



Research Article

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The connection between assessment and learning outcomes

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Abstract

Introduction: When learning outcomes are written, it is important that they are written in a way that they can be assessed. Clearly, it is necessary to have some form of assessment tool or technique to determine the extent to which learning outcomes have been achieved. The challenge for teachers is to ensure that there is alignment between teaching methods, assessment techniques, assessment criteria and learning outcomes. This link between teaching, assessment and learning outcomes helps to make the overall learning experience more transparent.

Purpose: To describe assessment techniques and see if there is an alignment between teaching methods, assessment techniques, assessment criteria and learning outcomes.

Materials and methods: Analysis of assessment techniques used by teachers at "Isa Boletini" secondary school, Tirana. Two aspects were used to carry out the research: student survey and teacher survey (interview). These surveys aimed to see if students are helped to understand how they should achieve learning outcomes and how clearly the assessment techniques and assessment criteria are defined by the teacher.

Results: From the analysis of gender data, (45%) were male and (55%) were female. The age group surveyed is 16-18 years old. 100 students participated in the study. The analysis of the students' survey shows that the answers given by them state that teachers use diverse methods during teaching and do not stick strictly to traditional teaching. The analysis of the teachers' survey shows that they find it difficult to coordinate or align teaching methods, assessment techniques, assessment criteria and learning outcomes, since most students are not interested during the lesson, they do not have cooperation with each other, or the spirit of group work, thus making it difficult to increase the performance of the students and their maximum involvement during the teaching process.

Conclusion: The use of appropriate teaching and assessment strategies leads to more accurate and clear learning outcomes. The quality of teaching increases when students can interact with teachers and teachers show genuine interest in solving their problems.

Keywords: assessment, curriculum, learning outcomes, teaching, learning activities.

1. Introduction

The challenge for teachers is to ensure that there is alignment between teaching methods, assessment techniques, assessment criteria and learning outcomes. This link between teaching, assessment and learning outcomes helps to make the overall learning experience more transparent. Student course evaluations show that clear expectations are an essential part of effective learning. Lack of clarity in this area is almost always associated with negative evaluations, learning difficulties and poor student performance. Toohey (1999) recommends that the best way to help students understand how they should achieve learning outcomes is by clearly defining assessment techniques and assessment criteria.

In terms of teaching and learning, there is a dynamic balance between teaching strategies on the one hand and learning outcomes and assessment on the other.

It is important that assessment tasks reflect learning outcomes as far as students are concerned, as assessment is the curriculum: "From the students' perspective, assessment always defines the actual curriculum" (Ramsden, 2003). This situation is presented graphically by Biggs (2003b) as follows:

The teacher's perspective:

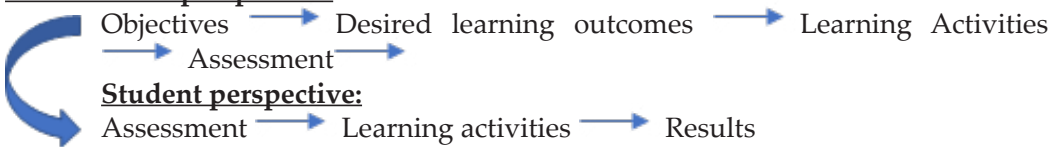


Figure 1: Teachers' and students' perspectives on assessment
The connection between curriculum and assessment

Biggs (2003) emphasizes the strong link between curriculum and assessment as follows:

For the teacher, assessment is at the end of the learning sequence of events, but for the student it is at the beginning. If the curriculum is reflected in the assessment, as shown by the arrow down, the teacher's learning activities and the student's learning activities are both directed towards the same goal. While preparing for the assessment, students will learn the curriculum (Biggs, 2003).

They will teach what they think will be appreciated, not what may be the curriculum or even what has been covered in lectures!

Towards the future with learning outcomes

As already indicated, international trends in education show a shift from the traditional "teacher-centred" approach to a "student-centred" approach. While traditionally the focus was on what the teacher does, in recent years the focus has been on what students have learned and can demonstrate at the end of a module or programme.

