

Exploring classroom assessment and its importance in 21st-Century Learning

Meneroka pentaksiran bilik darjah dan kepentingannya dalam Pembelajaran Abad Ke-21

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Abstract: Classroom assessment differs from examinations and other student evaluation forms. The fundamental purpose of classroom assessment is to enable teachers and students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom by utilising a learner-centred, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, and embedded in best practices approach. Assessment for learning, assessment of learning, and assessment as learning are the three types of classroom assessments that most education systems focus on. Assessment for learning is commonly used in classroom assessments to encourage and motivate students to learn. It is vital to ensure students learn what they need to learn. As a result, teachers' assessment procedures are required to provide accurate and indicative information about a student's current level of learning. This paper aims to provide literature reviews on issues regarding assessment for learning in an ESL classroom. The issues reviewed began with the history of implementing school-based and classroom assessments and the issues and challenges associated with assessment in the Malaysian education system. This paper also covered assessments aligned on 21st-century learning to instil 21st-century skills among students through classroom assessment. The relevance of assessment for learning and why it matters in 21st-century education are then highlighted in this paper. Finally, it offers some recommendations for improving the quality of ESL classroom assessments. In conclusion, this paper provides insight into classroom assessment practice and knowledge in preparation for future studies.

Keywords: ESL, classroom assessment, 21st-century learning, 21st-century skills

Abstrak: Pentaksiran bilik darjah berbeza daripada peperiksaan dan jenis pentaksiran pelajar yang lain. Tujuan asas pentaksiran bilik darjah adalah untuk membolehkan guru dan pelajar meningkatkan kualiti pembelajaran di dalam bilik darjah dengan menggunakan pendekatan berpusatkan pelajar, pengarah oleh guru, memberi kebaikan kepada kedua-dua pihak, dan amalan terbaik dalam pembelajaran. Assessment of learning, assessment for learning, dan assessment as learning sebagai pembelajaran adalah tiga jenis pentaksiran bilik darjah yang difokuskan oleh kebanyakan sistem pendidikan. Assessment for learning biasanya digunakan dalam pentaksiran bilik darjah untuk memberi motivasi kepada pelajar. Ia adalah penting untuk memastikan pelajar mempelajari apa yang mereka perlu pelajari. Oleh itu, prosedur pentaksiran guru diperlukan untuk menyediakan maklumat yang

tepat dan indikatif tentang tahap pembelajaran semasa seseorang pelajar. Kertas konsep ini bertujuan untuk menyediakan ulasan literatur tentang isu-isu mengenai pentaksiran untuk pembelajaran dalam bilik darjah ESL. Isu yang diketengahkan bermula dengan sejarah pelaksanaan pentaksiran berasaskan sekolah dan bilik darjah dan isu dan cabaran yang berkaitan dengan pentaksiran dalam sistem pendidikan Malaysia. Kertas kerja ini juga merangkumi pentaksiran yang sejajar dengan pembelajaran abad ke-21 untuk menyemai kemahiran abad ke-21 dalam kalangan pelajar melalui pentaksiran bilik darjah. Perkaitan pentaksiran untuk pembelajaran dan mengapa ia penting dalam pendidikan abad ke-21 juga diketengahkan dalam kertas konsep ini. Akhir sekali, beberapa cadangan diberikan untuk meningkatkan kualiti pentaksiran bilik darjah English as Second Language (ESL). Kesimpulannya, kertas konsep ini memberi gambaran tentang amalan dan pengetahuan pentaksiran bilik darjah sebagai persediaan untuk kajian akan datang.

Kata kunci: ESL, pentaksiran bilik darjah, pembelajaran abad ke-21, kemahiran abad ke-21

Introduction

The progress of society and the nation is built upon the educational system. An important part of teaching is classroom assessment. Linn and Miller (2005) state that assessment is a technique for learning about the learning process. Teachers are also responsible for conducting assessments of their students to determine how well they acquire knowledge and skills. Thus, teachers can identify what they have taught and what still needs improvement for students' learning using classroom assessment. In order to learn more about their students, quizzes, assignments, and tests are some standard assessment methods teacher's practice. They may conduct surveys and assign students to various exercises throughout the class to learn more about what students understood and what concepts and abilities they struggled with. Teachers constantly receive and use data to make judgments regarding managing the classroom, giving lessons, guiding students' learning, and planning (Russell & Airasian, 2012). The process of gathering, syncing, and analysing data to support decision-making in teaching is typically described as classroom assessment.

