Developing Teacher Subjective Theory Of Assessment

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Introduction, objective and research questions

Evidence shows that teacher conceptions about the purpose of assessment matter as to how assessment is planned and implemented in classroom settings. Therefore, examining these conceptions is useful in understanding and explaining classroom assessment issues.

Hence, this study explored how English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers approach assessment with a focus on the ways these teachers create subjective theories about assessment to understand how it can support and enhance student learning.

In exploring this aim, the following research questions are employed:

1. How do EFL teachers in Czech lower secondary schools construct their subjective theories of assessment?
2. What thought processes occur when teachers plan assessment practices to support learning?
3. What factors or critical incidences influence teachers' subjective theories about assessment?
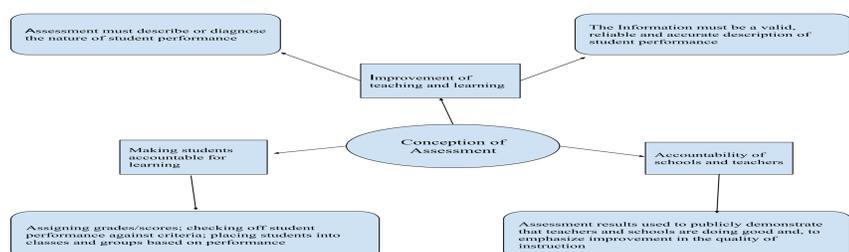
Theoretical Framework

Figure 1: A model on teacher's conception of assessment based from previous research (Brown & Remesal, 2017; Bonner, 2016; Barnes et al., 2015; Fulmer et al., 2015; Remesal, 2011; Brown, 2008; Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988)
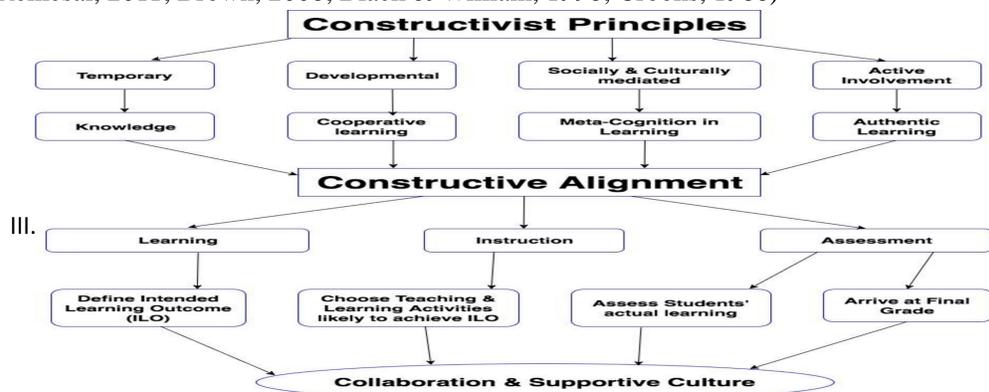

Figure 2:: Constructive Alignment Framework, Biggs (1996)

Research Design, Methods and Analysis

This study adopts qualitative interpretive design as an overarching methodological framework as a lens for capturing teachers' socially and culturally constructed subjective theories, beliefs, and attitudes about assessment..

The data sources were classroom observation, researcher's diary, and document analysis of student work together with the teacher interviews.

The research participants were 10 EFL teachers from seven Czech lower secondary schools. The purposive and snowball sampling methods was recruited to select the participants.

15 classroom observations with 15 researcher's notes were made and recorded. Furthermore, 20 pieces of students' work were reviewed.

Data analyses followed a thematic approach (Creswell, 2007)

Findings and Discussion

Despite teachers' limited exposure to assessment workshops, three distinct assessment beliefs exist within the lower secondary classroom:
- ✓ assessment for teacher and student accountability;
- ✓ assessment for student certification; and,
- ✓ assessment for improvement of teaching and learning.
- ✓ Assessment planning are based from classroom observation, student themselves, discussion with colleagues, reading, internet sources, experience, practice, university and school policy and were not supported by the professional development.

Acknowledgment

All of the 10 teachers believed that reflection and observing their own students assisted them in improving their assessment practices. Furthermore, one of the factor that affected the way they think was through their own realization.

Some of the teachers had changed their assessment practices halfway through their career as illustrated in the statement below:

When I like something or some part of the assessment [my colleagues] do, I try to somehow adjust and develop mine. (Tom)

It can be deduced from the above quote that for few teachers, some critical incidents have contributed to their assessment learning.

In one school, three teachers have created their own assessment rubrics to assess and guide students' written tasks.. They also involved students in the assessment process. Such activities promoted the development of meta-cognitive skills in both teachers and students. And aligns with Biggs (1996) constructive alignment..

The observational data showed that about five teachers constructed critical questions to develop students' critical thinking and understanding of reading and guide their reading-based writing tasks.

One teacher practiced three rounds of assessment to meet the desired learning goals. The teacher practiced self, peer, and teacher assessment, which meant students went through three levels of reworking their activities. Black and William (1998) points such activities allows students to think, discuss and reflect on their own learning as well as those of the peers and to articulate their reflections and provide feedback to each other.

Grading, testing, questioning, pictures, stickers, and verbal feedback are most common types of assessment with written feedback, peer, self, and portfolio as least practiced options.

Although grading does not contribute to students; learning process, it's use is overemphasized as influenced by educational and institutional policies and also rooted in social and cultural factors. Black et al, (2003) indicated that the parents assumed grades are the only forum through which they can find out how their children are faring at school. The teachers stressed that grading learners' performance is a dominant means to substantiate the accountability of students, teachers and schools, but not necessarily for improving teaching and learning.

Although these learning forums are used, the findings showed most of their assessment practices are still based on age old practices and in contrast of current research findings,

Conclusion

The finding suggest a targeted effective professional development courses that aligns with current assessment research findings needs to be introduced sooner to orient teachers on current assessment practices, so, it can help them in planning and implementing effective formative classroom assessment practices to support and improve student learning.

References

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