

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN PUNJAB PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to evaluate the teaching assessment practices of public Secondary schools' English teachers in Secondary in Punjab Pakistan. The classroom assessment practices, and Skills (CAPS) questionnaire was used to collect data from 89 Secondary teachers in the Sahiwal district. The study inquired how much, teachers agreed and have a consensus with the factors regarding "Beliefs on assessment" to what extent these factors are related and what are the areas of assessment and evaluation in which teachers believe that they are capable, skilful, and expert? Results also determined that predominantly teachers use old traditional assessment skills, and they mostly use those skills about which they think they are skilled. The study suggests more training and workshops give knowledge about assessment as well as skills to be applied in the practical classroom.

Keywords: Assessment in Language Education, Classroom Assessment Practices, English Language Assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation and analyzing the progress at every step is part of human nature which is called classroom assessment in the education and learning system. According to Ghaicha (2016), assessment works as a lever which works as a powerful tool that can improve as well as destroy the learning and teaching process. Assessment is very important in the education system because it is the assessment that tells us to what extent the educational objectives and goals are being achieved. Assessment is a bridge between teachers, their instructional method and Students' learning.

Classroom Assessment is a set of techniques that helps teachers to evaluate the student learning progress and to plan for better achievements in future. It consists of a chain of activities containing test taking, evaluation of progress, grading practice, criterion reference testing, obtaining results of assessments, conveying systematically to all stakeholders and at last considering the results plan for a better future. According to Jabbarifar (2009), the assessment is not only to evaluate the student's progress but also to give the true picture of teaching and instructional procedure. The teachers should have a good knowledge of the assessment procedure, the merits and demerits of its different methodologies and the decision to select the correct assessment technique at the correct time to get the required result.

Assessment Practices have a major role in the educational system because all decisions for the future, including instructional, administrative, managerial financial, etc., depend directly or indirectly on the assessment. There has been a lot of research work around the world on the subject of assessment practices and the results of the research are being put into practice.

Research Objectives

- To find out the assessment practices of Secondary school English teachers in Punjab, Pakistan.
- The study also explored what the teachers think about the assessment.

Research Questions

1. How much, teachers are agreed and have a consensus with the factors regarding “Beliefs on assessment” and to what extent these factors are related?
2. What are the areas of assessment and evaluation in which teachers believe that they are capable, skilful, and expert?
3. What are the areas of assessment and evaluation about which teachers believe that they mostly use in the classroom?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Testing is required to enhance human life performance and this factor results in the process of assessment and evaluation. According to Ghaicha (2016) assessment is a tool that can improve someone's progress, or it can also deteriorate. He says that peer and self-assessment should be mostly used and emphasized because these can standardize both assessment and learning as well. Assessment is a linkage between teachers' teaching methodologies and students' academic performances. He says that assessment is the name of a process to test the knowledge and cognitive abilities of a student. He pointed out that the purpose of assessment should be the improvement of learning ability but mostly the objective of classroom and standardized exams have been taken to assign the grade. Jabbarifar (2009) has another point of view about assessment that assessment can be helpful not only improvement of students' learning but also to enhance teaching methodologies. Different assessment types and techniques enhance the different types of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Promotion from one grade to another has been the main goal of teachers, parents, and students in almost every part of the world. Besides, a teacher wants to know to what extent he is succeeding in his goal by teaching the students what he is teaching. So different techniques have been innovated and used to enhance student achievements in this regard.

Teachers have assessment methods to be able to assess students effectively. Teacher collects different kind of information through classroom assessment and based on that information teacher and school administration take decisions about student as well as other elements of the education system (Romanoski, Cavanagh, Waldrip, Dorman, & Fisher, 2005).

The teacher manages the assessment in the classroom how and at what frequency the students will be assessed and how and when to give students feedback. According to McMillan and Hearn (2008), classroom assessment is much important and critical because effective and successful decision-making depends upon the teacher's assessment skills and their effective use.

Volante and Fazio (2007) state that in the modern education era, educational institutes are responsible for the quality education of students, so it is essential to make the teacher skilful in the assessment and evaluation practice which is an important part of education and learning. Research on the issues faced by teachers regarding student assessment practices has been conducted over the last decades to till now. Teachers are not satisfied with the induction training received on assessment skills and practices. The mostly teachers asked that the assessment training were not effective because it relates to higher administrative skills of assessment and no guideline and skills have been taught for practical implementation in a classroom context (Stiggings & Bridgeford, 1985).

