UNIVERSITY EXAMS PRESENT DANGER

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this theoretical article is to investigate the factors that make exams feel intimidating to university students rather than motivating them to study willingly. The goal of the research is to comprehend the causes of this occurrence and offer suggestions for how to deal with it. "A thorough evaluation of the prior research on the subject was undertaken for this study, with an emphasis on studies that looked at the connection between assessment and student motivation" (Crooks, 1988, p. 438). The focus on grades and rankings can foster a culture of rivalry that undermines the natural drive to study. One classic experiment conducted by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1970s, known as the "Candle Problem," demonstrated that external rewards (such as grades) can actually decrease intrinsic motivation for tasks that require creative problem-solving. Also, there is often a lack of feedback and support for students, especially those who struggle, which can further exacerbate feelings of inadequacy. In conclusion, the results of this study imply that in order to increase student motivation and involvement, evaluation procedures need to be reassessed and revised.

Keywords: Assessment problems; Lack of Clarity; Bias; Overemphasis on Grades; Assessment as a Threat; Mitigating the Threat of Assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a critical component of higher education. It is the method by which teachers assess the knowledge and development of their pupils. When done correctly, assessment may give students insightful feedback, assist teachers in bettering their lessons, and guarantee that learners are achieving the learning goals of their courses. Unfortunately, evaluation isn't always done correctly, and it can even threaten pupils rather than encourage them to study. "Unfortunately, evaluation isn't always done correctly, and it can even threaten pupils rather than encourage them to study" (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Harlen, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard, 2000; Wiggins,

2005; Wiggins, 1998). In this article, we will explore some of the most common problems of assessment in higher education as well as discuss why assessment can be a threat to students, and what can be done to mitigate this threat.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Assessment for Learning: This strategy places more emphasis on using evaluation to help and advance learning than just gauging results. When evaluation is employed largely for summative goals, it may produce a high-stakes climate that encourages anxiety and perceived threats among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This theoretical article seeks to investigate why evaluations appear to university students as a threat rather than as a motivation to study voluntarily. An extensive assessment of pertinent literature was done to reach this goal. The steps performed to choose and analyse the literature are described in the methodology that follows. Literature Search: A systematic search was performed using academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ERIC. The search was limited to articles published between 1988 and 2021 to ensure the inclusion of recent research. Selection Criteria: The initial search yielded a large number of articles. To narrow down the selection, the following criteria were applied:

a. Relevance: Articles that directly addressed the relationship between assessment and student motivation in the university context were included.

b. Peer-Reviewed: Only peer-reviewed articles were considered to ensure the quality and reliability of the sources.

c. English Language: Articles written in English were selected due to language proficiency limitations.

d. Publication Date: Preference was given to recent articles to incorporate the most up-to-date research findings.

Data Extraction and Analysis: Relevant information from the selected articles, including key arguments, theories, and empirical evidence, was extracted and organized. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns across the literature. Synthesis and Interpretation: The findings from the selected articles were synthesized and interpreted to develop a comprehensive understanding of the reasons why assessment may be perceived as a threat rather than an encouragement for university students. Integration Theoretical Frameworks: The theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars such as Black and William (1998), Crooks (1988), Harlen (2006),

Hattie and Timperley (7), Shepard (2000), Stiggins (2005), and Wiggins (1998) were integrated into the analysis to provide a theoretical foundation for the discussion. Citation and Referencing: Proper citation and referencing were ensured throughout the article following the guidelines of the chosen citation style (e.g., APA, MLA). The methodology described above guided the selection, analysis, and synthesis of the literature to explore the reasons why assessment seems like a threat rather than encouraging university students to study willingly. By drawing on a range of scholarly works, this article aims to contribute to the existing knowledge in the field and provide insights for educators and policymakers to create assessment practices that promote student motivation and engagement.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION
Lack of Clarity

Lack of clarity is one of the main issues with assessment in higher education. There are numerous ways to do this. For instance, learning objectives, evaluation standards, or grading guidelines may all be ambiguous. When students are unsure of what is expected of them, they may find it difficult to adequately prepare for exams, which can result in subpar performance and poorer grades. According to Black and William (1998), one of the main issues with assessment in higher education is the lack of clarity. They argue that learning objectives, evaluation standards, or grading guidelines may all be ambiguous, making it difficult for students to adequately prepare for exams (p.7). Additionally, Crooks (1988) emphasizes the impact of classroom evaluation practices on students, suggesting that unclear expectations can lead to subpar performance and poorer grades (p. 438). Harlen (2006) discusses the relationship between assessment for formative and summative purposes, highlighting the importance of clear assessment criteria for effective learning outcomes (pp. -178).

