Ways To Improve The Process Of Language Testing And Assessment In Public Schools In Uzbekistan

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Abstract: *Language testing has been a prolonged and most discussed topic in education. While carrying out research anyone come across numerous hypotheses, theories, and methods. In this article, we have discussed the importance of language testing and assessment alongside the ways to improve this process at public schools in Uzbekistan.*

Keywords: *Language planning policy process, language testing and assessment, classroom instruction, assessment tools, testing principles, formative assessment, summative assessment, level of creativity and critical thinking.*

INTRODUCTION

To choose a specific type of problem existing in educational system of Uzbekistan was too challenging a task. The reason for this is that there was not substantial experience in language planning policy process, and, that's why, there were some obstacles to identify a certain problem that would suit this sphere. However, after thinking about it carefully, it was decided to discuss and tackle with an issue that was common among almost all state school teachers in Uzbekistan. More specifically, the educational setting chosen for this small-scale research is a state school № 303 located in Sergeli, Tashkent. The target issue that needs to be urgently solved is teacher's attitude towards designing mid-term and final tests for school children. Here, the word "designing" should be emphasized because majority of teachers do not design those testing tools at all, instead they copy and paste them from exercises that exist in textbooks in use; at the same time, at schools, pupils are assessed in comparison to one another. One may wonder the reason why I have chosen this problem; the reason for choosing it is that this issue is becoming more common in schools which in turn bring about the degradation of language testing and assessment of students' language skills.

THE MAIN FINDINGS

There are one general goal and its objectives to be met after the end of policy planning implementation process. A main goal of the paper is to suggest of the organization of teacher training courses on testing and assessment to lead teachers to a more professional development. At the end of the implementation process, teachers will be able to

• Learn the basic principles of testing and assessment;

• Acquire good ethics of testing and assessment;
• Differentiate effective and ineffective ways of assessment;
• Analyze existing assessment tools and adapt them into classroom instruction;
• Improve the level of creativity and critical thinking of learners.

METHODS.

To be more specific, at the end, teachers will identify characteristics of a good test; in short, this training session for school teachers will develop their understanding of testing principles, namely validity, reliability, authenticity, practicality and backwash (Brown, 2010). Secondly, teachers will start approaching testing and assessment more seriously: acquiring the skills of western testing system, such as considering plagiarism and cheating during exams to be highly unacceptable, and in turn, it results in the decrease of plagiarism and cheating among pupils. Next, teachers will learn different ways of formative and summative assessment except multiple choice tests that are not authentic. On this point, Bachman (1990) defines authenticity as the appropriateness of a language user's response to language as communication. In addition, teachers will able to analyze current testing tools and think of ways to change them appropriately before applying them into their classroom instruction. The last but not the least, teachers will lead their pupils to be more creative and critical towards learning foreign languages. The purpose of 21st century teaching is not only to deliver subject matter knowledge, but rather prepare a young generation competent in different prospects such as being able to think creatively, globally and critically (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty and McLaughlin, 2007).As this can be considered as macro and micro level language policy proposal at a time, actors are both government officials and school administration. More precisely, Ministry of Education,

