

Principles for Assessing competence Based Teaching and Learning

How competence can be assessed

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Abstract

Assessment of learners' competence is of paramount importance in Competence based teaching and learning. It allows the assessor to work with a learner to collect evidence of competence from the learning outcomes of the learning programme. This paper examines competence assessment, the principles, methods and procedures for assessment of competences in a Competence Based Teaching and learning context. Understanding of the principles, assessment methods and appropriate assessment procedures is emphasized for adherence of quality teaching and learning. Various assessment methods are recommended for validity and the effective assessment of competences.

Key words: *Competence, assessment, teaching and learning, quality.*

Introduction

Assessment of competencies is crucial in competence based teaching and learning. Competence-based teaching and learning approach requires learners to be assessed based on the skills and knowledge that they are practically expected to demonstrate. This approach is currently emphasized after a shift from content based teaching and learning (Meyer - Adams *et al.* 2011, Baughman, et al., and 2012). Competence assessment determines whether the students have mastered the competencies specified in the school curriculum. It is expected to measure students' ability to integrate, synthesize, and use knowledge and skills in the real life experiences.

Competence assessment is an ongoing process in which knowledge and skills are continuously built and assessed. It allows learners to think and act in terms of attitude, skills and knowledge (ASK) with the aim of developing learners who are confident, critical, creative and innovative thinkers (Leutner *et al.* 2017). Hence in teaching and learning context, the competences are expected to extend as the learners grow. The learners can demonstrate mastery of the competencies as they keep on learning and re – learn them. Therefore assessment of competencies is emphasized in teaching and learning as it plays a key role in optimizing educational processes and improving the effectiveness of educational systems in provision of quality education.

Competence as used in this paper refers to set of defined characteristics that provide a structured guide that enable the identification, evaluation and development of the behaviour in individual. It is an integrated characteristic that results from the combination of knowledge and abilities. Furthermore, it is emphasized that in teaching and learning context competencies are to be specific and measurable, focusing on skills and abilities that are required in the education programme or course.

Hence, assessment of competencies allows the teacher to work with the learners to collect evidence of competence from the learning outcomes of the learning programme as presented in the curriculum. The following are some of the competences expected among learners in Tanzania. Literacy, numeracy, writing, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, communication, personal and social skills, Independent learning, technological literacy, science and technology, environmental education interpersonal relationship, arts and music, play and sports (TIE, 2013; TIE, 2015; TIE, 2016, TIE, 2018). These competences reflect the learning areas in various education levels and the desired learning outcomes as indicated in curriculum.

Principles and Methods for competence assessment

The paper highlights the important principles to be adhered in order to ensure quality in assessment of competencies. According to Gravells (2015) the following are some of the principles for competence assessment.

Validity

The frequency of assessment determines the accuracy in assessing competencies. Assessment of competence must be done more than one time in order to ensure validity of teaching and learning. Assessment instruments must be prepared according to the specific purpose in order to ensure that they measure what they are intended to measure.

Relevance

Assessment should relate directly to the programme aims and learning outcomes. It is also expected to cover all required competencies and enables learners to develop various competences. Hence, it involves selection of the most relevant methods appropriate to the kind of performance being assessed.

Feedback

Timely feedback is important in the assessment of competencies. It facilitates and promotes teaching and learning. Learners must demonstrate what they know or can do. That is, learners may be asked to develop and explain various procedures according to their subject areas such as development of project report, business proposal etc.

Sufficiency and authenticity

Assessment should cover all the required competences at a given time and levels. It also involves application of knowledge and skills in a real environment. Hence, it should be clear, accurate, consistency and timely information on assessment tasks and procedures.

Assessment of Competencies in teaching and learning

Competence based learning emphasize application of knowledge rather than the ability to recall the knowledge and it can be assessed through various approaches. One of the approach is Diagnostic assessment. It provides information about learner's prior knowledge, skills and attitudes. It helps to determine learner's strength and weaknesses. Furthermore, it enables the teacher to develop an effective learning according to the learners needs.

In competence based teaching formative assessment is also emphasized rather than summative assessment. It is argued that learners have shared responsibility to their learning in competence

based learning and teaching. Hence, they have to demonstrate what they know through formative assessment as part of assessment process (Meyer - Adams *et al.* 2011).

Formative assessment also referred to as assessment as learning, allows learners to be assessed as the teacher continues to teach. The teacher uses learner's knowledge and skills to improve their teaching (Heritage, 2010). It therefore uses various assessment methods such as oral questions, class test, individual assignments, practical exercises, portfolio and project work. It allows learners to reflect, regulate and monitor their learning progress, evaluate their own learning and get feedback. On the other hand according to Wynne, (2007) summative assessment (assessment of learning) allows learners to be assessed at the specific point of the learning cycle such as the end of the term or year of study and learners are ranked. It is therefore implies that demonstration of skills and the learner active participation in teaching and assessment process is limited.

Moreover, in competence based teaching and learning assessment of competencies can be done in different ways (Drisko, 2014, Voorhees & Bedard, 2015). It can be assessed through direct observation of competencies. That is through presentations, Projects, internship, field practice, teacher evaluations. It can also be assessed indirectly where less tangible competences for example interpretation can be assessed through written tests and exercises. In addition, evidence of prior learning can be assessed through portfolio, log book, referees and qualifications.

Furthermore, knowledge application can be measured by allowing students to demonstrate competency in terms of skills and abilities rather than memorization through short answer questions, true or false. In addition, it is emphasized that assessment of competencies can be done through appropriate activities to be done by all learners as a class and assessment done in individual or groups

Competence can therefore, be assessed through different ways depending on what is expected to be assessed. However, it is emphasized that the teacher is expected to assist learners who have difficulty in achieving competences that have been targeted in the curriculum and syllabus.

Hence teacher's skills in special education and guidance and counselling are important in assisting learners

Conclusion and Recommendations

First, in the competence based learning and assessment, the learner had the responsibility for learning the materials and demonstration of mastery of competences. Hence, provision of learning materials and assistance to students who require additional assistance is emphasized. Schools and educational authorities should therefore, support teaching and learning in order to ensure that the expected outcomes are attained as targeted in the curriculum.

Second, assessment of competences is performance-based it rarely have right and wrong answers hence it requires subjective evaluation. Teacher competence in teaching and assessment is therefore, emphasized and recommended for effective measurement of students performance of the competencies.

Third, understanding of the principles, assessment methods and appropriate assessment procedures is emphasized for adherence of quality teaching and learning. Therefore, various assessment methods are recommended for validity and effective assessment of competences.

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