



Book Review: *Classroom Assessment for Learning*

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Abstract

This book review analyses how Wang *et al.* (2018), in *Classroom Assessment for Learning*, break away from a teacher-led assessment model and systematically cultivate students' self-assessment skills. Through the transparent sharing of learning objectives, the interaction between scoring rubrics and descriptive feedback, and the application of tools such as self-assessment checklists and portfolios, this book can help students develop the ability to self-monitor and evaluate themselves. Finally, this analysis explores the constraints on the implementation of self-assessment posed by teachers' lack of assessment literacy, students' prior experiences and cognitive understandings, and the high-stakes external examination system.

Subject Areas

Education

Keywords

Classroom Assessment, Assessment for Learning, Self-Assessment

1. Introduction

"Assessment" is frequently associated with teachers' one-way evaluation and grading of students in traditional primary and secondary education classrooms. Students are frequently only passive recipients under this teacher-dominated testing paradigm, cut off from the evaluation process. In addition to depriving students of control over their own learning, this situation easily impedes the growth of their ability to reflect on themselves as autonomous persons. The paradigm of classroom assessment is undergoing a significant revolution as worldwide educational reform moves its emphasis from "how teachers teach" to "how students learn." Specifically, the old "Assessment of Learning" is giving way to the new AFL (As-

essment for Learning). *Classroom Assessment for Learning* (2018), authored by Shaofei Wang, is an important work.

This book systematically explores the issues of classroom assessment in the context of the interaction among learning-centered courses, teaching, and assessment. Although it integrates self-assessment, peer-assessment, and formative evaluation within the framework of AFL (Assessment for Learning), this book review opts to focus on “self-assessment” as the core analytical perspective. This is due to the fact that self-assessment is both the primary mechanism through which formative evaluation helps students attain self-regulated learning and the cognitive precondition for the substantive impacts of peer-assessment and teacher feedback [1]. On this basis, this book review seeks to focus on a central research question: How does this book challenge the traditional paradigm of teacher-led testing and provide an approach to helping students develop self-assessment skills? Centered on this question, this article will provide an in-depth analysis of the book’s core theories and practical strategies.

2. The Prerequisites for Self-Assessment

Before exploring how students develop an ability to assess themselves, we need to understand what forms an objective basis for student self-assessment. If students are unsure about the ultimate goal of their learning, they may not know how to assess themselves. In *Classroom Assessment for Learning*, the authors, Wang Shaofei *et al.*, provide a comprehensive explanation of how teachers can construct explicit classroom learning objectives based on curriculum standards, as well as an analysis of teaching materials and student conditions.

In discussing the setting of learning objectives, the book’s author highlights a prevalent issue in traditional classrooms, which is that learning objectives are often known exclusively by the teacher and not shared with students. Under these conditions, students can only mechanically follow the teacher’s instructions, oblivious of the assessment goals underlying the instructional activities [2].

The lack of knowing learning objectives prohibits students from effectively monitoring their own learning process. In their study on classroom assessment, Rickey *et al.* found that when learning objectives are hidden from students, it is difficult for them to have metacognitive control over the learning process. To overcome this problem, this book promotes the transparency of learning objectives. Teachers can break down broad, abstract curriculum standards into specific, observable, and measurable classroom learning objectives, and then convey these objectives in language that students understand [3].

Andrade confirmed that translating complex disciplinary terminology into specific behavioral descriptions that students can experience and compare is an important step in encouraging students to self-assess. When teachers and students achieve an agreement on learning objectives, students can participate in the evaluation. They can clearly understand the specific requirements underlying the courses, providing the groundwork for future self-assessment [4].

3. Basis and Methods of Self-Assessment

Students can recognize the goal of learning if learning objectives are made clear. However, particular assessment tools and feedback mechanisms are needed to evaluate their present learning status and fill the gap between their current level and the objectives. In their book, Wang Shaofei *et al.* contend that using descriptive feedback and qualitative performance assessment give students practical ways to diagnose their own learning [2]. The fundamental ideas of the worldwide evaluation for promoting learning are quite compatible with this viewpoint. According to AFL. Black, P., & Wiliam, D., classroom assessment should stimulate students' initiative as contributors to their own learning in order to effectively promote learning. To achieve this goal, teachers should transform assessment tools into a shared basis for evaluation between teachers and students [5].

