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Assessment:

A Continuous Process that Takes Place at the End?

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ABSTRACT

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The hypothesis for this essay is: "Teachers use assessment methods that are mainly summative and as a consequence student involvement in the assessment process is low, with too little focus on the goals of the education." The primary aim is to investigate whether or not this hypothesis is true. To answer this, students were asked their opinions about assessment. Also, teachers were asked questions about assessment, to see if there is a correlation between students' and teachers' thoughts. The investigation was conducted through a questionnaire, which 46 students and three teachers answered. The students came from three different ninth grade classes.

The results from the questionnaires indicate that mainly summative assessment methods are used since, for example, only 50% of the students know how they are being assessed. Also, when giving examples of assignments they get to do in class, most students gave answers that traditionally are connected with summative assessment. The results also show that student involvement in the assessment process is low, as 65% answered that they rarely or never get to self-assess, and they are only involved in planning subject areas sometimes. Also, a majority of 74% would like to have more personal conversations with their teacher about their development. However, most students feel that their teacher is clear about the goals and objectives of assignments.

The conclusion reached in this essay is that the hypothesis was partly true. The teachers in this study use mainly summative assessment methods, and student involvement in the assessment process is low. On the other hand, teachers are good at explaining the educational goals. In a majority of the questions, students' and teachers' opinions about assessment coincide. However, the opinions differ greatly between the classes in all but two questions.

Sökord: Assessment, Feedback, Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment

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1 Introduction

When working as a teacher at secondary or upper secondary school, assessing and grading students are important parts of the work. Therefore it should be of every teacher's interest to know more about assessment theories and methods, to develop as a teacher and become better at assessing the students. As a core subject, English, together with maths and Swedish, has been granted a special place in Swedish schools. This means that assessment abilities are of special importance for English teachers, as students have to pass the English course in order to qualify to the national programmes at upper secondary school or university.

Irrespective of our feelings towards grades, assessment is and always will be a part of the education system. In order to know whether or not students develop and learn teachers have to assess their progress. Also, student involvement in the assessment process is very important and in the Swedish Curriculum for the compulsory school system, the pre-school class and the leisure-time centre Lpo 94, henceforth referred to as the curriculum, this passage can be found:

The school should strive to ensure that all pupils: [...] develop the ability to assess their results themselves and to place their own and others' assessment in relation to their own achievements and circumstances. (17)

The curriculum also stresses the importance of a democratic school, where students should be actively involved in planning and evaluating their daily education. Butler and McMunn (134) have seen that, despite its importance, the majority of teachers do not usually involve students in assessment, nor do they inform them about assessment results or the goals with their instructions. The absence of goals in school is a problem, because as Black et al. (49) put it, "it is very difficult for students to achieve a learning goal unless they understand that goal and can assess what they need to do to reach it".

Fischer and Flynn (4) make a distinction between two types of assessments. Formative assessment is used by the teacher to provide students with feedback during the learning process and to improve their own instructional methods. With summative assessment, on the other hand, the goal is to judge student knowledge after the learning process is finished. Both of these assessment methods should be implemented in school. However, most teachers assess the way they were assessed themselves and regard it as an end activity rather than something ongoing. (Butler and McMunn 135) This means that even though theories about assessment develop, implementation does not develop at the same pace.

More information about assessment theories and methods will be found in the background of this essay, as will relevant terminology. Recent research done in the area of assessment will also be examined and related to the curriculum and the syllabus for English.

2 Aim

The hypothesis for this essay is: “Teachers use assessment methods that are mainly summative and as a consequence student involvement in the assessment process is low, with too little focus on the goals of the education”. The primary aim of this essay is to see whether or not this hypothesis is true.

The secondary aim of the essay is to see if there is a correlation between the students' and their teachers' thoughts when it comes to assessment. Are there any differences in the ways students and teachers look upon it?

