Developing formative potential when summative assessment dominates

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Overview

- Relationships between summative and formative assessment
- The role of context
- Students setting a test paper
- Student drawings research
- Implications for theory and practice
SUMMATIVE (SA) AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (FA)
Two teacher roles: judging and supporting

• Judging student performance, especially in summing up achievement (summative assessment)
• Supporting student learning (formative assessment)
• School tests usually need to fulfill both summative and formative roles: tensions
SA/FA relationships

• SA often a barrier to FA but also scope for positive interplay between the two.

• Possibility of developing greater formative potential from processes that might be interpreted by teachers and students as largely summative.
Facilitated by ..

- Well-designed tests/assessment which promote cognitive engagement
- Active student involvement
- Focus on mastery as well as performance
- A purposeful cycle of revision and follow-up
- Assessment literacy
THE ROLE OF CONTEXT AND CULTURE
From Testing to Productive Student Learning: Implementing Formative Assessment in Confucian-Heritage Settings

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History of examinations

• Competitive examinations dating to the Han dynasty: Imperial civil service examination system (Keju 科舉) from AD 606 to 1905

• Implementing FA in Chinese settings particularly needs to acknowledge the dominance of tests
The sculpture “Play Less” <<戲無益>> is located in Guangzhou Diaosu Park.
Formative use of tests designed primarily for summative purposes

- Student self-evaluation of test performance
- Re-teaching in qualitatively different ways
- Peer co-operation in revision and follow-up
Example test preparation activity

- Competition amongst groups
- Energetic peer coaching by team members
- One member of each 4 person group called out to blackboard

(Carless, 2011)
TEACHER IMPLEMENTATION → STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES
Students’ perceptions

Dr. Ricky Lam, Hong Kong Baptist University
Key words in captions

good exam mother test low
marks scores scared happy
unhappy study high stressed
feel nervous
Before the exam, I feel happy and relaxed. After it, I cry and feel confused.
I gave my test paper to my mother. She was very happy because I got 100. If I got low scores, she will be very angry and will scold me.
Parental involvement

“Whenever I revise my for the exam, my mum is always sitting next to me. Her presence is like a policewoman more than a tutor who can teach me”

(Carless & Lam, 2012)
RECENT RESEARCH 1: DEVELOPMENTAL WORK WITH PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS IN HONG KONG (Carless & Lam, 2013; Lam, 2012)
Active revision

• Students drafting their own test paper to enhance their revision process

• ‘Regular’ 8 year old Hong Kong Chinese students learning EFL/ESL
Preparation of test questions

• Helps students develop an overview of what is being studied (Black et al., 2003)

• Leads to cognitive gains (Rosenshine et al., 1996)

• Generating (and answering) potential test questions promotes successful performance (Foos et al., 1994)
Teaching procedures

- Introduce various types of assessment items, such as MC, filling in blanks.
- Revise key test content
- Asked students to form groups of four and construct their own mock test paper (and a marking scheme)
- Exchange papers
Selected findings

• Teacher reported higher scores (average + 7%) in the test which followed, in comparison with the previous year.
• Some students found it challenging to write MC questions: constructing distracters as well as correct answer
• Students found it novel and fun
• Student: “I feel so proud I can set a test paper for my classmates.”
Summary of the practice

• Teacher built on student desire for high test marks by arranging a revision task with students generating test questions.

• Students develop some ownership of the test preparation process, participants rather than just recipients.
RECENT RESEARCH 2: STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HUBEI (Xiao & Carless, 2013)
Yangyu Xiao (Shirley), PhD student
University of Hong Kong
Research prompt

Draw a picture of English assessment based on your own understandings, experiences and feelings, and include an explanatory caption

29 students (16-17 y.o) generated 68 pictures
Key themes

Affective responses
- 21 negative, 14 positive

Summative aspects
- Test results, procedures, limitations

Formative potential
- Teacher support
- Peer feedback
- Student follow-up
When I finished the exercises, the teacher checked my homework, made comments and communicated with me face to face. Afterwards, I am more aware of what I need to improve most and I will be motivated for future study.
Peer dictation is an original way for students to assess themselves. It can help improve student-student communication. It is great, but so hard!
I got a lot wrong in dictation. Textbooks are important and I need to digest them.
Student challenges

• Stating that they planned to follow-up, rather than actually following through
• Finding time/energy to remediate learning difficulties when faced with new content or tasks
• Memorization to boost marks rather than genuine long-term learning
Conclusions and Implications
Contextually grounded formative assessment practices

- Acknowledging dominance of testing and the existing practices / beliefs of teachers, whilst bringing some formative potential into summative assessment practices (Carless, 2011)
Restricted and extended FA

**Restricted** – a pragmatic, diluted version; emphasis on FA within SA

**Extended** – a more ambitious, extended version; greater emphasis on student autonomy and direction of own learning
Implications for theory

• A continuum of enacted formative assessment practice

Restricted <-----------> Extended FA

(Carless, 2011, chapter 5)
Implications for practice (1)

- Engaging students actively in test preparation and follow-up activities
- Promoting mastery (as well as performance)
Implications for practice (2)

- Key role of teacher in inducting students into rules of the (assessment and learning) game
- E.g. teach students how to revise, how to learn, how to use feedback
- Activate the students as users of assessment information
THANK YOU