

**The effectiveness of assessment for learning to enhance  
students' learning in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

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## **The effectiveness of assessment for learning to enhance students' learning in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

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### **Abstract:**

It is evident across the globe that assessment has become increasingly central to the whole process of education as an important part of the curriculum and the teaching and learning cycle. There is strong evidence in the literature that assessment for learning (AfL) is key for effective student learning and academic progress in education context. In response to this international movement towards innovative assessment, there are some recent attempts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) aiming to reshape and improve the assessment system. The significant evidence about the influence of assessment on students' learning drives this research to contribute to the Saudi education reform.

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فاعلية التقويم من أجل التعليم لتعزيز جودة تعلم الطلاب في المملكة العربية السعودية

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المملكة العربية السعودية

### الملخص:

أصبح جليا في جميع أنحاء العالم أن التقييم يشكل أهمية مركزية متزايدة في العملية التعليمية بأكملها كجزء مهم من المناهج ومن عمليتي التعليم والتعلم للطلاب. وهناك مراجعات عديدة ومهمة في الأدبيات على أن التقييم من أجل التعلم هو المفتاح لتعزيز عملية التعلم الفعال والتقدم الأكاديمي في سياق التعليم. واستجابة لهذه الحركة العالمية نحو تعزيز دور التقويم كوسيلة مبتكرة في تدريس الطلاب، وظهرت هناك بعض المحاولات في المملكة العربية السعودية تهدف إلى إعادة تشكيل وتحسين نظام التقييم والتقويم. هذه الأدلة المهمة حول تأثير التقييم والتقويم على تعلم الطلاب تدفع هذا البحث إلى المساهمة في تطوير وتحسين التعليم في المملكة العربية السعودية.

**Introduction:**

Over the last decades, considerable changes and reforms have taken place in assessment system within the context of education in the KSA. A new learning culture has emerged in the context of education in Saudi Arabia, with strong emphasis on the significant influence of assessment methods, strategies and delivery of learning outcomes (Al-Wassia, Hamed, Al-Wassia, Alafari, & Jamjoom, 2015).

Generally, assessment plays a vital role in the context of education, and it needs to be modified and reformed to prepare the millennials for the life-long learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2008). AfL has become a primary factor in empowering students and improve their learning. The paper aims to determine AfL approaches and purposes that can contribute to improve learning and support learners to be involved and engaged.

It is evident across the globe that assessment has become increasingly central to the whole process of education, especially with the increased need to find ways to assure and enhance the quality of educational provision. “In the context of an increasing demand for quality ... in education to meet economic and social challenges, many countries now see assessment and evaluation as playing a central strategic role in developing education policy” (Livingston & Hutchinson, 2017, p. 290).

Assessment has been recognized as a primary component of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and feedback cycle, with changed focus on outcomes rather than inputs. Thus, assessment should be designed to promote better learning (Miller, Imrie & Cox, 1998). Assessment, according to Brown and Glasner (2003), is an “essential element in the learning process and must not be treated as a bolt-on extra at the end of the teaching and learning process” (p. 1) rather it can actually shape this process in productive ways to enhance students’ learning and help them know how well they are doing and what else they need to do in order to move their learning forward. Assessment is about learning, means it is about what one needs to know and how one can do it in relation to the idea of progression and what to do next to continue progression.

### **Challenges of Implementing AfL:**

Introducing AfL in Saudi classrooms has become a demand due to its importance in increasing the education quality and the learning outcomes. However, it should be noted that for KSA, the practices and implementation of this assessment is rather new which might be associated with a number of barriers and obstacles. So, it would be of benefit to know what the challenges of implementing AfL are and what hinders its effectiveness.. The challenge lies in how teachers and students, who are strongly influenced by traditional practices of assessment, deal with the new modes of assessment (Quyen & Khairani, 2016).

While the main goal of AfL is “teaching students how to learn”, traditional assessment have high visibility where lecturers are often oriented to “teach to the test”, and learners are encouraged to meet the course requirements at the expense of learning development (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Black, 2015; Yin & Buck, 2015).

