Assessment of Evaluation Criteria of Students' Academic Performance at Post Graduate Level in Pakistani Universities

ARIFA KHAN
ANUM SHAHZADI
M. Phil. Applied Linguistics
Department of Applied Linguistics
The Riphah International University
Pakistan

Abstract:

The study focused on assessment of evaluation criteria at Post Graduate level in Pakistani universities. Research has been conducted in two universities of Faisalabad to find evaluation criteria at post graduate level. This research suggests that the teachers should pay more attention to assessment of evaluation. The researcher used quantitative method to collect the data. Each year lengthy assessments are taken to evaluate students learning and to mark grade. Researchers try to find the positive and negative impact of lengthy assessment from both teachers and students by questionnaire from 30 students and 10 teachers. It also highlighted the use of formative assessment within the classroom and its effects on grading as well as on evaluating learning of the students. Finally this article also provides the existing terminology of formative assessment and summative assessment and need of both to be applied in post graduate classes for learning and assessment.

Key words: evaluation criteria, students' academic performance, post-graduate level, Pakistani universities

Introduction

Assessment is closely related to teaching. Assessment in our education system requires changes to fulfill the needs of the learner of this era.

"Today many schools are moving away from the traditional model of norms-referenced grading standards to a system of authentic assessment, where learning objectives are standardized and active student involvement plays an important role in the assessment process" (Wiggins, 1998).

In future, assessment will no longer be appreciated for student achievement, but as an important part of the learning process.

As school moves away from the system of norms-referenced grading, many are implementing the criteria-based assessment model, where assessment is based upon pre-established learning objectives and student achievement is determined by the success in meeting program objectives. Instead of ranking student achievement, the criteria-based assessment model offers qualitative descriptors indicating the level of achievement of the student in meeting its objectives for learning. The criteria based assessment model requires greater student involvement, with the intention of developing student processes in critical thinking, meta-cognition, and reflection. Essentials to the success of criteria based assessment model is the idea that students deserve to have access to criteria and standards for the learning they must master (Wiggins, 1998).

The Elements of Formative Assessment
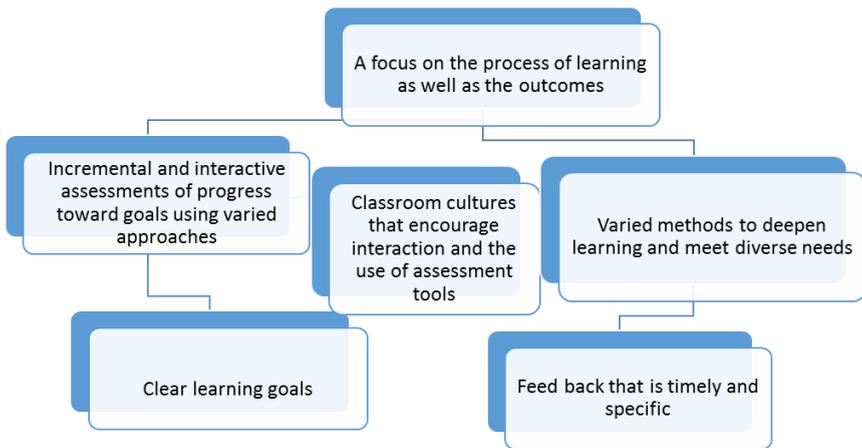
Source : Adapted from OECD (Looney, Ed.) ,2005

According to Black (2002) formative assessment is "only a shell into which effective learning strategies need to be fitted" (p. 410).

Classroom cultures integrating formative assessment help students to understand that they can learn from their mistakes, and that the most effective learning is based on willingness to address learning gaps and to persist toward goals. Students are more likely to take the risks necessary for further learning in such environments (OECD ,2005).

