



DepEd's 2015 Classroom Assessment Reform: A Policy Analysis

Plata, Sterling

De La Salle University

*Corresponding Author: sterling.plata@dlsu.edu.ph

Abstract: In 2015, the Department of Education (DepEd) implemented a new system for assessment and grading with Order 8 s.2015, "Policy Guidelines on Classroom Assessment for the K to 12 Basic Education Program." This document is divided into seven parts: the theoretical basis, a definition of classroom assessment, an explanation of what is assessed in the classroom, guidelines on how to assess learners, the grading system, an explanation of how the core values are reflected in the report card, an explanation on how attendance is reported, the intended audience of the classroom assessment report, and appendices that include sample assessment tools, a transmutation table, and templates for the student report card. In this regard, there is a need to analyze the policy by using the lens of standards-based grading to uncover the reform's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, since assessment and grading dictate students' failure or promotion, there is a need to review the assessment framework for teachers who need to cope with a new curriculum and a new assessment system as mentors and gatekeepers. Suggestions for classroom assessment reform policy are also presented for policy makers, teachers, and other stakeholders to continue the discussion on this critical matter.

Key Words: DepEd assessment reform; standards-based assessment; classroom assessment; grading and reporting

1. Introduction

Classroom assessment has been receiving much attention because of its impact on individual student learning compared to nationwide national testing (Guskey, 2003). For example, Guskey (2003) points out that when classroom assessment is well-planned, teachers can provide feedback that will enable the students to take responsibility for achieving the learning targets. Black and William (1998) in their study report that formative

assessment raises the standards of achievement, helps students in self-assessment, and helps low achievers and learners with learning disabilities to believe that they can still improve through feedback.

One aspect of assessment is standards-based grading (SBG). SBG is defined by Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) as grading that "involves measuring students performance on well-defined course objectives." It allows students to assess what they know and can do based on content standards. The reporting system helps students to see if they are meeting the performance standards. However,



Szymczak (2015) claims that transitioning to standards-based grading is not easy. In addition, classroom assessment should be anchored on a standard way of reporting (McTighe, Smith, Klenowski, and Gunn, 2010). Critical to this is the national assessment reform policy (Plata, 2015).

In this connection, this paper intends to answer the following questions:

1. How is DepEd's CAR (Classroom Assessment Reform) policy on grading aligned with existing literature on standards-based grading?
2. What processes and resources does DepEd provide to help teachers implement the reform in an objective and standard way?

As pointed out by Plata (2015), it is critical to evaluate national assessment reform policies because "classroom assessment and grading are the only bases for gate keeping, promotion, and academic awards" of students in the Philippines. She adds that "policy documents are critical tools for teacher development, student placement, remediation, and lesson planning."

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a policy analysis of DepEd's CAR. The policy documents and well as online resources provided by DepEd were studied to check their alignment with existing standards-based grading literature. These documents include the following:

- DepEd Order 8 s.2015
- DepEd internet pages on assessment
- DepEd English Curriculum

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part is divided into two sections based on the research questions set forth for this paper. Each section first presents the DepEd policy and then the analysis follows.

1. How is DepEd's CAR (Classroom Assessment Reform) policy on grading aligned with existing literature's guidelines?

First, DepEd policy (DepEd, 2015) on assessment and grading states that:

1. "Assessment in the classroom is aimed at helping students perform well in relation to the learning standards. Learning standards comprise content standards, performance standards, and learning competencies that are outlined in the curriculum" (p.3).

2. "Content Standards identify and set the essential knowledge and understanding that should be learned...Content standards answer the questions, "What should the learners know?" (p.3).

3. "Performance Standards describe the abilities and skills that learners are expected to demonstrate in relation to content standards and integration of 21st century skills" (p.3).

4. "Summative assessments are classified into three components, namely, Written Work (WW), Performance Tasks (PT), and Quarterly Assessment" (p.7).

5. Grade 1-10 Weight of Components

Written Work	30%
Performance Task	50%
Quarterly Assessment	20%

The following points in the policy are worth noting:

1. The DepEd English curriculum per grade level has four content standards and four performance standards for the whole year. There are eight domains for Grades 7-10 such as reading



- comprehension, listening comprehension, viewing comprehension, vocabulary development, literature, writing and composition, oral language and fluency, and grammar awareness. On the other hand, Grades 1-6 have 10 domains. Each domain has at least 2 learning competencies. It seems that there is a need to clarify how these learning standards will be evaluated. For instance, there is a need to clarify for teachers if the content standard and performance standard per quarter be evaluated in the quarterly assessment. A case in point is Grade 10 Quarter 4 Performance Standard: "The learner competently presents a research report on a relevant socio-cultural issue." DepEd (2015) defines Quarterly Assessment as a ways to measure what student learning at the end of the quarter. It seems impossible to assess this at the end of the quarter because of the complex research process.
2. Standards-based grading (SBG), according to literature (Guskey and Jung, 2006; Tomlinson and McTighe, 2006; O'Connor, 2002) should report how each student meets the curriculum content standards. However, the CAR policy of asking teachers to compute Written Works, Performance, and Quarterly Assessment and reporting a single grade in the report card seems to veer away from the main goal of SBG. Students will not know to the domain in which they excel or the domain where they need extra effort.
 3. It seems there is a need to review the CAR guidelines because there seems to be an overlap among the three components: Written Works, Performance, and Quarterly

