

USING ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING THEORIES TO SUPPORT 'ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING' PRACTICES

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Abstract

This paper is contextualised within current discourses of learner and learning-centeredness, student voice and agency, empowerment, and independence of thought and actions. Within these parameters, our discourses of assessment and learning require specific engagement with inclusive, proactive and active students.

Much research over the past two decades has focused on examining practices into how best we might support students' learning through assessment. There has been less focus on examining learning and assessment theories in relation to how each of these supports principles and practices. Fewer still are explorations of how theories in assessment and learning align with empirical research in order to provide a coherent whole.

'Assessment for Learning' has had an eventful journey. It has moved from being a desire by a group of academics to harness the power of assessment to the service of learning within the Assessment Reform Group and become international property to support student learning of all ages.

This is a conceptual paper which begins with the principles of Assessment for Learning and evaluates how both learning and assessment theories can support and sustain it. The theoretical rationale is then coordinated to good practices of student inclusion in learning, but particularly in inclusion in assessment and how these can contribute to our understanding of our practices in order to improve them further.

Additionally, this paper argues that linguistically and practically, the dichotomy of assessment of learning versus assessment for learning is not only unhelpful but creates a destructive separation of processes and procedures. This can be evidenced by examining possible self-assessment processes and procedures and ensuring that learners are agentic in understanding and examining assessments for certification which also serve as an efficient means to evaluate and support learning at the same time. Understanding and evaluating how and why work is of the required standard for certification should and must be a learning and developmental experience which is shared by learners with tutors. Grades and grading should also support students' shared understandings with their peers and tutors so that assessment and learning can be kindled spirits and dialogic and productive processes.

Keywords: Empowerment, Inclusive, Proactive, Empirical Research, Self assessment,
