# PRACTICE OF ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF BANGLADESH

**Md Abdullah Al Mamun[1]**
**Sumera Ahsan[2]**
**Md Khairul Islam[3]**

**Abstract**

Because of its promising role in facilitating students' learning, Assessment for Learning (AfL) has been discussed widely in literature. However, its implementation is neither straightforward nor uncontested. While a great deal of research has been conducted on AfL in primary and secondary education, limited research has been done in higher education in Bangladesh. Using basic interpretive qualitative approach, this study investigated assessment practices of three lecturers (university teachers) from three different departments and institutes of one public university of Bangladesh. Data from classroom (lesson) observation, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and Focus Group Discussions with students were thematically analyzed. Findings show that, though the teachers had scope to tailor assessment and though some aspects of AfL were reflected in classroom activities, the assessment strategies were not meaningfully translated into a holistic approach of AfL. The assessment practices were more concerned with measuring and monitoring classroom activities than promoting students' learning, which is the main goal of AfL. The lack of curriculum direction for AfL, teachers' limited understanding of AfL, examination-oriented education, large class size, short class-duration, and limited physical facilities were the challenges for AfL practice. Findings suggest that there is a need to integrate AfL in higher education curriculum with design suitable for the contexts of Bangladesh along with teachers' training on assessment.

**Keywords:** Assessment for learning, Higher Education, Bangladesh

## Introduction

Traditionally assessment is defined as assessing students at the end of an educational endeavor which is not integrated within the teaching learning

[1] **Md Abdullah Al Mamun**, Former student of Master of Education (MEd), Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka. Email: mamunmamun004du@gmail.com

[2] **Sumera Ahsan**, Associate Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka. Email: sumera@du.ac.bd

[3] **Md Khairul Islam**, Professor, Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka. Email: khairulislam@du.ac.bd

process; rather it is an isolated part. This traditional assessment focuses on the end of the semester examinations to measure students' achievement for the purpose of certification, giving award, for example. Literature referred to this assessment approach as Assessment of Learning (AoL) or summative assessment. In this process of assessment, students rarely get any ownership of their learning and have scope to become lifelong learner (Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Mubayrik, 2020). However, lifelong learning is an important aspect of learning that is emphasized in this contemporary world. To help students become lifelong learner, it is important to motivate students to appreciate learning and to conceptualize the process of their own learning (Nhat, 2015) which is truly relevant for students, especially in higher education.

On the other hand, Assessment for Learning (AfL) is designed in such a way that it is integrated into teaching and learning, promoting interactions among the teachers, students, and peers, and providing meaningful feedback to students and teachers for improving both students' learning by addressing diverse students' needs and for improving teachers' teaching practice (Griffin, McGaw, & Care, 2012). By helping students to understand their learning, strengths, and weaknesses, and by assisting them to develop goals and methods to promote their learning to the next step, AfL facilitates not only learning but also students' self-regulatory learning (Wiliam, 2011; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2014, Assessment Reform Group, 2002b; Black et al., 2005; Black & Wiliam, 2003; Mubayrik, 2020). Therefore, AfL is has special potential at tertiary level for its role in enhancing self-regulatory learning which is emphasized in higher education (Vosniadou, 2020).

Though the pedagogical potential of AfL is very prominent in assessment literature, its implementation represents complexities as there are many variables associated with this practice of AfL in classrooms and these factors vary based on different contexts, requiring further exploration of its practice in different contexts. Stiggins (1999) argues that in the context of the United States, policies may not require, encourage, or help teachers acquire and/or apply knowledge and skills in CA in classrooms. In Bangladesh, assessment system is driven by Assessment of Learning (AoL) or high-stake exams Recently there have been initiatives to introduce continuous assessment in secondary education and the curriculum has clearly mentioned the importance of formative assessment or AfL (National Curriculum, 2012; National Curriculum Framework 2021). Research shows that classroom assessment used by Bangladeshi teachers is far to reach formative assessment (Begum & Farooqui, 2008; Ahsan, 2009; Tarana 2010; Rahman, Babu & Ashrafuzzaman, 2011; Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2013; Azim, 2014; Rahman, 2018). For the higher education, different public and private universities have different curricula and

therefore different approaches of assessment are used, and most of the public university teachers in higher education do not have any pedagogical or assessment related training either (Raqib, 2019). These factors make quality assurance in higher education difficult to achieve, including the assessment practice. Only few research explored the AfL in the context of higher education, especially in a developing country context, and with the lense of quality education (e.g., Ullah, 2020; Rashid and Rhman, 2017; Akareem and Hossain, 2012). We found only one study in Bangladesh (Azim, 2014) that focused on higher education assessment from the perspective of AfL. However, that was mainly the analysis of videotaped classes of approximately 5 hours and teachers' written instruction. We think that the assessment practices in the classrooms of tertiary level needs further exploration in terms of AfL, especially from the view point of the learners as AfL emphasizes quality on feedback and quality of learning.

Therefore, using basic interpretive qualitative approach (Merriam, 2002), this study aimed to explore classroom assessment practices of three faculties (three lecturers of Arts faculty, Science faculty, and an institute from a renowned public university) within the framework of AfL.

This study should provide valuable information to the policy makers, curriculum developers, teachers and educational researchers, teacher professional development authorities, and higher education authorities to better understand the nature and current practices of classroom assessment andtake necessary steps to ensure the quality of higher education in terms of student assessment.

