

A Content Analysis of the Assessment Practices of Grade 3 Teachers

MARIVIC M. GARILLO
garillomarivicm@gmail.com
Jagupit Elementary School
Jagupit, Santiago, Agusan del Norte

Gunning Fog Index: 14.60 • Originality: 99% • Grammar Check 99%
Flesch Reading Ease: 33.05 • Plagiarism: 1%



ABSTRACT

Classroom assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process. The study investigated the classroom assessment practices of Grade 3 teachers in the division of Agusan del Norte, Philippines vis-à-vis with DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015. Exploratory approach was employed making use of interview and analysis of sample assessment tools. Qualitative data were analyzed partly following Georgi's technique. Content analysis and coding technique were also employed. It revealed that the Grade 3 teachers in the Division of Agusan del Norte failed to implement the prescribed assessment activities before the lesson, during lesson and after the lesson. Discrepancies were also revealed in the summative assessment where the performance-based assessment activities were not highly evident. They allegedly practiced both the traditional and alternative modes. The teachers' practice of authentic mode of assessment is less evident attributed to some teachers who attempted performance-based, portfolios and rubrics but only to a minimal extent. This implies the need to implement classroom assessment activities cognizant of the set standard by the Department of Education at this Grade level.

KEYWORDS

Assessment practices, authentic assessment, content analysis, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Classroom assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process. It is a clear of actions that involves both teachers and learners. The teachers give appropriate assessment to measure the learners' current and developing abilities while enabling them to take responsibility in the process. Various kinds of assessment shall be used appropriately for different learners who came from different cultural background and life experiences (Balinas, 2016).

The Department of Education (DepEd) issued Order No. 8 series of 2015 setting Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program. The said Order set standard classroom assessment which covered the formative and summative modes employing the alternative assessment approaches. Specifically, the Department prescribed three components of summative assessment namely the written works, performance tasks, and the quarterly assessment. This policy viewed in the recognition and deliberate consideration of the learners' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky 1978). Appropriate assessment is provided to ensure learners' achievement in moving from guided to independent practice of knowledge, understanding, and skills and enable them to apply this successfully in future situations. This view of assessment, therefore, acknowledges the unity of instruction and assessment (Buehl, 2005).

Thus, teachers should employ classroom assessment methods that are consistent with curriculum standards. It is important for teachers to always inform learners about the objectives of the lesson so that the learners will aim to meet and even exceed the standards. The teachers should provide immediate feedback to students about their learning process. In this regard, classroom assessment measures the achievement of competencies by the learners through the conduct two types of classroom assessments, namely formative and summative.

Practitioners and researchers reported various benefits of using the authentic assessment techniques in classroom assessment. Research findings suggested that when alternative assessment techniques are effectively integrated into instructions, they can improve engagement, provoke critical thinking, give students' voice in decision, and improve classroom discussion, increase attendance, and increase enjoyment of class (Frey & Schmitt, 2007).

On the other hand, studies also found limited application by teachers in the use of modern approaches such as the performance-based technique (Frey & Schmitt, 2007) which is highly regarded as the most appropriate approach in assessing student learning in the context of the 21st century teaching and learning (Wiggins, 1990; McMillan, 2001; Mertler, 2003)

The prevalence of traditional classroom assessment practiced is assumed to adversely affect the validity and reliability of the assessment, consequently resulting to poor teaching and learning. Classroom assessment plays a vital role in the teaching and learning process because it provides philosophical approach in soliciting feedback to

improve instruction. Appropriate classroom assessment identifies academic weaknesses and strengths so that educators can provide specialized academic support, educational programming and intervention (Wiggins, 1990; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mertler, 2003; McMillan, 2010).

In the Philippine setting, studies on classroom assessment are very nil, if any, they are not highly published, therefore, are hardly accessible. The proponent had the chance to read the findings of a study on classroom assessment practices by Belaya (2016) conducted in Claver District. The study revealed that the majority of the Grade 3 teachers in Claver District made use of the traditional assessment technique in assessing the critical thinking skills of their pupils. Specifically, these include quiz, oral recitation and multiple choice. Modern approaches in classroom assessment are not highly evident in the study (Belaya, 2016).

On the personal account, the proponent being a school administrator in a public school in the division of Agusan del Norte has observed the predominant practice of the traditional assessment techniques by teachers in most public schools in the Division. Like other schools, these teachers in the locality also encountered problems how to authentically measure pupils learning using the performance-based technique (Fangxi, Teng, Tan, & Peng, 2014).

