

LEARN TO GRASP ASSESSMENT NOT MERELY AS A DEVICE FOR STUDENT EVALUATION, BUT AS AN IMPERATIVE STRATEGY FOR TODAY'S EVERYDAY CLASSROOM LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENTS LEARNING AND SKILLS

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ABSTRACT--*Learn to grasp assessment, not merely as a device for student evaluation, but as an imperative strategy for everyday classroom learning and has a significant effect on improving students learning and skills. So, if concern is the change in students learning then there is a need to see the assessment with new eyes. The study was designed with the objectives, to bring on record the views of teachers about the use of classroom assessment practices in improving learning and developing skills at public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) at Undergraduate four years' programs. The sample of this qualitative research comprises 20 teachers, 4 teachers each from five sampled public sector universities in KP. To get the relevant information a semi-structured interview schedules were used from teachers of the sampled universities. To analyze data, thematic approach was used. The study resulted in, that almost all of the teachers were highly satisfied with the use of different assessment practices for the purpose of improving students learning and developing skills and have a very positive impact on the developing life skills among students.*

Keywords-- *Assessment for learning, students learning and skills development, teacher's perceptions, undergraduate program (Hons), KP Universities*

I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment does more than assign a rank or grade categorization of students; it does a lot in centering their interest (Sainsbury & Walker, 2008) commented, actually assessment compels their learning. There is sound experienced and broadly recognized thought about the influence of assessment in the enhancement of student learning (Nightingale & Hughes, 1996) (Crosling & Webb, 2002) and (Crooks, 1988).

The belief of assessment for learning is defined as a practice of pursuing and understanding data for use by students and teachers to know the standing position of the students in their learning, where they requisite to go, and what way best to reach there (James, Pedder, & Gardner, 2006)

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Progression of student learning through classroom assessment is not a new idea. More than 30 years ago, while describing the implementation of mastery learning, (Airasian, Bloom, & Carroll, 1971) demonstrated how to carry out this process in valuable and remarkably effective ways

(Guskey, 2007) revealed that assessment can be an imperative constituent on our part to improve learning. But as long as we use them only for the purpose of schools and students grading, we will ignore their most influential benefits. When classroom assessments become an essential part of the instructional process and for improving student learning, its benefits for both students and teachers will be limitless.

The means in which learning is apprehended and inferred have significant effects for assessment for learning, as argued by (Cauley & McMillan, 2010) assessments need to be harmonious with the perceptions of learning.

Similarly, (OECD, 2005) the study about the use of formative assessment for improving students learning was conducted by the OECD in the educational systems of Canada, Italy, Scotland, England, Denmark, Finland, New Zealand and Australia (Queensland), Scotland. The results of the study were looked by the Policy Brief for its wider use and policy principles to discourse barriers in the use of formative assessment. The finding showed the highly effectiveness of formative assessment in enhancing students' attainment level, improving equity of student outcomes, and raising the ability of students to learn.

Likewise, (Gibbs, 2010) mentioned that it is not to teaching strategies but to the assessment procedures that students react. Furthermore, qualitative studies were conducted which also have proclaims the importance of considering the way learners respond to novelties in assessment.

Keeping in view the highly significance of the use of classroom assessment practices in enhancing students learning and skills, this study focused on to explore the opinions of the university teachers with respect to the use of classroom assessment practices not only as a device for students' evaluation, but as an imperative strategy for today's everyday classroom learning to enhance students learning and skills. This study emphasized on the purpose of engendering expedient understanding of teachers with regard to the use of classroom assessment practices for the purpose of enhancing students learning and skills. The study probed the significance of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning at under graduate level in the public sector universities of KP. The key purpose of this study was to bring forth the significance of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning and skills.

Objectives of the Study

To explore the perceptions of teachers regarding the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students learning and developing skills.