Ministry of Finance, school administration, teachers and pupils are actors of the action; these actors play various roles in the implementation process. Here teachers' willingness to develop professionally is deemed as the most important factor. The reason for is that without this there is no use of the implementation of this proposal as unwillingness will anyway cause a failure of the plan. So what are needed from teachers are willingness and openness to learn new things. Besides, a role of Ministry of Finance is to financially fund to carry out this language policy proposal. In this case, it seems that a school administration has a double role: at first, they should work in collaboration with Ministry of Education and inform governmental organizations (specifically, Financial Institutions) about this issue and explain the importance of teacher training courses and then, after the funding is subsidized, a school administration should create atmosphere for their teachers to get needed training. In addition, at the end, experiment will be done on school pupils. This language policy proposal is very crucial to improve teaching and learning quality at schools. To do this, existing and needed resources must be taken into consideration. In current proposal, the place where training courses to be held will not be needed as schools (for example, School № 303) can be used for this purpose. Next, sources for printable materials (lectures, activities, seminar materials and others) also exist at school. The most important thing here to be approached is to find an instructor whose major is Testing and Assessment (preferably, the one who studied abroad). For this part, the responsibility can surely be given to Erkin Mukhammedov who did his Master's degree on Testing and Assessment at Warwick University in UK. Moreover, it will be better if school is provided with essential technological devices to increase efficiency of lessons. According to Hew and Bush (2007) that computers, laptops, software and internet are the examples of technologies that can be integrated into learning process. The timeline is arranged for several phases. In the 1st phase (pre part), school administration and Ministry of Education should collaborate and prepare a written request for Ministry of Finance to get must-have funding. Then a written proposal should be sent to Westminster International University in Tashkent as the above-mentioned teacher trainer is a full-time teacher there and do all needed legislation procedures. Once the funding is provided and there is an agreement with a teacher trainer (roughly 2 months), the 2nd phase (while part) will start. As all the materials and setting are ready for use, teacher trainings start in this stage. This is 1 month training course which teachers should participate everyday (overall 31 days). The 3rd stage is a practical part (post stage); at this phase, teachers should apply what they have learnt into practice (school-setting practice). The role of a teacher trainer in the 3rd stage is to observe teacher's classes and check whether they can use formative and summative assessment properly, and he should pay attention to learner changes at a time (for example, student's approach to a class). After all stages take place and aimed outcomes are reached, results will be presented to Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance; now it is time to implement the proposal in supra macro level. Overall, the whole process takes about 4-6 months. To complete these stages, sufficient funding is needed. As place for teacher training and other essential supplies exist, the plan will be somehow cost-effective. More specifically, it will cost about 5000$ for the whole implementation process. In terms of supply of high technological devices, the decree adopted on December 10, 2012 can be further referred. According to this law, analysis of the current system of organizing language learning shows that learning standards, curriculum and learning materials do not fully meet the current requirements, especially in the use of advanced information and media technologies. Besides, in this law, it is stated that between 2013 and 2016 all educational institutions should be provided with modern technological equipment. From 2013 the Ministry of Finance should allocate needed funding to carry out all the acts mentioned in the abovementioned Presidential Decree №1875.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

There are several things to be done in a suggested timeline for the proposal to succeed. Teachers should be taught the importance of formative assessment. Trumbull and Lash (2013) say that formative assessment is used to develop student's learning process and guide them to be better; it can be a peer evaluation, conversation or teacher feedback. What is more, Tomlinson (2001) claims that formative assessment is much more important than summative ones. They should not assess their students comparing to one another, but approach them individually. Secondly, types of summative assessment should thoroughly be explained to teachers alongside its essential principles (reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity and washback). Brown (2010) asserts that there are five cardinal criteria for "testing a test", and they are reliability, validity, practicality, authenticity and washback. Bennett (2009) supports the idea equating assessment for learning with formative assessment and assessment of learning with summative assessment. Simultaneously, teachers need to learn how to analyze existing assessment tools and adapt them into their classroom teaching. Target skills of the plan are not to develop language learning skills, but to upgrade teacher's teaching, testing and assessment skills. At the end of the course, they will be able to develop their own assessment tools and adapt other existing ones. Besides, their teaching methodology hopefully will change as they will know wash-backs of formative assessment and its types. Additionally, during classes, trainer's formative feedback will be given to teachers in order to lead them to a right path, and, at the end, their classes will be observed by a teacher trainer to ensure and evaluate the effectiveness of those teacher training courses. Next thing found important to touch upon was the influence of culture on this proposal. According to Khasanova (2007), English language has become widely learnt language in Uzbekistan since post-Soviet era. She says that there has been an increased interest into language learning and teaching, and that's why it is thought that the implementation of the proposal will not be very difficult for the reason of teacher's willingness as Guskey (2002) asserts that teachers are the key to the success of reform initiatives within a classroom. However, teachers need to acquire the western style of testing and assessment: in short, negative effects of plagiarism and cheating on exams; by this they will begin looking at teaching and testing from different perspectives.

CONCLUSION

Borko (2004) and Desimone et al. (2002) consider teacher professional development to be an important for developing teachers' knowledge and instructional practices. On this point, Avalos(2010) states that professional development is about teachers' learning , learning how to learn , and implementing their knowledge into practice to accelerate students' learning process. Based on these viewpoints, the autho r is off vociferous opinion that the language planning proposal is planned rationally and strongly since it affects positively both teaching and learning process.

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