

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND BHUTAN

Pelaksanaan Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah: Perbandingan Kajian Antara Malaysia dan Bhutan

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ABSTRACT

Classroom assessment is a continuous assessment of teaching and learning in the classroom. This includes assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. This study aims to compare and identify the levels of understanding, implementation, and reporting of classroom assessment among pre-service teachers at the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia Ilmu Khas Campus (IPGMKIK) and Paro College of Education, Bhutan. The research design is carried out quantitatively using purposive sampling involving a sample of 218 pre-service teachers at IPGMKIK and 97 pre-service teachers at Paro College of Education. Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire that was given online to the pre-service teachers. The research data was analyzed using SPSS Version 24. The research findings showed that the level of understanding, implementation, and reporting of classroom assessment among pre-service teachers at IPGMKIK is at a high level whereas the level of understanding, implementation, and reporting of classroom assessment among pre-service teachers at Paro College of Education are at high and moderately high levels. This shows that the assessment course affected differently in Malaysia and Bhutan. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement in assessment literacy for pre-service teachers' understanding, implementation, and reporting in Classroom Assessment.

Keywords: classroom assessment, formative, moderation, reporting, MADANI values

ABSTRAK

Pentaksiran bilik darjah ialah pentaksiran berterusan terhadap pengajaran dan pembelajaran di dalam bilik darjah. Ini merangkumi pentaksiran untuk pembelajaran, pentaksiran sebagai pembelajaran, dan pentaksiran tentang pembelajaran. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan dan mengenal pasti tahap pemahaman, pelaksanaan, dan pelaporan pentaksiran bilik darjah dalam kalangan guru pelatih di Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Ilmu Khas (IPGMKIK) dan Paro College of Education, Bhutan. Reka bentuk kajian dijalankan secara kuantitatif menggunakan persampelan bertujuan yang melibatkan sampel 218 guru pelatih di IPGMKIK dan 97 guru pelatih di Paro College of Education. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui soal selidik yang diberikan secara dalam talian kepada guru-guru pelatih. Data kajian dianalisis menggunakan SPSS Versi 24. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap pemahaman, pelaksanaan, dan pelaporan pentaksiran bilik darjah dalam kalangan guru pelatih di IPGMKIK adalah pada tahap yang tinggi, manakala tahap pemahaman, pelaksanaan, dan pelaporan pentaksiran bilik darjah dalam kalangan guru pelatih di Paro College of Education berada pada tahap tinggi dan sederhana tinggi. Ini menunjukkan bahawa kursus pentaksiran memberi kesan yang berbeza di Malaysia dan Bhutan. Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat ruang untuk penambahbaikan dalam literasi pentaksiran bagi pemahaman, pelaksanaan, dan pelaporan pentaksiran bilik darjah dalam kalangan guru pelatih.

Kata kunci: pentaksiran bilik darjah, formatif, moderasi, pelaporan, nilai-nilai MADANI

INTRODUCTION

Assessment in education is not unfamiliar to any educators, in fact, it was implemented many decades ago (Hayward & O’Leary, 2022; Lutovac & Flores, 2021). More than two hundred years ago, summative assessment became the main approach that has been implemented by all educators globally. However, in the 21st century, classroom assessment (CA) has been intensified, and given attention in recent years to improve the teaching and learning activities in the classroom (Brandmo et al., 2020; DeLuca et al., 2019). This is because so much emphasis has been placed on tests and examinations that the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and values has been neglected. CA is a continuous process in the classroom to obtain information about the progress and abilities of pupils, and the information obtained is analysed fittingly to enable educators to take appropriate follow-up actions (Brookhart, 2024).

In Malaysia, CA is one of the components of School-Based Assessment, known nationally as *Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah* (PBS) which was officially started in 2011 by the Malaysian Examinations Board (Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, 2019) to enhance meaningful learning that drives towards students’ progress (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021). CA is part of teaching and learning in the classrooms, an inevitable part of the curriculum, especially when the revised KSSR was implemented in 2017, in stages, beginning with Year 1. The revision paved the way for the development of the Standards-Based Curriculum and Assessment Document, or known as DSKP for every subject. The document states that “the curriculum standard is written in the form of Content Standard, Learning Standard and Assessment Standard” (Ng, 2019, p. 131)

Whereas in Bhutan, CA is highly important in student learning assessment and is an integral part of teaching and learning in the classroom (Hemlata Karki, 2020). Under the Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014-2024) which recommends strengthening the formative assessment, standardised written examinations are abolished from pre-primary to Year 3, (Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, 2023) akin to Malaysia’s abolishment of standardised written examinations for Level 1 (Year 1 to Year 3) primary students since 2019.