The author explains the creation and use of performance-based assignments and rubrics in this book. Conventional paper-and-pencil exams frequently base their findings on how well or poorly students answer objective questions; this method does not show students the dynamic process of applying knowledge. On the other hand, rubrics clearly divide complicated performance into several evaluation dimensions and several levels of achievement, whereas performance-based assessment challenges students to tackle complex problems in particular circumstances [2]. In his assessment research, Sadler pointed out that in order for students to participate in successful self-evaluation, they need to be aware of both the objectives and what defines excellent performance [6]. According to Wang Shaofei *et al.*, students can grasp the particular evaluation criteria and engage in evidence-based self-reflection during practical application if they are given the opportunity to review and comprehend the rubric prior to starting a task. They can even be organized to use the rubric to analyze their own prior work samples. Students can learn how to self-evaluate through daily classroom interactions and descriptive comments, in addition to organized resources like grading rubrics. Teacher evaluation in traditional classes is frequently restricted to grades. This kind of assessment doesn't offer precise guidance on how to get better [2]. This book highlights the value of descriptive feedback, which provides recommendations for improvement while explicitly identifying the precise gaps between a student's present real performance and the learning objectives. Teachers' descriptive feedback actually acts as a model of evaluative behavior for students when viewed through the perspective of learning transfer.

Hattie and Timperley pointed out that students' self-regulation is the highest level of feedback. Students can receive cognitive scaffolding through descriptive feedback based on evidence, which can convert abstract evaluation criteria into precise diagnostic information. Students have the chance to comprehend and utilize the teacher's evaluation logic when they actively compare and consider these facts against predetermined standards [7]. This allows them to progressively transform external evaluation into internal metacognitive monitoring and use internalized standards to assess their own learning process [1] [8].

4. Tools and Procedures for Self-Assessment

Students need to turn their understanding into regular learning behaviors in the classroom after developing assessment criteria and master assessment techniques. Wang Shaofei *et al.* methodically presented useful strategies for student self-evaluation and peer-assessment in their book. Using these tools gives students a useful means to absorb metacognitive skills and turns self-assessment from an abstract pedagogical notion into a concrete classroom routine. Flavell noted that frequent evaluation experiences are essential to an individual's metacognitive growth. Students can repeat this evaluative experience in their regular classroom activities with the help of the organized self-assessment methods recommended in this book [9].

After establishing assessment criteria and mastering assessment methods, students need to translate understanding into daily learning behaviors in the classroom. In their book, Wang Shaofei *et al.* systematically introduced a variety of practical tools for student self-assessment and peer-assessment. The application of these tools not only transforms self-assessment from an abstract pedagogical concept into a concrete classroom routine but also provides students with a practical pathway to internalize metacognitive skills. Flavell pointed out that an individual's metacognitive development depends on the repeated experience of evaluation [9]. The structured self-assessment tools advocated in this book provide a platform for students to repeat this evaluative experience in their daily classroom activities. The writers concentrate on creating specific tools like "Learning Portfolios" and "Self-Assessment Checklists." Before or during a learning task, teachers usually utilize self-assessment checklists to help students evaluate their progress in relation to a set of particular behavioral indicators. These checklists let students track their cognitive state in real time while they learn by simplifying difficult learning processes into simple steps. According to research by Efklides and Metallidou, systematic self-assessment checklists can greatly improve students' capacity for self-regulated learning by assisting them in quickly recognizing and correcting errors in their learning [10].

Additionally, the book's explanation of the "learning portfolio" gives students practical ways to consider their long-term learning process from a temporal perspective. Students should selectively gather their assignments, tests, and works for a learning portfolio, along with reflective notes about these items. The act of "selection" and "reflection" that students engage in with relation to these results is the fundamental usefulness of this tool, rather than the mere accumulation of learning outcomes. Students are required to use predetermined evaluation criteria to compare their prior work when asked to explain why they selected a specific piece of work to include in their portfolio. This long-term self-assessment encourages students to shift their focus toward long-term "skill development" rather than short-term "gains and losses in scores."

