EXPLORING THE ASSESSMENT CULTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION: A CASE OF ST. DOMINIC COLLEGE OF ASIA (SDCA), PHILIPPINES

[1]NILDA W. BALSICAS, [2]MELBERT V. ANIMAS, [3]FLORENCE C. CORPUZ

St. Dominic College of Asia, Bacoor, Philippines

Abstract- This study aims to explore the assessment culture of college teachers . The Assessment Practices Inventory (Zhang & Burry-Stock) was used for this purpose. The inventory was administered to 44 college teachers of St. Dominic College of Asia, Philippines. The syllabi or the weekly learning plan of the teachers were analyzed as to extent of implementation of the assessment activities in the context of OBE. Results showed that teachers' most common assessment practices is assessing group participation. Also, the use of authentic or alternative assessments as direct or indirect assessments is frequently implemented. The use written assessment format remains the major methods in assessing student learning outcomes. Implications include if teachers varied assessment practices perceptions also imply differences in their views about teaching effectiveness.

Keywords- Assessment Culture, Higher Education , Outcomes-Based Education

I. INTRODUCTION

All teachers have the commitment to improve student learning outcomes. In improving student learning outcomes, teacher's classroom assessment has a critical role because it can influence on the quality of teaching and learning, and a powerful point of leverage for change and improvement in education (CHE 2004b, 5 as cited by Scholtz, D. 2016). When student learning outcomes steadily and sustainably seen as great, very good or excellent, one could readily conclude that teachers have effectively implemented the three key areas of curriculum: intended learning outcomes, student learning activities and classroom assessment. Through classroom assessment that status of student learning outcomes could be accurately assessed (Cruickshank D.R. ,Bainer, D. L. & K.K. Metcalf ,2012,p.304) and can provide evaluation of quality instruction and teaching effectiveness. With that, teachers are viewed as the building block that secure better student learning outcomes (Deborah Eyre, 2016) . The recent implementation of the outcomes-based education in our institution predicated series of academic related curiosity for all stakeholders as to its timing, appropriateness, and most importantly how the approach can result in high performance student learning outcomes. According to Spady (1994): "Outcome-Based Education (OBE) means clearly focusing and organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences" . Harden (1999 cited by Kate Cobb, 2015) states that OBE is : "an approach to education in which decisions about the curriculum are driven by the outcomes the students should display by the end of the course and "results orientated thinking" as opposed to "input-based education". As a result, there is a need to shift focused on assessment practices and methods, from input-centered to a more focused student-centered learning assessment. The main theoretical underpinning of the outcomes-based curriculum is constructive alignment in which Biggs (2003) defined as "coherence between assessment, teaching strategies and intended learning outcomes in an educational programme (McMahon &Thakore 2006 , cited by Kate Cobb, 2015). Constructive alignment model demonstrated the alignment of the intended learning outcomes (ILO), learning activities, and the assessment methods. In this model, Biggs emphasized a meaningful assessment of student learning outcomes because as Biggs put it "students' learn what they think they will be tested on". With classroom assessment taking its place as a major component in the educational process, the quality of teaching and learning relies in part on teachers' assessment skills (Daniel & King, 1998). At SDCA, student learning outcomes are delivered in the perspectives of constructive alignment. Depending on the program, there is an emphasis in research activities, practical work including laboratory techniques, clinical and professional skills. In this study, assessment culture is operationally described as the assessment practices frequently used by the St. Dominic College of Asia (SDCA) college teachers and their perceptions towards level of skills to those practices . The main aim of this study is to explore the assessment culture of College teachers . Specifically, the objectives are to examine assessment practices of college teachers, compare assessment practices of teachers according to gender and teaching preparations , and to examine the teachers' assessment practices implementation. The research questions of the study include: What are the common assessment practices of College teachers? ; What is the level of teachers' frequency on use of assessment Practices and perception towards their level of skills in using the assessment practices

according to gender and according to teacher preparation; Is there significant relationship between teachers' frequency on the use of assessment Practices and perceptions toward level of skills in using the assessment practices ?, and How do college teachers implement assessment methods in the context of OBE? The study is similar to Zhang & Burry-Stock (2003) studies particularly in the use of the instrument but differ in the sampling location and in the context of OBE. The study is important to the College as it could be the basis of profiling the assessment practices of teachers in the OBE context.

Literature Review and Studies

Being committed to improve student learning outcomes and to promote culture of teaching quality, teachers should be allowed to evaluate their assessment practices and skills accordingly. An academic institution should encourage teachers to develop the assessment culture so student learning outcomes and achievement can be diagnosed and assessed accurately as possible (Eyre, Deborah, 2016). The succeeding literature review and studies are bases of the premises of the study.

