

Teacher mindset and skills in relation to programmatic assessment

Summary

Assessments are a pivotal element in higher education and functions as navigation of learning processes, as measurement of achievement and as feedback for improvements in education. However, there has been dissatisfaction about the use of assessments in traditional higher education because of the consequences for students. These issues are that assessments are often used for their summative function, that assessment is often seen separately from education instead of an integrated part of education and that assessments in traditional education no longer serve the needs for modern education in which complex skills and competencies become more important. As a response to these issues, an educational concept called programmatic assessment was created. Programmatic assessment is an assessment system in which the longitudinal development of a learner is visible to the learner as usable feedback and which provides rich data for informed holistic decision making on progression. In order to successfully implement programmatic assessment in higher education, teachers should have the right mindset and sufficient didactic skills. Having the right mindset includes a correct understanding of the principles of programmatic assessment, the changing teacher role and a shift in assessment conceptions from assessment of learning to assessment for learning. Besides, teachers should have sufficient didactic skills including didactic coaching, giving feedback and making didactic choices about learning. The program Applied Biology will be implementing programmatic assessment to give interpretation to the new vision of flexible and adaptive education of HAS University of Applied Sciences in Venlo. This study aims to get insight to which extent the teachers of the program Applied Biology have the right mindset and sufficient didactic skills for implementing programmatic assessment and what their personal learning goals are. In addition, it was researched to which extent managers have insight in the teachers' mindset and skills. Participants were first asked to fill in a quantitative questionnaire prior to individual semi-structured interviews to substantiate their scores. Mean scores and SD's were compared and combined with qualitative data in order to draw conclusions. Major results were that, although all teachers support the idea of programmatic assessment, most still have doubts and questions about the exact execution. Especially holistic assessment and executing the different roles as coach, teacher and decision-maker remained unclear. For didactic skills, teachers seemed to have more difficulties with didactic coaching and giving feedback to get to the core of students' learning processes. In addition, the competencies and their complete reflection in the curriculum was unclear. Teachers wish to learn more about these aspects and would like to learn this by getting theoretical background knowledge, external training and intervision with colleagues throughout the process. Teachers assessment conceptions did not fully match with those of previous research, which might be due to the lack of experience with programmatic assessment. Doubts about the execution and division of the different roles as teacher were also found in other studies. In conclusion, teachers have a solid basis regarding their skills and are supportive to the implementation of programmatic assessment. However, improvement is needed on didactic coaching and giving feedback to enhance learning processes and more understanding of the execution of programmatic assessment is required for successful implementation of programmatic assessment.