Assessment for Learning

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Contents

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Basic Concepts of Assessment

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

• understand what assessment refers to, and differentiate among various assessment-related terms;

• describe the context within which many of the assessment traditions evolved, and critically examine the impact of those traditional practices on learning;

• compare and contrast three views of learning (behaviourism, constructivism, and cognitive science), and describe how each leads to a different vision of assessment;

• explain how the quality of assessments (validity and reliability) can be judged, and describe steps teachers can take to enhance the quality of their assessments;

• describe and distinguish among the various roles and functions assessments take;

• recognize the key principles underlying assessment, and explain their significance to bring about effective assessment practice;

• explain the interconnected nature of teaching, learning and assessment, and the importance of assessment to support teaching and learning.

Assessment has to be seen as an interconnected part of teaching and learning. The conception of assessment is one that focuses on describing student learning, identifying where each student is in his or her personal learning progression, diagnosing any difficulties students may be having in their learning, and providing direction to the teacher and the student in the steps to be taken to enhance learning. This focus on the use of assessment to support learning, rather than to document achievement, has come to be referred to as "assessment for learning". To bring the concept of assessment for learning to fruition in the classroom, assessment activities have to be designed and conducted with the purpose of learning in mind. If teachers are to embrace this new philosophy of assessment, they need to understand how assessment for learning works.

Conceptualizing Assessment

Assessment is about gathering information. The information gathered is based on the purpose of the assessment. An assessment can be as simple as an exercise in which a teacher gathers information from students, interprets it, and makes judgements about their performance. When assessment is for learning, it takes on a larger meaning. Assessment for learning involves social interaction between teacher and student (and among students), who have a shared vision of learning. In this vein, assessment is a deliberate and planned collection of the full range of information from the students that helps them understand their knowledge, skills, and abilities, including strengths and weaknesses, values, and attitudes. Most importantly, assessment is a natural part of the teaching and learning process and is undertaken to support learning. In the assessment for learning classroom, teachers use a full range of assessment activities and strategies, to gain a comprehensive picture of how their students learn. The teachers analyze and interpret the information and use it for monitoring and adjusting instruction, as well as giving feedback to students. Students are active information providers. Not only do they engage in the teaching and learning activities, but they also use assessment information to set goals, make learning decisions related to their own improvement, and develop an understanding of what quality work looks like. They assess their own learning as well as the learning of their peers, communicate their status and progress towards established learning goals, and seek feedback from their peers and teachers about their learning. Assessment, as the term is used here, is defined as:

> Conscious and systematic activities used by teachers and students for gathering information, analysing and interpreting it, drawing inferences, making wise decisions, and taking appropriate actions in the service of improving teaching and learning.

There are diverse views on the interpretation of assessment terminology in the literature, and this may cause confusion. Very often, terms such as "measurement", "assessment", "evaluation", and "test" have been used interchangeably. The confusion could result from the fact that they are interrelated. A *test* often results in numbers (*measurement*), although not always. *Assessment* can include a variety of strategies, including *tests*, as sources of information about student learning. *Evaluation* is the value interpretation and judgement of outcomes of the data collection process in a decision-making context. It is based on information that may be the result of *assessment*, including *tests*. An example can be used to elaborate the close relationship among these terms. A teacher needs to know if her students can hear well in class. So, she has their hearing *tested*, using a procedure that *measures* their hearing acuity. Based on the results of the *test*, she *assesses* their need for some accommodation (a hearing aid in severe cases, or rearranging the seating in class for less severe cases). Finally, she *evaluates* the

effectiveness of her rearrangement, by *assessing* the degree to which students now are able to hear and understand instruction, and judging whether the accommodations have been effective. Table 1.1 further clarifies the meaning of these common assessment-related terms.

Table 1.1 Definitions of common assessment-related terms

Terminology	Meaning
Assessment	**Purposeful gathering of information, usually from multiple sources, to describe specific characteristics of people, objects, etc.** (in addition to the definition given previously)
Measurement	**Any procedure that allows us to attach numbers to characteristics of people, objects, etc. according to a set rule.** Measurement is the quantitative description of particular characteristics of a class of people, objects, systems, or events. These tend to conjure up visions of traditional, standardized achievement tests, for example, the comparative study of the performance in numeracy and literacy of 15-year-old students across countries as in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).
Test	**Any systematic procedure for sampling behaviour, skills, knowledge, etc.** A widespread understanding of a test is that it is a formal and systematic, usually paper-and-pencil procedure, in which a sample of an examinee's performance is scored and subsequently judged using a standardized process. However, it does not have to be formal, standardized, or even paper and pencil. For example, a vision test samples a person's visual acuity, and a driving test samples driving skills, neither of which is paper and pencil, standardized, or necessarily formal.
Evaluation	**Making a judgement of the value or worth or meaning of an activity, event, or body of information.** Evaluation is the value interpretation and judgement of outcomes of the data-collection process in a decision-making context; for example, deciding on whether the style for instructions for a dash jump is correct or whether the curriculum design is appropriate for a school.

Understanding the Changing Views of Assessment

Assessment, in the broadest sense of the term, has a long history in both the Eastern and Western worlds. Over the centuries, assessment has been mainly used for selection purposes. For example, since 1027–771 BC (the Western Zhou dynasty in China), a regular performance examination system for selecting government officials has been used by different dynasties with only a few minor interruptions. Many areas of the Eastern world share this purpose of assessment, including Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Korea. In the Western world, assessment can trace its roots to the eighteenth century, when the patronage or nomination system for hiring employees was dominant. In the nineteenth century, an industrial capitalist economy flourished. This type of economy created an increasing need for trained workers, which could not

be satisfied by the traditional methods of the nomination system alone (Sutherland, 1991). It was believed that a standardized examination system would make a good alternative, because it allowed talented people to come through from different social and cultural backgrounds. Today, there are a multitude of purposes for tests and assessments, including streaming to different classes, certification and awarding of diplomas, consideration for promotion, allocation of funds to schools and school districts, etc. Because of its selective purpose, this kind of assessment system has a great impact on people's academic and upward career movements and is therefore labelled a high-stakes assessment system.

The introduction of formal assessment into the education landscape was originally to ensure fairness. Many, however, including Lambert and Lines (2000) and Stobart and Gipps (1997), question the trustworthiness of examinations. In the examination process, all kinds of errors can happen including marking and arithmetic mistakes as well as misinterpretations in candidates' performances. More importantly, examinations tend to focus almost exclusively on a narrow range of the cognitive skills of students, leaving many other important areas of achievement, attitudes, and other non-cognitive attributes unaccounted for.

One of the most serious perceived problems of high-stakes examinations is the possible negative "backwash" effects on teaching and learning. Students are often "taught to the test". This practice is especially troubling when tests focus on only a narrow range of important learning outcomes. In these cases, the emphasis given during instruction to those subjects and topics not addressed on the examinations will be diminished.

Another related problem is that if the examination focuses on retention of knowledge rather than on demonstration of reasoning and thinking skills, then instructional practices in the classroom may mirror this focus. Because the stakes for success are high, teaching tends to focus solely on assisting students to pass the exams and on helping schools to get a good reputation. This kind of teaching often entails drills and rote memorization of factual knowledge rather than focusing on helping learners master important skills and develop deep understanding. The classroom assessments in such circumstances are typically focused on measuring the retention of the same factual information as is emphasized on the standardized exams, and the drills and in-class tests are often repetitive and excessive.