Hence, there is a fundamental lack of understanding in the concept of AfL among educators and very little understanding of how to use it in the classroom setting (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Kariri et al., 2018; Quyen & Khairani, 2016). Educators’ different understandings of AfL constitutes an obstacle as it ranges from understanding the role that it plays in enhancing learning to merely equating it either with measurement or as a “process of co-enquiry” (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008, p. 2).

The lack of a common understanding among educators in Saudi context indicates that the implementation new assessment culture is inconsistent and leads to anxiety (Amen, Ahmed & Alostaz, 2016). There are also sociocultural challenges specific to the Saudi culture, including the hegemonic power relationship between teachers and students. This power relationship is due to a cultural belief among Saudi society that knowledge mastery is only possessed by the teachers (Al-Wassia et al., 2015). Where the teacher is omnipotent, students are afraid to debate with their teachers, and teachers resent questioning and debate (Kariri et al., 2018). So, alternative assessment, such as peer-

assessments, may be less appreciated in such cultures (Yan & Cheng, 2015).

In Bramwell-Lalor & Rainford's (2015) study, it has been found that teachers can have difficulties implementing AfL as they were reluctant to release their own control, even though teachers knew intellectually that innovative assessment required a shift toward students' control of their own learning, and to be engaged in peer learning and peer assessment. However, although the use of AfL in new learning cultures is challenging, the extensive discourse showed similar challenges of AfL implementation in some developed, high-income countries, such as, the USA and the UK. Much research suggests that using AfL does not come naturally for teachers, particularly in a new learning culture. Nilsson (2013), for example, found that new teachers feel awkward using AfL and formative interaction in their classrooms. Nilsson suggests that in order for new teachers to understand how to use AfL in their classrooms, they needed to have experienced instruction where AfL was used.

#### **Assessment for Learning: Assessments to Enrich Student Learning:**

The relationship between assessment and learning and the capacity of assessment to impact upon the quality of learning has been discussed extensively (Beaumont, O'Doherty, & Shannon, 2011; Gibbs, 2010; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Race, Brown, & Smith, 2005; Sambell, 2011). Race, Brown, and Smith (2005), for example, assert that assessment has become one of the driving forces for students' learning more than ever before. This growing interest on AfL suggests a focus of improving students' learning (Murtagh, 2010). Accordingly, it appears that there is a significant movement in the assessment culture where the essence of AfL is promoted to help to provide information for both students and teachers to improve the learning and teaching process and reduce excessive focus in judgment, classification and categorization (Kennedy, Chan, Fok, & Yu, 2008).

#### **Contextualising Definition of AfL:**

The term "assessment for learning" was first used in 1992, by Mary James to distinguish between FA and SA purposes. Later the term was emphasized by Gipps (1994) to describe the shift from a traditional model of assessment that included "checking whether the information

had been received”, to a more holistic view of assessment focusing on “the structure and quality of students’ learning and understanding” (Gipps, 1994, p. 25). These movements reflect an understanding of the need to build and maintain students’ learning through focusing on assessment.

In the early 2000s, the term AfL came into common parlance to give emphasis to the purpose for which assessment is undertaken with regard to the functions of both FA and SA (Wiliam, 2011). In 2002, the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) used ten principles to narrow the understanding of AfL. They consider it as “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (ARG, 2002, p. 2). These principles state that AfL (ARG, 2002, p. 2):

1. is part of effective planning
2. focuses on how students learn
3. is central to classroom practice
4. is key professional skill
5. is sensitive and constructive
6. fosters motivation
7. promotes understanding of goals and criteria
8. helps learners know how to improve
9. develops the capacity for self-assessment
10. recognizes all educational achievements

The ARG’s definition demonstrates the key components of AfL, for instance defining and sharing learning criteria and intentions, students and teachers’ collaboration in classroom through questioning and discussion, formative feedback, self- and peer-assessments, etc. These techniques have been presented as a list to provide a common understanding of AfL. The purpose of these practices is to help to reduce the gap between the current level of students and the desired objectives and also increase the students’ self-monitoring of their own learning. This means that AfL focuses on the learning process and helps students



fill their learning gaps (Sadler, 1989). If these elements of AfL are used efficiently, it might effectively enhance learning and instruction.

