



Organizing and reporting assessment results

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Abstract This article discusses the scope of organizing and reporting assessment results, which include the processes of collecting, managing, analysing, and reporting assessment information. Specific sources of data, as well as strategies in obtaining and interpreting the information are listed. A synthesis on how the entire process of organizing and reporting assessment result tied with teacher role and responsibility is provided.

Keywords: *Assessment, organizing and reporting assessment*

Introduction and Basic Considerations

What does it take for the organization and report writing of assessment information to be precise and efficient? Does precision result from the type of assessment tests? Is efficiency brought about by the number or even types of strategies employed during assessment? Indeed these components of assessment contribute to the effectiveness of the assessment process. However, it is imperative that the types of measures or strategies used are all encompassed by the underlying objectives and expected outcomes as agreed upon prior to the execution of assessment. As such, the preparation behind an assessment program, along with the planning as to which measures and strategies are to be employed can fully contribute to the precision and efficiency of assessment and evaluation.

Planning is at the core of organizing and reporting assessment results. As earlier mentioned, effective assessment practice is born when assessment data reflect the learning objectives and learning outcomes of a lesson. By means of conceptualizing an assessment plan, teachers are able to narrow down the area to assess and maintain a clearer perspective of what students should learn. For instance, Helman (2006) explains that classroom literacy practices should be included in the assessment plan. By means of monitoring student progress and identifying who needs extra guidance, one is able to make the most of assessment data. Likewise, it is also ideal that the assessment data will be examined by all

stakeholders that hold various perspectives in the realm of learning. Reporting assessment data, thus, should be treated as important as test construction, where what needs to be reported should be determined beforehand.

The aforementioned rationale cites specific reasons regarding the significance of reporting assessment results. Navarrete and Gutske (1996) presented three main issues in reporting assessment data, which include the purpose of assessment, strengths and limitations of assessment, and methods of presenting results. A clear purpose facilitates clarity in communicating assessment results, which in turn, satisfies the informational need of the student. Reporting thus, allows for the availability of feedback about student performance for both student and parents. A clear purpose also promotes an understanding of its implications which can be reflected in the assessment design, data collection, instrumentation and analysis. Such understanding can serve as basis whether instruction is meeting the established literacy goals or there is a need to modify such goals. Over time, the degree of their progress may result to improved teaching and learning, and perhaps to funding, or continued funding, for improvement of instruction.

In order to achieve the proper assessment measures that appropriately reflects the objectives and outcomes of a learning material, it is imperative that the teacher has a clear idea on what type of data are necessary to assess the learning process, as well as knowing how to acquire such data. As the learning experience vary due to differences in context, the sources of information can be varied as well. Given that there are different sources of information, there are also various ways of obtaining them. The subsequent sections discuss collection of assessment data, with descriptions of the kinds of data that can be used for assessment as well as the strategies on how to collect them.

Assessment Data Collection

Organizing and reporting assessment begins with collection and storage of data. Since there is a vast range of assessment data that can be collected, stored, and analyzed, it is important to be selective in order to prevent being overwhelmed with data. It also allows one to be focused on what the target of assessment really is, which can have precise implication on specific learning targets. An advisable practice with regards to obtaining assessment data is to establish a range of mechanisms for data collection and to interpret and analyze as soon as possible. It is preferred that the gap between data collection and analysis will not be prolonged, but rather, is acted immediately as soon as data is available. The rationale behind this lies in the way the teacher can treat the data in an authentic manner, where it is still contextualized in the scenario where the data was acquired.

There are two ways in which information can be collected, and that is either it is obtained formally or informally. Formal data collection includes the use of research instruments, clinical techniques, and standardized tests. Informal data collection, on the other hand, pertains to observation, collection of classroom products or information sourced from parents or other individuals. In collecting information for assessment, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the

context where learning occurred. McAfee and Leong (2007) coined this as “multiple windows” from which data are obtained from. Multiple windows pertain to the varied measures of data that can provide a more valid estimate about the student’s achievement. In this sense, not only do more windows depict relatively complete information about the student, but it also increases the reliability and representativeness of the student’s learning accomplishments and capabilities. Multiple windows also liberate teachers from the constraint of one approach, which in turn, decreases the possibilities of errors. Three aspects of classroom management, namely, (a) source of information, (b) method of obtaining information and (c) context, setting or situation of the appraisal, can be varied to provide multiple windows or measures.