**Review of related literature**

*Assessment of Learning and Assessment for Learning*

The purpose of "Assessment for learning", is to nurture students' learning (Stobart, 2008), and metacognition (Vries, Dimosthenous, Schildkamp, Visscher, 2022). On the other hand, the major purpose of "Assessment of Learning" is to measure the learning. Over the past 40 years, AfL gained significant attention in educational domains as it was claimed to be helpful in promoting students' learning (Earl & Timperley, 2014; Torrance, 2012; Wiliam, 2011 in Nhat, 2015; Yang & Xin, 2022). In many literature, this approach is also explained as formative assessment (Torrance, 2012, in Nhat, 2015). Stiggins (2005, p. 326, in Nhat, 2015) argued that "summative standardized testing" only gives a snapshot of students' learning. Moreover, it takes a long time for this type of assessment to take decisions and to change classroom instruction, if possible at all.

## Pedagogical Potential of AfL

AfL has the pedagogical potential to foster students' learning as it provides effective descriptive feedback to both teachers and students on teaching and monitoring students' learning progress at different points of time during a semester and (Black & William, 1998; Popham, 2011; Guskey, 2006; Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Popham, 2011).

Af, an effective tool to enhance students' learning (Stiggins, 2005, 2007), can result in high academic achievement as it can engage students with effective learning strategies (Hayward & Spencer, 2010; OECD, 2005; Wiliam et al., 2004; Carrillo-de-la-Pena et al., 2007), nurtures the inspiration for learning (Harlen, 2012; Weurlander et al., 2012), strengthens problem solving performance (Balan, 2012) and forms lifelong learning skills for students. Stiggins (2005) argued that AfL has the potential of providing descriptive feedback to students in a continuous manner. When the students get detailed feedback and critically analyze their own learning process, they can revise their own learning strategies. Therefore it can directly contribute to improving students' learning. AfL can therefore help students achieve their expected learning goals. AfL also has an emotional effect on learners (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Stiggins, 2005). Sudents can set new goals for their learning based on their understanding of current learning status. Then they are more likely to believe in their own ability and be motivated to achieve their targets that they have set (Stiggins, 2005; Earl & Katz, 2006).

Teachers can use AfL as a tool to collect information on students' learning in a regular manner. This helps teachers to understand students' learning status, gaps, and strength based on which the teachers can identify students' learning needs. This process ultimately helps teachers to adjust or improve their teaching practice (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002).

Framing AfL Flórez and Sammons (2013, p.2) mentioned four strategies that are "considered important for Assessment for Learning (AfL) – sharing learning goals, formative feedback, peer and self-assessment, and the formative use of summative tests – have been found to be overwhelmingly positive in terms of their potential to promote improvements in teachers' classroom practice".

***Sharing learning intentions and success criteria*** is an essential element of AfL. This helps students to realize the purpose of what they are studying. It also clarifies what are expected from them as students, sometimes in the form of rubrics (Nhat, 2015). When success criteria for students' performances and work are communicated clearly, they are more likely to get motivated to engage in self-regulated learning. It facilitates both transparency and students' learning (Jonsson,

2014). ***Questioning*** is also a powerful tool for the practice of AfL (Assessment Reform Group, 1999; Crook, 1988; Black et al., 2005). Questioning helps to facilitate students thinking. It is also a great way to get information about students' knowledge, understanding and learning difficulties. To facilitate deep learning, the questions must be of good quality and effectively administered (Black et al., 2005). Global research strongly claim ***Feedback*** as central to AfL (Black et al., 2005; Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Evans, 2013; Sadler, 1989; Stobart, 2008). We can define feedback "as information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 82).

There are factors that contribute to the quality of feedback (Sadler,1989). Hattie and Timperley (2007) described three essential elements of effective feedback which are, where am I going? (Feed up), where am I? (Feedback), and how can I get there? (Feed forward).

There are also other characteristics of effective feedback. For example, not only the end work, but also the effort of the students should be valued by feedback to nurture students' confidence and high productivity in their learning (Dweck, 2006). Many researchers argue that effective feedback involves students in the process of assessment as dialogues between the teacher and the students. This approach of sustainable feedback, guides the immediate and future tasks of the students as they take the responsibility for their own learning (Askew & Lodge, 2000; Boud & Molloy, 2013; Hayward & Spencer, 2014)

In ***Peer assessment*** individuals assess the learning task or performance of their peers. Though teacher feedback is seen more crucial for enhancing students learning, feedback provided by the peers also provides a vital role in classroom assessment (Sadler, 1998).

***Self-assessment,*** which is a core element in AfLfocuses on "the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply on their work and making judgments about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards" (Boud, 1995b, p. 12). Self-assessment involves students to reflect on their own work to evaluate and monitor their learning based on success criteria prepared by them or by their teachers. Therefore, self-assessment is an integral part of self-regulated learning as this process of meta cognition helps them understand the assessment criteria and take responsibility for their own learning (Panadero & Alonso-Tapia, 2013; Allal, 2010; Alwis, & Schmidt, 2010), which ultimately builds them as lifelong learners (Cassidy, 2007; Elwood & Klenowski, 2002).

**Theoretical framework**

Earl and Kantz (2006) have put several aspects of AfL in the section 'Planning Assessment *for* Learning' which are clear and precise enough to guide a teacher for using AfL in his/her classroom. We used this guideline as a theoretical framework for analyzing our data and organizing our findings. However, as it was an explorative qualitative research, we collected data in an unstructured way and explored how it fit into this theoretical framework. It helped us in organizing our data into the findings section.