In the classroom, teachers assess students for various reasons, such as creating classroom stability, organising lessons, assigning students, offering feedback and rewards, identifying problems and disabilities with pupils, and assessing academic learning and development (Russell & Airasian, 2012). The early analysis provides teachers with an immediate impression and practical understanding of the qualities of the students. Thus, to strengthen Malaysia's position as a regional education center, the Ministry of Education (MOE) must undergo a

paradigm change that may herald a new millennium in all areas of education (Ambotang, 2013). According to the goals of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025, curriculum transformation is done to enhance learning in terms of content, pedagogy, and assessment. This is done to produce knowledgeable students capable of critical thought, possess leadership qualities, master bilingualism, practise ethics and spirituality, and have a sense of national identity.

As a result, this concept paper looks at teachers' classroom assessments in ESL learning, the history of implementing assessments for learning and the challenges associated with assessment in the Malaysian education system. The other goals are the relevance of assessment for learning and why it matters in 21st-century learning.

Problem of statement

1. The issues and challenges teachers face in implementing school-based assessment and classroom assessment in ESL learning and the benefits in 21st-century learning.

Objectives of the concept paper

1. To improve the skills and knowledge of teachers as assessors or assessors of the classroom in ESL learning.
2. To encourage teacher readiness for the change in the classroom assessment, which aligns with the national education system transformation in the 21st-century classroom.

Result and discussion

This section will analyse and review five main ideas from the selected articles; the history of the implementation of school-based assessment and classroom assessment in the Malaysian education system, types of classroom assessment, the issues and challenges of the implementation of school-based assessment and classroom assessment in Malaysia as well as the relevance of classroom assessment aligned 21st-century learning.

A brief history of the implementation of classroom assessment in the Malaysian education system

Dr Radzi bin Jidin, the present Malaysian Minister of Education, completely redesigned the existing examination system in the country. Eliminating two public examinations, the PT3 in 2022 and the UPSR in 2020, while keeping the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) exam intact. The decision was made because the current national education system was overly focused on exams and disregarded other significant factors, defeating the purpose of offering a comprehensive education. In addition, he claimed that after eleven years of education and three public examinations, teachers and students now solely prioritise exams and disregard other essential aspects of life. This is in line with what Yates and Johnston (2018) stated, that the examination technique is no longer a good way for students to learn because each student has unique skills and talents. Thus, the UPSR and PT3 examinations are replaced with classroom assessments.

School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The Malaysian Ministry of Education is concerned about allegations that the nation's educational system is overly exam oriented. As a result, Cabinet Meeting on December 17, 2010, decided to establish school-based assessment (SBA) as a component of the Education Transformation Program. As stated in the Education Development Master Plan (EDMP), Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB), National Integrity Plan (NIP), and as such intended in the National Mission, SBA is an initiative to develop human capital holistically through an emphasis on mastery of science, intellectual capital, cultivating a progressive attitude, ethics, and morals (MEB, 2013). SBA was first introduced at the high school level in 2012 after being initially deployed in primary schools in 2011. According to the MEB (2016), PT3 was fully implemented in 2014 as SBA or school-based assessment. Meanwhile, primary school students took the revised UPSR in 2016.

SBA grants teachers respect and autonomy to administer formative (an assessment that is conducted

while the learning process is still in progress) and summative (an assessment that is conducted after a unit), which is school based (Malaysia Examination Syndicate [MES], 2014). Figure 1 presents the SBA components in the national assessment system. At the same time, the purpose of SBA implementation is represented in figure 2. SBA will ensure that students attending public schools meet the highest knowledge, skills, and competencies required by nations worldwide. Teachers need to understand and appreciate the wellness of SBA (Malakolunthua & Hoon, 2010).

Figure 1. School-Based Assessment Component (Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan, 2014).