However, the ARG definition of AfL is widely understood as strategies or techniques that help in providing scaffolds for learners to construct their knowledge (Glasson, 2009). The argument here is that the implementation of AfL tends toward superficial and mechanical level in which AfL is being reduced to a set of strategies. This severely constrained the potentials for learning.

However, the superficial implementation of AfL techniques and strategies as only controlled by teachers led Marshall and Drummond (2006) to create a distinction between the “letter” and “spirit” of AfL, as will be discussed in the following section.

### **Moving from the “Letter” to the “Spirit” of AfL:**

Some AfL research assume that AfL that focusing on promoting an understanding of goals and criteria, giving feedback, helping learners know how to improve and developing the capacity for self-assessment reflects a purely constructivist approach (Cowie, 2005; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Murphy & Hall, 2008). A constructivist approach to learning “focuses attention on the mental models that a learner employs when responding to new information or to new problems” (James, Black & McCormick, 2007, p. 17).

A constructivist approach puts the emphasis on students’ interests and helps them to construct knowledge on schemas of prior knowledge by providing them with scaffolding instructions (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007). Hence, within a constructivist perspective, AfL provides learners the cognitive scaffolds to help them be expert learners who are able to construct and develop knowledge individually.

However, this constructivist view of AfL is challenged. Bredo (1994) criticised the focus on an individual model of learning where “mind is separated from its physical, biological, and social contexts” (Bredo, 1994, p. 26). Instead, AfL is a shared interaction in a social environment between teachers and students and students and peers (Sfard, 1998). Elwood (2006).

puts forward the notion that assessment is a complicated cultural process, where the relationship of the learner, the teacher and the task are

examined in the social and cultural context they exist in. When this context is strong enough, there is a clear impact on process of assessment, and so it must be understood fully. Without this, AfL fails as a way of facilitating a global approach to education which is not affected by culture or impacted by teacher personality (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 6). A sociocultural perspective can empower teachers into discussing their context's unique characteristics, which can allow learner autonomy to be developed. In turn, the process of learning then becomes the responsibility of the more independent learner.

The theoretical basis of AfL considers learning from a sociocultural perspective. In this regard, Marshall and Drummond (2006) stated that the most autonomy in students was developed by teachers who understood the value of social interaction and sharing the responsibility of learning with their students, with the help of AfL practices. In turn, teaching with the spirit of AfL could happen when the classroom built an environment where socially constructed learning is created. As a result, AfL is facilitated to the point where a culture of cooperation is established amongst teachers and their students, impacting subsequent assessment (Brookhart & Moss, 2009, p. 12).

### **The Sociocultural Theoretical Perceptive:**

The origin of sociocultural theories can be traced back to the work of Dewey and Vygotsky; the key notion of the theory is that learning is a social process. The American psychologist, John Dewey (1859–1952), and the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) were highly influential reformers in education context in relation to the sociocultural theories of learning. Their approaches to learning are most helpful in establishing and extending the relationship between assessment and progression towards independent learning (Bredo, 1997). Both Dewey and Vygotsky held a broadly similar perspective of the socially constructed nature of learning and understood the notion of progression toward learners' autonomy, although they differed at significant points in their understanding of learning (Glassman, 2001).

Dewey (1916/1991) argued "that education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process that

involve” (Dewey, 1916/ 1991, p. 38). He believed that the understanding develops through social interaction and “scientific inquiry” rather than through a symbolic teaching about a concept. This suggests that learning process should involve a clear interaction between students and teachers in a social environment. He argued that situating learning within the social context is important because engaging students in active learning helps them to conquer and destroy “self perpetuating prejudices” (Dewey, 1910,1997, p. 25).

Bredo (1994) maintained the situated view of learning as postulated by Dewey. Bredo sees learning as a distinct from locating learning in the head through symbol-processing of learning:

activity as involving a transaction between person and environment that changed both.... Dewey focused on “doings and undergoings” which reciprocally change the character or structure of both person and environment, creating a joint history of development.... making mind immanent rather than transcendent. Cognition as situated; the activities of person and environment are viewed as parts of a mutually constructed whole (Bredo, 1994, p. 24).

