the researchers found that teachers recognized the value of formative assessment but relied primarily on written tests because of large class sizes, heavy workloads, and limited instructional time. Alternative assessment strategies such as portfolios and project-based learning were used only occasionally. These findings suggest that policy aspirations alone are insufficient to transform classroom assessment without supportive institutional conditions.

Similarly, DeLuca et al. (2019) synthesized evidence from assessment literacy studies conducted across North America and Europe. Their review found that teachers generally possessed positive attitudes toward formative assessment but lacked sufficient expertise in designing and implementing authentic assessment tasks. The authors concluded that diversified assessment requires sustained professional development rather than one-off policy dissemination. In South Africa, Kanjee (2020) examined the implementation of classroom assessment under the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). Employing qualitative interviews with teachers and curriculum officials, the study found that teachers relied heavily on written tests despite policy requirements promoting practical and performance-based assessment. Participants explained that accountability demands, examination preparation, and administrative workload limited their willingness to adopt more diversified approaches.

Within East Africa, Moges (2018) investigated Continuous Assessment implementation in Ethiopian secondary schools using classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires. The findings indicated that teachers frequently used oral questioning and written tests but rarely employed portfolios, projects, or peer assessment because these approaches required more time and resources than were available.

Tanzanian research demonstrates similar trends. Komba and Mwandanji (2015) reported that most secondary school teachers relied primarily on tests and examinations, with limited use of learner-centred assessment techniques. Kitta and Tilya (2019) further observed that teachers experienced challenges implementing competency-based assessment due to insufficient training and assessment literacy. Although these studies provide valuable insights into assessment implementation, they rarely focus specifically on History classrooms. Consequently, little empirical evidence exists regarding the particular assessment techniques History teachers employ when implementing Continuous Assessment in Tanzanian secondary

schools. This study addresses that gap by providing subject-specific evidence from Bagamoyo District.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored in Sadler's Theory of Formative Assessment (Sadler, 1989) and complemented by Policy Enactment Theory (Ball et al., 2012). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding both the pedagogical purpose of Continuous Assessment (CA) and the contextual factors that influence its implementation in History classrooms. Sadler's theory views assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning, emphasizing that effective assessment should help learners understand expected standards, compare their current performance with those standards, and use constructive feedback to close identified learning gaps. From this perspective, CA should move beyond grading to support continuous improvement through diverse assessment strategies such as document analysis, debates, projects, source criticism, and reflective activities that promote historical inquiry and critical thinking. In this study, Sadler's theory provides a lens for examining whether the assessment techniques used by History teachers generate meaningful feedback, encourage learner progression, and align with the competency-based intentions of the curriculum.

While Sadler's theory explains what effective Continuous Assessment should achieve, Policy Enactment Theory explains why teachers may not always implement assessment as intended. Ball et al. (2012) argue that educational policies are not implemented mechanically but are interpreted, negotiated, and adapted by teachers within their specific school contexts. Consequently, classroom assessment practices are influenced by factors such as school leadership, professional knowledge, institutional culture, workload, accountability demands, and resource availability. In the Tanzanian context, although national policies advocate diversified and formative assessment, History teachers often work under conditions of large class sizes, examination pressure, limited instructional resources, and inadequate professional development, leading them to adopt assessment techniques that are practical rather than fully aligned with policy expectations. The integration of these theories therefore enables this study to examine not only the effectiveness of the assessment techniques employed by History teachers but also how contextual realities shape their assessment decisions and contribute to the gap between Continuous Assessment policy intentions and classroom practice.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach because it sought to understand teachers' experiences, perceptions, and classroom practices regarding Continuous Assessment techniques. Qualitative research enables researchers to investigate complex educational phenomena within their natural settings while capturing participants' meanings and interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study employed an exploratory case study design. Yin (2018) argues that exploratory case studies are appropriate when researchers seek to investigate contemporary educational practices within real-life contexts where the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. The design was

considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore: the assessment techniques History teachers actually employ; why particular techniques are selected; how contextual factors influence teachers' assessment decisions. Rather than measuring frequency statistically, the study sought an in-depth understanding of classroom assessment practices.

