Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses some theories related to the study, previous related studies, and conceptual framework. Those are assessment in higher education, accessing higher education, the on-course experience, success and non-completion, the postgraduate experience, the experience of different student groups, the transition from higher education.

2.1   Definition of Assessment

Assessment in higher education performs multiple functions for varying purposes (Boud1995; Carless et al. 2007). Assessments inform program selection decisions, determine student progression towards qualifications, and measure student learning towards attaining graduate profiles (Banta and Associates 2002; Brown et al. 1997). Assessments also provide information to faculty about teaching effectiveness (Biggs 2003; Ramsden 2003; Yorke 2003) and to students about how well they are doing and how they can improve their learning (Carless et al. 2007; Gibbs 2006; Gibbs and Simpson 2004).

There is extensive literature over many years regarding the principles and best practice guidelines for higher education assessment to ensure that graduates master critical academic and professional outcomes (Banta and Associates 2002;

Chickering and Gamson 1987; Hounsell et al. 1996; Maki 2004; Trigwell and Prosser 1991).

2.1.1   Assessment in Higher Education

Writing on assessment, like writing on course design as a whole, is split between that which is clearly research-based and that which adopts a descriptive and/or 'how to' approach. The latter specializes in summarizing contemporary good practice and in offering guidance to academics on what forms of assessment to use when (e.g. Brown et al. 1997; Brown and Glasner 1999; Brown and Knight 1994; Cox et al. 1998; Freeman and Lewis 1998; Heywood 2000; Knight 1999; Morgan and O'Reilly 1999).

The research-based literature on assessment in higher education appears to adopt one of two main directions. That is, either it argues that contemporary assessment practices are problematic, and perhaps begins to suggest what might be done about this, or it (following up the "how to" literature) explores the impacts of utilizing alternative forms of assessment.

Cook (2001) explored the consequences of changing the assessment practice on a large economics course, such that an assignment and mid-semester examination were no longer compulsory, and students could choose between four

alternative assessment packages. She reviews the choices the students made and queries whether it had much of an impact on their

grades, but concludes that the added flexibility was well received and (unlike the previous example) reduced student stress.

Research which problematizes assessment seems to be increasingly common. Thus, Leach et al. (2001) critique the existing hegemony in assessment practices, and argue the need to take on board students' perceptions. Holroyd (2000) argues that improving assessment practices is part of the growing professionalization of academics. Mutch (2002) suggests the importance of developing assessment strategies at a variety of levels within institutions of higher education. Knight (2002) argues that our summative assessment practices are in disarray, pointing out a range of problems, including assumptions about knowledge, limits to reliability and stability of judgments, transferability, limitations of criterion referencing, curriculum skew, the misuse and opacity of number, blindness to the learning process and lack of utility. He suggests that we need 'to explore assessment as complex systems of communication, as practices of sense-making and claim-making' (p.285).

Maclellan (2001) carried out a small-scale project that illustrates some of the problems with assessment practices. She examined how they were differentially experienced by staff and students in one higher education institution, by

distributing a questionnaire to samples both. Issues covered included the purpose of assessment, what was assessed, the timing of assessment, and procedures for marking and reporting. She found inconsistency:

> *Staff declared a commitment to the formative purposes of assessment but engaged in practices that militated against formative assessment being fully realised. Similarly, staff maintained that the full range of learning was frequently assessed yet the dominant mode of assessment was the traditional, academic essay, thereby attenuating the idea that students were engaging in authentic assessment which could enhance their learning . . . Overall the student view of assessment is a depressing one. The students do not exploit assessment to improve their learning and, furthermore, appear to have a very underdeveloped conception of what assessment is.* (p. 317)

Assessment is defined as the formation of judgments on the quality of students' achievement (Knight, 2006). In addition, assessment is seen to inform students about their learning performance and how they can improve their learning (Carless, Joughin, & Mok, 2006; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Assessment determines the progress of student learning towards qualifications, and measures their performance in attaining graduate profiles (Banta & Associates, 2002; Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997). According to Falchikov (2005), assessment is considered to be fundamental for learning and teaching getting students involved in learning.