Sources of Assessment Data

Source of information can be primarily acquired through the student who will be assessed. As the primary source of data, talking and listening with the student during class can be a convenient way to acquire data. This shows how students themselves volunteer information about their own learning and difficulties in the natural classroom setting. In a more formal set up of class discussion, student participation, perhaps in response to questions posed by the teacher, is an indispensable information source.

Parents, specialists, other adults, peers or classmates, and records about the student can also serve as sources of assessment data. Parents and other adults can provide yet another varied perspective about the student. Being the primary caregivers of students, parents know their children more than anyone else and generally have a closer experience of seeing how their children behave when they are not in school. In this sense, parents are more knowledgeable about the situations at home that might affect the performance of their children in school. Differences in home and school culture that can play a role in classroom dynamics of the student can be provided by parents and these inputs are useful in a school that caters to diversified student learning environments.

Other teachers who have handled the student in different contexts (e.g., school subject) can also provide how the child becomes ‘different’ based on the activities they perform in their respective classes. A student may behave in various ways in different classes and the perspective various teachers can provide can help in depicting a holistic picture of the student. Finally, records that depict attendance, intake, health and school history, progress reports, report cards, test results or portfolios can be rich sources of assessment data and can be used prior and after assessment of the student. As time, money and energy were utilized to arrive at these documentations, it is but right to put such materials to good use.

Peers and classmates can also serve as informant on how a particular student progresses in the classroom. Apart from the student to be assessed, the classmates also experience the same standards of instruction which can serve as comparison with regards to pace of learning. Classroom activities that require students to work together as a group can also serve as gauge as to the performance of each member with regards to a particular task by means of feedback or peer

evaluation. By means of having various sources on how learning is achieved can lead to a broader perspective with regards to the learning processes of a student.

Method of obtaining information can be by means of systematic observation, eliciting responses from students and, eliciting information from parents and other adults. In systematic observation, attention is directed towards a particular target such as the pattern of the child's behaviour, a situation or problem that needs resolution, or the child's progress towards an identified goal. When executing systematic observation, one should do so unobtrusively, ideally in a place with a full view of the target situation and behaviour but without disrupting the natural progression of the learning environment. During observation, verbal and non-verbal behaviour should be noted. For instance, the actual words uttered, its intonation, enunciation, and pronunciation, as well as body stance, movement, motor responses, gesticulations, and facial expressions should be recognized and recorded.

Strategies in Obtaining Assessment Data

As previously mentioned, the students themselves are ideal sources of their own learning status, which is why it is imperative that these insights are elicited in the proper manner. There are various ways in attaining this such as initiating instructional conversations or dialogues during class, as well as incorporating elicitation of feedback in daily classroom activities. This becomes evident during class discussions or structured learning exercises, where students are required to participate and produce a certain degree of quality output.

Alternative assessments, such as performance assessment, dynamic assessment, interviews, conferences, and discussions, are also other options by which teachers can secure student responses. Performance assessments allow pupils to demonstrate what they know and can do in real life situations. This also reflects a level of authentic assessment, and although indirectly, provides insights on the pedagogy of the instructor. On the other hand, dynamic assessments probe skills that are on the verge of emergence. The potentiality of these skills are recognized and acted up, that is, the potential is tapped and further honed for improvement. Indicators such as hints, prompts, cues or questions that aid in identifying the strategies and processes that enable the students to learn more effectively in the future are also noted. As the teacher and student continue to interact with each other in class, the skills are further developed until it reaches maturity and the student can perform optimally.

