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Incorporating Teacher's Self-evaluation into Formative Assessment: A Study on BRAC DevPro Course

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The paper is an attempt to explore the features of formative assessment when teacher's self evaluation is merged with it. Teacher evaluation, usually by students and sometimes by senior colleagues and even by administrators, has been a typical process and a practice to evaluate teacher's job success, particularly in private universities in Bangladesh. It is generally conducted at the end of the semester by the institute for executing its target. For evaluating students' success, teachers use formative assessment to check on the progress of their students, to see how far they have mastered what they should have learned, and then use this information to modify their future teaching plan. The researcher carried out this study in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Course for Development Professionals (DevPro) conducted by BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL), BRAC University. The target group of the study included sixteen high and mid level professionals of BRAC International which sends its skilled staff to work abroad. As the institutional evaluation of the teacher by students is conducted at the end of the semester and feedback is received in the next semester, the same group of students remains unaffected by the evaluation. Here, the researcher as a teacher got a self-prepared evaluation form filled by the participants in the middle of the course. To reinforce the objectives of formative assessment, the researcher has integrated the findings of self-evaluation into the formative test. This paper, thus, provides the scope for students to get benefitted from the teacher and from the course as well. The findings of the paper show very significant changes in the score of formative and summative test. The researcher, here, came up with the outcome that not only formative test but also teacher's self evaluation can work as a suitable tool to develop the teacher himself, students and the course as well.

Keywords: *Self-evaluation, formative assessment, summative assessment, DevPro course, BRAC Institute of Languages.*

Introduction

Evaluation, accountability and assessment work as the tools to lubricate the cogs of teaching learning mechanism. Though teacher evaluation by students has been questioned in several parts of the world, it has been finally fruitful and accredited by the personnel concerned. According to CPE (Center for Public Education, 2013), for decades, teacher evaluations were little more than a bureaucratic exercise that failed to recognize either excellence or mediocrity in teaching. As such, evaluation represented a missed opportunity for giving teachers valuable feedback that could help them improve their practice. Increasingly, this is no longer the case. Since 2009, over two-thirds of states in America have made significant changes to how teachers are evaluated. Hull (2013) in the same report states,

> "Classroom observations are not the only measure of teacher practice. State and districts rely on other forms of evidence to get a fuller picture of a teacher's performance. These include: a)

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> student/parent surveys, b) lesson plan reviews, c) teacher self assessments, d) measures of professional learning, e) student artifacts, f) teacher portfolios. These other measures can provide rich, qualitative information about classroom instruction. As such they add to the body of feedback teachers receive on their individual strengths and weaknesses." (p.22)

Hull has emphasized on student survey or student evaluation and teacher self assessment which have been used as the key tools for this paper. For teachers' own as well as professional development, teacher's self assessment or evaluation can work better than institutional evaluation. According to Schwartz (2015), self-evaluation is one of the most overlooked forms of explicit evaluation. Ideally and logically, this should precede all other forms of the evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Conscientious faculty members subject their teaching strategies, instructional techniques and style to their own critical evaluation on an almost constant basis. This evaluation often does not have a formal structure but even a simple checklist can help to focus ideas. Those faculty members who are most interested in doing their best are the ones who tend to take self-evaluation most seriously and may share their critiques and seek advice from colleagues on how to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

The researcher has merged the findings of his self-evaluation with those of students' formative assessment. Formative Assessment, when incorporated into classroom practice, provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. This kind of assessment informs both teachers and students about students' understanding at a point when teacher can make timely adjustments. These adjustments help to ensure students to achieve targeted standard-based learning goals within a set time frame. To make it happen, the teacher as a researcher here has incorporated his self-evaluation into formative assessment to accelerate the participants' learning outcomes of the Development Professional (DevPro) Course offered by BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL), BRAC University. BIL has been offering this course for last nine years to develop English Language communication skills for Development Professionals who are expected to work at home and particularly abroad to promote education as staff of BRAC Education Programme (BEP).

According to the traditional practice, teacher evaluation usually by students is conducted at the end of the semester by the institute for executing its target. As the institutional evaluation of the teacher by students is conducted at the end of the semester and feedback is received in the next semester, the same group of students remains unaffected by the evaluation. The same group of students will not receive any course with the same teacher if the programme is either a foundation or an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course. Here, the researcher got a self-prepared evaluation form filled out by the participants at the middle of the course and also conducted formative assessment as a part of the course. To reinforce the objectives of formative assessment, the researcher has integrated the findings of self-evaluation into the formative test. Thus, the rationale of the paper is justified by providing the scope for students to get benefitted from the same teacher and from the course as well. This paper will show what significant changes there will be in the score of summative test after incorporating the findings of formative test with those of teacher's self-evaluation.