The exacting standards associated with the stakes involved in these exams compel students to strive for high scores by doing exercises repeatedly and memorizing the model answers. Rote learning is difficult to retain in the long term. Learning and teaching to the tests is not only unhelpful to learning but also can place great pressure on the students, as well as on the teachers. They depress students' initiative and stifle creativity.

The Influence of Behavioural Views of Learning on Assessment

Behaviourism is a broad set of theories and practices that emphasize concepts such as reinforcement, stimulus-response association, and operant learning. The key tenets are that what is learned is behaviour (however complex that behaviour might be) and that behaviour is shaped by the consequences that follow the behaviour (positive consequence leads to an increase in the behaviour; negative consequence leads to a decrease in the behaviour). Learners are regarded as passive respondents to stimuli in the environment (Watson, 1924; Skinner, 1957). One implication of behaviourism is that complex behaviours can be broken down into simpler elements and these elements can be learned through reinforcement. Behaviourism has no explicit role for such non-behavioural constructs as thinking or reasoning. However, behaviourism has had a significant influence on classroom and school practices for many years and continues to exert an influence today. Behaviourism's influence on assessment is seen in such practices as measuring individual "facts" or skills in isolation from one another, expressing the level of knowledge or learning by the total number of individual items answered correctly on an examination, and in ranking learners based on "how much" learning is evidenced in their test results.

> Assessment associated with behaviourist views of learning aims to check whether the learners have met the requirements as set. A judgement will be made by comparing the predetermined learning targets and the ultimate performance of the learner. This view of assessment places a major focus on the product of learning. This kind of assessment represents Assessment OF Learning (AoL).

The Influence of Constructivism on Assessment

Behaviourism has been criticized because it ignores other contributing factors of learning such as those related to cognitive and psychological aspects (internal factors). The shortcomings of these early behaviourist theories for learning propelled some theorists to look for alternatives. In contrast to behaviourists, constructivists acknowledge the learner's active role and suggest that learners are able to determine their own learning. The "construction" of meaning from experience is how constructivism defines learning. Human beings are compared to scientists who constantly carry out their own personal experiments, construct hypotheses and actively seek to confirm or disprove them in the process of seeking knowledge. Gradually, they build up their own concepts about the world which they come into contact with, and create their own understanding of things (Berry, 1998).

The underlying principle of constructivism is that knowledge is actively constructed by the learners themselves from their own experiences. Recent constructivist movements also pay a considerable amount of attention to social interaction. Since this is a social world, direct or indirect encounters with others are almost daily happenings. Consequently, children do not go out into the world on their own in constructing knowledge but are constantly interacting and negotiating with others to construct their personal meanings. It is through interacting with others that children develop and readjust their own unique set of concepts. Nevertheless, Glaserfeld (1995: 2) points out that "the subject cannot transcend the limits of individual experience. This condition, however, by no means eliminates the influence and the shaping effects of social interaction." Constructivism, in this sense, can/should be viewed as social constructivism (Burr, 1995; Kozulin, 1998; Lantolf, 2000; Williams and Burden, 1997). Social constructivists believe that constructing knowledge must involve social interaction, and people with whom the learners come into contact will play a certain role in shaping their experiences. Consequently, the teacher's role has been drawn into play (Berry, 1998). Teachers take on an important role of facilitating student learning through assessment. These form the focus of the assessment for learning approach.

> Assessment associated with constructivist views of learning aims to understand how the learner learns, what the learner can do or cannot do, and makes some deliberations and decisions on how to help the learner learn. This view, which is more closely linked to contemporary theories of learning, places more emphasis on the process of learning. Theorists usually call this kind of assessment Assessment FOR Learning (AfL).

The Influence of Cognitive Science on Assessment

Recent efforts in the area of cognitive science have led to attention being given to metacognition as an important component of assessment. Metacognition is a term used in information-processing theory to indicate an executive function (Brown, 1994). The theory compares human learning to the ways that computers process information. This entails a four-stage encoding process of selecting, comprehending, storing and retrieving information. Metacognitive strategies involve planning, monitoring and evaluation in the learning processes. They are the measures that learners use to organize and manage their learning. Metacognitive strategies also include an awareness of what one is doing and the strategies one is employing (Berry, 2002). In other words, learners

will have to have metacognitive knowledge to recognize the demands of a particular task and to identify which strategies are most appropriate during any given tasks. This demands self-regulation on the part of the learners. Learners will have to self-monitor, self-evaluate, and self-assess their learning during and after the learning process. They think backward and forward and make plans for their learning. Learners become engaged users of the information that assessment can produce. They can use assessment to take responsibility for and improve their own learning. In this sense, self-assessment is part of the learning process. It should be noted that metacognitive skills must be developed, and many learners will not develop these skills without explicit guidance from teachers. Cognitive science, as informed by Snow and Lohman (1993), provides a powerful tool to understand mental processes underlying good or bad performance. Besides its relevance to assessment as learning, it is relevant to the approach of assessment for learning.

> Assessment associated with metacognition aims to enable learners to become autonomous learners. It requires that learners be aware of what is required from them and monitor and assess their own learning during the learning process. With the information obtained, they can regulate their learning to meet the goals they set earlier. This view of assessment stresses the learner's active role in learning. This kind of assessment is referred to as Assessment AS Learning (AaL).

The three approaches to assessment (AoL, AfL, and AaL) accentuate different focuses of learning conceptions or paradigms. AoL, being closer to behaviourism, represents the "assessment as measurement" paradigm. In this paradigm, judgements of performances are taken at the end of learning. Both AfL and AaL have a strong connection with constructivism and cognitive science. They both treat learning as an internal event, both emphasize the importance of feedback to learning, and both focus on formative assessment as key to learning. Where they differ is their primary focus. For AfL, the focus is largely on the role the teacher plays in promoting learning, and could be said to reflect an "assessment in support of learning" paradigm. AaL places special emphasis on the role of the learner and highlights the use of assessment to increase learners' ability to control their own learning. AaL could be said to be an "assessment as learning to learn paradigm". Although the three assessment paradigms have their own distinctive characteristics, they should be viewed as complimentary to one another in carrying out the educational purposes. The three assessment approaches are revisited in fuller detail in Chapter 3.

Ensuring the Quality of Assessment Practices

Teaching and learning are about decisions. The decisions teachers and students make to judge the quality of work, to guide and promote learning, and to identify the next steps to be taken, must be **informed** decisions. The information gathered through assessment must be of sufficient quality to ensure that good decisions follow. There are two aspects of quality of assessment information that must be considered: validity and reliability. Stiggins (2005) describes validity according to **fidelity** (of the assessment to the intended learning outcome), and reliability as being a matter of **sufficiency** (is there sufficient information from the assessment to support the decision to be made?).

Validity hinges on whether our assessment properly reflects the intended learning target. Assessing learning is different from measuring students' heights, because we cannot directly observe learning. Instead, we make **inferences** about learning, based upon what we observe (performance on a test or task, or communication in an interview). This **sample** of behaviour may be affected by factors other than learning. The instructions for the task may have been misunderstood, or the student may have left out some important point he or she knows. In such instances the teacher would come to an erroneous conclusion about the true extent of the student's learning. Many of the strategies offered in this textbook for developing and using assessments have the goal of ensuring the validity of the information produced by the assessment.

