SELF-ASSESSMENT: RESEARCH VERSUS PRACTICE

DUMITRACHE, C[osmin] L[aurentiu] & DUMITRACHE, R[amona]

Abstract: This paper proposes to discuss the concept of self-assessment in order to show that over-reliance on such testing does not affect instruction or impede school improvement efforts. A range of assessment approaches is used (a four phase model for guiding student self-assessment), who should prepare students for life in the real world. The attempt is not to state that teachers can be asked progressively to disappear from the scheme, but to emphasize that self-assessment add more self-confidence in reaching their goals, when used correctly, removing skepticism about validity of test scores.
Key words: self-assessment, guiding model, improvement efforts, reaching goals

1. INTRODUCTION

School self-assessment is defined as a procedure involving systematic information gathering which is initiated by the school itself and aims to assess the functioning of the school and the attainment of its educational goals for the purposes of supporting decision making and learning and for fostering school improvement as a whole (Schildkamp, 2007).

Self- assessment is part of the quality care cycle and it is mainly aimed at determining the quality, and improving the quality of education.

Self-assessment, in the career planning process, is the first step. It is the process of gathering information about yourself in order to make an informed career decision and to get better results in their work in the future.

A self-assessment should include a look at the following: values, interests, personality, and skills. Self-assessment is a method because of its impact on student's performance through self-effectiveness and personal ambition. Evidence about the positive effect of self-assessment on student performance is in particular mainly convincing for difficult tasks, especially in academically oriented schools. Perhaps just as important, students like to evaluate their work.

2. FLUCTUATIONS IN IDEAS OF EVALUATION

It is important to understand the context of assessment reform and the experiences of teachers who are experimenting or adopting new assessment practices.

Conceptions of good assessment are moving toward direct observation of performance rather than short written tests that correlate with the target aptitudes. In these performance assessments, students are working with complex tasks or dealing with real-life problems. These instruments are often administered to groups of students because team work represents out-of-school performance better than individual production . Such approaches to testing would be ideal for the many classrooms today that focus on collaborative and cooperative approaches to learning.

Real assessment standards require precise specification of what will be measured, identification of multiple levels of achievement, and descriptions of opportunities to study. The teachers should support and allow students to be assessed at an appropriate level of difficulty, when ready.

Briscoe found that when beliefs about teaching and the constructivist learning theory implicit in alternate assessment conflicted, conventional test practices returned. In Briscoe's study, conflict centered on one teacher's theory of how assessment influenced learning.

Finally, one of the most challenging shifts in conceptions of assessment is related to the changing role of the teacher and the changing educational environment. The context for educators is changing rapidly and dramatically. It is more complex and volatile. Teachers are in an environment of conflicting and ever-increasing demands where the school is expected to meet all these demands (Briscoe, 1994).

3. THE SELF-ASSESSMENT MODEL

Research indicates that self-assessment may offer a starting point for further analysis and have a main role in encouraging an increase in learning. It may be also a useful way to inform audiences about student's quality achievements.

When students evaluate personal performance in a positive way, self-assessments encourage students to set higher targets and engage more resources or effort. This combination means fulfillment, whose result is self-judgment (Ross et al., 1998 a).

Several instruments for self-assessment are available. These instruments help to collect data on educational indicators. Data on these indicators help to determine student's achievements quality. Ross defines educational indicators as statistics that allow for value judgments to be made about the most important aspects of the functioning of educational systems.

Usually five kinds of educational indicators are distinguished:

1. Input indicators: for example, the characteristics of the pupil population, the composition of the pupil population, the constitution of the teachers' team, the financial and human resources available to the school

2. Process indicators: such as the goals, the education offered the learning environment, educational leadership, evaluation frequency

3. Output indicators: factors such as success rates of pupils, exam results, achievement and value-added pupil achievement results

4. Impact indicators: these factors refer to changes in other sectors of society which may be seen as the effects of education

5. Context indicators: factors which refer to society at large and structural characteristics of national education systems (Ross et al., 1998 b).

Information on process indicators is most suited for determining the quality of education. Traditions of teaching,

learning and assessment and theories of learning and self-regulation, influence present day assessment practice.

