Hidden Curriculum: The Impact of Assessment on Students' Self-Regulated Learning and Resilience

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Abstract

The development of students with a formal curriculum should be in balance with the social and cultural aspects of any school, which in this place is the second curriculum or hidden curriculum so as to ensure a holistic development of students. The study sought to explore the positive impact of classroom assessment on students' resilience as a hidden curriculum. Students of University of Education, Winneba were targeted out of which 150 undergraduate students were randomly selected for the study participants. Three instruments were used. They were the unidimensional school assessment perception scale developed by Fisher, Waldrip and Dorman, Resilience scale by Campbell-Sills and Stein and the Self-Regulated learning scale by Tan et al., were adapted and used for the measurement of the constructs of relevance in the study. Data on the two hypotheses were tested using Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM) method with bias corrected confidence intervals. The finding of the study revealed that assessment was a significant predictor of self-regulated learning and resilience. It was recommended among others that faculty members are encouraged to strengthen classroom formative assessment practices and not to dwell on only summative assessment to take classroom related decisions. The implication of this is that it will create dynamic assessment culture that consolidate both the formal and the positive hidden curriculum benefits.

Keywords: Resilience, Assessment, Hidden Curricula, Self-Regulated Learning, Self-Reflective

Introduction

In addition to the formal curricula, there are hidden curricula that influence the learning process of higher education students. Bennett et al. (2004) conceptualized hidden curriculum as the rules, regulations and routines that students and teachers learn in order to be successful in the university as a social community. For Giroux (2010), hidden curriculum is in reference to unstated norms, values and beliefs transmitted to learners through formal curricular content and classroom interactions. The hidden curriculum may have either a negative or a positive impact on the individuals in the university community

(Rabah, 2012). In some instances, it reinforces the formal curriculum and in other cases it exerts a countervailing influence (Bennett et al., 2004). For purposes of emphasis, Carless (2006) argues that peer-assessment help students learn deeply through the process of discussion and defense and not a product of students marking each other for competition. When the stakes on assessment tasks are high, students tend to place much emphasis on a hidden curriculum of memorization even when the formal curriculum tends to focus on analysis and innovative thinking (Rabah, 2012). This is to say that generally; wrong approaches of learning are taken by students if assessment methods used by their instructors are not appropriate. In this study, learners are seen as human capital, and curricula are understood as value-neutral delivery systems for a fixed set of testable knowledge, performable skills and competences assessed through explicit learning objectives (Lundie 2016; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

There has been a stern call to move assessment from the traditional, incompatible measurement culture and aligning assessment with the emergent, new beliefs about learning (Shepard, 2000). Both traditional and alternative forms of assessment are assessed in the direction of how students learning is impacted directly or indirectly. In line with the main goal of this study, the idea was to investigate self-regulated learning (SRL) in traditional assessments within the tertiary education context. Traditionally, differentiation and individualised teaching and learning have been thought of as the domain of the teacher, where the teacher plans for and implements classroom strategies for student engagement. Self-regulation shifts this emphasis onto the learner, requiring them to be active participants in their learning. That is, learners become responsible for negotiating outcomes, approaches and strategies for achieving those outcomes. The skills required for responsible, active learning can be developed through teacher instruction and assessment, as well as through deliberate practice of elements of self-regulation (Pintrich, 2004). As a means to life-long learning, SRL is a constant goal for everyone, including both teachers and students. Self-regulation in learning involves deliberate selection and use of strategies to set direction and understand and plan processes that mediate between person, context and achievement (Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). That is, the learner develops strategies for negotiating distractions and input from others in the classroom, the classroom environment (including school culture) and planned, successful learning. The curious mind may want to know whether the prevailing mode of assessment within an educational setting can indirectly impact self-regulation skills to learners. This current study has the aim to inquire such a phenomenon.