On basis of the above argument, a situated view of learning involves thinking and action that cannot be separated. Through reflection and dialogue, individual can explore more deeply into experience. In his work, Vygotsky (1978) argued that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from experience.

Vygotsky highlights that construction of knowledge is a social process that begins firstly from interactions within social environment (interpsychological). This is constructed later within an individual (intrapsychological). This emphasis on social interaction is one of the core ideas that forms part of his theoretical framework. Vygotsky highlighted the role of culture and language as appropriate tools of engaging individuals in the achievement of greater social cohesion (Glassman, 2001). Language was realized as a tool that mediates activity especially when adults use tools such as language words, and signs to interact with individuals to complete a task. This helps individuals internalise learning and a ground for understanding their next task (Vygotsky, 1978).

Looking through the lens of sociocultural theory, the role of the teacher is to ensure that all students can work in a social environment and have the ability to collaborate in order to construct new knowledge and understandings. This arguably means that during interaction and collaboration, students learn from each other (e.g. their teachers and their peers).

Rogoff (1990) drew from Vygotsky’s work that the unit of analysis is no longer the properties of the individual, but rather the sociocultural activity that involve these individuals in actively participating in socially constituted environments. Vygotsky believes that the role of education is to provide learners with experiences which are in their model, thus promoting and motivating their individual learning.

Drawing from Vygotsky’s thinking, AfL views learning as a process in social settings in which assessment is considered as a key in enhancing learning. Furthermore, promoting this social construction of knowledge through assessment do not only focus on interactions between teachers and their students, but also on the use of different tools, such as peer-assessment and feedback. It can be argued that AfL can capture students’ future learning through creating an environment that supports learners to internalise different tools, instead of helping them to achieve certain outcomes in isolation to learning tasks.

AfL practices, within the sociocultural framework, are positioned within the broader social and cultural context of learning settings. “The social structure of the practice, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). This helps understanding AfL within a sociocultural context as an interactive process in which the teacher and students engage in discussion aiming to enhance and advance teaching and learning and encourage learners to become the owners of their own learning. Thus, Dewey’s and Vygotsky’s desire to promote autonomy where teachers can facilitate learning through engaging learners in assessment process is crucial to the “spirit” of AfL. This puts the emphasis on the realization of learner’ autonomy and development of their self-confidence as the

guiding principles of teaching and learning while implementing AfL in classroom.

Therefore, AfL practices in a sociocultural classroom is conceptualised as cultural and dialectical process to empower learners to increase their understanding and their control over the learning process. From a sociocultural view of AfL, it was positioned as practice that occurs within daily pedagogical practices (Mansell, James, & Newton, 2009; Sardareh & Saad, 2013).

### **Assessment for learning principles:**

There are an increasing number of principles guiding the good practice of AfL in the literature. For example, the AfL principles proposed by ARG in addition to the Assessment is For Learning project launched in Scotland as discussed earlier (p. 28), were useful guides for checking on the nature of various AfL practices to support the learning purpose of all assessments. Both studies take a school perspective.

In response to the sustained efforts to develop the learning state within HE sector, there is now extensive acknowledgment of the importance of defining assessment strategies which focuses specifically on improving and inspiring learning. There are a number of influential approaches which provide a good underpinning to identify the most effective and influential characteristics of AfL (i.e. Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Nicol, 2007; Rust, O'Donovan, & Price, 2005; Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). Their proposed approaches and principles are generated explicitly to address the strong link between assessment and learning.

However, assessment and feedback approaches still need further understanding and development even with some advances in policy and practice. Bloxham (2016) argued that assessment appears to be resistant to change and remains one of the most “conservative features” in HE. A number of studies regarding students’ opinions shows that assessment and feedback are major sources of dissatisfaction among those students (Soilemetzidis, Bennett, Buckley, Hillman, & Stoakes, 2014). These results highlight the need of assessment reforms. Recently, Brown (2015) asserted that.

