

# An Overview of Three Simple Classroom Assessment Techniques

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## ABSTRACT

Classroom assessment is an essential part of classroom activity. Generally teachers use classroom assessment techniques to collect students' feedback over understanding of a discussed topic merely. Other applications of classroom assessment such as promoting learning or encourage hesitant students to express their doubts are not in practice so much. In addition provide quick feedback to teachers regarding effectiveness of teaching is impossible by using summative evaluation. Classroom assessment techniques are excellent way out to deal with these issues. Classroom assessment techniques are quick and easy to run tasks, which check students' level of understanding and doubts at the same time. It promotes deep learning by providing an immediate opportunity for further elaboration. In this connection the way of administering three classroom techniques are discussed in detail.

**Keywords:** Classroom assessment, Lesson transaction, Hesitant student

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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers are always concerned with the betterment of students' learning. They use a variety of means, some formal and others informal, to determine how much and how well the students are learning. For example, to evaluate student learning most of the teachers use techniques such as quizzes, tests, or examinations; some also use assignments such as term papers, lab reports, and homework. Indeed, these techniques are the tools of evaluation. Here the objective of evaluation is to judge individual student achievement and assign grade or marks particularly. Evaluation is summative in nature and typically occurs at the end of lessons, units, and courses. Therefore, evaluation is not suitable for knowing the learning status of students during the lesson. But, identification of confusions and difficulties in learning during the lesson transaction is much more important for improving students' learning (Bell & Cowie, 2001; Torrance & Pryor, 2001; Harrison, 2005; OECD, 2005; Woods, 2015) as teaching strategies could be modified and adjusted immediately depending upon the identified difficulties. It is not like that the teachers never try to find out difficulties in students understanding over topic during lesson delivery but due to usage of traditional techniques no work is done.

Let's take a look what happened when a teacher use traditional way to find out difficulties in students understanding over topic during lesson delivery. In a class, teachers assess students' learning mostly by asking questions such as 'is it clear?' or 'do you understand?' or sometimes ask 'what is this or that?'. But, it is noticeable that most of the time it is a common group of students in a class who answer the questions or ask clarifications from teacher. This group of students is, actually, that part of class which is learning. But, what about the remaining students who are actually facing difficulty in learning and they are hesitant in asking questions or sharing about their learning difficulties. The reason of their not asking the questions or not sharing the learning problems may be many. Like, one thinks that the lesson teach by the teacher is very simple and other students understand it, only I am not able to understand this. So if I ask for any further clarification, my classmates will make a mockery of mine and think how idiot I am. Once in a while, when a student collects courage and dares to ask a very simple or basic question, other students of the class look at him or her in a taunting way. And, not only students, but teachers look at him or her in the same way sometimes. This discourages or in a way ends the future possibilities of daring to ask more questions or sharing the learning difficulties by that student or other students at the same level. These students always try to hide their identity of being a 'dull student'. Asking question in group like 'is it clear?' and accepting group answers for the question augments this problem. Such students taking the advantages of group-loading become successful in hiding their identity. They pretend in such a way,

like by shaking heads in agreement as if everything was understood by them or they say ‘Yes Sir’, ‘Yes Madam’ when the teacher asks, ‘Is it ok?’

Students concern to hide their identity is also genuine. Because if a daring student continues to ask basic questions, either the teacher gets irritated or the moment he or she raise his or her hand to ask a question, his or her classmates start laughing.

A good teacher always wants to ensure learning of each and every student of his class. So, identifying the problems in understanding of learners without revealing the identity of a learner facing difficulty even in a simple lesson or developing a confidence among all the learners about communicating their conceptual doubts without facing a taunting or mockery making eyes of the peers is a challenge. This challenge can be overcome by applying classroom assessment techniques described by Angelo & Cross (1993).

By definition, Classroom Assessment Techniques are quick, easy, small and innovative ways of evaluation conducted in classrooms (Walker, 2012). These are formative in nature and are process oriented, no grade or marks are given to the students for these activities. It helps teacher to check student understanding in “real time” when lessons are transmitted so that adjustments can be made immediately (Walker, 2012). In upcoming few paragraphs three simple but useful classroom assessment techniques are discussed.