Research Question

The study was directed by the following research question:

What are the perceptions of teachers regarding the use of classroom assessment practices in enhancing students learning and developing their skills?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the last decade as a result of different research studies revealed that globally there has been developing an affirmative attitude by most of the educationalists about the productivity of assessments in facilitating learning. Researchers contemplate assessments arrayed towards this conclusion that the use of assessment for learning or in other words for formative purposes has a remarkable influence on students achievements, motivation for progressing and facilitating their learning (Stiggins, 2002); (Black & Wiliam, 1998a); (Cauley & McMillan, 2010); and (Nolen, 2011).

(Ravitz, 2002) stated that the strategy of immediate feedback to learners have a beneficial impact on learning outcomes of students. Assessment is not only the source of collecting or providing of information, but it can also be used as a device to improve students learning and reform the teaching learning process. Therefore, it propose that assessment plays an important part in determining the performance and behaviors of students.

(Stiggins, 2007) stressed on the concern to the assessment for learning that our progressing task induces us to hold a new vision of assessment that can blow the source of high quality learning, motivation, confidence and potential for best performances that exist in within each learner.

Likewise, other researches substantiates (Hattie, 2008); (Brookhart, 1997); (Black & Wiliam, 2009); (Guskey, 2007), signifying that classroom assessment practices impart an ample impact on students' accomplishment. Likewise, a determination by (Shavelson, Schneider, & Shulman, 2007)proposed that there are evidences that from a large scale combined study on entrenching the use of assessment practices for learning in inquiry-based science curriculum, which indicates the improvement in students learning outcome. Furthermore, if assessment for learning is employed successfully, it supports to cultivate students' motivation for learning as a persistent disposition (James et al., 2006). (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2013)quoted the statement of president of USA Obama that there must be required our nation's governors and government education leaders to make judgments and develop criteria with broad perspective that not only to measure whether learners can lodge in a fizz on a trial, simply but concern should be whether they have 21st century abilities like skills of creativity, entrepreneurship, critical thinking and problem solving.

(Klenowski, 2009) stated that in the region of Asia-Pacific, there is a growing interest in the use of assessment for the purpose of improving learning in the past decade. There has been a precise concentration in the constructive effect of assessment for learning on students. Same situation is observed in Singapore, where the government proclaimed the endorsements of the PERI Committee (Primary Education Review and Implementation) in April, 2009 that asked for the starting of universal assessment to support learning and finish to exams for Primary 1 and 2.

Similarly, in Australia, from the late 1990s there has been grown international systemic cognizance of the significance of assessment for learning in the efforts of educational reform efforts. Inspired by the work of ARG and Paul Black, Dylan William, the momentum for change was emerged in the Asia Pacific region – remarkably in, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia (Glasson, 2009)

So, assessment is integral to educational reform, and it signifies a shift in discerning about learning and teaching. The use of assessment practices for learning embodies one of these indispensable changes. The concept of assessment for learning lets teachers use their insights about student understanding and individual differences,

to incorporate students centered strategies according to their needs in order to best serve for individual learner. Learn to grasp assessment, not simply as a device for learner evaluation, but as an imperious approach for everyday classroom learning (Earl, 2012).

III. METHODOLOGIES AND PROCEDURES

The researcher conducted a qualitative research approach for exploring the perceptions of teachers regarding the use of classroom assessment practices not merely for the students' evaluation, but for enhancing students learning and developing their skills at undergraduate (Hons) level in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Population

All the teachers who teach at undergraduate (Hons) level program in all the 19 Public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa constituted the population. The total number of teachers is 3,630 in these universities.

Sample Size and Its Distribution

The sample of the study was comprised on 20 teachers including 12 male teachers and 08 female teachers from the different disciplines of five public sector universities in KP. The total sample was including 20 teachers selected purposively from various disciplines out of five the selected universities.

Data Collection Instrument

The semi-structured interview was conducted to accommodate deep probes by the researchers. Teachers were interviewed to explore their opinions of the university teachers with respect to the use of classroom assessment practices not only as a device for students' evaluation, but as an imperative strategy for today's everyday classroom learning to enhance students learning and skills.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Qualitative analysis and results are presented to depict teachers' perceptions on the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students learning and developing their skills. The following research questions are addressed in comparison with, and discussion of these results.

