

Understandings of Assessment in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme: Focusing on Formative Assessment

ARIMA Miyo

The purpose of this dissertation is to clarify the concepts and origins of assessment present in the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP).

In previous educational assessment research conducted in Japan, the significance and issues of various assessment methods have been clarified, but teacher instruction and learner experiences of assessment have not been examined.

The MYP has drawn attention in the field of education and educational administration within Japan for its assessment methods. Unlike traditional instruction in Japan, the MYP is developed on an awareness of teacher instructional approaches and students' learning process which is gained through assessment. This research aims to examine and capture the perspectives of MYP-style assessment in an integrated manner.

Since the practices of formative assessment, which have received renewed focus in recent years, require a reexamination of teachers' concepts of assessment, this study sets formative assessment as an analytical framework for examining the understandings of assessment in the MYP. Following the process of reconstructing formative assessment in Europe and the United States, this study attempts to describe the reality of formative assessment from the learner's perspective.

Chapter 1 clarifies an awareness of the problems with teachers' instruction and students' learning caused by the nature of assessment that was present in the establishment of the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the MYP.

Chapter 2 identifies Alec Peterson's view of assessment, which is said to have greatly influenced the philosophy of the IB curriculum, to examine the intention underpinning the nature of assessment in the IB. He positioned assessment as a method to realize the goals of education and viewed assessment derived from educational goals as an "opportunity for self-awareness". This view is also present in the contemporary IB approach to assessment, in which all IB programs emphasize teachers' formative assessment and "assessment as learning", which focuses on the role of the learner in assessment.

Chapter 3 examines whether it is feasible for teachers to implement IB assessment in the MYP in line with the underlying intentions of IB assessment identified in Chapter 2. MYP documents referencing assessment were found to rely on a theory of educational assessment that emphasizes self-assessment. Additional analysis conducted with a cross-reference of OECD formative assessment frameworks that were created from international context studies indicated that MYP assessment guidance is appropriate for teachers who are developing formative assessment practices without prior knowledge of formative assessment theory.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of International Baccalaureate education in Japan, with the aim of describing the context of teachers and students who work and study within the MYP.

Chapter 5 aims to clarify the situation of teachers engaged in MYP assessment and position this situation within Japan's unique assessment context. It was found that the concept of formative assessment in Japan has been inherited from the terms used by "*kyōiku hyōka*" (educational evaluation) researchers and that formative assessment continues to be viewed as "*mitori*" and "*mikiwame*".

With this context, this study adopted a qualitative research method with interviews in order to answer the question of how teachers working within the MYP in Japan's Article 1 schools understand formative assessment and apply it in their practice. Chapter 6 examines the development of teachers' conceptions of assessment in the MYP. The analysis of interview data obtained from 10 teachers who work in authorized and candidate MYP schools indicated that teachers' conceptions of assessment transformed from assessment as grades and grading to assessment as making sense of and judging students' learning, clarifying that teachers' "*mitori*" and "*mikiwame*" changed to assessment as "an opportunity for self-awareness". A school-by-school analysis revealed that within assessment that emphasizes formative assessment, there is a need to move from "*mitori*" and "*mikiwame*" in a single teacher's classroom to the creation of a community for assessment among teachers.

Chapter 7 examines the developmental process of students' conceptions of assessment in the MYP. The analysis of interview data obtained from 29 students studying in authorized MYP schools revealed the direct results of this developmental process are the students' increased awareness of assessment, students using the MYP assessment criteria, and students realizing an ability to assess their own learning through experiencing summative assessment, self-assessment, peer assessment, and opportunities to receive feedback from their teachers. However, it was also found that the students' conceptions of assessment differed between the practices based on the view of assessment that encourages self-assessment and those based on the view of assessment as "*mitori*" and "*mikiwame*".

The findings of this study suggest that new assessment practices require: a shift from improving teachers' instruction to improving learners' assessment abilities; a movement away from "*mitori*" and "*mikiwame*" to the creation of an assessment community of practice for teachers and students.