Background

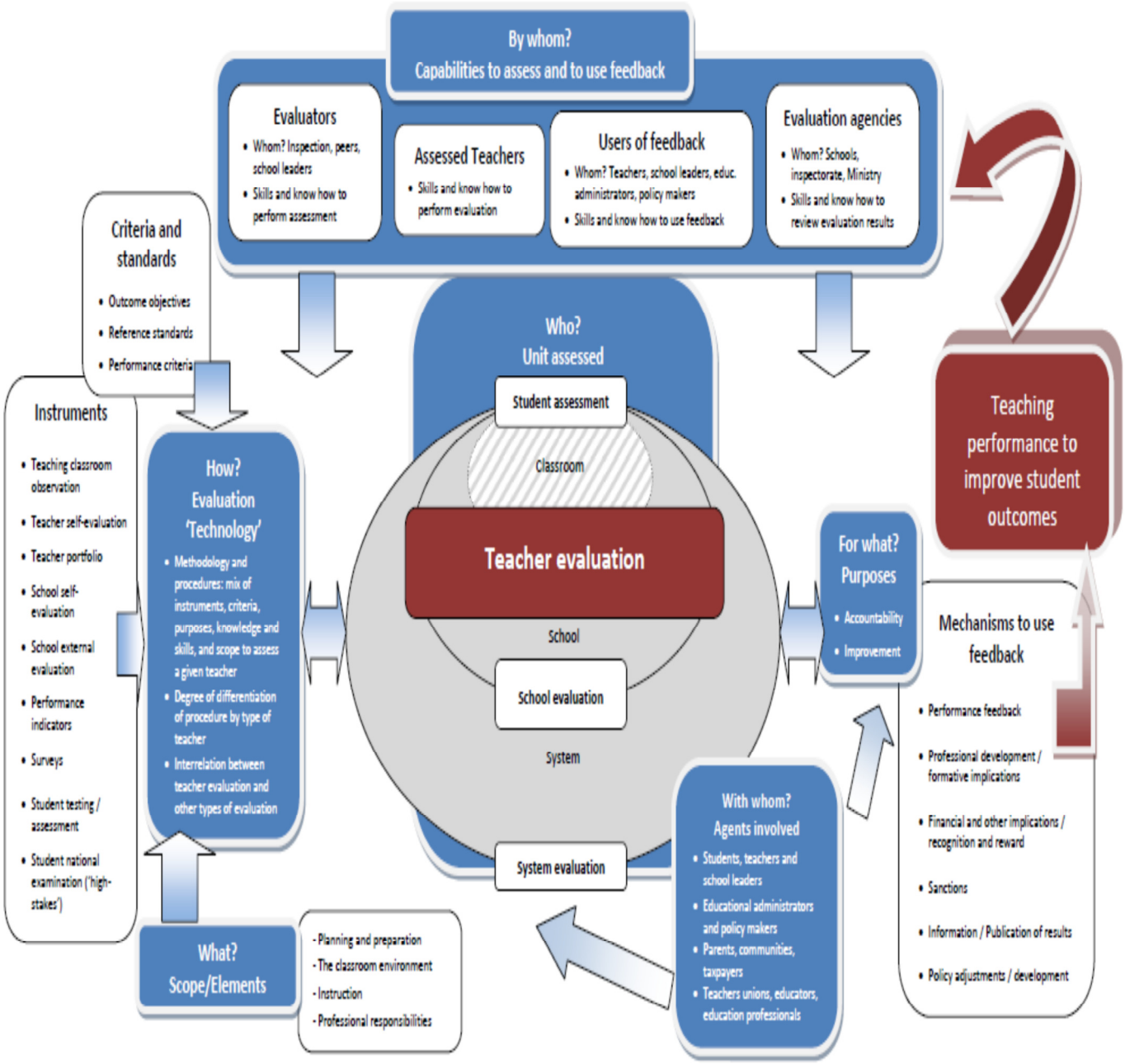
Evaluation and assessment are intertwined with the effectiveness of teaching and learning irrespective of any disciplines, contexts, levels and courses. These evaluation and assessment can be of students aiming at monitoring their progress, reinforcing desired outcomes and behaviors and of teachers aiming at strengthening their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and classroom practices. In this paper, teacher's self evaluation and students' formative assessment have been incorporated to accelerate the learning outcomes of the target learners. Stronge (2002) says, teacher evaluation

> "…is the process of comparing an individual teacher's documented job performance with the previously established roles and responsibilities and acceptable performance standards. By providing feedback throughout the evaluation cycle, the teacher is supported in his/her ongoing efforts to fulfill performance expectations and is able to identify areas of performance that need attention while there is still time to improve." (p.7)

Thus, accountability to authority and performance improvement to facilitate students have been the targets of teacher evaluation. These two educational dimensions are not competing with each other in the academic milieu rather they are supportive interests – dual interests that are essential for improvement of educational service delivery.