However, teachers still face challenges in implementing CA at the global level (Hemlata Karki, 2020). Lutovac and Flores (2021) assert that educators lack sufficient knowledge and skills in assessment, especially pre-service educators who acquire assessment knowledge briefly or in a fragmented manner from teacher education programs where the educators’ knowledge of assessment is questionable. In Malaysia, a study carried out by Mahaya et al. (2019) found that teachers lack knowledge about assessment, causing teachers to fail to plan lessons, uncover students’ true potential and provide comprehensive reports to parents. Teachers also give less feedback to students whereas with good feedback students can improve their learning outcomes (Gravett, 2020; Quinlan & Pitt, 2021). Moreover, a study by Isa et al. (2020) showed that 58 primary school teachers were still focused on exams because they could not change their exam-oriented learning mindset. In Bhutan, research also shows teachers are more focused on exams and more research should be carried out in CA (Hemlata Karki, 2020). Based on the challenges presented above, it is appropriate to provide guidance to teachers, especially to pre-service teachers. This is because pre-service teachers will have a long duration in the education service to educate pupils well so that the pupils’ learning is not affected. Pre-service teachers in all teacher education institutions both domestically and globally receive training and guidance on assessment courses in education, however, less research is conducted on the effectiveness of assessment training received by pre-service teachers (Lutovac & Flores, 2021; Schelling & Rubenstein, 2023). Hence, this study needs to be carried out among pre-service teachers in Malaysia and Bhutan to discover the level of understanding, implementation and reporting of CA so that steps can be taken to improve assessment literacy in these teacher education institutions based on the results of this study. Therefore, this quantitative study aims to answer the following questions:

- a. What is the level of CA understanding among pre-service teachers?
- b. What is the level of CA implementation among pre-service teachers?
- c. What is the level of CA reporting among pre-service teachers?

The significance of this research will be a pivot point for promoting and enhancing CA among preservice teachers, as well as improving the teaching and learning of CA at the Institutions of Teacher Education. The upskilling and improvement of the teaching and learning of CA are pertinent as students' progress in terms of knowledge, skill and values can be monitored and assessed individually to enhance their learning (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021).

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

CA is generally understood as 'assessment of learning, 'assessment as learning and 'assessment for learning where teachers have the assessment literacy in their classrooms (Brookhart, 2024; Brookhart & Nitko, 2019; Quinlan & Pitt, 2021). 'Assessment for learning' occurs when the teacher gives feedback to students based on inferences of student progress through observations, anecdotes, question and answer sessions, simple tests and so on. (Brookhart & Nitko, 2019; Hattie, 2023). This motivates and encourages students to improve their learning. 'Assessment as learning' encourages students to reflect and monitor their learning and performance progress to achieve higher levels. Empowerment is given to students to ask reflective questions and plan various strategies to improve learning. 'Assessment of learning' can be considered as a summative assessment where the teacher assesses the level of student achievement on certain learning standards by using paper and pencil tests or projects (Brookhart & Nitko, 2019).

Nevertheless, in many countries, the implementation of CA is still an ongoing issue due to the lack of school support, external policy, cultural norms and school environment (Hayward & O'Leary, 2022; Yan et al., 2021). Furthermore, countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea and China still consider tests or examinations to be of high importance to maintain high standards to compete in international educational achievement measures such as TIMSS and PISA (Heng et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021). However, the examination and assessment landscape in Asian countries, especially in Singapore has been reviewed and refined to support the implementation of CA to improve teaching and learning in the classroom so that students can face global challenges (Chan, 2021; Heng et al., 2021).