METHODOLOGY

It was decided to use a survey design to collect data, descriptive and comparative to explain the features and characteristics of many different kinds of teachers (Mertens, 2010). The study was conducted in public secondary schools of the district Sahiwal. There was a total of 800 schools in the whole district. Out of 800, 494 schools were Secondary schools. The data was obtained from School Education Departments' official Website School Information System (SIS).

Teachers assess students on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis through formal and informal ways. Term-wise and annual exams are held according to the instructions of the school education department. Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) was responsible to held board exams for grades 5 and grade 8 but from 2020 board exams for grade 5 have been replaced by SBA (school-based assessment) under the supervision of the PEC.

In this research two-folded sampling was adopted. In the First step, schools which were reachable to the researcher were selected through the convenience sampling method. In the second step, schools from each Markaz were selected by using a simple random sampling method to ensure that each school in the tehsil (sub-section of a district) had an equal and independent chance of being selected (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Calculating the sample size means that the quantity of required data for research is finalized. A reasonable amount of data will minimize the chances of any error (Abraham & Russell, 2008). The respondents to the research should be from almost every subgroup, for this purpose the teachers were selected in this research based on their training, teaching experience, classes to whom they taught and education level (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

Table 1 *Frequency Table of Demographic Variables*

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
School	Secondary	89	100
Gender	Males	52	58.4
	Females	37	41.6
Age Group	20-29 years	30	33.7
	30-39 years	42	47.2
	40-49 years	11	12.4
	Above 50 years	6	6.7
Teaching Experience	0-5 years	32	36.0
	6-10 years	28	31.5
	10-20 years	21	23.6
	Above 20 years	8	9.0
Highest Degree Level	Bachelor's degree	16	18.0
	Master's degree	72	80.9
	Doctoral Degree	1	1.1
Professional Education	B.Ed	45	50.6
	M.Ed	18	20.2
	Both	19	21.3
	None	7	7.9
Training in assessing students learning	No training received	19	21.3
	Assessments, tests, and measurements were included in the course.	50	56.2
	I took a course.	13	14.6
	I took more than one course.	7	7.9

It was decided to use the CAPS (Classroom Assessment Practice and Skills) questionnaire to collect the data for this research. In this questionnaire, there were 76 items which are close-ended in nature. There were three main divisions made in this questionnaire. The first part was further divided into two sub-parts. Respondent demographic information, educational history, teaching experience, and the level at which they are teaching.

In the second subpart, the thoughts of teachers about classroom assessment practices were obtained and discussed (MacMillan, 2008). This section used close-ended questions to acquire information about assessment pieces of training, teachers' thoughts about test construction and grading tasks (19 items). To collect the above data, a 5-point Likert -Scale was used which contains ranges from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.

The data collected for each question was analyzed in the following way. How many teachers are agreed and have a consensus with the factors regarding “Beliefs on assessment” and to what extent these factors are interrelated? To conclude how much teachers agreed and have a consensus with the factors regarding “Beliefs on assessment” and to what extent these factors are interrelated, descriptive statistics, means and standard deviations were computed. T-tests were applied to check the significant level of agreement between factors and items. By eliminating the effect of one or more factors, what kind of relationship? To answer this question, Partial correlations were determined (Howell, 2007). Partial correlations were also computed to check the connection between each pair of “Thought about Assessment” factors (Mastery, Performance, Grading Practices and Training) while the effect of other aspects remains constant.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This research studied the teachers’ classroom assessment practices, what is the link between teachers’ thoughts about classroom assessment, their perceived skill and to what extent they used assessment practices were observed. Also, teachers were compared based on teacher features (assessment training, subject taught, and experience or not). This chapter contains the results of this research. How many teachers are agreed and have a consensus with the factors regarding “Beliefs on assessment” and to what extent these factors are interrelated?

