Elementary Teachers' Perception on Formative Assessment: A Picture of Private Community Schools in Karachi

Victoria Joseph* and Nasreen Hussain**

Abstract

This quantitative research measures the elementary teachers' perception on formative assessment which involves the pre and post workshop facilitation on formative assessment among the elementary teachers at private community schools in Karachi, across gender and the years of teaching experience. The study unveils the background information, aims, scope, objectives and the researcher's interest in selecting the topic for research. Further on the study explored the subscales of formative assessment, corrective feedback and self and peer assessment. Teachers' Attitude towards Formative Assessment and Corrective Feedback (TAFACFQ) questionnaire was adapted from the literature, which contained 24 items, and was developed by Fakeye (2016) for finding out various factors which influence students learning during the teaching learning process. Data was collected from three private community schools in Karachi. Independent samples t-test was used to compare differences across gender, pre and post change of perceptions and the years of teaching experience. On the whole, results revealed that male teachers' perception on formative assessment was better than the female teachers, and the teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience perceived poorly than the teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience, and there was significant change in teachers' perception on formative assessment measured after attending the session on formative assessment.

Keywords: Formative assessment, perceptions, elementary teachers, community school, feedback, self-assessment.

^{*}HOD, Department of Education, Greenwich University

Email: victoria.v.joseph63@gmail.com

^{**}Associate Professor, Department of Education, Institute of Business Management

Email: Nasreen.hussain@iobm.edu.pk

Introduction

Every student, parent and teacher is familiar with the term assessment. Contextually the term 'test' denotes the actual meaning of assessment. The Atlantic Canada English Language Art Curriculum (2014) informs assessment and evaluation are a kind of process for collecting information about the learners and to analyse and deduce with reflection which is created on the data. Though the test is conducted only to measure the quantitative performance of the learner, the formative assessment helps in enhancing learning for the learners. The aim of formative assessment is equally to identify and remediate the weak learners and acclimate teaching methodology (Fakeye, 2011).

Assessment is one of the major issues in the teaching learning process and it is also thought to be one of the biggest hurdles in achieving desirable performances from the learner's selection of this area of research was influenced by the researcher's personal experience as a teacher in the community schools and the assessment patterns. The researcher believes that formative assessments influence the students' motivation to learn any discipline.by using different techniques of formative assessment the teachers can create motivation and interest among the learners. Formative assessment can be suitable for any type of learners. Teachers with their broad knowledge make the assessments meaningful rather than stressful for students and the social support of teachers can be a significant factor in students achievement (Rushton, 2009)

The study aims to investigate on elementary teachers' perception on formative assessment to enhance English language learning in private community schools, in Karachi. The results of this research study would yield key recommendations to various stakeholders such as students, administrators and teachers in assessing the students through formative assessment in English language teaching and learning process to bring in the desirable performance of the students and also to modify the teaching methodology. Assessments in a more enjoyable manner for the purpose of enhancing learners' self-efficacy and reducing their inherent test anxiety.

The word 'Assessment'derived from the Latin verb 'assidere' which actually means to sit with. During the assessment the teacher sit with the learner to make him understand the concept. It implies what the teacher had to do with and for the students and not to the students. Assessment of learner's knowledge is an orderly procedure of gathering evidence of learner's development to obtain knowledge (Linn & Miller, 2005) and Dhindsa et al. (2007)

describes assessment as an essential ingredient for teaching and knowledge. It is also a planned activity for gathering information of all learners.

McMillan (2004) informs that assessment is an umbrella concept that encompassess different techniques, strategies and uses for the learners as well as the teacher. Assessment is the gathering, valuation and practice of evidence that assist educators to obtain enriched results (McMillan, 2004, p. 8). Likewise, classroom assessment is the procedure of assembling and inferring information to support in classroom results. Formative assessment, counting analytic testing, is also the series of prescribed and familiar assessment measures and techniques directed by educators throughout the teaching period to rectify instruction and learning happenings for progression (Black & William, 1998).