3.1 Study Area and Participants

The study was conducted in Bagamoyo District, Coast Region, Tanzania. Bagamoyo was selected because: it contains public secondary schools implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum; History is a compulsory subject in Ordinary Level education; schools exhibit varying resource conditions and instructional contexts; the district provides a suitable setting for examining policy implementation within everyday classroom practice. Participants were purposively selected because of their direct involvement in Continuous Assessment implementation. The participants' composition is tabulated below:

Table 1. The participants

Participant Category	Number
History Teachers	10
Heads of Schools	5
School Quality Assurers	5
Total	**20**

History teachers provided classroom experiences, Heads of Schools explained instructional leadership practices, while School Quality Assurers offered system-level perspectives.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

This study employed three complementary data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document review. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore History teachers' assessment techniques, reasons for selecting particular approaches, challenges encountered, interpretation of Continuous Assessment (CA) policy requirements, and professional experiences. This method was appropriate because it allowed participants to provide detailed explanations of their experiences while enabling the researcher to explore emerging issues during the interview process (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Classroom observations were conducted to obtain direct evidence of CA implementation, including teacher questioning strategies, assessment activities, learner participation, feedback practices, and documentation of assessment evidence. Observation was important because it reduced reliance on self-reported practices and enabled the researcher to examine assessment processes within their natural classroom contexts (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, document review was conducted by examining lesson plans, schemes of work, CA registers, marked exercise books, assignments, History tests, moderation records, NECTA CA guidelines, and TIE History syllabi. Document analysis enabled comparison between teachers' reported practices, observed classroom activities, and formal assessment records, thereby strengthening methodological triangulation (Bowen, 2009).

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach, which provides a systematic yet flexible process for identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The analysis involved repeated familiarization with interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence; generation of initial codes; development and refinement of themes; definition and naming of themes; and interpretation of findings in relation to the research objectives and theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Data from interviews, observations, and documents were analysed concurrently to identify common patterns, contradictions, and contextual influences shaping CA implementation. The use of multiple data sources enhanced analytical depth and credibility by allowing the researcher to compare different forms of evidence and develop a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' assessment practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

3.4 Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was ensured using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation involving interviews, classroom observations, and document review, as well as member checking to verify the accuracy of participants' views and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was addressed through providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and assessment practices, enabling readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar educational settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Dependability was maintained through keeping an audit trail that documented research procedures, coding decisions, and analytical processes, while confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in participants' accounts and supporting evidence from observations and documents rather than researcher assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These strategies strengthened the rigor, transparency, and authenticity of the study findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Predominant Reliance on Written Tests

The findings revealed that written tests constituted the dominant Continuous Assessment technique used by History teachers in the participating secondary schools. Teachers reported using classroom tests, weekly quizzes, monthly tests, and terminal examinations as the main sources of CA marks. Although these assessment activities provided evidence of students' academic performance, they were largely designed around recalling historical facts rather than evaluating higher-order historical competencies such as interpretation, argumentation, and critical analysis. A History teacher from School D explained:

"Most of our CA marks come from written tests because they are easier to prepare, administer, and mark. With many students, other methods become difficult to manage." (School D History teacher, February 2026)

This statement demonstrates that teachers selected written tests primarily because of practicality and manageability rather than because they represented the most appropriate method for assessing historical learning. The teacher's explanation reflects a tension between policy expectations and classroom realities. While Continuous Assessment policy encourages varied assessment approaches, contextual constraints influenced teachers to prioritize techniques that could be efficiently implemented. Similarly, another History teacher from School K stated:

"History requires students to explain events, but because of time limitations we mostly give written questions similar to national examinations. Students also need practice because NECTA examinations are written." (School K History teacher, February 2026).

This response indicates that national examination demands strongly shaped classroom assessment decisions. Teachers perceived alignment with NECTA examination formats as necessary for students' success, consequently transforming CA from a formative mechanism into examination preparation. Classroom observations supported teachers' accounts. In most observed lessons, assessment activities involved: short-answer questions; recall questions; teacher-marked exercises; written class assignments. For example, during an observed History lesson on colonial administration, students were asked questions such as: "Mention three causes of colonialism." "State five effects of indirect rule."

Although these questions assessed factual knowledge, limited opportunities were provided for students to analyse historical evidence, compare perspectives, or construct arguments. The observation findings indicate that classroom assessment emphasized knowledge reproduction rather than historical thinking development. This pattern was further confirmed through document review. Students' exercise books and CA records contained mainly: written exercises; class tests; numerical scores; brief teacher comments. Few records demonstrated evidence of: reflective activities and analytical essays.