On Assessment

Definition about and on assessment comes in different forms but remain steadfast to determining student learning outcomes. These include : Assessment is the process of gathering evidences of students' performance over a period of time to determine learning and mastery of skills (Navarro, Rosita L, Rosita G. Santos, and Brenda B. Corpuz, 2017, p. 13-14) and about students' performances on assessment tasks, either as a group or individually, using a wide range of assessment methods, to determine the extent to which students are achieving the target instructional outcomes (Gallagher, 1998; Gronlund, 1998 cited by Hussain Alkharusi, 2011) and using them in making educational decisions (Cruickshank et al, 2012, Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

In the institution, the use of OBE created a milieu of wider range of assessment techniques and methods. As what Knight, Peter T. (2002) contends that with the use of varied assessments student learning outcomes and performance tasks should be judged by different methods as well.

Moreover, assessment in higher education impacts on student learning in various ways. The ways in which teachers view assessment influence their assessment practices and how they relate these practices to the teaching and learning process (Eyre, p79, 2016, Flectcher et al, 2012; Samuelowicz and BaiSamuelowicz and Bain, 2002) which result in various implications for student learning. Moreover, the ways teachers assessed indicate the quality of teaching and learning (Daniel & King, 1998) and more likely to help teachers improve student performance. Effective assessment requires that teachers collect and synthesize as much as accurate information as possible from as many sources as possible (Ardovino, Hollingswoth, &Ybarra, 2000). Increasingly, teachers develop and use assessment systems that incorporate multiples sources of data over time-. Often applying the principles of backward design , assessment systems thoughtfully guide collection of data in ways that are linked across assessments and that are integrated with curriculum and instruction. By carefully coordinating these three elements, assessment information and instructional decisions are more likely to help students and teachers improve their performance (Cruickshank et al ,2012) pp. 305-306).

On classroom assessment

Most college teachers believed that they have knowledge in testing (Gullikson, 1984; Wise, Lukin, & Roos, 1991 as cited by Zhang et al, 2003). With teachers devoting approximately 33% of their professional time assessing students in their classrooms (Stiggins, 1991 cited by Frey and Schimtt, 2010), and with the range of multiple assessment techniques at hand, it becomes imperative that teachers' assessment should use multiple sources data for the entire period of the semester. Furthermore, studies showed that assessment of students within OBE systems relies on performance assessments that differ from traditional methods of assessment. Performance assessments require the learner to demonstrate an outcome and apply their knowledge and skills to a particular context. Traditional assessment formats are therefore insufficient within OBE and novel formats are needed to assess student performance even though they often rely on scant evidence to support their use (Kate Cobb, 2015, Marzano, 1994), hence this study is conducted.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study explored the assessment culture of the college teachers in the context of outcomes-based education. It employed a cross-sectional survey design. A survey administered in only one occasion or group at a given point in time is a cross-sectional study (Xegidis, Bonnie, Robert Weinbach& Laura Myers, 2012, p.126). The College started implementing outcomes-based education (OBE) approach for the past two years. Last academic year, 2016-2017 the College promoted the use of constructive alignment in all curriculum in consonance with the OBE approach. The sample of this study consists of 44 college teachers at St. Dominic College of Asia teaching three categories of teaching preparations: 16 from the Management field; 17 from the Education ; 11 from Allied health, a total of 44 participants. Teacher-participants were given a modified questionnaire on Assessment Practices Inventory by Zhicheng Zhang and Judith A. Burry-Stock Classroom (2003). Through email, the authors

have approved the use of the instrument for this study. The questionnaire contains 67-test items on Assessment Practices using a Likert Scale.

We also examined the syllabi and the Course –weekly learning plan of the participants to find out if the assessment practices deployment is in consonance with the constructive alignment perspectives. Assessment tasks such as written examination, presentation, are used as either direct or indirect assessment. Ranking was used in the analysis of the data. Means and standards deviations were determined to describe the level of skills of male and female college teachers in their perceptions of the Assessment Practices . Correlation approach was used to find out if there is a significant relationship that existed between the frequency on the use of the assessment practices and the self rating of the teachers to the same assessment practices .

Discussion, Conclusion,and Implications.

1) What are the common assessment practices of College teachers?

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviation of Teachers Assessment Practices (Frequency of use and Perceived skills)

	Frequency on the use of AP			Perceived AP		
Assessment Practices /skills Statements	Means	SD	Description	Means	SD	Description
Choosing appropriate assessment methods for instructional decisions	4.209302326	0.74188112	UVO	3.863636	0.765261	skilled
Assessing group class participation.	4.162790698	0.753728275	UVO	4.113636	0.868463	Very skilled
Total Average	3.831309	0.924672	Used often	3.770353	0.961509	skilled

*Legend 1: Used very often (UVO) (4.1-5.0); used often(3.1-4.0); used occasionally (2.1- 3.0); seldom used (1.1.- 2.00) ; not at all used(.1- 1.0) ;

