IMPLEMENTATION OF PARENTS TEACHER CONFERENCES FOR ENGLISH LESSONS

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ABSTRACT

This research focused on analyzing teacher's implementation of parents-teacher conference assessment at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School. The objectives of this study were to specify the implementation of recommendations from a parents-teacher conference by the English teacher in the English lessons. The method used in this research was a qualitative research design. The instruments used to collect the data were observation sheets from the parents-teacher conference made by the teacher plus an interview guide. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The findings showed that the teacher used three steps with the parents-teacher conference: (1) before the conference (2) during the conference and (3) after the conference. The teacher adopted all the steps recommended by experts. The researcher suggests that English teachers and students use parents-teacher conferences as part of their assessment in their teaching-learning processes since the results from parent-teacher conferences are very useful for the teachers and their students.

Keywords: *Parents-Teacher Conference, Teacher's Implementation, English Lessons*

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a widely used term in the world of teaching-learning. Assessment and testing are different. Assessment is wider than testing, assessment includes many parts, more details and takes

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place over a period of time. Assessment does not only measure one domain of the students' ability. Teachers can assess their students whenever they like, inside the classroom or outside the classroom, while teaching or not, it's not as strict as a test. Finally, assessment is one of the most important things in the teaching-learning process. It includes many aspects which cannot be done in a short time. It is an ongoing process and includes many people not only the teachers. As Brown (2004) has stated:

> *"Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain, whenever a student responds to a question, offers a comment, or tries out a new word or structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the students' performance. While a test, in simple terms, is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain."*

Assessing is really important in the teaching-learning processes. By conducting an assessment a teacher can find out how effective her teaching is. She can find out whether the students have understood the lessons or not. Assessments need to be made by many parties. It is an impossible task for the teacher to make all the appropriate assessments alone. The diversity of English skills and backgrounds amongst the students will also influence the nature of assessments. Therefore, there needs to be co-operation between teachers and parents with other staff too and certainly with the students. The goal of any kind of assessment must be to improve the skills and ability of the students. An assessment is not simply a matter of hearing things, the teacher needs to see many aspects during the assessments of her students. Assessments are an important component in education. The government has set down some procedures for doing assessments. As the Ministry of Education states in the National Curriculum 2013 in *Permendikbud* (Government Regulations):

> *"Penilaian pendidikan sebagai proses pengumpulan dan pengolahan informasi untuk mengukur pencapaian hasil belajar peserta didik mencakup: penilaian authentic, penilaian diri, penilaian berbasis portofolio, ulangan, ulangan harian, ulangan tengah semester, ulangan akhir*

semester, ujian tingkat kompetensi, ujian mutu tingkat kompetensi, ujian nasional, dan ujian sekolah/madrasah.

[English version: Educational assessment is a process of collecting and analyzing information to measure the achievement of the student including: authentic assessment, self-assessment, portfolio assessment, results from examinations, viz: daily tests, midterm assessments, final examinations, competence examination, national examination, and school/ islamic school examinations]."

Accordingly, authentic assessments also occur in the daily activities of the students, as Bagnato, et al. (2007) have said: Authentic assessment is the systematic recording of developmental observations over time by families and knowledgeable caregivers about the naturally occurring competencies of young children in their daily routines. From this, it shows that in conducting an authentic assessment the teacher has to use a systematic way and the assessment cannot occur just at one time but must be done over time. Therefore, the approach to authentic assessment must be flexible. As Bagnato, et al. (2007) have stated:

> *The authentic approach offers flexibility in that it can accommodate a number of different assessment strategies, including testing without tests, the use of curriculum-based assessment, clinical judgment, and functional behavioral assessments. Furthermore, it recognizes the significance of assessing the individuality of each child's behavioral style as a factor defining the child's performance.*

The theory above shows that teachers are not limited to just one type of assessment for assessing their students. Teachers must have the authority to use various strategies when assessing their students, as long as the results of the assessment are based on evidence of the students' performance and the teachers can be responsible for the evidence.