The dominance of written tests can be interpreted through Sadler's (1989) theory of formative assessment. According to Sadler, assessment contributes to learning when it helps learners understand expected standards, compare their current performance with those standards, and take action to improve. Although written tests provide information about student performance, the findings suggest that they were often used mainly for grading rather than learning improvement. Students received scores, but limited evidence showed structured opportunities for reflection, correction, or improvement. Therefore, the assessment process stopped at the first stage of measurement and did not fully achieve Sadler's three conditions of formative assessment.

The findings suggest that: students were assessed; performance was recorded; grades were generated; but the assessment information was not consistently transformed into learning improvement strategies. This reflects what Sadler describes as the difference between assessment of learning and assessment for learning. From the perspective of Policy Enactment Theory (Ball et al., 2012), teachers' reliance on written tests represents a contextual adaptation of policy rather than simple failure to implement reforms. Policy Enactment Theory argues that teachers interpret and reshape policies according to their working environments. In this study, teachers understood that CA required diversified

assessment, but they operated within conditions characterized by: large classes; limited time; examination pressure; heavy marking responsibilities. Consequently, written tests became a practical solution because they were compatible with institutional expectations and available resources. Thus, the findings demonstrate that CA policy was not rejected by teachers but selectively enacted according to contextual realities.

The findings correspond with international evidence showing that teachers frequently maintain traditional assessment practices despite reforms promoting formative assessment. Black and Wiliam (2018) found that many teachers struggle to move beyond written examinations because such approaches are embedded within established accountability cultures. Similarly, Shepard (2022) argues that high-stakes examination systems often reshape classroom assessment by encouraging teachers to prioritize measurable outcomes over deeper learning processes. In Canada, Cisse et al. (2021) found that teachers implementing competency-based curricula continued relying heavily on written tests because alternative assessments required more time and resources. The similarity between these findings and the Bagamoyo context suggests that the dominance of written tests is not unique to Tanzania but reflects broader challenges in assessment reform implementation.

Kanjee (2020), examining assessment reform in South African schools, found that teachers frequently used written assessments because they were easier to standardize and align with accountability demands. Likewise, Ayanwale et al. (2023) reported that Nigerian teachers' limited assessment literacy contributed to continued dependence on conventional testing. Within Tanzania, the findings support Komba and Mwandanji (2015), who observed that teachers implementing competency-based curricula continued using traditional examinations despite policy expectations promoting learner-centred assessment. Similarly, Kitta and Tilya (2019) reported that inadequate preparation and limited professional support constrained teachers' ability to implement diversified assessment approaches.

4.2 Frequent but Undocumented Oral Assessment

The findings revealed that oral assessment was frequently used by History teachers during classroom instruction but was rarely documented as part of formal Continuous Assessment records. Teachers reported using oral questioning as an everyday strategy to monitor student understanding. A History teacher from School H explained:

"During lessons I ask many questions to check whether students understand. But normally I do not record every response because it takes too much time." (School H History teacher, February 2026)

This finding indicates that oral assessment played an important instructional role but remained informal and invisible within official CA documentation. Another teacher from School M stated:

"Discussion and questioning help me know whether students follow the lesson, but the marks we submit are mainly from written assessments." (School M History teacher, February 2026)

The statement demonstrates a distinction between assessment used for classroom interaction and assessment used for official reporting. Classroom observations confirmed that questioning was one of the most common assessment techniques used by History teachers. Teachers frequently asked questions during lessons to: introduce new topics; review previous

lessons; check comprehension; encourage participation. However, observations showed that: students' responses were rarely recorded; feedback was usually verbal; questioning did not contribute directly to CA scores. Thus, oral assessment functioned mainly as a teaching strategy rather than a formal assessment technique.

Review of CA records revealed minimal evidence of documented oral assessment. This suggests a gap between classroom assessment reality and official assessment records. Theoretical Interpretation through Sadler's Theory. Sadler's theory emphasizes feedback as central to formative assessment. Oral questioning has significant formative potential because it allows teachers to immediately identify misconceptions and provide corrective guidance. However, the findings suggest that because oral assessment was undocumented and rarely followed by structured feedback, its contribution to continuous learning was limited. Students benefited from immediate classroom interaction, but these learning opportunities were not systematically captured or used to monitor progress over time.

