

Determine Teacher Candidate Students' Views on Peer Assessment

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to expose the effect of peer assessment on teacher education and determine students' views about this practice. In the scope of this study three dimensions are discussed: Students' evaluation of peer assessment, students' opinions about the difficulties through this process and their suggestions about the implementation. This is a case study in qualitative research paradigm. This study was conducted with eight students in Guidance and Psychological Counselling Department of Education Faculty at Necmettin Erbakan University in 2014-2015 spring semester. In order to get in-depth understanding about the perceptions of the students, a semi structured interview technique was used in the data collecting process and data were analysed by descriptive analysis method. At the end of the research, the practice of peer assessment was found effective on motivating students to study and to learn, developing their thinking, problem solving, gaining knowledge from different sources and studying in cooperation skills.

Keywords: Peer assessment, Qualitative research, Teacher education

JEL classification: A2

1 INTRODUCTION

Peer assessment is one form of innovative assessment, which more and more is seen as a tool for learning rather than only as a tool for benchmark the knowledge at the end of the learning process. Peer assessment focuses on learning and aims to bring together learning and assessment, making the involvement of students desirable, which is also an important preparation for life and work.

Peer assessment is defined as a scenario where students review artifacts as learning outcomes of other students on the basis of a set of criteria. Peer assessment as formative as well as summative assessment is widely applied in higher education and Topping (1998) provided a general review of the usage and the effects of peer assessment. If peer assessment is established and delivered carefully it can yield gains in cognitive and social skills. He also mentioned that summative, correctional feedback has lower effects than formative feedback. A similar issue is also discussed in Black and Wiliam (1998), where studies suggest that comments plus grades can lead to lesser learning than formative feedback. Thus, formative assessment with peers should be encouraged.

Peer assessment has many benefits for students, including the fact that it can foster students' feelings of ownership for their own learning and can motivate them. If collaborative tasks are included in the peer assessment it becomes a shared activity rather than a lone one, and can produce a community of learning. Students also have to take up different positions - as assessee they get reviewed and as assessors they give feedback to other learners. This can make students think more deeply and see how others solve problems. In general, the use of peer assessment can lead to greater motivation and "deeper" learning.

1.1 The Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to introduce the effects of peer assessment in preparing students to teaching profession and to state students' view about this implementation. For this purpose we seek an answer for following questions;

1.1.1 How does students evaluate peer assessment?

1.1.1.1. What are the views of students about the effectiveness of peer assessment?

1.1.1.2. Which skills do students develop at the end of the peer assessment practice?

1.1.1.3. What are the students' views about differences between peer assessment and other assessment methods?

1.1.2. What are the students' views about difficulties encountered in the process of implementation?

1.1.3. What are the students' suggestions for implementation?

1.2 Method

This research aiming to determine students' views about peer assessment is a case study model in the qualitative research paradigm. Main features of qualitative research are; identification of problem (it is not compulsory to make problem identification at the start of research) studying environmental factors within the frame of attendants, gaining datum from small groups of attendances chosen purposefully, and using interpretive approaches which are not quantitative to attain descriptive history of attendants and their society (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). In the case study composing research design, longitudinal and in-depth investigation is made on an event or a case, instead of dealing with limited number of variables in a strict way by using extensive sample (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

This study was conducted with eight students in Guidance and Psychological Counselling Department of Education Faculty at Necmettin Erbakan University in 2014-2015 spring semester. Before the implementation students were informed about peer assessment.

1.3 Implementation

Implementation was carried out by researcher. Researcher took on training leader task. Eight study groups were created in literature review lecture. Each group was composed of five students. Groups were assigned to make research on the subject they chose. In the process of research writing, introduction and problem status of research are going to be created by using the data gained in the literature review lecture and a report is going to be delivered on behalf of group. Within the process of this study the performance of groupmates was tried to be revealed using peer assessment and the scores emerged at the end of the peer assessment of students affected their final exam in the rate of %20. After completing group work and handing the report in, students were asked to share group score taking each other contribution into consideration. Students prepared assessment form on their own and handed in. Students don't know what each student score is. Researcher calculated the arithmetic means of scores adding up the points and then dividing it into five, and assigned each student's peer assessment score.