Thus, the study focused on the assessment of learning practiced by teachers specifically on the development, validation, and administration of assessment instruments vis-à-vis with the standard policy as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 8, s.2015

FRAMEWORK

Alternative assessment is an evolving concept considered as the modern approach. It aims to measure authentic learning outcomes basically based on actual performance. Vygotsky (1978), Wiggan (1990), McMillan (2010) are among the most fundamental theorists supporting the alternative assessment. They introduced the most common approaches namely: performance-based, process-based, product-based, and portfolio assessment. The following theories support the modern approach:

According to Olivia (2010) another way of providing alternative assessment is to watch a presentation to gain knowledge and learning. When students watch a presentation, they might be watching all types of information -- technological presentation, a singing presentation or another way of getting the information. With a presentation learning assessment, students need to give the information that they were presented with. This doesn't usually happen in the same way that the presentation happened in the first place.

Premised by the discussion on the relevance of the modern approach, classroom assessment under the K to 12 Program is guided by the policy based on DepEd Order No. 8 series of 2015. This Order declares "Assessment ensures success to move from

guided to independent display of knowledge, understanding, and skills enabling learners to transfer knowledge, understanding and skills successfully to future situations. Assessment is meant to facilitate the development of higher order thinking the 21st century skills. The component of assessment includes the contents, performance and learning competencies. Specifically, the learners are assessed based on their written work – ability to express concepts in written work such as essay; performance task – the ability to show what they know by innovating or creating; and the quarterly assessment – the assessment of learning at the end of the quarter.”

The study basically looked into the Lived Experiences of teachers in their assessment of learning based on the standards stipulated in DEpEd Order No. 8, series of 2015. This covers their assessment activities such as how they developed, validated, administered, interpreted test items, and how they communicated and utilized results. The study also considered the sample assessment tools in the three components of written work, task performance, and quarterly test either by individual or by group.

Assessment practices are the modes, techniques, and approaches used by teachers in assessing learning. In this study alternative assessment is deemed appropriate which focuses on the performance, process and product. This includes the use of rubrics, portfolios, essay, journals, reports, letters, drawing, projects, oral recitation, role play, interview, observation form, checklist, demonstrations, sample products, long quiz, and higher order thinking skills.

The Proposed Capability Building Program for Grade 3 Teachers is the output of the study based on the findings. These are contextualized assessment tools for elementary pupils to measure learning of pupils to be developed by the researcher.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to describe the assessment practices of Grade 3 teachers in the division of Agusan del Norte in terms of lived experiences of Grade 3 teachers in public elementary schools regarding classroom assessment practices of learning with respects to the DEpEd standard as to the: (1) Type of Assessment; (2) Mode of Assessment; and (3) Process of Assessment.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed content analysis in describing the assessment practices of Grade 3 teachers in division of Agusan del Norte, Philippines. Specifically, the study used individual interview and small group interview to elicit information regarding the lived experiences among teachers in assessing learning of pupils based on DepEd standard. Information derived through the interview had to be verified by looking into the sample tools actually used by teachers. In this regard, a documentary analysis of

available sample tools was found necessary verified by an instrumentation expert.

The Respondents/ Sampling

The key informants of the study included the selected Grade 3 teachers coming from the six districts of the division of Agusan del Norte. They were chosen using the purposive sampling technique considering number of years of experience in teaching Grade 3 and their training and involvement related to instrument development and validation. The Grade 3 teachers served as participants during the interview to provide information on their lived experiences in practicing classroom assessment. Sample size was arbitrary until the saturation point was reached. In this study, the saturation point was observed when responses to questions were already recurring.

Research Instruments

The study employed interview guide that contained a grand tour question on the assessment practices of the Grade 3 teachers and follow-up questions as deemed necessary, observation form, and information sheet. The interview guide was used to elicit their lived experiences in classroom assessment. The observation form was needed during class observation and in documenting the sample assessment tools as proof of evidence

Data Gathering Procedure

Interview was conducted school to school. Small group interview sessions with selected Grade 3 teachers were held in schools with two or more teachers and individual interview to school with one grade 3 teacher.