The findings are consistent with Huisman (2018), who found that teachers frequently use questioning as an informal formative strategy but struggle to integrate it into systematic assessment frameworks. Similarly, Carless and Winstone (2020) emphasize that effective formative assessment requires documentation and feedback processes that enable learners to track improvement. In Tanzania, Kitta and Tilya (2019) reported that teachers often engage in informal assessment practices but lack mechanisms for systematic recording and utilization of assessment evidence.

4.3 Limited Use of Diversified Assessment Techniques

The findings revealed that alternative assessment techniques were rarely used in History classrooms. Although teachers acknowledged the importance of strategies such as debates, projects, portfolios, and document analysis, these approaches were seldom implemented. A teacher from School Z explained:

"We know debates and projects are useful in History, but with many students it becomes difficult to organize, supervise, and assess them fairly." (School Z History teacher, February 2026)

This indicates that teachers recognized the pedagogical value of diversified assessment but faced practical limitations. Another teacher from School K stated:

"Projects require time and resources. Sometimes students do not have materials, and teachers have many classes to manage." (School K History teacher, February 2026).

The findings suggest that limited use of diversified assessment was influenced more by structural constraints than by teacher resistance. Classroom observations showed limited evidence of: debates; group presentations; historical inquiry activities; document analysis tasks. Similarly, reviewed documents contained few examples of: portfolios; project assessments; analytical assignments. Most assessment records reflected conventional written tasks. According to Sadler's theory, diversified assessment is essential because learners demonstrate understanding in different ways. History competencies cannot be fully captured through written recall questions alone. The limited use of alternative strategies therefore reduces opportunities for learners to demonstrate: critical thinking; interpretation; argumentation; evidence evaluation. From Policy Enactment Theory, teachers' limited

adoption of diversified strategies reflects adaptation to contextual conditions. The policy expectation exists, but enactment is shaped by available resources, class size, and institutional support.

Carretero et al. (2020) argue that History learning requires authentic assessment approaches because historical understanding involves reasoning with evidence rather than memorizing information. Similarly, DeLuca et al. (2019) emphasize that teachers require strong assessment literacy to design and implement alternative assessment methods. Ayanwale et al. (2023) found that teachers rarely use performance-based assessments because of limited training and resource constraints. Komba and Mwandanji (2015) and Kitta and Tilya (2019) similarly reported limited implementation of learner-centred assessment strategies within competency-based curricula.

4.4 Examination-Oriented Continuous Assessment Practices

The findings further revealed that Continuous Assessment (CA) practices among History teachers in Bagamoyo District secondary schools were strongly influenced by the demands of national examinations, particularly those administered by the National Examinations Council of Tanzania (NECTA). Although CA policy emphasizes assessment as a continuous process for monitoring learning progress, providing feedback, and supporting competency development, classroom practices frequently reflected an examination-preparation orientation. Teachers commonly designed CA tasks to resemble national examination formats, arguing that such alignment was necessary to prepare students for future academic progression. A History teacher from School D explained:

"We design most of our class tests in the same format as NECTA examinations because students must become familiar with the examination style. If we give them different tasks, they may face difficulties later." (School D History teacher, February 2026)

This statement demonstrates how external examination requirements shaped teachers' assessment decisions. Although the teacher acknowledged the importance of assessment diversity, examination expectations became the dominant reference point for determining appropriate CA practices. Similarly, a history teacher from School K stated:

"Continuous assessment is supposed to help students improve, but in reality, we mainly use it to prepare them for the final examination because that is what determines their future." (School K History teacher, February 2026)

The quotation reflects a conscious transformation of CA from a formative learning mechanism into a preparatory tool for high-stakes examinations. Teachers were aware of the intended purpose of CA but adapted it to institutional expectations and accountability pressures. Classroom observations supported interview findings. Most observed assessment activities were structured around examination-type questions requiring students to: define historical concepts; list causes and effects of historical events; describe processes and events; reproduce information from textbooks. For example, during one observed lesson on colonial administration, students were asked: "Explain three reasons for the introduction of indirect rule." And "Mention five effects of colonial rule in Tanzania." Although such questions are relevant for assessing historical knowledge, they provided limited opportunities for students

to demonstrate: historical argumentation; interpretation of evidence; comparison of historical perspectives and critical evaluation of sources.

