

ABSTRACT

Improving Teachers' Use of Formative Assessment in School Based Assessment

Nirmala Ramnarine

This action research project sought to capture how a professional development workshop could be used to improve teachers' use of formative assessment in school-based assessments. The study involved a pre- post-test design with a treatment group of 3 teachers and 92 students and a control group of 2 teachers and 36 students at a denominational boy's secondary school in south Trinidad. Heritage (2007) theoretical framework for formative assessment was used to plan and implement a three-month professional development workshop for the three teachers. Data on teachers' and students' perceptions on the use of formative assessment were collected through questionnaires, journals, and observations. The professional development exercise improved teachers' use of formative assessment and increased students' performance within their school-based assessment. The teachers' perceptions indicated that they had feelings of uncertainty and lacked the skill to provide effective feedback. They identified several factors that militated against implementation, such as insufficient time and resources. They, however, saw an improvement in their students' performance and appreciation of the subject content. The students supported the use of formative assessment and welcomed the self-reflection and increased classroom discussions. The teachers, as well as the students, found that the individualized feedback was insufficient. This was as result of the limited amount of time assigned to classes with a large number of students. While increasing the use of formative assessment was beneficial to both the teachers and the students, the teachers were yet to develop the skills to manage their time and instantaneously adapt their practice to ensure that their students met their learning targets.

Keywords: Intervention programmes; Workshops; Formative evaluation; Primary school students; Student attitudes; Primary school teachers; Teacher attitudes; School-based assessment; Trinidad and Tobago