



Harnessing the New Modes of Learning: Teachers' Perceptions and Classroom Assessment Practices for Students' Over-all Development at Under Graduate Level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract

Currently, for improving students' learning, the focus is made solely on teaching strategies whereas assessment is practiced just for auditing and overlooks the improvement in students' learning. To this effect, a qualitative approach is executed to showcase teachers' perceptions regarding the use of classroom assessment practices for students' overall development. The sample of the study comprises 20 teachers, randomly selected, from five public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Relevant data were collected through semi-structured interview schedules while analyzed by adopting thematic approach. Cultural sensitivity was ensured during data collection process. The results revealed that teachers strongly asserted the use of classroom assessment practices for students' overall development. Teachers' emphasized that there is a need to equip the students with life-essential skills as the more students participate in classroom assessment practices, the more they will be able to develop skills and perform effectively in a real-life situation

Key Words: New modes of Learning, Classroom Assessment Practices, Students' Over-all Development, Teachers Perceptions, KP Universities, Pakistan

Introduction

Classroom assessment has gained much of the concern in the last decades, from educators for improving students learning (Airasian, 1994; and Stiggins, 1997).

The concern to the use of assessment for the improvement of learning is highlighted by Wiliam, (2011) that it is not what we teach through which students learn, in fact the truth lies that assessment is possibly the essential process in effective learning. Drummond (2008) asserted that it is an assessment that mirrors our consideration of learning, as well as what is appreciated.

According to Smith and Gorard (2004), the assessment has a notable consequence on the students' learning modes and it is the selection of assessment approaches made by the classroom teachers monitoring the progression of students learning.

Plake (2015) stated that the primary focus of instruction is always taken to the curriculum, while classroom assessments are usually in the learning process considered as a secondary element. However, current psychometric studies have resulted in a reliable association between students learning gains and appropriate classroom assessment practices.

For teachers, it is necessary to mode a learning environment that is conducive to achieving the desired learning objectives. The way to attaining this goal is that all elements in the education system are aligned with each other to enable the accomplishment of the proposed learning objectives. Thus alignment is vital to effective assessment. The manner classroom assessment is compatible with the objectives, goals and the teaching/learning strategies embraced influence students' learning (Farrell, 2008).

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Hence, there is a need to focus on the utilization of the assessment practices for its enormous benefits with respect to students' overall development along with improving their attitude towards learning. In this regard the current study was designed to outline attitude to assessment that yokes this latent for motivating and enhancing learning and illuminates how the classroom assessment practices can become a circumstance in which learning is vigorously encouraged centering students over-all development. The study emphasizes the purpose of centering valuable knowledge of teachers of classroom practices for over-all development of students.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To highlight the perceptions of teachers about the use of classroom assessment for enhancing students' learning.
- ii. To analyze teachers' opinion in what ways the use of classroom assessment practices help the overall development of students.

Research Questions

The research study was directed by the following questions:

- i. What are the views of teachers regarding the use of classroom assessment practices in enhancing students learning?
- ii. How do teachers perceive that the use of classroom assessment practices is useful in the overall development of students?

Literature Review

To use classroom assessment for the advancement of student learning is not a new idea. Decades back, while mentioning the application of mastery learning, Bloom validated how to progress learning effectively (Bloom, 1971).

OECD, (2005) reported that in classrooms encompassing formative assessment, interactive assessments are made by teachers frequently. This empowers teachers to regulate their teaching to meet individual student needs, and support all students to grasp high standards. Teachers keep students' actively involved in their learning process by applying regular classroom assessment practices which facilitate them in their learning, enable them to learn better and to develop their skills.

Frey & Schmitt (2007), stated that there are a variety of assessment practices that are mostly teachers' made and practiced classroom assessment are those which teacher value in their own classroom setting. The classroom assessment practices include all those procedures which teachers selected keeping in view the students while, it differentiates from the traditional assessment which focuses on the cognitive area and comprises assessment tools that generally test accomplishments in academic abilities, ignoring the over-all life learning skills and abilities.

