

Preface

The process of teaching a particular content extends beyond the mere act of transmitting information to students. Instead, it necessitates educators, especially teachers, to ensure the efficacy of this instructional process implemented to deliver a particular content. In this vein, assessing the learning outcomes has a paramount significance. It helps language practitioners decide whether the processes of delivering and developing a particular criterion of knowledge or skill require reflection, potential modification, and refinement before progressing to the subsequent stages of instruction.

1. Definition of Assessment

Within this context, assessment seems to be a defining concept that requires the language practitioners to provide a clear and inclusive literature about it. This concept is, in fact, defined by many scholars and from different perspectives:

- ✓ **Bricker (1993, p. 12)**, in which he states that “assessment refers to the process of establishing a baseline or entry level measurement of the child's skills and desired family outcomes”.
- ✓ **Adeshola and Abubakar (2020, p. 154)** adds also that assessment is “a planned process to the extent that the teacher consciously and continuously receives data of student performance and then uses this information productively, resulting in increased student motivation and engagement”
- ✓ **Boyle and Christie (1996, p. 32)** emphasize that *assessment involves teachers to effectively interpret the data gathered from this procedure in order to make the necessary judgments about the way a particular program is implemented, the method of a specific set of instructional tools are used, and the order of a certain sort of activities are presented*
- ✓ Another very pivotal perspective that identifies assessment includes the one presented by **Smith (1996, p.32)** in which he states “assessment is of the learner but not only in terms of her/his achievements and measured skills and knowledge. In the classroom, especially with school children, learner assessment usually includes additional components such as attitude, effort, personal progress”.
- ✓ Within the same vein, **Utlely (2011, p.178)** clarifies more that “Assessment also describes the process of determining the learners' attributes, (such as learning styles and preferences), and attributes of the environment that can facilitate or detract from learning”

- ✓ All perspectives mentioned above to define and specify the term assessment can now be synthesized in the definition presented by *Llewellyn (2013, p. 252)* in which he concludes that “*assessment includes a multiple focus: determining what students already know, determining the criteria for learning and quality of student work, monitoring student progress, and adjusting and improving instruction*”.

2. The Distinction between assessment, evaluation and measurement

Teaching and learning are two interconnected and complicated processes, as they require a range of other sub-processes. Within this educational context, collecting data about both teachers' and students' outcomes is a very crucial step to make decisions about the upcoming phases. Evaluation, assessment, and measurement are three basic concepts, which are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the process of obtaining data about teachers' and students' progress. These three concepts seem to have a common meaning if they are defined from a broad perspective; however, if these terms are addressed from a specific educational view, then a crucial distinction may occur. Therefore, it seems important for language practitioners to elucidate the specific meaning and purpose of each of these three interconnected terms. The difference that will be drawn helps language practitioners to either specify the term which is relevant to their aim or overgeneralize the meaning of all the three terms to be incorporated in one whole process in a one common situation (i.e., to be considered as one single concept).

The term evaluation, which can be placed at the first and broad level, is considered as an "applied research carried out to make or support decisions regarding one or more service programs" (Hadley and Mitchell, 1995 qtd in Mertens, 2010, p. 51). This definition emphasizes that evaluation is a concept undertaken particularly to form decisions regarding the curriculum construction and its application. Evaluation aims to reduce the uncertainty about the decisions made in relation to the teaching programs and the factors, which affect these decisions. This can be specified through the collection of data about the teaching-learning outcomes. It focuses on discovering the weaknesses, strengths, benefits, and drawbacks of the implemented

programs in the context of education (Derbel, 2017). Germaine and Rea-Dickins (1998, p. 12) explain also that evaluators are expected to offer data that may help “into decision making, planning, action and change, defined in our professional context in very practical curricular terms”. In other words, they emphasize that contributions gained from the process of evaluation should be practical and related to the curriculum, which is the set of courses or subjects taught in a particular educational program. That is, it is about using evaluation data to make informed decisions and improvements in the educational context.

Chester F. McNernly (qtd in Rani et al., 2004, p. 52) emphasizes also that the results of the evaluation process can be the basis for reflecting the needs of students and planning the teaching experiences needed for individuals. As evaluation is a broad term that focuses on both planning and determining the effectiveness of teaching-learning programs. It also tends to make judgments on individuals’ growth. Therefore, as this term holds various objectives in its core, it cannot adequately be undertaken using only one tool (like observation checklist, test, questionnaire...etc). However, it requires the implementation of many different techniques.

Assessment is another cornerstone for effective teaching- learning process. This concept is considered as a multifaceted approach that leads to outcomes related to the progress of a particular sample of population. It is viewed as a multifaceted approach as it possesses different aims in its process. According to the literature, Berry (2008, p. 5) specifies that assessment is concerned with the description of students’ progress and location in the learning process. This term focuses on diagnosing the problems that students may experience in learning and offering them with directions and solutions to overcome these learning obstacles. It is then specific in terms of its detailed objectives. Assessment does not literarily concern the process of curriculum decision-making, but it rather spots the light on diagnosing problems that students experience when processing a particular content (specific rather than general objective). This assumption does not guarantee that data collected from assessment is not necessarily used in the evaluation

process. In other words, evaluators could also incorporate the assessment outcomes to make decisions about the curriculum policy.

Unlike the other two previous concepts, measurement is concerned with the process of transforming individuals' behaviors, learning experiences, and outcomes into numbers. In other words, its major objective is to quantify the students' learning experiences. This transformation procedure is guided by certain rules and procedures to apply. Using an instrument to implement the measurement procedure (i.e., transforming behaviors into statistics) requires first identifying the variable(s) being measured. After the determination of the variable(s), the procedure involves identifying the behaviors that operationally reflect and define the variable(s). Drafting tests or other measurement techniques and applying them with a small sample to be refined based on its analysis. The last step incorporates administering the test to the whole population to obtain the statistical numbers to be analyzed and interpreted. To illustrate, if the teacher opts to measure students' writing proficiency, then he/she needs first to determine the variable being measured (i.e., writing proficiency). Then, he is required to identify the behaviors which reflect and define the variable. In this example, the behaviors which define the writing proficiency may include having rich vocabulary and mastering grammar rules. The next step involves the teacher to draft a test and pilot it to a small sample of students in order to be refined. After the adjustments made based on the analysis of the piloting study, the teacher applies the test to the whole number of students to obtain the statistical numbers which measure the writing proficiency (Petrosko, 2005, p. 47). Measurement can be then considered as the more detailed procedure used when the main objective is to transfer learning experiences into numerals to be analyzed and interpreted.

References used in this course in addition to authors you may use for further reading

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