Due to the intense pressure and stress within tertiary educational environment, the subject of resilience has become one of the most important concepts of consideration by educational researchers (Young, Peter, Sercombe, Sachdev, & Naeb, 2013; Connor & Davidson, 2003). Educational resilience as a concept is not viewed as a fixed trait but as something that can be promoted by focusing on "changeable" factors that can impact an

individual's success in school (Cyrulnik, 2009; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). The issue of educational resilience is so important because, policy makers, administrators, teachers, and parents need to understand why some students are resilient and do well in school, while others from the same socioeconomic backgrounds and schools and similar home environments do not do well academically. Wolin and Wolin (1993) explained that the term "resilient" was adopted in lieu of earlier terms used to describe the phenomenon (such as invulnerable, invincible, and hardy), because of its recognition of the struggle involved in the process of becoming resilient. The term resiliency generally refers to those factors and processes that limit negative behaviors associated with stress and result in adaptive outcomes even in the presence of adversity (Slvin, Hatchett, Shibnall, Schindler, & Fendell, 2011). Resilience has been positively correlated with effective coping styles, whilst negatively correlated with psychological distress (Swanson, Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, & O'Brien, 2011). An overarching theme among university students is that resilience is a protective factor associated with fewer mental health problems and successful adjustment to university life (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Therefore, examining the attributes of resilient students may reveal important contributing factors of resilience that reduce psychological distress. However, it is not quite clear whether resilience could be linked to assessment regime of an academic setting.

Globalisation has changed tertiary education system where emphasis is placed on knowledge creation and not just mere impartation of information. Teaching and learning is now situated in the context of innovation and creativity. Tertiary education system in Ghana, like other nations in the western world, aims at inculcating lifelong learning skills into learners. Along the foregoing aim, scholars have suggested several ways of achieving it, namely; innovative teaching (Oden & Kankam, 2013; Buabeng-Andoh & Totimeh, 2012), enhancing classroom support (Opoku, Oti-Boateng & Amoako, 2021) and teaching of stress management skills among students (Sossah & Asiedu, 2015). Even though classroom assessment is said to move hand in hand with teaching and learning (Brown, 2018; William & Parenti, 2017), it appears to be missing in the discussion of creation of life-long learning skills such as self-regulation and resilience. Within the assessment literature, extant studies have not laid credence on self-regulation and resilience as hidden values learned by university students through assessment. However, issues of washback effect of assessment because of their stakes are extensively known (Hillocks, 2002; Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Solorzano, 2008; Amoako, 2019). Contextually, the impact of assessment on students' self-regulated learning and resilience have also not been studied. Educational assessment researchers in Ghana have instead been concerned with how classroom assessment practices affect learners' academic achievement (Konadu, 2015; Agbeti, 2014; Hayford, 2007) and how assessment data have been used (Amedahe, 2001; Asamoah-Gyimah, 2021). Critical is the issue of how assessment in tertiary schools in Ghana contribute to creating a hidden curriculum of self-regulation and resilience

impartation. By the preceding issue, the background of the current study is set for the investigation of assessment impacts on self-regulated learning and resilience which are essential attribute for surviving the 21st century academic environment.

Classroom Assessment and Student Self-Regulation Nexus

Studies in this area have worked largely on how assessment practices, especially, formative assessment role in building students self-regulated learning skills. This review outlines and discusses some of the relevant studies on the stated theme. Paris and Paris (2001) explored classroom assessment activities influence on students self-regulated learning. The authors review related studies and also analysed data on the investigated phenomena. Findings of the study revealed that when instructors incorporate self-regulated learning (SRL) principles into classroom assessment, students learn the skills of setting appropriate goals, monitoring progress, and self-assessment. Brookhart (2001) in a similar study examined how classroom assessment informs the learning process and is used by both teachers and students. After a thorough analysis of the data, findings showed that self-regulation of learning and cognitive strategy used were positively related to performance on classroom assessments. For Allal (2010), she built on her previous study (i.e., Allal & Lopez, 2005) where she laid out a brief description of the implications for assessment of models of regulation developed in research on learning. She built a case for co-regulation, as students' learning depends both on their own regulation of their goals and actions and on the social or contextual aspects of classroom learning. She drew two implications for assessment: first, that assessment occurs in classroom social interactions as much as with formal tools; and second, that assessment can have greater effects on learning if it is deliberately integrated into classroom learning activities. Moreover, Wiliam (2011) presented a history of formative assessment, including a review of the feedback literature. He traced the importance of assessment practices back to the work of scholars from the beginning of the 20th century, interrelating assessment and learning theories. Of particular interest for this review is the summary of classroom assessment reviews, from Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) until the time of publication. The author mentioned SRL in relationship to Monique Boekaerts' SRL model (Boekaerts, 2011), which he described in detail. The connection between formative assessment and SRL is found in the claim that formative assessment facilitates students to be owners of their learning. Panadero, Jonsson and Strijbos (2016) investigated the connections among peer and self-assessment and students self-regulated learning. They concluded that the formative assessment and SRL fields have approached the same phenomena (especially self-assessment) with different lenses. This is to say that the authors discovered that both concepts were related. Finally, Panadero and Broadbent (2018) explored the relationship between evaluative judgement (i.e. the ability to assess a piece of work (one's own or that of others) while attending to the context,

