

A Correlational Study on Assessment Beliefs and Classroom Assessment Practices of School Teachers

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Beliefs of teachers about classroom assessment lead them to form classroom assessment practices. These beliefs are based on their life experiences as students first, and then as teachers. The current study investigated assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practices of English language male and female teachers. The main target was to measure if there is any relationship between teachers' current assessment beliefs and their classroom assessment practices. In this quantitative co-relational study survey was conducted to collect the data from two hundred and thirty-five teachers of district Swat and Mardan of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A self-developed questionnaire ($\alpha=.732$) was used for data collection. The results illustrated that the teacher had moderate assessment beliefs and followed traditional assessment practices frequently as compared to alternative assessment practices. The moderate level correlation between assessment beliefs of English teachers was observed with their classroom assessment practices which reflected the lack of sophisticated assessment beliefs which are the pre-requisites of 21st-century education. This gap may be a bridge through regular in-service training in the assessment.

Keywords; *assessment beliefs, formative and summative assessment practices*

Introduction

Belief is a mental illustration of reality which contains meanings, inclinations and attitudes that allow the realization of simple and complex categories of experiences and practices (Muñoz, Palacio, & Escobar, 2012). Every teacher has his\her own set of beliefs, developed throughout his\her life (Tateo, 2012) and are lenses to used to perceive the process and practices of academic life. Indeed, beliefs are operant conditioned that judge the value and worth of processes, ideas and practices (Baird, 2010). Beliefs are the strong perceptions and judgments about the truth and falsehood an individual holds (McKay, & Dennett, 2009). These are catered and nurtured on a long time basis and influence knowledge and experiences attained throughout life (Sikka, Nath, & Cohen, 2007). Assessment is an essential

element of the teaching-learning process (Reeves, 2009). It is carried out for several purposes at different times by adopting various methods (Thomas, 2012, Hussain, Kayani & Akhtar 2017). Furthermore, research studies have investigated the impact of teacher's assessment beliefs on their assessment practices (Thomas, 2012; Hama Karim, 2015). Teachers' assessment beliefs influence teachers' decisions related to the selection of assessment tool, developing assessment environment, scoring of students' responses and feedback to them (Hama Karim, 2015).

Similarly, these beliefs are affected by numerous factors such as institutional environment, social expectations, personal experiences, knowledge, skills in assessment and the in-service training attended by the teacher (Hakim, 2015; Hidayat, Fauziati, & Hikmat, 2017; Sikka, Nath, & Cohen, 2007). The institutional

environment stimulates teaching faculty for adopting the institutional values which are settled by the stakeholders (Cobb, McClain, de Silva Lamberg, & Dean, 2003). Institutions, where the emphasis is on the quality education, self-directed learning, mutual relationships, trust among students, teachers and administration, they prefer to follow formative assessment practices with constructive feedback (Nicol, & Macfarlane Dick, 2006). On the contrary, the institutions where the emphasis is on the accountability of the program or institutions summative assessment are preferred (Muñoz, Palacio, & Escobar, 2012). Likewise, social expectations are always on the top of school priorities, if it demands students' skills development such as cooperation, coordination, creativity, critical thinking, and preparation for future responsibilities then again the emphasis remains on formative and alternative assessment practices (Erwin, & Worrell, 2012; Heritage, 2010). On the other hand, if it demands learner-centred and competition-based grading systems then the focus remains on securing high marks (Miller, 2013). Therefore, in the case of former social expectations alternative assessment techniques, self-assessment, peer assessment, skills development hands-on practices and self-competition approaches are preferred (Cravens, 2006 Topping, 2009). Furthermore, Hakim (2015) was agreed that effective assessment practices contribute positively into the academic achievement of students which are the tangible evidence for students' academic successes (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). This has multiple impacts for students including-motivation, self-directed goals and demonstrating

