

## **Assessment for Learning: Aligning Classroom Assessment with Life-long Learning**

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### **Abstract**

*Classroom assessment is narrowly practiced just for appraising the learning while overlooking its effectiveness for enhancing students' learning. Assessment certainly is the bridge between learning and teaching. In the current study the teachers' perspectives were explored about enhancing students' life-long learning through the use of classroom assessment practices at public sector universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) at Undergraduate level. The perspectives of 30 teachers, 06 teachers each from five sampled public sector universities in KP were collected through a semi-structured interview schedules by adopting a qualitative research methodology. Data was analyzed through thematic approach. Interviews with teachers deep probed their perspectives which resulted that the use of classroom assessment practices for learning enhance students attributes which leads not only to general achievements in academic accomplishment but also development in their life learning approaches, enhancement in their life skills as well as increasing their engagement in self-learning behaviors. Furthermore, the use of classroom assessment practices instill graduate attributes which make students enable to employ knowledge and skills in future real life settings (lifelong learning). The stud highly recommended that students should be provided with the variety of assessment practices in order to facilitate them in providing best possible opportunities for developing their lifelong learning attributes.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment for Learning; Life-long learning; Classroom Assessment, Teachers Perspectives, Under-Graduate Students.*

### **Introduction**

When assessments are used with a focus on supporting learning rather than mere judgement, they can be seen as formative. The distinction between formative and summative assessments should depend on their intended purposes. Assessments should not only be about grading students or institutions but should also serve to reveal present level of accomplishment and enhance impending performance. The goal of assessment, both for students and institutions, is to assist students in reaching their highest potential (Panadero et al., 2019).

Panadero and Tapia (2014) mentioned that one of the main reason for encouraging active self-assessment among learners is to boost their academic performance and foster their ability to self-regulate their learning.

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Studies suggest a strong connection between self-regulation and student's achievement. Those who actively engage in their learning process by setting personal goals, devising strategies to reach them, consistently observing their development tend to learn more effectively and perform better compared to passive learners. Self-assessments plays a vital role in this self-regulation process as it enables students to participate actively in the process of their learning, maintain clarity about their task objectives, and continually evaluate and adjust their progress towards achieving their goals. This approach ultimately leads to improved learning outcomes and an enhanced educational experience (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012).

Reimers (2020) narrated that the way classroom assessments are designed and conducted should adapt to encompass critical thinking and problem-solving skills relevant to each academic subject. Therefore, Meier and Knoester (2017) highlighted that the assessments of learning should encompass various methods such as direct observations, verbal questioning, hands-on activities, demonstrations, the compilation of portfolios, students' self-assessments, and project based evaluations. Furthermore, teachers should actively participate in the systematic analysis of available data and transform the classroom culture. This transformation is essential to ensure that students no longer feel the need to fake competence or engage in superficial efforts. Instead, they should be encouraged to genuinely grasp and apply their knowledge, creating a more authentic and effective learning atmosphere.

Hammond (2017) cited the speech of president of USA Barak Obama that our governors and education leaders of our nation are required to make decisions and change criteria with all-encompassing perspective that not only to judge whether learners can lodge in a fizz on a trial, simply but concern should be on the development of their 21st century capabilities like critical thinking, entrepreneurship, creativity, and problem solving.

Similarly, in Canada, a document titled "Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind" was released in 2006. Within this document, depending on its purpose the assessment was categorized in different ways, including assessment as learning, assessment of learning and assessment for learning, each serving valuable roles. However, achieving the right balance among these categories is a complex undertaking. When the primary focus is on improving student learning, the aim of assessment for learning takes on greater importance compared to assessment for the purpose of learning. (WNCPC, 2006).

In the policies of assessment of various provinces, a consistent recognition is given to the benefits of integrating assessment for learning into methods of classroom teaching. These acknowledgement can be found in documents from various entities such as British Columbia Ministry of Education (2004), the Alberta assessments Consortium (2005), and the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010). These policies assert that assessment for learning not only aids students in making development towards standards of education but also encourages self-monitoring, the development of essential learning skills, and greater student independence which leads to lifelong learning. Furthermore, these policies stress that by prioritizing the improvement of students' learning abilities, which is at the core of assessment for learning, it will ultimately lead to enhanced results in summative assessments, expedited learning, and a reinforcement of commitments to lifelong learning (Birenbaum et al., 2015).