**Table 1**

***Features of AfL (Earl and Katz, 2006, p.54)***

| Why Assess? | to enable teachers to determine next steps in advancing student learning |
|---|---|
| Assess What? | each student's progress and learning needs in relation to the curricular outcomes |
| What Methods? | a range of methods in different modes that make students' skills and understanding visible |
| Ensuring Quality | • accuracy and consistency of observations and interpretations of student learning<br>• clear, detailed learning expectations<br>• accurate, detailed notes for descriptive feedback to each student |
| Using the Information | • provide each student with accurate descriptive feedback to further his or her learning<br>• differentiate instruction by continually checking where each student is in relation to the curricular outcomes<br>• provide parents or guardians with descriptive feedback about student learning and ideas for support |

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to explore the classroom assessment practice of higher education in Bangladesh in light of AfL.

**Methods of inquiry**

***Study approach and design:*** This study has explored the classroom assessment practice of higher education in Bangladesh within the framework of AfL. Due to its exploratory nature, this study has adopted a basic interpretive qualitative study (Merriam, 2002) design. We chose to utilize this approach since the aim of this

study was to investigate the assessment experience from both teachers and students rather than forming a generalized idea.

**Research participants:** Patton (2002) notes that "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (*N*=1), selected *purposefully*" (p. 230). He argues that, the type of the sample in qualitative is guided by purposeful strategies. Therefore we purposefully selected three different teachers working in three different departments or institutes- one from science faculty, one from arts faculty and one from an institute. One of the researchers observed three consecutive classes fo these faculties and the field notes were shared and discussed together.

Table 2: *Basic Information Related to the Classes Observed*

|   | *Name of the teacher | Faculty/Institute | Sex | Class size | Class duration |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mr. Rahman | Science | Male | 100 | 50 minutes |
| 2 | Mr. Barua | Arts | Male | 60 | 50 minutes |
| 3 | Ms. Karabi | Education | Female | 50 | 90 minutes |

Note: Pseudonyms are used for teachers.

**Instruments for data collection:** Data were collected from classroom (lesson) observations, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Three consecutive classes of each teacher's class totaling nine were observed. Three focus group discussions were conducted with students of these three teachers where six students formed each group. A total of three semi-structured interviews of the three teachers were conducted. The lesson observations were recorded using detailed field notes. The FGD tools were designed focusing on students' experience of assessment process, and how, if at all, they think it is linked with their improvement of learning and self-regulatory learning. The semi-structured interview questions revealed teachers' perception on AfL, their AfL practices and challenges that they face while conducting AfL/them.

**Data analysis:** This study employed the 'thematic' qualitative data analysis technique of Braun & Clarke (2006). The initial coding was done by the first author and then reviewed by all of the three authors. Theme development and labeling were done collectively. The study employed both deductive and inductive theme generation (Vaismoradi1, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). As we could observed only limited numbers of classes, and students' FGD was based on the classes observed, not all the characteristics of AfL could be observed, However, other inductive themes emerged that are not included in the

theoretical framework. To address ethical concerns, written consents were taken from the participants before collecting data for this study

## Findings and Interpretation:

The data gathered from observation, FGD and interview constructed different themes that are described below. These themes are related to the characteristics of AfL and are organized based on the theoretical framework explaining how much the assessment activities experienced by the teachers and the students are within the framework of AfL.

## Why assess?

The teachers mentioned that they used these assessment activities in the classrooms "to judge students' understanding on the concepts taught in their respective classes"; "to know about students' pre-existing knowledge"; "to monitor their learning, understanding or attentiveness"; "to make students alert in the classroom". The classroom lesson observation revealed that three teachers' roles were different for the assessment activities. Mr. Rahman used group work as a part of teaching activity and asked questions to groups whenever he assumed the students were being inattentive. Even while he was lecturing, sometimes Mr. Rahman asked questions to the entire class from the lecture he was imparting to check whether the students were attentive. (Science faculty, Field note; later explained by the teacher in interview).

Mr. Barua said " In the classroom he asks his students questions to activate and engage them; in classroom, "to motivate them to take part in the classwork activities." Mr. Barua was observed to ask a group-work related question to one of the students as the student was not participating in the group work (Arts faculty, Field note).

According to Ms. Karabi," I try to use spot surprise test for the students. Sometimes I do it to check if the students are learning properly or not, and sometimes I do it for enhancing students' attention to my class. Sometimes I check exercise books of some of the students of every group who are not attentive in the class. I always target them in my class to make them active more than before". From the quotes of the teachers and lesson observation, it seemed that the teachers use the assessment activities mainly for engaging the students and making them attentive. This is clearly related to the students' learning. However, the teachers did not describe the process explicitly directed to

facilitating students' learning, diagnosing misconnects and giving feedback for further improvement of their learning.

Students also echoed the same when they talked about why they think the teachers assessed them in class or engage them in assessment activities. Tasnim, a student of Ms. Karabi's class described, "every day our teachers monitor our class work in this way. Teachers ask questions while delivering lectures to check our attentiveness in class work, and she (Ms. Karabi) usually gives small-scale exams on some lessons from a chapter as class tests".

After the class, Poly from Mr. Rahman's class said, "The teacher distributed a pair of magnets to each group so that we could examine the attraction and repulsion of the two different poles. He asked us questions to check if we were attentive in the class and were  listening to his instructions". The students also get the idea that the classroom assessment activities and assessment techniques such as board work, group work, and asking questions are mostly for keeping them attentive, engaged and interested in the topic.