### **THE MUDDIEST POINT**

The Muddiest Point technique is one of the easiest classroom assessment techniques which can be used in any classroom situation (Angelo & Cross, 1993). This technique is used immediately after completion of a lecture or session to identify those portions of a lesson which students find least clear or most confusing. A teacher using Muddiest Point asks students to give a quick but thoughtful response to a question, ‘What was least clear to you in this lecture session?’ Or ‘What was most confusing to you?’ But neither the question will be asked in usual way like ‘is it clear?’ nor the response will be taken in usual way like ‘yes sir’, ‘yes madam’. Rather the teacher will follow a systematic procedure of using Muddiest Point technique.

#### **Procedure of using Muddiest Point**

- Prepare some paper slips and keep it ready with you. These slips will be used to collect students’ response about ‘Muddy Point’. The slips may be prepared like this:

**What was least clear to you in this lesson?**

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- Alternatively, you may use plain paper without written anything on it. In that case you may announce the question or write the question on the board.
- Go and start your class as usual. Finish teaching a few minutes before the end of class. Use this remaining time to assess muddiest points.
- Let students know what you are going to do and the objectives behind it. Announce how much time students will have to respond.
- Distribute paper slips among students. Assure them that there is no chance of being identified as a dumb student as writing names on slips is not required.
- Ask students to write in short most confusing or least clear concepts of that day’s lesson on paper slips.
- Collect paper slips from students.
- Identify muddy points by reflecting upon students’ response.
- Take decisions about which topics to emphasize again in next class.

### **ONE-MINUTE PAPER**

One-Minute Paper is one of the most used assessment techniques. It is simple and quick technique where one or two minutes are given to students to write down few aspects of that day’s class. It is also known as the ‘Half-Sheet

Response' as commonly half sheet of a scrap paper is used to collect students' response. Though this technique is mostly used at the end of a class but it can be used at middle of a class also. To use the Minute Paper, a teacher asks students to answer two questions:

- I. What are the most important concepts you learned in this class?
- II. Which concepts are still unclear to you?

#### Procedure for using One-Minute Paper

- First decide when to administer the Minute Paper. If your focus is assessing students' understanding over a lecture, the last few minutes of class is the best time. If your focus is on identifying students' interest, however, few minutes at middle of class are more appropriate.
- Accordingly, at a convenient time, pass out paper slips or half-sheets of scrap paper to the students. Paper slips may be prepared like this:

**What are the most important concepts you learned in this class?**

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**Which concepts are still unclear to you?**

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- If you are using scrap papers instead of paper slips then loudly announce the questions or write it on board. Clearly state how much time they will get to response and the purpose behind it.
- Don't ask students to write their names on paper as this will encourage students to response freely.
- Collect paper slips or half-sheets from students. You may use a drop box for this purpose.
- Analyze responses. Identify which concepts are understood well and which remain dubious.
- Discuss dubious topics again.

#### EMPTY OUTLINES

Empty Outlines technique is very simple but efficient classroom assessment technique. Teacher using this technique present few incomplete outlines to the students. Students are asked to complete those outlines within a limited period of time. This technique is very flexible and can be used at the beginning, middle or end of a class or lecture.

#### Procedure for using Empty Outlines

- Select a topic or content upon which assessment is to be done.
- Prepare few 'fill in the blanks' type sentences considering selected topic. These partially blank sentences will be used as empty outlines.
- Prepare paper slips or index cards having empty outlines written on it. Paper slip may be prepared like this:

*Psycho-analytic theory of personality was propounded by \_\_\_\_\_. This theory was built around three interrelated systems- Id, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.*

- Distribute paper slips or index cards among students asking them to fill the empty portions with appropriate words or phrase.
- Collect and analyze paper slips or index cards to identify how well the students connect to the concepts.
- Make effort to connect students well with concepts.



### BENEFITS OF USING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

Angelo and Cross (1993) stated, “The central purpose of classroom assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom”. These are quick and very easy to use procedure. It requires very little preparation from teachers’ end. It enables teachers to identify students’ difficulty quickly and organize subsequent lessons more accurately so that learning experience become joyful and effective. By using these techniques teachers observe class through their students' eyes which remind them of the range of intellectual and perceptual diversity present in classroom. Classroom Assessment Techniques encourage collecting response sheet anonymously from students hence eliminate the risk to be identified as a dumb student. For students who hesitate to express their difficulty in understanding, these techniques are priceless to them. Using assessment techniques regularly in class lead students to listen carefully as they already know that they have to response about it. It also promotes introspection and develops self-assessment skills among students.

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