Learning-oriented Assessment (LOA): Strengthening the link between learning, teaching and assessment

Coreen Docherty
4th CBLA SIG Symposium
Nicosia 2013
Aims

• Functions of assessment
• Traditional approach to defining assessment practices
• Learning orientated assessment (LOA)
  • Definition of LOA
  • Model of LOA
  • Implications of LOA on teacher education
Assessment in education

Assessment operates on *multiple levels* in educational contexts for different purposes and takes many different forms

“Assessment has to serve *double duty*”
(Boud 2000:159)
Wider educational milieu: socio-cultural, socio-economic, political factors

National or regional language education policies

School’s education goals

Learning environment
Purposes of assessment

• Measuring achievement (exams results/grades as proof of individual/group achievement, certification)

• Providing feedback to learners and teachers (assessment for/as learning)

• Public accountability (evidence of meeting targets, proof of value for money, usefulness of scheme/programme)

• Communicating ‘what we value’ (Boud 2000)
Multiple functions of assessment

“Every act of assessment we devise or have a role in implementing has more than one purpose. If we do not pay attention to these multiple purposes we are in danger of inadvertently sabotaging one or more of them” (Boud 2000:159)
Traditional distinction to account for different purposes of assessment

Formative

A kind of purpose

(e.g. Bennett 2011, Bloom 1969, Newton 2007)

Summative

A kind of judgement
A kind of purpose, determining what comes next

A kind of judgement on what has gone before

(e.g. Bennett 2011, Bloom 1969, Newton 2007)
Oversimplification of concepts
- Often use summative assessment formatively and vice versa

Imprecise terms
- planned/unplanned (e.g. Ellis 2003)
- Instrument/process (e.g. Bennett 2011)

Engendering confusion
Strengthening the link between learning, teaching and assessment

Carless (2009:80) “for all assessments whether predominantly summative or formative in function a key aim is to promote productive student learning.”
Whatever form the assessment takes ....

Classroom-based assessment ... or ... large-scale standardised assessment
Classroom-based assessment .... or ...

...large-scale standardised assessment

Provide evidence/feedback

Support learning = Learning oriented assessment
Defining LOA

Purpura (2004:236): “involves the collection and interpretation of evidence about performance so that judgements can be made about further language development”

... to promote learning
Learning-oriented Assessment

• captures the centrality of learning within assessment (not an afterthought)

• challenges the traditional view that exams are external, summative
Model of LOA

Model encompasses:

• the *macro level* – framing educational goals and evaluating outcomes (policy context)

• the *micro level* – individual learning interactions which take place within and outside of the classroom (learning environment)
Model of LOA

Macro level (setting and monitoring targets)

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

- C2: Proficient user
- C1: Independent user
- B2: Upper intermediate user
- B1: Intermediate user
- A2: Upper beginner
- A1: Beginner

Learning objectives

Course

Task

Micro level (materials, classroom practice)

Feedback & modify learning objectives

Record

Structured record

Informal record

Whole group, subgroups, individual characteristics

Language activity

External exam

Observation / evidence gathering

Interpretation

Monitoring of performance

Teacher decision-making

Record of achievement

Structured record

Whole group, subgroups, individual characteristics

© UCLES 2013
Key features

LOA relies on a systematic approach to assessment:

- Quality/appropriacy of evidence gathered
- Quality/appropriacy of interpretation made
- Appropriacy of feedback/modifications to instruction
- Alignment between external measures and classroom-based assessment
Aligning the quantitative with the qualitative i.e. linking testing and teaching expertise

Skills profile

Individualisation: the primary domain of the teacher
Implications of LOA for teacher training

• Teacher knowledge of and attitudes toward assessment
  • understanding validity and reliability within a classroom context
  • Assessment ≠ testing
• Knowledge of SLA
• Commitment to professional development
Benefits of LOA

**Teachers**
- participant in the assessment process
- clear evidence of progress towards learning objectives

**Learners**
- work at right level
- receive relevant and timely feedback
- become independent learners

**Schools & parents**
- monitor progress towards targets
- valid, reliable and recognised certification
Further reading


