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Select one aspect of the current assessment reforms and show what its implications are for changing classrooms in Hong Kong.

Introduction

This paper aims to investigate how the school-based assessment of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination changes classroom practice and affects teachers' roles in Hong Kong. SBA was first introduced in the English subject in Hong Kong Cert Level of Examination and it aims to enhance the validity and credibility of the examinations. In 2009, the three-year secondary was adopted at secondary four and the total year of secondary studies is reduced from 7 years to 6 years, which comprises three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary. Under the new curriculum, the importance of SBA also increases. It takes place in twelve subjects in the new assessment called Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. The new assessment is consisted of two parts which are the public exam accounting for 85% of the assessment and SBA accounting for the remaining 15%.

'Standards-referenced Reporting of assessments' is used for assessing the performance of students. The performance is expressed in terms of five levels. The assessment is very different from traditional HKCE and HKALE in which only a public exam took place. According to Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination Information on School-based Assessment, SBA 'is an assessment administered in schools as part of the learning and teaching process, with students being assessed by their own subject teachers' (p.2)'. The result of SBA accounts for the overall performance of HKDSE. The assessment activities include reading, group discussion, individual presentations and project-learning. It is indeed a substantial reform in assessment because it takes place in most of the subjects and exerts a

great impact on the overall result of HKDSE. It also greatly influences teachers' roles and classroom practice. Based on the handbooks of SBA documents, reference books and research papers, this paper will examine how SBA affects teachers.

Critical review of literature

A lot of theories have been used in order to support the essay but some are very crucial for the argumentation. The first one is the principal of summative assessment. According to McManus (2008), summative assessment works as an instrument to check and summarize what students have learned at the end of the instructional unit or how much students have achieved after a period of time. The results are usually expressed in forms of a grade, a score or a level and the assessment is usually a large-scale test or exam. Therefore, the assessment of most subjects in HKCE and HKALE was not incorporated into learning and teaching and was an isolated component. However, SBA belongs to formative assessment which aims to provide feedback so as to help improve students' learning (tuttle, 2008). This is to differentiate the difference between the past assessment and SBA and state the need of integration of assessment, learning and teaching. Besides this, fairness is defined to clarify its meaning and the importance. Since fairness is a controversial issue in SBA, it is necessary to define it. In general, fairness is defined as a situation or a condition that the assessment is not affected by factors which are not related to the criteria and aims of the assessment (McMillan, 2001). There should be no bias based on gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. No students can have a disadvantage or advantage due to the factors which are not related to the assessment. The above theories are crucial for the support of the essay.

Discussion

First and foremost, using SBA to promote learning and teaching is one of the major changes for teachers in the classroom. In the past, public exam had long been the only means of assessment for most of the subjects in HKCE and HKALE and they were summative assessment. Teachers did not need to incorporate the assessment of HKCE and HKALE into teaching and learning. In contrast, they have to integrate the assessment into teaching and learning under SBA. According to Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination Information on School-based Assessment, SBA puts a lot of emphasis on the integration of learning, teaching and assessment (n.d.).

Another important impact is that teachers have to ensure fairness in SBA. According to McMillan (2001), the objective of assessment is to acquire a 'sound inference of what students have understood, learned and achieved. Therefore, it is important and imperative to maintain validity and reliability of the results in the assessment to achieve the objective. For example, it is reported that the rationale of SBA in the HKDSE English examination is to enhance the validity and reliability of oral language assessment because subject teachers have to observe students over a very long period of time in SBA and thus a more balanced and trustworthy assessment is then can be provided for students. In the past, the exam papers of HKCE and HKALE showing candidate numbers are marked by examiners or markers without the students' names. This aims are to avoid prejudice and ensure fairness in assessing students' performance. On the contrary, students' performance has to be marked by their own subject teachers. As a result, some people doubt if teachers really assess their students fairly by using the criteria provided by the HKEAA without prejudice or preference. This may adversely affect the objectiveness, reliability and validity of the assessment.