Related to validity is the concept of reliability. Reliability reflects the **consistency** or dependability of assessments. This is like a bathroom scale for weighing yourself. The accuracy of the scale is judged by the consistency with which it reports your weight (if you obtained substantially different readings on consecutive weightings, you would doubt the accuracy of the scale). With summative assessments, especially, we need to be assured that the scores produced are dependable as indicators of student learning. Assuring the reliability of paper-and-pencil tests often involves having a sufficient number of items of appropriate difficulty. Reliability for any assessment comes down to using enough assessment tasks to ensure a sound basis for drawing any conclusions from that information.

Another aspect of reliability that applies when the teacher makes a **judgement** of the learner's skill (through an essay exercise or the performance of a skill) is **comparability**. Would another rater, using the same criteria, arrive at the same judgement regarding the degree of learning or skill evidenced?

Reliability and validity are related, and finding an acceptable balance between the two is important (Harlen and James, 1977). An assessment can produce reliable information without necessarily producing valid information. This can happen if the assessment reflects the wrong outcomes. For example, students are given a short written test of their maths skills, using word problems. Some students have difficulty with the language of the problems. Their scores are influenced by their language skills, in

addition to their maths skills. Their performance cannot be validly interpreted as evidence of their maths skills. But, the scores they received on that set of tasks would likely be reliable in the sense that the test would produce the same result if administered again.

Assessment for learning focuses primarily on classroom teachers' assessment practices and their use of formative assessment tasks to gather information on student learning. In the classroom, validity is a very important concern.

Multiple Roles and Functions of Assessment

Assessment is often used for more than one function. There are many different ways of categorizing the functions of assessment. The functions are mainly twofold: (1) for making judgements of the performance of individuals or the effectiveness of the system and (2) for improving learning. These basic functions can be further extended to selection and placement, accountability, diagnosis, and support of learning, as presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Functions of assessment

Assessment Function	Description
Selection and Placement	Test or examination is used to determine who will be selected to university, or is used to place students into school bands.
Accountability	Assessments are used to determine if students have achieved learning outcomes appropriate for their grade level, and are used to judge the effectiveness of teachers, schools, etc. in helping learners achieve the intended learning outcomes.
Diagnosis	Assessment is used to identify underlying sources of learning difficulties.
Support of learning	Assessments (especially at the classroom level) are used to monitor the progress of learning; to provide learners with feedback on their learning, to help them improve; to assist teachers in identifying changes to be made in their teaching; to enhance student motivation and confidence by demonstrating progress.

Guiding Principles for Making Assessment Effective

The concept of assessment for learning gives a general direction of where assessment should go. However, given the strongly entrenched views and practices of classroom teachers and school leaders regarding the proper role of assessment, a great deal of additional work will be needed to move from the general outline of an assessment for

learning environment to the reality of all classrooms operating on this basis. Ten assessment principles for assessment for learning have consequently been developed, presented within the framework of AoL, AfL, and AaL (see Figure 1.1). The highlights of AoL, AfL, and AaL are their specific emphases, respectively, on product of learning, process of learning, and learner taking control. These are all related to learning in one way or another. Teachers, students, and system can all contribute to making assessment effective. The ten guiding principles will be of help when actions are being considered.

FOR

Principle 1
Aligning assessment to teaching and learning

Teacher

Student

| **Principle 2**
Exploring multidimensional assessment methods | **Principle 3**
Selecting assessments susceptible to learning | **Principle 4**
Drawing on joint-efforts amongst colleagues |

Principle 5
Assessing students continuously

Principle 6
Allowing students' participation in assessment process

Principle 7
Using assessment to uncover learning

Principle 8
Making marking criteria accessible

Principle 9
Providing feedback

Principle 10
Analysing and reporting results

OF

System

AS

Figure 1.1 Ten assessment principles and the AoL, AfL, AaL framework
(The basic structure of AoL, AfL, AaL is adapted from the Blueprint for Government Schools, State of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, Australia (2002)

1. *Aligning assessment to teaching and learning*

In a typical classroom, assessment is an everyday activity. Assessment must be consistent with the objectives of the course and what is taught and learned. The assessment methods employed should reflect the variety of subject and course goals.

Basically, what to assess should reflect the teaching content, and the assessment tasks that are set should reflect the skills that students will need in their studies. With reference to the set criteria and through various means, teachers can observe, collect, record and analyze students' performances, and then diagnose and estimate their learning condition and capability. Teachers give students effective feedback and then adjust teaching, as a means of focusing on continuous improvement in both teaching and learning. Teachers use the information obtained from their assessments to help them understand the learning progress of the students. With the insights gained, teachers can modify teaching and learning activities to suit students' needs.

2. *Exploring the use of multidimensional assessment methods*

Assessment can be varied in form, depth or breadth, to reflect different facets of learning. A variety in types of assessment allows a range of different learning outcomes to be assessed. It also keeps students interested, especially when assessment tasks are authentic. There are two special benefits arising from the use of multidimensional assessment methods in the improvement of quality learning. First, it conveys to the student the important message that learning is complex, and that important learning outcomes can take many different forms and can require many different skills to demonstrate. Multidimensional assessment methods also help to ensure that the learning of students with less traditional or commonplace talents and ways of learning is properly acknowledged and credited.

3. *Selecting those assessment methods which are susceptible to learning*

The less effective forms of assessment inhibit or narrow learning opportunities and should therefore be reduced to a minimum. The "right" forms, accordingly, provide learners with plenty of learning opportunities. Using varied assessment strategies such as portfolios, observations, experiments, projects, simulations, interviews, performances, presentations, concept maps, word association and linking etc. allows a deeper understanding of students' learning in different perspectives.

4. *Considering drawing on joint efforts among colleagues*

In education contexts, students' learning is the result of concerted efforts from different parties. This should also be applicable to assessment. Collaborative actions support discussion on assessment matters and understanding of students' learning from different

perspectives. This kind of professional collaboration is very important to the setting of rating criteria, for example, when several raters will be involved in judging students' work against the same standards. Teachers can work together to set different sets of rating standard, including various kinds of skill and content. This helps in setting assessment plans of different levels.

5.   *Assessing students continuously throughout the learning processes*

Progressively assess students' learning so that assistance can be given to students when they first need it, and before more serious learning difficulties arise. Students can be given a series of smaller, appropriately valued assessment tasks spread through the term. What is important to bear in mind about continuous assessment is that the purpose is to identify potential problems, monitor satisfactory progress toward significant learner goals, and to provide feedback and encouragement along the way. For that reason, assessments based on initial attempts on the part of students to demonstrate new skills should not be heavily weighted toward the final judgement of student proficiency in a new skill area, at the end of the term. These assessments can be based on observation, judgement, encouragement, guidance, and corrections.

On a cautionary note, many teachers will initially view continuous assessment as an unrealistic goal, as they envision a never-ending stream of student work to be reviewed and returned. There is a need to balance the amount and types of assessment being conducted, to avoid student and staff assessment exhaustion. The secret to successful continuous assessment is to integrate the assessment activities with the instructional activities, so that, as instruction takes place, naturally occurring opportunities for gathering information on student understanding and progress are built into the process. For that reason, it is useful to have an assessment plan integrated into the teaching and learning plan.