There are some relevant studies which are related to authentic assessment. From the study by Armstrong (2013) about the implementation of self-assessment, the findings showed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control

group. For peer assessment Sivan (2011) had researched the use of peer assessment to improve teaching-learning processes. The findings showed that the students found peer assessment to be an appropriate method for their studies. Paredes (2010) in his study about parents-teacher conferences found that most parents have high aspirations for their children's academic success.

Another relevant study was conducted by Nauss in 2008 about student-teacher conferences, the results showed that both parents and students consistently and usually felt that student led conferences allowed the students to take ownership of their academic results. These results indicated that students can accept and reach their goals with high expectations for academic achievement when given the opportunity to own their work and success. For role-play, the study by Yessy in 2009 found that the role-play technique allowed the students to speak naturally and developed the students' creativity. And finally, from the study by Huxham et al. (2012) about oral interviews, the findings showed that students gave better performances for their oral assessments.

Research Question

How can a teacher use implementation of self-assessments, oral interviews, role-plays, parents-teacher conferences, students-teacher conferences and peer-assessments?

Research Objective

To find out how self-assessment, oral interviews, role play, parents-teacher conferences students-teacher conferences and implementation of peer-assessment can be used by a teacher.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Authentic assessment

Authentic assessment is assessment that is done continually in the context of a meaningful learning environment and reflects actual and worthwhile learning experiences that can be documented through observations, anecdotal records, journals, logs, work samples, conference results, portfolios, writings, discussion papers, experiments, presentations, exhibits, project results, and other methods, including writings, videos and recordings. Authentic assessment may include individual as well as group work. The emphasis is on self-reflection,

understanding and growth rather than on responses based only on the recall of isolated facts, as in tests (Winograd & Perkins, 2002). The two most important reasons for using authentic competency-based assessments are (a) their construct validity and (b) their impact on student learning (Gulikers, et al., 2006).

Authentic assessment involves the teacher as an observer and as a researcher (Zumwalt, 2010). The teachers have to be coached and trained to observe their students. If the teachers use the wrong tools for assessment of their students that could wrongly record the performance of the students. In addition, assessment at the elementary level is different. One of the principles of assessment of young learners is that assessment should support the teaching-learning processes so that the outcomes from the assessment will motivate the learners, Kelly (2013). When teachers use traditional assessments, then the scores of the students will be low; so the students will feel they have failed which will decrease their motivation for further learning. Therefore, the best solution for the teacher is to use authentic assessments.

Parents-Teacher Conferences

Lemmer (2012) has said that the most common form of direct communication between parents and teachers in schools worldwide are the parents-teacher conferences. Purposeful parent-teacher conferences afford the teacher and the parents the opportunity to address a particular topic related to the child, such as academic progress and/or behavior. Education theory shows that parents-teacher conferences are needed in the teaching-learning process. Either academic or behavior progress of the students are also determined by parents at home. The teacher doesn't know what [s the behavior of the child at home, unless the teacher holds such a conference. From the research results, the researcher found that the parents of student A were surprised when teacher NH said that student A was very talkative at school while at home the parents said that A was very introverted and talked very little. Both the teacher and the parents were surprised with the facts that they found out from their conference. This result showed there was a difference in the behavior of the student at school from that at home. Therefore, the parent-teacher conference was important for the teaching-learning processes and the teacher needs to conduct regular parent-teacher conferences. Regular home-school communication is fundamental for effective parental involvement in schooling (Evans, 2004; Graham-Gray, 2002).

Shifting the current parent involvement paradigm from a school-centered model to a student-centered model is a noble beginning (Paredes, 2010). Nowadays, parents-teacher conferences are one of the solutions for problem with students at school. The teachers cannot ensure the progress of the students by themselves. They need help from the parents, particularly at the primary level. Therefore, teachers have to involve the parents in the teaching-learning processes for their children at school. As Paredes (2010) has suggested one opportunity directly related to improving student achievements is the parent-teacher conference.

