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CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS: TEACHERS' VOICE TOWARD THE PRINCIPLE OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

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Abstract

Learning assessments can serve two purposes, formative and summative. The first is commonly associated to assessment for learning while the latter is aggregated as assessment of learning. However, formative assessment has often played second fiddle to summative assessment. While there have been several studies which proved the significant effect of formative assessments to increase student achievement in learning, not many teachers do practice formative assessments due some reason. This study aims to discover English teachers' experiences regarding formative assessment so as to identify key problems and challenges they face in implementing. This research employed qualitative design in which deep exploration of the phenomenon was conducted. The study revealed that teachers' main constraints lay on, insufficient knowledge of formative assessments, time management, and the absence of formal guidance from the authority.

Keywords: Constraints, Formative Assessment, Assessment For Learning

INTRODUCTION

In teaching and learning process, classroom assessment plays an important role as one of the crucial obligation for the teachers. It is regarded as inseparable aspect in getting the progress of teaching and learning to students. An assessment in learning is also considered as a tool for gathering useful information about teaching and learning through an orderly process of inquiry based on a set purpose that effectively informs practice and decisions (Hasim & Tunku Mohtar, 2013). Ordinary teachers spend up to one-half of the classroom time assessing and evaluating students' learning (Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2010).

Teachers must assess their students to find out the feedback on students' understanding on the material given on that time. As stated by Singh (2017) that teachers assess student learning to obtain feedback about students' understanding of the knowledge, skills and content taught and thus, to be able to identify their students' weaknesses and strengths. The literature on classroom assessment has shown that the content domain in which lecturers/teachers are required to develop the assessment skill would encourage educators to focus on the process as well as the products of learning, and to move away from a reliance on single-test scores towards assessment that seeks to capture a variety of abilities and outcomes (Sambell, McDowell,

& Brown, 1997). It means that the assessments done by the teacher is expected to give the record on how well the students absorb the knowledge that the teacher is trying to transfer.

Schools in Indonesia or where else in the world commonly carry out educational assessments in terms of summative tests and examinations. The aim of summative assessment is to measure what students have learnt at the end of a unit, to promote students, to ensure that they have met the required standards on the way to earning certification for school completion or to enter certain occupations, or even as a method to select students for entry in further education ((OECD/CERI, 2005). This then leads the teacher to accept the principle "testing for learning" as their teaching assessment. Hasim (2018) also says that Conventionally, largely perhaps for logistical reasons, there has been an emphasis on *a posteriori* assessment of students learning by such means as tests and examinations.

Apart from the practice of testing in educational assessment, during the teaching teachers need to ascertain that their students have really understood the given materials. The type of assessments that functions to gather evidence of students learning and providing feedback to students and adjusting instructional strategies to enhance achievement is formative assessment (MacMillan, 2014). Formative assessment (hence in this article abbreviated as FA) can be used to improve learning, to generate insights on educational issues, to promote continuous evaluation and to strengthen programs and organizations (Mathison, 2010). According to William (2011), formative assessment provides information about the learning process that teachers can use for instructional decisions and students can use in improving their performance, which motivates students. To add, Boston (2012) states that formative assessment helps students believe that everyone can learn and achieve positive results in their studies. Formative assessment has also features that affect students on psychological and emotional levels giving them opportunity to avoid unwillingness and discouragement in learning (Akhmedina, 2017). In other words, formative assessment which has been defined as assessment for learning can give many benefits for students' learning improvement. In formative assessments, students will not just focus on the grade or score they will achieve. In formative assessment, students will take responsibility on their own learning. As stated by Popham (2014) mentions that formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of students' status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their learning tactics. It means that the students will have a chance to plan what they want to do according to their teacher's instructions and recommendations.
Regarding the benefit and importance of formative assessments, teachers should consider implementing this kind of assessment regularly to get the best result of students' learning. In fact, based on the survey gained by the writer, it is found that teachers face some difficulties in implementing formative assessments in their classroom. This condition then leads the writer to investigate what the main reasons why the teachers do not implement formative assessment in their classroom.

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METHODOLOGY

This study applied a survey and qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), the qualitative method offers greater opportunities for conducting exploratory and descriptive research that uses the context and setting to search for a deeper understanding of the person being studied. This means that qualitative study brings an opportunity to gain the data deeper through certain ways. All participants were 25 English teachers of Junior High Schools in Semarang, Indonesia. Questionnaires and in depth-interview were given to the participants to get the main data about constraints in implementing formative assessments in their classroom.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The result of this study was divided into two main data. They were about teachers' understanding on formative assessments (including their perception and how often they implemented formative assessments) and their constraints in implementing formative assessments in the classroom.