academic potentials to the stakeholders. Likewise, classroom assessment practices are also used to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching delivery (Earl, 2012). The results of these practices provide evidence to teachers regarding the level of students' understanding, progress towards the desired goals and areas of students' strengths and weakness (Alkharusi, 2008). Similarly, it also understands them on the effectiveness of teaching techniques and enables them to adjust their instructions according to the level of the students (Griffin, & Care, 2014). These practices are based on teachers' beliefs which provide the foundation for the selection of assessment practices and methods. The paradigm shift from teacher-centred education to learner-centred approach has brought drastic changes in almost all the dimensions of education. Furthermore, the emergence of the concept of teachers' accountability, standardization of education, demands of accreditation councils, quality assurance mechanisms and such other sophisticated changes that took place in last two decades have abruptly changed the requirements of professionals at school (Bullough, Clark, & Patterson, 2003). In this regard the demand for public accountability of teachers led by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Council for Measurement Education (NCME) have resulted in specifying the standards for teachers to be satisfied in different domains of teaching including assessment such as-pedagogical standards, assessment literacy standards and curriculum standards (Beveridge, 2009). Furthermore, such standards were observed in Pakistan in the form of National Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan

(NPSTP-2009) (Hameed-Ur-Rehman, & Baig, 2012).

Another important development towards quality education was accreditation councils which emphasized on the provision of learning facilities, ensuring quality in teaching-learning process and demanding for the evidence of effective program implementation (Zorek, & Raehl, 2013). Similar to the international practices in Pakistan after the re-formation of UGC to HEC different accreditation councils were established with the same purpose of assuring quality. All these councils have set standards of uniform nature to ensure quality education (Malik, 2013). Likewise, another development in this regard is the quality assurance mechanisms in education through the Quality Assurance Division of HEC and Quality Enhancement Cells of Universities (Hina, & Ajmal, 2016). All these mentioned above are to implement the paradigm shift in its true spirits where assessment is one of the core elements of accountability, accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms. But studies like (Dilshad, 2010; Khattak, 2012) have concluded that whether it's the changes in curriculum, training, provision of educational facilities, accreditation process, QEC intervention or the introduction of NPSTP the quality is decline day by day. Among all the identified reasons for this cause one of the major cause identified by Khan (2018) in his PhD dissertation is the pedagogical belief of implementers (teachers) which hinders the implementation process. According to him changes in education needs a change in the beliefs of teachers if it doesn't then all the efforts will be in vain, as they hinder the process of

implementation through transforming the change into their own traditional sketches.

Therefore, keeping in view the efforts made towards quality education in term of teachers' accountability, accreditation process and quality assurance mechanisms this study intends to investigate teachers' assessment beliefs to find out that whether these beliefs are in accordance with the required demands of NPSTP, teachers' accountability and quality assurance mechanisms? Further, it is important to observe what types of assessment practices these teachers do follow?

Research Question

What are the assessment beliefs of secondary school English Language teachers, and are these related to their classroom assessment practices?

Research Hypotheses

Following were the major hypotheses of the study;

1. There is no significant correlation between teachers' assessment beliefs and their classroom assessment practices.
2. There is no significant difference between the assessment beliefs and practices of male and female teachers.
3. There are no significant differences between the assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practices of public and private sector secondary schools.

Significance of the Study

Teachers' beliefs influence teacher's deposition, attitude, thinking pattern, practices and even decisions concerning his personal and professional life. This study is significant for teachers, curriculum experts, training institutions, students and policymakers as;

1. It identified teachers' assessment beliefs which need to correct through intervention in the form of in-service training.
2. It provided information to curriculum experts so that they could determine/devise applicable assessment tools and mechanisms
3. It identified the weak areas of a teacher in assessment practices which could be strengthened through in-service training

Methodology and Procedure

The study was quantitative correlational and a survey was conducted to investigate the research problem. As the research problem was "a correlational study on assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practices of English teachers" therefore, the study is co-relational and quantitative from design perspectives.