During the small group interview session, a grand tour question was which stated *“Based on your lived experiences in your respective classrooms for the last five years, what were your common practices in assessing the learning of your pupils?”* Before hearing responses, the researcher had to explain the grand tour question by specifying the needed data by asking follow-up questions. The researcher encouraged free-flowing discussion giving time to every participant to share his/her personal experiences regarding classroom assessment practices in candid thought. The researcher also allowed interactions between and among participants so that a realistic, candid and substantial information would be elicited.

Oral and written responses were considered. A written copy of the grand tour question and the subsequent follow-up questions with corresponding space to write answer was given to the participants so that they had options whether to answer orally or in written. That technique was considered to capture all the information shared by the participants. Towards the end part of the session, the researcher requested the participants to answer the questions in writing to the best of their ability and collected the same right before the session would formally close. The same procedure was observed during the succeeding sessions.

Responses obtained from taking down their responses and those in form of written response were transcribed in toto and stored in safe compartments while on the process of data gathering. After each session, the researcher had to visit selected classrooms among those who attended the session gather samples of assessment tools and other documents like the Table of Specification (TOS) actually used by Grade 3 teachers in all subjects. A short interview with school head District Supervisor was done to verify information. Sample assessment tools included in this study covered only the periodical test for 3rd grading period of SY 2016-2017 taking into account the factors of accessibility and convenience.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from the interview with informants were analyzed partly following some techniques introduced by Giorgi's (2011) on descriptive phenomenology in keeping with the phenomenon and paying a critical attention on the acknowledgment and bracketing the informants' lived experiences. After a verbatim transcription of the interview protocols, observing Giorgi's (2011) five – step methodology were followed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Based on your lived experiences in your respective classrooms for the last three years, what were your common practices in assessing the learning of your pupils?

With references to Giorgi's approach analyzing qualitative data, thorough reading and re-reading of the entire transcript was made to explore the contents of the gathered information. After a rigorous and tedious process of reading and re-reading, the researcher was able to identify the recurring and common responses and grouped them together according to the pre-determined themes of the study namely the Assessment Methods and the Assessment Activities. The clustered common responses were then synthesized and are presented in Table 1 those under the Assessment Methods practices.

By dividing the data transcripts into several clusters, meaning units can now be established which contains specific meaning relevant to explain the phenomenon being investigated. As what transpired in this study, discussions of the lived experiences of teachers describing their assessment practices are clustered around methods employed in terms of type, mode, and technique of assessment and the assessment tools they used.

Table 1. Assessment practices clustered under standard 1 (Type of Assessment)

Common Response
Formative assessment $f(n=38$ or 95%): given daily or weekly using the quizzes, drills, class recitation
Summative assessment $f(n=40$ or 100%): done quarterly using long periodical tests

Regarding the type of assessment, the study found that Grade 3 teachers generally practiced routine of formative assessment and periodic summative assessment. The formative assessment is usually done daily right after instruction of certain lesson. The purpose of which is to monitor the learners as to how keep pace with the learning process. The summative assessment is done periodically by quarter covering certain units.

Comparing the actual classroom assessment practices of the Grade 3 teachers in the Division and the set standard of the Department of Education, the study found insufficient classroom assessment practices both in the formative and summative assessment. In the formative assessment, the Grade 3 teachers failed to implement prescribed assessment activities before the lesson, during lesson and after the lesson. Discrepancies were also revealed in the summative assessment where the performance-based assessment activities were not highly evident. This implies the need to implement classroom assessment activities cognizant of the set standard by the Department of Education at this Grade level.

Table 2. Assessment practices clustered under standard 2 (Mode of Assessment)

Common Cluster Responses
Traditional Assessment $f(n=40$ or 100%)
Making use of Multiple-choice $f(n=26$ or 65%)
True or False, Fill-in-the Blank, Essay, Recitation, Solving Problem $f(n=26$ or 65%)
Performance-based Assessment (38%)
such as the following:
Individual Oral Exam $f(n=9$ or 23%)
Role Play $f(n=5$ or 13%)
Portfolios $f(n=3$ or 8%)
group activities $f(n=9$ or 23%)
Rubrics $f(n=14$ or 35%)

As regards to the mode of assessment, the Grade 3 teachers practiced both the traditional and authentic approaches. The Table 3 shows that the traditional paper-and-pencil tests are highly evident the use of quizzes for formative assessment. Summative test was practiced using the multiple-choice, fill-in the blank, and essays.