*Legend 2: (4.1-5.0) very skilled ; (3.1-4.0) skilled ; (2.1- 3.0) Somewhat skilled; (1.1.- 2.0) A little skilled ; (0.1- 1.0) Not at all skilled

Based on Table 1, results showed that teachers have rated their assessment practices and skills and perceived assessment skills "used often" (Means 3.831309, SD -0.924672, "skilled" (Means 3.770353 , SD-0.961509), respectively. Moreover, Table 1 shows that "used very often " assessment practice and the perceived " very skilled" assessment skills were: Evaluating oral questions from students, Assessing group class participation, and Writing essay questions. The finding shows that despite the implementation of outcomes-based education traditional methods of assessment are predominantly used by college teachers whereas practices of assessment that require authentic and performance tasks involvement of teachers and students were not " used very often" and also perceived by teachers as :very skilled". This finding concurs with Ndalichako (2004) 's study which revealed that the predominant forms of assessment that were used frequently by teachers included class exercises, tests and quizzes and homework.

2) What is the level of teachers' frequency on use of assessment Practices and perception towards their level of skills in using the assessment practices according to gender?

Table 2A. Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Practices according to gender .

Items	Female					Male			
	Means	SD	Means	SD					
Administering announced quizzes	4.155556	0.937595	4.142857	0.654654	Evaluating oral questions from students	4.15625	0.749603	4.173913	0.716822
Developing assessments based on clearly defined course objectives	4.166667	0.923548	4.190476	0.813575	Assessing students through observation	4.28125	0.853564	4.130435	0.757049
Writing essay question	4.222222	0.646762	4.147619	0.669043	Using concept mapping to assess student learning.	4.1875	0.774597	4.217391	0.951388

Assessing group hands-on activities.	4.277778	0.669113	4.147619	0.669043	Assessing individual class participation.	4.28125	0.740013	4.173913	0.949308
					Assessing group class participation.	4.1875	0.740013	4.086957	0.949308
					Assessing individual hands-on activities.	4.25	0.669043	4.26087	0.864312
					Using norm-referenced grading model	4.375	0.86465	4.130435	0.919701
					Using norm-referenced grading model	4.375	0.86465	4.130435	0.919701
					Incorporating classroom behavior in the calculation of grades	4.28125	0.740013	4.26087	0.751809
Average	3.840796 "Used often"	0.894642	3.760483 "skilled"	0.835438	Average	3.780784 , "Used often"	0.835438	3.753407 "skilled"	0.916276

*Legend- Used very often (4.1-5.0);used often(3.1-4.0); used occasionally (2.1- 3.0);seldom used (1.1.-2.00) ; not at all used(.1- 1.0) * Legend: (4.1-5.0) very skilled ; (3.1-4.0) skilled ; (2.1- 3.0) Somewhat skilled; (1.1.- 2.0) A little skilled ; (0.1- 1.0) Not at all skilled

Female respondents who used frequently the assessment practices and perceived assessment practices rated overall "used often" and "skilled " (Means- 3.840796, SD -0.894642); (Means-3.760483, SD -0.835438), respectively. Data also showed that female teachers "used very often" and perceived as "very skilled" to some assessment practices which include: Assessing students through observation Using a table of specifications to plan assessments, Evaluating oral questions from students Developing assessments based on clearly defined course objectives Matching assessments with instruction.

Male Respondents who use frequently the assessment practices and perceived assessment skills rated overall "used often" and "skilled" (Means-3.780784,SD 0.83543); (Means-3.753407, SD -0.0.916276), respectively. Data also showed that male teachers "used very often" and perceived as "very skilled" to some assessment practices which include: Evaluating oral questions from students; Assessing students through observation; Using concept mapping to assess student learning ;Assessing individual class participation, Assessing individual hands-on activities, Using norm-referenced grading model Incorporating attendance in the calculation of grades. While the results of the study are not statistically measured, it is similar to the result of the study conducted by Ndalichako (2015) and Balsicas, N. Makalintal R. and M.L. Joson (2017) which showed that there is a significant difference in teachers' perception of assessment practices according to gender .

3) What is the level of teachers' frequency on use of assessment Practices and perception towards their level of skills in using the assessment practices according to teaching preparations?

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Frequency on Use of the Assessment Practices and Self-perception of the Assessment Practices Skills according to teaching preparations

Management		Education		Allied Health		Management		Education		Allied Health	
Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD	Means	SD
3.744	0.992	3.784	0.827	3.996	0.877	3.773	1.029	3.644	0.840	4.016	0.830
3563	0007	0221	368	269	329	486	105	279	538	584	538
Used Often		Used often		Used often		Skilled		Skilled		Skilled	
Frequency on the use of assessment practices and skills						Self-perception of assessment practices and skills					

Based on Table 3, results showed that teachers' frequency on use of the assessment practices and perception to the assessment practices skills were similar in descriptions, that is both "used often" and "skilled". This findings demonstrated that there is still a need to improve assessment practices of college teachers. The result supplemented the observation that assessment activities particularly to " think beyond their immediate classroom contexts and to consider whether and how assessments is preparing students for a lifetime of learning and work" (Boud (2007) remain a challenge for college teachers (cited by Sherran Clarence, Lynn Quinn and Jo-Anne Vorster, 2015).