Solution: To address this issue, instructors should work to present precise and thorough learning objectives, evaluation standards, and grading guidelines. Rubrics, checklists, and other tools that serve to define expectations and give pupils a clear path to success can be used to do this.

Bias

Bias is a different issue with assessment in higher education. Unconscious bias on the part of educators is one example of bias, as is systemic bias ingrained in assessment instruments and processes. Bias has the potential to reinforce existing educational inequities and result in unequal outcomes for pupils.
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systemic bias ingrained in assessment instruments and processes (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Harlen, 2006; Shepard, 2000; Stiggins, 2005; Wiggins, 1998). Bias has the potential to reinforce existing educational inequities and result in unequal outcomes for pupils (Black & William, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard, 2000; Stiggins, 2005; Wiggins, 1998).

Solution: Educators should work to adopt unbiased and open assessment tools and techniques in order to combat prejudice in assessment. In order to lessen the effects of unconscious bias, this can be done by using blind grading. It can also be done by using a variety of assessment techniques to give a more complete picture of student performance.

Assessment as a Threat

Students may be threatened by assessments for a variety of reasons. The fact that evaluation is frequently linked to grades is one of the primary causes. Students may believe that their value as a student is based on their grades because they are viewed as a gauge of academic progress. Students may believe that their future depends on how well they perform on tests, which can cause anxiety and stress. Students may be threatened by assessments for a variety of reasons. The fact that evaluation is frequently linked to grades is one of the primary causes (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Shepard,2000). Students may believe that their value as a student is based on their grades because they are viewed as a gauge of academic progress (Black & William, 1998; Harlen, 2006; Wiggins, 1998).

The ability to compare kids to one another is another way that assessment might endanger students. As a result, students may be more concerned with surpassing their peers than with actually learning and comprehending the material. This might cause pupils to prioritize memory and regurgitation of material over in-depth study, which can result in a superficial comprehension of the subject matter.

When assessments are utilized as high-stakes tools, pupils may also be at risk. High-stakes exams are ones with important outcomes for students, such graduation, job, or admittance to a university. Students may believe that their entire future depends on how well they succeed on an assessment when it is employed as a high-stakes tool. This could lead to pressure and tension, which could be bad for learning.

Reducing the Threat of Assessment

There are strategies to lessen the threat that evaluation poses to pupils. One strategy is to change the emphasis from grades to learning. This can be accomplished by using formative assessment, in which learners receive feedback on their progress during the course of learning as opposed to only at the conclusion of a course or task. Students are more likely to

engage in deep learning and grow a passion of learning if learning is prioritized over grades. "There are strategies to lessen the threat that evaluation poses to pupils. One strategy is to change the emphasis from grades learning. This can be accomplished by using formative assessment, in which learners receive feedback on their progress during the course of learning as opposed to only at the conclusion of a course or task. Students are more likely to engage in deep learning and grow a passion for learning if learning is prioritized over grades" (Black & William, 1998; Crooks, 1988; Harlen, 2006; Hie & Timperley, 2007; Shepard, 2000; Stiggins, 2005; Wiggins, 1998). Finally, when evaluation is used in a helpful and motivating context, kids may find it less intimidating. Teachers may foster a positive learning environment by giving students clear and helpful feedback, being accessible for questions and concerns, and fostering a culture in the classroom that prioritizes learning and growth over grades and competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

Assessment is an essential part of education, but it can also be a threat to students, instead of making them learn willingly. When assessment is associated with grades, used to compare students to one another, or used as a high-stakes tool, it can create anxiety, stress, and a superficial understanding of the subject matter. Assessment can, however, be a tool for fostering in-depth learning and a love of learning if the emphasis is shifted from grades to learning, a range of assessment techniques are used, growth and development are prioritized, and a supportive environment is created. Additionally, educators can develop a more equitable and efficient assessment system that promotes student learning and development by addressing problems like ambiguity, bias, and overemphasis on grades. It is our duty as educators to make sure that assessment is used to promote student learning and development rather than to intimidate or reprove them.

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