If we want to improve students’ engagement with learning, a key locus of enhancement can be refreshing our approaches to assessment (p. 106).

Reforming approaches to assessment is key to improving learning and education. It is recognized that this issue is undoubtedly nuanced, complex and highly situated phenomenon, thus in what follows some principles that have influenced the development of AfL are discussed. As the AfL literature has been heavily influenced by these principles, it is important to identify them and understand their significance in order to better understand and inform the spirit of AfL implementation and development.

### Conditions under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004):

Reviewing the principles in which assessment promotes learning, Gibbs and Simpson (2004) develop a number of conditions in relation to the development of effective assessment and feedback processes. Gibbs and Simpson's 11 conditions (Figure 1) can be grouped into 5 key themes include: 1) Quantity and distribution of student effort, 2) Quality and level of student effort 3) Quantity and timing of feedback, 4) Quality of feedback and 5) Student response to feedback. These five themes are further clustered into two main themes: student effort (Conditions 1-4) and feedback (Condition 5-11).

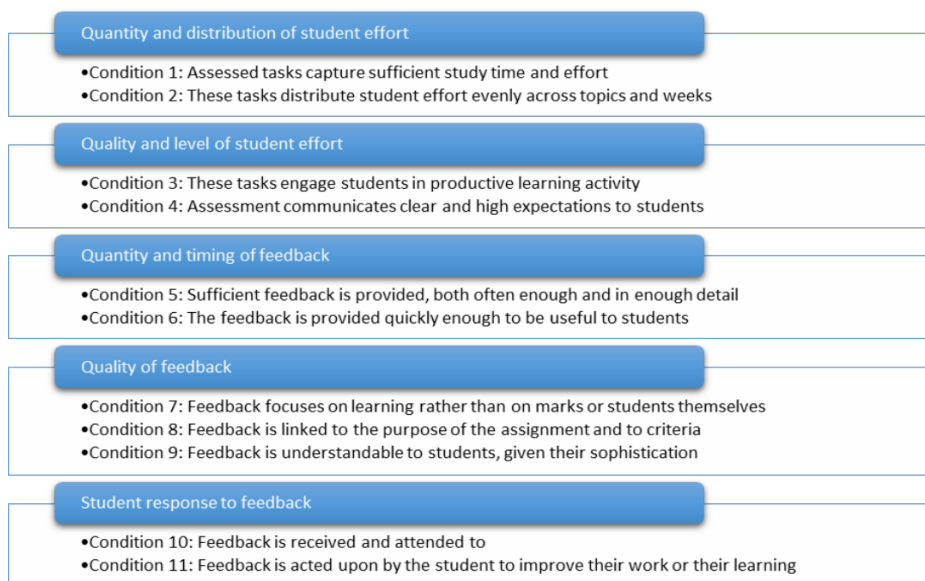


Figure 1 Conditions under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning, Gibbs & Simpson (2004)

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) suggest that the use of assessment and the impact this assessment has on learners’ effort should be rethink in education sector. Later, Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet (2007) criticise the large volume of SA that decrease the study time students spend on their course. The findings of Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet’s study highlight the need to reconsider the number of assessment tasks used in each course, in addition to the distribution of these tasks. Based on Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet’s study, it appears that there is a link between different conditions (i.e. Condition 1 & 2) and focusing only on one condition will not enhance students’ learning. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) also stress the impact of feedback on students’ learning as reflected in 7 conditions mentioned in Figure 1 above. While conditions 5 to 9 arguably have emphasised what teachers should do to provide feedback, conditions 10 and 11 focus on students’ engagement with the provided feedback. However, the feedback seems to be largely controlled by the teachers and students’ role is limited to receiving and attending to that feedback. The conditions set out by Gibbs and Simpson (2004) is criticized by limiting the role for students while focusing largely on the role of teachers in assessment. However, these conditions are the first set of guiding principles to promote students’ assessment.