The teachers’ practice of authentic mode of assessment is quite evident in their attempt to employ performance-based approach, but only to a minimal extent, through group work activities, individual oral participation, and portfolio. The use of rubrics as assessment tool in measuring learning performance was frequently mentioned during the interviews but needs verification since sample rubrics were not evident in the study. Based on the meaning contained in the unit data and the inference derived from the interpretations, this study found that the assessment methods practiced by Grade 3 teachers are more of being traditional than that of being authentic. The standard set by the Department as far as the mode of assessment is concerned is the extensive implementation of alternative assessment approaches both in the formative and the summative assessment. Thus, where the traditional paper-and-pencil tests were highly prevalent, it can be inferred that the Grade 3 teachers in the Division were not able to meet assessment of learning based on the standard.

Assessment activities covered the process as how the teachers developed, validated and administered the assessment instruments; how they interpreted, communicated, and utilized assessment results.

Table 3. Assessment practices clustered under standard 3 (Process of Assessment)

Common Response	
Instrument Development	
1. Development of items is based on contents set in the learning objectives.	f(n=20 or 50%)
2. Development test items is based on the Table of Specifications (TOS).	f(n=12 or 30%)
3. Test items were developed with varying degree of difficulty ranging from Easy, Average, Difficult	f(n=10 or 25%)
4. Test items were developed to measure various competences with reference to Bloom’s Taxonomy	f(n=8 or 20%)
5. Test items were developed to measure Knowledge, Process Understanding and Product (KPUP)	f(n=7 or 18%)
Instrument Validation	
1. Items for periodical tests are validated by school heads or principal by checking the contents of the test based on the learning objective & TOS	f(n=24 or 60%)
2. Test items are validated through Item Analysis conducted by teachers.	f(n=4 or 15%)
3. Test items are validated by the LAC consultants, Test Item Committee	f(n=4 or 10%)
4. Test items are validated through pilot testing by teachers	f(n=2 or 5%)
Communication and Utilization of Assessment Results	
1. Results are communicated to parents during PTA meeting	f(n=40 or 100%)

The assessment activities of Grade 3 teachers in the districts basically covered the development of teacher-made instruments for formative and summative assessment of

learning. The construction of test items is based on the contents set in the learning objectives. The test items covered various cognitive domains with varying level of difficulty. Most often, the validation of test instrument is done by school heads or principals, and sometimes by the SLAC leader. Item analysis and pilot test were practiced but only to a less extent. Assessment results are communicated to parents periodically, through the report card, during the Homeroom PTA meeting.

Content Analysis of the Sample Assessment Tools

The Grade 3 teachers claimed that they practiced both the traditional and alternative modes of assessment during the focused group discussions. The Grade 3 teachers claimed that they practiced performance-based, process-based, portfolios, and rubrics. They also claimed their assessment instruments possessed validity guided by the Table of Specifications (TOS) ensuring representativeness of samples considering the learning contents and level of cognitive domains.

Table 4. Sample assessment tools in English and Filipino subjects

1.1. Periodical test in English 3 (40 items) Contents: Naming pictures by filling in the blank; using demonstrative pronoun guided by picture by filling in the blanks, writing personal pronouns to replace name by filling in blanks; drawing objects based on the sentence; classifying simple and compound sentence; providing comparative and superlative forms of adjective by filling in blanks; inferring character traits implied in sentences by filling in the blank; and drawing and describing object based on imagination of event.
2.1 English 3 third Quarter (35 items) Multiple-choice, listening comprehension, fill-in the blank, sentence completion, Contents: Listening comprehension, analyzing and interpreting pictures/objects, evaluating true and false statement, naming pictures by filling in missing letters, classifying facts from opinions, reading and comprehension, classifying simple and compound sentence, transforming declarative sentence into question, writing complex sentence.
4.3 Ikatlong Markahang Pasulit sa Filipino 3 (10 items) Description: Multiple-choice Contents: Reading Comprehension, inferring, giving meaning based on context clue.
Evident Observations: <i>Common learning contents in English 3, cognitive assessment paper and pencil test, similarity of test items and assessment technique, utilization of tactile kinesthetic and visuals, most items are simple recall, identification, comprehension, very few if any measure higher order thinking skills (HOTS)</i>

Based on the analysis of the contents of the sample assessment tools in English and Filipino 3 subjects, the study noted similarities of learning contents, assessment techniques specifically the use of multiple-choice mainly focused on the assessment of cognitive domain competence in remembering and understanding. Test items that measure the higher order thinking skills (HOTS) are not evident although in the Table of Specifications (TOS), there were mentions of analyzing, applying, and creating.