6.   *Allowing students to take part in the assessment process*

Assessment does not have to be conducted solely by the teachers (and in fact it is not, and should not be). Students themselves can contribute towards their own learning through assessing themselves and their peers. Students should be regarded as insiders instead of outsiders when it comes to assessment and learning matters. They should be involved in making judgements about their own work, monitoring their own progress, learning to set goals for themselves, and presenting themselves and their work to others. Well-constructed self-assessment and peer assessment exercises have the potential to provide valuable learning experiences and encourage lifelong learning. Assessment is

composed of three processes: setting criteria for assessment, selecting evidence to match those criteria, and judging the match between the evidence and the criteria. There are many teaching-learning contexts in which it is appropriate for students to be involved in one or all of these assessment processes.

7.   *Using assessment to uncover students' learning*

Assessment should be "informative" as well as formative, revealing what sorts of learning have been achieved and what learning is still to be attained. The methods used should be able to assess a wide range of learning outcomes. Depending on a single assessment method such as examination has to be discouraged.

The main objective of assessment is improving students' learning behaviour, not for getting the result by the end of the term. End-of-term decisions can, and should, be based on multiple sources of evidence of student learning, such as projects they have completed, papers they have written, assignments they have turned in, tests or quizzes administered at the end of a learning cycle, and anything that represents the students' state of knowledge following appropriate opportunities to achieve mastery of the intended learning outcomes. What is *not* advisable is to base end-of-term decisions about learning on a single source of evidence, or even type of evidence, *and* that information gathered primarily for formative purposes *not* serve as the basis for judging end-of-term status. Therefore, it is better to use multidimensional methods to assess students' performance. For example, a teacher should adopt summative assessment strategies to summarize students' quality of learning by the end of the school term for deciding whether they pass or not, or should be promoted to the next level. The objective in this case is to prove learning. In addition to the summative assessment techniques, the teacher should use formative assessment methods to diagnose learning difficulties and monitor student progress, while promoting greater learning. The objective is to improve learning. These two kinds of assessment can be used simultaneously. The formative assessment is able to provide timely and regular feedback, while summative assessment usually presents the final results.

8.   *Making marking criteria accessible for students*

Students need to understand clearly what is expected of them in assessed tasks. Each assessment task is to be accompanied by clear assessment criteria that are effectively communicated to students and markers. Teachers have to develop an assessment plan before teaching a learning programme and should let students know clearly at the start of the term what the goals of the learning programme are, and how students will be

expected to demonstrate the mastery of those goals. Criteria for assessment should be detailed, transparent and justifiable. Teachers can get students involved in discussing the criteria or even in setting the criteria.

9.   *Providing feedback to facilitate students' learning*

Feedback is fundamental to the learning process. It is important to provide students with timely and comprehensive feedback on the extent to which they are achieving the goals and objectives of their learning. Formative assessment is very effective in monitoring and supporting the students' learning progress during instruction. The objective is to provide teachers and students with feedback on the learning results for promoting students' learning, improving content arrangement in the curriculum and exploring better modes of teaching. Its fundamental spirit is to tally assessments with the detailed target behaviour so as to form an interactive cycle. From time to time, students should be made aware of their achievements and those aspects they need to improve on for their future development. Students should also be given opportunities to act upon the useful suggestions made by the teachers, their peers, or ones they make themselves.

10. *Analyzing and reporting students' results*

Systematic analysis of students' performance on assessment tasks can help identify areas of the curriculum that need improvement. This enlightens teaching and eventually benefits students' learning. When reporting students' results, teachers can consider using the form of a qualitative profile rather than a single score or other quantification. The qualitative profile includes relevant data about effort, attitude, personality and achievement etc. The advantage is that the focus of the information being reported is the student, his or her level of achievement, the effort being shown, and the characteristics of the student as a learner, characteristics that may be aiding or impeding the student in his or her learning. By focusing the information thus, it is possible to reduce comparisons between students by parents, and give teachers a better opportunity to communicate with parents those essential matters regarding their student and his or her learning.

A Vision to Share

The fundamental principle of assessment for learning is making a strong connection between assessment and learning. In the assessment for learning model, assessment should be used to promote, induce, and reinforce learning. Within the parameters of assessment for learning, students' involvement in the assessment activities is taken seriously, as they are the main players of learning. Teaching, learning, and assessment have to come together and work together if we are to raise students' standards of achievements.

Summary

- Assessment is a natural part of the teaching and learning process. Both teachers and learners should be involved in the assessment, teaching, and teaching processes.
- Assessment can serve a much broader purpose than measuring success defined simply as acquisition of factual knowledge. Instead of using it merely as a tool to measure student success, assessment should be treated as a catalyst to learning.
- Although Assessment of Learning (AoL), Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment as Learning (AaL) have their own distinctive features, they are complementary with rather than contending to one another. An appropriate combined use of the three will help improve teaching and learning.
- There are many ways of classifying the functions of assessment. One simple way is to subsume the functions into two main categories: making a judgement of performance and improving learning.
- Ten guiding assessment principles can be used to help make teaching and learning more effective.

Review Questions

1. How should assessment be interpreted to reflect the improving of learning characteristics?
2. What are the problems of high-stakes testing?
3. How do different learning theories impact on conceptions of assessment?
4. How can teachers ensure the quality of assessment practices?
5. What are the functions of assessment?
6. What are the guiding principles for making assessment effective?

Suggested Tutorial Activities

1. Discussion:

   Why does the culture of AfL need to be established? How can the AfL culture be established?

2. Scenarios analysis:

   Form groups of three to four. Choose one of the scenarios provided and suggest how you may use the guiding assessment principles to help improve the situation.

Scenario 1	On Parents' Day, a parent reflected that her son performed rather poorly in his homework. However, he could not work out how his work could be improved, although he very much wanted to do so.
Scenario 2	On the same Parents' Day, one other parent said that her daughter's total aggregate for the exam was 90%, which was 5% lower than on the last exam. She wanted to know why and how the teachers could help her daughter score higher next time.
Scenario 3	During the lessons, your students are either very passive in learning or active in doing things unrelated to learning.
Scenario 4	You are a teacher (or a senior teacher/the school head) new to a school. The school has a good reputation for their students' academic performance. However, it has long tradition of teaching to tests. More often than not, there is at least one test per subject each week. Students are not interested in activities unrelated to tests.

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10

Case Studies

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:
- understand how the assessment policy of individual schools may impact on the implementation of assessment for learning;
- appreciate how the concepts of AfL of individual teachers can influence their assessment practices;
- recognize through the case studies provided the ways that AfL can shape and be reflected in the instructional and assessment practices of classroom teachers;
- relate the concepts of assessment for learning to your own teaching.