4) Is there significant relationship between teachers' frequency on use of assessment Practices and perception toward their level of skills in using the assessment practices ?

Table 4. Correlation between teachers' frequency on use of assessment Practices and perception towards their level of skills in using the assessment practices

Correlations

		MEAN	Means
MEAN	Pearson Correlation	1	.115
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.464
	N	44	43
Means	Pearson Correlation	.115	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.464	
	N	43	43

Based on Table 4 , results showed that teachers' frequency on use of the assessment Practices and skills and Self-perception of the Assessment Practices Skills do not have significant relationship (r-.115, $p<.05$). This indicates that the frequency on the use of assessment practices is not associated with the self - perceived skills to assessment practices . College teachers do not attribute their level of assessment skills to the frequency of usage; it could mean that assessment activities vary in ways of implementation. This result is similar to the statement that "lecturers often plan the curriculum for a course, then devise the teaching and learning activities, and then the assessment (Sherran C et al , 2015) and the ways in which teachers view assessment influence their assessment practices and how they relate these practices to the teaching and learning process (Eyre, p79, 2016, Flectcher et al, 2012; Samuelowicz and BaiSamuelowicz and Bain, 2002).

5) How do college teachers implement assessment methods in the context of OBE?

Table 5. Sample Assessment Activities of College Teachers at St. Dominic College of Asia as reflected in the Weekly Learning Plan/Syllabi

	Prelim	Midterm	Final
Direct Assessment	Written Periodic Exam using Multiple-Choice test and essay	Written Periodic Exam using Multiple-Choice test and essay	Written Periodic Exam using Multiple Choice test and essay Assessment and alternative assessment
Indirect Assessment	Assignment, Seatwork, Written Quiz, Long Test, Group Activity, Graded Recitation, .laboratory work	Assignment, Seatwork, Written Quiz, Long Test, Group Activity, Guided Reporting, laboratory work	Assignment, Seatwork, Written Quiz, Long Test, Group Activity, Guided Reporting, case analysis presentation , reporting, group presentations, laboratory work

The weekly learning plans of the participants were examined and content analyzed as to how the assessment methods were implemented in the context of OBE. Out of 44 weekly learning plans, the most common assessment method for direct assessment was the use periodic summative while for indirect assessment , the most common (in ranking order) include: assignments, seatwork, written quiz, long test, group activity, etc. The results showed that while there is direct alignment of the intended learning outcomes (topic/chapter) to the teaching-learning activities and assessment methods , there is an apparent gradual adoption of alternative or authentic assessment of students such a such as group performance presentation, group research presentations, portfolio in the final period of the term. Most notable is that written examinations or assessment activities related to pencil and paper format remains the major requirement in passing the course. Said results support the statement that the most common form of classroom assessment remains the teacher-developed assessment (Brookhart, 2004 as cited by Cruickshank D.R. ,Bainer, D. L. & K.K. Metcalf ,2012 p.316) . Said results are similar to what Gullickson found that using teacher-made objectively scored traditional paper-and-pencil tests was the most common method used across all levels and subjects taught.(cited by Bruce B. Frey and Vicki L. Schmitt(2010)

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

While the most common assessment practices of College teachers is assessing group participation, college teachers implement and viewed assessment practices in many ways: they used often the various assessment practices but remain prudent towards perceived skills in various assessment practices. Gender and teaching preparations do not influence their assessment practices.

It could be interesting to explore whether revealed difference in the use of assessment practices and perceptions towards level of skills in assessment practices also imply differences in their views about teaching effectiveness in attainment of student learning outcomes. Moreover, the use of authentic or alternative assessments as part of direct and indirect assessments is frequently implemented. It means that college teachers are increasingly aware of the need to focus on alternative means of assessing students that would “directly examine performance on worthy intellectual tasks” (Wiggins, 1990, p. 1), validly measure important classroom objectives, and use assessment to promote learning (cited by Frey and Schimtt, 2010) The use written assessment format remains the major methods in assessing student learning outcomes. It could be interesting to explore further whether the current assessment methods are able to guide through the students into attaining the course learnings. As Biggs(2003) put it “concept of constructive alignment is useful for reminding curriculum/course designers of the need for coherence between all the elements of the curriculum (Biggs 1999; Biggs and Tang2011). In an aligned system, the assessment methods should be designed in a way that students will be guided into attaining the course outcomes (Sherran C et al (eds) , 2015).

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