quality, standards and criteria built upon previous experience) and the development of SRL skills. After though review and anlysis of the studies, the authors concluded that assessment is relevant for the development of self-regulated learning. Careful examination of the reviewed studies in the assessment literature endorses the fact that classroom assessment has rippling effect on students' self-regulation. An observation made is that most of the study done on the issue of classroom assessment and SRL largely made use of 'formative assessment'. Since the other traditional forms assessment even occupy a wider space in our school system, it becomes critical to investigate how those forms also affect SRL. This current study sought to take such a direction.

Classroom Assessment impact on Students Resilience

Academic resilience is important because it increases the likelihood of academic success in the midst of regular adversities (Cassidy, 2015). One key to building resiliency is facing adversity or failure with positive adaptation (Riley & Masten, 2005). In order to study the value of building resiliency in the academic setting, Riley and Masten (2005) suggested training students on classroom exercise. Classroom assessment according to Riley and Masten, helps students to build positive adaptation for academic failure. In aligning with the fact that educational resilience can consciously be developed (Masten & Reed, 2002), Berg and Pietrasz (2017) posited that the use of experiential classroom exercises can be helpful in building resilience in students. Again, Clipa, Duca and Padurariu (2021) further discovered that there is a connection between exams anxiety and resilience. The role of exam anxiety is primarily to create positive adaptation which subsequently shift to resilience. Even though scanty, available studies suggest that classroom assessments are relevant in contributing to students' resilience.

Research Hypotheses

1. H0: Classroom assessment will not significantly predict self-regulated learning of students.

   H1: Classroom assessment will significantly predict self-regulated learning of students.

2. H0: Classroom assessment will not significantly predict resilience of students.

   H1: Classroom assessment will significantly predict resilience of students.

Methodology

Design

Examining the impact of classroom assessment on self-regulated learning and resilience of students in higher education context was the prime focus of the study. Due to the hypothetical nature of the endogenous variables (i.e., self-regulated learning and resilience) involved and the quest to report the current state of the phenomena under investigation, descriptive survey design was chosen. Descriptive survey design was the option because, ontologically, the study shares the belief that through quantitative measure the endogenous variables could be understood better (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

Participants

This study was an initial study in the investigation of hidden curriculum of an assessment practice within the traditional university education context in Ghana. Hence it targeted regular undergraduate students. In effect, the study purposively chose a public university, that is, University of Education, Winneba (UEW), which originally has the mandate of producing only education professionals. Out of the fourteen (14) faculties in UEW, ten (10) of the faculties were randomly selected. Out of the ten (10) faculties that were selected, an academic department was considered and in each of the departments, 15 students were randomly selected to take part of the study. In all, one hundred and fifty (150) students were selected to constitute the study participants.

Measures

Three instruments were adapted and used for the conduct of study. The first instrument was a 24-item Assessment Relevance (AR) instrument developed by Fisher, Waldrip and Dorman (2005). The AR scale has five hypothetical dimensions (i.e., congruence, authenticity, consultation, transparency and capability) and an overall Cronbach alpha index of .89. The second instrument was a 10-item unidimensional 4-points Likert resilience scale developed by Campbell-Sills and Stein (2007). The resilience scale had an internal consistency index of .85 which was measured using Cronbach Alpha. The third instrument was a 14- item Self-Regulated Learning scale developed by Tan et al., (2019) for the purpose of measuring students' self-regulation in an academic setting. The SRL scale has three hypothetical sub-dimensions and an overall Cronbach alpha index of .76. Three instrument instruments were put together as a single questionnaire and pilot tested to fine-tune the items.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

The study went through ethical clearance protocols prior to the administration of the instruments. First of all, gate keepers for the various academic departments were consulted and permission were sought appropriately. Researchers briefed participants about the aim of the study and sought for their permission to take part through signing of research participation form. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process and they were also given the permission to opt out of the study whenever they so desire. In all, 150 questionnaires were given out to participants to respond to, and all the questionnaires were received after the twenty-one days' data collection exercise. This questionnaire return rate was 100%. The two hypotheses were tested using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) approach (specifically, AMOS) with bias corrected confidence intervals.

