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CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT PRACTICES: AN EVALUATION OF BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the classroom assessment practices of teachers in Myitkyina Township, Myanmar. A total of 237 teachers from Basic Education High Schools in Myitkyina Township participated in this study. Descriptive research design and survey method were used. An instrument: Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices Questionnaire was used to collect the required data. The internal consistency was α =0.87. According to the results, the sample mean (193.22) is larger than the theoretical mean (141). Then, it was found that there were significant differences in teachers' using performance assessment and non-achievement-based grading by gender. Similarly, in the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by subject, mean score of science teachers was highest and that of art teachers was lowest. Moreover, in the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by position, mean score of senior teachers was highest and that of primary teachers was lowest in assessment practices. Similarly, in the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by service, mean score of teachers who have above 30-year service was highest. Finally, this study hopes that the school administrators can get the ideas to recover and promote the teachers' classroom assessment practices with the cooperation of the experts.

Keywords: *classroom assessment, assessment practice, performance assessment.*

INTRODUCTION

Learning is the ultimate dependent variable in education. Everything done in the name of education impacts positively or negatively on learning. It is through assessment that learning and hence quality of education is defined. Any improvement in these depends ultimately on the quality of and improvement in assessment. Just like the physicians cannot have effective practice without good assessment, teachers cannot have effective teaching without skills related to good assessment (Nenty, 2005). Assessment is at the heart or center of all educational activities and every activity in education looks on to assessment to establish its validity and effectiveness. The quality of assessment bears on the quality of educational inputs, processes and products and hence on the quality of education enjoyed by the society (as cited in Maina, 2014).

Classroom assessments practices of teachers connect curriculum, instructional mechanism and students learning outcomes, which is one of the essential elements of teaching learning process. Teachers use classroom tests, presentations, questions answer sessions, projects, and group activities to enhance student's learning. These practices enable students to practice learning contents, develop thinking patterns, activate their neurons and enhance their confidence on attained skills and knowledge (as cited in Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad & Islam, 2019).

Moreover, classroom assessment practices concentrate on the improvement of students learning and teachers' teaching. The results of these practices provide evidences to teachers concerning students' level of understanding, progress towards the desired goals and areas of students' strengths and weakness (as cited in Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad & Islam, 2019).

Further, research studies also showed that formal assessment techniques which include; written weekly/monthly term tests, presentations, individual projects and experiments has close relationship with students' anxiety. On the contrary, informal assessment techniques which includes; rubrics, portfolios, group work and classroom discussion used in classroom assessment have positive contribution to students' achievement. Gronlund classified these tools into traditional and alternate types of tools. Traditional tools such as objective type tests (MCQs, fill in the blanks, true false and matching items). These tools are traditional as it needs less time and difficulty level is low as compared to alternate tools-portfolio, observation and other performances type tests which ask for more time and are more complex in nature. Results of studies revealed that students are intrinsically more motivated for alternate tools of assessment. The results also showed that majority of teachers carried out assessment practice without understanding these practices properly which negatively influence students' achievement and teachers' performances. Therefore, experts demanded teachers for more sophisticated skills and knowledge of assessment practices (as cited in Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad & Islam, 2019).

If classroom assessment practices are not carried out in a manner suitable to the intended purpose, they will not provide healthy feedback about the teaching and learning process. Often, teachers tend to devote more time to teaching strategies, teaching materials, and planning materials as they focus on reflecting and teaching content in teaching processes. This leads teachers to have more tendency to be organized and ready than to focus on their students' prior knowledge, experiences and personal information. Furthermore, because the teachers focus most of their time and energy on developing curriculum content and reaching achievements, their target is to satisfy learning expectations for the relevant subject area as opposed to focusing on the individual achievements of the students (Gallavan, 2009). Classroom assessments are helpful at this point and serve to facilitate the progression of the teaching process in a controlled way. These assessment practices are constantly seeking ways to create evidence for student learning, and the end result is that evidence is used to better adapt the leaning needs of students (as cited in Erdol, & Yildizhi, 2018).

In this present age, education should develop and change. According to Conlon (2008), for survival in the 21st century, people expect all teachers to teach all students how to think and communicate effectively, and they need to assess these skills and benchmark expectations to what the world will require of our high school graduates (as cited in Maina, 2014). And this needs to happen every day in every class and at all grade levels. If teachers in Myanmar do this in all of their schools, while also stimulating curiosity and imagination, then all students will have the skills they need to get and keep a good job and be a contributing citizen, while our country will have a workforce that can continually produce innovations. An economy based on innovation will be more competitive and successful than any other in the 21st century.

