Assessment for Learning - Policy Framework

Introduction

In compliance with the draft document of the national curriculum framework (NCF) which is underpinned by two major issues, to raise the standards of learning through a quality education for ALL, the school will contribute by putting teaching and learning as its top priority. Effective and efficient teaching and learning are measured by various forms of assessment, amongst which we have:

Assessment of Learning or as it is more commonly known, summative assessment — this is a measurement of the learning that was supposed to have taken place.

Assessment for Learning or as it is more commonly known, formative assessment — this is the interpretation of the collection of the learning evidence that is taking place and more important is the use of this evidence in helping the students move ahead in their learning journey.

Underlying Principles that need to be discussed and commented upon:

· Growth mindset vs Fixed Mindset
· Every student can progress
· Constructivist approach that involves scaffolding
· Building on and refining the existent good practice.
· Reflection on learning for a lifelong learner
· Develop a learning focused environment through a climate of mutual respect where everyone feels safe to move ahead on his/her continuum of learning.
Basic Strategies of Assessment for Learning

Dylan Wiliam and Paul Black (1998) argue that they do not know of any other way of raising standards with such effectiveness and efficiency as with the use of Assessment for Learning Strategies.

The methods that you decide to choose to implement these strategies are entirely left to your professionalism as a class manager. Dylan William implies that teachers should be left 'loose' to tailor their approaches according to the class they are teaching. Despite this freedom, Dylan Wiliam, argues that teachers should keep tight to the principles of assessment for learning, if they want to ensure success.

These seven basic principles are:

1. Understanding what the students know. (at the beginning of every lesson, timing, by saying a statement, asking a question, brainstorming, concept mapping....)

2. Clear and shared learning intentions. (during first part of lesson, different from task, written, reminded to students)

3. Clear and focused success criteria. (how will I know that the students have progressed towards the learning intention? can be discussed with students, need to cater for the different levels of students, be realistic, achievable, cater for all students at all levels)

4. Effective Questioning. (wait time, no hands up technique, pose-pause-pounce-bounce strategy, open vs closed questions, lower vs higher order questioning)

5. Effective oral and written feedback. (in relation to learning intention and success criteria, comments vs marks, when how much? What is manageable and what leaves an impact on students’ learning? What is the next step in learning? What evidence is collected to show that this next step is done?)

6. Peer Assessment (how can this be done? When? Who benefits from it?)

7. Self-Assessment. (against the success criteria, time for reflection on one’s learning)

Discuss how these can be implemented in class.
Establishing Roles

Teachers

AfL requires teachers to be involved in gathering information about pupils’ learning and encouraging pupils to review their work critically and constructively. The methods for gaining such information are well rehearsed and are essentially:

- Observing pupils- includes listening to how they describe their work and their reasoning;
- Questioning- using open questions, phrased to invite pupils to explore their ideas and reasoning;
- Setting tasks in a way which requires pupils to use certain skills or apply ideas;
- Asking pupils to communicate their thinking through drawings, artefacts, actions, role play, concept mapping as well as writing;
- Discussing words and how they are being used.

These are the factors that will make a normal lesson become a lesson with AfL evident in it.

Students

Students are responsible for their learning. They focus on the teaching objective and drive learning by means of the success criteria. Reflection on what learning is taking place is done when evidence is compared to the success criteria. Students need to do this self-assessment, understand where the difficulty lies, expose the difficulty to the teacher and put all the effort and practice necessary to overcome this difficulty and move ahead.

- What is the student expected to do in class and at home?
- How can the student do self-assessment?
- What is the best way to reflect on learning?
- Is practice more important than understanding the concept?
Parents

Parents are important stakeholders in the educational journey of their children. It is essential that they embrace this pedagogical approach, so when possible they can reinforce the learning experience and be in a better position to understand the decisions taken by teachers.

- How will they be informed about this policy?
- What are they expected to do?
- How can they help their children to progress?

Key Elements of an AfL Policy

The following need to be discussed in order to have a common understanding.

1. Establishment of a classroom culture that encourages interaction and the use of assessment tools.
2. Establishment of learning goals, and tracking of individual student progress toward those goals.
3. Use of varied instruction methods to meet diverse student needs.
4. Use of varied approaches to assessing student understanding.
5. Feedback on student performance and adaptation of instruction to meet identified needs.
6. Active involvement of students in the learning process.

Reporting to parents

What is documented by the teacher? What frequency? When is this reported to parents? In what way is it done? What is included in the report? What is reported… marks, comments, next steps?

Concluding Remarks

Who is responsible for this policy? How will we know whether it is working? When should it be reviewed? What support is needed and from where can we get it? Who should be informed about this policy?