All four factors were significantly different from each other. To check whether teachers agreed or not to each item and if agreed then to what extent, for each item, descriptive statistics were applied. Overall, most teachers agreed with the items of the Performance factor. But individually the statement with which most teachers agreed was that the purpose of assessment is to monitor students learning progress. 96 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations for “Thoughts about Assessment” Factors and Items
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mini mu	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
Proficiency	89	6.00	25.00	20.43822	.87606
“2) The purpose of classroom assessments is to determine whether students have mastered the learning objectives	89	1	5	4.06	.789
6) The purpose of classroom assessments is to determine the effectiveness of my instruction	89	1	5	3.99	.746
7) Tests help me focus on the skills/knowledge needed by my students.	89	1	5	4.18	.791
12) The purpose of assessment is to monitor student's learning progress	89	1	5	4.29	.678

16) Students should consider grades as feedback for improvement	89	1	5	3.92	.895
Performance	89	6.00	30.00	23.75283	6.66891
4) The purpose of classroom assessments is to determine student grades	89	1	5	3.58	1.009
8) The purpose of classroom assessments is to prepare students for standardized examinations	89	1	5	4.07	.951
9) Students should consider grades as rewards for good work.	89	1	5	4.10	.739
10) The purpose of assessment is to make students accountable for their learning	89	1	5	4.07	.795
11) Teaching for the test is good as long as the test is well constructed	89	1	5	3.80	.956
17) The purpose of classroom assessments is to motivate students	89	1	5	4.13	.815
Grading Expertise	89	3.00	15.00	11.22471	8.83868
13) Student effort should be considered when assigning student grades.	89	1	5	4.08	.742
14) Giving individualized comments for student learning is more important than giving grades	89	1	5	4.04	.811
15) I learned assessment practices that I never use in the classroom	89	1	5	2.31	1.174
Training	89	2.00	10.00	7.2921	1.52407
1) The student assessment training I received was adequate	89	1	5	2.13	1.236
18) I need more training in student assessment, tests, and measurement”.	89	1	5	4.04	.865

How much the teachers are agreed or not with the factors and items about the assessment skills?” To answer the above question, descriptive statistics and sample t-tests were applied to the data. What are the areas of assessment and evaluation in which teachers believe that they are capable, skilful, and expert? Skill subscale was diminished into further six factors (through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

Table 3 Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Skills Factor

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criterion Reference testing	89	16.00	35.00	27.2360	3.56760
“17) Assessing specific course objectives	89	2	5	3.93	.780
19) Making sure the test adequately covers the material taught in class	89	2	5	4.15	.716
23) Developing rubrics (marking keys) for objectively grading students’ assignments	89	1	5	3.67	1.009
24) Fairly assigning grades to all students	89	2	5	4.04	.689
25) Using assessment results when evaluating class improvement	89	1	5	3.88	.781
26) Aligning test items with instructional objectives	89	1	5	3.81	.877
28) Providing written feedback comments along with grades	89	1	5	3.75	.857
Grading Practice	89	11.00	25.00	18.5730	2.97676

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10) Using portfolio assessment	89	1	5	2.15	1.202
15) Including student improvement in the calculation of grades	89	2	5	3.79	.730
16) Including student effort in the calculation of grades	89	1	5	3.66	.976
18) Developing systematic grading procedures	89	1	5	3.76	.739
20) Using peer assessments for student assessment	89	1	5	3.82	.820
Statics Application	89	12.00	30.00	21.7753	4.17175
4) Explaining standardized exam scores to others	89	1	5	3.60	.901
5) Calculating central tendency (average/mean, median, or mode) for teacher-made tests	89	1	5	3.55	1.011
6) Conducting item analysis (item difficulty or item discrimination) for teacher-made tests	89	1	5	3.58	.986
7) Revising a test based on item analysis	89	1	5	3.64	.908
22) Using a table of specifications to plan assessments	89	1	5	3.71	.920
29) Calculating variability (standard deviation) for teacher-made tests	89	1	5	3.70	1.060
Assessment Applications	89	16.00	35.00	26.2584	3.80050
3) Writing test items for higher cognitive levels	89	1	5	3.70	1.027
8) Assessing individual student participation in whole class lessons	89	1	5	3.75	.957
9) Assessment of problem-solving skills	89	1	5	3.73	.902
11) Using assessment results for decision-making about individual students	89	1	5	3.79	.846
12) Determining why students make specific mistakes	89	2	5	3.92	.678
13) Using assessment results when planning to teach	89	1	5	3.75	.816
14) Communicating classroom assessment results to others	89	1	5	3.62	.983
Essay Items	89	5.00	10.00	7.7191	1.06588
2) Writing essay questions	88	2	5	3.80	.697
21) Fairly and consistently grading essay question responses	89	2	5	3.92	.757
Objective Type Items	89	4.00	10.00	7.9888	1.36926
1) Writing multiple-choice questions	89	1	5	3.99	.805
27) Writing true or false questions"	89	1	5	4.00	.892