Among the key characteristics of outcomes-based education listed by Harden (2002) are:

- Development of clearly defined and published learning outcomes to be achieved prior to program completion;
- Designing the curriculum, learning strategies and learning opportunities to ensure the achievement of the learning outcome;
- An assessment process aligned to learning outcomes and assessment of individual students to ensure they achieve outcomes;

2. Case study

This study was conducted at “Isa Boletini” secondary school, Tirana. For the study, questionnaires were prepared for students and interviews with teachers of different subjects, placing more emphasis on the profile subjects of natural sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics). The interview with the teacher consisted more of the forms and types of assessment used by the teacher, how effective they are, etc. The questionnaire for students contains 10 questions and is presented in the section Annexes.

3. Case study analysis

From the case study we came to these conclusions. From the analysis of gender data, 45 (45%) were male and 55 (55%) were female. The age group surveyed is 16-18 years old.

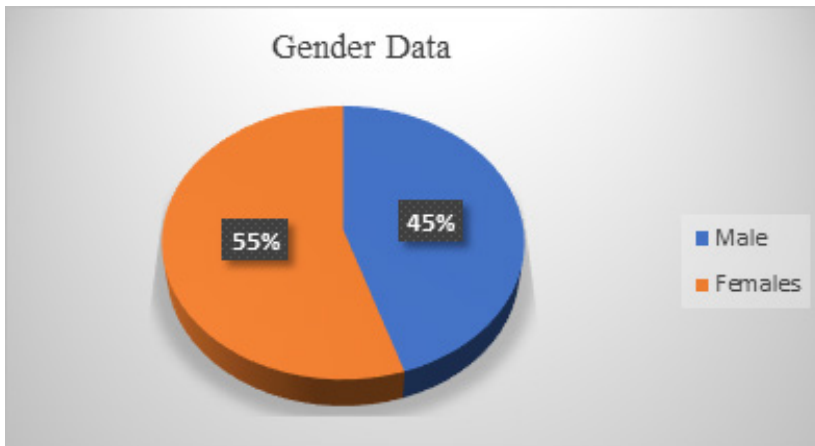


Chart no. 1: Analysis of gender data

The student survey shows that most of the students thought that the teacher as a teacher is positioned more in the explanation of the subject material and not to create an interactivity between the students of the class.

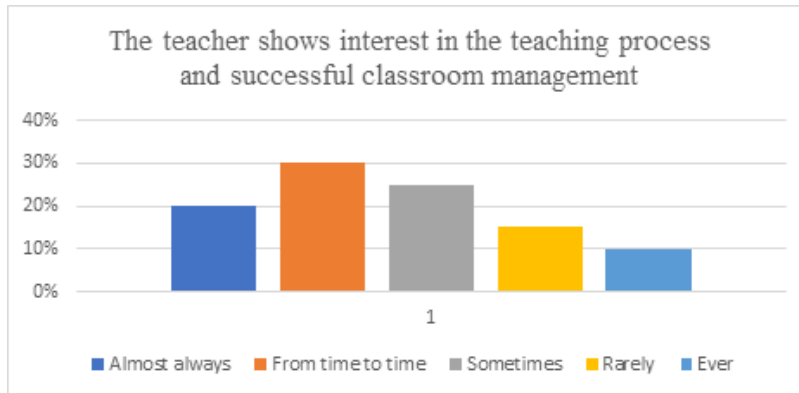


Chart no. 2: The teacher shows interest in the teaching process and successful classroom management

Regarding the question of how the teacher reacts to the student’s performance in tests or projects, about 60% of them are satisfied with the way the teacher communicates the results and the positive support they receive.

