

EDFD220, ASSIGNMENT 2

*Discuss how different types of assessment helps to reinforce or hinder self-regulated learning.*

There are numerous ways students can be assessed to reinforce self-regulated learning throughout their educational development. Summative and formative assessments are the predominant forms used throughout today's classrooms. Teachers use formative assessment to measure progress during a school day, "it provides teachers with information about their different strengths and weaknesses as the students participate in an activity" (Seely Flint, 2014; Clark, 2012). These assessments usually come in the form of class discussions, teacher-student conferences and observations (Seely Flint, 2014). In comparison, summative assessments are used to "sum up what a student has learnt at any given point in time" (Seely Flint, 2014, p325). Summative assessment is closely connected to predetermined benchmarks and standards. It usually takes the form of unit tests, final exams and reports (Seely Flint, 2014). In recent times the focus of assessment has begun to move away from the traditional summative evaluations, and instead place a greater emphasis on formative ones (Radovan, 2011). While both forms of assessment serve different purposes and have positives and negatives, the writer contends that in order for students to best self-regulate their own learning, both forms of assessment should be used in synthesis with each other.

Learning how to self-regulate through assessment during a student's primary school years is vital as it "has the potential to support learning, improve outcomes and instill lifelong learning competencies" (Clark, 2012). Self-regulated learning refers to "learning that results from students' self-generated thoughts and behaviours that are oriented toward the attainment of their goals" (Schunk, 2009). Complementary to this definition, Clark argues that a teachers' main goal throughout assessing is to not only monitor the progress of students, but to also "guide them along a self-regulation

continuum so they can optimally close the gap between their current status and their desired outcomes” (Clark, 2012). In order for students to be able to self-regulate and grow during study sessions “assessment should be accurate, thoughtful and supportive” (Seely Flint, 2014, p325).

As research in self-regulated learning advances, debates continue about how to effectively measure it in a strategic and dynamic way (Mccardle, 2015). Although there are differing cognitive theories about student self-regulation among educators, they all agree that to be successful “learners need to be proactive and exert control on their learning processes and environments” (Schunk, 2009). A reoccurring feature of research findings on formative assessment is that “attention to the interactive nature can lead to significant learning gains” (Schunk, 2009). It is for this reason that this push towards formative assessment instead of summative assessment is clear. Formative assessment allows for students to be active while learning as well as be their own initiators, planners and observers of their own educational experiences (Mccardle, 2015; Clark, 2012).

It is obvious that when it comes to the issue of student self-regulated learning, formative assessment is the clear winner. “The theory of formative assessment is found to be a unifying theory of instruction, which guides practice and improves the learning process by developing self-regulated learning strategies” (Clark, 2012, 208). It is an open space where students and teachers work together to “set learning goals, learning intentions and success criteria” to assess their overall learning and progress (Clark, 2012). An important function of the formative interaction between student and teacher is to make the implicit knowledge that is sometimes hidden to students, “transparent, explicit and available” by the teacher (Clark, 2012, 209). In saying this, it can therefore be considered “a diagnostic method of assessing as it provides the opportunities to receive feedback, monitor student performance and to engage in multiple problem solving situations” (Rashid, 2014).

Not only does formative assessment help students steer their own education but also has many benefits for teachers. Research by Crooks (1988) demonstrates that “substantial learning gains are possible when teachers introduce formative assessment into their classroom practices” (Rahsid, 2014). When teachers understand how students progress or when they are having trouble, such information provided by formative assessment can be used to “make necessary instructional adjustments to their teaching practice” (Rashid, 2014). In conjunction with lifelong learning skills and self-regulated learning, formative assessment is the most effective when students are able to self-assess so they can individually understand the purpose of their learning (EDFD Lecture). It comprises “student reflection and peer assessment...and encourages metacognitive thought as a chance for students to learn and think about their own participation in the learning process” (EDFD lecture).

Even though formative assessment seems the right candidate for self regulated learning, sometimes if not applied correctly it can be useless. As formative assessment is so broad, and there are multiple ways a teacher can formatively assess his or her students, there is no one-way to incorporate this type of assessment into the class curriculum (Rashid, 2014). This means that there are inconsistencies and discrepancies within assessment from one classroom to the next (Rashid, 2014). Another consequence of this lack of information fluidity of formative assessment is the “inconsistent adoption and application”(Clark, 2012). While teachers agree that formative assessment is an important form of evaluating their students’ progress, most of them agree that they are unaware when this form of assessment is actually taking place (Harlen & James, 1997). Research suggests that for effective formative assessment to occur, “teachers need to develop an adaptive cycle of teaching to meet the needs of the students” (Clark, 2012). Fullan (2007) suggests that schools lack the knowledge, skills and personnel to implement formative assessment into the classroom. Similarly, Black and William (2006) also emphasise that this task of incorporating formative assessment into the

curriculum is improbable without the “committed investment of resources and expertise from external sources” (Clark, 2012). Informal use of formative assessment such as looking for visual cues or quick discussions, are generally not as reliable or consistent enough as an end of unit test or exam might be (Steward & Mickelson, 2004).