We also explored what the students think they gained (purpose) from these assessment activities. Even though many students revealed in the FGDs that the assessment activities were for helping them to learn, engage, and act better, their description ended up in getting good score, passing exams, and better memorization. For example, Nayeema from Ms. Karabi's class expressed that,

> I think these assessment activities have been introduced in order to reduce our study load for the year-final exam, and thus to reduce our exam phobia and also to make us more attentive during the sessions….nowadays we receive feedback on our day-to-day progress, so we try to learn the lessons just after the class, which helps us to be prepared for the final exam.

Salma from Mr Barua's class reported,

Now we are trying to understand any topic very actively through brainstorming….After having a clear conception of any topic in the class….we have to do assignment which leads us to study the topic again at home and then to write it down….as a result, the topic becomes easy for us to memorize.

It seems that there is a combined purpose that works in both teachers and students mind regarding the assessment activities. For teachers, they use these as different tools in different sitiations in clasroom, and learning is one of the

purposes. For students, the learning purposes get blurred because of the nature of high stakes in summative assessment.

## Assess What?

The teachers, in the interview told that they have specific assessment criteria in their mind- thatthey want o measure in the students' performances. However, students were not clear about what the teachers are measuring for a certain assessment activity. For example,Rita thought that if she could produce the assignment with originality, that would be the most important criteria for assessing it as a standard graduate work. For the same assignment, Foysal thought that the teacher would score the task high if the student could analyze the important concepts. Similar grey idea regarding the assessment criteria was found among the students of two other classes as well. FGD revealed that the students constructed their own understanding of assessment criteria as they did not get specific clear idea about the criteria of assessing the work (group work, project, report etc.),. These understadings are shaped by the marks they obtained in their previous work, discussion with senior students, and teachers' general reference about good work and preferred ways of doing work that are communicated in classes. However, both teachers and the students reported that rarely there is any clear communication or rubrics between teachers and students regarding the expected outcome of any assessment work and activities.

## What Methods?

Table 3 shows the techniques of AfL that were used in the observed classes. Besides classroom activities, the students were also given take home assignments.

**Table 3:** *Assessment Activities in Different Classrooms in Three Consecutive Class Days*

| Faculty/ Institute | Teacher | Activities in day-1 | Activities in day-2 | Activities in day-3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Science** | Mr. Rahman | Group work in theoretical class | Group work in practical class | Asking some oral questions (oral test) in theoretical class |
| **Arts** | Mr. Barua | Group work | Presentation | Written test |
| **Education** | Ms. Karabi | Class test, group work | Presentation | Paper cutting, presentation |

Based on the nature of the subject area and the specific topic to be taught in class, the assessment activities varied. The students in FGDs have stated that they sometimes experience these assessment activities in classroom, not regularly. They reported that they also experienced other assessment activities such as project work, creative writing, literature review, report writing etc. Therefore, activities for AfL strategies such as question-answer, writing on the board, group discussion, presentation and assignments are present. It seems that there were at least some scope or structure present to practice AfL in these classrooms. However, whether any of these assessment activities can be framed as AfL depends vitally on the purpose or intention of these activities.

Self and peer assessment, a very crucial aspect of AfL was absent in those observed activities. FGDs with the students of the three classes revealed that they have not experienced self and peer assessment for these classes. The teachers also informed that they did not have plan for such activities. At the same time, how frequently the observed activities are practiced is also a question. FGDs with the students of Mr. Rahman and Mr Barua revealed that the teacher uses these activities (that they used in the observed 3 days) only occasionally. However, Ms. Karabi's students said that she uses the activities regularly in a planned way. Mr. Rahman said, "sometimes I take presentation and projects as assignment in my classroom. But it is tough to maintain regularly."(interview)

The term AFL is not explicitly mentioned in the curriculum of those specific department/institution. However all three teachers informed that except for the final exam, which is summative in nature, they have some flexibilities regarding the assessment practices such as mid-term, tutorial and assignments. For example, Mr. Barua said that for one of the courses he takes the students to a historically important place and have them write reports based on their visit which counts as one of the midterms. Teacher's way of shifting, arranging, and allocating marks for different assessment activities shows that they have the scope and freedom to develop their own classroom assessment structure and incorporate AfL activities within their regular class schedule.

**Ensuring Quality**

***Sharing the purpose:*** One characteristic of AfL is that the assessment purpose and criteria are shared with the students. For most of the assessment activities students are not always sure about the exact purposes and expected outcomes. For the same activities different students explained different purposes as the teachers do not share the purpose of each activity clearly.

***Feedback process:*** To be formative in nature, assessment should provide descriptive feedback with direction for improving students' learning in a timely

manner. Classroom lesson observation shows that feedback was not provided for many of the assessment works and even when it was provided, the nature was 'on the go', 'instantaneous', and 'without record keeping'. Moreover, feedback was not provided by the teachers in time.

When Mr. Rahman was asking questions to the students as an oral class test in the class, he listened to the answers of the students. He did not mention if it was correct or not (Science faculty, Field note-3). In the interview, he explained the main role of test was to measure students' learning only; it was for his understanding about the students' learning (Interview with Mr. Rahman). Students in the FGDs mentioned that they rarely get to know their marks in class tests or assignments let alone descriptive feedback.

Mr. Rahman's student Hasan's response was, "teachers assess us through assignments, class tests, group work and presentations during each term. But they seldom give feedback to us. We know our marks after final exam with final results". Mr. Rahman stated, "I have taken assignments and projects as a part of my course. The marks are added with the final examination. It is impossible to give feedback early because we have huge number of students". Same reason was given by Mr. Barua regarding publishing the results of assessment activities only at the end of the semester. However, Mr. Barua thinks that the time frame for marking the papers should be followed strictly and directed clearly in the curriculum. Thus, the flexibility in the curriculum and syllabus gives the teachers not only the scope to use different AfL activities both as graded and non-graded work, but also for being flexible about feedback timeframe. In almost all the instances except the department of education, teachers and students meant only the marks or just letting students know whether their answer is right or wrong when they talked about feedback. The idea of descriptive feedback was a missing piece of the assessment framework.