This study contributes in the area of teaching and assessment to would be teachers and school administrators. It also helps in exploring various approaches of assessment in relation to students learning; raising awareness about different paradigms of classroom assessment. This study also hopes to contribute to more empirical knowledge on assessment practices.

Aims of the Study: The main aim of this study is to investigate teachers' classroom assessment practices in Basic Education Schools from Myitkyina Township. The specific objectives are as follows.

1. To examine the teachers' classroom assessment practices
2. To compare the teachers' classroom assessment practices by school and subject.
3. To compare the teachers' classroom assessment practices by teaching experience and position.

METHOD

Samples: The sample for this research was selected from Myitkyina Township in Upper Myanmar by using stratified random sampling technique. The participants were totally 237 teachers from 6 basic education high schools (male = 11 and female = 226). Research Method: In this study, descriptive research design and survey method were used. Instrument: *Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices Questionnaire* was used to evaluate the participants' assessment practices in the classroom. This questionnaire was developed by Zhang, Z. & Burry-Stock, J.A. (1994) and consisted 47 items.

It comprises six subscales. They are Using Paper-Pencil Tests (UPP) (12), Standardized testing, Test Revision, and Instructional Improvement (STRI) (9), Communicating Assessment Results, Ethics, and Grading (COMEG) (10), Using Performance Assessment (UPA) (6), Nonachievement-Based Grading (NG) (5), Ensuring Test Validity and Reliability (ETVR) (5). The scale applied five-point rating-scale. The choices were 1 = not at all used, 2 = seldom use, 3 = used occasionally, 4 = used often, and 5 = used very often. The internal consistency was α = 0.87.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices

According to Table 1, the sample mean (193.22) is larger than the theoretical mean (141). Therefore, it can be said that the teachers from Myitkyina Township possess good assessment practices. Among the subscales, mean percentage of teachers' using performance assessment was highest (88.3%). However, using paper-pencil tests was lowest (72.22%). Therefore, it can be concluded that the teachers rarely used paper-pencil tests than other assessment types. It may be due to the fact that teachers used paper-pencil tests only in chapter end test and final examination and they used alternative assessments such as performance assessment in their regular classes.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices

	Number of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Percentage
Using Paper-Pencil Tests	12	45.33	5.673	72.22%
Standardized Testing, Test Revision and Instructional Improvement	9	37.59	4.853	83.53%
Communicating Assessment Results, Ethics and Grading	10	41.40	4.642	82.8%
Using Performance Assessment	6	26.49	2.975	88.3%
Nonachievement-based Grading	5	20.42	3.914	81.68%
Ensuring Test Validity and Reliability	5	21.98	2.857	87.92%
Overall Assessment Practices	47	193.22	18.583	

Comparisons of Male and Female Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices

To find out gender differences in teachers' assessment practices, descriptive analysis was made. The means and standard deviations of male and female teachers were reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Gender

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Using Paper-Pencil Tests	Male	11	44.45	7.271
	Female	226	45.37	5.600
Standardized Testing, Test Revision and Instructional Improvement	Male	11	36.18	4.579
	Female	226	37.66	4.865
Communicating Assessment Results, Ethics and Grading	Male	11	39.73	3.952
	Female	226	41.48	4.665
Using Performance Assessment	Male	11	24.00	2.966
	Female	226	26.62	2.928
Nonachievement-based Grading	Male	11	18.36	2.541
	Female	226	20.52	3.945
Ensuring Test Validity and Reliability	Male	11	21.64	3.295
	Female	226	22.00	2.841
Overall Assessment Practices	Male	11	184.36	17.750
	Female	226	193.65	18.552

Table 2 also showed that there was slight difference in mean scores by gender in teachers' assessment practices. Again, to find out difference significantly, independent samples *t* test was used. It was reported in Table 3.

Table 3 Independent Samples *t* test Results for Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Gender

Variable	***t***	***df***	***p***
Using Paper-Pencil Tests	-.523	235	.602
Standardized Testing, Test Revision and Instructional Improvement	-.986	235	.325
Communicating Assessment Results, Ethics and Grading	-1.226	235	.221
Using Performance Assessment	-2.891**	235	.004
Nonachievement-based Grading	-1.794*	235	.020
Ensuring Test Validity and Reliability	-.412	235	.681
Overall Assessment Practices	-1.624	235	.106

Note. ** The mean difference is significant at 0.001 level.