These sorts of assessments place more stress on higher-order learning skills, collaborative skills thinking skills, problem-solving skills and offer multi-ways opportunities for developing these skills (Cerny, 2000). While involving in various assessment practices like classroom presentations to public indicates to students that their effort is valued and strengthens the impact of their works and efforts in a real-world context (Barron & Hammond, 2008).

Llewellyn (2003) stated that traditional approaches generally focus on the assessment of the knowledge, while alternative assessment practices stress on to enhance and reveal the achievement of students learning. In this setting, alternative assessment practices have a corresponding element for students with diverse learning modes along with the providence of substitutes for the assessment of these students. Therefore, instructors must incorporate alternate assessment methods that empower an assessment of attitudes and skills along with the knowledge and students' comprehension, besides applying traditional assessment approaches.

Involving students regularly in various assessment practices leads to self-monitoring, goal setting, and progress in their learning and skills. Parents are involved and informed in generating a community of writers (Romeo, 2008). It helps in developing not only their written expressions and higher-order learning abilities but

also regulates students learning growth by keeping them aware of their attainment level and mastery of skills. (Piazza, 2003; Tierney et al., 2003 and Johnston & Costello, 2005).

To accomplish competency level in learning, there must be provided to students such opportunities that motivate them and to assign them different assignments that help them to improve their ability as readers and writers. Classroom assignments then deliver the training and feedback essential to gain competence. (AACTE, 2008).

Shamatove, (1998), Alvi, (2005), and Rodrigus, (2006) specified that in the framework of developing countries, such as Pakistan, very diminutive literature is presented with respect to classroom assessment for learning. Yet, a study was conducted in Pakistan on performance assessment which designates that the application of various assessment practices facilitated students' reasoning and interrogative abilities and improved their attention in learning (OnYongo, 1999).

To create real advancement, argued that well-made and properly implemented formative assessment should be able to propose how teaching strategies should be improved, along with to know about student's attainment level and progress potentiality focusing on their life skills development (Bennett, 2011; Tan, 2013).

Keeping in view the above discussion from various authors there is a need to utilize the various effectiveness of assessment practices for not only the auditing of students' learning but also for enhancing their learning.

Methodologies and Procedures

The current study designed to investigate the views of teachers about the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students' learning and over-all development at the undergraduate level in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Population

The population of this research study included all of the teachers teaching at undergraduate level program in 19 Public sector universities of KP, Pakistan.

Sample Size and Its Distribution

The sample of this research study contained 20 teachers, selected the various disciplines of randomly selected five public sector universities in KP including male and female teachers with a random number.

Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected through a semi-structured interview with profound probes by the researchers. Teachers were interrogated about the effectiveness of classroom assessment practices for the progression of students' learning and over-all development.

Results and Discussion

Qualitative results are mentioned to illustrate teachers' opinions on the significant use of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students' learning and over-all development. In this respect, the following research questions are presented with results and discussion.

Use of Classroom Assessment for Enhancing Students' Learning

The explanation provided by the respondent teachers in reply to the research question, views of teachers concerning the use of assessment practices for enhancing students learning. Views specified by teachers highlight, in what way they observe the use of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning grounded on their practices in classroom. Numerous opinions were given by the teachers about the use of classroom assessment practices for learning.

They illustrated their perspectives by reflecting numerous effects and aspects of classroom assessment practices for enhancing learning.

In interrogating about their insights of the use of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning that practiced by the teachers in their classrooms, almost all of the participant teachers (i.e. 20 teachers) expressed that classroom assessment practices perform a noteworthy role in augmenting students learning.

A critical consideration of the data underlined a sum of alignments that were entrenched in the teachers' insights when they expressed deeply regarding the use of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning. While most of the respondents' comprehensions reverberated with each other, some are here affluence enlightening that explicates their insights about the use of classroom assessment for enhancing students learning.

We need to eradicate the gaps and try our best to make learning easy for our students. So, for the effectiveness of classroom assessment practices is concerned, we found it really helpful in the progression of students learning. The point is that by this probe we at one hand provide different opportunities to students to advance their learning along with developing their skills as well as we assert coercion or in other words, we offer an inducement in the form of weight to their participation. So it is convenient for us to grip students' concentration in classroom learning activities.