**A Social Constructivist Assessment Process (Rust, O’Donovan & Price, 2005):**

A social constructivist assessment process was advanced by Rust, O’Donovan and Price (2005). This process has since informed further development and research in the assessment literature and their impacts on the education sector. The work of Rust, O’Donovan and Price involves building a shared understanding of academic standards between lecturers and students. Relating this work to AfL does not seem to be easy. However, the later work, Price and O’Donovan (2006) put the emphasis on “students need to understand the assessment task, criteria and expected standards, and subsequently their feedback so they can develop their learning and improve future performance” (Price & O’Donovan, 2006, p. 100).

Price and O’Donovan (2006) maintained that providing explicit assessment information and criteria through course specifications or

learning outcomes ignores sharing of shared understanding of assessment process, criteria and task. Hence, Price and O'Donovan (2006) and Rust, et al. (2005) suggest a model of assessment process based on the social-constructivist approach to teaching and learning (see Figure 2). According to Rust, et al. (2005), "many problems in current practice could be overcome and the student learning experience greatly enhanced if a social constructivist approach is applied to the assessment process" (p.232). This arguably could enhance learning and high achievement of learning among students because AfL is situated with social circumstances.

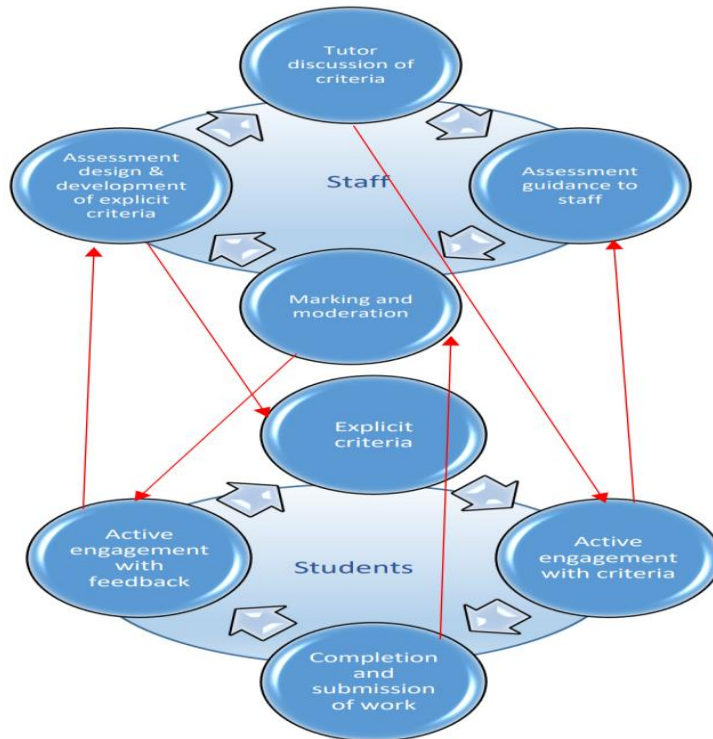


Figure 2A social constructivist assessment process: one dynamic system, Rust, O'Donovan & Price (2005)

Based on Rust et al.'s (2005) model, assessment is a process that involves different interactions between teachers and students, as illustrated in Figure 2 above. The focus of this model is to actively engage both lecturers and students in the process of constructing, developing and



applying assessment criteria and assessment feedback. A social constructivism theory underpins AfL, hence, it is important not to view AfL as set of fixed processes represented in the model. Rust, et al. (2005) maintain that assessment criteria should be aligned with learning outcomes and overall teaching, learning and assessment Tutor discussion of criteria Assessment guidance to staff Marking and moderation assessment design & development of explicit criteria Explicit criteria Active engagement with criteria Completion and submission of work Active engagement with feedback processes. Arguably, teachers should provide students with opportunities to be engaged in understanding the assessment criteria and assessment feedback.

This model by Rust, et al. (2005) is the only set of principles that views AfL as a process. In addition, this model represents the assessment process from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives and interactions and a more balanced role of both of them. This model has its benefits in emphasising that assessment is a complex process that involves interactions between teachers and students.