Last but not least, teachers have to change their beliefs and practice that they have to spend most of the time in class on the preparation of examinations, which hinders the enforcement of SBA. The examination-oriented education system has been implemented for a very long time. The results of public exams determine whether students can get a seat in university or choose their favourite faculty in tertiary education. As a result, the competition is indeed intense which exerts great influence on teachers' practice. Most teachers and students have over stressed on achieving high scores and excel others in public exams (Cheng, 2001). Their teaching and classroom practice have been focused on the syllabus of public exams. Teaching exam skills, practicing past papers and focusing on the content of exams are the routine of both teachers and students in class. Therefore, they have to change their traditional classroom practice in order to implement SBA effectively.

Recommendation

With a view to the integration of assessment, teaching and learning, teachers have to give quality feedback to students so that they are able to know their weaknesses and strengths in order to make continuous improvements. The forms of SBA are mainly group discussion, project learning, reading, individual presentations and they are part of classroom learning. Through the assessment, teachers can understand more about their students' progress, standard and problems. Due to better understandings of their students and intense review by the assessment process, they can improve or shape their teaching techniques and strategies or trim the curriculum. For instance, as stated in Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination 2013 English Language School-based Assessment Teachers' Handbook (2013), in the oral assessment, teachers are not only required to give a grade to students, but offer feedback on the specific aspect of their speaking skills. In return, students can

improve their problems from the feedback of teachers. It can be seen that assessment plays an indispensable role in teaching and learning. Assessment, teaching and learning should be integrated and each of them cannot be separated. Teachers should actively make use of the assessment in order to enhance the effectiveness of their teaching and learning of students.

In order to maintain reliability and validity, teachers have to ensure fairness in assessing students' performance. Due to the importance of fairness, teachers have to follow the guidelines of the HKEAA completely when assessing students. They have to assess students according to the marking criteria and standard only without influenced by other unrelated factors. They must also submit the mark according to the procedure. Besides this, discussion with students about the marking criteria is necessary because this can increase the transparency and fairness of the assessment. This should not only happen before the commencement of the assessment, but regularly happens in the classroom. This can let students keep track of their learning progress and standard. After all, it is of utmost significance for teachers to implement fairness throughout the assessment and they have to be aware of it at anytime.

Unlike traditional exams and practice, teachers should not make the task of SBA like an exam and they should not frighten or intimidate students. Under the task, students should not act as rehearsal which means the existence of unnatural language use or memorization of words. They should not use the results of SBA to threaten students or make rankings in class and in opposite make the tasks like activities in order to make them get involved in learning. Only when teachers change their attitudes, can students also change the beliefs and engage in learning in SBA. Moreover, instead of spending most of the lessons on the preparation of public

exams, they should spend a suitable proportion of the class on the practice of SBA so that students can gain extensive experience in doing the tasks under informal situations. They should explain the criteria and the assessment guidelines to students and therefore they can possess thorough understanding of the tasks. During the practice of the SBA tasks, teachers should use the same criteria to assess their students so that students can understand their progress and continue to make improvements. They should be given extensive opportunities of informal assessments so as to familiar with the type of tasks and the criteria before conducting formal assessment. They should be allowed to develop confidence in practice. Teachers should change their traditional way and practice that they used in the past.

Conclusion

All in all, integrating assessment with learning and teaching, assessing students fairly without bias and change traditional exam practice are the major challenges for teachers. . Unlike traditional exams, SBA requires the integration of assessment, teaching and learning. It is not a separated element. Although it gives a certain degree of autonomy to teachers to implement the assessment tasks, teachers should assess students fairly according to criteria and guidelines. In addition, the impact of public exams on teachers has been very great. They have to gain a thorough understanding of SBA and adopt appropriate practice in class which is different from traditional exam practice. With a view to cope with the challenges, teachers should be given adequate training and guidance to implement SBA and achieve the objective of it.