Panadero et al. (2016) stated that participating in intricate intellectual chores during classroom activities, coupled with continuous collaboration among peers and instructors, facilitates profound learning by establishing links with metacognitive processes. Students can actively take part in diverse activities like discussions, data analysis, debates, and tasks that involve integrating information. The goal is to ensure that students engage in these classroom activities, offering them greater chances to nurture their lifelong learning capabilities.

Assessment Reform Group (2002) emphasized that assessment intentionally crafted to improve learning is the most potent instrument available to empower individuals, enhance educational standards, and encourage lifelong learning. This approach, which strongly connects with aiding students in their learning process, is referred to as “assessment for learning” (AFL).

Rahmani (2003) identified some critical deficiencies in Pakistan’s education system. It was pointed out that the system heavily relies on standardized exams, concentrating mainly on the content within its curriculum and not giving sufficient attention to the assessment process. Additionally, it was highlighted by Samosa (2022) that assessments are primarily used to test students’ knowledge based on facts, rather than nurturing their critical and logical reasoning abilities. As a result, students are not adequately equipped to perform effectively in real-life situations.

Furthermore, assessment is primarily seen as a means to grade students through summative exams, leading to a situation where teachers mainly focus on instructing students to excel in test performance rather than prioritizing their overall learning improvement. Similarly, exams are predominantly utilized to evaluate students’ memorization skills, which in turn, encourage rote learning (Alvi, 2005 & Rehmani, 2003). In the light of Rodriguez’s critical assessment of Pakistani assessment methods in 2006, it was suggested that teachers, educators, and policymakers should acknowledge the importance of incorporating a variety of assessment approaches. This underscores the urgent need to introduce innovative assessment practices to advance the education system and facilitate lifelong learning.

Hence, there is a need to reorient assessment practices so that they can effectively validate and promote learning within university as well as in real world contexts beyond academia (Junyent, & Ciurana, 2008). This transition also entails a shift from assessing knowledge or skills in isolation to assessing their practical applicability beyond the university environment (Norris, 2016).

The study emphasizes the significance of teachers having a deep understanding of how classroom practices align with the concept of lifelong learning. Objectives of the Study

- i. To explore the teachers’ perspectives about the use of classroom assessment for lifelong learning.
- ii. To identify and analyze how teachers develop graduate qualities which empower students to implement learning in future life situations (lifelong learning).

#### Research Questions

The research study was guided by the following questions:

- i. How teachers take in the use of classroom assessment practices for improving students ‘lifelong learning’?
- ii. In what ways teachers can make align the classroom assessment strategies with lifelong learning?

### **Methodology**

This study was designed to explore the perspectives of teachers about the alignment of classroom assessment with lifelong learning at undergraduate level in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan through a qualitative exploratory research design.

#### Population

The population comprised of the teachers who were teaching to undergraduate students in all of 24 Public sector universities of KP, Pakistan.

#### Sample Size and Its Distribution

30 teachers were selected out of randomly selected, five public sector universities in KP. Various disciplines were selected through stratified sampling technique and data were collected from both male and female teachers which were selected randomly.

#### Data Collection Instrument

Semi-structured interview schedules were adopted for collecting relevant data. Teachers were interviewed regarding the alignment of classroom assessment practices with students' lifelong learning.

### Results and Discussion

The results are stated to elucidate teachers' thoughts and ideas on how to align classroom assessment with students' lifelong learning for enhancing students' learning. In this context the following research questions are mentioned with result and discussion.

#### Classroom Assessment and Students' Life-long Learning

The teachers' responses to the research question help clarify their understanding of how assessment practices relate to students' lifelong learning. Their opinions offer insights into the teachers' perspectives on the role of classroom assessments practices in nurturing lifelong learning among students. These teachers shared various ideas about how classroom assessment practices can contribute to lifelong learning.

They conveyed their viewpoints by citing multiple consequences and aspects of classroom assessment that contribute to the enhancement of students' lifelong learning.

The respondents were prompted to share their views regarding the use of various classroom activities as an assessment practices to align the classroom assessment strategies with lifelong learning. A logical analysis of the data in this regard carried to the surface that majority of the participants (30 teachers) apply limited various assessment activities i.e. time projects and some of practical activities, group tasks and pair work to involve students in lifelong learning process. They quote the effectiveness of such practices for lifelong learning in the following words:

....up to me the group work is more important when that is important to identify the task within a group, so there may be three students working in a group on a particular task but in usually at the under-graduate level they haven't work in group before then they may not fully divide the task that's give rise a problem that should be overcome somehow by explaining to the students that they need to divide the task and there should be proper contribution by each student in the group. And it doesn't mean that one or two students in the group does whole the task and it will work out only when all the students work on equally on a particular task. And that's why I do encourage my students to work equally and to divide the task and all of them should be aware what he/she is doing and so this should be actually a practice and in the future when they need to work on a task/problem in a group so they will be able to solve it collectively. So this way their various abilities get developed like contribution in group tasks, team management, problem solving and timely deadline meeting etc.