Study Respondents

The population of the study was all Secondary School English Teachers teaching English to tenth-grade students in district Swat and Mardan. Through simple random sampling techniques, a sample of two hundred and thirty-five teachers was selected for the study. There were one hundred and fifty-five male and eighty female respondents of the study, while one hundred and twenty-seven respondents were selected from public sectors schools and one hundred and eight respondents from private sector schools.

Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected from the sample group through a self-developed questionnaire which was comprised of twenty-two close-ended items with four options to the respondents. These items were reflecting teachers formative, summative assessment

beliefs and classroom assessment practices.

Pilot Study

The questionnaire was first presented to pilot testing to measure the reliability coefficient of the instrument. The questionnaire was administered to thirty teachers, the collected data were analysed through SPSS versions 16 and the reliability coefficient of the instrument was .732. The validity of the instrument was ensured through the expert opinion of three assistant professors in the field of education of the University of Swat.

Data Collection and Analysis

After pilot testing, the instrument was administered to the sample of the study. Due to cultural constraints data from male respondents were collected by the researchers themselves while data from female respondents were collected with the help of female research assistants. The data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS software.

Results

Data were collected through a questionnaire from high school English teachers. The respondents of the study were two hundred and thirty-five who belong to public and private sectors schools and all the respondents were different on the basis of experience and training in assessment perspectives.

Seventy-nine (79) respondents had one to five years, seventy-eight (78) respondents had six to ten years, forty-one respondents had eleven to twenty years and thirty-seven respondents of the study had twenty and above years teaching experiences. There were one hundred and ninety-six respondents who had no formal training in classroom assessment practices,

twenty-seven respondents had one-week training in assessment, eight respondents had two to five weeks training and only four respondents had more training in their overall teaching experiences. There were four options for the respondents for each

item in the questionnaire. Therefore, the mean scores were interpreted as follow;

- 4.00 to 3.51 Strongly Agreed
- 3.50 to 2.51 Agreed
- 2.50 to 1.51 Disagreed
- 1.50 to 1.00 Strongly Disagreed

Table 1

Teachers’ assessment beliefs regarding formative and summative assessments

Formative Assessment Beliefs	Mean	Std D	Std D	Mean	Summative Assessment Beliefs
Communicating learning outcomes with students	3.46	.680	.924	3.07	Feedback to students for grading and identifying their strengths/ drawbacks
Oral feedback to students on the grey area	2.57	.891	.924	2.75	Assessment for students grading
Assessment as an integral part of the teaching-learning process	3.36	.711	.715	3.19	High stake testing improve students’ learning outcomes
Written feedback to students for identifying areas of improvement	2.92	.903	.978	2.35	Classroom assessment leads negative competition
Classroom assessment enhance students achievement	3.42	.720	.803	2.59	Assessment through direct observation hinders students’ learning
Informal assessment techniques are best to assess students learning	2.12	.901	.823	2.52	Formal assessment develop anxiety among students
Overall Formative assessment beliefs	17.96	2.49	2.72	16.48	Overall Summative assessment beliefs
Teachers’ assessment beliefs	34.442		4.204		

Teacher assessment beliefs are classified into formative and summative categories. The communication of learning outcomes with students was considered beneficial for students’ achievement, while informal assessment techniques and oral feedback to students’ remains the weak beliefs of teachers. The overall formative assessment beliefs of teachers’ shows that the majority of respondents have an average level of formative assessment beliefs. High stake testing, feedback to students in-term of marks and assessment for grading were identified from the table

as strong summative beliefs of teachers, while students direct observations which hinder students’ performance and formal assessment practice which results in students’ anxiety were found of average level beliefs of teachers. The overall summative assessment beliefs of teachers reflect that majority of the respondents have an average level of summative beliefs. To conclude, the majority of the respondents have an average level of assessment beliefs which illustrates their average level of knowledge and understanding of assessment concepts.