1.4 Data and Data Collection

In this study semi-structured interview was made to determine students' views about problem based learning approach. For this purpose an interview form was developed by researcher. In the process of developing form, related field literature was reviewed and opinions of specialists' were asked to provide the validity of the research.

Interviews were made on 11-15 May 2015 with four volunteer group leaders. Interviews took approximately 25-30 minutes.

1.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis method, mentioned in qualitative research data analysis, was used in the process of data analysis. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to submit the data in an organized and interpreted way to readers. Afterwards; these descriptions are explained and interpreted, cause effect relationship is studied and some conclusions are drawn (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2005).

After completing interviews, sound recordings were put down on paper. Dialogs put down on paper was read and interpreted by researcher in detail. At the first stage, interview records were encoded by colleagues of researcher independently to provide the validity of data. Then, authors discussed their view and at the first stage of analysis, they reached a consensus on theme classification.

2 FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this part, findings gained from the analysis of interviews made with students are included. These findings are subsumed under three themes as peer assessment, difficulties experienced during the implementation process, and the suggestions for implementation. Detailed information about these three themes is given below.

2.1 Evaluation of Peer Assessment Implementation

Three sub –category emerged from the analysis of students' views about peer assessment. These categories are "effectiveness of peer assessment, skills peer assessment fostered and the differences of peer assessment from other types of assessment".

2.2 Effectiveness of Peer Assessment

In the matter of effectiveness of peer assessment students stated that peer assessment is effective in making them face facts, helping to notice their abilities and inabilities, and so raising awareness with regard to improve themselves. A student makes a remark on an impression peer assessment left by these words;

Initially I thought that "assessment is made only by teachers". To tell the truth, after I experienced peer assessment implementation, I realised that it is possible for us to be included in assessment process. It urges you to study more, observe, and improve yourself (Harun).

Along these lines any other student explains the effectiveness of peer assessment with regard to noticing her weaknesses with these words;

I took remarkable steps, teacher. First of all, I hesitated if I assess my friends. Because, all of them are my good friends. But I saw I did it. At least I understood the importance of this progress (Tuba).

Students stated that this implementation had made them satisfied and during the process they had taken part in group work willingly. An attendant emphasizing that peer assessment motivated her to study hard and learn, stated that he attended the work willingly during the process and she was aware of her responsibility on this matter. And she expresses her thoughts with these words;

I think peer assessment encourage students to take more responsibility. Personally I see that it motivated me more. For example, there were some times I had exams but I spared time for it. I felt obliged but I was not troubled with that (Seher).

Any other student shared his thoughts stating that taking part in assessment process motivates the students to study avocationlly and he adds;

.....In addition, as I said, peer assessment whetted my appetite for my profession. It reminded me my role in assessment process and how I should behave my students (Rıdvan).

A student stating that she felt special during the peer assessment process expresses her thoughts saying that with the help of peer assessment she gained self-esteem and respect for her profession and she adds;

During the process of peer assessment I felt special, I wasn't worthless. Isn't it great? I mean feeling special (Betül).

Any other student emphasizes the effectiveness of this implementation in terms of presenting assessment making and confronting students with assessment and she adds:

... As I said before when I make assessment, I shape my friend's future at the same time. This is a big responsibility. And my friend's judgement on me have impact on my future (Çiğdem).

When the students' statements are considered, it is seen that peer assessment implementation urges students to search and improve themselves and it motivates students to study and learn more. Studies included in related field literature also supports these findings of research (Albanese & Mitchell, 1993). In addition, from the statements of students it is understood that peer assessment implementation is effective in preparing students to teaching profession. In terms of teacher training, peer assessment approach is compatible with adult learning theories. *Because* practise is essential in peer assessment approach, and using this approach in teacher training brings to mind that it will be a compatible way of learning with the nature of teaching profession (Lyons, 2006).

2.2.1 Skills Peer Assessment Implementation Fostered

In the process of peer assessment implementation students attended, it is understood that study skills, and thinking skills of students developed and students made progress in getting information from different sources, sharing this information with each other, and fulfilling their responsibilities. A section taken from a student dialoguing with regard to the skills peer assessment fostered is presented below:

I think my study skills and questioning skill developed. And, if it is skill, I made progress in making collaboration, meeting with group, and I fostered sense of belonging to the group (Betül).