Results

H0: Classroom assessment will not significantly predict self-regulated learning of students.

The hypothesis sought to investigate whether assessment practices of an academic setting as perceived by learners predict self-related learning. This was tested using CB-SEM method with bias corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval. Summary of the analysis is shown in Figure 1.
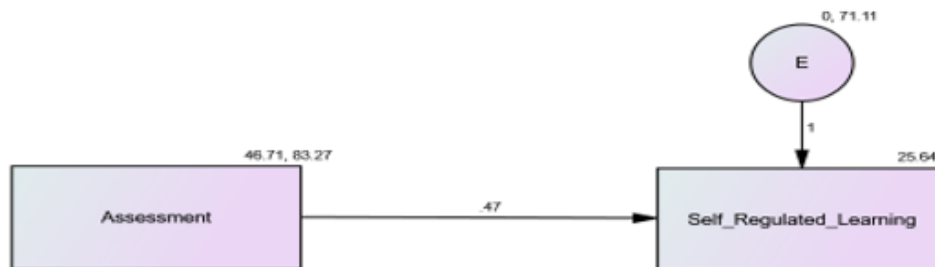

Figure 1: Assessment predicting self-regulated learning

Table 1: Structural regression model for assessment and self-regulated learning

Model	B	Std. Error	CR	Lower	Upper
				95% Confidence Interval	
(Constant)	25.640	3.603	7.116	17.461	33.082
Assmt→ SRL.	.47	.076	6.225	.321	.641

*Significant, p<.05, R= .47; R^2 = .22

  Results from Figure 1 show that assessment predicts self-regulated learning of students by .47, with error variance of 83.27 for the exogenous variable (i.e., assessment) and 71.11 for the endogenous variable, self-regulated learning. From Table 1, result shows that a unit increase in assessment practices of lecturers as perceived by students will lead to .47 increase in self-regulated learning of students. This is because assessment was found to be a significant predictor of SRL, B = .47, Boot 95%CI (.321, .641). In effect assessment explained 22% of the variances in self-regulated learning of students.

  H0: Classroom assessment will not significantly predict resilience of students.

  This hypothesis sought to investigate the predictive impact of classroom assessment of a university. The hypothesis was tested using CB-SEM method with bias corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval. Summary of the analysis is shown in Figure 2.
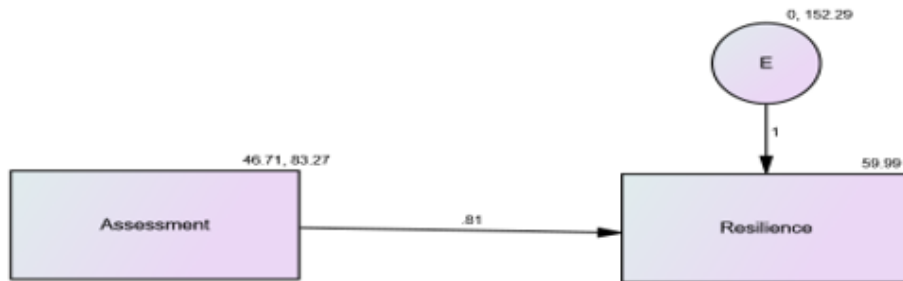

Figure 2: Assessment predicting resilience

Table 2: Structural regression model for assessment and resilience

Model	B	Std. Error	CR	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
(Constant)	59.9	5.273	11.377	47.945	74.156
Assmt→ Resilience.	.81	.111	7.280	.520	1.068

*Significant, p<.05, R= .81; R^2 = .66

As shown in Figure 2, assessment predicted educational resilience by .81, with error variance of 83.27 for assessment and 59.99 for resilience. In other words, assessment can be said to be a significant predictor of resilience, B = .81, Boot 95%CI (.520, 1.068). This implies that an additional increase in assessment will lead to .81 increase in resilience. The data showed that classroom assessment of the academic institution explained the 66% of the variances in students' resilience. Assessment coupled with it pressures help students to be resilient for the entire academic pursuit.