My approach is to give a particular task in the class and give the task to individual student and they have to provide their own feedback based on for example o the previous lecture to see the topic in detail and for alternative, I divide the class in four to five groups and by that they come up with me with the ideas and share their ideas by understanding the concept to solve the problem and theses two approaches which I use at the classroom

level and found productive in improving students learning particularly for difficult or higher order learning to make their concepts clear about the particular topic and make them enable to implement such knowledge and practices in real life situation....

It helps for in-depth understanding but I have seen that it is more helpful in developing team spirit among students. They learn how to prepare a project by working in a group. It improves their capability; it improves their managerial skills and a team spirit to work in a group for establishing a project. It also helps students particularly slow learners to get help from their other group members which is an opportunity to such students to get improve their learning. But it is possible when the project is equally divided among the members of a group. This one issue related to this practice which we frequently received that students come with complains that this member is not working and which always lead to fights among them. So, in this respect I keep checked on every member of the group to see his her task on their selves and try to make sure students work with each other cooperatively. In other words it's a training through which students get the opportunities to develop desire behaviors and values which help them in their practical life...

....the thing is that if we assign project to the students and some of the project depending on the nature of the project like some of mega projects yes, definitely we do involved more students and if the project is not that much extensive then we assign to just couple of the students or to an individual student as well. The idea behind by giving this project activity is that we give this opportunity to the students that they should understand theoretical background plus practical work so it's a practical based learning and we involve them if they working in a group that increases their potential that how to work as a team so to improve their ability as a team work is one of the objective behind applying this activity in the classroom and yes I do agree with it that it helps in improving students learning and some of the best skills which every student need to get developed.

Individual projects do increase a lot of their knowledge, if you give them individual projects because, at university level, particularly when you teach them professional studies, so professional study doesn't mean that you read a book and then straight write down it in a paper, you have to actually practically can made them so yah the projects are the way where they can practice their practical experiments. But in group projects there are some students who get a very little knowledge and benefit in their learning out of it and most of the students just find a way through to get out though it, that's why they get their selves in some groups and ask their friends in groups to do assignment for them. It is only effective when every student has assigned their individual role to perform in that project and acts as a team work and it will also develop their different skills like, what do you say ...management skills, students' leadership skills also get polish through it...the activity based assessment is a more reliable way of getting information and the learning through this approach occurred a kind of permanent learning so that's why it's a more reliable way of learning. Students also develop their other learning abilities and skills like problem solving and particularly they learn about the group dynamics. Besides that it creates among students a competition to do well and to bring forth their efforts to perform well in a given activity.

....Besides that students also pass through the practice of task completion approaches to meet the challenges at the given time period so that's why todays more focus is given to the activity based learning. But one thing which I want to mention in this regard that such practices prove to be effective when used in organized way whenever if it gets difficult to be mange in a given period of time then it leads to waste of time and energy and won't provide such a productive results in terms of learning. That's why I considered that a teacher should be skilled enough to facilitate appropriately different types of practical assessment....

....it is good activity based assessment it is good, but it is difficult for us to judge students' performance as we haven't any appropriate or standardized way of its assessment, and a teacher has to concentrate on each and every student in the class, but I used to give time students for discussion within class in groups though not for judgment but for improving their learning though there are some students when they don't know about the topic but when there is going discussion on that topic they definitely get idea of it about the topic and yah, help in improving their learning...

It is apparent from the above responses that almost all of the respondent teachers' considered the practical activities and group projects as the most productive assessment activities for cultivating lifelong learning and in-depth understanding among students.

Respondents figured out that such practices are effective in developing lifelong learning, and in-depth understanding of concepts as well as it leads to the development group dynamism through team work. Students get enabled to develop their problem solving abilities to meet deadlines under pressure furthermore, involvement in such classroom activities leads students into a positive competition environment. It also builds among students a struggle to do their best and to bring forth their efforts to execute well in a subjected situation which make them enables for real life setting performances.