The teachers' effort must be on the quality of feedback which they provide to the students rather than the quantity of information gathered by the teach and the data gathered is used to identify, understand and remediate pupils problems and learning difficulties (Airasian, 2005). Formative assessment is ongoing and it commences while the instruction is taking place and it is giving true meaningful, timely and specific feed back for the learners. Mostly the formative assessment is flexible, easy-going and varies according to the subject and individua learners, and the feedback has to takeplace quick without much delay to enhance the individual learning than simply quantifying the learners' performance (Assessment Reform Group, 1999).

Teacher Perceptions

Teacher perceptions are the opinions and feelings or conceptual pictures which the teachers hold about their pupil or systems. It may vary from teachers to teachers according to their background and their thinking pattern (Shahid, 2010). Social constructivists claim that the philosophy, beliefs, background, biasness and practice may reflect on performance of the pupil. Teachers' qualification and professional degrees also play a major role in understanding a system of education and which is directly affect the perception of certain method of assessing the students (Mary, 2011). Another important on teacher perception is each teacher has her or his own perception and they are different from each other. Teacher perceptions are important providers and impact the manner they approach or teach in the classroom which eventually leads to students' motivation and active engagement in learning activities (Hardré & Sullivan, 2008). The variances within teachers' own abilities and knowledge, the Social-personal manner they interact with their students may also affect the students learning and motivation.

Feedback

Feedback is understood as a chief constituent in formative assessment and unique of the dynamics that have the strongest inspiration on learning (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2009) whereas Hattie and Timperly (2007) exclaim feedback is one of the most significant reinforcements on learning and accomplishment which can of both negative and positive. Shute (2008) uses the term formative feedback is the information transferred to the student that is envisioned to adjust his or her thoughtful performance for the persistence of refining knowledge (p. 154). She further states that feedback has the positive impact on students which leads to learning. The researcher concludes feedback is all about what the students have to do and what they should avoid.

Stenger (2014) gives five valuable information on feedback. In the first place, the feedback should be specific and should be on time. Further he adds the feedback should be focused and initiates the learner with essential goal, the fourth point is to convey the feedback sensibly and the last could be the feedback must involve the learner. Specific feedback means to give the feedback where it is necessary, and it should be simple, achievable and measurable and most importantly time based. Rather than giving quantifying feedback, it is better to provide qualitative feedback by writing the correct comment for the learners to follow (Nicol &-Dick, 2006)

Formative Assessments through Different Techniques

It is important that the formative assessment approaches and techniques with the corrective feedback must be implicit so that it may enhance students learning within a certain period of time (Benson & DeKeyser, 2018). There are different ways to assess the students during the teaching learning period. It is entirely depending on the teachers and the students to select what technique is convenient useful. Portfolio, quiz, simple class presentations, puzzles, small projects, individual, pair and group task can be of much usage.

Modification of Teaching

In order to improve the pupil's learning, the teaching methodology should be constantly modified to bring desired outcome. The teacher must create the interest and involvement among the students to create conducive learning environment to enhance students learning (Roskos & Neuman, 2011). The important aspect of formative assessment changing the instructional strategies if the learning needs to be enhanced. There are teaching methods such as cooperative learning methods, Socratic method, demonstration method, and

interactive teaching methods can be done to encourage the learners to be participative and internalize the concept of the topic to arise the learner to develop analyzing mind rather than teaching through lecture method where a learner is inactive

Self and Peer Assessment

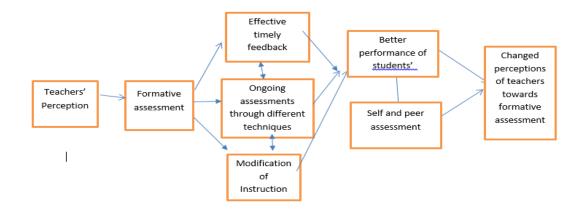
Iglesias, Puga and Juste.(2010) view on both personal and peer assessments assist to develop learning associations inside the classroom. If the students have been engaged in principles and set their goals, self-assessment is the needed footstep in the teaching learning process.