In teachers' opinion, they are well-skilled in criterion-referenced testing practices. Especially about 90% of teachers marked skilled and very skilled. It shows that they are highly skilful in checking that the test made covers all the academic material taught and is the test is linked with the course objectives.

In these statements, teachers were asked to give their opinion that what is the level of expertise and skill in the: (a) The test made covering all the syllabus and content taught or not (b) giving a grade to students fairly without taking any other factor in mind, (c) developing rubrics. The purpose of three items lying under the head of grading practice was to assess to what extent teachers were skilled in (a) applying the portfolio assessment concept practically, (b) were the teachers include students' efforts at the time of grading, and (c) there should be a systematic procedure of grading should be, were significantly different from each other ($p < .05$). Also, all items that were lying under statistical application usage, were all significantly different from each other regarding what extent teachers agreed or not ($p < .05$).

What are the areas of assessment and evaluation about which teachers believe that they mostly use in the classroom? The result shows that collectively the assessment practice which is mostly used by teachers were criterion-referenced testing practices. In teachers' opinion most

teachers are highly skilful and as a result, use the skill of writing multiple choice questions in constructing the assessment tests. 73 % of respondents (65 out of 89) agreed that they mostly use the skill of objective items.

DISCUSSION

According to educationists and educational policymakers, teachers' assessment practices in the classroom have a key role in the educational, learning and teaching process. The success or failure of any educational system largely depends on it because it is through assessment practices that can be determined whether the educational process is achieving the desired teaching goals or not and to what extent. Educational policies and decisions can be made on their views, recognized skills and the frequency of use in the context of Public Secondary schools, have been discussed.

Most of the researchers consider mastery and performance as one factor (Meece, Anderman & Anderman, 2006), but in this research, they are treated and studied as separate factors. Such that, teachers who sense that the major purpose of assessment is to monitor whether students are learning or not and at which level, check that the students have met the learning objectives and assess whether the teaching and instructional methods are effective or not, the same teachers also think that the main purpose for which all the assessment process is carried out is the preparation of students for standardized or board exams and the assessment process pays the responsibility on students of learning and make them inspired to take good grades. English teachers have diverse thoughts about assessment. They have less knowledge about new thoughts, skills, and methodologies of assessment.

Findings in this research concluded that the use factor depends on the learned skill factor. Teachers are more likely to use the same skills in the classroom that they believe they are more proficient at. Supposing that teachers are most skilful and proficient in the use of criterion-referenced assessment practices, grading practices, and statistical and assessment applications, as they thought that they learned these skills in a better way. Skills regarding Essay Items and Objectives also have high values, but there were relatively weak associations among "skill" and "use" factors. This shows that even though teachers thought skilled in essay and objective items, they rarely use these skills comparatively. Using portfolios and creating items for higher cognitive skills were the weak areas, the teachers do not know well about these skills and as a result, they do not use them. The practical message received from the findings of these results is that there is much need for effective training regarding assessment skills and also practice their use in fields.

CONCLUSION

The results of the research explained the relation between teachers' perceived skill and the rate at which they used grading practices. This exposed those teachers who said that there is not a good standard of skill in grading practices and as a result, there is not much use for grading practice. Especially using portfolios was not known by most teachers and as a result, it was not practised by teachers during the assessment process. The teachers mostly use the old traditional method of assessment. This situation demands training regarding portfolios in which teachers should be trained conceptually and practically in the field. Grading practices involve a lot of activities created to make decisions about student achievement with the purpose to evaluate learning and making instructional and other required changes. If used effectively and properly, grading practices applied by teachers in classroom settings can help students to point out the regions where they need to progress.

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