3 Method

3.1 Target group

The study targets students attending the ninth year at secondary school. They were asked both which assessment methods their teachers use and how involved they are in the process. The reason why this group was chosen is because the classes at secondary school are more heterogeneous than classes at upper secondary, where students have chosen a national programme according to their interests. Also, compared to students attending eighth grade, these students are used to being graded.

3.2 Questionnaire

The research of this essay is based on a questionnaire. To include more students and still be able to finish this study on time is the main reason why the study was conducted in this manner. Interviews with the students would have been too time consuming and the material collected would not have provided sufficient information to draw any general conclusions. When constructing the questionnaire these questions worked as a basis, as they are relevant for the study and related to the hypothesis:

- What do students know about the assessment methods being used by their teacher?
- Do students feel that they have a good dialogue with their teacher when it comes to their development?
- What kind of feedback do the students want from their teacher?
- How familiar are students with the curriculum and syllabus?

The questionnaire consists of eleven questions, three open and eight closed. The reason why most questions are closed is to simplify the compilation of data. However, to investigate certain areas more thoroughly some open questions had to be included. Three different varieties of closed questions are used, with a majority of dichotomous questions, where students had to give a yes/no response. These types of questions give straightforward answers that are easy to compile. (Cohen et al. 250) Three questions are based on rating scales, meaning that students chose an answer on a scale that best corresponded with their views. This differentiates the answers to a higher degree than dichotomous questions, but is still easy to compile. (253) There was also one multiple-choice question.

Even though the students who participated in the study probably are proficient in English, the questionnaire was done in Swedish. This was to prevent the language from being an obstacle for the students when answering the questions, and to make sure that the answers were not affected by potential language errors. The translation of the questionnaire was part of the process of compilation and it is important to keep in mind that there is a risk of mistranslation when translating between two languages.

Before completing the study in classes, a small pilot study was carried out to make sure that the questions were clear enough and to minimize misunderstandings. The pilot study was conducted among five students, three girls and two boys, of the same age as my target group. This was helpful as it showed that most of the questions provided useful answers, although the last question had to be reformulated to become more comprehensible for the students. The results of the pilot study will not be presented.

The teachers included in this study also answered a questionnaire, although interviews were considered from the beginning. However, to be able to easily compare the answers from students and teachers the data was collected in the same way. The teacher questionnaire was based on the same type of questions as the questionnaire that was given to the students, and it contained corresponding questions. The teachers answered in English.

3.3 Literature

When choosing literature for this project mainly recent published works have been consulted. The last twenty years or so there has been a rapid change in the area of assessment. Caroline V. Gipps's book *Beyond Testing: Towards a Theory of Educational Assessment* has provided an overview of how the area has changed, and how the past influences the present. Paul Black, Chris Harrison, Clara Lee, Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam have, in their work *Assessment for Learning: Putting It in to Practice*, presented recent research in the area as well as giving practical tips of how to improve assessment in the classroom. This work has been very useful during the research of this project and will be returned to several times in the background. The syllabus and the curriculum for the compulsory school have been consulted as well.

4 Background

4.1 Defining assessment

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary states that the word “assess” stems from the Latin word *assidere*, which means “sit by”. The modern interpretation is to “evaluate or estimate the nature, value or quality of”. Both of these definitions are useful when trying to understand the concept of assessment. Quality assessment, as defined by Butler and McMunn, is when teachers consider purposes of assessment, are clear about expectations, provide good feedback, use assessment as a way to improve instructions and vary their assessment methods. Assessment should be regarded as ongoing and involve both students and teachers. (7)

Trice writes that all too often in the past, assessment was regarded as something that was separate from learning and instruction and stresses the fact that it is not separate from teaching. Learning, curriculum, instruction and assessment are, in fact, all part of teaching and they should be seen as one inseparable act. (18-19) Assessment in education is often connected with grades. Shepard (10) wants us to move away from regarding assessment as reward and punishment, and instead see it as a source of enlightenment and help. Assessment could be used to improve learning, provided that it is moved into the centre of the learning and teaching process.