In comparison to formative assessment, summative assessment “is designed for the purpose of grading and verifying the effectiveness of the curriculum”(Peterson & Siadat, 2009). This means that summative assessment is a more accurate predictor of scores on an exam or test (Peterson & Siadat, 2009). Historically, summative assessment would have been commonplace and students’ studies were reflected and evaluated by their overall scores in tests and/or exams (Steward & Mickelson, 2004). Although assessment has come a long way, and many students would prefer to be assessed in an informal manner like that of formative assessment, summative tests should remain a positive part of the learning process (EDFD220, Lecture 4: Assessment). Through dynamic involvement during tests, students are able to see their overall learning achievements and become the “beneficiaries rather than the victims of testing, as these results can help them improve their learning” (EDFD220, Lecture 4: Assessment).

Summative assessment is “an important element of the assessment process as it informs what has been learnt and what still needs to be taught (EDFD220, Lecture 4: Assessment). The results from tests or exams should not be looked at in comparison to other students or to diminish ones self-confidence, but instead to be used as examples to inform future curriculum (EDFD220, Lecture 4: Assessment). When it comes to summative assessments it is easy for students to look at their scores and never look at it again. For summative assessment to work well in today’s modern classroom, spending the time to give feedback to students in a meaningful and constructive way should play a significant role (EDFD220, Lecture 4: Assessment). By doing this, students are able to self-regulate their learning

as they can use this type of assessment as evidence to make judgments on their achievements, goals and standards (Steward & Mickelson, 2004). In order for summative assessment to reinforce self-regulation it cannot be used in a negative way but instead it should “match the intended learning goals, be reliable, authentic and be shared among teachers, students and parents” (EDFD).

While there are benefits of summative assessment, most educators agree that it generally provides limited insights on student learning and more insights on how to improve teacher instruction (Steward & Mickelson, 2004). It is more likely to focus on the teaching outcomes of the teacher and not the learning outcomes of the students (Steward & Mickelson, 2004). For example, if a teacher has limited knowledge on a particular topic, his or her teaching abilities will be reflected through his or her students’ test or exam scores. Weimer (1990) goes further to argue that “summative assessment generally does not enable instructors to improve their teaching but rather provides insight on how the teaching-learning process can be made more effective” (Steward & Mickelson, 2004).

Unlike formative assessment where students are working collaboratively with their teacher and allowing them to have a curiosity to learn, theorists raise concerns that high-stake tests like that of NAPLAN “trivialises learning and threatens self confidence, self-efficacy and interest which is required for self-regulated learning” (Clark, 2012, 208). Continuing with the idea of NAPLAN, the focus of summative evaluation is on factual knowledge and the final outcomes only (Peterson & Siadat, 2009). Tests like these capture only a very small piece of a student’s capable knowledge and only a piece of what a student knows or is able to do (Seely Flint, 2014). Critics of large-scale assessments argue that “they adversely affect the classroom and remain disconnected from instruction” (Schunk, 2009). The results are marked against different schools around the state and country with little guidance on how to improve or better ones score is provided. Although

these large scale assessments give a “longitudinal perspective of student achievement, it is the day-to-day knowledge of the individual child’s progress that is more helpful to teachers, parents and students” (Seely Flint, 2014).

In conclusion, Broadfoot (1996) stated that “the most vital aspect of any assessment, was that the assessment should promote the learning rather than demote it”. This notion should be true for any teacher assessing their students as without relevance to student learning it will be hard for students to self-regulate what they have achieved and what they desire to achieve. While both assessments still exist in today’s classroom, it is believed that neither one should exist without the other. Although they are very different, they are equally important. When it comes to assessment, formative assessment is much more modernised and an informal way to gain information of students through use of feedback and setting goals. It promotes an inclusive and open environment where strong student-teacher relationships are encouraged. Nevertheless, summative tests may be stressful or not provide much insight into the individual child, but it serves both as a guide to teaching methods and to improving overall school curriculum. Through both assessments students are able to better understand their learning goals and intentions and should not evaluate their education by a fail or pass. Regardless on form of assessment, children and adolescents can be taught self-regulated skills, how to use these skills and how to maintain themselves over time to future learning situations (Schunk, 2009).

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