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

According to Table 3, it was found that there were significant differences in teachers' using performance assessment and non-achievement-based grading by gender. Therefore, it can be concluded that female teachers better used performance assessment and non-achievement-based grading than male teachers.

Comparison of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Subject

Table 4 showed the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by subject. In assessment practices, mean score of science teachers is highest and that of art teachers is lowest. It may be due to the fact that science has many practical tasks and so many alternative assessments can be applied while art comprises of literatures and so it emphasizes more on traditional assessments. To be clearer, a bar graph is shown in Figure 1.

Table 4 Mean Comparisons of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Subject

Subject	Number	Assessment Practices	
		Mean	Std Deviation
Science	66	196.24	17.08
Art	82	191.44	17.43
Science+Art	89	192.62	20.52

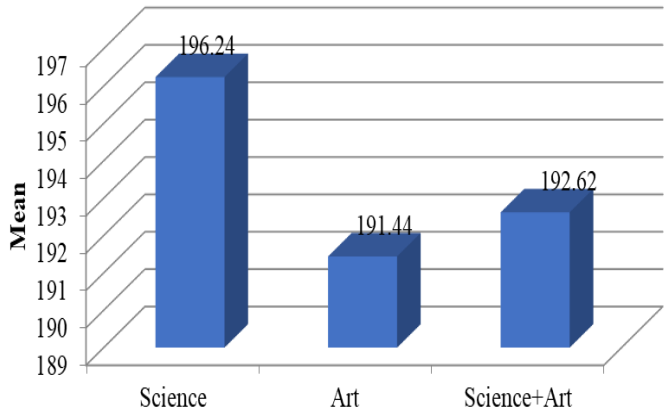

Figure 1 Mean Comparison of Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices by Subject

Comparisons of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Position

Table 5 showed the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by position. In assessment practices, mean score of senior teachers is highest and that of primary teachers is lowest. Therefore, the teachers from high grade classes more follow assessment practices than others. It may be due to the fact that content areas are becoming extensive when the grades become high. To be clearer, a bar graph is shown in Figure 2.

Table 5 Mean Comparisons of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Position

Position	Number	Assessment Practices	
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Primary Teacher	53	192.06	21.27
Junior Teacher	115	193.25	17.71
Senior Teacher	69	194.06	18.04

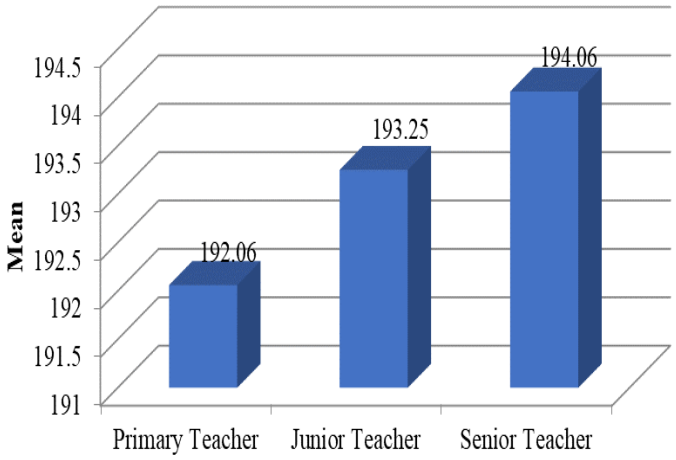

Figure 2 Mean Comparison of Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices by Position

Comparisons of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Service

Table 6 showed the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by teacher's service. In assessment practices, mean score of teachers who have above 30-year service is highest. Therefore, it can be said that teachers who have above 30-year service are more practiced classroom assessments than other teachers. This may be due to the fact that the experienced teachers have a lot of knowledge about classroom assessment and so they can also apply the appropriate assessment types in accordance with the student' ability and the nature of subjects. To be clearer, a bar graph is shown in Figure 3.