**Using the Information:**

***Record keeping:*** keeping record of students' performance was narrow in scope and was not always structured. For example, when Mr. Rahman was watching the group activities, he invited students for presentation. Though there were marks assigned for the presentation, he never maintained any record (Science faculty Field note). However, Mr. Barua and Ms. Karabi mentioned that they maintain the record of the students' performances (marks) if it is a graded one.

Interview data revealed that all the teachers meant only assigning marks when they described record keeping and feedback, not any description or note about the performance with strengths and weaknesses and guidance for further learning. Therefore, the record keeping was limited to assigning marks and not

recording individual or group performance, or their gradual development over the semester. We found that the teachers were more concerned with assigning marks for the graded work rather than giving feedback. Interestingly, when the activities were not graded, the teachers seemed to be more inclined to provide the students feedback walking through the class, observing group work, asking them questions, giving them opportunities to question, and answering their queries. However, these were still unplanned, unstructured and instantaneous.

Classroom (lesson) observation also revealed that most of the time, teachers do not take any note on student performance or progress even though they try to monitor their learning by trying to know their understanding, issues in understanding, and trying to help them overcome the issue or solve the problem sometimes. Although this monitoring is spontaneous and earnest, it is sporadic and not systematic.

In some situations, feedback was not effective or meaningful for the students. For example, 10 different colour poster papers produced by the groups were hung on the rope. Mr. Rahman selected one yellow poster paper with nice handwriting in black as the best one. He declared to the class to give a big round of applause to group 7 (Science faculty, Field note1). It was not clear why or on what basis the teacher selected this group as the 'best'. In the FGD students were also not sure about why it was selected as best.

**Agency in assessment activities**

The agency, responsibilities, and power are shared and distributed among the teachers and the students in an AfL framework. For the observed activities, though the students seemed to participate in the assessment activities enthusiastically and joyfully, most of the vital decisions were made by the teachers such as what kind of assessment activities will take place, what weightage or number it will carry, when it will take place, or who will take part in what form. Students usually followed teachers' instructions related to assessment activities in the classroom.

**Table 4:** *The Role of Teachers and Students in Different Assessment Activities*

| Classroom scenario | Role of the teacher | Role of the students |
|---|---|---|
| Mr. Rahman asked questions from the lesson, almost every student in the class raises a hand to answer (they seem very active) within 2 minutes the whole class (100 students). | - Assessor/examiner | - Listener<br>- Answer provider |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The students of Mr. Rahman's class completed their group tasks within the allocated time (10 mins.) and went towards the rope to hang their group work. When the presentation of group 1 was done, the next group came automatically without waiting for their teacher to call them. | - Task assigner<br>- Manager | - Presenter<br>- Time manager<br>- Rule follower |
| When Mr. Rahman distributed a tool to each group for examination, all group members seemed to be eager to examine them and see what happens…at each and every point Mr. Rahman discussed the findings, and students took notes. | - Task assigner<br>- Discussant | - Experimenter<br>- Participant<br>- Note taker |
| Many students of the class raised their hands to show their interest to go to the board to write. Mr. Barua invited Faysal to write on the board and he came to the board to write. He was asked only to write the lesson topic to the day. | - Instructor | - Participant<br>- Writer |
| Ms. Karabi formed the groups in her class by herself. Students changed and took over the leadership according to their own wish in three days. Students revealed during a FGD that they select a new leader everyday who leads the group work and presents on behalf of the group. | - Manager | - Decision maker (technical aspects) |

The table above represents different assessment activities in different classrooms observed and the associate role of the teachers and the students. In these specific situations, the teachers played the role of assessor, question asker, task assigner, manager, discussant, and instruction provider. The students exhibited the distinct roles of listener, answer provider, presenter, time manager, rule follower, experimenter, and participant. Students sometimes took decisions but about non-

academic technical aspects only, such as how to form a group, number of group members, and selecting the group leader for example.

However, if we see the engagement in each group during the group work, there seems to be a shared agency among the group members while doing the assigned work. The students had lively discussion in the group, took turn in leadership, distributed tasks among the members, combined their work for presentation, and took the responsibility for failure and success as a group. For example, while describing their performance in the groupwork, they always used "we" but not I or a particular person.

**Discussion**

In this study, we attempted to explore tertiary level teachers' and students' assessment practices in classrooms within the framework of Assessment for Learning (AfL). In the literature, it has been argued that AfL should be encouraged for promoting students' learning and preparing them for becoming self-motivated learners (ARG, 1999; ARG 2000a; Stiggins; 2005). However, the analysis has shown that although the curriculum of higher education provides scope for the teachers to customize assessment strategies, and some aspects of AfL were reflected through different activities in the classrooms, the existing practices were not aligned with the nature and characteristics of AfL. While some activities, including group work, pair work, discussions, and presentations, were emphasized in the classroom whichhave some value in terms of encouraging students to learn and build skills, important AfL aspects were missing. The significant findings are critically discussed here based on the key aspects of AfL as established in the literature.

AfL should have the particular purpose of enhancing students' learning (ARG, 1999; Black et al., 2005). But findings indicated that the teachers' assessment objectives were not learning targeted, rather their objectives were to monitor students' activities and observe attentiveness in the classroom. But difference was evident among the practices of the three teachers. Comparing to others, the class of Education teacher who had professional training on learning assessment was more learning oriented in her assessment purpose. This demonstrates the benefits of having professional training for teachers on AfL. However, if we analyze the goal of the existing assessment practice, it could not be classified as AfL rather it was more of an assessment of learning.