Figure1

A Conceptual Framework for Teacher Evaluation (Santiago and Benavides, 2009)



The two functions- teacher evaluation and teaching performance to improve students' learning outcomes are thus interchangeably entwined in the total evaluation process resulting in the achievement of students. According to Stronge (2002),

> "As the field of education has moved toward a stronger focus on accountability and on careful analysis of variables affecting educational outcomes, the teacher has proven time and again to be the most influential school-related force in student achievement." (p.7)

To serve the purposes of education, to judge students' achievement and to maintain and sustain teachers' quality, teacher evaluation matters to a great extent. As Stronge and Tucker (2003) state, "without high quality evaluation systems, we cannot know if we have high quality teachers." (p.3)

Teacher evaluation is usually conducted by students and sometimes by senior colleagues and even by the administrators particularly in private institutions whereas teachers' self evaluation is conducted by teachers themselves for their continuous development. Chahine et. al. (2008) state

> "Planned, systematic self-evaluation is a self-strengthening process – it builds muscles for reflection and learning. And the more you reflect and learn and then act on your learning, the better you do it next time. Self-evaluation creates a habit for continuous improvement." (p.4)

As Learning and Development Centre (2012) ideates, self-evaluation can assist teachers to

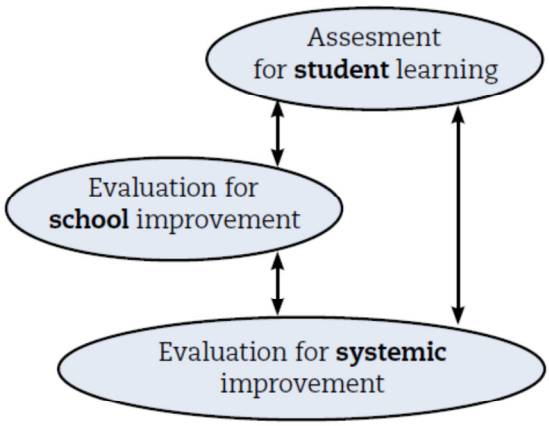
> "a). improve the educational experiences you provide for your students, b). identify the professional education you need to further develop your capacity to teach well, c). prepare for your performance review with your supervisor, d). assess your readiness to apply for promotion and tenure." (para.5)

Teachers' self-evaluation and students' formative assessment work as catalysts for each other to bring success for both teachers and students. Formative assessment provides feedback to both teachers and students to pave the way for their professional and academic development respectively. Teachers gain information through formative assessment to create opportunities for them to make adjustment to the ways they work by, and to accelerate students' efforts to achieve their ultimate goal. According to Popham (2013), formative assessment is

> "simply a planned process wherein teachers, or their students, use assessment-elicited evidence of student learning to decide whether to make changes in what they're currently doing. Teachers find out if they need to adjust their ongoing instruction. Students find out if they need to alter the ways in which they're trying to learn. Formative assessment is, at bottom, an ends-means process in which teachers and/or students rely on assessment consequences (the ends) to decide whether any adjustments are warranted in what they're doing (the means). It's really not surprising that formative assessment works so well." (para.4)

Teachers can use the results of formative assessments to adjust their teaching strategies and students with appropriate materials and learning conditions. Information gained from formative assessment can help a teacher determine (1) how to group students, (2) whether students need alternative materials, (3) how much time to allocate to specific learning activities, (4) which concepts need to be re-taught to specific students, and (5) which students are ready to advance.

Figure-2
Formative Assessment to improve learning (OECD, 2005)



Source: OECD, *Formative Assessment: Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms*, Paris, 2005.

Formative assessment, thus, helps students in the process of assessing their learning, monitoring their knowledge and understanding during instruction, and evaluating their systemic improvement. It also provides useful feedback and makes timely changes in instruction to ensure the utmost student achievement. As Popham (2008) says, "formative assessment represents evidence-based instructional decision making. If you want to become more instructionally effective, and if you want your students to achieve more, then formative assessment should be for you."(p.15)

Formative assessment assists teachers to decide next steps in the process of learning as the instruction moves toward the summative assessment of student learning. Summative assessments are cumulative evaluations used to measure students' growth after instruction and are generally given at the end of a course in order to determine whether long term learning goals have been met. According to Darden (2013), summative assessment is

> "the gathering of information at the conclusion of a course, program, or undergraduate career to improve learning or to meet accountability demands. Ideally, summative assessment reflects the culmination of the scaffolding process of learning provided by formative assessment throughout the course. When used for improvement, it impacts the next cohort of students taking the course or program." (para.4)

Alvarez et. al. (2014) consider that formative assessment has the potential to enhance teaching and learning, especially for those students who face particular challenges, such as English Language Learners (ELL). They examine how formative assessment can enhance the teaching and learning of ELL in particular. The researchers also highlight the opportunities and challenges inherent in integrating formative assessment into instruction for ELL students in the era of the Common Core and other "next generation" standards. They argue that in order to use formative assessment effectively with this student population, teachers must attend simultaneously to the students' needs both in learning content and skills and in developing the English required to express their learning.