Table 6 Mean Comparisons of Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices by Service

Service	Number	Assessment Practices	
		Mean	Std. Deviation
Below 10 Years	35	192.83	18.38
11-20 Years	113	193.73	17.96
21-30 Years	52	191.75	21.33
Above 30 Years	37	194.08	17.11

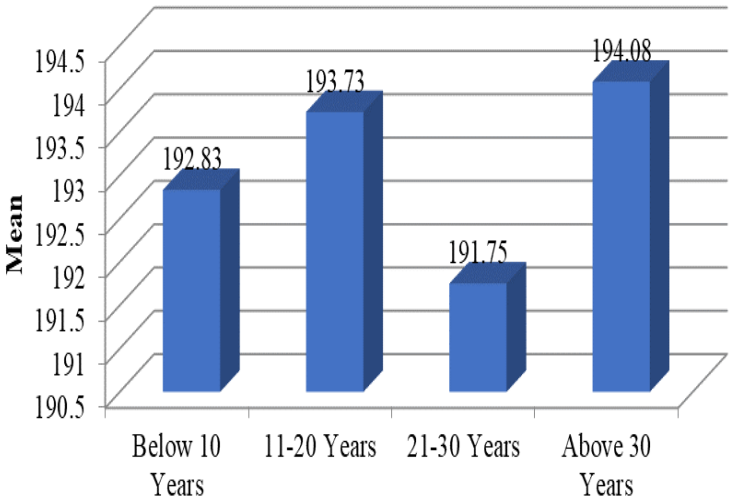

Figure 3 Mean Comparison of Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices by Service

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Classroom assessment embraces a broad spectrum of activities from constructing paper-pencil tests and performance measures, to grading, interpreting standardized test scores, communicating test results, and using assessment results in decision-making. When using paper-pencil tests and performance measures, teachers should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of various assessment methods, and choose appropriate formats to assess different achievement targets (Stiggins, 1992).

The main aim of this study is to investigate teachers' classroom assessment practices in Basic Education Schools from Myitkyina Township. It was found that the teachers from Myitkyina Township possess good assessment practices. The teachers rarely used paper-pencil tests than other assessment types. It may be due to the fact that teachers used paper-pencil tests only in chapter end test and final examination and they used alternative assessments such as performance assessment in their regular classes.

Again, it can be concluded that female teachers better used performance assessment and non-achievement-based grading than male teachers. According to the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by subject, in assessment practices, mean score of science teachers is highest and that of art teachers is lowest. It may be due to the fact that science has many practical tasks and so many alternative assessments can be applied while art comprises of literatures and so it emphasizes more on traditional assessments. In the comparison of teachers' assessment practices by position, the teachers from high grade classes more follow assessment practices than others. It may be due to the fact that content areas are becoming extensive when the grades become high.

When the teachers' assessment practices are compared by teacher's service, it can be seen that teachers who have above 30-year service are more practiced classroom assessments than other teachers. This may be due to the fact that the experienced teachers have a lot of knowledge about classroom assessment and so they can also apply the appropriate assessment types in accordance with the student' ability and the nature of subjects.

Investigations of teachers' assessment practices revealed that teachers were not well prepared to meet the demand of classroom assessment due to inadequate training. Problems were particularly prominent in performance assessment, interpretation of standardized test results, and grading procedures. When using performance measures, many teachers did not define levels of performance or plan scoring procedures before instruction, nor did they record scoring results during assessment. In terms of standardized testing, teachers reported having engaged in teaching test items, increasing test time, giving hints, and changing students' answers (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

Teachers also had trouble interpreting standardized test scores and communicating test results. Many teachers incorporated non-achievement factors such as effort, attitude, and motivation into grades and they often did not apply weights in grading to reflect the differential importance of various assessment components. Despite the aforementioned problems, most teachers believed that they had adequate knowledge of testing and attributed that knowledge to experience and university coursework (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

Therefore, based on the literature and the research findings, the following suggestions would be given:

a) Teachers need to use and practice their own assessment skills in their classroom which were trained and well equipped in their respective teacher trainings.

b) Teaches should be helped and guided by seniors and school administrators to do the assessment practices in accordance with the grade levels and content areas they are required to teach.
c) Township Education Officers, Deputy Township Education Officers, Assistant Township Education Officers, Heads and Deans should continuous monitor to teachers' assessment practices in classroom.
d) Records for teachers' classroom assessments should be maintained.
e) Staff development and knowledge sharing program (eg., lesson study) should be occasionally held.
f) Awareness about changes in grading system should be given.

Therefore, assessment is the feedback mechanism for improving classroom learning. By improving teachers' assessment practices, classroom learning can be improved.

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