In Malaysia and Bhutan, the abolition of examinations for level one (Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3) implies teachers should fully implement CA (formative and summative assessment) to improve instructional activities in the classroom (Hemlata Karki, 2020; Ilhavenil & Wan Nor Fadzilah, 2022) by focusing on learning concepts that are oriented towards student development and instilling good values in the form of daily routines to shape student character. These are synchronised with MADANI core values in Malaysia and Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014-2024). MADANI, a framework introduced by the present Prime Minister in Malaysia, focuses on six core values: sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust and compassion (Anwar Ibrahim, 2022).

However, CA, especially in formative assessment, is still not widely implemented by educators based on studies conducted (Hayward & O'Leary, 2022; Black & Wiliam, 2018). Many educators find it easier to implement common practices such as summative assessments involving tests and exams because they are simpler when compared to CA. Common routines include memorisation, lower-level thinking skills among students, and overemphasising the grading function (Black & Wiliam, 2018). Educators view CA as more difficult to implement because it requires time and effort. At the global level, the problem or challenge that is often highlighted is that educators do not discuss among themselves or critically review the types of questions they send to students either in oral or written form and also other types of learning methods or strategies for assessment accountability to occur (DeLuca et al., 2019; Lutovac & Flores, 2021). At the local level, formulating low-level question items seems to be the teacher's daily work because it is undemanding (Nor'Aida et al., 2020). Many educators also like to use grading because it seems effortless, thus leading to failure of self-assessment by students because they do not have a comprehensive idea of how to assess their learning.

Additionally, a recent meta-analysis study conducted by Rosli et al. (2022) revealed inconsistencies among Malaysian primary school teachers who reported on teachers' understanding of

CA. Studies carried out by Arumugham (2020) and Dorin and Yasin (2019) show that teachers still need guidance and guidance to integrate assessment into their teaching and learning. However, a study carried out by Ilhavenil et al. (2020) revealed that teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment based on the Curriculum and Assessment Standard Document (DSKP) for KSSR (Revision 2017) were at a medium-high mean level. This indicated that teachers perceived they could assess students through various teaching and learning activities, and measure student achievement using various assessment methods.

Besides research on primary school teachers, research on preservice teachers in Finland displayed detailed knowledge and up to the mark of CA implementation (Atjonen et al., 2022), whereas, in Portugal and Myanmar, preservice teachers needed more time and autonomy due to struggles in carrying out CA although having sound knowledge in CA (Maura et al., 2024; Oo et al., 2021). Therefore, inconsistent findings from the primary school teachers and preservice teachers suggest that more research should be conducted to collect data on CA, especially among pre-service teachers in Malaysia and Bhutan.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The design of this study uses a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire instrument. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the Directors of both institutions to carry out this study for ethical consideration. The survey instrument was adapted from Wan Nor Fadhilah et al. (2021) study on the Implementation of Classroom Assessment (Level One) which has three constructs where the coefficient reliability reading was 0.89, 0.93 and 0.94 after factor analysis. The study sample consisted of Year 2 pre-service teachers who had taken the assessment course at IPGMKIK. 218 pre-service teachers answered the questionnaire. At Paro College of Education, 97 Year 2 pre-service teachers responded to the questionnaire. The gender of the students was not taken into consideration.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted online at IPGMKIK and Paro College of Education with a survey instrument. The instrument has three constructs: Understanding of CA, Implementation of CA, and Reporting of CA. Out of the original 25 items, only 18 items are used because the items are suitable for pre-service teachers. Therefore, a pre-test was carried out to ensure the clarity of the instructions and items in the questionnaire so there was no ambiguity in the questions and items (Ikart, 2019; Memon et al., 2017). The survey instrument used a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not sure, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), research conducted online has advantages in terms of cost savings and speed distribution. It can also avoid the error of transferring responses into the database which can be caused by human error and provide an opportunity for more efficient data collection (Hensen et al., 2021).

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 24.0 software. Descriptive findings are reported in the form of mean, minimum, maximum and standard deviation. Mean interpretation is also reported. Table 1 shows the mean interpretation for this study. Internal reliability using Cronbach Alpha was conducted to ensure consistent measurement across the various items in the instrument and that the items 'unite as a set' (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 1
Mean Interpretation

Mean Value	Interpretation
1.00 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderately Low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderately High
4.01 – 5.00	High

Notes: Taken from Psychometric Theory (2nd ed.), by Nunnally, J. C. (1978)

FINDINGS

Coefficient reliability shows an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.7 (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Cronbach's Alpha reliability values for the constructs of Understanding of CA, Implementation of CA and Reporting of CA implemented in this study are 0.85, 0.90 and 0.91 for Malaysia whereas in Bhutan are 0.84, 0.76 and 0.81. Table 2 shows the mean findings, and standard deviation for all constructs in the CA study while Table 3 shows the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation findings for all items for Malaysia and Bhutan.