Criteria of Good Assessment

According to Hammond et al. (2013) there are five criteria of good assessment: (1) Assessment of Higher-Order Cognitive Skills that allow students to transfer their learning to new situations and problems, (2) High-Fidelity Assessment of Critical Abilities as they will be used in the real world, rather than through artificial proxies. This calls for performances that directly evaluate such skills as oral, written, and multimedia communication; collaboration; research, experimentation; and the use of new technologies, (3) Assessments that are internationally benchmarked: Assessments should be evaluated against those of the leading education countries, in terms of the kinds of tasks they present as well as the level of performance they expect, (4) Use of items that are instructionally sensitive and educationally valuable: Tests should be designed so that the underlying concepts can be taught and learned, rather than depending mostly on test-taking skills or reflecting students' out-of-school experiences. To support instruction, they should also offer good models for teaching and learning and insight into how students think as well as what they know, (5) Assessments that are valid, reliable and fair should accurately evaluate students' abilities, appropriately assess the knowledge and skills that they are intended to measure, be free from bias, and be designed to reduce unnecessary obstacles to performance that could undermine validity. They should also have positive consequences for the quality of instruction and the opportunities available for student learning.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Parents-Teacher Conferences

Gaunt (2018) has stated that the advantages of parents-teacher conferences are: (1) Better outcomes for students; students with involved parents get higher scores, enroll in higher-level programs and

have good attendance, stronger social skills and better behavior, (2) Positive relationships: Parental involvement at school can help build positive interactions between parents and their children, as well as between parents and teachers and between teachers and students. Gaunt has also said that two disadvantages of parents-teacher conferences are: (1) Some parents may feel out-of-the-loop as many schools lead a strong push for parental involvement through committees and classroom volunteering, (2) Helicopter parenting: Some parents can take their involvement too far, always hovering over their children.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is descriptive-qualitative as proposed by Setyosari (2010) who has stated that a descriptive study aims to explain and describe a condition, event, and/or object. Setyosari (2010) further added that qualitative research is where the researchers apply techniques such as interviews, content analysis and so forth. Sukmadinata (2011) has said that in descriptive research, the researchers do not give any treatments to the object, just recording what is happening as it happens.

This research was conducted in a natural setting where the researcher was deeply concerned with the existing social context for the implementation of authentic assessment which is used by the English teachers at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School. In conducting this qualitative research, the researcher not only describes the phenomena but also interprets each case and the associated conditions.

By conducting this qualitative research, the researcher has tried to present the existing phenomena and the natural setting for the implementation by the teacher of authentic assessment of English lessons at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School. The researcher was directly involved and spent time doing observations in the classroom. Besides the observations, the researcher also collected data through interviews, taking field notes and making recordings. The data gathered was presented qualitatively, in the form of words rather than numbers.

This study was conducted at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School which is located on Jalan Teuku Nyak Arif, Lamnyong, Banda Aceh. The school has 200 students and 20 teachers. The researcher observed one teacher from grade 2 for self-assessment, role play, oral

interviews, parents-teacher conferences, students-teacher conferences, and for peer assessments.

The sources of data for this study were observations of the teacher's implementation of authentic assessments in English Lessons. The data was collected through observations, interviews and documentation. The observations were made seven times during classes and many times outside the class. Interviews were also done with the teacher. Documents were studied related to authentic assessment such as the curriculum, student portfolios, teacher reports, teacher comments and rubrics and formats for teacher self-assessments, peer assessments, role play, students-teacher conferences, oral interviews, and parents-teacher conferences.