If we talk about the assessment practices and how such practices do increase the participation of the students, so let's consider the scenario when students are not attending the classes but when they know that there is an assessment and that assessment will be included as a part of their final examination and if it is graded then the participation is obviously hundred percent.

When various assessment practices are used on a daily basis in classroom students involved in their learning increased and they also get to know of their weaknesses and do their best to cover the weaknesses which need modification. It also compels students to work interactively with their on the learning research approaches concerning not only to learning but also helpful in grooming of students personality.

Absolutely, these practices are very effective as by participating in group activities students develop team dynamics and valuable skills, which make them well prepared to face the challenges conveniently in their real-life.

It is not about assigning the grades but the primacy is learning. For example, we referred the presentations and debates and paired discussions to improve students' confidence and communication skills. Similarly, when I have intention to advance their problem-solving abilities, analytical skills then I assign them projects and practical tasks etc. and such assessment helps me out not only judging their progress but also very effective in students' overall development. That's why we strongly support the use of classroom assessment continuously for the skills development of the students.

It is apparent from the above excerpts that teachers who do practice various assessment practices have the view that this approach is very productive in enhancing students learning. The participants expressed that not only did they found this method effective in improving students learning but also students get a variety of opportunities in the areas where they need to develop their different skills along with improving their knowledge, which they articulated in the following discussion.

Classroom Assessment for Improving Students Over-all Development

In line with their sights for the use of classroom assessment for enhancing the learning of students' explanations, participant teachers were obvious in conveying themselves about the effective use of assessment practices for over-all development, which they came to know during their experience in their teaching. Here we give a few excerpts that mention the effective uses of classroom assessment are as follows:

By applying various assessment practices, students are provided with various opportunities for developing and enhancing their numerous abilities. Some of them effective in developing students' reflective abilities and writing skills for example written assignments and review etc. while some are effective in developing problem-solving abilities among students like practical work and projects etc.

We found the use of classroom assessment practices very helpful in achieving students' interest in their learning, particularly of those students who were not serious for their learning and those, who were having anxiety in attending regular classes and used to be absent mostly from classes. Once we started to shoulder on students the responsibility of their learning by applying different assessment practices, it turned out to a different classroom environment where students were eager to participate in such activities and also developed an

atmosphere of competition to prove their abilities. Though most of the students were reluctant and were having fears to participate in activities, when we apply different assessment activities continuously and also made it clear to students that their participation will be awarded and graded through different means so, then even the hesitant students started to take participation. And as a teacher we were so pleased when we saw those passive learners as active participants in their learning process. That's why we tried to use different assessment practices keeping in view the objectives and level of interest of the students.

We think it is a very constructive approach because, when addition to the judgment we keep engage students in such activities they pass through self-assessment which helps them in improving their learning and also monitor their own learning.

When the student participation is appreciated the other student definitely asks him/ herself why he or she can't do that. So he or she gets the motivation in this way and secondly when any activity is going to be graded to their total marks so definitely they have to participate otherwise will have to lose the marks and that's why we are now applying assessment activities as classroom learning strategies because, when we use any learning activity but don't grad that activity to students' final grading then students don't take it seriously. While when we mention that to students any given assignment or activity is going to be graded then they take it serious and try to complete the task in a given period of time we get a feedback about our strategies and also get to know of students' position in their learning process that in what areas they are doing well and in where they need to focus on for more development. For example, in my class once in a third semester I found one student who was very good in his written expression, we can say with distinctive quality in producing his written assignments and reflecting on any activity, event etc. but whenever there comes a time to present orally anything he was always reluctant and we came to know about when we asked for presentation even he himself came know about this when he found himself hesitant to present his point of view orally in front of class. So when we noticed that then we encouraged him and supported him and assigned oral presentation continuously in order to lessen his anxiety and after a few efforts he was able to do very well. The objective of quoting this particular example is just we want to say that by applying different assessment practices not only teachers but students and even they did not come to know about the strength and weaknesses of students and besides that when students are given regular practice so it helps them to overcome on their weaknesses and develop their weak areas.