Assessment. An example is Grade 9 Quarter 4 Content Standards, "The learner demonstrates understanding of how Anglo-American literature and other text types serve as means of preserving unchanging values in a changing world; also how to use the features of a full-length play, tense consistency, modals, active and passive constructions plus direct and indirect speech to enable him/her competently performs in a full-length play" (Deped, 2013, 148). A teacher who needs to plan his or her assessment will focus of preparing tasks for Written Works, Performance, and Quarterly Assessment, instead of planning assessment tasks to find out if students are meeting this standard.

2. What processes and resources does DepEd provide to help teachers implement CAR is an objective and standard way?

There are three resources provided for teachers to implement CAR. First, is DepEd Order 8, s.2015. It defines key terms, provides the guidelines for formative and summative assessment, the steps for computing the final grade, and the template for the report card. In addition, additional resources are the Excel template for computing the quarterly and final grade based on the components: written works, performance, and quarterly assessment as well as a video explaining CAR.

However, one point worth noting is the seemingly lack of policy regarding calibration. Calibration or moderation or consensus moderation is a process where teachers come together to review their assessment and scoring of specific student outputs to ensure rater



reliability and consistency (Hipkins and Robertson, 2011; Australian Catholic University, n.d.; Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, 2007). Assessment and grading are highly subjective activities (O'Connor, 2003) and with the increasing recognition that performance tasks rather than traditional testing are authentic means to assess students, there is a need for a system to help teachers, parents, and students be confident that assessment results are based on a common objective system.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This policy analysis was conducted in order to review the alignment of DepEd's CAR with existing literature on standards-based grading and to review the policy regarding the processes and resources provided by DepEd to support teachers. The results suggest that CAR needs a careful review to make assessment standards-based. In this way, the process of grading and in completing the report card will help the students and their parents to know if the standards in the different domains are being met. In addition, the results also show that there is a need to clarify how content standards, performance standards, and learning competencies are assessed and reported in the context of SBG. Lastly, the results show that CAR seems to lack a system for moderation and calibration, so that teachers from the same grade level teaching the same subject will use the same rubrics and will evaluate students' learning in a standard way.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy analysis may serve as a discussion point among policymakers, researchers, and concerned teachers. Researchers in this area

may contribute to the discussion by surveying how teachers implement CAR. This type of research will help uncover teachers' needs that can be addressed through different professional development programs. Research on teacher-made assessment tasks, tools, and reporting systems is also recommended.

6. REFERENCES

- Australian Catholic University. (n.d.) Consensus moderation. Retrieved from https://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/579886/Consensus_Moderation.pdf.
- DepEd (2015). Policy guidelines on classroom assessment for the K to 12 Basic education program. Retrieved from http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/order/2015/DO_s2015_08.pdf.
- DepEd. (2013). K to 12 curriculum guide English. Retrieved from <http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/English%20CG%20Grade%201-10%2001.30.2014.pdf>.
- Guskey, T. (2003). How classroom assessments improve learning. *Educational Leadership*, 60 (5), 6-11.
- Guskey, T. & Jung, L. (2006). The challenges of standards-based grading. *Leadership Compass*, 4(2), 1-4.
- Hipkins, R. & Robertson, S. (2011). Moderation and teacher learning. Retrieved from <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/moderation-teacher-learning.pdf>.
- Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat. (2007). Teacher moderation: collaborative assessment in student work. Retrieved from



DLSU
RESEARCH CONGRESS
"Responding to the Challenges of the ASEAN Integration"

20
16

Presented at the DLSU Research Congress 2016
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
March 7-9, 2016

https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/Teacher_Moderation.pdf.

McTighe, Smith, C., Klenowski, V., and Gunn, S. (2010). The centrality of teachers' judgement practice in assessment: a study of standards in moderation. *Assessment in Education*, 17(1), 59-75.

O'Connor, K. (2002). How to grade for learning. California: Corwin Press.

Plata, S. (2015). KPUP and standards-based grading in the Philippines: A policy analysis. Retrieved from http://www.dlsu.edu.ph/conferences/dlsu_research_congress/2015/li/LLI-I-005.pdf.

Steadman, M. (n.d.) Using classroom assessment for to change both teaching and learning. Retrieved from <https://www.sdbor.edu/services/studentaffairs/documents/usingclassroomassessmenttochangebothteaching-learning.pdf>.

Szymczak, J. (2015). Transitioning to standards-based grading model at the middle level. Retrieved from <http://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/314/>.

Tomlinson, C and McTighe, J. (2006). Integrating differentiated instruction and understanding by design. Virginia: ASCD.