In most educational contexts, assessment guidelines are stated and defined in the national curriculum or system for schools to refer to. In Hong Kong, the learning function of assessment has been brought to much wider attention than it has been in the past, especially in recent years. The message of assessment for learning has been conveyed very explicitly to schools in the basic curriculum guidelines as well as in many education occasions such as workshops and seminars offered by the government. However, because of different circumstances, the good intentions may not be easily transferred to classroom actions. This chapter shows that individual schools may have their own interpretation of the government assessment guidelines. Similarly, individual teachers may have variations in understanding assessment for learning and therefore implement the concept in their own way. The deep thinking and tutorial exercises in the three sections in this chapter will provide the first platform for deliberation and for putting the assessment for learning concepts into practice.

This chapter uses three schools and their three teachers as the focus of discussion. The information of the following case has been derived from an examination of the assessment practices in three secondary schools in Hong Kong. The information presented is based on the findings of a study conducted by the author of this book. It is worth noting that the information is fact-based with no added interpretation. The sources

of information include school documents, teacher interviews, teacher reflections, student interviews and student portfolios. The three schools represent three different levels of academic performance. School A is high, School B medium, and School C low. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part presents the assessment practices of the three project schools and the three teachers from these schools. In the second part, a learning and assessment plan is presented in which various important assessment for learning concepts are showcased. The second part also presents how the three teachers used the learning and assessment plan for their teaching. At the end of part one and the two sections of part two, some deep thinking exercises about assessment for learning are provided. The review questions at the end of this chapter aim to take the understanding to an even deeper level.

Part 1: Three Project Schools

School A was a prestigious school. On the whole, the students were keen workers and outperformed their counterparts in many other schools in Hong Kong. In the 2006 school self-assessment report, School A stated that it saw assessment as a tool both to evaluate student performances and to reinforce learning. The assessment used included class work, home assignments, oral presentations, portfolio and project production, short quizzes, formal tests and examinations.

The school used summative assessment and increasingly used formative assessment. One formative assessment example the school gave was a secondary assessment task, social studies project. There were some learning tasks related to the project which students were required to submit. The tasks would be assessed by the teachers throughout the project time. In addition, the students were required to orally present the end product (the project itself), which would be given marks. The marks assigned to the oral presentation plus those given to the final product would be counted towards students' overall performance of the subject. In addition, to assist students with diverse learning needs, the school organized an English language bridging course and an English language enhancement course for those who recently joined the school and were seen to need further support in English language. For this academic year, from the data gathered, the school saw the need to give the new intake extra support in Chinese language and maths. Consequently, more teaching time was allocated for these two subjects in the Secondary 1 curriculum. There were, however, no descriptions of how the assessment was organized to match the diverse learning needs of the students. School A always maintained high academic performance and was a top band school.

School B emphasized academic performance. The school depended heavily on tests and exams, dictations, and homework to assess students. The purpose of using these assessment strategies was to motivate students to learn. Dictations and homework were treated as "formative assessment" by the school, based on the interpretation that

these assessment methods were given during the term. It was believed that the assessment strategies could create a washback effect and students would therefore "learn". Teaching methods tended to be traditional. Lecturing was the normal practice, and students had very little involvement in the learning process. The role of students was to complete the assignments as set and study hard for the tests and examinations. To help them pass the summative tests and examinations, students were given a large amount of homework and/or a number of tasks to do every day. The style of assignments was rather traditional, for example exercises usually found in the workbook or at the end of a chapter/unit. More often than not, the assignments were mechanical exercises which students could complete by looking in the book. Other times, students would be asked to memorize the spelling of some newly taught vocabulary items for the next day's dictation. School B used to be a popular school in the district area because it was perceived to be a high-performance school. However, recently, the students' academic performance had gone down, slipping from its position as a top band school.

School C moved to a new site only several years ago. It was a millennium school well equipped with a lot of learning facilities, including modern information technology and computer equipment. The students were mainly from the low-income group of the community. According to the teachers, many students experienced family problems, for example difficulty in being a child in a single-parent family. There were students who were physically disabled, and a few were identified as autistic. Teaching and learning were traditional. Teaching tended to cover the content of the textbook. Students in general were rather passive in learning and were very used to following the activities in the textbook. Assessment policies were also traditional. Although the school had a vision of acknowledging all achievements of students, the assessment was mainly focused on determining students' academic results in different subject areas. Standardized tests and examinations (paper-and-pencil tests) were employed as mechanisms to make students learn. For senior forms, the tests (daily marks) and exam (final marks) allocation was twenty percent and eighty percent. The assessment practice in junior forms basically resembled the senior form assessment practice. The only difference was that daily marks increased to thirty percent, ten percent of which were generated by projects, dictations and compositions. The school did make a note in its last year's report that, in addition to assessing students through tests and exams, students' performance in the class should be taken into consideration. Teachers could use projects to assess student learning from different perspectives. However, the results of the interviews with the schoolteachers revealed that the assessment practice of the school still relied heavily on evaluating results rather than using assessment to support learning. Tests and examinations were the standardized assessment practice and were used solely for summative purposes. The school had not mentioned how assessment was used for catering for the diverse needs of some of their students. School C was a low band school. There was no evidence to show that it was moving out of its current band bracket.

Deep thinking and tutorial activities:

1. Critically examine specific aspects of the assessment practice of the three schools. Look for what seemed well done, what might have been done differently or better, and what wasn't. Based on the assessment concepts discussed in the previous chapters, make suggestions on how to use assessment to help the students of the three project schools learn better.

2. Compare the assessment practices of the three project schools. Hold a debate on the topic: "Assessment practices are related to student performance".

Part 2: Three Teachers from the Three Project Schools

As part of the study, three teachers from three schools were invited to try out a learning and assessment plan, presented in Figure 10.1 (see p. 190). Some basic learning activities were provided to them, and ideas of assessment for learning were discussed between the teachers and the researcher (i.e. the author). The teachers were given a free hand to use the basic set of learning and assessment activities provided, with an understanding that more thought from them was needed, especially about their assessment strategy use.

The learning and assessment plan

The theme of the learning and assessment plan was charities. The plan used a task-based approach. The worksheets for the task sheets and related information would be kept in a portfolio, which would have to be submitted to the teacher for marking. Table 10.1 provides an overview of all three tasks of the plan. Task 1 in Table 10.2 (p. 189) will be used to further elaborate the learning and assessment activities encompassed in the plan. The task is used to highlight the learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment strategies of the plan. A detailed description of all six lessons is given as further elaboration of the assessment strategies and learning activities.

Lesson 1: Introduction of unit

Task 1 required students to look for information about charitable organizations in Hong Kong. Lesson 1 began with giving students a broad overview of the learning and assessment plan as well as a brief account description of the three tasks. After introducing the objectives and learning targets of the tasks, students were given a goal-setting record sheet to complete (Figure 10.1). There were twelve learning targets on the record sheet, reflecting language development of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The goal-setting record sheet helped students understand the learning objectives of the whole plan. It was also be used as a **self-needs analysis**.