Mastery of Learning

Guskey (2005) claims about Bloom's Mastery of leaning is very important and it is attained by practicing student centered approaches. Corrective feedback is given to bring desirable learning changes among the learners. Mastery of learning is completely different from the conventional teaching methods to modern and contemporary method of teaching which encompasses the several ways in which teaching is done to enhance learning and motivate students. Bloom's valuable point is that the teachers organize the important concepts, skills and knowledge which they are supposed to teach to the students and also follow the table of specification to see to the time spent in teaching and it will be followed by informal assessments called the formative assessment to obtain the goals and objectives which were already planned ahead.

Researcher's Conceptual Framework on Formative Assessment

Assessment can be classified into two types which is formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment is the on going type of assessment which happens during the teaching learning process as it is assessment for learning while the other hand summative assessment happens during the end of the term or sessions measured to be the assessment of learning (Shahid, 2010). The conceptual framework explains that at first, primary teacher perceptions on formative assessment is obtained through the survey, where the teachers simply give their opinion on how they perceive formative assessment. Later, a three hours' workshop on formative assessment is facilitated to the primary teachers insisting on the various aspects of formative assessment which includes corrective feedback, modification of instructional methods and ongoing peer and self-assessment which leads to better performance of the students. At the end of the workshop, same questionnaire is given to measure the change in their perception on formative assessment.



Every school and educational instituition focus on summative assessments, due to which learning has changed very little effect on the teaching methodology. Contemporary pedagogies in the classroom have not produced abundant improvements in knowledge as recorded by these valuations. The study will recommend that the assessments has stressed teachers and students but did not enhance genuine or critical learning. Initial studies have braced, with great dimensions of sign, that by following the techniques of formative assessment in a classroom can result in better performance of the individual learners specially the weak students (Hallam, et al., 2004)

Research Objectives

- 1. To investigate Elementary school teachers' perception on formative assessments across gender.
- 2. To measure the differences in perception of teachers who have less than 5 years and more than 10 years of teaching experience.
- 3. To conduct a 3 hours training sessions on formative assessment for Elementary teachers
- 4. To develop a conceptual framework of formative assessment for teachers

Research Questions

- Is there a significant difference in elementary teachers' perception on formative assessment across gender?
- Is there a significant change in the Elementary teacher perceptions on formative assessment following the workshop on formative assessment?
- Is there significant difference in elementary teacher perceptions on formative assessments between the teachers who have less than 5 years and more than 10 years of teaching experience?

The study aimed to protect the participants from any psychological and physiological harm. In addition, it would maintain the confidentiality of each participant's data and encourage voluntary participation along with the participants' right to withdraw from the research study at any time during the research process (Sidhu, 2013).

Formative assessment is presently a "hot topic" between educators and administrators and is now familiar as one of the most influential methods to improve pupil motivation and accomplishment. Study has gathered that displays a constructive association among formative assessment and student motivation and accomplishment in class made and standardized assessments (McMillan 2010). Formative assessment specially giving corrective feedback and modifying instructional strategies, in day-to-day teaching learning process enhances the learners' performance and create motivation among the pupils and the teachers to integrate different techniques to assist the students to improve their own performance. This research may help the community schools to know what formative assessment and practice for better performance of learners is.

The limitations of the study are described next.

Convenience sampling in the private community schools was done due to time constraints as several schools were located in different parts of Karachi. Thus, the results cannot be generalizable to other schools or systems of Karachi.

This study used a survey design within the quantitative paradigm to find out teachers' perception on formative assessment among the elementary teachers at private community schools in Karachi. An adapted questionnaire, Attitudes of Teachers Towards Formative Assessment and Corrective Feedback Questionnaire (ATTFACQ) which was originally developed by Fakeye (2016) to find out about the attitude of teachers towards formative assessment and corrective feedback among teachers as well as students in Rome,

Italy. This questionnaire comprised of three subscales formative assessment, corrective feedback and self and peer assessment. The questionnaire had a five-point Likert scale, 1 to 5. The 32 elementary grade teachers participated in the research study and each teacher was given a survey questionnaire before and after attending a 3 hours' workshop on formative assessment.

