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Sunddip Panesar-Aguilar
Walden University

Erick Aguilar

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Walden University

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Promoting effective assessment for learning methods to increase student motivation in schools in India

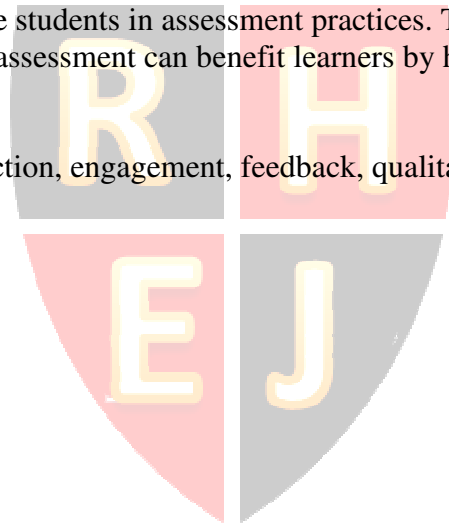
Sunddip Panesar-Aguilar
Walden University

Erick Aguilar
ourcohort.com

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how using effective assessment can engage learners and motivate student learning in the Dehradun, Noida, Delhi, and Trivandrum regions in India. The study randomly sampled 26 teachers from six private schools. Private schools were used in this study since such schools allot substantial funds to support ongoing professional development. Four core themes were identified from this study. The implications derived from this study suggest that educational leaders, stakeholders, and teachers can help improve student motivation in the classroom if they involve students in assessment practices. This study provides a clear understanding of reasons why assessment can benefit learners by helping them feel motivated to learn.

Key words: assessment, instruction, engagement, feedback, qualitative, formative, teachers



INTRODUCTION

Many private and public schools invest money into professional development to help teachers gain the strategies needed to be skilled at motivating student learning. The construct of student motivation in learning is the result of task-related and organizational factors, such as the type of assessments embedded in classroom teaching (Clark, 2012; Crossouard & Pryor, 2012; Mislevy & Zwick, 2012; Satayu, Boonchom, & Yannaput, 2012). The topic of assessment has been widely researched in organizational literature databases because there is a correlation between assessment, performance, and productivity. The motivation of a student depends on the type of assessment practices used in the classroom, which in turn, affects student success (Offerdahl & Tomanek, 2011).

The government of the education system in India is focused on improving its current system as a whole. Since the country is a developing nation, the quality of education is important (Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2016). Leaders in India contended that because of the economic and social challenges in the country in the 21st century, the educational system as a whole cannot improve (Barli, Kurt, Cabuk, & Bynum, 2005; Seth, 2015).

Secondary school education systems in India are integral, as these institutions help to shape the human capital of the country (Ghailani & Khan, 2004; Sharma, 2014). Geographically, the areas of Trivandrum, Dehradun, Chandigarh, and Delhi regions heavily emphasize education in comparison to other states in the nation. The quality of education in these regions depends on satisfied and committed teachers who work towards motivating students to help them succeed in their learning (Ghailani & Khan, 2004; Seth, 2015; Sharma, 2014).

In particular, Assessment for Learning (AFL) is a method widely adopted in many schools in North America. Since this method has proven to help students increase motivation and engage in the classroom in North America, adopting this practice in India can help motivate students, who are often learning through lecture-style lessons. The typical lesson involves a teacher writing notes on the board for students to copy down and students are regularly given memorization drills; thus, learners are passive recipients of information who rarely get involved in their learning and assessment practices (Barli et al., 2005). The results from this study is important, as it adds depth to the existing literature in assessment practices and motivation of student learning, and strengthens a literature trail of these variables in the Indian education system.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study explored how an assessment method called Assessment for Learning can help teachers gain the strategies, skills, and ready-to-use resources to incorporate effective assessment practices into their daily teaching pedagogies to motivate student learning. For three months, 26 kindergarten to grade 12 teachers in schools in the Trivandrum, Dehradun, Noida, and Delhi regions in India attended four workshops related to developing effective assessment practices in the classroom to motivate student learning. The assessment method specifically taught was Assessment for Learning. Assessment for Learning is a formative feedback tool that is implemented during practice work as opposed to on the final product (Clark, 2012). Since students need time to act on feedback, the most appropriate time to allow for students to get

feedback is on practice work, such as an assignment or project, where students still have time to make improvements or changes that will benefit their learning (Chappuis, 2005).