Table 2

Teachers’ formative and summative classroom assessment

Formative Assessment Practices	Mean	Std D	Std D	Mean	Summative Assessment Practices
Alternate assessment practices	3.03	.778	.675	3.34	Assessment through objective

Questioning during classroom instruction	3.47	.622	.816	2.93	tests
Assessment through oral presentation	3.17	.617	.821	2.84	Assessment through subjective test
Assessment through class summary	2.90	.747	.780	2.53	Assessment of students through portfolio
Assessment through informal techniques	2.53	.780	.846	3.21	Assessment through informal techniques
Overall Formative Assessment Practices	15.11	2.29	2.207	14.85	Assessment of students project or thesis
					Overall Summative Assessment Practices

The teacher used formative assessment practice in the class. The most frequently used techniques were; questioning during classroom instruction, students' oral presentations and alternative assessment techniques, while assessment through classroom summaries and through informal assessment techniques are the

practices which are practised by the respondents rarely. On the other hand, major summative assessment practices were objective type, subjective type tests and students' assessment through projects/thesis which was followed in the classroom by teachers.

Table 3

Relationships between teachers' assessment formative/summative beliefs and practices

Assessment beliefs and practices	R	P-value
Formative assessment beliefs and practices	.452**	.000
Summative assessment beliefs and practices	.445**	.000
Teachers' classroom assessment beliefs and practices	.576**	.000

** The significant of Correlation was at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table illustrates the correlation between the variables. There was a significant correlation ($r = .452$) between formative assessment beliefs and formative assessment practices and the results were significant at .000. This correlation is moderate. There was a significant correlation ($r = .445$) between summative assessment beliefs of teachers and their summative assessment practices which is significant at .000 and is a moderate level of correlation.

The overall correlation between teachers' assessment beliefs and their classroom assessment practices is ($r = .576$) which is once again significant at .000 and this correlation is also of moderate level. To conclude teachers' assessment beliefs are closely related to their classroom assessment practices. Therefore the hypothesis was rejected as there is a significant positive correlation between teachers' assessment beliefs and their classroom assessment practices.

Table 4

Gender-wise and sector-wise comparison of teachers' assessment beliefs and practices

	Variables	Mean	M.D	T	Sig	Variables	Mean	M.D	T	Sig
Beliefs	Male	35.638	3.513	6.60	.000	Public	34.496	.1164	.211	.833
	Female	32.125				Private	34.379			
Practices	Male	30.574	1.799	3.291	.001	Public	33.547	.8418	.592	.113
	Female	28.775				Private	32.705			

The gender-wise comparison illustrates that there is a significant difference between male and female assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practices. The mean differences of assessment beliefs were (3.513) and t value was 6.60 which were significant at .000, while these differences in their assessment practices were also significant. Male respondents were found having high mean scores on assessment beliefs and practices. With these results, the second hypothesis was rejected as there is the gender-wise difference between male and female teachers' assessment beliefs and their assessment practices. Sector-wise differences between the respondents of public and private sectors were not significant as the mean differences and the t value was not significant nor from the perspectives of beliefs and neither from classroom assessment practices. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted that there is no significant difference between assessment beliefs and practices of public and private sector teachers.

Conclusions

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the study following conclusions were drawn;

1. Most of English language teachers do believe in the effectiveness of summative assessments of students' performances, similarly, forty-six per cent of the respondents believe that formative assessment contributes to the enhancement of students' performances. This contradiction revealed that majority of teachers do follow summative practices as it enables them to grade

students' performances, however, they know the importance of formative assessment practices but they don't practice it due to different reasons.