The study assessed individuals' opinions by way of employing a quantitative nonexperimental survey design, thereby allowing the researcher to infer conclusions that were specific, objective and generalizable to the population. Fraenkel (2012) notes that a quantitative approach allowed the researcher to engage a moderately large sample in the study that allowed the use of inferential statistics for ensuring precision in the analysis of the data.

Research Hypothesis

- 1. There is no significant differences in elementary teachers' perception on formative assessment across gender.
- 2. There is no significant changes in Elementary teachers' perception on formative assessment following the workshop on formative assessment.
- 3. There is no significant differences in elemenatary teachers' perception on formative assessments between teachers who have less than 5 years and more than 10 years of teaching experience

Research Tool

An adapted instrument ATTFACQ used for the study and this tool was developed by Fakeye (2016) and originally tested among teachers and students in Rome, Italy. This questionnaire was used for data collection among the 32 teachers from three private community schools in Karachi. The questionnaire consisted of 24 items grouped under three subscales such as formative assessment, corrective feedback and self and peer assessment. The research tool comprised of two sections. Section A comprised a section that sought professional information of the participating teachers such as their years of experience, grades which they are teaching and the school in which they are teaching. Items are arranged on a Likert scale (1-5) for sixteen items under two subscales feedback and formative assessment. Strongly agree is marked with 5, agree is with 4, uncertain is 3, disagree is 2 and strongly disagree is considered as 1. The researcher also used the reverse coding for the negative items.

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Table 1

Subscales of the Questionnaire							
Subscale 1	Items						
Formative assessment	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8,9,10						
Subscale 2	Items						
Corrective feedback	11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20						
Subscale 3	Items						
Self and Peer Assessment	21,22,23,24						

Table 2

Measure of the Reliability of each Subscale

Subscales	Cranach's Alpha	No. of Items	
Formative assessment	.692	10	
Corrective feedback	.710	10	
Self and peer assessment	.734	04	

Population, Sample and Sample Size

Population for this study was selected from the private community school to get a picture of the assessment systems in the community schools of Karachi. Though this community school system covers around forty-six schools in different parts of Karachi, only three schools were selected according to the convenience of the researcher. Data collected through sampling, which is precisely selected from the accessible population that can be generalized over the target population (Gay, 2003). Convenient sampling method was used for this study, thus the target population was primary school teachers of private community schools because of the researcher's background and experience. The sample included 32 of the male and female elementary teachers at the ABC school in Karachi. The sample for the study employed the aim of the study which was to find out the perceptions of elementary school teachers on formative assessment.

Data Collection

Data was collected through an ATTFACQ questionnaire that was directly administered by the researcher to the elementary teachers at private community English medium schools. At firzst the survey questionnaire was administered to the elementary teachers after a brief explanation of how to fill the questionnaire to measure their professional knowledge on formative assessment. The questionnaire has 24 items on a fivepoint Likert scale of 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'uncertain', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'. The questionnaire incorporated items on three subscales such as formative assessment, corrective feedback and peer and self-evaluation.

Later on a three hours' workshop on formative assessment was facilitated to the same teachers. The workshop provided information about what is formative assessment and what is the differences between formative and summative assessments, techniques of conducting different formative assessment, peer and self-assessment, importance of giving corrective feedback.

Following the workshop, another survey question was given to the participants to fill and in which the response of elementary teachers was good. Altogether, thirty-two teachers which include both male and female teachers of the private community schools participated in the study. The said A, B C schools situated in Saddar area, Karachi, eight kilometers from the researcher's Institution.

Data Analysis Methods

Descriptive statistics was assigned to study the data followed by paired sample t-test in SPSS-22, as the samples from pre and post workshop were same. This was chosen to describe and present the data collected from the questionnaire to develop a general understanding on the teachers' perceptions towards formative assessment within the particular community schools. Paired sample t-test was used to find the change of perceptions among the elementary teachers across genders, pre and post workshop change of perceptions on formative assessment.