While revealing the usefulness of assessment practices which involved activities and students active participation, some of the respondents highlighted that, management of such classroom activities is a high skilled task for the teachers and to execute successfully, teachers are required to be skilled enough and well trained in order to achieve its objectives. They further added that that if teachers are having difficulty in managing these classroom activities then it will be not that much productive in terms of learning outcomes.

So it is evident from the above excerpts that university teachers give due considerations to the use of assessment practices for lifelong learning. For the development of such attributes among graduate students the teachers do engage students mostly in practical activities i.e. individual, group projects, pair activities and practical tasks which they considered are helpful in providing opportunities for the students to develop life skills and lifelong learning and which to developing of 'meta' skills in students by empowering them to monitor their own learning, endorsing and involving critical reflection, which in turns leads to the development of meta skills and students also get the confidence to implement their learning in contexts beyond their educational institution.

#### Discussion

The findings of the study showed that if the focus is on the students' lifelong learning then the classroom assessment practices should be given high preference in regular classroom activities and to be use with proper planning by the teachers aiming development of students attributes which make them enable to accomplish their life goals through lifelong learning.

So for development of lifelong learning attributes among students are involved, the findings of the study highlighted that that university teachers' considered various assessment practices as group work, pair work and projects and involving students in real life problem solving activities enhances effectively lifelong learning attributes among students. The same is found out by (Marin & Halpern, 2011; Schulz, & FitzPatrick, 2016) that when students work in group then there are vital learning gains for students and more capable of to be prepare for real life situation. In another research study, a comparison four types of problems presented between individual students and to cooperative teams were presented which leads to the findings in outpacing of the individuals by the cooperative teams on all categories and through all ages (Schelble et al., 2022).

So many other experimental studies which have resulted that groups always outperform individuals on learning students perform more well in group tasks than individual tasks (O'Donnell & Dansereau, 1992; Hsiung, 2012; Zambrano, Kirschner, Sweller, & Kirschner, 2019).

Similarly, in another decade back study by Thomas (2000) documented five main elements of effective project-based learning. He asserted in the light of his study findings that curriculum primarily engrossed on a dynamic investigation that comprehends exploration and understanding construction, planned around vigorous queries that entail students to meet essential ideas and values, based on the real life problems and are student-driven allowing students to be responsible for planning and managing their work. Same is mentioned in the findings of Kingston (2018).

In other research studies of project-based vs traditional approaches have recognized several benefits of projects based assessment, for example in the development of problem understanding and solving abilities (Gallagher, Rosenthal & Stepien, 1992; Jollands, Jolly & Molyneaux, 2012), development and to support in their reasoning ability to with clear arguments (Stepien, Gallagher & Workman, 1993; Cullen, Fan, van der Brugge, & Elga, 2018), and enhanced ability for designing a project after executing on an related problem-based challenge (Moore et al., 1996; Tamim & Grant, 2013). In problem-based learning, students use their high logical abilities while working in groups, investigating eloquent problems, ascertain their objectives that what they require to learn and how to look for possible solutions and produce approaches to meet the solution for problems (Barrows, 1996; Silver, 2004).

The credence of teachers that classroom assessment practices improve students' lifelong learning is in correspondence with the consequences of the social cognitive study on motivation and achievement. Endowment for producing classroom assessment the basis for stimulating theory integrating group and paired experiences and individual psychology into an incorporated theory about the inducement of students 'efforts and attainment also initiates from what is known about the psychology of lifelong learning (Farrell & Ives, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

The investigation of data explicates that responded teachers give due considerations to the use of assessment practices for lifelong learning. For the development of such attributes among graduate students the teachers do engage students mostly in practical activities i.e. individual, group projects, pair activities and practical tasks which they considered are supportive in creating opportunities for the students to develop life skills and lifelong learning in order to be able to perform well in real life setting. Teachers further asserted that by frequent use of practical activities as assessment practices are much helpful in training students which make them enable to be ready for accomplishing easily their tasks in a real life. The inference can be taken that for developing graduate attributes enabling students to implement learning in their future life situations the practice of various classroom assessment practices are considerably valuable.

## **Implications**

- i. The outcomes of the study fill the gap of lack of empirical investigation in the area of the assessment for its efficacy of life learning.
- ii. This finding will be a source of direction for the stakeholders while designing lifelong learning strategies in the curriculum guide of all level programs.

## Recommendations:

- i. In view of the demonstrative elusiveness of the assessment practices from perceptions of teachers it is vital to the effective use of assessment practices to enhance students' life learning abilities.
- ii. The students should be provided with the variety of assessment practices in order to facilitate them in providing best possible opportunities for developing their lifelong learning attributes.

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