Interviews are also efficient means to get student information. The content of the interview should comprise of well thought of questions that reflect what teachers expect students to do relative to the objectives of the assessment. By means of this method, it allows the teacher to probe deeper into the experiences of the student during the learning process. It is important to note however, that there is equal importance placed in both initial and follow up questions since it allows the teacher to create a holistic portrait of the student's learning experience.

Another way to get information is through holding student-teacher conferences. The process entails the two parties to sit together and discuss what the student has done and what the teacher thinks of it. However, it is not just the teacher who gets to provide inputs during conferences, but the student is also given the opportunity to explain his or her work relative to a particular class standard. Thus, conference discourse results to mutual exchange of insights and suggestions.

Periodic sampling of classroom work products aid in assessment as this shows what the student has learned over a period of time. Within the collection of work products, breakthrough samples that show a particular growth and development toward a certain learning standard also provide valuable information about the student's learning process. Finally, by means of holding informal conversations, conferences, and administering questionnaires to parents also achieve the objective of acquiring ample information about the student's learning progress.

Given the various sources and strategies that reflect multiple windows approach to assessment, it is noteworthy to mention several guidelines in choosing the appropriate assessment window. First is to identify the behaviour to be assessed and find out the contexts that would best demonstrate the behaviour. Second is to consider whether the source, method, and context will produce an authentic assessment. Finally, the teacher should maximize the chances of seeing the behaviour within a context. This is important because certain contexts restrict and limit the occurrence of certain types of behaviour, while certain activities can be more engaging and elicit better, more reliable sources of behaviour. Recognizing the extent to which a particular context can provide the most useful data is most useful in the assessment process.

Management of Assessment Data

While assessment information will more or less depict the status of a learning individual, properly handling such data is also a relevant issue. Knowing the source and the process of how to get information is one aspect of collecting assessment data. However, having the proper collection tools will enable the teacher to efficiently proceed with the assessment process.

Some assessment tools include paper and pencil collection of simple numerical and textual data. These can be incorporated through the use of devices such as word processors and spreadsheets with appropriate an analysis-ready software. Aside from the traditional tools, it is advisable to make use of a range of technologies that can help collect, store and manage assessment data.

Among these technologies include digital cameras, audio recorders and video cameras that are relatively affordable and easy to use with minimal skill requirements needed to operate. One can easily access and manage the digital data by means of, for instance, the 'drag and drop' method for transferring files to the computer and specific software are available that can help manage data files. Likewise, today's mobile phones have features that make its functions highly flexible, such as recording audio and video. The flexibility of the mobile phone, matched with a regulated policy on the extent of mobile phone utility in class, can

pave way to the involvement of the students themselves in gathering assessment data using the mobile phone as means for documentation.

After collection, there are strategies that can be utilized in order to facilitate compilation, storage and presentation of assessment data. Portfolios, individual and group profiles and technology-aided storage are some examples of managing information used for assessment. Using portfolios can determine the student's status and progress within a learning context. It can also be a source of instruction and provides information that is useful for reporting assessment results. Portfolios also allow for the preliminary identification of students who need special attention.

Individual profiles document a student's capabilities and behaviour patterns, including the extremes and uniqueness, and stylistic approaches to learning that are not easily seen in just one assessment. Group profiles, on the other hand, show class performance on one or more items. They focus on a range of class behaviour and identify subgroups or clusters of students with similar strengths and needs. The behaviours can be presented qualitatively, such as in terms of the degree of detail, and quantitatively, such as the frequency of the behaviour's occurrence. Given the profiles, varied instructions can be planned in response to the student's needs.

Technological advancement has its fair share in shaping the strategies for storing and managing assessment data. As mentioned earlier, word processors and spreadsheets, as well as software that can create data bases of information can help a teacher in assessment data management. Other software that come in generic computer programs such as Media Player, Movie Player, Picasa or iTunes can also serve as storage and presentation tools for assessment data. In using these devices, however, it is advisable to use specific file names for each data file for easy reference, as compared to the automatic abstract or numerical file name generated by the digital device. Online resources such as Google Docs also allow one to solicit responses for data by means of online instrument administration which will automatically be encoded in a spreadsheet file.