Data Analysis

Measuring The Elementary Teacher Perceptions on Formative Assessment

This research study aimed to explore the teacher perceptions on formative assessment among elementary teachers of community schools in Karachi. The study was able to complete through a survey before and after conducting a three hours' workshop on formative assessment that employed an adapted version of the Attitude of Teachers on Formative Assessment and Constructive Feedback Questionnaire (ATFACFQ). This tool was developed and tested by D.O. Fakeye, Ph.D. in Rome, Italy.

Demographics

This section offers a brief summary of the demographics of the sample. The sample comprised elementary teachers (n=32) who taught at the private community schools in Karachi which followed the Sindh Matriculation system of education.

Teachers who participated were from the private community schools and are of different qualification. About 60 % of the Elementary teachers have done graduation, around 40 % of the teachers were done masters while only few teachers were done B.Ed., a professional qualification for teaching.

The outcome of this research exposed that the elementary teachers have changed their attitude to moderately encouraging perceptions towards formative assessment and corrective feedback. The finding of this study approves with the studies carried out by Hallam et al. (2004) and Condie, Livingstone and Seagraves (2005) who conveyed that the male teachers strongly conveyed and believed the importance and perceived the formative assessment an essential milestone in the modern teaching learning process. Perception on corrective feedback had changed post workshop and reflected clearly in the questionnaire therefore it is understood that formative assessment is extremely operative. Teachers believed and suggested the practice of formative assessment in their classrooms, which created a noteworthy influence on learners' self -confident and self-esteem, with work and attainment which was aligned to the study by (Fakeye, 2016). However, research by Aucker in 2000 describes that formative assessment and corrective feedback sometimes have undesirable effects on pupils' enthusiasm and self-confidence.

The results further clarify that teachers with less than 5 years of teaching experience did not perceive well than the teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

The comparison between male and female teachers too shows significant changes in their perception. The male teachers perceived a better understanding and importance of formative assessment than their counter parts.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in teacher perceptions on formative assessment across gender

Table 3					
Group Statistics					
Subscale	Gender of th	e participants	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation
Formative assessment	male Female		08 24	4.1926 3.9655	.33919 .24660
Table 4 <i>Independent Sample</i> Formative Assessme		mative Assess Sig.	<i>ment acros</i> . t	s Gender df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances	.391	.536	1.966	31	.049
assumed					

Grouping variable: Gender of the research participants

The above table depicts that there is variation in the teacher perceptions on formative assessment. The male teachers perceived better about the formative assessment than the female teachers. Male teachers displayed greater importance of formative assessment (M=4.1, SD=.34) in comparison to female teachers (M=3.9, SD =.24), since the value of p as shown in the table 3 is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant, t (1.966) with a medium effect size. Hence, the first hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant differences in teacher perception's on formative assessments between teachers with less than five years and more than ten years of teaching experience

Table 4							
Subscale		ars of teaching perience	5	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Formative	<5	years	4	20	4.0121	.29125	
assessment	sessment >10 years		1	12 4.2576		.10714	
Table 5 Independent Sam	ples t-i	test Formative A	ssessmen	t on Years	of Teaching	Experience	
Formative Assess	sment	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	
Equal variances assumed	not	1.161	.294	-1.162	31	.0445	
Equal variances assumed	s not			-2.457	30.89	.0931	

The above table 4 represents variation in teacher perceptions on formative assessment between the teachers who have less than five and more than ten years of teaching experience. The teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching showed better outook on formative assessment than the teachers who had less 5 years of teaching experience. Therefore the teachers with more than ten years of teaching had higher regard for formative assessment (M=4.3, SD=.11) than the teachers who had less than 5 years teaching experience (M=4.0, SD=.30). since the value of p shown in table 4 is .0445 < .05, therefore the above mentioned hypothesis is statistically not significant but the null hypotesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant change in the teacher perceptions on formative assessments following a three hours workshop on formative assessment.