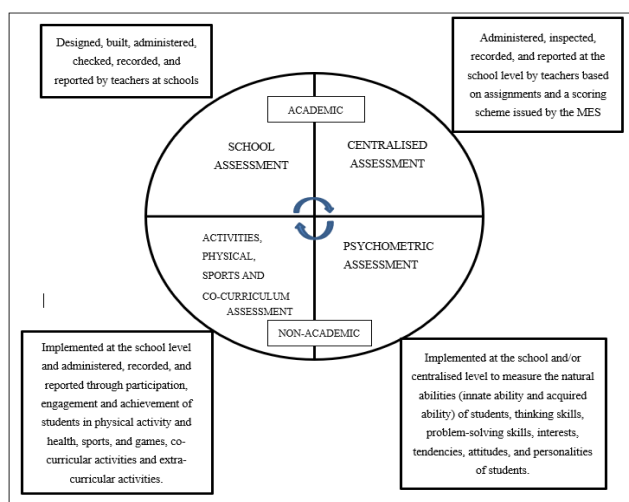
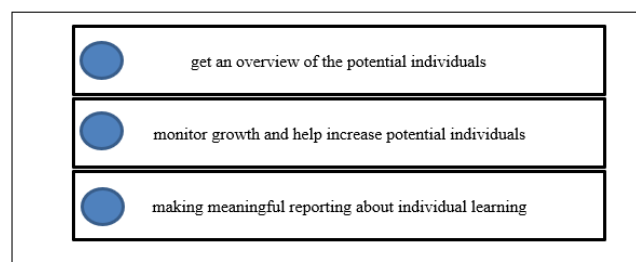


Figure 2. Objectives of School-Based Assessment (Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan, 2014).



Classroom Assessment

School Assessment has been known as classroom assessment since the end of 2016. It maintains all School Assessment concepts and determines students' mastery level in each subject stated in the Performance Standards. Classroom assessment is a continuous process during teaching and learning sessions to gather data on student

growth, advancement, aptitude, and mastery of the intended curricular goals. Instead, assessment has evolved into a tool that embodies and facilitates learning (Black & William, 2005). Proper implementation of classroom assessment will give a clear idea about the student's mastery of the Learning Standards in the curriculum.

Classroom assessment enables students, teachers, parents, and the school to know the quality of student learning. The purpose of classroom assessment is to help teachers make instructional decisions and to support students' learning (Black, 2014; Black & Wiliam, 2010; Zhao, Heuvel-Panhuizen; Veldhuis, 2017). It also aims to improve student learning through formative assessment: Assessment for Learning (AfL) and Assessment as Learning (AaL). This type of assessment is used to gauge how learning is developing and progressing, revealing students' strengths and limitations so that remedial action can be conducted to enhance student learning and to give feedback on the efficiency of the teacher's teachings (Acar-Erdol & Yildizli, 2018).

Issues and challenges in implementing School Based Assessment and classroom assessment in Malaysia

The national assessment system has been updated to support the recently established curriculum following the education policy reformation. However, the transition to a new national assessment system is complicated. Several studies have identified potential issues that could hinder the reform of the national assessment system, particularly in implementing school-based and classroom assessments.

Implementing classroom assessment in an interracial country and heterogeneous educational environment undoubtedly leads to many issues and challenges. For instance, teachers' ability to implement assessments is frequently voiced. For SBA issues, teachers are consistently shown to be less prepared to administer it (Ghazali, 2016; Singh et al., 2017). Although some teachers are familiar with the SBA principles, there are still issues with translating the theory into reality (Singh et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the professional development courses did not seem to impact their ability to use SBA (Singh et al., 2017). Teachers were discovered to be having difficulties with SBA planning, creating SBA instruments, and SBA analysis (Ismail et al., 2016).

Then, teachers feel burdened implementing SBA in the classroom (Ghazali, 2016; Ong, 2011) because it takes more teachers' time (Othman et al., 2013). For instance, they must take full responsibility from choosing and creating assessment tasks to administering the tests throughout the teaching and learning process. They also assess students' learning progress based on their responses and produce a report that summarises the students'

learning progress.