Peer-assessment is seen in this book as a crucial tool for promoting self-evaluation. The author points out that because students' linguistic foundations and cog-

nitive capacities are similar, peer feedback is simpler to comprehend [2]. According to Fernández-Ferrer *et al.*, the assessor in peer-assessment significantly contributes to students' metacognitive development from the perspective of cognitive processing. Even if peer feedback does not immediately transform into self-monitoring, peer-assessment promotes the growth of self-evaluation skills. When students assume the position of evaluators, they are able to apply abstract evaluation criteria to actual actions, which enhances their understanding of task standards and learning objectives [11]. Wang Shaofei *et al.* emphasized the significance of establishing explicit criteria for peer involvement in order to direct students toward evidence-based, constructive mutual support and feedback and to keep peer-assessment from devolving into subjective criticism or superficial praise [2]. By examining their peers' work, considering their own shortcomings, and applying the experience and standards used in evaluating others to themselves, students can create a scaffold for developing internal self-monitoring abilities and eventually internalizing and improving self-assessment skills [11] [12].

5. Practical Obstacles to Self-Assessment

Although this book lays out a clear approach and provides instruments for student self-assessment, the application of this paradigm faces considerable practical challenges in the context of basic education. The authors do not ignore these issues, but rationally pointed out the resistance encountered by the evaluation reform at both the conceptual and technical levels.

Teachers are facing the difficulty of a lack of assessment literacy. Pastore observed that, while teacher education lays a strong emphasis on broad teaching tactics, teachers can struggle to put assessment ideas into practice and lack the skills required for systematic classroom evaluations [13]. The authors of this book also contends that creating a high-quality rubric or constructing a performance-based assignment that actually encourages students' deep thought is a significant challenge for instructors' professional competence. In the absence of ongoing professional collaboration and help from external experts, instructors are likely to reduce these tools to simply forms for filling out to meet inspection requirement, losing sight of the original aim of allowing students to engage in self-assessment [2].

There are individual differences and restrictions in students' prior experiences and cognitive understandings. Students' ability to do good self-evaluations is not inherent. Even when teachers provide checklists and rubrics, students' previous assessment experiences, confidence levels, and comprehension of standards can all have an impact on self-evaluation [14].

At the institutional level, it is limited by the traditional external evaluation system and high-stakes exams. The contemporary educational climate relies significantly on summative standardized assessments. As long as end-of-term scores and acceptance rates are the primary metrics for evaluating school and teacher performance, teachers will struggle to find enough time and motivation to slow down

the pace of their daily instruction and guide students through the process of self-assessment and reflection—a long-term process that yields gradual results. According to Rudner and Schafer, the high stakes and severe pressure of exams make it difficult to apply learning-promoting assessments in the classroom. Consequently, to properly achieve a transition from teacher-led assessment to student self-evaluation, the technical advice in a single book are insufficient; this change is strongly reliant on the systematic reconstruction of the school's assessment culture [15].

6. Conclusion

In summary, *Classroom Assessment for Learning* by Wang Shaofei *et al.* offers a systematic approach to transforming the traditional, teacher-dominated assessment model in the classroom. Through the transparent sharing of learning objectives, the interaction of scoring rubrics and descriptive feedback, and the use of tools like self-assessment checklists and portfolios, this book creates a methodical practice framework that supports the development of students' self-assessment skills. This paradigm clearly outlines the path for the transformation of classroom evaluation towards AFL (Assessment for Learning), even though it still faces obstacles like teachers' inadequate evaluation skills, the limitations imposed by students' prior experiences and cognitive understandings, and the objective restrictions of the external standardized high-stakes examination system during its practical implementation. For the purpose of promoting the student-centered reform of basic education evaluation, this book has significant theoretical and practical reference value.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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