

The instructive implications of Hong Kong higher education for mainland China education

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to analyse the successful experience of higher education in Hong Kong and to propose recommendations and strategies to promote higher education in mainland China. Secondly, to provide an overview of the experience and development patterns of Hong Kong's higher education institutions and to provide an effective theoretical framework for university education in the mainland. This study will be a quantitative study with data collection and analysis by means of an online questionnaire. Fifty teachers from a university in Hong Kong will participate in the questionnaire exercise. The study found that universities in Hong Kong place more emphasis on formative assessment, but as this is an ongoing process, not every teacher is able to give feedback. However, in contrast to SA, FA is more conducive to developing students' learning skills.*

Keywords: *Higher Education; Hong Kong; Mainland China*

1. Introduction

1.1 The Background of Research

Higher education coursework in mainland China is now mostly examination-based, rather than an assessment, which is a kind of summative evaluation, i.e., summative assessment (SA). Higher education in Hong Kong, on the other hand, is due to the region's early colonial origins and the influence of Western culture, primarily based on assignments, which is defined as teachers providing feedback to students on their learning and is therefore referred to as continuous assessment, i.e., formative assessment (FA). According to the report, the researchers asserted that assessments as an evaluated function were essential to higher education, and both educational researchers and non - specialists might accept them (Bevitt, 2015)^[1]. Similarly, Gibbs (2006)^[2] claimed that the assessments submitted served to the framework of learning. Even though these statements are strongly supported by the scholarship (Bryan & Clegg, 2019)^[3], another researcher believed that they should be handled with caution in view of the complex education system that was linked with these findings usually (Joughin, 2009)^[4]. Regardless of the statements and their interpretations, the assessment of students cannot be considered separately from the processes of learning and development. Because assessment is about numerous things simultaneously, the link between assessment submitted and acquiring knowledge is often fraught with difficulty (Ramsden, 2003)^[5]. Aspects of assessment include marking and evaluating student successes and aiding college students in the learning progress, and continuous assessment usually accomplishes both of these goals simultaneously. Thus, continual evaluation procedures often have a formative impact on the learning process. On the contrary, education for exams will not have a similar impact. At the same time, the harm of exam-oriented education has been mentioned countless times by many scholars (Kirkpatrick & Zang, 2011; Ro, 2019; Yao, 2015).^[6-8]

1.2 The Aim of the Research

From a comparative standpoint, the aim of this study is to analyze the successful experiences of higher education in Hong Kong and compare them to mainland China, investigate the problematic areas of education in mainland China, and propose recommendations and strategies for promoting higher education in mainland China. On the other hand, a study of Hong Kong's development history and the current state of higher education, and a synopsis of its experience and development laws can offer guidance for the direction of education in mainland China, enhance the concept of university education, contribute to the innovation of university education, and help to restructure the university's model of cultivating brand new talents.

1.3 Research Significance

The report would have implications for the reform of higher education models on both theoretical and practical aspects. According to theoretical considerations, the majority of current research focuses on the direct and indirect negative effects of teaching to the test on students, while only a small amount of research has been conducted on how continuous assessment could contribute to student learning success and the challenges that may be encountered in the future. Thus, using complex systems theory to study Hong Kong's higher education structure, could fill in gaps in existing theories of higher education assessment and facilitate the development of complex systems theory as a field of study. In the significance of the practice, there is little experience to rely on in the operation of mainland higher education institutions that simply utilize grades rather than feedback from professors as the outcomes of learning, and much work is still being done in that area of research. Hence, a more in-depth and thorough examination of higher education in Hong Kong would surely provide significant insights that would be applied to the actual process of constructing the mainland's higher education system, therefore improving the quality of education in higher education institutions. Based on the research focus mentioned above, the questions for this paper are set as follows:

- (1) How is the information available concerning continuous assessment and examination-based evaluation of student learning in the educational literature?
- (2) What factors contribute to a positive learning attitude in the classroom?
- (3) What are the quality control requirements that professors of higher education must adhere to in order to provide an evaluation of high quality to students?

2. Literature Review

It is difficult to draw a difference between formative versus summative evaluation in education (Morris et al., 2021)^[9]. There is a significant distinction between these two sorts of evaluation in that both are not only employed at different times but also have different purposes and have different effects on students' progress (Salas Vicente et al., 2021)^[10]. The design of certain measures in higher education is always to be both formative and summative in nature (Adarkwah, 2021). Formative assessment activities are those that offer feedback to students in order for them to learn from their mistakes and improve their performance (Adarkwah, 2021)^[11]. Furthermore, since a grade is granted and it adds to the final outcomes of the coursework, the examination serves as a summative function task for the course (Koenka, 2022)^[12]. Each of the several goals of evaluation overlaps with another or, at times, is in direct conflict with another. Providing a cogent theory of FA and feedback, Sadler (1998) had contributed to the field of education^[13]. Nevertheless, neither summative assessment nor its link with formative assessment is directly discussed or clarified in his research: there is not any mention to summative assessment clearly address or define the relationship between the two types of education forms. Today, summative evaluation has come to reflect all of the negative social elements of a student's life (Darr et al., 2021).^[14]