A student stated that this implementation developed the sense of responsibility and shared his opinions with these words:

I can say that; in the group, studying skills developed and students made progress in taking and fulfilling their responsibilities (Harun).

In parallel with these remarks any other student stated that he made decision about others and he fostered decision making skill and exemplified:

For example, I have never thought of Harun. Now I have noticed and observed him. Now I know more about him (Çiğdem).

Students express that in the process of peer assessment implementation they fostered self- confidence:

I really have difficulty in making decision. I am often undecided. I forced myself into making decision. I suppose I did it (Seher).

Above, it is obvious from the students' remarks that peer assessment process fostered self confidence, questioning, taking responsibility, and making decision. A research conducted by Sluijsmans and others in 2001 showed that peer assessment improved problem solving skills of students. Giving students a chance for solving the problems they encounter, helps the students to improve their problem solving skills.

Students stated that peer assessment implementation fostered the ability of getting information from different resources, collaborative working, and communication skill. On the same topic, similar results were obtained from the research conducted by Akpınar and Ergin (2005).

2.2.2 Differences of Peer Assessment from other Types of Assessment

Students are included in assessment process with peer assessment implementation. A student stating that peer assessment makes practice attractive expresses her thought with these words:

What makes this group attractive and the reason why attended this group is actually lack of such kind of implementation in our other lectures. By this means, I can make assessment (Çiğdem).

For example, a student states that peer assessment process is motivating and effective in qualifying in the field of application and from those aspects peer assessment process is more attractive and satisfying in proportion to other assessment methods. And he adds:

I have always gone to school because I have had to. But now I observe the group and think about what to do (Harun).

2.3 Difficulties Encountered in the Process of Implementation

It is understood from the interviews made with students that initially, students had a feeling of desperation and inadequacy and they got confused under the responsibilities they took. In their answers relating to the difficulties they encountered in the process of implementation, students shared their feelings and the experiences they got. For example, a student expresses her at the implementation time feelings with these words:

I felt desperate. I worried if I make a mistake and needed a help of someone (Tuba).

It is understood that because the students experience such kind of implementation for the first time, they have difficulty in understanding procedures.

First of all I want to state that at the start of this implementation I wasn't sure about when and how many points to give. But later, it become clearer in my mind (Harun).

2.4 Suggestion for Implementation

Students in their interviews, made some suggestions about how to conduct peer assessment implementation in a more effective way. These suggestions centre on the timing of peer assessment implementation, and the proportion of peer assessment score in final score.

It is emphasized that at its first stage peer assessment scores can be implemented without reflecting it to the real scores of students but the subsequent assessments should be reflected.

You take some information, this is ok. But it have an impact on our real scores at once. This made me think. If there is injustice? I would be lying if I said I didn't think (Çiğdem).

A student states his suggestions with regard to that it will be more motivating if peer assessment score's propotion is more than %20 in final score.

I think we would try hard if peer assessment score had impact at the rate of %30 or %40 on our final score. I mean this makes our assessment scores more important (Harun).

4 CONCLUSION

Students stated that peer assessment implementation was effective in making them face the facts, helping them to notice their own abilities and disabilities, raising awareness for improving themselves better. In addition, students state that peer assessment implementation contented and motivated them to work and learn.

Students stating that peer assessment is effective in preparing to teaching profession emphasized that the implementation motivated them avocationally and they felt special when they made assessment.

At the end of the research, it is concluded that peer assessment implementation is effective in preparing students to teaching profession, helping students to notice their abilities and disabilities, motivating students to working and learning, developing skills such as thinking, getting information from different resources, collaborative working.

5 SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions were made below for the use of peer assessment in the study and research area with regard to teacher training:

Extending over the peer assessment implementation a long period of time such as a education year or a school year raise the effectiveness of peer assessment implementation because students face more assessment practice.

Besides descriptive studies dealing with experiences of students and instructors, studies based on qualitative research paradigm can also give in depth-information about teaching process.

In this study, peer assessment implementation was conducted to teacher candidates of Psychological Counselling and Guidance and effectiveness of the implementation is tried to be proven from different aspects. Effectiveness of peer assessment in training teachers from other field of study can be studied.

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