'Feedback,' which is believed to be central to AfL(Black et al., 2005; Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Evans, 2013). According to the researchers, a variety of factors can influence the efficiency of feedback on learning, and successful feedback must meet specific content and approach requirements. In terms of content,

Black and Wiliam (1998a, p. 85) asserted that feedback "should be about the specific attributes with advice on how he or she might improve." Three fundamental parts of feedback, according to Sadler (1989), are identification of the expected level of achievement, awareness of the students' current level, and a recommendation of how to continue learning toward the intended performance. The three basic components of feedback were stated by Hattie and Timperley (2007) as follows: where am I going? Where am I now, (fed up)? (Feedback), and what is the best way for me to get there? (Fast forward.). These key features of 'feedback' as a part AfL were apparently absent in the assessment practices of three university teachers in Bangladesh context. The study found that the students were not used to get meaningful feedback on their assigned work except getting marks with examination result, andboth teachers and students conceptualized marks added in their result as feedback. While descriptive feedback should be something where strength and weakness of the students should be clearly mentioned as well as way for further improvement, the findings did not show any meaningful evidence on it. Although there is room for AfL in the curriculum, yet this flexibility also acts as a hindrance in providing feedback on time to the students. Teachers claimed large number of students in a single classroom, duration of class, and lack of physical resources, and their workload as potential challenges for not providing feedback on time.

Apart from that, just providing marks or grades, sometimes teachers were found to provide evaluative feedback in the classroom (e.g., commenting students' work as 'good/ better/ best' without giving explanation why the work was 'good/better/best') without any explanation or description. As a consequence a myth was established among the students about the criteria of getting good comments or marks from their teachers. Therefore, students themselves were found creating "mystical assessment rubrics" which was evident as obstacles for enhancing students' learning through this process. Besides the instantaneous nature of sporadic feedback without proper record keeping could not help teachers to track students' learning. Therefore, it also did not help the students in facilitating their learning.

Many scholars (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Carless, 2013; Hayward & Spencer, 2014) contend that effective feedback necessitates students' participation in teacher-student assessment dialogues. This type of feedback is known as sustainable feedback, and it can help pupils improve their capacity to learn both current and future assignments. The concept of long-term feedback emphasizes students' accountability for their own learning, which connects to the use of peer and self-evaluation in AfL activities. Findings suggest that opportunity for peer and self-assessment was apparently absent in the assessment practices.

Black et al. (2003) argue that when assessment and learning are treated simultaneously, students take center stage and are expected to perceive themselves as learners who contribute to knowledge building. In assessment, an emphasis on student agency recognizes students as agents who make decisions and whose actions impact assessment methods in both expected and unanticipated ways (Adie et al. 2018). The findings imply that this AfL trait was not present in three university lecturers' existing assessment processes. Assessor, examiner, work assigner, manager, instructor, discussant, and other roles of teachers were visible. Students were assigned the roles of listeners, response givers, timekeepers, rule followers, experimenters, and presenters. Students' engagement in decision-making was restricted in these circumstances to determining who would be the group leader. Explicit student agency, as described by Black et al. (2003), Adie et al. (2018) and Clark (2012), had yet to be established in existing practices. Even though students enjoyed activities since these activities were new to them, they were discovered to have no control over any of them. Everything was found to be dominated by teachers, and agency is in teachers' hand.

**Implication and further scope of the study:**

Despite the fact that the findings of this study are not generalizable due to its qualitative nature, they provide helpful insights for researchers, policymakers, and teachers working to promote quality higher education and AfL practices. Further research can be conducted to understand the broader perspectives as AfL practices at higher education in Bangladesh- in rural and urban, public and private university settings, for example.

**Conclusion**

This paper examines higher education assessment practices in Bangladesh. Based on the findings of this qualitative study, it can be concluded that three university lecturers' existing assessment practices were more concerned with measuring students' learning and monitoring their classroom activities than promoting students' learning, which is the main goal of AfL. The classroom activities of the lecturer of Education, who had professional training on AfL, indicates having more connection with AfL. The findings encourage recommending teachers' professional development on AfL, integration of AfL in the curriculum, modification of existing result-based assessment practices, and developing contextualized framework of AfL for Bangladesh context.

# References

Adie, L.E., Willis, J. & Van der Kleij, F.M. (2018). Diverse perspectives on student agency in classroom assessment. *Aust. Educ. Res. 45*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0262-2

Ahsan, S. (2009). Classroom assessment culture in secondary schools of Dhaka city. *Teacher's World: Journal of Education and Research, 33-34,* 231-244.

Akareem, H.S. & Hossain, S.S. (2012). Perception of education quality in private universities of Bangladesh: a study from students' perspective. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *22* (1), 11-33, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2012.705792.

Allal, L. (2010). Assessment and the regulation of learning. In E. B. P. Peterson (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of education* (Vol. 3, pp. 348–352). Elsevier.

Askew, S. (2000). *Feedback for Learning*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203017678

Assessment Reform Group. (1999). *Assessment for learning: beyond the black box*. University School of Education. https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/the-assessment-reform-group

Assessment Reform Group. (2002). *Assessment for learning: 10 principles*. Assessment Reform Group. Retrieved from https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/project/the-assessment-reform-group

Azim, F. (2014). Learning promoted by classroom assessment in higher education of Bangladesh: A case study. *The International Journal of Social Sciences, 26*(1), 165 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267332248

Balan, A. (2012). *Assessment for learning: A case study in mathematics education* [Unpublished manuscript]. Faculty of Learning and Society, Malmö University.