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation for all Constructs for Malaysia and Bhutan

Construct	No. Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Interpretation
Malaysia				
Understanding of CA	6	4.39	0.46	High
Implementation of CA	8	4.40	0.48	High
Reporting of CA	4	4.28	0.56	High
Bhutan				
Understanding of CA	6	4.01	0.67	High
Implementation of CA	8	4.03	0.65	High
Reporting of CA	4	3.93	0.66	Moderately High

Table 3*Mean dan Standard Deviation for all Items in Malaysia and Bhutan*

No.	Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
		Malaysia		Bhutan	
1	I understand the description of each mastery level in the Performance Standards	4.36	0.601	3.76	0.61
2	I understand the purpose of CA.	4.48	0.570	4.33	0.57
3	I understand the concept of formative assessment in the classroom	4.49	0.554	4.11	0.81
4	I understand the concept of summative assessment in the classroom	4.50	0.570	4.10	0.68
5	I understand the difference between assessment for learning and assessment as learning.	4.31	0.700	3.97	0.70
6	I understand the moderation process in classroom assessment.	4.17	0.663	3.78	0.65
7	I can clearly state the learning objectives.	4.45	0.607	4.05	0.71
8	I can plan T&L activities in line with the learning objectives.	4.42	0.589	4.11	0.57
9	I can plan the assessment methods according to the T&L activities carried out.	4.39	0.636	4.00	0.59
10	I am able to prepare assessment instruments according to the T&L activities carried out.	4.27	0.660	3.86	0.66
11	I will give opportunities to pupils to assess their friends during T&L activities.	4.41	0.639	4.18	0.61
12	I will give opportunities to pupils to self-assess during and after T&L.	4.44	0.636	4.04	0.64
13	I can determine the pupils's level of mastery based on the Performance Standard.	4.39	0.650	3.73	0.77
14	I will give feedback to the pupils about their performance after the assessment.	4.46	0.584	4.25	0.69

15	I am able to record pupils' achievements by using the reporting template	4.26	0.672	3.77	0.71
16	I can give comments on the development of pupil's knowledge.	4.30	0.635	3.98	0.61
17	I can give comments on the development of pupil's skills.	4.30	0.621	3.94	0.66
18	I can give comments on the development of pupil's values.	4.26	0.623	4.01	0.65

Under the Understanding of CA construct, the highest mean for preservice teachers in Malaysia is 'I understand the concept of summative assessment in the classroom' (4.50), followed by 'I understand the concept of formative assessment in the classroom' (4.49) while the lowest mean is 'I understand the moderation process in the classroom assessment' (4.17). Meanwhile, for the preservice teachers in Bhutan, the highest mean is 'I understand the purpose of CA' (4.33), followed by 'I understand the concept of formative assessment in the classroom' (4.11). The lowest mean is 'I understand the description of each mastery level in the Performance Standards' (3.76).

Under the Implementation of CA construct, the highest mean for preservice teachers in Malaysia is 'I will give feedback to students about their performance after assessment' (4.46) and the lowest mean is 'I can provide assessment instruments that are suitable for the PdP activities carried out' (4.27). For the preservice teachers in Bhutan, the highest mean is also 'I will give feedback to students about their performance after assessment' (4.25) and the lowest mean is 'I can determine the pupils's level of mastery based on the Performance Standard' (3.73) followed by 'I can provide assessment instruments that are suitable for the PdP activities carried out' (3.86).

Furthermore, under the Reporting of CA construct, the highest mean is 'I can give comments on the development of pupils' knowledge (4.30) and 'I can give comments on the development of pupil's skills (4.30) while the lowest mean is 'I can record student achievement in reporting template' (4.26) and 'I can give comments on the development of pupil's values' (4.26) for the Malaysian preservice teachers. On the contrary, for the preservice teachers in Bhutan, the highest mean is 'I can give comments on the development of pupil's values (4.01) while the lowest mean is alike Malaysia, 'I can record student achievement in reporting template' (3.77).