Last, teachers frequently complained about the lack of SBA implementation modules (Kenayathulla & Ibrahim, 2016). Teachers involuntarily created their instruments because not many fully prepared ones were available, even though they only had a basic understanding of item development. As a result, students' measurements were eventually considered invalid (Kenayathulla & Ibrahim, 2016), as the instruments created lacked sufficient validity and reliability.

Meanwhile, classroom assessment issues are not much different from the previous SBA. Teachers were found to be unprepared to manage assessments based on the level of assessment provided in DSKP (Abdullah et al., 2020). Arumugham (2020) reported that teachers' knowledge of determining students' mastery levels and performance criteria for the DSKP is unsatisfactory, resulting in a lack of focus on the students' experience. Teachers must analyse and completely comprehend DSKP, the concept of classroom assessment, and apply it to the subject taught when planning teaching, learning, and assessment. Therefore, teaching and learning will be continuously assessed, and teachers should be able to conduct formative and summative tests in all subject areas (Black & William, 2018; DeLuca & Johnson, 2017; Ministry of Education [MOE], 2020).

Other than that, poor teaching preparation, lack of assessment understanding, and other issues can lead to fair results when monitoring student learning development. Ali and Veloo (2017) found out that teachers were biased in assigning students a level of mastery, and a lack of confidence in the assessment process results in erroneous reports. As a result, the student's true potential cannot be discovered. In addition, teachers lack the confidence to provide a report using the classroom assessment format and believe that creating the report is a burden and a difficulty in implementing classroom assessment (Karen Reenai & Maslawati, 2020). As a result, it is crucial to examine classroom assessment in schools from all angles and start making improvements immediately.

The relevance of classroom assessment aligned to 21st-century learning

Malaysia aims to get the best position in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) by 2025 (MOE, 2016). Therefore, the schools concentrate on producing high-quality education and parallel the educational transformation. Teacher quality is a significant area to study to produce excellent intellectual resources. Thus, the Malaysian MOE expanded the

implementation of 21st-century learning across the nation in 2015 through the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013–2025 (MOE, 2013). The value of human capital development at the school level requires teachers with broad classroom experience and 21st-century learning. Therefore, teachers who are knowledgeable in 21st-century teaching and learning with 21st-century pedagogical skills, such as ICT, are vital.

In education, the phrase "21st-century skills" has gained significant power. This crucial idea applies to cognitive skills like problem-solving, reasoning, critical and creative thinking, and meta-cognitive and conative skills like resolve, self-efficacy, motivation, and openness to problem-solving. Social skills include teamwork, communication, and ownership (Kutlu & Kartal, 2018). These skills did not arise in the 20th century.

Curriculum, teaching, and the learning setting in the classroom have all started to vary in the 21st century, and well-suited education should acquire with the shift in the targeted competencies. Classroom assessment must reflect the nature of these competencies and promote their growth (Stiggins, 2002; 2005). According to Stiggins (2002), a new perspective on classroom assessment needs to be developed to connect assessment and enhance education. The experts in educational assessment have first concentrated on examining and enhancing new approaches and procedures to produce more accurate and valid results. While this is happening, the crucial question of "how do assessment tools allow students' self-efficacy and promote willingness to learn?" should be answered.

It becomes more crucial to adopt an assessment strategy that aligns with the nature of 21st-century skills and can aid in their development to meet the demands of this new millennium world. Teachers are responsible for ensuring the consistency between the skills needed, and the hidden messages conveyed to students through the assessment approach are crucial. This consistency can be achieved when teachers embrace the assessment for learning method and effectively use this understanding in their classrooms. Thus, with this method, students will learn confidently to share answers without worrying about being punished if the answer is wrong or even looking for a reward. Through individual progress, they will engage in learning by knowing their strengths and weaknesses. In this learning environment, the student can focus on improving certain skills and study more intently without worrying about achieving better than their peers or facing negative consequences for mistakes.