According to Shah et.al (2015), the years of research has proven that nothing educational institutions can do for their students more than giving them effective teachers. They worked to develop effective evaluation system for education institutes in Karachi. They interviewed teachers in charge and program

managers to get their opinions on guidelines for developing faculty evaluation. Teachers were consulted on what areas of assessment should be based. Moreover, students' feedback on teacher's performance was collected. Their paper reveals that students' feedback, colleagues review, and teacher's self-reflection method will be significant in designing effective evaluation system. Study recommends that a teacher's evaluation system should allocate appropriate questions to students' feedback, peer review and standards set by institute.

Chesnut et.al (2015) conducted a study in Indiana on the process of teacher evaluation that could be facilitated by the departments themselves, by the state department of education, or by a professional association aiming at teacher's development and capacity building. The most prevalent trends were the increased focus on teacher evaluation theory and practice in education leadership curricula and the shared perception that the new law would enhance the utility and rigor of Indiana's teacher evaluation processes. Across the four institutions, discussions among faculty members regarding curricular changes due to the new teacher evaluation requirements occurred inconsistently. Their research reveals that faculty members share the concern that their students—future school administrators—will face difficulties in implementing the revised teacher evaluation processes in Indiana, simply because they will lack sufficient time or organizational capacity to do so.

Gallagher (2004) examined the validity of a performance-based, subject-specific teacher evaluation system by analyzing the relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement. In the first stage of the study, he used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to estimate value-added teacher effects, which were then correlated with teacher evaluation scores in literacy, mathematics, language arts, and a composite measure of student achievement. Additionally, teacher evaluation scores were inserted into the HLM models as subject-specific predictors of student achievement. Results indicate a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement in reading and a composite measure of teacher and student performance and a positive relationship in mathematics. He also used document analyses and interviews with teachers to explore factors affecting the relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement across subjects. Findings suggest that the relationship is stronger in reading than mathematics because both teachers and evaluators have more pedagogical knowledge and better alignment to standards and assessments in reading than in math.

Ross and Bruce (2015) took self-assessment as a powerful technique for improving achievement. They outlined a theory of teacher change that links self-assessment by teachers to their professional growth. This theory provides avenues for peers and change agents to influence teacher practice. They applied the theory to change in mathematics teaching and reported an explanatory case study in which use of the self-assessment tool, in combination with other elements, contributed to change in the instructional practice of a grade 8 mathematics teachers. Provision of a self-assessment tool contributed to teacher growth by: 1) influencing the teacher's definition of excellence in teaching and increasing his ability to recognize mastery experiences; 2) helping the teacher select improvement goals by providing him with clear standards of teaching, opportunities to find gaps between desired and actual practices, and a menu of options for action; 3) facilitating communication with the teacher's peer, and 4) increasing the influence of external change agents on teacher practice. Their study argues that providing a self-assessment tool is a constructive strategy for improving the effectiveness provided it is bundled with other professional growth strategies: peer coaching, observation by external change agents, and focused input on teaching strategies.

The other studies, reviewed here, have been conducted in their own settings, on their target groups and in their own educational perspectives. The present paper will show what significant changes there will be in the score of summative test after incorporating the findings of formative test with those of teacher self evaluation in its own perspective.

Methodology

Participants

The research has been carried out in a natural classroom setting on sixteen BRAC high and mid level professionals who have been working in BRAC Education Programme (BEP). All the participants have their Masters degrees in various disciplines and seven to twenty two years working experiences in BEP. The job responsibilities of the participants are to promote education, to maintain contact with Government and Non Government organisations, to monitor and supervise the other sub-programmes of BEP, to conduct meeting with staff and parents. BRAC International is expecting to send them abroad to execute their job responsibilities using the target language. Among sixteen participants, 14 were male and two were female and their age limit is 35-55 years. As they have long working experiences in managerial posts and have higher education in various disciplines, they can generate ideas, they are analytical and their cognitive level is good. All of them were residential participants and motivated, enthusiastic and interactive in the training sessions.

Data Collection

The researcher used a self prepared questionnaire following the questions used in BRAC University for formal teacher evaluation by students. For each question, there were five options for grading, ranging from 5 to 1 indicating the best to worse. In addition, there was an open ended question to suggest for the further development of the course and for the professional development of the teacher. He also conducted focus group discussion (FGD) with participants to collect data. As a part of the course, the researcher also gave formative and summative assessments, the result of which have been incorporated with the teacher's self evaluation.