**Twelve Principles of Good Formative Assessment and Feedback (Nicol, 2007 and 2009):**

Nicol has different versions of AfL principles, suggesting that assessment is a complex area that requires revision and review. The different versions of assessment principles are often confusing for practitioners. Nicol highlighted twelve principles in Figure 3 below. Each principle of these twelve principles has questions which help teachers to review their assessment processes.

Nicol referred to a conceptual model of self-regulated learning of Butler and Winne (1995), which emphasises students’ active role in learning. This model of self-regulated learning may make students socially isolated.

Nicol (2007 and 2009) put the emphasis on the importance of feedback from others (i.e. teacher, peers) and interactions and engagement between teacher-student and student-student. Nicol’s twelve principles therefore are underpinned by a social-constructivist viewpoint as put a great emphasis on the importance of dialogue and social engagement.

Nicol focuses on students’ empowerment through stressing the importance of student involvement and self-evaluation and reflection in learning. Distribution of students’ time and effort on challenging learning

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tasks and giving them choice in topics, methods, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments are overarching themes of empowering students as introduced by Nicol.



Figure 3 Twelve principles of good formative assessment and feedback, Nicol (2007 and 2009)

Nicol's twelve principles promote the active role teachers and students play in creating AfL. In the twelve principles of good formative assessment and feedback (Nicol, 2007 and 2009) the importance of dialogue and social engagement are stressed. Nicol (2009) explains that the framework which is introduced by Nicol (2007) assist the application of the twelve principles, in order to improve especially, although not limited to, the first-year student experience. Nicol (2007) introduces a framework with two dimensions to assist the implementation of those principles.

There are two dimensions of assessment and feedback implementation. These involve the engagement-empowerment dimension and the academic-social dimension. The engagement-empowerment dimension refers to the principles that enable students to become self-regulated learners.

Nicol (2009) maintains that engaging students does not necessarily empowering them. He states that the guiding principles for assessment involves creating an atmosphere that gives students control of the learning situation through sharing responsibility to empower them. This dimension was also viewed through Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding as it "depicts the progressive reduction of teacher 'scaffolding' as students develop their capacity for self-regulation" (Nicol, 2009, p. 20). Therefore, Nicol's engagement dimension should be between teachers and students, and students themselves. As students are socially engaged in the learning environments, they internalise the tools necessary to learn and therefore empower themselves.

### **Six Conditions of Assessment for Learning: The CETL's Model (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013):**

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's (CETL) specific aim was the development of best AfL approaches across the institution. The CETL is "one of 74 centres of excellence established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2005" (Sambell et al., 2013, p. 7). The key purpose for AfL of CETL is to support students in taking responsibility for evaluating, judging and improving their own performance. This idea of autonomous learning expressed in their definitions of AfL signifies a constructivist approach which were

underpinned by Nicol (2007 and 2009) twelve principles of good assessment and feedback. The model of AfL discussed in Figure 4 below was developed by CETL and led by Kay Sambell and Liz McDowell. This model consists of six inter-related conditions with intention to transform teaching, learning and assessment environments holistically (Sambell et al., 2013). It aimed to achieve a better integration of teaching, learning and assessment processes.

