

Chapter 5

Re-Purposing Summative Assessment as Formative: A Reflective Guide to Facilitating Deep Learning

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ABSTRACT

Students often feel that assessments are used primarily for grading purposes only. There is anecdotal evidence too that students are being over assessed in UK Higher Education (HE) given that it is common place for the curricula to be designed with formative and summative assessments in mind. This reflective case study aims to establish the link between the attainment of independent learning outcome and a new form of assessment that is based on three years of teaching a Project Management unit in two internationally leading Schools of Mechanical, Aerospace, and Civil Engineering in England and Singapore. Data from the observation of an operational unit specification reveals that depending on the timing within the schedule of the unit, summative assessment with appropriate feedback can be re-purposed as formative and summative. The implication being a paradigm shift in the design of unit specification for the purpose of attaining Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) that enhance deep learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The design of most curricula consists of both formative and summative assessments (Taras 2005). It is argued that the former focuses on the process and the latter on the product (Black et al 2004:55-56). The implication here is emerging evidence of discontentment amongst students and teachers. The students complain of over assessment while few teachers are motivated to operate parallel assessment that is designed for both summative and formative functions (William 2000b:16).

It is therefore not a surprise that the UK Professional Standards Framework aims to ascribe values and ethics with respect for learners and diverse learning communities, promoting participation and equality of opportunity for learners and use of evidence-informed approaches from research and scholarship (UKPSF 2011). Similarly, the affective domain in Bloom's Taxonomy (Krathwohl *et al* 1964) is about learning judgment, discretion and other personal attributes that might be regarded as part of ethics. However, there are not many generalisable quality standards for assessing academic practice and quality (Martensson *et al* 2016) - or more importantly the impact of teaching on the satisfaction of learners. There is also evidence that explicit approach to academic practice can produce a negative response in students who not only find the subject a difficult one but also can regard a didactic teaching approach as ineffective (MacFarlane 2004).

The author will argue that value, quality and ethics are important to academic practice (teaching, research and service). Svinicki (1994) suggests the HE sector seek ethical assessment responsibility not only towards students but also towards training providers.

It is against this backdrop that this book chapter aims to establish the link between the attainment of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) and a peculiar (re-purposing of summative assessment as formative) form of assessment that draws on several years of teaching a project management unit in two world leading Schools of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering in UK and Singapore.

The chapter will start with a brief literature review and evaluation of a curriculum design from an employability perspective in the Higher Education (HE) sector and a push for wholesome academic practice. This will be followed with a reflective position on assessment and feedback that the author teaches to postgraduate students.

In particular, the chapter will evaluate the ILO (without appending the actual unit specification because of ethical issues), delivery methods, content and some materials used in the case study. The chapter will also anonymously reveal the experiential development of a substantial summative assessment for a credit-bearing unit. This will reflect how it is aligned to the course unit's ILO, its corresponding assessment rubric and constructive feedbacks.

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