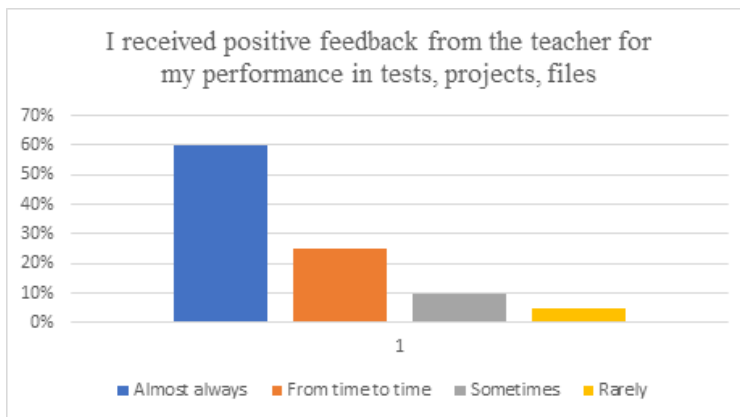


Chart no. 3: We received positive feedback about the teacher’s performance in tests, projects, files

According to their answers in the questionnaire, the students expressed that the teachers design the tasks, tests or projects in accordance with the material that covers the relevant subject, in accordance with their learning results, as well as there are many teachers who use different instructional materials or didactic to make the lesson more attractive, thus increasing the students’ desire to have as much involvement in the lesson as possible.

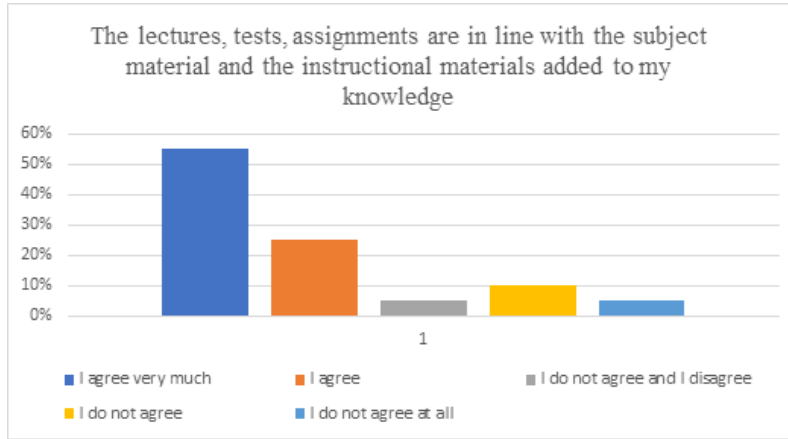


Chart no. 4: Lectures, tests, assignments are consistent with the course material and the instructional materials added to knowledge

Students think that teachers during the process of explaining the lesson should be more attentive to pay attention to the explanation of the basic concepts of the subject and then expand the lesson based on the level of the class.

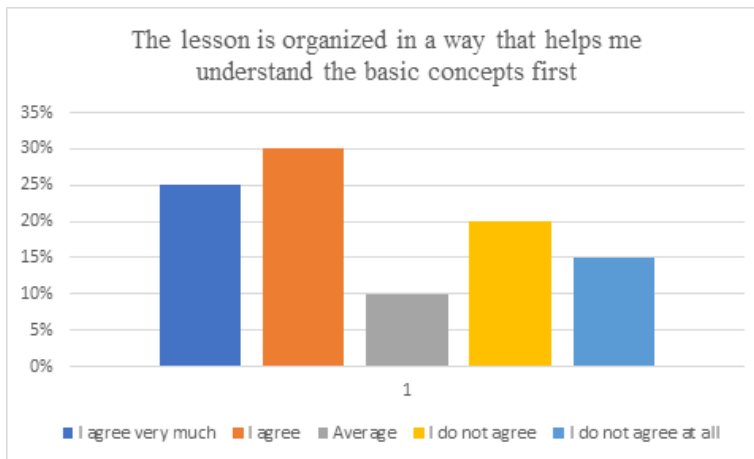


Chart no. 5: The lesson is organized in a way that helps students understand the basic concepts first

Regarding the evaluation process, about 40% of the students stated that their learning results were continuously evaluated during teaching.

