



ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

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1 INTRODUCTION TO ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

As we teach, it is important to assess and evaluate the teaching and learning process to ensure learning objectives are achieved. Assessment plays an enormous role in the teaching-learning process. It helps teachers and learners to improve teaching and learning, this is a continuous process and a periodic exercise.

1.1 Definition of assessment

Assessment in teaching and learning has been defined in various ways by different authors. In general, assessment is defined as any systematic procedures for collecting, reviewing and using information about learners, so as to make improvement where necessary. This means that assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about learners' learning. In general, assessment is an ongoing interactive process, in which the teacher and learner are involved.



All definitions of assessment point to the fact that assessment is a process by which the teacher gather information about the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the appropriateness of the course or curriculum being implemented. It is more than simply giving marks or grades although that may be a part of it. Assessment plays a crucial role in the education process because it guides teachers on the choice of learning tasks and the approaches to such tasks. Assessment also guides on which aspects of the curriculum need reviewing.

Function and purpose of assessment

The central purpose of assessment is to provide information on learners' achievement and progress and set the direction for an on-going improvement in the teaching/learning process. Some key functions of assessment include the following:

- to identify learners' current performance
- to aid learning
- for review, transfer and certification
- to check on the overall efficacy of the teaching/learning program
- to determine any particular learners' stage of development
- to gain information about learners' specific instructional needs
- to identify any concepts or procedures which may need to be re-taught or reviewed

- to motivate and direct learning
- to provide feedback to learners on their performance

1.1.1 Formative vs. summative assessment

It is important that teachers use different types of assessment in their classroom in order to promote learning. There is so much more to assessments than delivering an end-of-unit exam or preparing for any other test. Assessments help shape the learning process at all points and give insights into a learner's learning. In light of this, it is important for teachers to understand the difference between two types of assessment: formative assessment and summative assessment.

Formative assessment

Formative assessment is carried out throughout a course or project to aid learning. Only because learners made it to the end of a unit test, does not mean they have mastered the skills, so formative assessment is not about assigning grades to learners.

Formative assessments help teachers understand a learner's learning while they teach and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. It helps teachers to track how knowledge is growing and changing in learners in real-time. Some examples of formative assessment include:

- student portfolios;
- class discussions;
- regular quizzes;
- virtual classroom tools as Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com).

Summative assessment

Summative assessment is generally carried out at the end of the course or project, semester or unit. It is evaluative and primarily used to assign learners a course grade. Typically summative assessment occurs at the end of an educational activity and is designed to judge the learner's overall performance.



Summative assessment can also be engaging for learners and useful for your teaching. Try creating assessments that differ from the standard tests, like recording a podcast, writing a script or short play or develop an independent study project. No matter what type of summative assessment you give your students, keep some best practices in mind:

- keep it real-world and relevant;

- make questions clear and instructions easy to follow;
- give a rubric so learners know what is expected of them.

1.1.2 Assessment for learning

Since the turn of the 21st century, emphasis is on 'Assessment for learning. Assessment for learning focusses on the learners and emphasizes assessment as a process of metacognition (knowledge of one's own thought processes) for learners. It emerges from the idea that learning is not just a matter of transferring ideas from someone who is knowledgeable to someone who is not, but is an active process of cognitive restructuring that occurs when individuals interact with new ideas. Within this view of learning, learners are the critical connectors between assessment and learning.



For learners to be actively engaged in creating their own understanding, they must learn to be critical assessors who make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and use it for new learning. Assessment for learning focusses on the explicit fostering of learners' capacity over time to be their own best assessors. Teachers need to start by presenting and modelling external, structured opportunities for learners to assess themselves.

The five principles for 'Assessment for Learning' include:

- The active involvement of learners in their own learning
- The provision of effective feedback to learners
- Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- Recognition of the profound influence assessment has on learner's motivation and self-esteem
- The need for learners to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve

1.1.3 Assessment vs. Evaluation

While assessment focuses on the learning and teaching processes and outcomes, and provides information for improving them, evaluation focuses on grading the quality of learner's outputs. Evaluation is therefore described as the structured interpretation and giving of meaning to results. It looks at original objectives and makes a comparison with what was accomplished. An evaluation can be used as a final review to gauge the quality of instruction. It is always product-oriented. This means that the main question is: "What's been learned?"