Thus, when revising the curriculum and classroom assessment, it is essential to know what benefits students will gain from the cognitive skills in their life and how they can use them every day. Therefore, the skills are clearer to be accomplished since students need to be well

equipped with various skills to use in their life. The first step in implementing 21st-century teaching methods should be to enhance teachers' toolkit assessment techniques in the classroom to reinforce their teaching (Jacobs, 2010). Additionally, based on these definitions, the teaching activities in the classroom and the assessment functions should be remodelled. The National Research Council (2003) also claims that a suitable assessment may aid teachers in improving their teaching approach by reviewing students' progress.

According to studies on classroom assessments by Price et al. (2011), three techniques and approaches share the same characteristics. First, high-quality teacher-designed assessments inform teachers what and how students learn to adjust or adapt to teaching. Second, they enable teachers to identify a more incredible range of skills and abilities in addition to knowledge repossession. Third, these assessments give students new roles in the assessment process, which can improve student involvement in the subject.

Teachers gain insight into student learning to modify instruction: Teachers can use the information they get from these assessment methods to make decisions about their classes right away because it is a formative assessment. The assessment may assist teachers in their upcoming lessons based on students' progress.

Assess a broader range of skills and abilities: Traditional assessment techniques, such as true/false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank questions, prioritise memorisation and recall abilities that require little cognitive effort (Dikli, 2003; Shepard et al., 1995). Performance-based assessments (PBA) and portfolios are two methods that go beyond the standardised tests that are used to hold schools accountable. These methods take a wide range of achievement indicators into account and draw data from various sources (Shepard et al., 1995; Wood, Darling-Hammond, Neill, & Roschewski, 2007). evaluation of each student's abilities rather than just a number or per cent correct.

Give students new roles in the assessment procedure: This collection of assessments includes students at every stage of the assessment process, in contrast to the traditional assessments that are developed, delivered, and evaluated by teachers. For example, during peer assessment, students are required to act as the assessor, providing comments and recommendations on how to enhance the work of their peers. Including students in developing assessment criteria, determining their strengths and weaknesses, and keeping track of their learning is the centre of learning from the teacher to the students (Nunes, 2004).

Therefore, by implementing assessment in the 21st-century classroom and learning, students are given more

responsibility for their learning. At the same time, the main goal is to train students to acquire interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and teach them to practice their skills. Students should be able to assess, consider and make decisions whatever situation in their life. Everything can start from their learning in the classroom. Students later will be more independent and aware of their learning progress so that when they complete school, they have a future to hold to and to complete their dreams.

Recommendations to improve the quality of classroom assessments in ESL classroom

Classroom assessment's success depends on ongoing dialogue and instructional guidance between the instructional coach and the teacher. According to past studies, it is still considered that for all teachers to comprehend and adequately administer classroom assessments, and they need constant supervision and assistance (Arumugham, 2020). The previous study also reveals some gaps that policymakers must fill to meet the implementation goals. Instructional coaches, such as School Improvement Specialist Coaches (SISC+), should consider sharing more information about various teaching methods, teaching modelling, and developing appropriate checklists to assist teachers in implementing various teaching strategies (Lee et al., 2020).

Policymakers and educators are responsible for promoting and implementing an integrated approach to classroom assessment, emphasising the benefits and opportunities of formative assessment to accommodate the multi-dimensional nature of critical competencies. Assessment techniques should document learners' competencies and support teachers in making decisions about their teaching methods and curriculum priorities. It is vital to realise that using formative and summative assessments will increase the validity and reliability of the assessment process.

Then, policymakers should support the use of cutting-edge equipment in the classroom and incorporate specialised training into programmes for teacher training. Teachers must receive the necessary training for ICT technologies to integrate into classroom practices and positively impact student learning adequately. Traditional teaching and assessment methods must also be transformed. For innovative assessment techniques to be effective, active student participation in the assessment process must be a foundation.

Conclusion

Even though Malaysia has been officially practising classroom assessment more than 20 years later than other countries, we are still moving in the right direction.

Teachers must embrace a different perspective on classroom assessment and be optimistic about it because it influences a child's holistic learning. Black (1998) states that it is impossible to solve the issues and challenges of formative assessment improvement quickly. Every teacher should incorporate formative assessment into their lessons. It will unquestionably be effective in the future with the assistance of many parties, particularly with the proper professional development from school administrators, teacher trainers, and education officials.

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