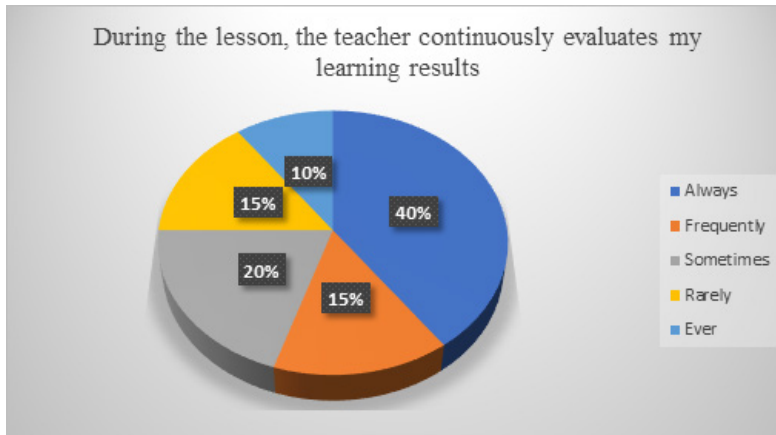


Chart no. 6: During teaching, the teacher continuously evaluates the learning results

Regarding the assessment forms, the students think that there should be a parallelism between the tests, projects or the student's file, that is, the tests should not be the only ones that cover most of the evaluation of the subject content.

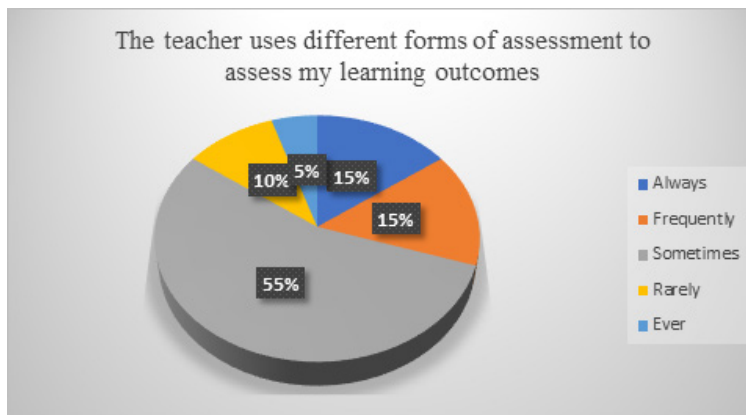


Chart no. 7: The teacher uses different forms of assessment to assess the learning outcomes

Analysing the answers given by the students through the questionnaire, we see that the teachers use diverse methods during teaching and do not stick strictly to traditional teaching. In the meantime, we realized that in the classes where the questionnaire was distributed, a low level of students prevailed and only a small part of them were categorized as students with a high level of learning, interest in teaching or their concentration during learning.

If we do an analysis of the interview with the teachers, it turns out that they have expressed that they find it difficult to coordinate or align teaching methods, assessment

techniques, assessment criteria and learning outcomes, since most students have a low interest during the lesson. They do not have cooperation with each other, or the spirit of group work, thus making it difficult to increase the performance of the students and their maximum involvement during the teaching process.

4. Recommendations

Below I have presented some recommendations as arguments that I personally judge:

- Clear definition of learning outcomes;
- Choosing teaching and learning methods to ensure that learning outcomes are achieved;
- Assessing student learning outcomes and checking to see how well they match what was intended;
- Teachers should be supported to choose the appropriate teaching strategy to suit the intended learning outcome, e.g., lecture, seminar, group work, discussion, group presentation or laboratory class;
- Appropriate teaching and assessment strategies should be used in accordance with the learning outcomes;
- Learning outcomes specify the minimum acceptable standard to enable a student to pass a given subject. Student performance above this basic threshold level is differentiated by applying grade criteria. Grade criteria are statements that indicate what a student must demonstrate to achieve a higher grade. These statements help to distinguish a student's performance levels. By making these criteria clear to students, it is hoped that students will aim for the highest levels of their performance;
- The quality of teaching increases when students can interact with teachers and teachers show genuine interest in solving their problems;
- Normally the lectures, assignments, practices and other small parts that make up the course should be logical and should complement each other. Student feedback is essential to understand whether course material is consistent with lectures, assignments, and tests. Students are lost if there is no harmony between the factors mentioned above. Schools should appreciate this and collect feedback from students directly to improve the course immediately if possible or in the future. The subjects should be structured in such a way that students have a good understanding of theoretical concepts as well as practical ideas.

Students like to test themselves and know how they have performed. Recognition of their performance gives them a sense of accomplishment.

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