The problem is that without teacher involvement in student self-assessment, they have no control over students, in the way of checking if they are on an upward or downward path. The teacher's main goal is not to check if students evaluate their own work (they will, regardless of teacher involvement), but to make sure they will try to show them how to do it in the most effective way (Oscarson, 2009)

4. A FOUR-PHASE MODEL FOR GUIDING STUDENT'S SELF-ASSESSMENT

PHASE 1- Involving students in characterizing the criteria that will be used to asses their performance. Involving students in determining the assessment criteria commences a negotiation. Neither establishing school targets nor acceding to student preferences can be as successful as creating a shared set that students observe to be meaningful. Using studies about their studying place, as an example, indicate that involving students in making decisions about their studying place increases satisfaction and goal commitment. Extra to increasing student dedication to instructional targets, negotiating intentions enables teachers to help students set goals that are specific, immediate, and moderately difficult, characteristics that contribute to greater effort. It also creates an opportunity in influencing orientations toward studying, a long term guidance effort, that is in cooperative learning contexts since students sometimes prefer adopting orientations in group learning (such as permitting someone else do all the work) that impede studying.

PHASE 2- Instructing students how to apply the criteria to their own work. If students have been engaged in a negotiation in the previous phase, the criteria that result will be a combined set of personal and school goals. Since the goals are not entirely their own, students need to see examples of what they mean in practice. These examples help students to understand exactly what the criteria mean to them. Teacher modeling is important, as is providing many numerous examples of what particular categories mean, using language that connects criteria to evidence in the appraisal.

PHASE 3- Offering students feedback on their self-assessments. Students' initial understanding of the criteria and how to apply them are likely to be deficient. Teachers have to help students recalibrate their way of understanding by arranging for students to receive feedback (from the teacher, peers, and themselves) on their attempts of implementing the criteria. Regarding that different sources (e.g., peers and teacher) are used to obtain data for comparison, it helps students in developing accurate self-assessments.

PHASE 4- Helping students developing effective goals and action plans. The most difficult part of teaching students how to evaluate their work consists of outlining ways of providing support for students as they use self-evaluative data to set new goals and levels of effort. Without teacher's help, students may not know if they reached their target or not. The students can also bind different levels of fulfillment of the learning strategies with the effort spent. Finally, teachers can help students create applicable action plans in which possible and practical to achieve easily goals are viable as a set of specific action intentions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Self-assessment is peerless in requesting students to reflect on their achievement and any regular test procedures are not offering any information about students' inner states while carrying out the test, their future interpretations about the quality of their work and the targets they fixed in order to respond effectively to feedback.

Educational assessment is an integral part of the quest for improved education. Through assessment, education stakeholders seek to determine how well students are learning and whether students and institutions are progressing toward the goals that have been set for educational systems.

While students advance in the schooling process, their skepticism about the validity of test scores increases. Students judge self-assessment much better than any other kinds of assessment they like self-assessment because it offers a better view about expectations and gave students feedback that can be used for getting a better quality work.

Self-assessment has an indirect effect on achievement through self-efficacy (beliefs about one's ability to perform actions that lead to desired ends). What is crucial is how a student evaluates a performance. Positive self-evaluations encourage students to set higher goals and commit more personal resources to learning tasks. Negative self-evaluations lead students to embrace goal orientations that conflict with learning, select personal goals that are unrealistic, adopt learning strategies which are ineffective, exert low effort and make excuses for performance. Higher self-efficacy translates into higher achievement (Ross et al., 1998, a).

Achieving these goals requires a strong connection between educational assessments and modern theories of cognition and learning. Without this connection, assessment results provide incomplete, and perhaps misleading, information about what has been learned and appropriate next steps for improvement. Creating better assessments should not be viewed as a luxury, but as a necessity.

Students need to be able to appraise their performance accurately for themselves so that they themselves understand what more they need to learn and do not become dependent on their teachers.

A fundamental reason for self-assessment is to help the learner become aware of achievement reached at any given time and over a longer term, and in this way enhance learning.

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