Classroom Assessment for Learning

Description provide by the participant's responses part of the research question, perceptions of teachers regarding the use of assessment practices for enhancing students learning. Opinions given by teachers will shed light on how they perceive the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students learning based on their practices in classroom. Various views were presented by the teachers with respect to the use of classroom assessment practices for learning.

They communicated their point of view by deliberating various aspects and effects of classroom assessment practices for learning.

In asking about their perceptions of the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students learning that the research participants practiced in their classrooms, almost all of the participants (i.e. 20 teachers) shared that classroom assessment practices play an important role not only as judgemental tool but also in the improving students learning, particularly in a semester system where there is a set criteria from the quality enhancement centres of the universities, that different assessment practices are applied throughout the semester.

An analytical appraisal of the data highlighted a sum of configurations that were embedded in the respondents' understandings when they resided profoundly about the use of classroom assessment practices for enhancing students learning. Of these, classroom assessment for learning and developing skills, appeared as a significant magnitude that participants articulated augmented their practices of classroom assessment. While maximum respondents' understandings resonated with one another, here few are affluence illuminating that elucidates their perceptions about the use of classroom assessment for improving students learning and developing their skills.

When different types of assessment practices are implemented in classroom then students get different opportunities for improving their different abilities and skills along with knowledge improving. Some of the practices help in students writing skills like written assignments etc. while some are helpful in developing their problem solving abilities like practical task, mini projects etc. So, it definitely helpful in the over-all development of the students.

I think it is interesting in a way as I can give an example from the cress cross puzzle quiz which I give to my students now, they were not familiar with that only those students who read the newspaper they were familiar with that activity while other students they were not. So it is interesting for them to learn as a new form of assessment because it's not only judging them but at the same time they are also learning for example they have definition given to them and they have to identify a word to put that into the puzzle so automatically they pass through learning process along with assessment

of course, when students are keep engaged in a variety of classroom activities and when teachers make sure the participation of all students within class in such activities by assigning grades or any other worth to students participation then it leads to a favourable environment for learning and students grooming. The main factor which I noticed that in this approach, there is a large room for students' over-all development, I mean that we apply different activities

we have to remove the gaps and where I need improvement of my own self along with the students because when you think that what you are teaching students are not getting then there is some flaw in your communication so then you have to improve that and have to reach to the level of students to make them their learning easy. So, for that purpose the use of various types of classroom assessment practices is very helpful. The thing is that, through this approach at one hand we provide to students different opportunities to improve their literacy skills and on another hand we assert a kind of compulsion or one can say in a good way we provide an incentive in the form of grading in order to make sure the students that their participation will be valued. So in this way it becomes easy for us to grasp their interest in their learning and they then get ready to shoulder the responsibility of their learning.

I have found what we used to do whenever we apply any assessment practice then we used to share that feedback technique on the top just by putting name and roll number but not students' marks. And when in a written test we deduct students marks then also give the reason and that's why marks has been deducted so when

students go through their test/paper they also got their mistakes with reasons of deduction then they do work on and never do such mistakes again and I found it very helpful and seen the students in the beginning and then end of the semester with big positive difference and improvement. So if we see it's a kind of burden on a teacher but the result is very productive on the other hand which give a satisfaction to teacher afterwards.

The use of assessment practices on daily basis in classroom is highly useful for the well-being of students because, when students are involved in such practices they came to know about their particular weaknesses and try to do well in that area. And such assessment practices compel students and teachers to work closely and do concentrate on the academic research approaches towards learning and on the overall grooming of personality. As well as when students do participate in group tasks they learn team dynamic and their different skills get developed which then make them fully prepared to perform well in their real life settings and to face easily the life challenges.

It's not is about to giving the grades but the priority is the learning. Besides that it has made teaching easy for us, it's something like we have got the right keys for opening the doors, I mean earlier in traditional education system we only used one strategy for learning irrespective of taking in consideration individual differences and also the basic objectives, while now in this approach we know for what kind of articular development of students what articular strategy should to be apply. For example, to improve students communication skills and for their confidence building, I do prefer presentations, debates and open forum discussions with question answer sessions etc. and when I have the objective to improve their problem solving abilities, their managerial kind of analytical synthetic skills and polishing their group dynamics then I do ask for mini projects and practical tasks etc. so along with judging these practices do very much a lot to focus in students overall development.