Moreover, the findings indicated that Hong Kong's tertiary institutions were placing more emphasis on students' academic aptitude rather than simply standardised exam scores and that students would achieve stronger academic performance after they begin their studies in the city (Wong, 2022)^[15]. The students from universities, according to Yan & Brown (2021), benefit from continuous assessment procedures because they were encouraged to learn on a continuing basis^[16]. In a similar vein, Hounsell (2021) believed that continuous assessment allowed for the giving of feedback and support on college students' progress in their coursework^[17]. Although another research expressed concern about the widespread usage of continuous assessment with a graded purpose, they do so because they believe it may reduce the effectiveness of feedback (Sambell et al., 2007).^[18]

3. Methodology

This study will use quantitative research, with data collection and analysis by means of an online questionnaire. In order to ensure the professionalism of the questionnaire, it will be designed by directly quoting or adapting past researchers' reports.

An education department of a university in HK, engaged in the survey, and the attendees were educators in the department. The educational teachers were chosen for this role considering they sit at

the crossroads of higher education and the compulsory domain. In order to optimize data collection, data was gathered at the weekend. This is referred to as opportunity sampling. Fifty lecturers were given a questionnaire with 20 items (see Appendix), which they completed. The survey was completed prior to the investigator's briefing in order to guarantee that the circumstances were equal. Fifty surveys were distributed, completed, and returned to the sender on the same day. Teachers did not still provide comprehensive responses to all of the questions. While it was necessary to compute the proportion out of 50 to ensure more accuracy in presenting the results, the numbers (in brackets) represent the number of replies to each question, which was done in order to improve the overall accuracy of the findings report.

4. Result

4.1 Task examples used in summative assessment

The keywords or notions 'exam/test' was used by 50 per cent (25/50) of those who responded. 28% (14/50) responded with the phrase "finish essay/assignment." As a result, 78% of respondents reported seeing a summative assessment activity that matched the definition that included the words 'end' or 'ultimate.' 18% (9/50) of those surveyed said it was connected to the latest legal tests. As a result, the examples were consistent in almost 82 per cent (41/50) of the replies, indicating that the examples were consistent.

4.2 Task examples used in formative assessment

The notion of formative assessment was likewise universally agreed upon by all participants. 86% (43/50) of lecturers used the words 'progressive' and/or 'for training' in their descriptions. The linguistic connotation of formative evaluation is also emphasized in the concept of formative assessment. On the other hand, 30% (15/50) of those polled indicated 'feedback.' A total of 40 per cent (20/50) employed the terms or concepts of 'interacting, questioning, conversation, elicitation,' among other things. 11% (11/49) of respondents used the words 'thesis, course work, and homework.' Work and feedback are mentioned by 16 per cent (8/50) of those polled. The rate of 18 (9/50) of the samples was challenging to categorize.

4.3 Students are provided with details on formative assessment activities.

As Table 1 shows, teachers inform students that their course is formative assessment and clarify what formative assessment is and how it works are 72% and 66% respectively. More teachers made effort to mark (72%) than grade (40%), as well as the functions of FA, are linked to SA, the rate is 80%.

Table 1: Formative Assessment Survey Results

Questions 1-5	1. Inform learners that their course is Formative Assessment.	2. Clarify what Formative Assessment is and how it works.	3. FA is making effort to mark.	4. FA is making effort to grade.	5. The functions of FA are linked to SA.
Agree	72% (36/50)	66% (33/50)	72% (36/50)	40% (20/50)	80% (40/50)
Disagree	28% (14/50)	34% (17/50)	28% (14/50)	60 (30/50)	20% (10/50)

4.4 It is vital to us as lectures to understand the theory

All of the teachers in university agreed with the theory is vital to them.

Table 2: Theoretical Cognition Survey Results

Question 6	6. It is vital to us as lectures to understand the theory.
Agree	100% (50/50)
Disagree	0

4.5 SA and FA evaluate outcomes and/or process

According to Table 4.3, university teachers believe that summative assessment is more concerned with outcomes (100%) than with process (60%). Conversely, formative assessment is more concerned with the process (88%) than the outcome (72%).

Table 3: Comparison of process and results of SA and FA

Questions 7-10	7. SA evaluates outcome	8. SA evaluates process	9. FA evaluates outcome	10. FA evaluates process
Agree	100% (50/50)	60% (30/50)	72% (36/50)	88% (44/50)
Disagree	0	40% (20/50)	28% (14/50)	12% (6/50)

4.6 SA and FA determine for score and/or for performance

As shown in Table 4.4, respondents generally felt that SA functioned as an affirmation of marks (86%), but 76% also felt that it was also a way of determining students' academic performance. Secondly, less than 50% of those responding thought that FA had the function of determining marks, compared to 54% who disagreed with this view. However, over 90% believed that FA was an endorsement of academic performance.