1. Teachers' Perception on Formative Assessments.

   Questionnaires were given to gain the data about teachers' perception on formative assessment. According to the result of questionnaires, the teachers actually had positive attitude towards the implementation. It was proven from their understanding which is good. On the other hand, even they said that they had understood well on formative assessment, they mentioned that they rarely implemented formative assessment.

   a. Teachers' Understanding on Formative assessment (FA)

      The figure 1 below showed that basically teachers had good understanding on FA. 17 teachers (68%) had mentioned that they really understood FA well. Thus, 4 teachers (16%) said that they understood FA and the rest 4 teachers (16%) also mentioned that they did not understand FA.

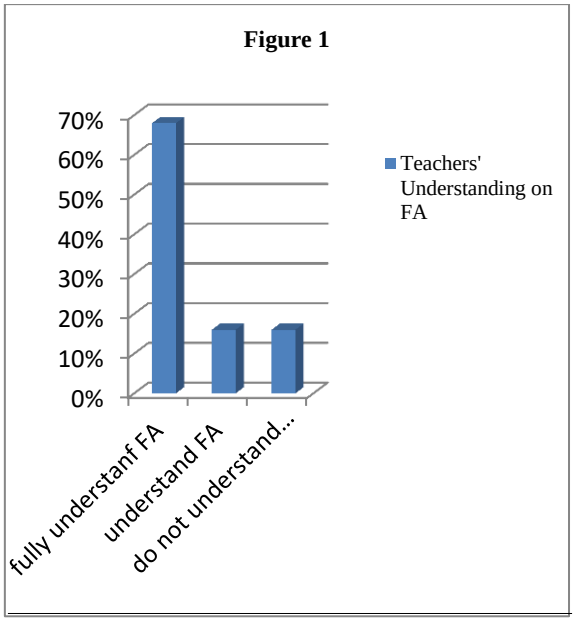

Figure 1
Teachers' Understanding on FA

The data of figure 1 had proved that teachers actually had known about formative assessments. This data was supported by their statement in interview as stated below:

Teacher 3: *Ya, I have known about formative assessment well since I was post graduate student. It is interesting actually.*

Teacher 6: *Sure, I understand FA. It is an assessment that can help us as teacher to renew the*

teaching and learning process.

Teacher11: *Yes, I understand completely on formative assessment.*

Teacher16: *Of course, I understand formative assessment. I also implement it in my classroom. I am good in implementing formative assessment.*

b. Teachers' Perception on Formative Assessment

The next data was about the teachers' perception on formative assessment which can be seen on the figure 2 below.

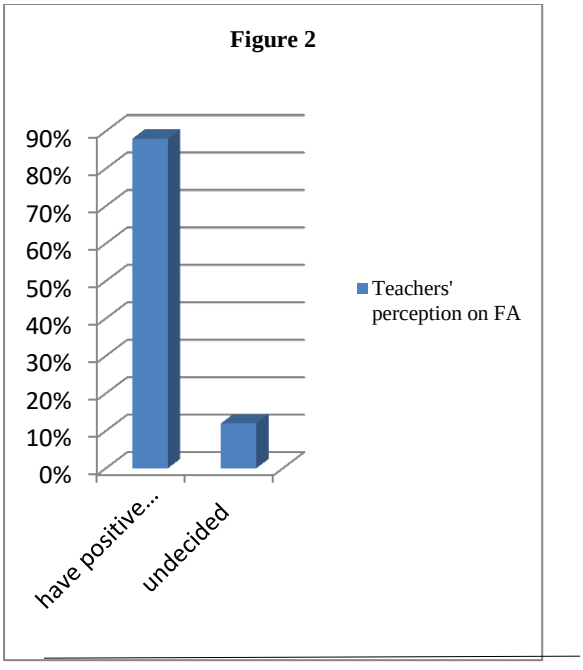

Figure 2
Teachers' Perception on Formative Assessment

Figure 2 above proved that teachers actually had positive attitude toward formative assessment. They believed that formative assessment can give benefit to their students. To add, they also mentioned that formative assessment can give feedback to them on the improvement of their students learning.

c. Frequencies in Implementing Formative Assessment.

the previous data had shown us that teachers had understood well on formative assessments, meanwhile they mentioned that they mostly did not implement formative assessment.

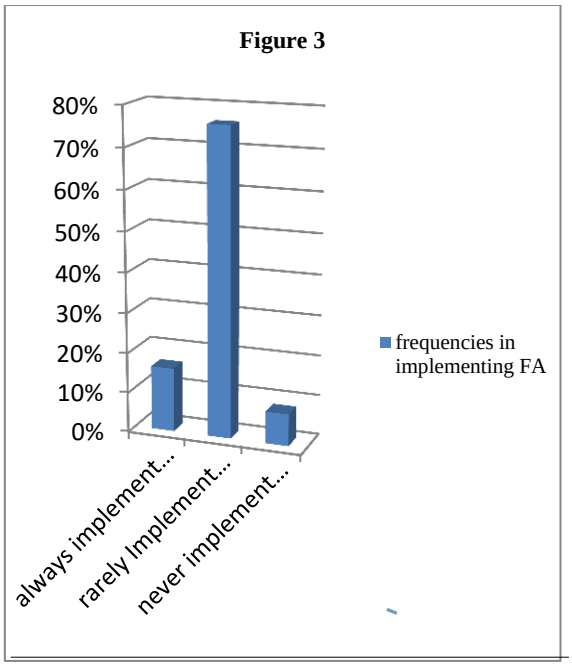

Figure 3
Frequencies in Implementing FA in the Classroom

The data above showed that most teachers rarely implement FA (76%) even they had understood well on FA. Then 16% of the teachers said that they always implemented FA in their English classroom. Meanwhile, there were 8% of the teachers said that they never