Assessment, or feedback, is both diagnostic and prescriptive, meaning that it tells students what they are doing right and what needs work. (Tilestone 7) Shepard (11) writes that we take for granted that feedback will lead to self-correction and improvement. However, this is not always the case. Some teachers experience that students rarely read comments, both because teachers give them too little time to look at the comments in class, and because students often focus on the grade and compare their results with other students in the class. (Black et al. 43)

4.2 Learning theories

Gipps (4) writes that assessment must be based on our best current understanding of theories of learning. To better understand the development of assessment methods it is important to first understand the theories behind these methods. Two different theories have played a significant part in the educational field ever since the 9-year compulsory school was introduced in Sweden in 1962. (National Agency for Education 6)

The first theory that has had a major influence on the educational system is behaviourism. This movement holds that learning is linear, which means that a student cannot reach a higher level until previous levels are fully mastered, and we master new things through repetition. Knowledge is seen as an external blueprint that can be transmitted from the teacher to the student. Also, the behaviourists assume that all learning objectives can be specified and measured. The main criticism to this theory is that if students learn isolated facts, they are quickly forgotten as they do not have any meaning and because they cannot be applied to other areas. Students who regard knowledge in this way will develop strategies to memorize facts successfully. (Gipps 19-23)

The new curriculum, which was introduced in 1994, is based on the constructivist theory, which assumes that students are active constructors of their own knowledge. Learning is regarded as networks that work in many different ways and students learn best by actively making sense of new knowledge. The social constructivists claim that learning is best done in social settings. An important concept in this theory is metacognition, defined as “thinking about thinking”. Metacognition promotes self-awareness among students so they can control their own learning. (Gipps 21-26) This is also an important idea in the curriculum, which stresses student involvement in deciding the content and methods of instruction. (National Agency for Education 14)

Vygotsky (referred to in Smith 222) saw learning as a complex interaction between biological, psychological and social factors. When we are interacting with friends, teachers or parents we are able to develop. The gap between what we can do on our own and what we can accomplish with help is called “the zone of proximal development”, and teachers' role is to “scaffold” students towards further development. Smith (221) writes that this theory of knowledge has made a significant impact in English language teaching. Many English teachers have embraced the shift from behaviourism to constructivism, as language learning is a social act, and identify students as active learners. But she also points out that there are difficulties with implementing these thoughts, as the old transmission model is rooted deeply in us. (227)

4.3 Summative assessment

Anderson et al. (246) write that summative assessment is usually formal and based on specific information sources such as tests, projects and essays. Summative assessment has its roots in the traditional behaviouristic discipline. (Gipps 20) However, summative assessment is a necessary element in schools today, as teachers have to grade their students and carry out national tests. Grades are an important part of society since, as Dörnyei puts it, “parents expect them, education authorities require them, college admission tutors rely on them, and in general, society uses them to distribute its job resources and career paths among multiple applicants”. (132) Criticism to summative assessment methods is that they do not support high quality learning. (Havnes & McDowell 4)

4.3.1 Tests – a traditional summative assessment method

Airasian (173-177) states that the most common way to collect formal evidence about pupils is through paper-and-pencil tests. One frequent mistake when using tests is that teachers rely on questions that check memory rather than higher-level thinking. This can undermine the instructions made earlier since the test does not show how much the students have actually learnt. Furthermore, students might not see the importance of instruction if the content of the test does not relate to it and, as a consequence, it can have a negative influence on motivation. (184) Black et al. argue that tests should be seen as a positive part of the learning process, but they should not be the dominant assessment method. Students should be actively involved in the test process to stop them from feeling anxiety and to make them see

that they can benefit from them. (56)

4.4 Formative assessment

With the shift of learning theories in mind, it is not difficult to see why formative assessment is the most emphasised in research today. Black et al. (79) write that formative assessment gives teachers the opportunity to be more consistent with new research done on learning. Fischer and Frey (4) define formative assessment as a way for teachers to provide students with feedback during the learning process and to improve their own instructional methods. However, this definition is not always sufficient. Gipps (124) takes it one step further by stating that some believe that formative assessment must involve the students to a higher degree. Gioka writes “Emphasis on formative assessment as an interaction has important practical consequences for sharing and understanding learning goals and assessment criteria, for providing good quality feedback and time for peer- and self-assessment”. (146) Assessment should be seen as communication between teacher and students, where they together define what important knowledge is. (Havnes and McDowell 6)

