

Abstract

Formative assessment has long been regarded as one of the most effective strategies to benefit student learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Hattie, 2009). However, many Hong Kong schools and teachers continue to focus on a competitive and selective approach, although formative assessment has been promoted at government policy level since the 1990s (Berry, 2011). This suggests several lines of inquiry relevant to a study: 1). More needs to be known about teachers' intentions to implement formative assessment and what influences them in making these decisions. Previous studies have contributed to this topic, but those attempts focused on either contextual or personal factors. No attempt has been made to provide a holistic understanding by covering both aspects as well as the interaction between them. 2). What teachers actually do in formative assessment practice needs to be documented, and such documentation needs to be integrated with students' reactions. Where such studies exist, they are largely descriptive; teachers' practices and students' reactions are treated in isolation rather than as interactive. This has been a barrier to the development of a deeper structural understanding of formative assessment, and studies need to move beyond description towards understanding as a general principle. 3). Formative assessment is a context-based activity (Carless, 2012) so that the particularities and local interpretations of its practices in specific contexts, such as Hong Kong classrooms, deserve specific investigation.

The proposed study will explore teachers' intentions and practices regarding formative assessment as well as the factors that influence their intentions and practices. Personal factors—such as attitudes, subjective norms, and self-efficacy, as specified in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991)—and contextual factors will be used as predictors. This represents an important attempt to conceptualize teachers' formative assessment practices holistically taking into consideration multiple influences on teaching practice. Students' reactions, such as attitude and perceived usefulness, will also be investigated in accordance with teachers' strategies. This research, therefore, moves beyond the documentation of individual cases in order to locate formative assessment in a broader theoretical framework.

A mixed research design will be used. Approximately 800 teachers will participate in successive surveys using a revised version of a questionnaire developed in a pilot study (Yan & Cheng, 2015). A total of 54 teachers will participate in pre-survey focus group interviews. Another group of 27 teachers will be observed teaching two double lessons and individually interviewed during the period of the follow-up survey. A sample of students (N=750), taught by the 27 observed teachers, will participate in a survey followed by interviews with selected students.

The proposed study will make both theoretical and practical contributions to the literature on formative assessment. The findings will contribute to a structural understanding of formative assessment practices supported by both qualitative and quantitative data from

teachers and students. The distinctive use of TPB will also inform psychological theory by investigating the role of contextual factors in the framework and the instruments developed will form a foundation for future study. The findings can be fed directly into improving teaching practice, teacher education and policy making. The proposed study will also lay the groundwork for intervention programmes that better facilitate teachers' formative assessment practices and consequently student learning.