Table 5

Subscale	Pre-post work shop	Ν	Mean	S. D	
	on formative				
	assessment				

Elementary Teachers' Perception on Formative Assessment					30
Formative					
Assessment	Pre-test	32	3.8621	.28154	
	Post-test	32	4.0156	.28712	

Table 6

Independent Samples t-test on Change in Perceptions on Formative Assessment Pre and Post Workshop

Formative Assessment	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.286	.595	2.144	31	.0345
Equal variances not assumed			2.125	30.23	.0455

Table 5 refers to an independent t-test conducted to measure the teacher perceptions on formative assessment before and after attending a work shop on formative assessment. There is a significant difference in scores of post workshop perception (M=4.0, SD=287) which has shown increase comparing to the pre workshop score (M=3.8, SD=.28). t(31)=2.144 and p value is < 0.05. The teachers had changed their perception as they understood the importance of formative assessment after attending 3 hours' workshop. The third null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion and Conclusion

All three of the subscales showed the significant differences and the study has shown to be statistically significant. The results of the study showed teachers had changed their perception after attending a 3 hours' workshop on formative assessment. While comparing the gender regarding perception on formative assessment, the male teachers perceived well about formative assessment than the female teachers of the private community schools. The teachers who have more than 6 years of teaching experience had a positive opinion on formative assessment than the teachers who had less than 5 years of teaching experience.

With regards to formative assessment, the male teachers from the private community schools had a positive opinion on formative assessment than the female teachers. It was statistically proved that the pre workshop perception on formative assessment was comparatively changed in post workshop perception on formative assessment. The teachers who had more than 10 years of teaching experience displayed favourable perception on formative assessment than the teachers who had less than 5 years of teaching experience. Giving focused and timely feedback is a culture in Pakistani schools. One of the core aspects of formative assessment is the corrective feedback. Through giving specific and timely and accurate feedback, the learners are motivated to be responsible and are willing to learn from the given feedback. Self and peer assessment help the students to grow in the learning slowly and steadily.

Recommendations

- Since the study was conducted only in three private community schools, it cannot be generalised to other community schools of Karachi. This study may need to be conducted in different community schools to get the correct outcome to be generalised.
- Since the research is quantitative in nature, the research data could not validate the multiple meanings of teacher perceptions response formative assessment, corrective feedback and self and peer assessment, so it is suggested an experimental study on the same topic.
- Research can also be recommended for a comparative study among the Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Rawalpindi diocese.
- Research can also be recommended for a comparative study between public and private schools both urban and rural areas in Sindh province.
- Formative assessment is a welcome change in the assessment system of Pakistan. The school administrators are encouraging and recommended to inspire teachers, parents and students to create awareness on the importance of formative assessment. Provide resources to implement the different technique of formative assessment during the teaching learning process as the formative assessment is the assessment of learning. Encouraging and introducing the corrective feedback systems in the school might improve the students learning and help in teacher medication of instructional methods.
- Parents are motivated to support the formative assessment systems with different techniques of assessing the students rather than a paper pencil test. Parents are therefore advised to support their children and the teachers of the concerned school.

Conclusion

The research offered a quantitative method analyses to measure the primary school teacher perceptions on formative assessment from a private community school in Karachi. The study engaged a pre and post workshop survey analysis to measure the change perceptions among the teachers. This study orbits around three subscales such as formative assessment, corrective feedback and self and peer assessment. Outcome of the study revealed all the three subscales statistically significant, and all three hypotheses rejected. Formative assessments are a pleasant solution for academic concerns as it provides clear target to students to be focused and avoids meaningless rote learning. Formative assessment aids teachers to be facilitators than mere teachers as it makes them better organised and try different teaching methods to suit the individual learners and be ready to fulfil the needs of both high and low achievers. On the other hand, formative assessment enhances motivation among students to participate actively and bring necessary engagement in the classroom. One main aspect of formative assessment is that enable the students for self-evaluation along with peer evaluation and change them to be self-directed learners and for the researchers it provides forum for action research and experimental studies for better academic achievements, curriculum development, policy making, evaluation and monitoring and systemic change. In the end, formative assessment techniques are highly recommended for both teachers and school system to change the way of assessing students to bring possible changes in the system of assessment and learning styles to curb the traditional rote learning habits of students.

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