2. Similarly, high stake tests, feedback in-term of marks and assessment for grading only also reflects that majority of English language teacher do the assessment for grading purpose only, and most of the respondents ignore the concepts of assessment for learning and assessment as learning. Similar to the previous conclusion teacher knows the importance of formative assessment and its contribution into students' performance but due to the hard work, extra time for feedback and none series attitude they have delimited themselves to summative assessment practices.
3. Majority of the English language teachers follow only summative assessment practices at their classrooms, furthermore the most frequently used assessment tools were objective type, subject type tests and projects in English language subject at the secondary school level. It is because these traditional assessment practices are easy to construct and marked while alternative assessment practices demand for more time and efforts which wasn't observed.
4. It was concluded from the co-relation coefficient .452, .445 and .576 that there is an average level relationship between formative assessment beliefs of teachers with their classroom assessment practices, similarly, the average level relationship was found between summative assessment beliefs and classroom assessment practice and

overall English language teachers' beliefs with their classroom assessment practices.

5. Furthermore, it was also concluded from the results that male has more sophisticated beliefs than female English language teachers.

Discussions

Assessment beliefs are fundamental and have significant influences on the classroom assessment practices of classroom teachers. Teachers' formative assessment beliefs were of average level and they less used formative assessment practices. The results are in accordance with the results of Hama Karim (2015). The results also confirm the findings of (Ateh, 2015; Calveric, 2010) where teachers formative assessment beliefs and their formative classroom assessment practices have a moderate association. This association further establish the fact that the teachers' sound formative assessment beliefs lead to formative assessment practices in the classroom. A substantial majority of the respondents believed that assessment is an integral part of the teaching-learning process. This shows that the majority of teachers are frequently using assessment for various purposes in the teaching-learning process. As Popham (2011) concluded that teachers teaching effectiveness is based on the use of assessment relevant activities which enable the teacher to improve students' achievement. Similarly, the same conclusions were drawn by Brookhart (2008). Furthermore, results illustrate that traditional assessment practices and particularly summative assessment practice which grade the students were recorded that they develop anxiety among students. The

results are confirmed by the results of different researchers (Alkharusi, 2015; Alkharusi, 2008; Furtak, & Morrison, 2013). Questioning during classroom instruction was the major formative practice that the majority of respondents used in their classroom teaching, which was considered the most influential practice that drives the instructional process of the teacher. Similarly, oral presentation and observation of students' performances were also prominent practices used in students' assessment. Hama Karim (2015) on the contrary concluded that teacher's direct observation, portfolio assessment and performance-based assessment were the major classroom assessment practices. The results of the association between teacher's assessment beliefs and assessment practices are in conformity with the findings of Büyükkarcı (2014) and Muñoz, Palacio, and Escobar (2012). The gender-wise and public and private sector teachers' beliefs and practices comparisons are unique to other studies conducted on assessment beliefs and practices. The gender-wise comparison is significant and male have highly sophisticated beliefs and practices than female respondents while the beliefs of public and private sector teachers are not significant in this regard.

Furthermore, based on the study results it seems important that another study may be conducted to measure the relationship between assessment beliefs and practices of teachers in the classroom with students' academic achievement. Similarly, another study may be of scientific importance to investigate the factors responsible for teachers' assessment beliefs

and practices, on the bases of which a reflective picture might be drawn. Therefore, the future researcher may lead these areas for further exploration which will be highly significant for teachers, students and the whole academic.

Recommendations

Keeping in view the results, conclusions and discussion of the study following recommendations were made;

1. The low use of formative assessment is a constraint for adopting formative assessment practices, therefore, it is recommended that through regular in-service training the teachers may be given that knowledge and skills of formative assessment so that their beliefs could be modified and could be used for the use of formative assessment practices in classrooms.
2. Most of English language teachers believe in the effectiveness of high stake tests which reflects their incompetence in test construction. It is, therefore, recommended that teachers' may be more involved in test construction for students.
3. The curriculum developers are recommended to design such curriculum contents which have in-built assessment tasks, further they may design assessment tasks by identifying the usage of alternative assessment practices.
4. School authorities are recommended to support teachers through all available means for opting formative and alternative assessment beliefs and practices.

5. Furthermore, it was recommended that future researchers may investigate teacher's assessment beliefs in comparison of the assessment environment of the institutions and with students' academic achievements.

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