Findings

The data received from questionnaire, the open ended question, and FGD reveal some important results of which the researcher was not aware of or even did not think of these findings to be addressed. The following table demonstrates the outcomes the researcher received from the questionnaire filled by participants.

Figure 3

Table on questionnaire

Areas to be graded	Grading: 1 being the *lowest* and 5 being the *highest*				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Instructor was adequately prepared for the class.				6 Pps	10 Pps
2. Instructor was able to communicate in the class effectively.				5 Pps	11 Pps
3. Instructor was available and helpful beyond the class.				4 Pps	12 Pps
4. Instructor made effective use of teaching aids.				11 Pps	5 Pps
5. Instructor created an atmosphere of respect and showed interest in my learning.				6 Pps	10 Pps

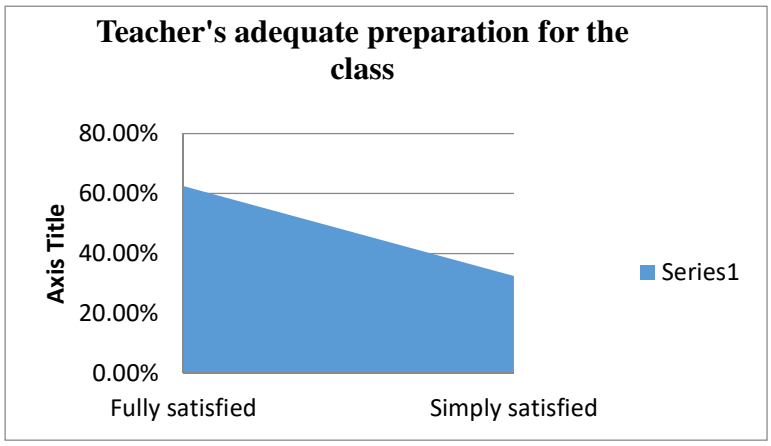
6. Instructor motivated me to think more critically and stimulated intellectual curiosity.			10 Pps	4 Pps	2 Pps
7. The exams, quizzes, and assignments covered the contents specified in the syllabus for the course.			11 Pps	3 Pps	2 Pps
8. Instructor encouraged participation, discussion and questions from the students.				2 Pps	14 Pps
9. Instructor was fair in evaluating and grading the students.			10 Pps	1 Pp	5 Pps
10. Instructor maintained regular class schedule.				1 Pps	15 Pps
11. Feedback given on the assignments was effective.			12 Pps	4 Pps	

Pps- Participants

As it has been mentioned, the total number of the respondents was sixteen and eleven questions were given to them for grading the teacher (the researcher). In response to the question regarding the adequacy of the teacher's preparation for the class, 62.5% of the participants are fully pleased with the teacher whereas 37.5% of the respondents are simply satisfied.