Instruments used in this study included the observation sheets, interview guides, documents, recordings, and field notes. An observation sheet was designed to use for data collection during assessment processes such as teacher-student interactions, recording teachers' rubrics, comments and records. The researcher also designed an interview guide to use to get information that was not covered by these observations. Ary et al. (2010) have stated that interviews are used to gather data from people about opinions, beliefs, and feelings about situations using their own words. They are used to help understand the experiences people have and the meanings they make of them rather than to test hypotheses. Interviews may provide information that cannot be obtained through observations or they can be used to verify observations (p. 438). Examples of questions from the interview guide are: "*Biasanya, pertanyaan apa yang NH tanyakan ke orang tua?*" [English version: "Usually, what questions do you ask the parents?"]. "*Dan saran apa yang diberikan oleh orang tua untuk perkembangan anaknya?*" [English version: "What suggestions are given by the parents for the development of their children?"]

The researcher conducted one observation for each assessment session, in total she made six observations. She sat in the back and spent considerable time observing the teacher, the students and the class activities. The observations focused on the teacher's implementation of authentic assessment in the English lessons. Throughout the observations, she took field notes to record what was happening in the class such as the behavior of the students, their activities, the events, the methods, and other features. The researcher used non participant observations where she just monitored what was

going on and did not get involved in any of the activities (Syamsudin & Damaianti, 2009).

An interview was also held to obtain data that was not obtained through the observations. The interview was crucial since in qualitative research, the phenomena needs to be clearly interpreted through direct interaction with the subject in a deep interview (Syamsudin & Damaianti, 2009).

To support the data, the researcher also reviewed some documents such as, a self-assessment format, a peer-assessment format, a role-play assessment format, an oral interview assessment format, the students-teacher conference assessment format and the parents-teacher assessment format. All these documents were obtained from the teacher. By getting this documentation, the researcher was able to clearly explain the phenomena of the teacher's implementation of authentic assessment in her English lessons at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School. The documentation provided strong evidence since it was stable, rich, and a motivating resource (Moleong, 2005).

The data in this study was qualitative. The data was obtained through classroom observations, an interview with the teacher and the documentation, recording and taking of field notes. According to (Moleong, 2005), analyzing data depends on three processes that are related to each other; describing, clarifying, and connecting. Then the data was analyzed through the processes of data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions as proposed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013).

Sugiyono (2007) has said that validity in qualitative research can be established by conducting some methods such as checking credibility, transferability, dependability and/or confirmability. In this study, the researcher chose credibility. The following techniques can be used to ensure credibility in qualitative research, viz: (1) Prolonged engagement, (2) Persistent Observations, (3) Referential Adequacy, (4) Member Checks, (5) Triangulation, (6) Thick Descriptions and (7) Negative Case Analysis. In fact the researcher chose only four techniques, namely: (1) Prolonged Engagement with the Participant, (2) Persistent Observations, (3) Referential Adequacy, and (4) Member Checks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The data from the observations and the interviews showed that in implementing the parents-teacher conference assessment, the teacher employed techniques from the Harvard Family Research Project (2010) for the parents-teacher conference assessment the researcher only observed one teacher.

The teacher sent a request by WhatsApp Messenger (WA) to the parents in which the teacher asked permission from the parents to visit them at home: and she also told them the goal of the visit was to discuss the progress of their child, student A.

The parents, who received the invitation, agreed to the teacher visiting them at home. On Saturday, since every Saturday is a holiday at SD Teuku Nyak Arif Fatih Bilingual School. Since it is a school holiday, the teacher can meet the students at their home as well when visiting their parents the teacher visited in the morning. She prepared her notes about student A beforehand: In those notes, she noted the progress of student A, and also what information that she wanted to know about student A from the parents, for example: With whom did A study at home? At what time did A go to sleep & at what time did A get up, when did she have breakfast & what did she eat for breakfast, what subjects did she say she liked & which ones didn't she like.

The teacher also brought A's portfolio with her and showed it to A's parents. In this case, the teacher used the family home rather than the classroom. When she spoke to the parents, the teacher started by talking about the progress of A, for example "Maam, ibu (mother of) A, A is a very friendly child at school and A can easily comprehend the lessons quickly". When the teacher told the parents the positive things about their child, they became really excited and asked many questions about their child, such as: "*A kurangnya dimana ya miss?* [i.e. "What aspects does A need to improve, miss?"] Then the teacher showed A's portfolio to the parents. The teacher also asked some questions about A, such as "*A ada ngaji bunda*?" "*Belajar dengan siapa di rumah?*" "*Ada les?*" ["Does A learn to recite the Al quran? With whom does A study at home? Does she attend extra coaching courses?]"