In Assessment for Learning initiatives, teachers can use a variety of methods to help students understand a) where are they going in their learning; b) where are they now in their learning; and c) how can they close the gap? The benefit of using Assessment for Learning is that this type of assessment has the potential to motivate learners and improve student achievement; teachers still have time to make any adjustments to the learning; when adjustments occur, students benefit; and students can use the results to adjust and improve their own learning. The teachers involved in the study taught their perspective grades but incorporated the methods that were provided in the workshop for the 2014 to 2015 school year. Each school in the study housed kindergarten through grade 12 students.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

While an abundance of literature can be found on the gaps in higher education in India, little research illustrated the need for effective assessment practices in the kindergarten to grade 12 levels. Specifically, no literature on incorporating Assessment for Learning techniques to motivate student learning in classrooms in India was available. Literature revealed that children in the Indian education system have gaps that need attention (Clark, 2012; Dey, 2014; Dutta, 2016; Quayum, 2016; Sharma, 2014). There are several disadvantages to the Indian education system; however, the poor quality of education, with poor infrastructure, poor literature, and inadequate pedagogic attention are the reasons that the system is failing the most (Dutta, 2016; Sharma, 2015). Further, teachers in many schools do not have the resources to prepare students in the classroom with various lessons.

Oftentimes, because of the lack of resources, teachers tend to use the textbook and write notes on the chalkboard to convey their lessons. Further, since the teachers in the education system often have poor quality teaching skills, government schools are unable to attract good quality teachers due to inadequate teaching facilities and low salaries. Consequently, lack of resources and poor quality teachers results in students being taught using rote methods of learning. Teachers in elementary and secondary systems also tend to use the lecture style of learning, where students take notes and are passive recipients of information, which follows a teacher-centered learning model. Dutta (2016) contended, “Unless high quality of education both in terms of infrastructure and academic is not provided and sustained in all higher education institutes, it will be difficult to match with global world” (p. 112).

When students in India transition to higher education, students are expected to learn content knowledge “without overtly relying on rote methods, and a system of feedback and practice that will enable students to monitor themselves” (Dey, 2014, p. 44). One of the challenges in higher education is the current assessment methods that are being employed. Dey (2014) proposed to incorporate class participation, project work, assignment and examination marks involve program assessment, process assessment, and outcome assessment, individually as well as in collaboration.

This method will not only require that a student receive assessments based on coursework but also encourages students to work with others. The goal is to move students away from rote memorization and using collaborative methods to tackle higher education coursework. While Dey’s research describes assessment methods in higher education systems in India, the kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms have similar problems of rote methods of learning.

Quayum (2016) developed a case study to illustrate the need for creativity and innovation in the teaching methods in schools in India. Thus, Quayum (2016) believed in author Rabindranath Tagore's educational vision that "education should be not for mere "success" or "progress" but for "illumination of heart" and for inculcation of a spirit of sympathy, service and self-sacrifice in the individual" (p. 2). Innovation can happen when students are involved in the assessment of their own learning.

Kant Dwivedi (2012) contended the government of India is emphasizing the need for quality and excellence in all education systems. The issue starts with teacher education programs since teacher quality in public schools in India is low (Dutta, 2016). In order to positively impact student achievement, professional development must be high quality and connect directly to achievement (Kant Dwivedi, 2012; Nelson & Landel, 2007). Specifically, challenges in teacher education in India include lack of courses in classroom management and assessment. Revitalization of the teaching-learning process is necessary (Seth, 2015).

