

Chapter 8

Chinese International Graduate Students' Perceptions of Classroom Assessment at a Canadian University

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate Chinese international students' perceptions of classroom assessment in Canadian higher education. Data collection for the study took place in a Canadian university and was comprised of two parts: an online survey for the collection of quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews for the collection of qualitative data. Sixty-two participants (n=62) voluntarily finished the online questionnaire and ten interview participants took part in semi-structured interviews. The exploration into the participants illustrated that Chinese graduate students held positive perceptions of classroom assessment at the Canadian university where the study was conducted, in terms of congruence with planned learning, authenticity, student consultation, transparency, and diversity.

BACKGROUND

Classroom assessment serves as an integral constituent of the teaching and learning process in higher education (Cheng & Fox, 2017). During their time in the college or university classroom, students are exposed to several kinds of assessment tasks. Students build their own opinions about the significance, usefulness, value, and shortcomings of these tasks when processing them (Alkharusi et al., 2014; Mertler, 2003). Such assessments are not only considered a means of evaluating and awarding marks in order to decide whether students have accomplished objectives; they have also developed into a tool for learning (Watering, Gijbels, Dochy, & Rijt, 2008).

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Teachers, administrators, and policies overwhelmingly determine what forms and tasks of classroom assessment are applied in higher education; however, students' experiences with the process are central to determine the effectiveness of a pedagogical approach and how to improve it. Thus, educators in higher education must recognize students' perceptions of assessment if they seek to construct an involving and high-quality learning environment (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Hayward, 2012). Students should also understand the assessment processes and the meanings for themselves as learners in order to maximize learning (Fisher, Waldrup, & Dorman, 2005; Schaffner, Burry-Stock, Cho, Boney, & Hamilton, 2000). It is therefore important to recognize and examine students' perceptions of classroom assessment in higher education; however, few studies have thoroughly investigated this topic (Torkildsen & Erickson, 2016).

With an increasing number of international students studying abroad, internationalization has seen a significant expansion, particularly in Western universities since 2000. This provides a substantial source of revenue to receiving countries and universities (Biggs & Tang, 2011). In Canada, the internationalization of higher education is developing at a high pace (Y. Guo & S. Guo, 2017). One indication of the recent expansion of internationalization is the increasing enrolment of international students in Canadian institutions of higher education. According to a report given by the Canadian Bureau for International Education in 2019, there were 572,451 international students in Canada at all levels of study in 2018, and Chinese international students comprised 143,104 (25%) of those students. Given the substantial number of Chinese international students entering Canadian educational institutions, investigating how Western pedagogical approaches, particularly assessment, impact these students is becoming increasingly important.

This chapter focuses on an examination of Chinese international graduate students' perceptions of classroom assessment in Canadian higher education. This vein of research is critical to the success of Chinese international students as Western and Chinese pedagogies are drastically different in many respects: Western education is known as student-centered and quality-oriented, while Chinese education has long been considered teacher-centered, content-based and exam-oriented (Wang & Kreysa, 2006). Consequently, assessment is primarily executed in the form of examinations in Chinese schools (Kennedy, 2007). Whether this gap between the two pedagogies could lead Chinese international students to hold different perceptions of classroom assessment at in Canadian higher education is the major concern for this chapter to explore.

INTRODUCTION

In order to examine how Chinese international students perceive classroom assessment, it is important to establish some of the fundamental elements that characterize this issue. Firstly, it is critical to define assessment itself, as well as the different formats of assessment. It is then necessary to outline the importance of students' perceptions of classroom assessment. Finally, an in-depth investigation requires an understanding of the factors of classroom assessment that can motivate students' learning, and assessment and learning in China.

Definitions of Assessment

Teachers can use assessment tools to gather accurate information about students' learning, understanding, and skills (Cheng & Fox, 2017). By locating students' positions in their learning process, teachers can

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