Teacher perspectives of school-based assessment in a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur

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Abstract

School-based assessment is a new policy venture in the highly centralised education system of Malaysia. One area that has been subjected to this change initiative is the Oral English Assessment (OEA). A qualitative study was conducted to explore teacher perspectives of the implementation of school-based OEA among the Form 1 (Year 7) students in a secondary school. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on two English Language teachers and their oral English assessment sessions were observed. Data were coded, clustered, and categorized into themes. Analysis indicated that both teachers generally agreed that school-based assessment is the way forward in assessment provided the fundamentals are in place. Issues such as grading guidelines and implementation procedures must be ironed out before successful implementation can happen. Cross-case analysis revealed three major themes: insufficient guidelines on the implementation process, lack of teachers' knowledge base, and lack of external monitoring of school-based OEA. The inherent implication of the themes is that greater attention is required in the implementation of educational policies with effective alignment of the relevant tools.

School-based assessment, teacher competency, policy implementation, Malaysia

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1. Introduction

Traditionally, Malaysia has practiced a centralized education and assessment system. With regard to assessment, students have been assessed formally through common public examinations that were designed and developed by the examination syndicate of the Ministry of Education. The public examinations included the Primary School Assessment Evaluation in Year 6, Lower Secondary Assessment in Year 9, and Malaysia Certificate of Education in Year 11. In recent years, there has been a shift in assessing certain aspects of students' performance at the individual school level. This change from a public examination-based assessment to school-based assessment (SBA) was introduced for three main reasons. Firstly, the proponents of assessment methods believe that students' ability and knowledge should not be tested merely through a one-off, summative evaluation; instead, it should be carried out constantly throughout the year (Tombari & Borich, 1999). It is also in line with the Malaysian Ministry of