Students shouldn't be discouraged they should be encouraged so that they can actively participate in these different types of assessment practices and the best way when they students get to know that their participation will be acknowledged, it does motivate them to ensure their participation. For example if they are shy and they cannot communicate properly then practicing in the presentations would give them confidence to speak out in front of the large groups. Besides that students adopt self-learning attitudes which leads to a productive learning and enhancement of their abilities, like to shoulder the responsibility of their learning and defining challenges and then to meet the requirements of completing their assign tasks make them enable to develop and polish problem solving, creative and analytical skills. That's why I strongly support the use of classroom assessment continuously for the skills development of the students.

For the improvement of both analytical and critical understanding among students' the assessment practices must be a regular part of the course as these give us a double package both as an assessment tool and also provide appropriate ways of improving students learning.

It is evident from the above quotations that almost all of the respondents who are using in their classrooms different assessment practices have found this approach very productive in improving students learning. Various aspects of the classroom assessment provide the respondent teachers means to make use of it for improving students learning and developing their different skills. Some of the respondents considered that in the semester system it is a reinvigorated approach towards teaching, learning and assessment practices and particularly towards consideration of students' individual differences for improving their learning. The participants shared that not only did they found this approach effective in improving students learning but it also has made teaching easy for them. They also mentioned that they get easily to know about the students individual differences and so, they try

to apply different assessment strategies that students can get a variety of opportunities in the areas where they need to develop their different skills and knowledge. Moreover, the use of assessment practices for developing of students skills also appears as an imperative part of respondents experiences and this elucidates that why and how much of the stress has been placed on the use of a variety of assessment practices as only developing of knowledge is not matter of concern but to make the students skilled in different life aspects, their developing in this level of education is also important.

The quotations above necessitates how effective are the use of classroom assessment practices not only to get feedback and to know about the students learning level or to be used for the purpose of grading students attainment level but also a way to instil and develop various skills of students when they keep indulge regularly in team work activities and practical assignments they develop team dynamics, their management abilities get developed and besides that. Besides that the use of classroom assessment practices are very productive in bringing the change of students' behaviours towards their learning and through the use of such practices, students adopt self-learning attitudes which leads to a productive learning and enhancement of their abilities.

So it is obvious from the above, that the assessment practices best served for diverse purposes and inclusively assisted to facilitate students learning and to develop their skills.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The respondent teachers have expressed their views about the use of classroom assessment practices for improving learning and to develop students' different learning skills. Besides that the use of classroom assessment practices are very productive in bringing the change of students' behaviours towards their learning and through the use of such practices, students adopt self- self- evaluation and self-learning attitudes which leads to a productive life-long learning and enhancement of their abilities. Likewise, it is indicated by the teachers that the use of classroom assessment practices creates an environment more favourable for learning. Teachers in the study were of the view that the classroom assessment practices are not used only to get feedback and to know about the students learning level or to be used for the purpose of grading students' attainment level but, also for the development of students skills. It is clearly evident from the opinions of respondent teachers classroom assessment practices play an important role not only as judgmental tool but also in the improving students learning. Besides that the respondent teachers expressed that the use of different assessment practices has made their teaching easy.

These results of the study are consistent with the decade's back study of (Boud, 2013)assessment plays number of roles. The main determination of assessment is to expand learning, update teaching, help students attain the maximum standards they can and supply meaningful reports on students' attainment. The signification of the role of assessment may vary according to situations. It is the assessment which defines the patterns of learning.

Similar to other studies (Crooks, 1988); (Black & Wiliam, 1998a); (Steadman, 1998); (Stiggins, 2002); (Wood, 2007); (Earl, 2012); and (Spinelli, 2010)results of the respondent teachers and students asserted that the influence of classroom assessment practices on students learning and developing their different abilities are very high.