Assessments have been defined in varied ways with different purposes. (Nguon, 2013)

Sutton (1992) explains why such a summary of learning is needed. 'A summary is needed to provide an accurate picture of the child's learning and progress, without the burden of too much detail. Summarizing often feels very unsatisfactory. It flattens out the unique representation of the child as an individual, and sometimes produces an image more crude and blurred than we would like' (Sutton, 1992, pp. 3-4).

2.2   Types of Assessment

2.2.1   Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment is a type of assessment which examines what a student knows and can do prior to a learning program being implemented.

Assessment of students' skills and knowledge upon entry to the program provides a baseline against which to assess progress. It is particularly important in re-engagement programs due to the complex learning needs and barriers of students in these programs, which must be taken account of in design and delivery of the individual learning program.

2.2.2 Formative and Summative Assessment

Biggs (1999) pointed to the important distinction between *formative* and *summative* functions. George and Cowan (1999: 1) described summative evaluation as consisting of judgements which, 'for the immediate future, form the basis of one or more decisions which stem from that judgement'. In summative assessment, students are graded at the end of a module, unit or course. Summative judgements are also used to accredit learners at the end of a programme. Nevo (1995) characterized these judgements as being for diagnostic and certification purposes. George and Cowan (1999: 1) also saw evaluation as formative 'when the intention is to identify scope and potential for improvement'. In formative assessment, results of assessment are used for feedback to teachers and students alike. Wiliam and Black (1996) identified *feedback* as a key component to formative assessment. They stressed the importance of Ramaprasad's (1983) conceptualization of feedback as 'information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way'. Thus, the authors reasoned that formative functions of assessment are validated in terms of their consequences. Hounsell (2003) provided an illuminating account of the tensions between our knowledge of the impact of formative feedback on learning and concerns about reduced opportunities for students to benefit from it.

Black and Wiliam (1998: 143) argued that formative assessment is at the heart of effective teaching and that self-assessment is '*an essential component of*

formative assessment' (italics in original). Their review of research literature found evidence to support the assertion that formative assessment improves standards. In addition, many studies found that formative assessment helps low achievers more than other students.

Wiliam and Black (1996) characterized the relationship between formative and summative functions as a continuum. At the formative pole, assessments are evaluated by the extent to which they provide the basis for successful action and ignore problems of creating shared meanings. At the other, summative pole, shared meanings are important and 'undesirable consequences that arise are often judged by appeal to the need to create consistency of interpretation' (Wiliam and Black, 1996: 544). They concluded that significant tensions are created when the same assessments are required to serve both formative and summative functions. However, George and Cowan (1999: 17) saw the distinction between formative and summative evaluation as, 'a balance, which in the early stages of development will emphasise formative rather than summative evaluation; and which, in later stages, will dwell on the reverse balance'.

2.2.3 Assessment for Learning, Assessment of Learning, and Assessment as Learning

Assessment for learning includes all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by students in assessing themselves, which provides information to be used as

feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities which they are engaged (Earl K. &., 2011). This view is aligned with that stated assessment for learning is designed to give teachers information to modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities (Earl L. M., 2006). When assessing students for learning, teachers use the classroom assessment process and get the information about students' achievement that it provides in order to advance, not only check on, students learning (Stiggins ,. R., 2002). The effect of assessment for learning as it plays out in the classroom, is that students keep learning and remain confident that they can continue to learn at productive levels if they keep trying to learn.

Assessment of learning gives evidence of achievement for public reporting (Stiggins ,. R., 2002). Assessment of learning is used to confirm what students know and can do, to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes, and occasionally to show how they are placed in relation to others (Earl L. M., 2006). Assessment of learning is an assessment that happen after learning is supposed to have occurred to determine if it did (Stiggins R. J., 2004, p. 31).

Assessment as learning concepts including students should be active participants in their own learning, anticipate receiving and utilizing constructive feedback and be able to identify their own learning gaps and solve their learning needs, with teacher assistance (Earl K. &., 2011, p. 13). In other words, students are able to reflect themselves about what they can do and what they cannot do. So, they

have to think what strategies that they will use to support their learning process in order to use for the next steps of learning.

2.3   Standard of Good Assessment in Higher Education

Assessment in higher education plays multiple roles. This statement is supported by Fletcher (2012) who said that assessment in higher education serves multiple purposes such as providing information about student learning, student progress, teacher quality, and program and institutional accountability. Therefore, there are some principles of good assessment in higher education (Nicol, 2007).

