

The significance of Authentic Assessment in the Curriculum of 2013

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Abstract

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process and it is used to see whether the teaching and learning process can run as expected and reach the desired objectives. Based on the Implementation guidelines of Curriculum 2013, it is implied that authentic assessment is the most suitable technique to use. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) state that authentic assessment refers to the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, attitudes on instructionally-relevant activities. It includes performance assessment, portfolios, and student self-assessment. Authentic assessment places heavy demands on teachers' professional skills since it calls for independent judgment and interpretation of student performance. It also takes times and careful planning to be used effectively. Teachers need professional development and support to design and use it that effectively addresses multidisciplinary understanding and critical thinking skills. Teachers need to collaborate with their colleagues to try out new assessments and to discuss the assessment they are using. Without proper knowledge, skills, attitude, and collaboration, teachers will almost certainly have problems in advancing beyond rudimentary uses of these new approaches

Key words: authentic assessment

A. Introduction

Curriculum change is common in education. Curriculum in education should be evaluated from time to time in order to meet the needs from various parties. Consequently, it continually changes. The emergence of a new curriculum may overwhelm for some parties. They may worry whether they will be able to apply it well. Even just to understand it may pose certain challenge. It seems so hard to understand a new thing. The emergence of Curriculum 2013 is quite shocking for some people since they consider it so different from the previous one. In order to understand the new curriculum, it is necessary for us to read and examine the whole document, see the structure, understand the content, and figure out how to apply it in teaching and learning process. Many components need to be considered to understand the whole things of the curriculum- the goals, objectives , the course content, the sequence, etc. - but in this short paper, I would like to focus the discussion on the assessment part.

Assessment is a component of a curriculum design. It is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Teachers assess students' learning from the beginning until the end of the teaching process. Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain than tests. It can be in the form of feedback, comments, questions, confirmations, corrections, quizzes, tests, etc. (Brown, 2004: 4). Airasian (1994: 5) defines assessment as the process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to aid in decision making. Assessment is a general term that includes all the ways teachers gather information in their classrooms.

Assessment can be categorized into two big categories, informal and formal assessment. Informal assessment can take a number of forms starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching, and other impromptu feedback to the students' performance. Informal assessment is embedded in classroom tasks designed to elicit performance without recording result and making fixed judgments about a student's competence. Formal assessments, on the other hand, are exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and students an appraisal of student achievement. And tests are included in the formal assessment (Brown, 2004: 5-6).

Based on its function, assessment can be formative or summative. Brown (2004: 6) states that formative assessment is done in the process of forming students' competence and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the students) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (formation) of learning. For all practical purposes, all kinds of informal assessments are formative in nature. Summative assessment, on the other hand, aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. A summation of what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished objectives, but doesn't necessarily point the way to future progress. Final exams in a course and general proficiency exams are examples of summative assessment. They are formal assessment.

B. Assessment mentioned in the Curriculum 2013

The assessment mentioned in the document of a curriculum or the ones we mention in our lesson plan are the formal assessment. Based on the Implementation Guidelines of the Curriculum 2013, it is stated that: 1) assessment is directed to measure students' competence stated in the curriculum, 2) it is basically criterion-referenced assessment, 3) It is an ongoing process, that all indicators are assessed, and then analyzed to see what have been or have not been achieved by students, and then to locate students' difficulties in achieving the competence, 4) The result of the assessment is used to give feed backs and follow-up activities for students to reach the competence.

Related to the competence that must be learned by students, Curriculum 2013 mentions the terms *Core competence* and *basic competence*. Core competence is the realization of the standard of competence that must be achieved by the graduates upon completion of certain education levels. It contains the description of qualities that must be achieved, in the forms of moral/ religious values (core competence 1), social attitudes (core competence 2), knowledge (core competence 3), and skills or the application of knowledge they have learned (core competence 4). The quality of the core competence must be balanced between the hard skills and soft skills. Basic competence, on the other hand, is the competence attained by each subject matter for each level or grade. It is the content or competences of a certain subject derived from the core competence.

The Implementation Guideline number 1 states that assessment is directed to measure student's competence stated in the curriculum. This means that our assessment should be able

to measure the students' moral or religious values, their social attitude, their knowledge, and their skills. Knowledge can easily be measured using tests or traditional assessment, such as multiple choice tests, matching, completion, short answer, etc. Skills can be measured using performance assessment, such as oral performance. But how could we measure social attitude or moral values? This certainly needs other types of assessment or an alternative way to assess those competences. Brown (2004: 251) states that alternative in assessment gained its popularity when there was a rebellion against the notion that all people and all skills could be measured by traditional tests. Teachers and students were becoming aware of the shortcomings of traditional standardized tests. They proposed to assemble additional measures of students, such as portfolios, journals, observations, self assessments, peer assessments, and the like, in an effort to triangulate data about students.