Table 4: Comparison of scores for SA and FA

Questions 11-14	11. SA determines score	12. SA determines learning performance	13. FA determines score	14. FA determines learning performance
Agree	86% (43/50)	76% (38/50)	46% (23/50)	92% (46/50)
Disagree	14% (7/50)	24% (12/50)	54% (27/50)	8% (4/50)

4.7 SA and FA support the helpful feedback

As can be seen from Table 4.5, the percentage of those who think SA provides effective feedback is 80 per cent, while the percentage of those who think FA provides useful learning feedback is 94 per cent.

Table 5: Comparison of learning feedback between SA and FA

Questions 15-16	15. SA supports the helpful feedback	16. FA supports helpful feedback
Agree	80% (40/50)	94% (47/50)
Disagree	20% (10/50)	6% (3/50)

4.8 Students comprehend and concentrate on SA/FA

University students' knowledge of SA and FA was 76 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively, according to the data shown in Table 4.6. University students' attention was divided between SA and FA, with FA receiving around 34% of the focus and SA receiving 2.5 times more attention than FA.

Table 6: Comparison of student concerns in SA and FA

Questions 17-20	17. Students comprehend SA	18. Students concentrate on SA	19. Students comprehend FA	20. Students concentrate on FA
Agree	76% (38/50)	86% (43/50)	62% (31/50)	34% (17/50)
Disagree	24% (12/50)	14% (7/50)	38% (19/50)	64% (33/50)

5. Discussion

It is clear from the analysis that only half of the population perceived summative assessments to be related to examinations and tests, so this does not mean that the examination-based model of education has been completely abandoned in the Hong Kong higher education system. However, it is worth noting that close to 80% of the respondent cohort perceived summative activities to be associated with words such as an end and final, suggesting that whether summative assessment, whether in the form of examinations or otherwise, presents results those students cannot change. It is remarkable that only 30% of the definitions of formative assessment include the word "feedback," given that it is a crucial component of the definition. Another peculiarity is that it is challenging to understand how lecturers might see formative evaluation as either for developing or for learning when 'feedback' is still not supplied. Second, close to 90% of respondents believe that continuous assessment is associated with 'progressive', which is the same as what Yan & Brown has mentioned in past research, formative assessment is a method of continuously encouraging students to learn.

Secondly, most teachers choose to inform students that their course is a formative assessment and how formative assessment works, which will save students from stressing over exam grades. When asked to perform things new, lecturers desired to be reminded of the theory behind it, which is why formative assessment is so important in education. It is clear from Tables 3-5 that SA does focus more on outcomes and grades, whereas FA focuses on the learning process and student performance, and more importantly, FA provides more useful feedback on student learning, whereas SA does not. Unfortunately, it is difficult to gain the attention of students as FA does not have the pressure of grades and exams.

6. Implications

A survey of lecturers in Hong Kong universities shows that influenced by Western culture, the education model in Hong Kong is more concerned with the individual development of students and the enhancement of their creative abilities, rather than measuring them by standardized answers. The concept of exam-based teaching in higher education has been abandoned in favour of improving students' ability to think independently and practically, rather than looking for a standardised answer for the sake of the final exam result. Through continuous assessment, university students can better understand themselves and form a positive interaction with their future career needs. All the above models of education in HK's universities are worthy examples for mainland universities to follow. However, as FA does not gain a high level of attention from students, HK's universities also add some summative tests as appropriate to ensure that students pay attention to the task at hand.

7. Conclusion

As a consequence of the fact that this is limited research of just 50 professors at a single university, readers should remember that the findings cannot be generalized; nonetheless, they may be utilized to highlight the situation. For higher education area that desires to learn better via formative assessment, the present framework of assessment is available, as the theory requires teachers to provide feedback during the teaching process if a formative assessment is required. On the good side, the statistics reveal that instructors make substantial use of formative evaluation, mostly in the university but also in a few instances in the form of summative testing. This demonstrates a demonstrated commitment to promoting assessment in order to assist learning. However, despite the fact that the research was conducted in a particularly unique situation, the results are regarded to be applicable to various scenarios in higher education. A learning-oriented method to assessment should be an important element of any reputed university nowadays age when assets for universities to engage students in learning are limited. Any suggestion in favour of improving the student teaching-learning process might include the supply of such a method like an integral part of any degree program.

8. Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

If you implement a formative assessment to the students, you should answer the questions of the following and choose to agree/disagree:

Is it your intention to inform students that this would be a FA?

Do you elaborate on how it would be a formative experience?
Does formative assessment make effort to the mark?
Does formative assessment make effort to the grade?
Is there a relationship between formative and summative work?
Is it vital to us as lectures to understand the theory?
SA evaluates outcomes.
SA evaluates a process.
FA evaluates outcomes.
FA evaluates a process.
SA determines a score.
SA determines performance.
FA determines a score.
FA determines performance.
SA supports the helpful feedback.
FA supports the helpful feedback.
Students comprehend SA.
Students concentrate on SA
Students comprehend FA.
Students concentrate on FA

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