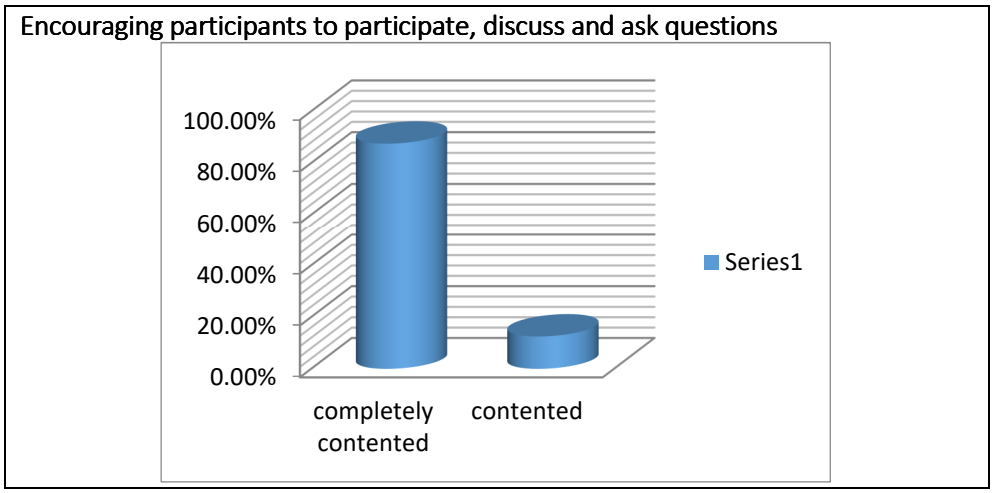
Figure-4

Teacher's Preparation for the Class



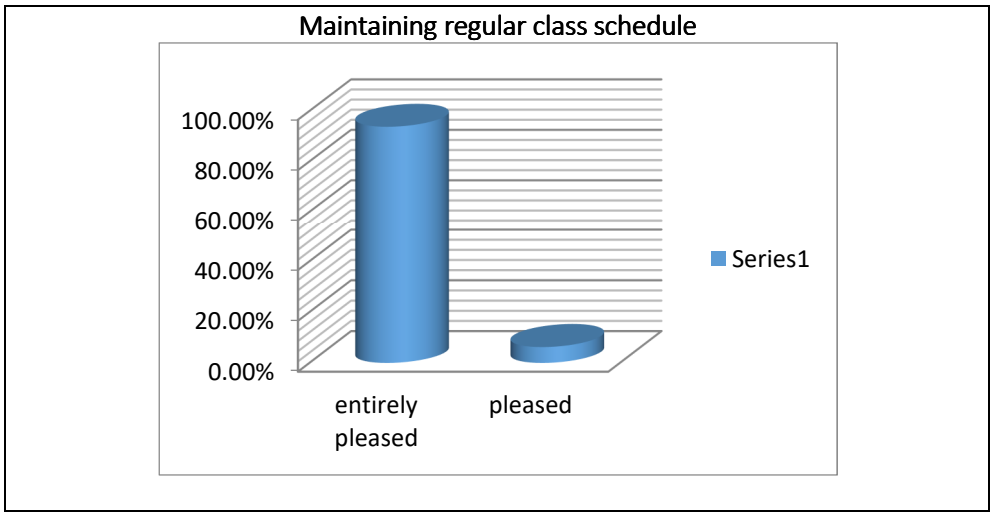
Again, concerning the teacher's communication with participants, availability and support for them even beyond the class, most of the participants show very positive responses. The data also expose that a large number of the participants are very happy with the teacher as he created an atmosphere of respect for the participants and showed interest in their learning. Also, about 87.5% of the participants are completely content with the teacher for encouraging them to participate, discuss and ask questions whereas 12.5% of them are content.

Figure-5
Teacher's Encouragement for Participants



Moreover, 93.75% of the respondents are completely pleased with the teacher for maintaining regular class schedule where only 6.25% of them are simply pleased.

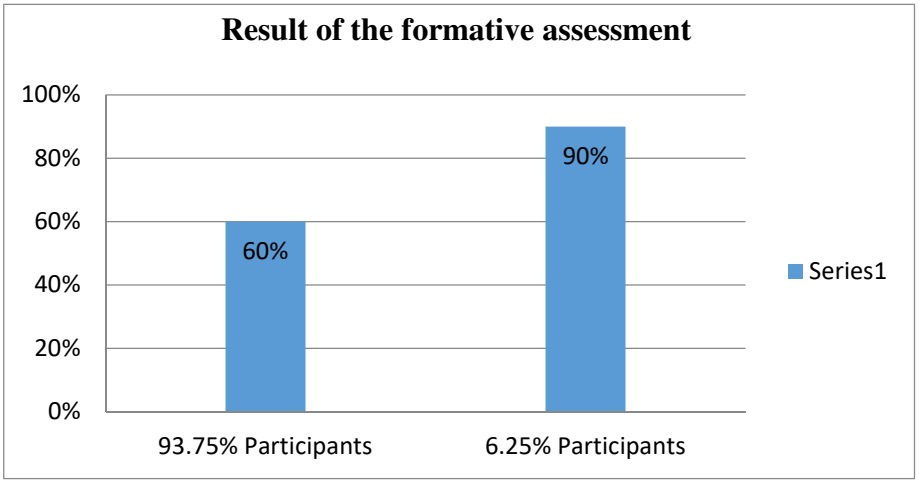
Figure-6
Teacher's Regular Class Schedule



Contrary to the above findings, a very good number of the respondents are neutral in some areas indicating that these areas need to be improved. The participants in general think that feedback given on the assignments could have been more effective. They also believe that the teacher could be much fairer in evaluating and grading the participants. Again, most of the participants have questions regarding the exams, quizzes, and assignments covered in the course. Almost all the participants want the teacher to motivate them to think more critically and intellectually, and to make effective use of teaching aids. In response to the open ended question, the participants in a large number suggest the teacher to be strict to his decision to achieve his target rather than prioritizing the opinion of the learners who are more assertive than and senior to the teacher/the researcher himself. They also expect the teacher to give

