



Favorable Indices for Assessing The Performance of University Students in The Humanities Fields and The Amount of Attention They Receive

Mostafa BagherianFar ^{*1}, AhmadReza NasrEsfahani ², Mohamad Javadipour ³, Asghar Zamani⁴

1. Corresponding Author: Ph.D Curriculum Studies in higher education, University of Isfahan, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Isfahan, Iran. E. Mail: m_bagherian@edu.ui.ac.ir
2. Professor, Department of Education, University of Isfahan, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Isfahan, Iran
3. Associate, Department of Curriculum Planning, University of Tehran, Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Tehran, Iran
4. Associate, Department of Higher Education Management, Higher Education Research and Planning Institute

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Abstract

Aim: The present study is aimed towards Identification the Indices of Desirable Students performance evaluations regarding the Humanity Courses for Universities and the Extent of attention them. In the present study, we have made use of the consecutive mixed-method exploratory research which is of instrument-making type. In the quantitative section, a qualitative case study method and in the quantitative section, a descriptive-survey method was employed. For the qualitative section, we underwent quasi-structured interviews with 20 distinguished and qualified experts and faculty members of universities having their expertise in evaluation. Also, 360 of the students of universities comprised the quantitative statistical population. This number of participants was selected using multistage cluster sampling method. The results indicated that the interviewees outlined fourteen indices as the salient indices of evaluation and it can be argued that the recognized indices can be recruited to evaluation and revise the evaluation of courses in different majors of the humanities.

Keywords: *evaluation; curriculum; The Humanity Courses, universities.*

Introduction

Assessment of students' learning has been introduced as an influential element in the curriculum, such that any weakness in assessment, which is mainly placed at the end of the curriculum, can lead to the failure of a curriculum. Assessment is defined as value-based judgment. Assessment includes two main components: 1) collecting data using measurement tools that include relevant criteria; 2) using the results to judge or decide on goals based on agreed standards (Alderman et al., 2014). The effects of assessment on students' learning have been widely discussed. Cohen & Sampson (1999) suggested that assessment has a great impact on learning in formal courses. It plays an important role in the processes (the content) and the approaches (the amount and how) of students' learning (Dai, Matthews & Reyes, 2020).

The research results of Murillo and Hidalgo (2020), Rasouli, Zandi and DeLuca (2018), Xu and Brown (2016), DeLuca et al. (2016), and DeLuca (2012) showed that observing the principle of justice is one of the important principles in professors' methods of assessment. Furthermore, Tierney (2014, 2016) considers fairness in assessment necessary to ensure justice, which supports the compatibility of assessment with students' needs and characteristics. Assessing how students learn is considered an essential component of effective education, and a key path to achieving important improvements in students' abilities. However, we should know what the relevant indices to determine the assessment quality are. Considering the lack of research in this field, as well as limitations such as inadequacy in conducted studies, it appears necessary to conduct such research.

Methodology

This practical study used exploratory sequential mixed methods design for developing tools. Qualitative data was collected and analyzed to help develop a questionnaire. The qualitative phase was conducted using a qualitative case study method, and the quantitative phase used a descriptive survey method. Experts and key informants of assessment were selected via purposive sampling as potential participants, which continued until theoretical saturation of data. Therefore, 20 experienced professors in the field of assessment were recruited. The statistical population in the quantitative phase included all third- and fourth-year undergraduate students of Isfahan University in the academic year 2019-2020. The sampling method in the quantitative phase was multi-stage cluster sampling based on the sampling table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

To collect data, semi-structured interviews were used in the qualitative phase, and the questionnaire extracted from the interviews in the quantitative phase. The reliability and validity techniques were used for the qualitative validation. To analyze the data, structural and interpretative methods were used in the qualitative phase, and descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the quantitative phase.

Results

The findings related to the first research question showed that the most important assessment indices are suitability of assessment tasks with course objectives, observance of scientific and professional principles when designing questions and conducting exams, giving feedback to students' assignments and guiding them, diversity of assessment methods, suitability and coordination of assessment with course content, informing students of assessment criteria and methods, observing justice and fairness in question design and grading, attention to continuous and developmental assessment; assessment of students' knowledge, attitude and skills regarding the course, and activity-oriented assessment.

The findings of the second question of the research showed that the mean assessment indices were higher than the standard score in the courses of "teaching methodology", "development management" and "research method in law" and lower than the standard score in other courses (3). The findings of the third research question showed that the mean of the major of "educational sciences" was higher than the criterion score (3), the mean of the major of "public administration" was equal to the criterion score, and the mean in other majors was lower than the criterion score. The findings of the fourth research question showed that the index of suitability of assessment tasks with lesson objectives had the highest mean and the index of activity-oriented assessment had the lowest mean. It should be noted that the mean of all assessment indices was lower than the assumed mean of the society (3). MANOVA was used to investigate the significance of the variables of majors effect on the rate of using assessment indices, which indicated that according to the value of Wilks's lambda (0.752, $F = 1.84$, $\eta^2 = 0.055$) and the level of significance obtained ($P=0.000$), there is a significant difference between majors. The findings of the sixth research question showed that the mean of the two groups of males and females was significantly different at the 95% confidence level in the rate of using lesson assessment indices.

Discussion and conclusion

The results indicated that the pass/fail of the courses should not be based only on the students' final exam, but it is necessary to use different assessment methods to accurately define their academic progress and present their abilities and capabilities. The use of different contents by professors leads to the assessment moving from output-oriented and result-oriented to continuous-oriented and process-oriented approaches. In addition, the process-oriented approach to evaluation improves problem-solving ability, critical thinking, and application of knowledge in real situations. The traditional view of the assessment process leads to very little use of novel technologies, superficial learning, poor interaction with students, and emphasis on mere memorization. Finally, it is suggested that professors not only use written assessment for each course, but use a variety of new assessment methods.

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