This study confirms that the assessment shouldn't be used typically to make judgements about students' attainment level or acceptability for further study but also to be taken in consideration for it's another most important purpose to facilitate learning. Same is confirmed by other research works with respect to the use of

assessment practices for improving student learning. It is claimed that assessment has to shift to 'assessment for learning' from 'assessment of learning', to design and plan assessment procedures and practices in a way that to enhance students learning and reinforce instead to weaken students' attainment, progress and confidence (GIPPS, 1999); (Torrance & Pryor, 1998); and (Black & Wiliam, 2010). The results is compatible with another study that approves, that in Asian culture the use of assessment for learning can enhance students' motivation to learn (James, Pedder, & Gardner, 2006). The findings of the study show that the classroom assessment practices play an important role not only as judgmental tool but also in the improving students learning. Besides that it was also expressed by the respondent teachers that the use of different assessment practices has made their teaching easy for them and they are in better position to know about students individual differences and keep on track students learning in positive direction. In alignment to this many other researchers stated the same results of their research study i.e. (Steadman, 1998) mentioned that over the past many years those students and teachers who have practiced such activities for them the use of the classroom (Ayatollahi, et al., 2012)assessment practices proved to be very helpful and effective both for improving learning and developing various skills. And they are certain about the productivity of the use of assessment for learning as a feedback approach that delivers instructors with information on the efficacy of their teaching and student understanding, besides that classroom assessment also encompasses learners in vigorous intellectual dispensation of new evidences and enables them to track their learning progress. Classroom assessment is a learning novelty that yokes endeavours to enhance learning and teaching.

Likewise, other researches validates (Hattie, 2008); (Black & Wiliam, 1998b); (Guskey, 2007); and (Brookhart, 1997), signifying that classroom assessment can have an ample bearing on the attainments of students in learning and developing skills. Another work, by (Shavelson, Schneider, & Shulman, 2007), proposes that data from an enormous combined research on entrenching assessment for learning in inquiry-based curriculum of science plugs to improved student learning outcomes. Furthermore, if assessment for learning is implemented successfully, it supports to enhance students' motivation for learning as a persistent disposition (James, Pedder, & Gardner, 2006)

(Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2008) accomplished a study inspecting the relationship between assessment and students' attitudes towards learning. This investigation offered an inclusive analysis of students' insights about assessment creating a substantial impact in understanding the influences of assessment in teaching learning process.

VI. CONCLUSION

The analysis of data illustrates that almost all of the teachers perceived that the classroom assessment shouldn't be only used for the judgment of students' attainment level of learning and other evaluation purposes but should also be used as a regular classroom practice for improving students learning and developing their skills. The data collected in result of this research study supplements to the existing bulk of knowledge embodying the impression teachers' perception of classroom assessment attributes used by classroom teachers can have on student affect in improving their learning. Teachers showed their satisfaction of the effectiveness of classroom assessment practices in enhancing students' leaning. It was concluded that the use of different assessment practices is very helpful in enhancing students learning and developing their skills the over-all development of students and particularly

developing students higher order learning abilities like management skills, problem solving, analytical abilities and creativity etc.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

- 1) In the light of teacher's perspectives, the findings of the study enriches researcher field of assessment in education context.
- 2) Since most of the existing literature comes from the West, it will be interesting to ascertain out if and how the ideas ferment in a different culture.
- 3) The findings of the study fill the gap of lack of empirical inquiry in the area of the assessment for learning.
- 4) The findings of the study also plug the gap of lack of empirical inquiry in the area of utilization of classroom assessment not only for the purpose of judgment but also in supporting learning
- 5) This assessment will be a source of guidance for the policy makers and curriculum developers while drawing up their strategies in the future.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Considering the demonstrative dynamics of the assessment practice from teachers' perspective is vital to the operative use of assessment practices to improve students learning and skills as well as the over-all teaching learning situations.
2. Assessment for learning should be included as a course subject in the curriculum of teacher training programs.
3. Based on findings, the study suggests that an institutional support is needed to foster assessment for learning approaches among all the level of education system.

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