

ABSTRACT

Formative Assessment in Jamaican Classrooms: Towards a Model for More Effective Implementation

Clavia Williams

Formative assessment has been heralded as germane to effective teaching and learning. However, despite an increasing global trend of a pedagogical shift from behaviourism to constructivism, teachers' classroom assessment strategies have remained largely traditional and summative. This multi-phase mixed-methods study investigated the extent to which formative assessment was being used in Jamaican secondary schools and explored how formative assessment may be more effectively infused into the teaching of English in Jamaican secondary schools. Data generated through a survey of 1,088 secondary school teachers and corroborated through semi-structured interviews, observations and experimentation with 32 secondary school teachers from the 5 types of secondary schools in Jamaica were analyzed using ANOVA, exploratory principal component analysis, standard multiple regression, ANCOVA, and the general inductive approach. Results showed that secondary school teachers predominantly used traditional assessment tools and strategies for formative and affective purposes despite school type, but the formative assessment practices were largely ineffective. It also showed that formative assessment improved student achievement in English in both internal and external examinations, and if formative assessment is to be effectively infused into the English classroom, steps have to be taken to encourage the formative use of summative tests and greater use of alternative assessment tools and strategies by classroom teachers. The greatest consideration has to be given to assessment factors, specifically national and schools' assessment policies and negative student behaviour. The findings have implications for all the stakeholders in education, including, the Ministry of Education, teacher training institutions, and the Caribbean Examination Council.

Keywords: formative assessment; English Language; English Literature; multi-phase mixed methods; secondary schools; Jamaica