Formative assessment and summative assessment

The goal of formative assessment is to evaluate students learning to provide feedback that can be done by teachers and students. Formative assessment can be taken as

Ideas for formative assessment

- Multiple choice questions (MCQs) with feedback
- Formative assessment using voting systems in class
- Peer-to-peer feedback either face-to-face or on-line (can also be across year groups

- Draft elements which contribute towards final summative assessment.
- Essay plans
- Annotated bibliographies
- Book reviews
- Repeat practice before final submission: e.g. 3 critical summaries the last of which is summatively assessed.
- Regular standard exercises where student can select which one to submit for formal assessment.
- Short exercises, peer reviewed against standard criteria.
- Reflective production journals/blogs.
- Individual and small group studio tutorials
- Year, group, studio meetings/feedback sessions
- Pin-up's, crits, reviews (sometimes with external critics from practice/industry)
- Feedback at student presentations of various sorts
- Feedback on draft papers and dissertations
- Self diagnostic skills audit
- Essays in Pharmacy

(http://advan.physiology.org/content/33/2/98.full.pdf+html)

A note on Formative and Synoptic Assessment
It could be helpful for students to devise a synoptic assessment (ie assessing against the learning outcomes of more than one module) for formative assessment. This may be particularly useful in Level 4.

Ideas for feedforward
- Peer marking in class using exemplars/comment banks
- Self-assessment using exemplars/comment banks
- 'Quick and dirty' responses to drafts via email/ review & comment facilities in word
- Face-to-face tutorials (e.g project supervisions)
- Self assessment check list prior to tutor review. Student identifies what elements they would like feedback on.

Getting students to self-assess their work

We can use student self-assessment to deepen their learning, and to make tutor-marking more effective, and efficient – and to start initiate tutor-student dialogues. This is a way to getting students to reflect. It allows us to evidence good feedback practice for inspection purposes. It can help us to avoid wasting our time – and students' time, and makes sure students actually read your feedback. Moreover, we can give our students the feedback they want as well as the feedback they need.

Five questions to consider for self-assessment-tutor dialogues

1. What do you honestly consider will be a fair score or grade for the work you are handing in?
2. What do you think was the thing you did best in this assignment?
3. If you had the chance to do the assignment again from scratch, how (if at all) might you decide to go about it differently?
4. What did you find the hardest aspect of this assignment?
5. Please jot down three short questions you would like me to answer about this example of your work:

(Based on Race, P.)

A compendium of extracts on Assessment
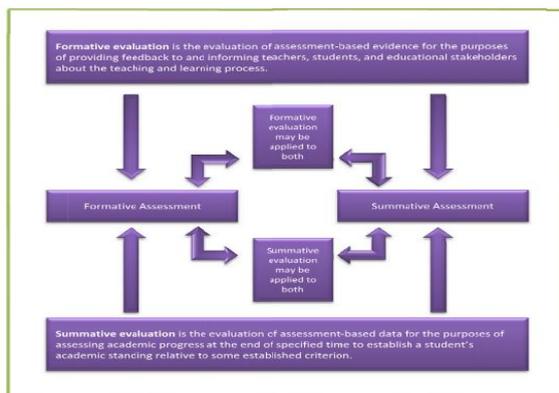
Figure2. Practical Model of Assessment and Evaluation System
(http://phil-race.co.uk/most-popular-downloads/ accessed 27.05.2014)

Objectives of Research

The goal of assessment has to be, above all:

- To support the improvement of learning and teaching.
- To make use of variety of assessment methods to gather evidence of student learning.
- To define clear learning goals, which are the basis of developing or choosing ways to assess student learning.
- To analyze achievement data to make good inference.
- To make appropriate instructional modification to help students improve.

Significance of Study

Unsound assessment will be replaced by sound assessment to make students better.

Study will provide useful feedback to teachers and students which will help as teaching guide to improve learning.

Research Question:

- Whether assessments provide targeted learning in education system?
- How the shortcomings of the present assessment system can be improved?
- Whether formative assessment is better solution for good result, and academic achievement?

Literature Review

According to C. A. Tomlinson,

"Assessment always has more to do with helping students grow than with helping students grow than with cataloging their mistakes".

"Formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of students' status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedure or by students to adjust their current learning tactics". (W. James Popham)

"Learning can be enhanced to the degree that Students share the challenging goals of learning, adopt self-assessment and evaluation strategies , and develop error detection procedures and heightened self-efficacy to tackle more challenging tasks leading to mastery and understanding of lessons". (Hattie & Timperlery (p 103)

"Assessment is often shrouded in mystique, governed by tradition and has the tendency to be notoriously inadequate" (Beaumont-kings, 1994, p. 1)

"Well-designed assessment sets clear expectations, establishes a reasonable workload (one that does not push students into rote reproductive approaches to study), and provides opportunities for students to self-monitor, rehearse, practice and receive feedback.
(James, Mclnnis &Devlin, 2002, p.7)

"We owe it to ourselves and devote at least as much energy to ensuring that our assessment practices are worthwhile as we do to ensuring that we teach well". (Boud, 1998,p.2)

"A solid understanding of assessment issues should be part of every teachers' knowledge base, and teachers should be encouraged to equip themselves with this knowledge as part of their ongoing professional development. (Weigle, 2007, p.207)

"Assessment in the international Baccalaureate's Middle year Programme (MYP) follow a criteria-related assessment model, meaning that the program's learning objectives are directly aligned with the program's criteria of assessment." (From Principals to practice, 2008)

The benefits of student involvement in the assessment process have been widely acknowledged. Research in assessment strongly supports that the validity and reliability of assessment is greatly increased when all members of the learning community are involved. (WNCP, 2004)Furthermore, greater student access and teacher articulation of learning objectives has been shown to generate greater success in learning (Sadler, 2005). When students know what is expected of them, what the goals for learning are, and what the purpose of assessment is, they have a greater opportunity to prepare by identifying their

strengths and areas for improvement in the learning process (Bargainnier, 2003; Wiggins, 1998).

The IB clearly indicates that the criterion-related assessment model implemented in the MYP requires students to have access to the learning objectives for each subject group (From Principles to Practice, 2008). While access is a broad term, for the purpose of this report, I refer to access as the articulation, or the level of frequency and quality in which program objectives and assessment criteria are communicated to members of the learning community, primarily students and parents. Essential to the notion of access is that students are informed about the criteria by which judgments are made about the quality of their work (Sadler, 2005). As Wiggins argues through his model of educative assessment, in order to effectively learn, students need "a complete demystification of the standards and performances of test tasks against which they will be evaluated" (Wiggins, 1998, p.14). Knowing the specific objectives for learning and the criteria for assessment enables students to prepare, self evaluate, self-adjust, and reflect; fundamental requisites of learning in a system of educative assessment (Bargainnier, 2003; Davies and Le Mahieu, 2003; Sadler, 2005; Wiggins, 1998). In educative assessment, learning objectives are articulated to students before, during, and after assessment. For successful articulation of learning objectives to take place in the MYP, the IB specifically requires that schools clarify (MYP: From Principles into Practice, 2008):

Results from Quantitative Study

This study will show that how education system under one system of education articulate student learning by implementation of criteria-related assessment and what problems teachers and students have to face for this implication.

For this purpose 10 teachers and 30 students from two universities of Faisalabad are selected to analyze data. Researchers do whole work with coordination of both teachers and students with some questionnaires. Quantitative method is used to conduct this research.

Teachers Questionnaire Results
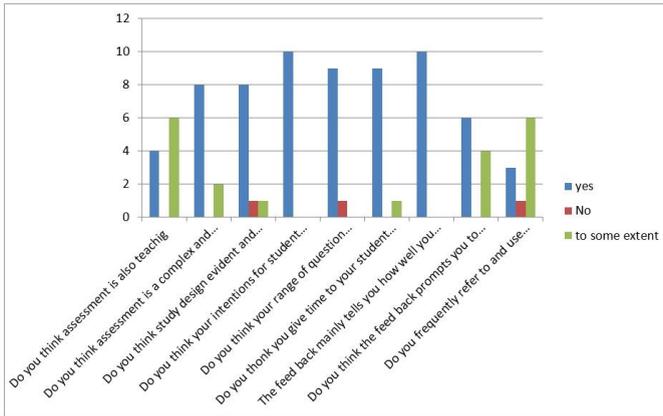
Student Questionnaire Results
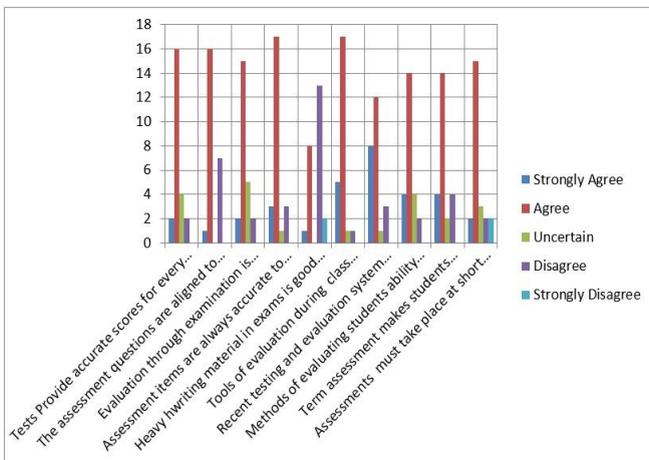
Analysis