Later, the teacher followed up what she had found out from the parents-teacher conference: A few days after the conference, via WA, she thanked the parents for helping A at home. The teacher also gave A some worksheets to do at home with help from her parents. This kind

of activity is done to help the parents to participate in helping to improve the English skills of their child. The teacher also reported the further progress of student A with a brief report. The teacher also visited the parents of several other students. After brief reports, the teacher kept the notes of all suggestion from the parents.

Then, during the learning processes on the following days, the teacher opened her notes again to remind herself of what she needed to do to fulfill the needs of each of her students. Where sensible the teacher did what the parents had suggested to her. For example, she gave the students more vocabulary to learn and asked her students to get their parents to help them to memorize the extra vocabulary. At the end of each semester the teacher wrote all aspects of each student's strengths and needs plus comment for each student in each of their individual reports.

From these reports the parents can read the detailed description of their childrens strengths and needs and also their teacher's comments so that all of the parents can know and understood their child's strengths and needs.

Discussions

There are 3 components for parents-teachers conference according to the Harvard Family Research Project (2010), namely, component [1] before the conference, where there are 5 steps, component [2] during the conference, where there are 7 steps and component [3]: after the conference, where there are 3 steps. The researcher discussed each point for each component with the teacher: For the first component, for point 1, the teacher, NH, didn't put alternative scheduling options into the invitations, since the parents got the invitation directly from the teacher. For point 2, NH prepare a portfolio of A's written work and she talked about it with A's parents. For point 3 there were no differences, while, for point 4, NH didn't send reminders to the parents since the parents had accepted the invitations as the teacher only sent the invitation two days beforehand. For point 5, NH didn't need to create a welcoming environment since the conferences were held in the homes of the parents not in her classroom. Next, the researcher looked at the points in the second component for parents-teacher conferences, viz: For point 1, there were no differences; for point 2, the teacher brought A's portfolio but she didn't bring portfolios of the other students written work, however she was still able to discuss each

student's progress and abilities; for points 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 there were no differences with the format from the experts. Next, the researcher looked at the third component where there were no differences found in all three points. This is in line with Letsholo (2006), who has noted some strategies to use when conducting parents-teacher conferences, such as, invitation techniques, pleasant encounters, pertinent information, positive information and adequate preparations. Moreover, Epstein (2001) has described six types of parental involvement.

Parenting

Schools should assist families with parenting and child rearing skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development and setting home conditions to support learning at each stage and grade level.

Communications

Schools should communicate with families about school programs and the progress of individual students developing open school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

Volunteering

Schools should improve recruitment, training, work and schedules to involve families as volunteers and audiences at school and in off school locations to support the students in the school programs.

Learning at Home

Schools should involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curricular-linked activities and decisions.

Decision-making

Schools should include parents as participants in school decisions, governance and advocacy activities though PTA committees, councils and other parent-school organizations.

Collaborating with the Community

Schools should coordinate their work and resources with the community, local businesses and local colleges and universities and government agencies.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Teacher NH used three steps in conducting her parents-teacher conferences [1]: Before conference; (a) send invitations, (b) review student's work, (c) prepare thoughts and materials, [2]: During the conference; (a) discuss progress and growth (b) ask questions and listen actively (c) share ideas for supporting learning (d) seek collaborative solutions to problems (e) make an action plan (f) establish lines of communication. [3]: After conference; (a) follow up with the parents (b) communicate regularly (c) connect parents with-class activities.

Suggestions

The researcher suggests that English teachers should use parents-teacher conferences in their teaching-learning processes since parents-teacher conferences can be very useful for the teacher, especially for primary school or young learner teachers, where they have to establish a motivational atmosphere and build a positive attitude towards learning English.

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