

Fostering self-regulated learners through child-centred evaluation activities



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Emiko Izumi, PhD from Kwansei Gakuin University, discusses child-centred evaluation activities, including enhancing thinking, judgment and expression skills

Introducing compulsory foreign language studies in upper grades of Japanese elementary schools in 2020 posed challenges in integrating instruction and evaluation. In this context, extensive research over thirteen years has been conducted to foster self-regulated learners, focusing on children and child-centred evaluation activities.

[Following our piece in the January issue](#), we provide an overview of our research undertaken and its key findings.

Classroom research into child-centred evaluation activities

Our research encompasses three main areas: Firstly, it emphasises designing child-centred evaluation activities during classes that facilitate learning and enhance children's sense of competence and self-efficacy.

This involves creating Can-Do assessment criteria, which outline the skills and knowledge students should acquire, and employing reflection sheets as a tool for formative assessment, encouraging students to reflect on their progress and develop a strong sense of achievement.

By adopting this approach, our research aims to foster self-regulated learners actively engaged in their own learning journey.

Secondly, the research focuses on developing thinking, judgment, and expression skills, crucial components outlined in the Japanese Ministry of Education's Courses of Study.

To cultivate these skills, problem-solving performance tasks require critical thinking and effective communication. These tasks are evaluated using rubrics, providing clear assessment criteria and guidelines.

What sets this research apart is the active involvement of children in co-creating these rubrics. By participating as evaluators, children gain a deeper understanding of the evaluation process and take ownership of their own learning.

This promotes assessment for learning, where assessment becomes a valuable tool for students' growth and development.

Thirdly, our research explores evaluation methods, interventions, and transformations that contribute to improving children's learning and teachers' instruction.

Classroom research serves as a foundation for investigating the effectiveness of various evaluation strategies. The insights gained from reflection sheets and surveys provide valuable feedback for

refining instructional practices and evaluating the impact of these strategies on student learning outcomes.

Student instruction & evaluation strategies

Our research underscores the importance of creating meaningful learning experiences using English authentically. To enhance thinking, judgment, and expression skills, students are given tasks designed to have a clear purpose or situation for using English, enabling them to develop their language skills through trial and error.

By engaging students' bodies and emotions, we emphasise the importance of meaningful communication activities that foster an active learning environment.

Collaborative learning in pairs or groups is also encouraged, as it facilitates peer interactions and mutual learning. Distributing individual tablets through the government's GIGA School initiative has further enhanced research-based learning. Providing students with choices in their learning is crucial for fostering self-regulated learners.

Shared evaluation criteria & rubrics

Clear evaluation criteria and standards are shared with students. The research employs a four-level Can-Do assessment scale to set reachable and appropriate levels for students. The scale reflects students' confidence and proficiency in achieving specific language activities.

Rubrics play a vital role in setting clear expectations and facilitating consistent assessment. They are created to establish each unit's short-term and long-term goals and develop and acquire skills.

Mountain climbing unit design: Backward design

Using the metaphor of mountain climbing, one of the research collaborators, Sayaka Okuhira, a public elementary school teacher, seeks to promote students' motivation by setting clear goals and working persistently toward their achievement.

Teachers and students co-created rubrics. The process involved watching an initial animated story, brainstorming activity ideas, developing a learning plan through backward design, and integrating instruction and assessment using the rubric. The following steps were taken:

1. Initially, the teacher and the whole class engaged in a dialogue format to discuss what had been learned and studied.
2. Groups collaborated to present their ideas and expressions, sharing ideas individually.
3. The class decided whether the ideas generated by the groups should be shared and included in the rubric.
4. Once created, the rubric was immediately put into practice, customised, and used to provide feedback during practice presentations.

By co-creating rubrics, students emulate positive behaviours, recognise their strengths, and gain confidence, promoting more room for child-centred evaluation activities.

Transformation of teachers through the co-creation & utilisation of rubric

The co-creation of rubrics enabled teachers to recognise that students internalised previously taught content. Students generated creative ideas and improved upon the guidance provided by teachers. Teachers could make improvements in their teaching by observing students' progress.

Rubrics fostered metacognitive skills and self-assessment abilities. Reflection sheets in a mountain climbing format allowed students to write their own learning plans, make revisions, and visualise their learning progress. The pie chart showing four levels of ability indicators represented their sense of achievement and self-efficacy.

Achievements & challenges of child-centred evaluation activities

The research yielded several significant achievements. Co-creating learning plans and performance tasks empowered students to take ownership of their learning, utilising their own ideas and envisioning their progress towards specific goals.

The co-creation of rubrics allowed students to refer to their peers' ideas and practices, promoting self-monitoring and self-assessment. Peer assessment activities using rubrics enabled students to reflect on their tasks and reassess their level of achievement, fostering a sense of accountability and continuous improvement.

However, the research has also highlighted challenges. Teachers must develop the ability to determine the appropriate intervention and instructional support timing in various learning situations. Shifting from a class rubric to personalised rubrics can enable students to evaluate themselves effectively. Encouraging students to create their mission and align it with their goals further enhances their assessment literacy and fosters a sense of agency and well-being.

Our research provides valuable insights into fostering self-regulated learners through child-centred evaluation activities. By emphasising co-creation, student agency, metacognitive development, visual representations of learning, and teacher professional development, this study offers practical strategies for implementing student-centred evaluation practices.

Creating inclusive & engaging learning environments

The innovative approaches presented in this study contribute to creating inclusive and engaging learning environments that empower students and enhance their learning experiences.

By nurturing individual goal-setting and collaborative learning, this research not only facilitates the growth of students but also empowers teachers, leading to an overall transformation in the education landscape. Our research findings have the potential to inspire further studies and influence educational practices worldwide. We hope to continue researching with children in the future.

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