Teachers benefit from using effective assessment methods in the classroom. Ying Li and Liping's (2016) study analyzed the effectiveness of peer and self-assessment. Based on this study, the authors found that peer and self-assessment methods deepened the learning from surface, rote learning to development of higher-order thinking. "Any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning," (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2002, p. 34) highlighting that within effective assessment methods, feedback is needed.

Assessment for Learning is an assessment method that requires involvement of the students. The way in which feedback is provided in Assessment for Learning is that feedback is timely, ongoing, measurable, and provides direction for further learning (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis (2004). According to Stiggins et al. (2004), there are seven strategies of Assessment for Learning, including: (a) providing students with a clear direction of the learning outcomes; (b) utilizing strong and weak student samples; (c) teachers offering regular, descriptive feedback; (d) teaching students to self-assess and set their own goals; (e) creating lessons that will focus on one learning outcome at a time; (f) teaching students how to improve by providing opportunities to revise work; and g) providing students with opportunities to self-reflect and be involved in the learning by tracking their own progress.

The key to Assessment for Learning is to understand that a summative assessment such as a percentage or grade as a stand alone does not tell a student what he or she did well, what to improve on, and involve the learner in engaging learning. Already in education schools in India, lack of engagement occurs because students are viewed as passive recipients of information (Popham, 2011). Therefore, Assessment for Learning utilizes a learner-centered approach to learning, which helps to engage the learner in critically analyzing the content he or she is learning.

In this method of learning, when the learning outcomes are clear, feedback that is provided by the teacher is acted on and helps to assist the learning process (Satayu et al., 2013). With a summative assessment, formative feedback is needed to supplement, for example, the grade or percentage on a given task. This type of feedback provides students with a destination for learning and understanding of how the learning outcomes relate to their actual learning. Research on Assessment for Learning practices indicates that students have the ability to increase their motivation for learning and their academic achievement (Chappuis, 2005; Stiggins, 2007). This type of learning benefits students in India since this involves students in the learning process. This method of assessment was implemented in India to help teachers to encourage

students to be active learners who are motivated to be in the classroom and use higher order thinking skills.

A person's self-efficacy is an important factor for motivation of learning in the classroom. Rice (2001) extended Bandura's theory and believed self-efficacy's theory and referred to self-efficacy as a belief in one's capability of performing a specific task. Moreover, he argued that self-efficacy is different from self-esteem. Bandura suggested, "Self-esteem tends to pervade a wide variety of activities" (as cited in Rice, 2001, p. 147).

Thus, people are described as having generally high or low self-esteem. "Self-efficacy is more situational" (Rice, 2001, p. 147). For instance, an individual may have high self-efficacy about turning in an assignment that he or she worked hard at as opposed to not working as hard. In Bandura's self-efficacy theory, there were three components that he believed self-efficacy could be learned and the expectations that are acquired, including: a) performance accomplishments, b) verbal persuasion, and c) vicarious learning (Rice, 2001). Rice also suggested that Bandura believed that physical or affective status had an effect on the development of self-efficacy.

Additionally, Brown (1999) argued that self-efficacy intervention is important for students. Brown not only provided strategies for teaching self-efficacy, but also argued that these learning experiences must integrate school-based learning with real-life conditions. Brown's theory mirrors this study because it requires the integration of classroom instruction with community-based experiences and the active involvement of teacher and students in the assessment process.

Bloom's taxonomy is another factor that impacts success of students in classrooms in India. In his model, Bloom created a hierarchy of questions that starts at the knowledge and comprehension level and in his highest level, he related to the synthesis and evaluation levels of learning (Bloom, 1956). Since research indicates students in India are often using rote memorization skills to acquire learning, they are learning at the lower levels in Bloom's taxonomy, such as the simple memorization of facts. Understanding, at the synthesis or application level, requires students to take the information learned and apply it to different contexts of learning, such as rewriting the story of The Little Red Riding Hood in the wolf's perspective.

PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH SITE

All participants in this study were employed in the Sanskriti, Doon, Excel Global, Bal Bharti, and Noida schools in India. These 26 male and female teachers were selected by their school administrators to attend four workshops on Assessment for Learning and implement the practices in their instruction during the 2014-2015 school year. Each school serves students from kindergarten to grade 12.

Every teacher willingly participated in the Assessment for Learning training workshops, attended all workshops, and willingly agreed to participate in the study and complete an open-ended questionnaire. The participants were all between the ages of 23 to 53, and had varying credentials of experience. The teachers taught in a range of subjects, such as: English, mathematics, science, history, social studies, psychology, and languages. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of teachers who participated in the research.

The research sites were Delhi, Dehradun, Trivandrum, and Noida cities in India. All five schools were classified as private elite schools. Each school had kindergarten to grade 12 programs.

DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process took place in five schools in the Delhi, Trivandrum, Noida, and Dehradun regions in India. Data collection occurred using open-ended questionnaires involving 26 schoolteachers who teach kindergarten to grade 12 course subjects. Only full-time teachers on contract, who taught one or more subjects, were included in the study; administrators, special education teachers, counselors, and substitute teachers were excluded. The sampling population included random sampling and the target population was 26 teachers. This study had a potential of 62 participants who could have been used for the study; 42% of the population was used for this research study.

Participants were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire at the end of completing four Assessment for Learning training workshops. Participants in this study attended all four workshops and were asked to stay for four hours for each session, but were invited to stay longer to ask questions, clarify, and contribute more. Two sessions lasted longer 20 minutes longer than planned; however, all participants stayed back to finish the workshop.

Over a one-month period, four workshops were scheduled and conducted for each school. Noida and Sankskriti schools teachers attended the workshops together, whereas Excel Global teachers and Bal Barthi school teachers attended the workshops separately. Before the start of the workshops, informed consent was attained. Further, before the start of the workshop, research participants were given instructions on the data collection methods, the purpose of participation, withdrawal at any point, and confidentiality. Informed consents were signed and returned during the workshop.

To capture richer, candid responses, participants were requested to not provide any identifiable information when completing the questionnaire. Maxwell (2004) contended rich data as “data that are detailed and varied enough that [participants] provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on and the process involved” (p. 254). The questionnaires provided to research participants were open-ended so that participants can provide lengthy responses and variety in their answers. Any similar or same answers create patterns. The patterns identified result in the development of common themes. Categories were then created to formulate themes from the patterns that were identified.

An analysis of the data occurred to identify common themes and patterns from the open-ended questionnaires. A manual method in addition to Moustakas (1994) modified van Kaam method was utilized to find the themes and patterns. The modified van Kaam method is a manual process that requires the researchers to code, categorize, extrapolate, and analyze data from the questionnaires (Moustakas).

The use of a modified van Kaam method enabled the researchers to get a better understanding of the problem that was being explored for this research study. The open-ended questionnaires were deconstructed and then reconstructed to help the researchers understand the data (Moustakas, 1994). Categories were created to organize the data. Patterns and themes emerged from building connections between the categories.

Member checking of the interviews after they were transcribed was used to ensure accuracy of the findings through email. Email was used for member checking because of the

time factor. Member checking allowed the participant to review the transcription of the interview and allows the participant to add or change anything before final approval. Any research participants who believed their views were accurate and an honest reflection was portrayed in the questionnaires did not review the transcribed data.

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Based on transcription of the data, core themes and patterns were identified. The themes and patterns were the result of participants answering open-ended questions relating to utilizing effective assessment methods to engage learners in the classroom. Four themes emerged and are presented in Figure 1 and Table 2.