Table 10.1 The learning and assessment plan: An overview of all three tasks

Theme: Charities			
Task	**Learning Targets**	**Teaching Content**	**Assessment**
1. Find out information on various charitable organizations such as the SPCA	**Grammar** Reported statements in simple present tense Wh- questions, negations in sentences and phrases **Vocabulary** New words related to fundraising activities **Reading** Extract information from texts **Speaking** Make suggestions **Listening** Listen to peers' suggestions and make comments	L01 – Introduction of unit L02 – Concept mapping & schedule forming L03 – Stepping into mini research & schedule forming L04 – Interviewing & reporting to peers L05 – Skills forming & reflections L06 – Self-correction & consolidation	1. **Formal assessment** 2. **Informal peer assessment** 3. **Self assessment** 4. **Performance-based assessment** 5. **Teacher observation**
2. Designing leaflets for charitable organizations	**Reading** Referencing skills The use of pronouns **Writing** Writing leaflets **Speaking** Make suggestions and make learning plans **Listening** Listen to peers' suggestions and give comments on peers' writing of leaflets **Grammar** Function and usage of relative pronouns Defining and non-defining clauses **Vocabulary** Vocabulary items and their prefixes dis, in and un.	L07 – Introduction to writing leaflets L08 – Teaching of relative pronouns L09 – Teaching of defining and non-defining Qs L10 – Consolidation of previous lessons L11 – Writing leaflets L12 – Reflections and evaluation	1. **Formal assessment** 2. **Informal assessment** 3. **Self assessment** 4. **Teacher observation and assessment**
3. Writing a proposal to an organization for fundraising	**Recap** Revision of vocabulary items and skills **Writing** Writing of proposals **Listening** Note-taking and giving comments on peers' oral presentations **Speaking** Presentations of proposals in class	L13 – Introduction of task and role distribution L14 – Teaching of proposal writing L15 – Group discussion and consultation L16 – Presentations & 17 L18 – Final reflection	1. **Self assessment** Formal assessment Informal assessment 2. **Peer assessment** 3. **Teacher assessment**

Source: Internal Research Grant research project (Berry 2006–07)

Lesson 2: Concept mapping and schedule forming

At the beginning of the second lesson, the teacher introduced concept maps to the students. A number of concept maps were used to illustrate the characteristics of good concept maps. The students were then given a vocabulary sheet with twenty vocabulary items on it (Figure 10.2, see p. 191). The new words were related to the main theme, charity. Students were asked to clarify their understanding of the words. They could brainstorm or confirm the meaning with their peers (**informal peer assessment**), or refer to a dictionary or any other means they found useful. Then individually, students drew a concept map to show their understanding of the words and their perceived conceptual linkage among these words. Upon completion of the individual concept map, students gave each other feedback based on the pre-discussed concept maps characteristics (**peer assessment**). To further support the activity, the teacher had demonstrated how a conversation could be maintained. Students could ask for a copy of sample discussion dialogue only when they felt more support was needed. During the peer assessment, the students were encouraged to raise questions (**informal questioning**) and give comments on each other's work. Students should make a judgement on whether the suggestions were useful for them. If the suggestions were deemed useful, students would then make further adjustments of their concept map before submission to the teacher (**formal teacher assessment**). The teacher conducted observations by looking at students' competence in language use, their communication skills, and the degree of participation in pairs and group work in the whole lesson. The teacher then conducted a whole-class discussion and provided **feedback to students** to clarify some misunderstood meaning and concepts. With this new understanding, students drew a new concept map or added new ideas to the old one. An example of a final product of the concept map is shown in Figure 10.3 (see p. 191). The bubbles with dotted lines were pre-discussion concepts, and the ones with solid lines were added after the peer assessment and receiving feedback from the teacher.

Lesson 3: Stepping into mini research and schedule forming

In lesson three, students were provided with a leaflet of a charitable organization. They were asked to identify some information they thought useful, and then individually they wrote it down on the note sheet provided. The information could include a brief description of the organization, vision and mission, their service, donation methods etc. Then the teacher held a whole-class brainstorming session during which questions could be used for prompting answers (**questioning**). The questions would lead into setting a schedule for research information (Figure 10.4, see p. 192). Peer feedback could be invited (**informal peer assessment**). The teacher could give immediate feedback as well (**teacher informal assessment and feedback**). Students were asked to do some research on charity work and organization as homework. They would need to choose a charitable organization and design a leaflet by themselves, which would be marked by the teacher (**formal assessment**).

Table 10.2 The learning and assessment plan: Task 1

Theme: Charities			
Task	**Learning Targets**	**Teaching Content**	**Assessment**
1. Finding out information on various charitable organizations such as the SPCA	**Grammar** • Use reported speech to report an incident (simple present tense) • Wh- questions, negations in sentences and phrases for making suggestions **Vocabulary** • Learn some vocabulary items related to fundraising activities **Reading** • Extract information from written texts • Referencing skills **Speaking** Brainstorm ideas for the investigation and draft a concept map (Question formation) **Listening** • Listen to classmates' suggestions for the investigation and comment on classmates' concept maps	*Lesson 1* INTRODUCTION OF UNIT • The teacher (T) introduces the objectives of the unit and gives an overview of the structure and content of the 18 lessons • T gives an example of concept map and asks students to brainstorm a concept map for the investigation *Lesson 2* CONCEPT MAPPING & SCHEDULE FORMING • In pairs, the students (Ss) brainstorm the focuses of investigation based on the leaflets provided. They then complete a note sheet with a concept map enclosed. • T helps Ss to identify some key content of the leaflets and brainstorm things need to do for the investigation. • Ss decide on their research plans *Lesson 3* STEPPING INTO MINI RESEARCH & SCHEDULE FORMING • T teaches the format of wh- questions • Ss do the listening task in the book • Ss choose a charity organization for research and completes a research schedule *Lesson 4* INTERVIEWING & REPORTING TO PEERS • Ss finish the interview note sheets • T conducts an information gap activity and introduces reported speech *Lesson 5* SKILLS FORMING & REFLECTIONS • T conducts a teaching activity. Ss reflect on their learning. Ss finish the worksheet on reported speech *Lesson 6* SELF-CORRECTION & CONSOLIDATION • Ss correct each other's worksheets and own mistakes • T gives instruction on self-assessment activity and gives guidance to Ss for writing reflective journals	**Formal assessment:** • Worksheets **Informal peer assessment:** • Mark and correct each other's worksheets • Peer feedback on the concept map **Self-assessment:** • Self-monitoring record • Self-assessment task **Performance-based assessment:** • Role-play **Teacher observation:** • Observe the communication skills, competence and the degree of participation the Ss in pair shown by work, group work, and role-play.

Source: Internal Research Grant research project (Berry 2006–07)

Name: _____   Date: _____

Expressing Wishes for Learning

> What would you like to learn in English? How could you get hold of them one day?

Please write down what you would like to learn in each area if there is any.

In this unit, I am going to learn . . .	Ah!!! I would also like to learn . . .
1. New vocabulary about charity.	_____
2. The usage of reported speech.	_____
3. The usage of relative pronouns, e.g. who, whom and which.	_____ _____
4. The usage of words with prefixes such as 'un', 'in' and 'dis' to describe feelings	_____
5. The usage of a new sentence structure of defining and non-defining clauses	_____
6. Ways to form questions	_____
7. Ways and phrases to make suggestions	_____
8. Ways and skills to listen to others and take notes	_____
9. Ways to share happy experiences and exchange ideas	_____
10. Skills for extracting useful information from articles and resources	_____
11. Skills for correct reference in a passage	_____
12. Skills for proofreading and correcting own writing	_____

Figure 10.1 Lesson 1 assessment: Self needs analysis

Name: ——————————— Date: ———————————

Vocabulary Items for Concept Map

Please put a √ next to the words which are in your concept map.
You do not have to include all the words in your concept map.
Add your own new words in the spaces given throughout the unit.