Questionnaire had been distributed among 30 students, 6 out of them didn't fill form due to some reason. 24 respond about assessment of evaluation criteria. 16 of them were agree that tests provide accurate score for every student.16 of them were also agreeat that assessment questions that are aligned for evaluation are standard and make sense both from a content and depth of knowledge. Whereas 7 of them disagree this question. Most of the students were agree on assessment system but they were completely disagree heavy writing material during exams. Most of them were agree to change the evaluation system for good performance. They have the opinion that term assessment make students crammers not learners. They agree to take assessment at short intervals to enhance the learning of the students that really point to apply the formative assessment system in our education system at post graduate level.

Conclusion

It is concluded that methods of assessment which teachers are applying in universities for students assessment of study performance is not so perfect, they are using summative way of assessment, whereas they must apply both summative and formative assessment to check students study performance. By applying this strategy student performance will be better in future.

Suggestions for better assessment of evaluation

The decision about the awarding of an overall grade from the criteria is clearly something that needs to be shared with, and made clear to, the students who undertake the paper. In addition grading against such criteria should be used in

conjunction with formative assessment in order for students to work in an ipsative way (Harlen & James, 1997).

This paper has provided a view of recent assessment of evaluation criteria at post graduate level in Faisalabad universities according to the recent examination system of Pakistan. Recent system require modification and refinement in evaluation methods. Formative assessment criteria is better to be applied before summative assessment for better understanding and learning of post graduate level.

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QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT ASSESSMENT (FOR TEACHERS)

Do you think "Assessment" is also teaching?
(a)   Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

Do you think assessment is a complex and personal activity
that is best assessed and evaluated using multiple techniques
and broadly-based criteria?
(a) Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

Do you think study design evident and appropriate for
assessment?
(a) Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

Do you think your intentions for student learning are connected
with what and how you are assessing?
(a) Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

Do you think your range of question relevant to your idea?
(a) Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

Do you think you give time to your student to answer you?
(a) Yes   (b) No   (c) To some extent

The feedback mainly tells you how well you are doing in
relation to evaluation?

(a) Yes   (b)   No   (c)   To some extent

Do you think the feedback prompts you to go back over material
covered earlier in the course?

(a) Yes   (b)   No   (c)   To some extent

Do you frequently refer to and use information from the
teachers' guides associated with the curriculum materials
adopted by this university?

(a) Yes   (b)   No   (c)   To some extent

Assessment of Evaluation Questionnaire
(To be filled by student)

Department_____

Teacher's Name_____   Year of Study_____

Please give us your views to improve evaluation system. You will be encouraged to be frank and constructive in your comments.

Core Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Tests provide accurate scores for every student.					
The assessment questions are aligned to the standards make sense both from a content and depth of knowledge.					
Evaluation through examination is validated and stabilized over time.					
Assessment items are always accurate to check whole learning of all syllabus contents.					
Heavy writing material in exams is good to evaluate students' ability.					
Tools of evaluation during class encouraged participants.					
Recent testing and evaluation system improved my learning and confidence.					
Methods of evaluating students' ability need to change for good performance.					
Term assessment makes students crammers not learners.					
Assessments must take place at short intervals to enhance learning of student.					
Comment on effectiveness of evaluation methods:					