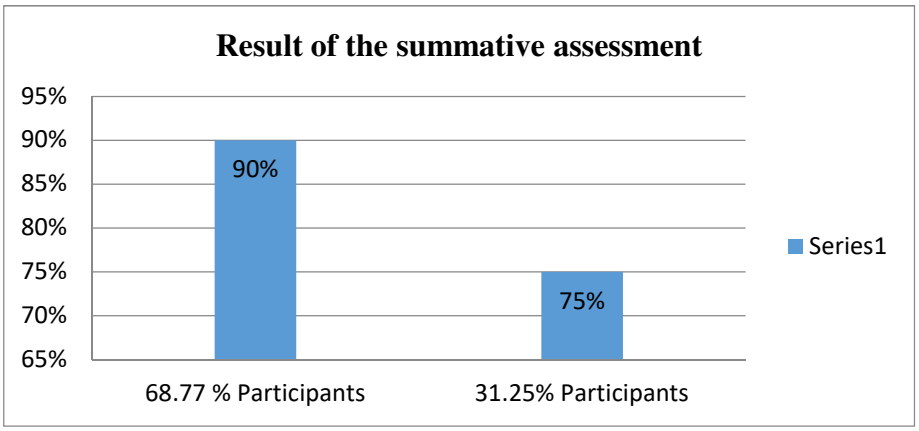
individual and specific feedback and to prepare lesson for vocabulary development. The teacher as a researcher has received almost the same information from FGD. Additionally, the participants recommend a specific and organized module for the course. Again, the findings of the both formative and summative assessments show the most significant aspect of the paper i.e. the changes in the score of summative test after incorporating the findings of formative test with those of teacher's self-evaluation. The data disclose that in the formative assessment, 15 participants out of 16, that is 93.75% of the participants got 60% marks whereas 1 participant meaning 6.25% of the respondents achieved 90% marks.

Figure-7
Result of the Formative Assessment



After incorporating the results of teacher's self evaluation into the result of formative assessment, the findings of the summative test at the end of the course show the most significant and expected change in the students' result. In the summative assessment, 11 participants out of 16 (68.77%) scored 90% marks whereas 5 participants (31.25%) scored 75% marks.

Figure-8
Result of the Summative Assessment



Thus, the variation between the results of the two assessments- formative and summative- echoes the answer to the research question which was to show the changes in the result of the summative test where 10 participants out of 16 have been able to score 90% marks.

Discussion and Recommendation

On the basis of the findings, observation and experiences, the researcher argues that teaching-learning is rather a process than a product and one cannot expect it emerge suddenly. A teacher can be more successful when s/he keeps on bringing changes within her/him and even in the course if it is needed. Here, this is appreciable that in most of the cases the teacher (the researcher) was performing rightly. The statements, not shaded (statements 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10) in the findings of the questionnaire in figure 3, demonstrate the appreciation of the researcher's performance regarding his preparation for the class, effective communication in the class, availability and support even beyond the class, respect and interest in participants' learning, and inspiration for participation and discussion in the class. For the rest of the areas, the teacher kept on bringing changes for his own development and to convey benefit to his students. According to the participants, the teacher/the researcher was not as successful as he was supposed to be regarding the use of teaching aids. The teacher used sound system for listening classes, the system worked but the quality of the sound was not good enough for their practice. Again, as adult learners, they were capable of generating and sharing ideas, sometimes within the track and sometimes out of the track. In these circumstances, the researcher tried to bring them within the track for which they sometimes got disheartened. He also felt that participants took it as a barrier in the way of their intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. Since the teacher conducted the research at the middle of the semester when the whole delivery plan or the syllabus was not covered, participants were right to raise the question regarding covering the contents specified in the syllabus for the course. In terms of evaluation and grading for a presentation class for speaking assessment, the teacher was grading following the prescribed rubrics where more marks were set for presenting the content. In the presentation, most of the participants shared their thoughts and knowledge which were away from the content and scored less marks than those who discussed the content well but spoke less. The teacher provided both specific and general feedback to the participants on the areas to be developed but their expectation was to receive more specific and individual feedback from the teacher. The teacher very cordially received all these suggestions taken from the data and from the results of the formative assessment and brought necessary changes in his practices and in his teaching materials.

The teacher as a researcher has some observation and recommendation for students' better learning outcomes. First of all**,** using technology based materials should be very user friendly. If the teacher uses any sound system, he needs to pay attention to the better functioning of the sound as well as adjusting the difficulty level of the listening track and its fluency with the level of the students. Secondly, to deal with learners, in particular to deal with the adult learners, the teacher needs to be very careful. Even if the teacher is right in his/her decision in terms of pedagogy and classroom management, adult learners sometimes take it otherwise. In order to overcome such situations, teacher can remind students often what they are expected to do and what the objectives of the session are. In addition, regarding evaluation and grading, only following rubrics by the teacher himself is not enough rather the teacher should clarify the rubrics to the students before grading. Rubrics can serve the purposes of teaching-learning when they are used appropriately and clear enough to both teachers and students. Andrade (2000) says,