❑ Fundraising activities
❑ Organization
❑ Teachers
❑ Book sale
❑ Charity sale
❑ Community
❑ Funds
❑ Designing leaflets
❑ Strategies to raise funds
❑ Worldwide organizations
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————

❑ Education
❑ Schools
❑ Students
❑ Carnival
❑ Dress causal day
❑ Government
❑ Donation
❑ Local organizations
❑ Writing proposals
❑ Tax
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————
❑ ————————————

Figure 10.2 Lesson 2 assessment (i): A vocabulary sheet for drawing
on peer feedback and teacher feedback
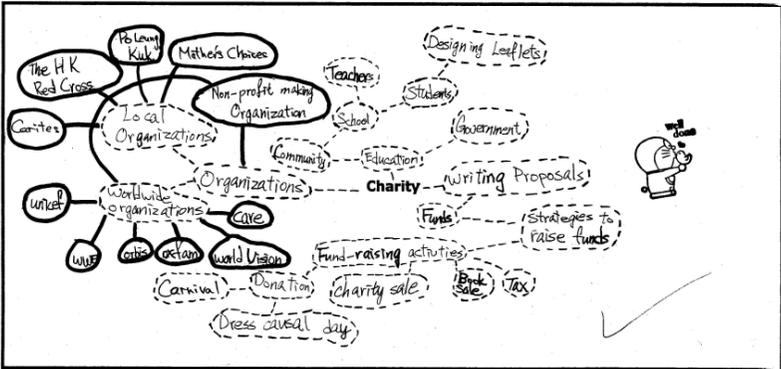
Figure 10.3 Lesson 2 assessment (ii): An example of final product of a concept map

Name: _____   Date:_____

Research Schedule

What are the steps or procedures for you to collect different important information for writing your own leaflet? Take a few minutes and think about what you should do. Step 1 has been done for you.

Step	Area of Focus
Example: 1	Choose a charity organization
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

Figure 10.4 Lesson 3 assessment: Worksheet for brainstorming and recording peer feedback and teacher feedback

Lessons 4 to 6: Interviewing and reporting to peers, skills forming and reflection, self-correction and consolidation

These three lessons are discussed together, to keep a coherent flow of the description. At different times of these lessons, the teacher taught *wh-* questions and reported speech. The teachers distributed an interview note sheet with one guiding question (*wh-* question) as an example. The students needed to write down a number of *wh-* questions on the note sheet (Figure 10.5). The purpose was to find out the results of the research conducted by their partners. After giving students some time to draft a few questions, the teacher held a whole-class discussion. The teacher invited the students to talk about the questions they had drafted for the interview (**informal peer assessment and**

Name: _____

Date: _____

 Interview Note Sheet

You and your partner want to know more about each other's research. Discuss the details of the research and form questions to ask for some information from each other. Put down the name of your partner as well. The first example has been done for you.

Name of your partner: _____

1. *(Name of the organization)*

Which charitable organization do you wish to write to?

Answer: _____

_____

2. *Type of the organization*

_____

Answer: _____

_____

3. *Service of the organization*

_____

Answer: _____

_____

4. *Example (s) of some events of the organization*

_____

Answer: _____

_____

5. *Special events of organization*

_____

Answer: _____

_____

6. *(Can you can think of 2 more related questions?)*

_____

Answer: _____

_____

7. _____

Answer: _____

_____

Figure 10.5 Lesson 4 assessment: Interviewing notes for drawing
on peer and teacher feedback

teacher feedback). Students revised their questions. In pairs, they interviewed each other. They could negotiate better questions to ask and different answers to the questions. They were encouraged to comment on each other's suggestions (**informal peer assessment**). A number of self-assessment opportunities were created for students to reflect on their learning, which the teachers could use at their discretion. For example, a self-monitoring checklist (Figure 10.6) could be given to students to self-assess their learning progress. Two other examples were given, including the one which asks students to reflect on their own progress and to make plans for improvement (self-assessment learner logs in Figures 10.7 (see p. 196) and 10.8 (see p. 197), with student reflection). The portfolio would be collected and marked as **teacher assessment. Written feedback** would be given to the students.

Deep thinking and tutorial activities:

3. The learning and assessment activities presented above offer some ideas of how assessment can support learning. In groups, critically examine them and make suggestions on how these can be further improved to support learning. Explain why.

4. Develop an assessment plan and design some learning and assessment activities for teaching your own students. Support your design with assessment for learning concepts.

Three different experiences

Three teachers from the three different schools were involved in the study. Using the same learning and assessment plan presented in Figure 10.1, the three teachers implemented the plan in the school they taught. Using self-assessment and teacher assessment as the context, the following presents the experience of the three teachers in using assessment for teaching and learning. Individual teachers inevitably had their own way of using the assessment activities provided. The information presented in the following is again fact-based with no further elaboration or interpretation added.

Student self-assessment

The self-assessment tasks

Self assessment was conducted with the use of a self assessment checklist (Figure 10.6) as well as two learning logs (Figures 10.7 and 10.8). The self assessment checklist required students to self-evaluate their strategies for learning English in the lessons.

Self-assessment checklist

Name:_____

Date:_____

Here are some classroom tasks. They help you to improve your English.

	Often	Sometimes	Not yet
Talk to your English teacher in English			
Follow teacher's instructions to finish the task			
Ask partner for information in English			
Raise questions in English when there are difficulties			
Speak English during the English lesson			
Finish the learning tasks with classmate in English			

If you have some answers of "*Not yet*", what are the reasons?
_____
_____

Could you answer all your partner's questions?
(Yes/No)

Do you think you are doing well for the task? What are some examples?
(Yes/No)
Examples:
_____
_____
_____

What do you think you can do to help yourself participate more in the English lessons?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Figure 10.6 Lesson 5 assessment (i): Self assessment: A self-monitoring checklist

Date:	Period covered:

In the last four lessons, you have done:
1. Concept maps
2. Discussion and interview with classmates
3. Research of charities
4. Forming *wh-* questions

You should have studied:
wh- questions; reported speech; fundraising activities vocabulary; extracting information from texts; referencing skills; making suggestions; listening to peers' suggestions

Reflections

I used English when:

I spoke English to (whom):

I enjoyed/did not enjoy doing:

I think I did the following well:

In this task, I made these mistakes:

In this task, my difficulties are:

Future action plans

Now you should have reflected on and understood more about your learning. What will you do to improve?

I will:

because

I would like to know:

I would like to be helped in these areas:

Figure 10.7 Lesson 5 assessment (ii): Self assessment: Learner log 1

Reflections

Date: 12 th May , 2006 , Name: Ivy

Time flies. It is the end of our teaching periods ☺. Do you remember any useful learning activities? Are you happy with your effort and performance?

1. What do you feel about the learning and learning activities in general? Have you found anything useful or interesting?

I feel very happy . Because I learn many things in the learning and learning activities . Yes , I have . I have learnt many new words and I learn how to write a leaflet .

2. I have learnt the following things from English lessons:

- write a leaflet .
- learn some new words
- learn to listen people
- learn to find useful information in the web sign .