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implemented FA as far as they taught English in the classroom. This data of figure 3 was also proved by the result of interview as stated below.

Teacher 2 : *I rarely use formative assessment in my class. I don't want to be busy in preparing the class by using FA.*

Teacher 13: *I seldom implement FA in my English class. I don't really understand it.*

Teacher 14: *I am afraid in using FA in the class. I understand it actually. I have read some references but don't know why I am afraid I make mistake so I rarely implement FA. Once I implemented FA, but it was guided by my colleague who is good in implementing FA.*

Teacher 21: *(laughing) he..he.. I am so sy that I never implement FA in the class. I am lack of idea of that.*

Teacher 22: *Ya, I rarely implement it. It needs preparation right? I have so many other schedule so I almost implement it. But actually I ever implemented last semester*.

2. Constraints Faced by the Teachers in Implementing Formative Assessment in English Classroom

The teachers were also asked about the constraints that they face in implementing formative assessments. There were three reasons considered as their obstacles such as their insufficient knowledge of formative assessments, time management, and lack of guidelines of formative assessment.

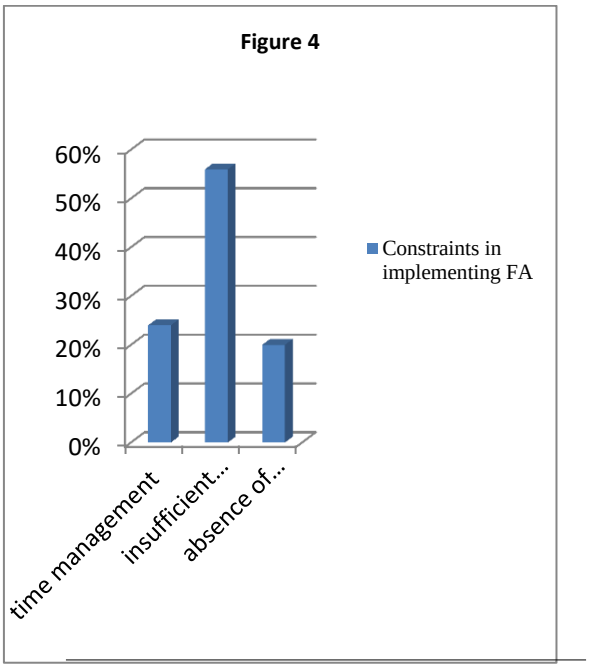

Figure 4
Teachers' Constraints in Implementing FA

The figure 4 above told us that the main reason of why teachers rarely implement FA was their insufficient knowledge of FA (56% of the teachers). Even they had said that they understood well but they thought they needed more knowledge on it. Many teachers rely a lot on summative assessment in the classroom with little emphases on formative assessment. This is thought to result

from teacher beliefs which are consistent with principles of scientific measurement; they believe that assessment should be uniform in order to ensure fairness. For this reason they see assessment as official and divorced from the process of teaching and learning. With large classrooms, new or inexperienced teachers are more concerned with classroom management issues than trying out strategies that will help students learn.

The second constraint was about time management of the teachers. With large classrooms, new or inexperienced teachers are more concerned with classroom management issues than trying out strategies that will help students learn. 6 teachers (24%) from 25 teachers mentioned that they had to finish all materials on time. Thus, they have other obligations to do as teachers. The condition led them to keep conveying the material without thinking the students' learning process. Moreover, they said that formative assessment was time-consuming so they thought they would waste the time of teaching and learning.

The last constraint was about the absence of clear guidelines on formative assessment. One of the constraints is due to the absence of formal training. Training is usually for summative assessment, in particular that for final exam. Not much reference is exposed to then relating to the implementation of. 5 teachers (20%) agreed with this reason.

CONCLUSIONS

Referring to the results of this study, it can be summed up that basically teachers have good understanding on FA. Besides, they also have positive attitude toward formative assessments though most of them were proved not having implemented it in their classroom.

Constraints in implementing the FA were identified in three factors. The first is on the insufficient knowledge of FA. Then followed by the time management factor, and the absence of formal guidance of FA. The success of implementing the FA depends solely on the teachers' willing to move from the comfort zone while the ministry of education or other agencies should facilitate teachers with training on FA and provide fixed and clear guidelines for FA.

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