Ctlls – the principles and practices of assessment assignment

Assessment is a vital element in the learning process to aid both the teacher and learner's understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. It evaluates if learning has taken place and helps to aid teacher's planning to ensure that the student meets the learning objectives. Teachers carry out assessment for a multitude of reasons. Data is required by managers and the institution for which they work, and ultimately can affect funding levels. Students themselves often desire a grade to understand how they are progressing in class compared to their peers.

For many it is motivational, although for mom this can have the opposite effect. This is why detailed and structured feedback is so important, as it can be motivational and celebrate achievements, even if they are limited. Assessment is critical because as Scales comments, " Without some form of assessment it would be impossible to ascertain whether progress has been made by all or Just some of our learners. " (2008, p. 176) There are five main purposes of assessment: initial assessment; diagnostic assessment; formative assessment; assumptive assessment; positive assessment.

The initial assessment happens before a course even begins as it includes guidance urine enrolment; it looks at prior learning and skills and helps to show what a learner may be capable of, as well as their current level of ability in the chosen subject. It is a chance for the learner to showcase their abilities and express their future career goals. It can identify that a particular course is unsuitable for the learner, which is important to understand before the course begins to ensure a positive experience for the learner and to prevent withdrawals, which affects the institution's success rates.

All students enrolling on a vocational course at College are required to work towards Level 2 qualification in Functional Skills English, which is the subject that I teach. As part of the initial assessment process they have to sit a short literacy paper which gauges what level of diagnostic assessment will be most suitable for them to complete at the start of term. As part of my initial assessment process with new students I like to ask them to self- assess their own reading and writing skills by completing a Reading and Writing Self- Assessment. See Appendix 1 .) These comments can be very enlightening and tell me who dislike the subject and can't be bothered, they Just tick yes or no to everything ND do not give it proper and careful thought. This obviously serves no purpose and renders the self-assessment useless. Diagnostic assessment shows exactly what the student understands in a particular subject area matched against a predetermined set of criteria from the course curriculum. It is used widely to assess basic skills in both English and math's.

It shows if a student has the required prior learning and can identify if they will need additional support to reach the final goal. Scales is very critical of institutions which sit new students in front of a literacy or innumeracy test on their first day; but unfortunately this is a requirement by management at College. During their first English lesson, students have to sit a diagnostic assessment based on the score they achieved during the initial assessment. (2008, p. 79) " Assessment for learning is based on the belief that everyone can learn and that formative assessment is a key strategy to help learners improve and develop," says Scales. (2008, p. 180) Formative assessment is the assessment for learning that happens as a natural part of the learning

process during each lesson, as the teacher questions the student about their knowledge, gives feedback as work is completed ND it importantly helps students to place where they are in the learning process. The key to formative assessment is that it happens at the time.

For example, " Tests that happens at the end of a teaching block are too late to be used for formative assessment. " (Highland Learning & Teaching Toolkit, 2010) Testing needs to be short and happen at regular intervals whilst a topic is being taught. Formative assessment allows the teacher to evaluate their teaching and tailor future lessons to the students' needs. It also shows the student which areas they need to focus on. During teaching with my learners I use a variety of methods of formative assessment.

The ones I favor the most are questioning and providing detailed feedback on work that they are completing in class. Highland Learning and Teaching Toolkit states that, " Feedback given whilst the pupil is still engaged on the task is particularly effective. " (2010) I agree with this as the student can sometimes not remember what they were doing if they look at the feedback in one or two weeks' time. Very often when you engage them in conversation, they say that they were unsure or thought hey needed to do something differently.

For many of my students who have not had a positive experience of English at school, questioning works extremely well to show them (and me) how much they have understood about a subject. Some of them feel nervous of testing and doubt their own ability, so the opportunity to sit with them and talk through a subject very often reveals to them that they have a greater

grasp of the topic than they first thought. Some of my students are desperate for a mark or grade if they have completed a piece of written work, for example.