Discussion

The thrust of the study was to examine the influence of assessment on students' self-regulated learning and resilience as a hidden curriculum. Based on the foregoing main aim, one of the specific objectives was to explore the influence of assessment on self-regulated learning of students. In line with this objective, the study discovered that assessment was a significant predictor of self-regulated learning. In an academic setting, an assessment serves as an anchor that help students to learn self-regulation. Technically, assessment procedures in universities serve three main purposes, that is, formative, summative or both (Nitko, 2001). Students are often assessed as a means of diagnosing and regulating classroom instruction (i.e., formative) or possibly to measure how much of instructional material or skill acquired for certification (i.e., summative). However, as a hidden curriculum, assessment also influences students to self-regulated in order to be successful within the academic environment. This is to say that assessment help learners to acquire the skill to become active participants in their learning. That is, learners desire to have good assessment outcome forces them to become responsible for negotiating outcomes, approaches and strategies for achieving those outcomes. Findings of the current of the current study agrees with what is known in the literature concerning assessment and SRL nexus. For example, Paris and Paris (2001) investigation of assessment and SRL showed that assessment activities had significant influence on self-regulated learning of students. In a similar study, Brookhart (2001) explored how classroom assessment informs students behavior and learning processes. Brookhart discovered that self-regulation of learning and cognitive strategy used were positively related to performance on classroom

assessments. The two variables (i.e., assessment and SRL) are also thought of to influence each other (Panadero, Jonsson, & Strijbos, 2016). In such a situation, assessment could help students to develop self-regulation learning skills while self-regulated learning could likewise help students to perform well on assessment.

The second objective was about examining the impact of assessment on educational resilience of students. Findings on this objective showed that assessment has impact on the students' educational resilience. The finding implies that people are able to manage and cope well with academic stress because school assessment has enabled them to develop positive adaptation for resilience. Even though people recognize that academic programmes are stressful to go through, they marshaled strategies to cope with the stress that comes with it because they know that at the end the various assessment encounters, they would be able to acquire a skill or earn a certificate. The resilience therefore, is the value or quality transmitted to students by means of executing the formal curriculum which is anchored on assessment. The finding that assessment has a causal effect of resilience aligns with extant studies in the literature. In a study, Riley and Masten (2005) discovered that classroom exercises (assessment) affected respondents' educational resilience. On the same tangent, Berg and Pietrasz (2017) also found experiential exercises to be relevant in building students' educational resilience. The implication of the study finding is that, as student's experience regular writing of quizzes and examinations, the students indirectly learn the task of resilience (Masten & Reed, 2002). Further, there is evidence suggest that test anxiety that accompanied regular classroom assessment fulfils the impartation of the hidden curriculum (Clipa, Duca, & Padurariu (2021).

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study the study concludes that participants of the study were able to set their own academic goals and had strategies to achieve those goals because of the influence of their university's assessment practices. In the circumstances where appropriate assessment methods (especially, multiple methods) are used, students are able to acquire self-regulated learning skills where they take center stage of their own learning. Moreover, it can be concluded that participants of the study are hardy and cope well with academic stress because of assessment. Going through a formal curricular requires that students take several forms of assessment at different levels. These assessments activities in a way prepare students minds to adopt strategies in order to cope with academic stressors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the study makes the following recommendation for practice and future research.

- Practitioners (i.e., lecturers and academic counsellors) should consciously teach university students at all levels to develop self-assessment and peer-assessment skills to augment traditional classroom assessment. This will help students reap the full benefit of the positive hidden curriculum of self-regulated learning and other metacognitive skills.

- Faculty members are encouraged to strengthen classroom formative assessment practices and not to dwell on only summative assessment to take classroom related decisions. This will create dynamic assessment culture that consolidate both the formal and the positive hidden curriculum benefits.

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