Theme One: Improvement in Assessment Strategies

Study participants (100%) indicated a need to have more effective assessment strategies such as Assessment for Learning that would better enable them to engage their learners. All participants unanimously agreed the current assessment methods employed were contributing to rote memorization because assessment was not taught in teacher preparation programs. Participants (96%) indicated assessment courses were not part of their teacher preparation programs. Further, the assessment strategies currently being employed in the classroom follow the general rule of marking answers right or wrong and providing a letter grade.

Study participants (90%) stated the need for utilizing group work in classes to allow students to work together in teams so that students can collaborate with one another on assessment practices. Understanding how to tie the state mandated learning objectives to the evaluations was another area that participants (100%) did not consider prior to the workshop. Participants (100%) use the mandated learning outcomes to develop their lessons, but never considered tying these outcomes to their assessments so that students are able to understand what the purpose of the test, group project, or assignment is.

According to Stiggins (2007), assessment, when linked to the prescribed learning outcomes, allows students to understand what the purpose of learning is. Students understand there are outcomes that need to be learned in every subject but do not necessarily understand how these outcomes are tied to the lessons they are taught. These learning targets or outcomes need to be written in student-friendly language so that students can understand what the mandated outcomes are.

Participants (83%) believed that the current assessment strategies did not engage their students. Study participants (92%) take their marking home, check off using a checkmark for right and an “x” for wrong and put a score out of a whole and provide a percentage. While some study participants (86%) contended they have students mark each other’s work in class, the method follows a similar method to checking off right answers and marking an “x” for wrong answers. Moreover, study participants (96%) described using stickers and phrases such as “good job,” “better luck next time,” “try harder,” “you need to study more,” “well done,” “excellent work,” and “fantastic” to be encouraging. Such phrases are considered praise and the common misconception is that praise is not considered feedback (Rapp, 2012; Stiggins, 2007; Stiggins et al., 2004).

According to Brookhart (2008), “feedback should appeal to both the mind (cognition) and the heart (motivation)” because it gives students an understanding of where they are currently at in their learning and what they need to do better for next time” (p. 32). The phrases

“good job” or “excellent” do not tell the students what they did well, what they did not do well on, and what they need to revise for future assignments. One participant stated, “when I get home from the school, I do not have a lot of time to mark so I find it easy to just check off what students did right or wrong.”

Continued professional development will help teachers to understand that Assessment for Learning is not more work but a different way of working. For instance, providing ready-to-use resources, providing data-driven evidence, and ongoing coaching will help teachers to understand the importance of utilizing Assessment for Learning initiatives. When teachers have obtained the appropriate resources and skills through effective professional development on assessment, they will become better prepared to assess students in the classroom.

Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs is applicable to Theme One because when the teacher can acquire the basic needs of students, they can then feel motivated (self-actualized) in the classroom. The basic needs they would require is to feel confident and a sense of achievement in their learning through effective assessment practices that illustrate they are meeting the learning outcomes of the course. Motivation begins as the seed to helping a student feel self-fulfillment. A teacher would also feel self-actualized when his or her students succeed in their classes by getting good grades (Maslow, 1954).

Theme Two: Lack of Feedback

Participants feel they need assistance in expanding their assessment practice of simple test and assignments scores. Focused feedback was another area that participants agreed they did not consider. Consistent with the literature, to improve their learning, students need to receive appropriate and focused feedback early and often; they also need to learn how to assess their own learning. When feedback is provided, students know their destination of learning. Feedback also has to be descriptive by identifying specific strengths, describes what needs improvement, and identifies how to close the gap (Chappuis, 2005; Stiggins, 2007).

