

Foundations of Teaching for Learning 3 by อนุญัตน์ บั้งเส็ง

Part 1: Describe what you understand to be the relationship between assessment, curriculum, and teaching.

There are different types of assessments that can be used, depending on the type of learning that is to be achieved. An assessment must achieve the following purposes: communication, valuing what is taught, reporting out, without causing the removal of equality through sorting by grades. They are meant to be provocative in nature.

Assessment can be seen as an efficacious means of communication between teacher and students. The student is able to communicate the learning to their teacher who would in turn return the commentary of their learning.

Assessments can be formative (used to monitor student learning and is given at regular intervals in a course/syllabus) or summative (used to evaluate student learning, tests all the learned content at the end). It is possible that peer/self-evaluations could form some of this learning, as the students would also have to take on the perspective of the teacher.

The idea of having marks awarded in assessments has the purpose of informing the student the extent to which they have managed to master the syllabus that they are trying to learn and also allows the teacher to revise their teaching methods if the marks are found to be mediocre. Formative assessments will also allow students to benefit from it and be able to pick up on their mistakes, since formative assessments, if accompanied with summative assessments, would have relatively low weightage. In this regard, feedback really matters a great deal it can allow for more transparent learning; this will require the intervention of the teacher and/or peers.

It is impossible to discuss assessment without looking at curriculum or teaching as these are intertwined with each other.



Curriculum targets, also known as prescribed learning outcomes, could be viewed like a standard framework to the way that the syllabus is supposed to be taught. If the list of curriculum goals is made clear to the students, they may be able to follow lessons better as they will know how the teacher is intending to go about the syllabus: covering some seemingly useless topic which actually is meant as a stepping stone for the next topic which has far more application in real life. Apart from a more lucid sense of direction, the use of assessments would also help to allow them to focus with respect to the goals.

The teacher is very important in this kind of thing. They need to be able to provide feedback on the assessments that they do carry out, to find out the weaknesses of their students and to work on them, to ensure that they do not judge work based on factors other than the work itself. For feedback to be effective, the student must not only get the feedback, but also have the willingness and time to make good use of it. While it would not be appropriate to flatter the student's work for things they did not include/include incorrectly, they must be able to do it with equality to all and also ensure that it will not be deleterious to their self-esteem. Even in peer evaluations, they must also try to ensure that the students know what good feedback is and enforce giving proper feedback, as it would otherwise mean that some students may not take it seriously, or worse, criticize on their peer and reduce the equality.

Ideally, the school and the world would be homogeneous with regard to race, religion, language and every other distinction that could possibly lead to segregation to any degree. This would mean that the teacher would not have to try to achieve social equity and as such create fair assessment. However, such classes rarely form, and besides, having a homogeneous class is actually disadvantageous culturally as it would create an unrealistic learning environment in preparing for the world. Some races like Maoris and Blacks have been looked down upon historically, as with women in general in developing countries. There is the need to have inter-cultural skills in addition to any skills from the academic content learned.

As the classroom situation would most likely incorporate different races and religions especially in places like the USA and Singapore, there is the need to be able to ensure that everyone has a fair learning environment, regardless of their origin. This is why teachers often have goals that must go beyond their curriculum. Having good habits of mind (curiosity, flexible learning, persistence, setting realistic goals) and social skills (turn taking, respecting others regardless of origin) would be two important skills to impart regardless of the syllabus.

Part 2 (Question was related to effectiveness of objectively scored items vs essay items)

Before I can answer the question, I need to define what objectively scored questions are. They are questions, often multiple choice or true/false questions, which aim to get the student to give a single, succinct answer to a given question. The questions here are examples of objectively scored questions. This is in contrast to the essay items, in which an essay to answer an open-ended question is written instead, and it tests the students' planning and organization in writing a relatively long (not necessarily objective) response to the question. This peer assessment is an example of an essay item. (if you want, พี่น้องหน้าเหมือนกันปะ Hog Riders.)

The school system I know best is that of Phuket International Academy. There are different subjects in the curriculum: Thai, English, Economics, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics, for instance. Each subject has its own form of assessment; almost all the coursework, as well as the language and humanities summative assessment papers for the most part, had used the essay format. In the sciences and math, as well as in formative assessments for the humanities, it was far more common to see objectively scored questions. The questions aimed to test on the student's understanding of not only the concept, but also the application of the given concept in a given scenario/case study.

Formative assessment through objectively scored questions can play a very crucial role in terms of having the teacher try to figure out their students' strengths and weaknesses in a given subject, even if (as in Economics) the final exam is in essay form. This is because both essays and objectively scored questions are designed to test a student's knowledge of the work that is supposed to be studied.



I remember a time when the teacher (**Ms Juliana Tenggara**) was teaching microeconomics and macroeconomics with equal emphasis; however, after a half-hour MCQ test on both sections, she used the results and found that the macroeconomics section scores were significantly lower than that of the microeconomics section. Thereafter she devoted much more time to work on the students' weaknesses: that is, the parts of the macroeconomics section where most students got incorrect.

She could very well have used (an) essay question(s) to find our capability with the various components of the subject. Both types of assessment involved students having to understand the core ideas and points within the subject and can be used to measure many important educational achievements. They both involve the selection of ideas and

concepts in terms of what would be most appropriate and relevant for the given question. However, she most likely knew the various teaching methods and the crucial differences between the use of objective test items and essays. She knew about the weaknesses of practicing with essay questions. They would be relatively difficult to score accurately (and hence would make it more difficult to evaluate the students' skill properly); students would be more likely to spend more time writing than actually thinking about the question, meaning that they may not use the knowledge properly; also, since she knew the students, it meant that there would inevitably be bias from the students' past work/background when she grades such papers no matter how hard she tried to avoid doing so. Less time would likely have to be spent marking the papers, so students can get comprehensive feedback more quickly. Although it may be harder (and more time consuming) to prepare quality multiple choice questions, this can be done significantly beforehand as the teacher knows the syllabus that is to be taught and can prepare questions based on those grounds.

The scores to such assessments, apart from giving the teacher knowledge about how well the class is performing, also allows the students themselves to ascertain their relative knowledge through class ranking. Progression needs to be indexed to the curriculum and be realistic about how learning takes place; the tools that are used to score have to be valid. However, class ranking by itself is not conclusive, since the group that one compares themselves with is not necessarily an evenly distributed group (in terms of ability); for instance, being top in the class may mean that the whole class did badly, rather than the person having aced the paper. Stanines can help as a standardized score would take certain factors like the difficulty of the test and the time of year into account unlike the raw score, thereby reducing the margin of error.

Of course, the use of objectively scored questions, particularly the binary choice type (true/false) by itself, has its own weakness. If used by itself, even if the student had absolutely no idea of the answers, it is possible to get lucky and obtain a score far higher than what they should get based on their knowledge, a problem that doesn't arise from essay questions. To counter that, she has used a lot of multiple binary selections as well as matching lists (with the options to choose from exceeding the number of questions). The multiple choice questions (especially definition questions) were made such that the most attractive answer to the layman (one who did not study the syllabus) would be an incorrect one.

Consequently, I find that the practices used in Phuket International Academy link up quite closely to that of the "who needs to be taught what next" idea.