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***Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research
(Book Review)***



Teacher-Made Assessments: How to Connect Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Learning (2nd ed.). Christopher, R. Gareis, and Lesli, W., Grant. Routledge (2015). xvi + 192 pp, ISBN: 978-1-315-77341-4 (ebk).

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Teacher-Made Assessments: How to Connect Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning (2nd ed.) written by Gareis and Grant is a Taylor and Francis 2015 publication. The volume is written in a professional but accessible style and offers essential information and practical advice about classroom assessment and aims to assist teachers in designing high quality assessments, analyzing and interpreting standardized assessments, and becoming more competent creators of, consumers of, and communicators about classroom assessment, in attempts to improve student learning. The potential audiences of the book are classroom teachers, assessment practitioners, instructional leaders, principals, test item developers, university professors, and undergraduate as well as post graduate students in educational testing.

In the first chapter, the authors clearly explain the need for assessment in the classroom. This introductory chapter discusses the important role of assessment in teaching and in improving student learning, assessment uses, the relation between assessment and accountability movement in educational settings, and the effect of classroom assessment. The negative consequences of standardized assessments are clearly described and a comparison is made between classroom assessment and standardized assessment. The authors then attend to the three major roles of assessment, namely, pre-assessment, formative assessment, and summative assessment using easy-to-understand examples, concluding that all classroom assessment is ultimately intended to contribute to student learning and by doing so, all classroom assessment is formative in nature, topics discussed more in-depth in Tomlinson and Moon (2013).

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In chapter two, the authors focus on reliability and validity in everyday life and in educational settings, and describe the characteristics of, and the ways to ensure, validity and reliability of teacher-made assessments. They end the chapter by explaining how validity and reliability interact with and influence each other, noting that reliability is subject to systematic and random errors and is therefore something relative. They claim that validity is a matter of degree, i.e., no test is utterly invalid or perfectly valid and it is associated with the confidence level we can draw inferences with based on assessment about student learning. The authors then go into details of four C's of validity (construct, content, concurrent, and consequential facets) and the issues that should be considered in gauging each in teacher-made assessments using illustrative example scenarios. In the remaining part of the chapter, they present some tips for ensuring and enhancing validity and reliability and present examples of teachers' reflections on their experiences of reliability and validity.

In the next chapter (Chapter 3), we learn about alignment between curriculum and assessment. The point of the authors is that alignment should be made between the dimensions of content and cognitive demand or behavior of the intended learning outcomes. They identify seven steps for making strengthened teacher-made assessments that are reasonably reliable and valid by sticking to some guiding principles such as a. unpacking intended learning outcomes, b. creating a table of specifications, c. clarifying purposes for and circumstances of assessing student learning, d. determining the appropriate types of assessment items/activities to use, and so on.

In the coming chapter (Chapter 4), the authors lay out basic procedures and guidelines for writing efficient select-response items. Following this topic, they briefly describe and raise a caution about bias and argue there are ways for tapping lower- and higher-level cognitive processes through constructing select-response items that lead to error free, reliable, and valid assessments, providing detailed guidelines for developing multiple-choice items that can reach these standards. However, for a more detailed discussion, the readers are recommended to study Kline (2015) which deals comprehensively with how test items of different types should be constructed and checked for their validity and reliability in a step-by-step fashion and at an advanced level.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) is devoted to the discussion of guidelines related to developing constructed response items. Guidelines are then offered for constructing each component of these items, i.e., *the prompt, response format, and scoring criteria*. The issue of bias (ensuring that student performance is not unduly affected by systematic and random error), and principles for tapping higher cognitive levels of learning (i.e., application, analysis, evaluation, and creation) through this item type are discussed next along with an example for each. The chapter ends with the authors' advocating the use of different item types in assessments.

In chapter six, an argument is made to link assessment to student learning such that learning does not stop with assessment. By bringing forth an example scenario, the authors explain how a table of specifications can be provided for interpreting and analyzing student learning. They suggest that teachers first analyze how the class performed as a whole through preparing a grade distribution and item analysis. The teachers then are informed of the need to learn more about the performance of individual students on the assessments analyzed through the lens of the curriculum to garner information on the nature of student learning. Of the five purposes of analyzing student learning described in this chapter, grading and feedback are dealt with as separate headings followed by a

description of the characteristics of and practical techniques for offering effective feedback. In line with recent trends in and findings of assessment-related research (e.g., Sadeghi & Abolfazli, 2014), the chapter ends with a final remark on the purposes and positive outcomes of assessment as learning, one being helping students to become lifelong learners.

In the final chapter, the authors emphasize the need for assessment literacy by focusing on the professional practice of teachers as leaders. In particular, they explain that assessment literacy can be viewed as a professional competency from three essential aspects (in that teachers ought to be educated to be good creators of, intelligent consumers of, and effective communicators about assessment). The authors then end the chapter with a summary of how teacher leadership can constructively improve the practice of colleagues, through say, collaboration in designing lesson plans and assessments, and constructively developing and critically reviewing assessments used by school districts.

As regards the positive points of the book, the authors present an introduction to each chapter which can act as a good advance organizer for the reader to the main discussions that follow. New terms are bold-faced and definitions follow them; furthermore, the provision of a glossary at the end of the book is also an advantage. The figures provided in some chapters lucidly summarize the text in line with the quote a picture is worth a thousand words. The examples provided are not discipline-specific and are applicable to teachers across subject areas including art, foreign languages, health, physical, career, and technical education. The book in general is a practical and accessible resource for classroom teachers as they make alignments in their own classroom assessments with the expected content and cognitive level of state standardized and district curricula.

However, there are some negative elements in this second edition which can be amended in future revisions. As the authors themselves confess, the book is not comprehensive enough to be used for very advanced courses on assessment. Another shortcoming of the book is that some parts which are related to the topics being discussed in a single chapter and therefore should be considered simultaneously when the reader is learning about a specific subject are indeed not included in that section. For example, in chapter 3, when materials are presented on alignment, it is stated that curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be aligned in teacher-made assessments; however, the first and the third of these three elements are discussed with instruction not included in the discussion. In addition, in the same chapter, it is claimed that learning happens at three levels, i.e., cognitive, psychomotor, and affective; however, the authors use Bloom's taxonomy which focuses only on cognitive domain of learning, yet it should be more appealing and useful for the reader to know about all the three domains and understand the distinctions in one place. At the same time, although it is a good idea that the authors present multiple examples for a topic, sometimes too much is offered (for instance, the examples given in chapter 3) which makes the reader weary. Despite these minor shortcomings, the book is expected to offer a handful of practical advice to both new comers and established practitioners in the field of assessment for learning.

References

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