Participants (75%) reported the large class size as a factor in hindering ability to provide formative feedback. Since formative feedback is integral to improving student learning (Chappuis, 2005; Clark, 2012; Offerdahl & Tomanek, 2011; Stiggins, 2007), having too many students in the classroom takes too much time, in addition to the other duties that a teacher needs to accomplish. One participant believed “a school day starts at 7:00 in the morning and ends at 6:00pm. Within that day I am busy with all my other expected duties that are part of my teaching contract. Given such a workload and having 35 students in my classes, I am stressed about how I am going to provide feedback as well. I am afraid it will be hard.” Administration and school district personnel need to account for current issues teachers are facing with the large class sizes to gain a better sense of how to support their staff.

Study participants (93%) believed feedback provides direction and feedback needs to be ongoing. Participants did not (85%) feel they provided feedback in a timely manner. However, participants (94%) stated that providing examples of strong and weak sample assignments is an important tool to use in helping students understand the direction of the assignment. One participant indicated that there is “lack of time to try and use this type of feedback. Who has time to figure out how to find these various feedback forms? This is why I go back to the traditional way of marking because it is easier.”

Applicable to this theme is the theory of motivation because when effective feedback is provided to a student in a timely manner, a better student-teacher relationship is formed,

communication with the student and teacher strengthens, establishment of trust is formed, students can act on feedback better, and teachers experience a feeling of success because they feel that they have accomplished something pertinent to their role as a teacher (Robbins, 2005). All of the aforementioned factors enable teachers to experience higher levels of self-efficacy. When higher levels of self-efficacy are ascertained, teachers may feel more contentment in the teaching assignment, contentment in learning the material as opposed to memorizing the information, contentment in the teaching profession itself, and have positive student-teacher relationships.

Theme Three: Limited Self-Reflection on Practice

Participants in the study (100%) expressed not knowing how to develop self-reflection tools in their assessment practices and indicated (94%) they believed self-reflection to be irrelevant to motivate student learning. Self-reflection tools and strategies are necessary to help teachers in India encourage self-reflection activities in the classroom. Research suggests teachers need to consider promoting self-correction to students because reflective thinking is an integral part of learning (Bruce, 2001; Brookhard, 2008; Black et al., 2002; Stiggins, 2007). A participant contended “I do not understand entirely how to get my students to use self-reflection in their learning. I do believe they need it because I am sometimes guessing how they are doing when I am teaching. If I ask them out loud, “does anyone understand,” I barely get a response back. I never know until I give them a test.”

Study participants (90%) believed students should be involved in peer and self-feedback. Providing students with opportunities to reflect on their own learning and be able to work with one another to exchange feedback among their peers can help them become lifelong learners (Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Mooney, Ryan, Uhing, Reid, & Epstein, 2005). Students can track their own feedback through journal writing, discussing what they have learned and how well they believe they have learned it; having a prepared score sheet to put in the front of their notebook or binder with an area to write comments about any questions or concerns they have; and through online blogging, asking questions and providing their input. Another way students can self-reflect is by having students keep a list of the learning targets for a course and have them check off each target once they have mastered it. Further, participants (92%) felt that since social media is a form of communication for today’s learner, students should use the self-reflection tools such as graphic organizers and feedback forms available online.

Peer and self-feedback is considered an important self-reflection practice for study participants (94%). A participant said, “I like that peers can work together to help each other understand the learning in my class. I need some ideas on how I can put this into my teaching practice.” One way peers can provide feedback is by using a scoring criterion and providing comments on a peer’s assignment. The teacher should give students time to take their peer’s feedback and make necessary changes before submission to the teacher. According to Stiggins (2007), self-feedback is important because it gives the learners an opportunity to critically think about their own learning and determine if they meet the targeted learning objectives.

The perception theory is highly applicable to the self-reflection of learners, as those who are given self-reflection opportunities through feedback may have high expectations of how to be more motivated to learn in the classroom, which may help teachers to acquire an idealized view of the types of self-reflection required in their own learning (Evans & Tribble, 1986). Previous literature indicated the need for students to utilize self-reflection opportunities; a teacher who

understands the importance of self-reflection will have students who will most likely succeed or do better in the classroom. Also, a positive relationship will be established between the teacher and student, and the teacher can develop a class that works together to learn as opposed to having students simply memorize lectures (Anhorn, 2008; Culross, 2007).