DISCUSSION

Overall, the pre-service teachers in IPGMKIK, Malaysia and in Paro Education College, Bhutan believe they can understand the concept of classroom assessment (CA), implement CA in the classroom and report on CA to stakeholders such as parents. This is proven by the three means for the constructs which showed a majority of high mean interpretation.

Understanding of CA is an important construct because a lack of solid understanding of CA will lead to problems in the implementation of CA. Several studies that have been conducted show that there are teachers who lack knowledge about assessment as a whole (Mahaya et al., 2019; Rosli et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the findings in this study show that the pre-service teachers in both institutions understand the concept of CA which involves formative and summative assessment. This finding is due to the preservice teachers who were exposed to the concept of CA in their assessment courses. Knowledge of the basic concepts and purposes of testing, measurement, evaluation and assessment as well as types of assessment such as formative assessment and summative assessment are revealed in the course 'Assessment in Education'. Although the overall understanding of CA construct displayed a

high mean, focus needs to be given to the item 'I understand the moderation process in classroom assessment' in both countries because pre-service teachers need to go through the process of moderation practically. Practical exercises can be taught in lectures to strengthen pre-service teachers' understanding of the concept of moderation (Atjonen et al., 2022).

In terms of implementation of CA, although in this study the construct has a high mean interpretation for both countries, it is still the perception of pre-service teachers in both countries who believe they can implement CA with confidence, especially in giving feedback to students. This may be because the pre-service teachers have been exposed to the 'Assessment in Education' course while on campus. However, the preservice teachers in both countries need more assistance in providing various assessment instruments to achieve learning outcomes. Studies show teachers need to receive continuous in-service training in terms of pedagogy such as effective questioning techniques as well as meaningful feedback to students to improve their learning (Ilhavenil & Wan Nor Fadzilah, 2022; Gravett, 2020; Tshewang Dorji, 2020).

For the Reporting of CA, interesting revelations can be found in both countries. The lowest item mean for Malaysian preservice teachers is 'I can record student achievement in the reporting template provided by the Ministry of Education' and 'I can give a review of students' values development'. However, for the Bhutan preservice teachers, the highest mean is 'I can give a review of students' values development'. The pre-service teachers in IPGMKIK have been exposed to the reporting templates during the course implementation, but they may be less confident in commenting on the progress of students in the reporting template, especially about the progress of students' values because they have not been placed in school. However, in Bhutan, values play a very pertinent role, especially in their ancient tradition, culture and wisdom as envisioned in the Draft Education Policy (NEP) 2019 (Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessments, 2023). Educating for Gross National Happiness (EdGNH) initiative to transform Bhutan since 2010 emphatically directing educators to incorporate values, especially happiness into their instructional approaches in the classrooms (Gyamtsso et al., 2017). This is reflected in Bhutan's preservice teachers' confidence in reviewing students' values development.

Overall this research implies that the preservice in both countries have assessment literacy in terms of knowledge but needs practical support in implementing and reporting of CA. Preservice teachers need 'authentic assessment experiments' (p.10) with students during teaching practice to enhance their understanding of the alignment of learning objectives and assessment strategies (Atjonen et al., 2022; Moura et al., 2024). For future research, probability sampling could be employed as this research only used purposive sampling. More institutions of teacher education could be involved in future research with a mixed-method research design employed.

CONCLUSION

Although the three constructs in this study show a high and moderately high mean interpretation, more efforts need to be made to ensure that pre-service teachers have high competence in terms of knowledge and skills in assessment in both countries. This is because assessment literacy is an important competency for educators in the 21st century to achieve student learning goals (Brookhart, 2024; Lutovac & Flores, 2021). For practical implications, more opportunities in terms of time should be given to preservice teachers during practicum to ensure adequate exposure, in enhancing their implementation of CA. Policymakers should invest in the recruitment of future educators to develop budding teachers who are committed to teaching and learning.

Therefore, continuous efforts should be carried out, especially in teacher education to improve pedagogical knowledge, various forms of teaching and soft skills among teachers (Ng, 2019), following MADANI values. With this, the goals of the curriculum will be achieved as intended in the National Education of Philosophy in Malaysia and Bhutan.

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