Begum, M., & Farooqui, S. (2008). School based assessment: Will it really change the education scenario in Bangladesh?. *International Education Studies, 1*(2), 45-53. DOI:10.5539/ies.v1n2p45

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education, 5*(1), 71– 74. 10.1080/0969595980050102

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (2003). In praise of educational research: formative assessment. *British Educational Research Journal, 29*(5): 751–765. https://core.ac.uk/reader/82510

Black, P., Harrison, C., Hodgen, J., Marshall, B. & Wiliam, D. (2005). The dissemination of formative assessment: A lesson from, or about, evaluation. *Research Intelligence, 92*, 14–15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258423179_The_dissemination_of_formative_assessment_a_lesson_from_or_about_evaluation

Boud, D. & Molloy, E. (2013). Rethinking models of feedback for learning: the challenge of design, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 38*(6), 698-,712. 10.1080/02602938.2012.691462

Boud, D. (1995). *Enhancing Learning through self assessment*. Kogan Page. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315041520

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brookhart, S. M. (2001, March 2). The standards and classroom assessment research. In *The Symposium on Role of the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students in Developing Quality Teacher Assessors*, Dallas, Tx. https://archive.org/stream/ERIC_ED451189/ERIC_ED451189_djvu.txt

Campbell, C., Murphy, J.A., & Holt, J.K. (2002, October). Psychometric analysis of an assessment literacy instrument: Applicability to preservice teachers. *In Mid-Western Educational Research Association*. OH. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.404

Carless, D. (2013). Sustainable feedback and the development of student self evaluative capacities. In S. Merry, M. Price, D. Carless & M. Taras (Eds.), *Reconceptualising feedback in higher education: Developing dialogue with students* (pp. 113-122). Routlege.

Cassidy, S. (2007). Assessing 'inexperienced' students' ability to self-assess: exploring links with style and academic personal control. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 32*(3), 313-330, DOI: 10.1080/02602930600896704

Chappuis, S. & Stiggins, R.J. (2002). Do students care about learning? Classroom Assessment for Learning. *Educational Leadership, 60*(1), 40-43.

Chowdhury, S. K., & Ahmed, S. S. (2013). Exploring the side effects of assessment in secondary schools and its impact on students: Perspective from Bangladesh. *American Journal of Educational Research, 1*(9), 380-390. 10.12691/education-1-9-6

Clark, I. (2012). Formative assessment: Assessment is for self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychology Review, 24*, 205–249. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-011-9191-6

Crooks, T.J. (1988). The impact of classroom evaluation on students. *Review of Educational Research, 58*(4), 438-481. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1170281

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success.* Random House. Retrieved from https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2006-08575-000

Earl, L. and Katz.S. (2006). *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind: assessment for learning, assessment as learning, assessment of learning*. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth.

Earl, L. M., & Timperley, H. (2014). Challenging conceptions of assessment. In C. Wyatt-Smith, V. Klenowski & P. Colbert (Eds.), *Designing assessment for quality learning* (pp. 325-336). Springer.

Elwood, J., & Klenowski, V. (2002). Creating communities of shared practice: The challenges of assessment use in learning and teaching. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 27*(3), 243–256. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602930220138606

Evans, C. (2013). Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research, 83*(1), 70-120. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654312474350

Falchikov, N. (1995). Peer feedback marking: Developing peer assessment. *Innovations in Education and Training International, 32*(2), 175-187. 10.1080/1355800950320212

Flórez, M.T. & Sammons, P. (2013). *Assessment for learning: effects and impact.* CfBT Education Trust. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED546817

Garrison, C., & Ehringhaus, M (2011). *Formative and Summative Assessments in the Classroom.* Retrieved                                                          from

http://ccti.colfinder.org/sites/default/files/formative_and_summative_assessment_
in_the_classroom.pdf

Griffin P., Care E., McGaw B. (2012). The Changing Role of Education and Schools. In: Griffin P.,
McGaw B., Care E. (Eds.) *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills.* Springer.

Guskey, T.R. (2006). Making high school grades meaningful. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(9), 670-675.
https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170608700910

Harlen, W. (2012). *Assessment and learning: The Role of Assessment in developing motivation for
learning.* SAGE. Retrieved from 10.4135/9781446250808.n11

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1),
81-112. https://doi.org/10.3102%2F003465430298487

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement.*
Routledge. Retrieved from 10.1007/s11159-011-9198-8

Hayward, L. & Spencer, E. (2010). The complexities of change: formative assessment in Scotland.
*Curriculum journal, 21*(2), 161-177. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2010.480827

Islam, N.N. & Ahmed, I. (2018). Thinking unconventional: alternative assessment at tertiary level
education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of New Technology and Research, 4*(1), 18-23.
10.30957/ijotl-tl.v5i3.633.

Jonsson, A. (2014). Rubrics as a way of providing transparency in assessment. *Assessment and
Evaluation     in     Higher     Education,     39*(7),     840-852.
https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.875117

Lew, M.D.N., Alwis, W.A.M., & Schmidt, H.G. (2010). Accuracy of students' self-assessment and
their beliefs about its utility. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 35*(2), 135-156.
10.1080/02602930802687737

Marshall, B. & Drummond, M.J. (2006). How teachers engage with Assessment for Learning:
lessons from the classroom. *Research Papers in Education: Policy and Practice, 21*(2), 133-
149. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520600615638

Merriam, S. (2002). Introduction to Qualitative Research. In: Merriam, S. and Associates (Eds.),
*Qualitative Research in Practice,* (pp. 3-17). Jossey-Bass.