The extracts above dictate how operative are the classroom assessment practices to inculcate various skills among students when to keep involve regularly in various assessment practices. Moreover, the use of classroom assessment practices are very effective in positive behavioural changes among students, students embrace self-learning approaches which leads to prolific learning and augmentation of their abilities.

Their voices also highlighted the significance of the assessment practices in terms of increasing students' engagement in their learning and their participation in classroom activities. Besides that it is also brought to the surface by the participants that the use of classroom assessment practices is very helpful in developing students' interest in their learning as in this approach students is provided with variety of opportunities for learning, not just one method or strategy which minimized the scope for learning. The participants asserted that by applying various assessment practices students get the interesting ways for their grooming.

So it is evident from the above discussion that the assessment practices paramount effects and served the best for varied determinations and inclusively supported to not only facilitate students learning but cantering their over-all development.

Discussion

The results of the study indicated that classroom assessment practices produce an environment conducive for learning and play a significant role in the students' overall development.

The outcomes of the study are aligned with the study of (Boud, 2013) that assessment performs a number of roles. The basic purpose of assessment is to increase learning.

In accordance with the study of Brame (2013) which concluded that the complex cognitive tasks connected with class activities, supplemented by the continuing peer/instructor collaboration result in the deep learning through association with the processing meta-cognition. Respondent teachers mentioned that the students can keep engaged in different activities i.e. discussion, data analysis, debates, and activities involve synthesis of data.

The purpose is that students are to be involved in such activities within classroom that they can get more opportunities for developing their life learning abilities.

Similar to the study of Struyven, Dochy, and Janssens (2008) which inspected the connection between students' attitudes and assessment towards learning which resulted in responses by the respondent teachers that assessment has a considerable impact the progression of students learning.

The belief of teachers that classroom assessment practices enhance student leaning is also steady with the outcomes of social-cognitive studies on achievement and motivation. Provision for creating classroom assessment the source for engendering theory incorporating group experiences and individual psychology into an integrated theory about the stimulus of student struggle and attainment also originates from what is recognized about the psychology of learning (Farrell & Ives, 2015).

Likewise, the results of this study validate other researches (Hattie, 2008). Another work, by (Shavelson, 2007) recommends that data from massive shared research on establishing assessment for learning in the inquiry-based curriculum of science resulted in improved student learning attainments and over-all development.

Conclusion

The exploration of data elucidates that teachers professed the use of classroom assessment is highly valuable and proved to be effective in instilling among students life skills along with enhancing their learning. The data resulted that the classroom assessment practices should be the regular part of daily classroom hours in order to train students in a way that they accomplish readily their goals in a real-life setting. By using classroom assessment practices, teachers can inculcate positive learning behaviors in students particularly in developing self-learning and self-assessment approaches among them. The information collected in the result of this research study complements the current substance of knowledge exemplifying the impression that teachers' insight of classroom assessment aspects used by classroom teachers can have an effect on students' overall development. The conclusion can be drawn that the use of various assessment practices is very effective in enhancing students learning and over-all development, particularly evolving students higher-order learning abilities.

Implications

- i. The outcomes of the study fill the gap of lack of experiential inquiry in the area of the assessment for its effectiveness in enhancing learning.
- ii. The findings of the study also plug the gap of lack of empirical inquiry in the area of utilization of classroom assessment as the best tool for students' overall development.
- iii. Since most of the current literature comes from the West, it will be stimulating to determine out if and how the ideas ferment in a diverse culture.
- iv. This valuation will be a source of direction for the policymakers and curriculum developers while illustrating their strategies in the future.

Recommendations

- i. Considering the affectionate subtleties of the assessment practices from teachers' point of view is vigorous to the operational use of assessment practices to enhance students learning and to be used as regular tools for their overall development in the teaching-learning circumstances.
- ii. Assessment may be revived a learning strategy for its various effects and may be incorporated as course content in the teacher training programs.
- iii. Grounded in the findings of this research study, the study proposes that an organized provision is needed to adopt the use of classroom assessment practices for learning among the other level of education system.

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