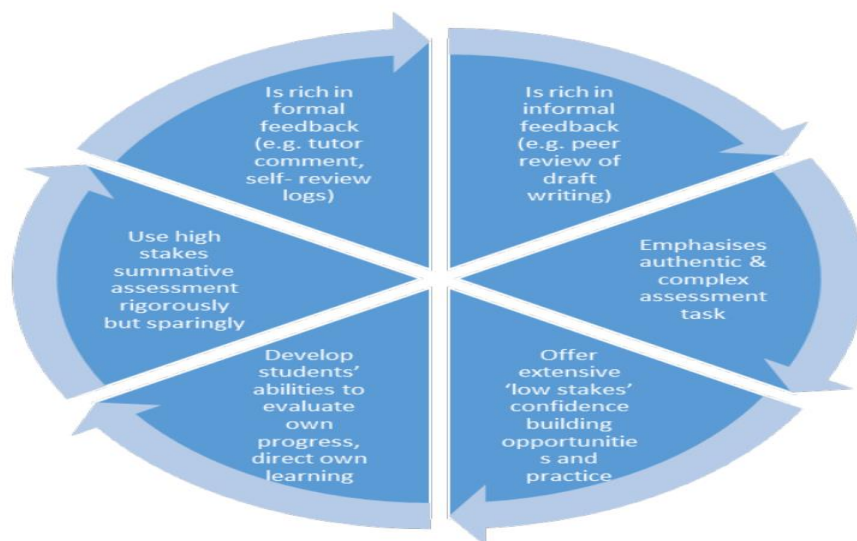


Figure 4The CETL's model: the six conditions of assessment for learning  
This model is described as a feedback-rich learning environment that has formative assessment at the core aiming to enable all learners to progress. This model is the only set of principles that divides feedback into formal and informal. The divide stresses feedback is not solely the responsibility of lecturers, but also teacher-student and student-student dialogic feedback from a range of formal and informal collaborative learning activities, which seem to have a strong social constructivist underpinning. This interactive teaching and learning processes enable students to play an active role in their own learning, rather than simply expecting teachers to perform that role for them. This model stresses the authenticity and complexity in assessment methods and content. This demonstrated the importance of enabling learners to construct their own

meaning of the world. Authentic assessment encourages students' engagement in their learning. Sambell et al. (2013) maintained that engaging students in learning activities and feedback gives them opportunity to actively understand, interrogate and challenge the standards, outcomes, and criteria used for the evaluation. This leads to active learning that increasingly enable learners to take control of their own learning and its assessment. This directs students to learn in real-life situations and with increased opportunity for application and assessment of their own progress and attainments; which supports autonomous learning.

Promoting a balance between the use of both FA and SA is another feature of this model of AfL. Interestingly, the term 'formative assessment' and 'summative assessment' were not used in defining these conditions but opts for low stakes and high stakes assessment. However, as argued by McDowell, Sambell and Davison (2009), the "high-stakes summative assessment is used rigorously but sparingly, so that formative assessment can drive the learning offering students extensive opportunities to engage in the kinds of tasks that develop and demonstrate their learning, thus building their confidence and capabilities before they are summatively assessed" (p. 60). Later, in their book, Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery (2012) have changed the model and rather than using the term "low stake" and "high stake", they have replaced them with formative and summative.

According to McDowell, Wakelin, Montgomery and King (2011), these six conditions should be viewed as an overall approach rather than see them as isolated techniques. Viewing these conditions as a cohesive approach positively influences learners experiences (Sambell et al., 2013). They argue that "our model was developed as a means of trying to ensure that participating teachers developed sophisticated levels of assessment literacy which could be use as basis from which to critically interrogate and inform their practice" (p. 8).

From the different sets of principles discussed in this section, it is clear that there are some commonalities across all principles, such as, provide and engage students with explicit expectations, provide and engage students with useful feedback, engage teachers and students in

constructive dialogue. These principles of AfL aim to place the student at the centre of the learning process (Crooks, 1988). However, it is crucial to not see these models and principles as a quick fix to achieve the desired outcome. This implies that AfL is much more than a set of simple strategies or principles to be implemented by educators, but rather move more towards AfL which has learning at its core and help learners to feel empowered in their learning.

Ultimately, all the principles of AfL are interrelated and interacting in which learning effectively promote students’ engagement and autonomy in a social environment. Thus, AfL must be conceptualized as an integral part of cultural and dialectical process that support students to act as partners in learning and to exercise increasing levels of control over their learning.

**Conclusion:**

Assessment for learning is highly effective method for enhancing learning as it empowers students by involving them in the learning process. It encourages a growth mindset, where learning is seen as an ongoing process rather than a final outcome. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be able to understand AfL concept and principles. By adhering to these principles, assessment process can be a powerful method to shift their wider underpinning teaching theories toward a more learning-centred pedagogy and consequently to empower student learning. The shift toward more learning-focused pedagogy, for example through peer discussion, allows student-student and student-teacher interaction and sharing of assessment expectations and aspirations, all of which lead to the conclusion that learning is both process and product.

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