Mubayrik, H.F.B. (2020). New Trends in Formative-Summative Evaluations for Adult Education.
*SAGE     Open.*     July-September,     1-13.     DOI:     10.1177/2158244020941006
journals.sagepub.com/home/sg

National   Curriculum   &   Textbook   Board.   (2012). *National   Curriculum.*   NCTB.
http://www.nctb.gov.bd/

National Curriculum & Textbook Board. (2022). *National Curriculum Framework 2021.* NCTB.
2023-04-05-05-53-eb730ced57e4704a4e10e83b40a6d305.pdf   (portal.gov.bd)

OECD. (2005). *Formative assessment-improving learning in secondary classroom.* OECD
Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/education/ceri/35661078.pdf

Pham, T. H. T. (2014). Cooperative learning in CHC countries. In T. H. T. Pham (Ed.),
*Implementing cross-culture pedagogies,* (pp. 29-50). Springer Verlag.

Popham, W.J. (2011). Assessment literacy overlooked: A teacher educator's confession. *The
Teacher Educator, 46*, 265-273  10.1080/08878730.2011.605048

Panadero, E., & Alonso-Tapia, J. (2013). Self-assessment: Theoretical and practical connotations. When it happens, how is it acquired and what to do to develop it in our students. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology, 11*(2), 551–576. https://doi.org/10.14204/ejrep.30.12200.

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Rahman, M. F., Babu, R., & Ashrafuzzaman, M. (2011). Assessment and feedback practices in the English language classroom. *Journal of NELTA, 16*(1-2), 97-106. 10.3126/nelta.v16i1-2.6133

Rahman, M.M. (2018). Exploring Teachers Practices of Classroom Assessment in Secondary Science

Classes in Bangladesh. *Journal of Education and Learning 7*(4), 254-263.

Raqib, A. (2019). Innovations in Teacher Training at Higher Education in Bangladesh. *Social Science Review [The Dhaka University Studies, Part-D], 36* (1). 221- 231.

Rashid, M.M. & Rhman, M.Z. (2017). Quality of Higher Education in Bangladesh: Application of a Modified ServQual Model. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century. 75* (2), 72-91.

Stiggins, R.J. (2005a). Evaluating classroom assessment training in teacher education programs. *Educational Measurement Issues and Practice, 18*(1), 23-27. 10.1111/j.1745-3992.1999.tb00004.x

Stiggins, R. (2005). From formative assessment to assessment for learning: a path to success in standards-based schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 87*(4), 324-328. https://doi.org/10.1177/00317217050870041

Stiggins, R. (2007). Assessment through the student's eyes. *Educational Leadership, 64*(8), 22-26.

Stobart, G. (2008). *Testing times: The uses and abuses of assessment*. Routledge.

Sadler, D. R. (1989). Formative assessment and the design of instructional systems. *Instructional Science, 18*(2), 119-144. 10.1007/bf00117714

Tarana, K. N. (2011). *Exploring the perceptions of assessment: What assessment means to teachers and students in secondary schools* [Unpublished manuscript]. Department of Educational Evaluation and Research, University of Dhaka.

Torrance, H. (2012). Formative assessment at the crossroads: Conformative, deformative and transformative assessment. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(3), 323-342. 10.1080/03054985.2012.689693

Topping, K. (1998). Peer assessment between students in colleges and universities. *Review of Educational Research, 68*(3), 249-276. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170598

Topping, K. (2009). Peer Assessment. *Theory into Practice, 48*(1), 20-27. 10.1080/00405840802577569

Ullah, M.N. (2020). Ingredients of Quality Education at Tertiary Level: An assessment of Higher Education in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Engineering Applied Sciences and Technology*, *4*(11), 546-556. 10.33564/IJEAST 2020.v04i11.097

Vaismoradi1, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice, 6*(5). 100-110. DOI: 10.5430/jnep.v6n5p100

Vosniadou, S. (2020). Bridging Secondary and Higher Education. *The Importance of Self regulated Learning. European Review, 28*(S1), S94-S103.10.1017/S1062798720000939

Vries, J.A., Dimosthenous, A., Schildkamp, K., & Visscher, A.J. (2022). The impact of an assessment for learning teacher professional development program on students' metacognition. *An International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice, 34* (1), 09-129. 10.1016/j.stueduc.2022.101184

Weurlander, Maria, Soderberg, Magnus, Scheja, Max, Hult, Hakan, & Wernerson, Annika. (2012). Exploring formative assessment as a tool for learning: Students' experiences of different methods of formative assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 37*(6), 747-760. 10.1080/02602938.2011.572153

Wiliam, D., Lee, C., Harrison, C., & Black, P. (2004). Teacher developing assessment for learning: Impact on student achievement. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 11*(1), 49-65. 10.1080/0969594042000208994

Wiliam, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning. *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 37*, 3-14.

Wyatt-Smith, C., Klenowski, V., & Colbert, P. (2014). Assessment understood as Enabling. In C. Wyatt-Smith, V. Klenowski & P. Colbert (Eds.), *Designing assessment for quality learning* (pp. 1-22). Springer.

Yang, L. & Xin, T.( 2022). Changing Educational Assessments in the Post-COVID-19 Era: From Assessment of Learning (AoL) to Assessment as Learning (AaL). *Educational Measurem,nt: Issues and Practice, 41*(1), 54-60. https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12492