Theme Four: Tracking Student Progress

All participants (100%) agreed that classroom assessment is useful to them and their students. One participant shared how individual tracking of progress gives a picture of the student's individual ability. Tracking student progress also allows the teachers to know what parts of an assignment students understand and what parts they need further teaching.

Understanding how to design rubrics with the student in mind and with the engagement of students is essential for teachers to be able to adopt effective assessment methods in the classroom. Teachers need to provide a rubric and go over each element prior to the start of a task. Each point in the rubric needs to relate back to the learning outcomes so that students are aware of how this relates to the overall goals of the course. Students should be at the forefront of this movement by working with the teacher in designing the rubrics.

One participant shared how "I use rubrics in my class but I did not consider tying them back to the learning outcomes. I do not know how I can involve my students in building rubrics." Students can also help develop the rubric with the teacher. The teacher can spend time in the classroom going over the assignment criteria and then asking students to share what areas they believe the teacher will be looking at to assess their work. The teacher can take each student's input and create the rubric. Since the rubric is designed as a collective team with the teacher and students, there is ownership in the rubric; thus, students are tracking their own learning.

Studies related to tracking student progress emphasize the importance of supporting students as they self-select learning targets, self-monitor their progress, and self-assess their development (Glaser & Brunstein, 2007; Mooney et al., 2005). A student tracking his or her own progress is an important and fundamental step in learning and being involved in assessment. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory postulates that the basic, lower needs of individuals must occur before higher needs (Hayhoe, 2004; Maslow, 1954). Students who are not tracking their success may feel a lower sense of self-worth, security, safety, and self-esteem, which would not enable them to reach their full potential. However, self-actualized students are those who have higher feelings of self-worth, security, safety, and self-esteem. Thus, teachers also feel higher levels of self-actualization, which is the highest need in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, which would help them from taking risks and moving away from rote learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Four Theme model summarizes the core themes addressed in this research study and presents value in understanding how to assist teachers in India on how to adopt effective Assessment for Learning practices in their teaching (see Figure 1). The model illustrates how each diverse stakeholder can better support teachers in India on how to adopt assessment practices that will motivate their students in the classroom. The Four Theme model is designed to promote effective assessment practices to help increase student motivation in the classroom.

SIGNIFICANCE TO LEADERSHIP

Practitioners, researchers, and scholars can benefit from results of this study as this information describes the need for teachers in India to adopt Assessment for Learning practices in their classrooms to motivate students to learn and achieve better grades. The results of this study provide school district personnel with the information needed to support teachers with the finances to attend ongoing, data-driven professional development opportunities that will allow teachers in India to gain the skills required to adopt Assessment for Learning practices. School district leaders can provide teachers with coaching opportunities from stakeholders or professional consultants who are trained in Assessment for Learning initiatives based on the results of this study. School district personnel understand the need for supporting their classroom teachers in ensuring student needs are being met.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

In this study, the following limitations are applicable:

1. The study was limited to 26 teachers in four schools in various regions in the country of India. The sample size was limited and beyond the researcher's control.
2. Only select private schools in the Delhi, Dehradun, Trivandrum, and Noida regions were used in the study. The results may not accurately represent schools in all other regions of the country.
3. There was an assumption that research participants would complete the questionnaire without any preconceptions, naïve conceptions, or biases. Thus, the study is limited to honesty in the responses to the open-ended questionnaire.
4. Generalizability is limited due to a homogenous sample and time sensitive and natural settings that are subject to change.
5. Data collection and analysis was limited to a 3-month timeframe. A longer length of time may have improved the depth of thematic analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the results and findings of the research, the researcher suggests the following recommendations. As the research study was limited to only five private schools in different regions in the country of India, conducting additional research in schools across the country in India would help produce a larger sample size. A larger sample size and additional schools from various regions in India would provide researchers with greater depth of the current assessment practices and how this impacts the way in which students learn in the classroom.