2.3.1   Help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, standard)

Teachers give assessment in order to achieve the learning outcomes at the end of the course. All good teachers have an implicit idea of how they want their students to change as a result of their teaching so that they can work towards achieving that change when teaching (Biggs, 2011, p. 99). He also added when assessment is not aligned with the intended learning outcomes or when the teaching methods do not directly encourage appropriate learning activities, students can easily 'escape' by engaging in inappropriate learning activities. Bloxham (2010) stated that assessment tasks are assessing the stated learning outcome for the module. Moreover, Biggs (2011) also pointed out that when the term 'intended' learning outcomes is used, the teaching and assessment should always allow for

desirable but unintended learning outcomes, so that the students have freedom to construct their own knowledge.

2.3.2   Encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks

Assessment is a key to capturing student time and effort and there is a range of effective ways to increase student activity through assessment (Bloxham, 2010, p. 52). To encourage student time and effort in learning, teachers have to consider approach of learning that is used by students (Biggs, 2011, p. 28). Deep approach is used to understand the whole material about the specific subject and they have interest in studying the subject (Biggs, 2011); (Bloxham, 2010); (Ramsden P. , 2005). Students try to understand the meaning of what the author is trying to say rather than just copying the sentence inside the book and remember it. The learning strategy use include combining information that they have and also their ideas and relate it to their experience. This kind of approach leads to higher-quality outcomes for students (Bloxham, 2010).

Surface approach is used when students have to deal with the requirements of the task without personal engagement or the aim to understand the whole material of the specific subject (Biggs, 2011; Bloxham, 2010; Ramsden, 2005). Some students use the learning strategy to focus on knowledge by memorizing the content of the subject rather than understanding the whole content of the subject. At the end, students do not understand well about their studies and have poor-quality

of the learning outcomes (Entwistle, 1997 cited in Bloxham, 2010). Biggs (2011) argue that surface approach is used to discourage student in learning while deep approach is used to encourage student in learning. This statement also supported by Bloxham (2010) who said that assessment task should be designed to encourage good quality 'deep approaches' to learning in the students.

2.3.3 Deliver high quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct

Feedback is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter. Feedback needs to provide specifics and sufficient comment or suggestions on strengths, areas for development and strategies for improvement (Bloxham, 2010, p. 104). Feedback is used to actively improve student learning (Boud, 2013). Teachers should deliver high quality feedback information after students completed their task in order to help the students self-correct (Nicol, 2007). Gibbs (2004) argue that feedback on frequent assessment is the main interactive component of teaching. Training and paying tutor also have toprovide comprehensive feedback and monitoring the quality of the feedback. Moreover, all assessment activity in universities should aim to produce effective feedback for students (Yorke, 2003 cited in (Bloxham, 2010, p. 102).

2.3.4 Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem

One way to enhance the value of the task to the students is to make their work important for them (Biggs, 2011, p. 35). He pointed out that there are four categories of motivation that can make student work more important for them.

There are *extrinsic* motivation (what the outcome produce), *social* motivation (what other people value), *achievement* motivation (the opportunity for ego enhancement), and also *intrinsic* motivation (the process of doing it). For students who are not motivated yet, Biggs (2011) suggested that using social motivation is a good strategy. Teachers who love their subject and show it, can be inspirational. Student realize that there is someone who perceive great values, so they become curious and try to seek some of the value.

2.3.5 Facilitate the development of self- assessment and reflection in learning

Self-assessment refers to the involvement of the learners to judge their own learning progress in order to achieve the learning goals (Falchikov, 2013). They have a freedom to choose challenging activities, take risk, improve their own learning, and completed the goals. In self-assessment, students have control to their learning, so they can decide how to use the available resources within or outside the classroom.