The emergence of technological utility for recording assessment data shows that while it is standard to produce a written report as an assessment output, there are options as to how to most effectively convey the results and implications of an assessment. Shepard (1980) cites how other media can be used such as film strips or slide show presentations as this can be effective in catching and holding the attention of an audience, perhaps in longer duration, as opposed to words and graphs in written forms of reports.

Given both the traditional and contemporary approaches to reporting assessment results, it is still highly recommended for reports to be delivered personally. Face to face contact ensures that reports will be looked at and provides the opportunity to address questions that cannot be catered by written documents.

Interpreting Assessment Data

With the assessment data obtained and secured, meanings can now be extracted and applied in the contexts of instruction. Apart from student-driven information, assessment data should also inform the teacher of his or her own teaching. Thus, effective recording can provide a clear insight on the content and

process of the student's learning as well as insight on teacher's pedagogy and effectiveness.

As previously mentioned, there is no single source of information that tells everything about the student, and that the context where learning occurred affects student behaviour in various ways. In analyzing assessment data, therefore, the type of process usually reflects the objectives of the assessment in order to serve as a guide in arriving at explanations and implications. For instance, one strategy in the analytic process is to look for general themes or common issues among students. Perhaps, these commonalities come in the form of concerns, difficulties or small successes in class. The responses, derived from textual or visual data, can also be categorized to a particular teaching task or activity.

It is also efficient to conduct specific analysis of data in response to particular issues at hand. Having a research question in mind can be utilized as a lens to look into the data in a particular focus, where the teacher can be selective and prioritize certain types of responses or information over others. By means of such selectivity, the teacher is able to explore key moments within the lesson in more detail, where students are really engaged and clearly learning effectively.

With regard to this, Fautley and Savage (2008) espouse the use of thick description, a strategy that is used as a guide for data interpretation that reminds the teacher that data is heavily contextualized. The scope of student learning context encompasses within the classroom, the instruction that is being undertaken and the individual lives of the students. Thus, when the teacher focuses interpretation and analysis on individual students, it is helpful to keep in mind that the classroom is a socialized environment and instruction is mediated by classroom environment, pedagogy, other students and previous learning experiences. It is imperative that these variables are considered when analyzing and interpreting assessment data.

Writing Assessment Reports

Apart from the role of context in learning, it is also important to consider the audience or the recipient of the report such as parents or school managers. Individuals who require a write up of assessment data would need different types of information. For instance, a parent may be interested on how the child is faring in school and what other strategies can help the child excel, while a school administration may prefer data that would facilitate curriculum improvement. Clearly, the report audience will have implications to content and eventually, the format of the report.

When it comes to writing assessment reports, however, it is generally acceptable to cover points regarding the consequence of one's teaching and how it can be improved, as well as what students have learnt and the evidence of their learning. For example, a teacher can create simple descriptions of individual student's learning and should be able to justify these by citing accomplished classroom activities. The teacher is expected to illustrate the facts of what a student has achieved in a particular time period with descriptions with their work that is either in progress or finished products.

Comparative and interpretative information should also be a part of the assessment report. Comparisons are important if different audiences are to derive meaning from assessment results, while interpretative information about the implications of the assessment results that will play a role in instruction. Specifically, assessment data derived from interpretative information will aid in the utility of the information in arriving at conclusions that will have an impact in maintaining or improving instructions for learning.

Synthesis

Conclusions derived from assessment data are contextualized in one's way of teaching and in most cases, are tentative and not easily generalizable to other instructor's way of teaching or managing a class. This lack of generalizability should not be mistaken as a weakness of the assessment process, but instead should be viewed as strength. For one thing, it reinforces one's professional role and identity as a teacher in relation to the instruction done and the learning that the students have gained. As an individual in a teaching profession, a key function of a teacher is to obtain, develop and provide a rich account of student learning based on assessment data, where the experience is expressed in a rich manner and not reduced to mere numbers or statistics.

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