Following are a few steps involved in the process of evaluation:

1. Identifying and defining general objectives

In the evaluation process, the first step is to determine what to evaluate and so to set down educational objectives.

2. Selecting teaching points

The next step in the process of evaluation is to select teaching points through which the objectives can be realised. Once the objectives are set up, the next step is to decide the content (curriculum, syllabus, course) to help in the realisation of objectives.

3. Planning suitable teaching and learning activities

Thirdly, the teacher will have to plan the learning activities to be provided to the learners and, at the same time, bear in mind the objectives as well as teaching points.

4. Evaluating

The teacher observes and measures the changes in the behaviour of learners through testing.

5. Using the results as feedback

The last, but not the least, important step in the evaluation process is the use of results as feedback. If the teacher, after testing the learners, finds that the objectives have not been realized to a great extent, she/he will use the results in reconsidering the objectives and in organizing the learning activities.

2 CLASS ASSESSMENT TOOLS

There is no shortage of class assessment tools for teachers to make use of. Many assessment tools are available to help teachers design classroom instruction and enable their learners to improve the process of learning.

2.1 Assessment rubrics



A rubric is an assessment tool used to clearly state what is expected from the learner. It contains a coherent set of criteria (dimensions on which performance is rated), matched with descriptors (tasks or skills being measured) and levels of performance expected (rating scale).

Rubrics can be used for pre-assessment to clarify expectations and grading methods, for assessment to help evaluators focused and objectively assess the learners on the pre-defined expectations and for post-assessment to give learners a clear explanation of their results. Assessment becomes more objective, consistent, defensible and efficient. Rubrics support learners' self-reflection and self-assessment as well as communication between teacher and learners.

Steps and resources

1. Define the assessment criteria and levels of quality, preferably with the learners.
2. Give time to learners to practice and understand the use of the rubric.
3. Once learners are familiar with the tool, use it for self, peer or teacher assessment.
4. Based on the results of self, peer or teacher assessment, teacher gives feedback and guides the learners to improve their work.

Tips

- Use few criteria to keep the rubric user-friendly.
- Rubrics developed in cooperation with learners, increase their acceptance of assessment

2.2 Student portfolio



A student portfolio is a systematic collection of learner work and related material that depicts a learner's activities, accomplishments and achievements in one or more subjects. Portfolios allow for competence-based assessment by measuring the learner's growth and development. Learners develop a sense of ownership about their portfolios and understand where they made progress and where improvement is needed. Contents of a learner's portfolio may vary with the level of the learner and the types of assignments given in class. Some examples are:

- Learner's work (assignments, assessments, evaluations, score sheets, sample products, attendance sheets).
- Reflections, teacher observations, conference records, progress reports, worksheets, artefacts (poems, letter, reading logs and audio /videotape recordings, photos, sketches).

Steps and resources

1. Decide together on the portfolio content, such as samples of learner's work, reflections, teacher observations and conference records, and agree on timelines.
2. Develop assessment criteria and procedures to keep track of the learners' progress.
3. Plan for formal learner-teacher conferences as well as informal meetings in which progress is reviewed and discussed, and reflection encouraged.

Tip

Ask your learners to develop their portfolio online (E-portfolio) using **Padlet** (www.padlet.com). Padlet is an application where learners can easily create a virtual pin board to hold resources and to showcase their work.

2.3 Self - assessment



Learners become better learners when they deliberately think about what they are learning and how they are learning it. In this kind of reflection, learners step back from the learning process to reflect on their learning strategies and their progress as learners. This encourages learners to become independent learners and increases their motivation.

Self-assessment is a meaningful exercise that helps learners to critique their own work and form judgments about their strengths and weaknesses. It also informs the teacher about learners' thoughts on their progress, and gives the teacher feedback on how learners are internalising the course material.

Execution

- Provide clear targets and criteria against which learners can measure their own performance.
- Guide learners in defining their own personal and achievable short-term learning goals.
- Guide the learners to ensure they provide sufficient evidence to support their self-assessment, in line with the set criteria or rubric.
- Allow time for learners to share their self-assessments with a peer or in a small group.
- Repeat the self-assessment exercise several times until learners are familiarised with it.