2.3.6 Give learners choice in assessment – content and processes

There is a connection between different ways about thinking of assessment and the quality of student learning. The teacher with a develop understanding of assessment will strive to connect his or her goals for learning firmly with the assessment strategies he or she uses (Ramsden P. , 2003, p. 183). By using various method, which teachers may usefully combine with a degree of student choice over

the methods themselves—such as examination vs. essay—will tend to encourage greater responsibility for self-direction in learning. (Ramsden P. , 2005, p. 185)

2.3.7 Involve students in decision – making about assessment policy and practice

Involving student in making decision about assessment could encourage them in learning. Nicol (2007) argue that student has responsibility for their learning. He added that more students are academically and socially involved the more likely and persist and succeed in their learning. Therefore, student should be engage in learning in order to be succeed in their learning,

2.3.8 Support the development of learning communities

Early assignments are helpful in integrating students into academic life and good study habits (Cook et al. 2005 cited in (Bloxham, 2010).Nicol (2007) pointed out that student in learning process should get two dimensions; academic experience and social experience. The assessment that is given by teachers also should support the students' interaction in social context. He found that social interaction not only scaffolds academic writing skills of individual students, but it also provides positive social supports.

2.3.9 Help teachers adapt teaching to student needs

Assessment should be used for teacher to evaluate their teaching strategies in order to improve the teaching learning process to fulfill student needs. A competent teacher should try to diagnose students' misunderstanding and trying to

change them through structuring the curriculum and assessment correctly (Ramsden P. , 2003, p. 98).

2.4   Theory of Perception

In often repeated definition, perception is the process of interpreting the information and organizing or forming the images from the out world (Lahey, 2009, p. 124; Santrock, 2005, p. 123; Passer & Smith, 2004, p. 110). Perception is based on a complex continuous process of detecting, receiving, and translating sensory messages. Those constant chain processes are called as sensation (Lahey, 2009, p. 124; Santrock, 2005, p. 123; Passer & Smith, 2001, p. 133, Paasser & Smith, 2004, p. 110). Although sensation and percep0tion is quiet similar, these two processes are definitely different. Sensation and perception define as one continuous processing system information (Santrock, 2005, p. 124).

Sensation happens before brain interprets the received information from the sensory organs. All creatures have sensory organs, for instance, human. They have eyes, ears, skin, nose, and tongue to receive stimuli to feel the sensation. If one if the sensory organs has limited function or even worse, cannot work at all, the other sensory organs' ability will increase (Santrock, 2005, p. 125). The sensory organs which have the sensory receptor cells use to detect the sensory message which often called as stimulus based on its function. A stimulus refers to any aspects that can detect by the sensory organs. For example, light can be detected by eyes, smell can be detected by nose, sound can be detected by ears, taste can be detected by

tongue and heat can be detected by skin (Lahey, 2009, p. 127; Passer and Smith, 2001, p. 135). After the sensory organ detected the stimuli, the transduction process happens from the sensory organ to the brain. Brain will interpret, organize, and form the received stimuli to be the complete information actively and creatively (Passer & Smith, 2001, p. 135). It will find the meaningful patterns of the sensory information (Santrock, 2005, p. 127). This process is known as perception.

The purpose of perception has shifted meaning. As cited in Santrock (2005), David Marr (1982) beliefs that the purpose of perception to define information from outside world (Santrock, 2005, p. 123). Shifted purpose of perception comes from an evolutionary perspective who stated that perception is the way for creatures to enhance the chance of survival (Santrock, 2005, p. 123). A creature has to able to feel and react spontaneously and accurately. In fact, the way of creatures respond to the stimuli is different and will interpret the stimuli into something meaningful to each creatures based on their experiences. They will detect and give response if the stimulus is "positive " and "negative".

2.5   Previous Study

Cheng, L., Wu, Y., & Liu, X. (2015) conducted a research about Chinese university students' perceptions of assessment tasks and classroom.The aim of this study is to address the research gap resulting from the lack of empirical research on students' perception of the task and environment of classroom assessment, the relationship between the task and environment by means it relates to learning of

students whith in the context of Chinese EFLtertiary education. By using data collection and data analysis, the result showed the participants's assessment tasks as being highly related to what they were learning in English classess and demonstrated a match between assessment and learning from the students' viewpoint. Students were seldom to involve in developing the criteria for assessment which has been empirically supported by previous studies(Cheng et al. 2004; Wang et al. 2013).

2.6   Theoretical Framework

Students who are the main actors in the process of delivering and receiving assessment tasks should get more attention about their response during the assessment tasks. The assessment tasks in the language instructions carry both benefit and achievement for the students' cognitive which affect in students practices. Not only the effect of benefits and achievements, the assessment tasks while delivering and its content also involved giving the effect of assessment.