But I prefer to give detailed feedback on what they id well and how they could improve in one or two areas of weakness. Quizzes to recall information from the previous lesson. Apostrophes is an area that many students find very challenging and although I teach the subject and use a worksheet to formatively assess their understanding during the lesson, it is an area that students subsequently find difficult to put into practice in their own written work. I therefore use ' The Shopping Trip' during the following lesson to assess that the skill was fully understood and can be recalled one week later. Please see Appendix 2. One disadvantage with this worksheet is the sheer number of corrections that need to be made. Some students find it difficult to concentrate and struggle to focus long enough to complete it accurately, despite understanding how to use an apostrophe. The advantage though is that it is thorough and can sometimes highlight other areas of concern regarding the spelling of plurals. Another example of formative assessment that I use is the ' Good College Awards 2012. ' (Please see Appendix 3. This is very effective at assessing if the student can recall the requirements for form completion, I. . Using the correct punctuation for titles and addresses. One weakness is that because it is a form, the students often fail to complete their writing in full sentences, thinking that note form is sufficient. But this does serve as a useful example and reminder that during the assumptive written exam all writing should be in full sentences. Assumptive assessment is the assessment of learning.

It does not improve pupils learning and is usually always a formal assessment at the end of a course or unit to grade what the learner has understood and can recall at that point in time. It can be n essay, assignment, test, oral or an examination. For my particular subject there are three assumptive assessments which include: reading; writing and speaking and listening. Positive assessment is self-assessment. In ' Teaching and Learning; Assessment', Thereon says that, " It is more relevant to performance coaching, special needs education and therapy than to most mainstream teaching. (2011) But I think for many low achieving learners it is an excellent form of assessment as it measures an individual's learning Journey and allows them to measure their progress. There is no imprison to others in the group or to external standards set by an examining body as they are comparing themselves to their own personal best. I like to allow learners to look at previous work and assess how far they have progressed. They are very often surprised by their own progress and wouldn't believe it if they couldn't see it and assess it for themselves.

For any assessment to take place the principles of validity, reliability and fairness should be considered and adhered to. It is important that the assessment is valid and measures the knowledge/skills that have been taught or are in the curriculum; hat it does not take into account areas that are not relevant. For example the Functional Skills English reading exam does not require students to write in full student's ability to read and understand a text and to pick out the relevant information in that text. It would not be valid to score a candidate on their grammar and sentence construction.

For an assessment to be fair it should also be written in plain English and be error free. It should be repeatable, as Scales points out, reliability and validity are closely linked, but the reliability of the assessment puts the emphasis more on its accuracy ND consistency of application. (2008, p. 184) It should produce similar results with a similar group of students. The assessment should not only be valid, but it should also be fair. As Gravels writes, " the assessment is appropriate to all learners at the required level, is inclusive, I. E. Available to all, and differentiates for any particular needs. " (2011, p. 93) The exercise we took part in during the STALLS course clearly showed us how it felt when a task was not fair, when not all of the groups were given equal opportunities. During the exercise one group received fewer resources than the others. It is also important that students with additional needs are given everything they are entitled to, to allow them to compete fairly with the majority. I monitor, record and report learner progress and achievement through a variety of methods.

Most of them are not required by my department, but help me to keep on track of my student's progress as there are three examinations that must be passed to achieve the functional skills English award. The Functional Skills Assignment Tracking document allows me to record each student's progress in terms of each element of the assumptive assessment. (Please see Appendix 4. I also use my Teaching Record to record progress made against the curriculum so I can easily see what topics I have worked on with each group.

I also use a simple tick sheet to record when I can see evidence of each element of punctuation in a student's work. Please see Appendix 5. This is useful to target those learners who find punctuation difficult, as I can then set them additional work to practice this area and not force other students to keep working on something they fully understand and consistently use correctly. I report learner progress through E-Tracker showing when learners have met set objectives and their achievement is automatically updated through management reports once the learner achieves all three components of the English exam.