Brown and Hudson, 1998: 645-655) sum up the characteristics of alternatives in assessment as follows:

1. Require students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
2. Use real-world contexts or simulations;
3. Are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities;
4. Allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day;
5. Use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
6. Focus on processes as well as products;
7. Tap into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills;
8. Provide information about both the strength and the weaknesses of students;
9. Are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered;
10. Ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment;
11. Encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria; and
12. Call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 1) state that alternative assessment consists of any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction. Alternative assessment is by definition criterion-referenced and is typically authentic because it is based on activities that represent classroom and real-life setting. Assessment is authentic when it corresponds to and mirrors good classroom instruction, when the results can be used to improve instruction based on accurate knowledge of student progress. This is essential in making assessment authentic because we and also our students should find assessment to be important for improving teaching and learning. Authentic implies that tasks used in assessment are valued in the real-world by students. So, authentic assessment is what we need in the implementation of curriculum 2013. It is in accordance with the guideline number 2, stating that it is basically criterion-referenced assessment, and number 4, that the result of the assessment is used to give feed backs and follow-up activities for students to reach the competence.

O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 11-14) further explain that authentic assessment is the multiple forms of assessment that reflects student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities. This is in accordance with guideline number 3

stating that the assessment should be an ongoing process, that all indicators are assessed, and then analyzed to see what have been or have not been achieved by students, and then to locate students' difficulties in achieving the competence.

Authentic assessments include oral performance (interviews, story/ text retelling), writing samples, projects/exhibitions, experiments/demonstrations, constructed-response items, teacher observations, and portfolios, self-assessment and peer-assessment (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996, Brown, 2004). In oral interviews, students can respond orally to questions about a range of topics, and the teacher can ask probe questions to determine student comprehension or command over specific aspects of the language. In constructed-response items, students read and review textual materials and then respond to a series of open-ended questions eliciting comprehension and higher-order thinking. This type of assessment is authentic in that it draws on the kinds of thinking and reasoning skills students use in a classroom, presents problems or questions that are typical of classroom instruction, and encourages students to apply classroom learning in real-life settings.

Teacher observation can be a way to assess student learning. Teachers often observe students' attention to tasks, responds to different types of assignments etc. In a planned classroom activity, teachers can observe student's use on academic language, and interaction to ensure that they are on task and working productively. In order to turn the observations into assessments, we need to record observations systematically over time to note changes in student performance (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Furthermore they state that the use of authentic assessment places greater demands on teachers than the use of traditional assessment. Time and management skills are needed to design and use these assessments, and judgment is required in reaching conclusion about the student learning and student progress.

In order to apply authentic assessment, teachers are advised to work collaboratively with their colleagues and gain support from the school administrator and also from students' parents. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) suggest 8 steps to design authentic assessments:

1. Build a team
2. Determine the purposes of the authentic assessments
3. Specify objectives
4. Conduct professional development on authentic assessment
5. Collect examples of authentic assessments
6. Adapt existing assessments or develop new ones
7. Try out the assessments
8. Review the assessment

The demands for the technical quality of assessments focus on the reliability and validity. Reliability is the consistency of the assessment in producing the same score on different testing occasions or with different raters. Inter-rater reliability is important in authentic assessments to ensure consistency and fairness. The use of proper scoring rubrics can also help consistency in scoring. Clear and sound scoring rubrics are basics in implementing authentic assessment.

In developing and using authentic assessment, there is no substitute for effective professional development. Staff development activities are needed in order to help teachers reach agreement in scoring any authentic assessment. The staff development may cover: 1) orientation to the assessment tasks, 2) clarification of the scoring rubrics, 3) practice scoring 4) record the scores, 5) check reliability, and 6) follow- up activities.

Validity is also an important aspect in assessment. Two types of validity are of most concern with authentic assessments. The first one is content validity, or the correspondence between curriculum objectives and the objectives being assessed. The second is consequential validity, or the way in which the assessment is used to benefit the teaching and learning processes and to benefit students (Darling-Hammond, 1994, Shepard, 1993 in O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Content validity or curriculum validity is very important to ensure correspondence between curriculum objectives and the content of the assessment, and to make sure that the assessment represents thinking skills in the curriculum. Because authentic assessments provide in-depth assessment of student knowledge and skills, curriculum validity is all the more important.

Related to the consequential validity of authentic assessment, O'Malley and pierce (1996:26) state: "The discussion of the usefulness of assessments for instruction leads directly to consequential validity. Assessments have consequential validity to the extent that they lead teachers to focus on classroom activities which support student learning and are responsive to individual student needs. One of the major considerations in the design of assessment is authenticity with respect to classroom activities. If assessments are in fact authentic, the teacher will naturally include the result of the assessments in instructional planning. Because performance assessments should be used on an ongoing basis, teachers should have the information they need to review student performance to verify that students are profiting from instruction. Having this information available enables teachers to investigate the effect of their teaching on student learning and to reformulate their instruction so that it becomes more effective."

Conclusion

Authentic assessments are what we need in the implementation of curriculum 2013. With authentic assessments we can measure students competences stated in the curriculum, monitor the on-going process of student learning, find student difficulties and help them to attain the learning objectives and develop the core and basic competences. Authentic assessments fulfill the curriculum validity and consequential validity so that they are very useful in the teaching and learning process. In order to be able to design and use authentic assessments properly, professional development or training for teachers on the use of authentic assessment is mostly needed.

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