This suggests that examination-oriented assessment narrowed the scope of History learning by prioritizing factual recall over analytical historical thinking. Therefore, although CA activities were conducted regularly, their structure and purpose reflected examination preparation rather than continuous learning improvement. The findings can be understood through Ball, Maguire, and Braun's (2012) Policy Enactment Theory, which argues that educational policies are not simply implemented as written but are interpreted and reconstructed by practitioners within particular contexts. In this study, teachers did not reject CA policy intentions. Instead, they negotiated between policy expectations and examination realities. The national examination system acted as a powerful contextual influence that shaped how CA was understood and practiced. Thus, teachers enacted CA through an examination-oriented interpretation because: student success was measured through national examinations; schools were judged by examination performance; parents and communities valued examination results; teachers perceived examination preparation as their professional responsibility. Therefore, the dominance of examination-oriented CA reflects adaptive policy enactment, where teachers modify policy intentions to fit institutional accountability demands.

The relationship between examination systems and classroom assessment practices has been widely documented in research. Shepard (2022) argues that high-stakes accountability systems often distort formative assessment reforms because teachers prioritize practices that improve examination outcomes rather than deeper learning. Similarly, the OECD (2023) reported that in many education systems, teachers struggle to balance formative assessment goals with examination accountability pressures. In the United Kingdom and other OECD countries, Black and Wiliam (2018) observed that assessment reforms often experience tension when teachers operate within systems where standardized examinations determine educational success.

Similarly, In South Africa, Kanjee (2020) found that despite policy emphasis on continuous and formative assessment, teachers frequently prioritized examination-related tasks due to accountability expectations. In Nigeria, Ayanwale et al. (2023) reported that continuous assessment was often reduced to a mechanism for generating examination marks rather than supporting learner development. Within Tanzania, the findings support Komba and Mwandanji (2015), who noted that competency-based curriculum reforms were constrained by examination-oriented teaching cultures. Similarly, Kitta and Tilya (2019) found that Tanzanian teachers often adapted assessment practices to examination demands despite policy intentions promoting learner-centred approaches.

4.5 Inconsistent Formative Feedback Practices

The final theme emerging from the data was the limited and inconsistent use of formative feedback in Continuous Assessment practices. Although teachers regularly assessed students through tests and assignments, feedback was commonly restricted to scores, ticks, crosses, or brief comments. Opportunities for detailed explanation, correction, and improvement were limited. A History teacher from School H explained:

"After marking, I normally write the score and sometimes a short comment. With many scripts, giving detailed feedback to every student becomes difficult." (School H History teacher, February 2026).

This statement highlights how workload pressures affected teachers' ability to provide meaningful feedback. While teachers recognized the importance of feedback, contextual realities limited their capacity to implement it effectively. Another teacher from School K stated:

"We return tests quickly, but we do not always sit with students to explain their mistakes. Time forces us to continue with the next topic." (School K History teacher, February 2026)

The statement indicates that assessment feedback was often viewed as completion of marking rather than as an ongoing learning process. Classroom observations showed that feedback practices were generally limited to: announcing scores; returning marked scripts; correcting answers collectively. Few lessons demonstrated: individual feedback discussions; student reflection activities; revision based on feedback; opportunities for students to improve responses. For example, after a class test, a teacher reviewed correct answers on the board but did not discuss common misconceptions or allow students to revise incorrect responses. This limited feedback cycle weakened the formative value of CA.

Assessment records showed that teachers commonly provided: marks; ticks; crosses; short phrases such as "good," "improve," or "rewrite." However, there was limited evidence of detailed comments explaining weaknesses; recommendations for improvement; student reflection records. Therefore, feedback existed but lacked the depth and continuity required for formative assessment. The findings strongly relate to Sadler's (1989) argument that feedback is the central mechanism connecting assessment and learning improvement. According to Sadler, students must: understand the expected standard; compare their performance with that standard; and take action to reduce the gap. However, when feedback is limited to scores, students may know their results but not understand why they performed poorly; what aspects require improvement; how to improve future performance. Therefore, the observed feedback practices represent incomplete realization of formative assessment principles. Assessment occurred, but the feedback loop necessary for learning improvement remained weak.