Due to the nature of the way the Indian education system assigns teacher contracts, the limitation of the study was to all teachers teaching various courses and grades from kindergarten to grade 12. Future research can also include a repeat of this study but using teachers who teach only one grade and one subject matter in more schools. Repeating a similar qualitative study with the same ideas would increase reliability and validity and pose fewer limitations. Another possible future research study could include conducting a similar qualitative study with the same research questions but using a larger sample size in the same schools; this would help to postulate comparative perceptions and innovative insights.

A recommendation is that future researchers can conduct a comparison study of private schools versus public schools in India, and see if both experience the same issues in terms of

understanding and implementing effective assessment practices. Since the study only used private schools, understanding how government funded schools may be similar or different will help to determine the education system as a whole. Studies to determine the effectiveness of Assessment for Learning may be shared to those who already implement such assessment practices. Future research in Assessment for Learning and student outcomes utilizing a statistical methodology to determine whether such assessment practices are helping students learn better is another area of recommendation.

Longitudinal studies to explore the long-lasting impact of Assessment for Learning should be conducted. Further, future research in examining whether such assessment methods prepare secondary students for entry into post-secondary institutions would also be beneficial. Results from these studies can help provide information on whether effective assessments improves the way in which students learn and are motivated to be involved in the learning.



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APPENDIX

Table 1.
Demographics of Subjects Taught

Subjects	# of Teachers	Location/School
English	5	Excel Global, Doon, Bal Bharti, Noida
Mathematics	4	Excel Global, Doon, Bal Bharti
Science	4	Excel Global, Sanskriti, Doon, Bal Bharti
History	3	Doon, Bhal Bharti, Noida
Social Studies	5	Doon, Sanskriti, Noida
Psychology	3	Excel Global, Doon
Languages	2	Bal Bharti, Sanskriti
Total	26	

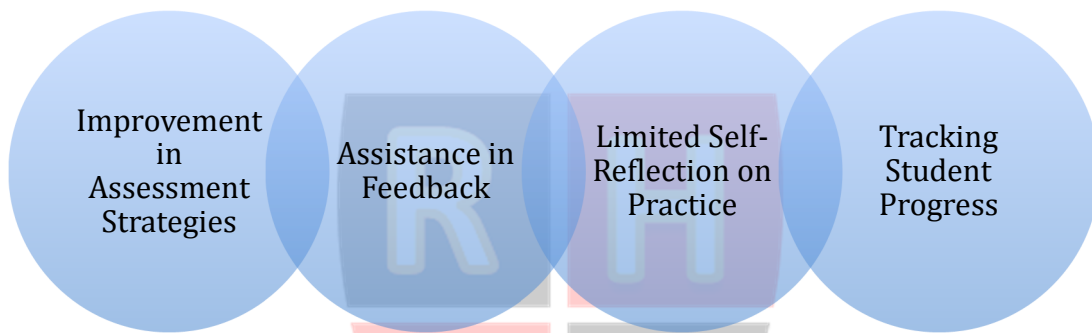


Figure 1: *Four Themes*

Table 2

Core Themes and Patterns from Questionnaire

Theme and Pattern	Description
Improved Assessment Strategy	A need to have clear assessment strategies that link back to the learning outcomes and engage the classroom student.
Lack of Feedback	Focused feedback needs to be ongoing, specific, measurable, and help the student understand their destination of learning.
Limited Self-Reflection on Practice	Peer, teacher, and self-feedback is required for students to gain self-confidence in their learning and be motivated to continue to improve in the class.
Tracking Student Progress	Emphasis on students need to have the ability to know what they are doing well, what needs improvement, and what to consider for future

assignments; online and ready-to-use tools can assist students in tracking their own progress.