3. Were there any difficulties in learning? How did you solve them?

Yes , there were . I will discuss with my classmates or ask teachers .

4. Do you think you are a good learner? What will you do if you want to improve yourself?

Yes . I do . I will read more English newspapers, read more english books , If I have something don't understand I will ask someone to help me .

Figure 10.8 Student self assessment: Learner log 2 (with student reflection)

For example, the students indicated how often they would communicate with teachers and students during the lesson. A number of open-ended follow-up questions were used to prompt students to look into their learning and to make suggestions for improving their own learning. The two learners' logs required students to reflect on what they did in the lessons, what they thought they had learned well and not too well, and what kinds of future plans they would need, in order to improve further. The checklist and learners' logs would be submitted to the teachers for monitoring progress and for giving support whenever it is deemed necessary.

The responses of the three teachers to students' self-assessment

Miss Chan (School A) made numerous responses to students' self-reflections. For example, when a student wrote that she would try not to speak Cantonese during English lesson, in order to improve her English, Miss Chan drew a smiley face right next to the statement, to show her appreciation. Other times, she showed her approval by writing comments such as "Good idea". To acknowledge good progress, she would write, for example, "You have made good progress in your research". She made suggestions to help students improve. For example, "You will need to gather more information to enrich this part" (indicated in the worksheet). "You could look into (a website) for further information".

Mr Au (School B) read through the self assessment checklists and logs and gave some ticks. However, he opted not to give any comments in writing. It was not clear whether Mr Au had given verbal feedback to his students.

Mr Wu (School C) also provided feedback to students. Some feedback was to suggest ways for improvement, for example, "This word doesn't fit here" (with indication). "Look for the meaning in your dictionary. You can either use the same word in a different context or find another word to replace it." Mr Wu sometimes used questions to stimulate students' thinking. For example, "Now, you have collected some information about a charity organization you want to write about. Is the information enough? How would you organize the information you have got?" Students in School C were usually low achievers and had low self-esteem. One student said that he loved to improve his English by doing more reading. However, he found it very hard to start this. Mr Wu then wrote, "Choose some interesting but very easy books to start with. How about bringing one to me so we can read together first?" In one lesson, when one student showed his frustration about the pronunciation mistake he made, Mr Wu said, "Don't worry. Let's say it again. Repeat after me?"

Teachers' reflection on self assessment after implementation

Miss Chan said that she experienced a number of difficulties when promoting self assessment in the classroom. Her students did not seem to be keen on taking control of their own work. Things like monitoring their own work did not seem to interest them much. Her students were very used to following instructions. Except for a number of high achievers, most students preferred to have the instructions from their teachers rather than making plans for themselves. On the whole, students lacked the skills of doing self and peer assessment. Despite this, Miss Chan was very positive about self assessment. She believed that self assessment would benefit students, as learning would not be spoon-feeding. It would be something from them.

Mr Au said that students did not know what to write in their self assessment. They were not able to make suggestions about what to do to become better. Probably because of their low level of language proficiency, students could not truly express themselves in writing. Therefore, many of them just copied exactly the same words as the teachers used as examples in the instructions. Mr Au said that he had a lot of trouble when he first got his students to do self assessment. He needed to do a lot of clarification with them. Despite this, he found it worth doing, as he saw that students became more active in learning. He said jokingly, "My students like to take more control over their learning now. They negotiate with me about the composition submission due date and the number of words to write."

Mr Wu experienced difficulties when first conducting self assessment with his students. They found the idea of self assessment intimidating. Probably because of this, some of his students did not complete the self assessment sheets. Some of those who completed the self assessment tasks had very low self-esteem. They were rather hard on themselves. For example, one student wrote "I am bad". Another wrote "I am not a good learner". The self-reflection skills were very immature at first. There was a general lack of self-reflection skills. The students were not able to pinpoint their problems, nor were they able to make suggestions for improvement. The situation gradually improved after a few times of using self assessment. Students became better able to identify what they wanted to learn and to suggest what they could do to improve their learning. Mr Wu observed that it was good that students had begun to think about their learning. However, there was a discrepancy between what they wanted to do and what they actually did. In general, Mr. Wu was very positive about self assessment. He felt that it was particularly helpful in helping students see their strengths and weaknesses. He pointed out that it was important to let students see the objectives of self assessment and to familiarize them with the self assessment procedures in order to make it useful for the students. Mr Wu's students indicated that they benefited from self assessment. One student said that it helped him see his weakness so he could do something about it. Another said it helped raise his awareness of "ownership in learning".

Teacher assessment

Students were required to submit their work to their teacher from time to time. There were some marking variations among the three teachers. Miss Chan liked to use encouragement tactics. As mentioned, she used "cutie chops" as well as drawing smiley faces on work that was well done. Comments such as "Well done! You are able to master the questioning skills very well!" were often used to acknowledge students' good work. In addition, correction feedback was frequently used to point out students' grammatical and spelling mistakes. Some constructive feedback was found, for example "Perhaps more information about the background is needed". When students were off-track, she would make comments such as "You have got quite a lot of information in this part. Maybe you could talk a bit more on other areas (indication on the note sheet)". Mr Au and Mr Wu used similar tactics for giving feedback. Comments such as "Good" and "Excellent" were often found. Both used correction feedback for grammatical and spelling errors. Mr Au sometimes gave students extra help by providing needed information to them.

Deep thinking and tutorial activities:

5. Compare the assessment practices of the three teachers. Point out the strengths of their practices and suggest what more could be done to support student learning.
6. Mr Wu's students had rather low self-esteem. Discuss how assessment could help raise students' self-esteem. Why is it important to have good self-esteem in learning?

The Interface of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

The assessment methods used in many schools tend to focus on determining students' performance at the end of the learning process. Tests and exams are normally used as the vehicle to get that information. Traditional assessment practices tend to focus on errors made by students, and as such can lead to lack of self-confidence and reluctance to undertake challenging learning. Assessment focusing on end product is less helpful in supporting learning. Assessment should also be used for, among others, identifying students' learning needs, motivating students' towards learning, as well as giving them learning support. It is important for teachers to know that assessment, teaching, and learning are interrelated and should be considered together while doing instructional planning. The cases provided in this chapter demonstrate the sort of integration that teachers can use for the integration of teaching, learning, and assessment.

Summary

- The three secondary schools presented reflect variations of assessment policies, assessment practices and interpretation of assessment for learning.
- The learning and assessment plan, Task 1 and the six lessons, exemplify the way that assessment can support learning.
- Individual teachers may have their own ways of implementing assessment for learning, as evidenced by their different ways of handling student self assessment and teacher assessment.

Review Questions

1. Go back through the cases and locate what the teachers think might be indications of the linkage between assessment practices and school performance.
2. Revisit the assessment for learning concepts discussed in previous chapters. Then examine the different assessment practices of the three teachers. Which of their assessment practices reflect assessment for learning?
3. The teachers in these cases all reported encountering some challenges and difficulties as they attempted to introduce self assessment practices into their classrooms. Using the perspective and ideas about self assessment that have been shared in this textbook, consider how you might have responded in their place. What are some strategies and steps you might have taken to ensure that self assessment was successful in your classroom?
4. Based on the teacher assessment reported in the three cases, discuss how teacher assessment can be done to support learning.

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Subjects