> "At their very best, rubrics are also teaching tools that support student learning and the development of sophisticated thinking skills. When used correctly, they serve the purposes of learning as well as of evaluation and accountability. Like portfolios, exhibitions, and other

> authentic approaches to assessment, rubrics blur the distinction between instruction and assessment." (Para-1)

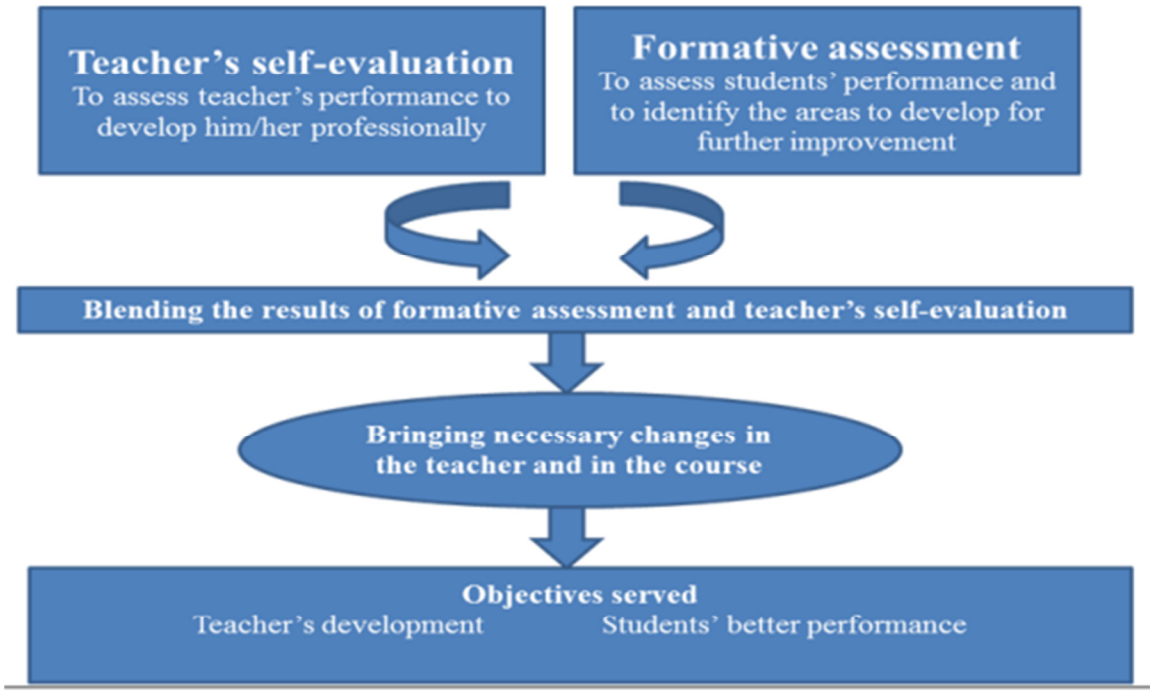
The teacher can emphasise on the most important area which carries more marks and even sometimes the course teacher can invite some guest teachers to grade their performance. Again, the teacher can identify the needs and temperament of the learners through self-assessment and bring necessary changes in the way of his teaching and providing feedback. As Ross and Bruce (2015) say, self-assessment helps the teacher select improvement goals by providing him with clear standards of teaching, opportunities to find gaps between desired and actual practices, and a menu of options for action. Learning will also be more effective if feedback is more specific, individual, and constructive. Furthermore, learning will be accelerated if the teacher becomes friendly with and respectable to the learners particularly when they are adult, but at the same time, s/he needs to make sure that the learning outcomes are achieved. To achieve the goal, the teacher sometimes needs to be stricter with due respect to the learners and keeping in mind the context.

Conclusion

Teaching-learning is a process which develops gradually when necessary changes and inputs are incorporated in the course and within the teacher himself. To make it happen, the respective teacher needs to be cautious enough to include or exclude what the course needs and the students expect for their development. At the same time, the teacher should also be aware of the purposes of teaching and assessing the students, evaluating himself/herself to achieve students' learning outcomes, building students' capacity, identifying the areas to be developed, bringing necessary changes, targeting further improvement, and developing the teacher himself/herself professionally. Thus, teaching includes not only teaching but also learning for a teacher when s/he evaluates herself/himself and conducts necessary assessments for students for the continuing development of both the parties – teachers and students. The figure below shows it well.

Figure-9

Process of teaching-learning development



This paper is, hence, a functional evidence of the significant changes what happened at the end, in the summative test, after the incorporation of self assessment results with those of formative assessment. The researcher at the same time believes that the data would be more authentic if he could conduct the study on a large number of participants and different group of participants. The researcher requests English Language Teaching practitioners, educators, researchers to carry on further research in the same field to investigate some more findings for effective teaching and learning.

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