Thus, analysis of sample test items was done vis-à-vis the learning objectives and the level of cognitive taxonomy.

Referring to the Sample Assessment Tool in English 3 (ETool1) and the corresponding TOS (ETOS1), it was found that there is mismatch in the classifications of the test items with respect to learning objectives and the level of taxonomy (Bloom's). To cite a few, Test Items No. 5 *Lita is taller than Alma. What adjective is used in the sentence?* No. 6 *Roy is the most cooperative pupil in the class. What degree of comparison was used in the sentence?* These were claimed to be Analyzing though they only measure knowledge. Items No. 20, 21, 22, & 23 were classified as Creating but they seemed to measure only Understanding or Inferring. It appears that some teachers lacked profound knowledge and understanding in classifying test items according to Bloom's taxonomy and in constructing valid test items to measure learning outcomes. This implies the need to enhance teacher competence in the development of valid assessment tools in English and Filipino.

Table 6. Sample assessment tools in Science and Math

1.6 Periodical Test in Science 3 (30 items) Contents: Identification using multiple-choice; identifying objects and information by filling in the blank; writing examples based on situations and events cited.
Science III Third periodical Test (30 items) Type: Identification, multiple-choice, fill-in the blanks, completion, essay Contents: Identifying and inferring symbols, objects and illustrations, evaluating concept in statement, identifying sources of energy, evaluating proper use of electricity based on illustrations, supplying appropriate information to complete the paragraph, essay on the importance of light and electricity.
3.3 Third Grading Period in Mathematics III (Bisaya 30 items with TOS) Description: Multiple-choice, computational, illustration Contents: Identification of mathematical concepts state in situation and illustrated in objects and symbols, solving Mathematical problems, illustrating concepts using lines and symbols.
4.2 Third Periodical Test in Math 3 (30 items) Description: Identification, classification, multiple-choice, illustration of concepts Contents: expressing fraction based on illustration, concept recall fractions, classifying fraction, transforming fraction into illustration, analyzing and interpreting figure
Evident Observations: <i>Common learning contents in Science and Math, Math items are mostly computational, Science test items mostly measure knowledge and comprehension. Out of the three sample assessment tools in Math only one had TOS – reflecting only the objectives, number of test items per objective, percentage and placement of test items. Classification of test items according to Bloom's taxonomy is not evident. Assessment tool for Science had no TOS.</i>

In-depth analysis of the observations, revealed that Science and Math teachers are not compliant with regard the making of Table of Specifications (TOS) as requisite in test construction. The deficient TOS gathered in the study only indicates that most of the Science and Math teachers lacked knowledge and skills in TOS making and in

developing valid assessment instruments. This substantiates earlier finding stating that some English and Filipino teachers lacked sufficient knowledge and skills in developing valid instrument to measure learning outcomes. Again, this finding greatly implies effective intervention to enhance teacher competence in classroom assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Comparing the actual classroom assessment practices of the Grade 3 teachers in the Division of Agusan del Norte and the set standard of the Department of Education, the study found insufficient classroom assessment practices both in the formative and summative assessment. In the formative assessment, the Grade 3 teachers failed to implement prescribed assessment activities before the lesson, during lesson and after the lesson. Discrepancies were also revealed in the summative assessment where the performance-based assessment activities were not highly evident. This implies the need to implement classroom assessment activities cognizant of the set standard by the Department of Education at this Grade level.
2. The assessment methods practiced by Grade 3 teachers are more of being traditional than that of being authentic. The standard set by the Department as far as the mode of assessment is concerned is the extensive implementation of alternative assessment approaches both in the formative and the summative assessment. Thus, where the traditional paper-and-pencil tests were highly prevalent, it can be inferred that the Grade 3 teachers in the Division were not able to meet assessment of learning based on the standard.
3. The Grade 3 teachers in the division of Agusan del Norte have inadequate practice of classroom assessment. Their assessment practice is predominantly traditional using less valid and reliable tools due to insufficient competence in measurement and evaluation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Grade 3 teachers in the division of Agusan del Norte should undergo intensive trainings, seminars, workshop to develop update themselves with the trend in classroom assessment.
2. Grade 3 teachers should develop learning pedagogies in measurement and evaluation to improve their classroom assessment practices.
3. The herein Proposed Capability Building Program for Grade 3 Teachers in the division of Agusan del Norte should be adopted, funded, and implemented in the Divison.

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