The findings align with Brookhart (2021), who emphasized that effective feedback must be specific, timely, and focused on improvement rather than merely reporting performance. Similarly, Hattie and Zierer (2022) argue that feedback has a strong influence on learning only when students understand how to use it to improve their performance. Research shows that many teachers struggle to move from evaluative feedback toward developmental feedback. Carless and Winstone (2020) reported that teachers frequently provide grades but insufficient guidance for improvement. Kanjee (2020) found that assessment practices in South African schools often emphasize marking and reporting rather than feedback for learning. In Ethiopia, Moges (2018) observed that teachers' limited assessment literacy reduced their ability to use feedback effectively. Kitta and Tilya (2019) found that assessment practices frequently emphasized scores and examinations, limiting the formative function of assessment.

Generally, this study examined the Continuous Assessment (CA) techniques used by History teachers in secondary schools in Bagamoyo District, Tanzania. The findings demonstrate that although teachers implement various assessment activities, the actual practice of CA remains characterized by limited diversification, strong examination orientation, weak documentation of formative processes, and insufficient use of feedback for learning improvement. The findings reveal a significant gap between the intended purpose of CA policy and its classroom enactment. While Tanzanian educational reforms emphasize competency-based learning and assessment for learning, classroom practices remain largely influenced by traditional examination cultures and contextual constraints. This section discusses these findings through the integrated lens of Sadler's Formative Assessment Theory (1989) and Policy Enactment Theory (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that Continuous Assessment implementation among History teachers in Bagamoyo District secondary schools reflects partial enactment of assessment reform intentions. First, although teachers regularly conduct CA activities, the dominant reliance on written tests indicates that assessment practices remain strongly influenced by examination traditions. The formative purpose of CA is therefore weakened because assessment information is not consistently used to support learning improvement. Second, oral assessment is widely practiced as an instructional strategy but remains largely undocumented within formal CA systems. This limits its contribution to cumulative assessment records and reduces opportunities for systematic feedback. Third, alternative assessment approaches essential for History learning, including debates, projects, portfolios, and source-based activities, are rarely implemented due to contextual challenges such as large classes, limited time, and insufficient resources. Fourth, the study concludes that CA implementation is not simply a matter of policy compliance but a negotiated process shaped by teachers' interpretations, leadership practices, institutional conditions, and accountability pressures. The gap between policy intentions and classroom realities therefore reflects contextual adaptation rather than deliberate resistance. Effective CA implementation requires strengthening both teachers' professional capacity and the conditions under which assessment occurs.

5.2 Recommendations

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, together with curriculum and assessment authorities, should reconsider CA implementation strategies by focusing on usability and contextual relevance.

Tanzania Institute of Education should ensure that, Policy documents should be translated into practical teacher-oriented guides containing: examples of History assessment tasks; templates for portfolios; models for formative feedback; strategies for assessing large classes. Technical policy language alone is insufficient to transform classroom practice.

NECTA should ensure that, Assessment reforms should ensure greater consistency between formative assessment principles and national examination expectations. If national examinations continue emphasizing recall-based knowledge, teachers will continue adapting CA toward examination preparation. Therefore, examination frameworks should incorporate competency-based assessment principles.

The Ministry of Education Science and Technology should strengthen Continuous professional development should focus on: designing authentic assessment tasks; assessing historical thinking; providing effective feedback; moderating assessment; using assessment evidence for instructional improvement. Training should be continuous rather than dependent on occasional workshops.

Heads of Schools should strengthen instructional leadership by establishing professional learning communities focused on assessment. Schools should encourage teachers to: collaboratively design assessment tasks; moderate student work; analyse assessment results; share successful assessment practices. Leadership support is essential because, according to Policy Enactment Theory, school leaders mediate how policies become classroom practices.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should consider:

- Conducting quantitative studies examining relationships between assessment techniques and student achievement in History;
- Exploring students' experiences and perceptions of CA effectiveness; and examining the impact of professional development interventions on teachers' assessment practices.

This study's findings suggests the need for the government through its ministry to facilitate the following:

- Strengthen teachers' assessment literacy.
- Expand professional development opportunities.
- Enhance instructional leadership.
- Align national assessment systems with competency-based principles.

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