

# A Practice-based Reflection on Assessment in Effective Teaching

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**Abstract:** Assessment tracks students' learning process whenever learning occurs. Different assessment methods are used in different teaching conditions and using the methods properly contributes to a successful lesson where learning progress is expected to be the key objective. Therefore, understanding assessment, reflecting on its applicability and conducting the methods suitably is of great importance for teachers in teaching effective lessons.

**Keywords:** Assessment; Effective teaching; Learning progress

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## 1. Introduction

The effectiveness of a teacher's lessons has a great effect on students' learning progress. According to Herring, Curran, Stone, Davidson, Ahrabi-Fard & Zhanova (2015) that effective teaching could lead to students' success in the learning. How a lesson goes depends largely on what teaching strategies the teacher uses, how the teacher uses these strategies to assess students' progress and how the teacher uses the results of assessment to adapt to teaching. Among all the characteristics of effective teaching (KDE, 2018), assessment is the key while learning occurs because it constantly provides teachers with information that tells the teacher what to do before, during and after lessons.

Assessment is of central importance in education (Taras, 2010) and it serves a variety of functions. Good assessment supports students' further study in a traceable and measurable way. As any activity undertaken by a student provides an opportunity for an assessment of the performance (NRC, 2001), one assessment tool can not fit all situations. The main two tools that the teachers use to assess students nowadays are formative assessment and summative assessment (Dixson & Worrell, 2016), whose relation is that formative assessment involves gathering data for improving learning while summative assessment is to use these data to assess how much the students know after a period of time's learning. Therefore, the teachers must know what the two assessment strategies are and how to adopt them.

## 2. Assessment Methods and Examples of their Usage

### 2.1 Formative Assessment

#### 2.1.1 Definition

Formative assessment refers to assessment for learning. As shown by Assessment Reform Group (2002) cited in Boyle and Charles (2010: 286) that assessment for learning or AfL is defined as 'the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there'. Therefore, assessment for learning is not just a simple know-then-go procedure because the teachers must use the assessment results to alter the ways of delivering a lesson so as to make effective learning happens.

#### 2.1.2 Commonly Used Methods

When it comes to select AfL methods for activities that require instant interactions, there are two perspectives could be taken into considerations: the teacher-centered assessment and the student-centered assessment.

The teacher-centered assessment refers that the assessment is relatively more controlled. The teacher asks questions verbally or non-verbally and students need to answer them with expected answers. This is usually completed in the ways such as multiple choice questions, true or false questions, questioning and thumbs-up. An example of using multiple choice questions

method is that after finishing teaching a language point, the teacher shows a multiple choice question on the board and asks students to choose the correct one from given answers. The result of this assessment decides whether or not there will be a further discussion about the language point. The true or false questions method is used in a similar way with multiple choice questions method where the teacher provides questions with fixed answers. Another commonly used way is questioning where the teacher asks questions verbally and students answer them. Thumbs-up could be part of questioning method because students still need to answer questions in this process but answering with their thumbs. For instance, the teacher asks the question “Do you agree with the idea?” the students show thumbs-up to agree and the opposite to disagree. If there is no need of instant interactions, walking around the classroom to check students’ work is also effective. The teacher collects questions while circulating and then gives feedback to all.

The student-centered assessment is less controlled and mainly refers to self-assessment. Self-assessment allows students to reflect on their learning by themselves instead of being limited by the teacher to reflect on a specific aspect and it helps students test by themselves to know where they are, what they have known and what they do not know. This is supported by Andrade and Valtcheva (2009:13), who defined self-assessment as ‘a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly’. However, student-centered does not mean the activity is completely managed by students, it still requires teacher management and guidance. For example, the teacher could ask students to self-assess by thinking about WWW (What Went Well) and CDB (Could Do Better) for the speaking practice during the public speaking lesson and then ask students to share their opinions. This activity shows teacher management and guidance when 1) the teacher organizes discussions and 2) there is a need to give students key words or clues to guide their self-assessment.

## **2.2 Summative Assessment**

### **2.2.1 Definition**

According to Taras (2010), summative assessment is a judgement which encapsulates all the evidence up to a given point, which generally means the scores of examinations. Fautley and Savage (2008) also claimed that the feature of summative assessment is to look back and sum up on students’ achievement by giving judgements and marks. The teacher uses summative assessment as a way to test students what learning has taken place and what knowledge has been obtained during a period of teaching and learning as the summative assessment usually applied at the end of a period of instruction to measure the outcome of student learning (Kibble, 2017).

### **2.2.2 Commonly Used Methods**

The main source for summative assessment is test including external tests and school’s own tests (Black, Harrison, Hodgen, Marshall and Serret, 2010). The teacher marks and grades students’ work such as end of unit tests and end of term tests to assess students’ learning. The assessment data is used to track students’ learning progress and for teachers to reflect on present teaching as well as further planning. The forms of test are diverse and the teacher should choose the most suitable one from, for example, closed-book test, open-book test, practice paper, research paper, audio record, etc. Generally, to assess students’ subject knowledge, the teacher could use closed-book test; to assess speaking ability, the teacher could record students’ audios; and to assess extra-curriculum learning, the teacher could ask students to write research paper.

## **3. Discussion and Conclusion**

Although examinations and grading are widely used in summative assessment, some people raise worries about it as it seems focus too much just on final scores of the examinations. People concern that the strong pressure regarding final results forces the teachers to pay too much attention to preparing students’ tests rather than focus on finding ways to improve students’ learning. However, the final scores of the summative assessment are used to set targets for students which will guide the teachers’ teaching and students’ learning and the teachers will use the targets to do differentiation or set individual support plan to support students’ learning process. In fact, grades contribute to motivate student’ self-study. According to the research carried out by Trotter (2006) that more time of the students will be spent on the subject if the subject is arranged with summative assessment. Raupach, Brown, Anders, Hasenfuss and Harendza (2013) also reported that summative examinations affect students’ learning behavior as students will spend more than 2h/week on voluntary self-study. Therefore, examination as the main form of summative assessment is still necessary.

Both formative assessment and summative assessment can not work alone because effective formative assessment leads to a pleasant summative result while an inadequate summative assessment result indicates an ineffective formative assessment

process. Whenever using assessment, the teachers must think about its applicability and differentiate difficulty to adapt to students' abilities. No matter which assessment method the teachers use, a timely and detailed feedback should always be provided to confirm with students in terms of their learning because the key to assessment is to support students in making progress.

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