Tips

Weaker learners tend to mark themselves up with the self-assessment technique. To tackle this issue self-assessment can be accompanied by a form of peer-assessment.

2.4 Peer - assessment



One way for learners to internalise the characteristics of quality work is by evaluating the work of their peers. Peer-assessment involves learners reciprocally evaluating each other's work. To do this, they must have a clear understanding of what they are looking for in their peers' work. Evaluating peers' work enhances the evaluators' own learning and self-confidence. Peer-assessment empowers learners to take responsibility and manage their own learning and develop life-long assessment skills. It also enhances learners' learning through knowledge sharing and encourages them to engage with course material more deeply.

Execution

- Identify activities for which learners might benefit from peer feedback.
- Design guidelines or rubrics with clearly defined tasks for the reviewer.
- During in-class peer review sessions, give directions and time limits and discuss with learners the rubrics' criteria.

Tip

Consider having learners evaluate anonymous assignments for more objective feedback.

3 REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Reflection is about critically examining oneself, and it is a facet of effective teachers. It is a critical element of professional growth. Reflective practice involves the teacher asking questions about the teaching and learning process like. This topic will provide insights in the essential elements of reflective practice.

3.1 Definition of reflective practice

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on your own actions in order to engage in a process of continuous learning. It is a way of studying your own experiences to improve the way you teach. It is very useful for teachers who want to carry on professional learning throughout their teaching career. The act of reflection is a great way to increase confidence and become a more proactive and qualified professional.

Examining your own practice is one of the best ways to improve it. ”

All teachers, just as any other professional, have a duty of care to enhance their skills and knowledge via a process of continuous reflective practice, as it is an integral part of maintaining professional status.

A teacher should be able to observe her/his behaviour, feelings, thoughts, skills, attitudes, biases from an objective viewpoint. It offers teachers a more thorough understanding of dilemmas in their classroom and promotes new ways of thinking. Some of the functionalities of reflective practice are the following:

- It can help teachers recognize and continue good practices.
- It can make teachers become aware of aspects of current practices that could be improved.
- It can help teachers identify areas that require considerable attention.

3.2 The reflective cycle

Graham Gibbs, a sociologist and psychologist, developed a tool for reflective practice, called 'Reflective Cycle'. It is a circle model which is structured in phases and breaks down the experience, allowing you to reflect upon an experiences as it happened. This tool allows you to better your performance as it is happening, as well as improving it for the future.

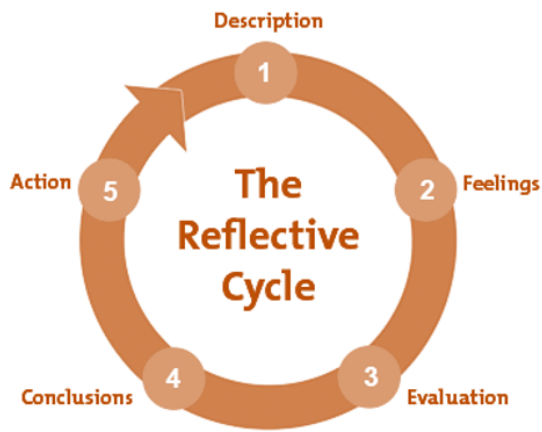


Figure: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

1. Description

The first step of the Reflective Cycle is to describe the learning process in detail. It is important to ask yourself the questions:

- What happened and who was there?
- What did you do?
- What was the result?

2. Feelings

Reflect upon what was thought and felt during the process. It is important to ask the questions:

- How did you feel before the process?
- What did you feel while it was taking place?
- How were you feeling afterwards?
- How do you think the other participants felt?

3. Evaluation

Thirdly, it is important to evaluate the experience. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What was successful during the activity and why?
- What didn't go well?
- What did you contribute?
- How did others contribute?

4. Conclusion

Once the experience has been evaluated, you can start drawing conclusion about what happened. Ask yourself the following questions:

- If you were faced with the same situation again, what would you do differently.
- What skills do you need to develop, so that you can handle this type of situation better?

5. Action

You should now have some possible actions to deal with similar situations more effectively in the future. Once you have a plan and identified the areas you will work on, commit to taking action and make sure to review progress.