A number of researchers write about the advantages of formative assessment. Black et al. (9), for example, write that a number of studies showed that when formative assessment is strengthened, students learn more. They continue by saying that learning cannot be done for the student, rather, the students have to do the learning themselves. The role of the teacher is to support the students, to scaffold them (59), which is done through feedback. Havnes and McDowell also write that there is much evidence that formative assessment improves student learning. (6) When educating teachers, Smith has seen that when they are actively involved in constructing their own knowledge, they remember it longer. (226) One of the most important advantages of formative assessment, argued by Black et al. (67), is that students become more aware of when they are learning.

One of the disadvantages of formative assessment is that it is not as objective as summative assessment. Also, socio-constructivist views on classroom assessment are an idealization, and even though the ideas are based on theory and empirical studies, it is not known how these ideas will work in practice on a large scale. Another problem concerning formative assessment is that teacher students do not get the opportunity to try out this way of assessing students in practice, and instead they create traditional tests. (Shepard 6-12) Trice (167) has observed that teachers include activities in their teaching that provides for formative assessment, but they still base the given grades entirely on traditional tests.

4.4.1 Self-assessment – a formative assessment method

Self-assessment is a way to include the students in the assessment process, which is being emphasised in formative assessment theories. Students are not just objects of assessment, they should participate in constructing assignments and assessing their own and their fellow students' work. (Dysthe 21) If students participate in the assessment process, they become more responsible for their own learning. (Black et al. 18) Being able to take responsibility for their own learning is important for metacognition, and is also part of the syllabus in English, which states that:

The school in its teaching of English should aim to ensure that pupils [...] develop their ability to reflect over and take responsibility for their own language learning and consciously use different ways of working to support their own learning, ...
[electronic source]

Harris (12-13) writes that doubts about reliability in self-assessment have been raised, however, the benefits outnumber the negatives. The result of self-assessment is active learners who take responsibility for their own learning and know their strengths and weaknesses. When using self-assessment as a method, it is important to be clear about the criteria on which the students should base the assessment. (16) Tileston (59-60) writes that self-assessment is one of the best ways to make students develop, and create meaningful learning, but still it is used the least in the classroom. Dysthe et. al. conducted a study which showed that to enhance learning, students should be directly involved in assessment. They also write that it is not enough to make the criteria visible. To be able to use the criteria in the learning process, the teacher has to work with them together with the students. (129-130)

4.5 Balancing formative and summative assessment

Since both formative and summative assessment are present in school, teachers need to find a way to balance the two. Formative assessment will also include summative assessment as teachers have to grade their students at the end of a course or semester. Summative assessment, for example tests, can also be conducted in a formative way. When revising a test teachers can stimulate their students to reflect on their results and give them time to go through the test, especially questions they had trouble answering. But they should also be given time to reflect on what they know and what they need to work further with. If many students get the same questions wrong, the teacher can concentrate on clarifying those questions. (Black et al. 53-55) Because summative and formative assessment can be combined, it is somewhat difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the two. As it

turns out, the difference between the two does not lie in the method in itself, but rather in the way the method is being used.

4.6 Assessment as motivation

Dörnyei writes that it is important to give students positive feedback, but all too often teachers put the emphasis on the difficulties students might have with a task. This can lead to students getting bad feelings about their accomplishments. To prevent this, teachers should provide positive feedback and make the students feel satisfaction after completing a task. Positive feedback should include the amount of effort put in, the learning process and the experiences acquired along the way. (125)

Dörnyei also regards grades, or rewards, as something that does not enhance motivation. Instead they can mislead students to believe that getting good grades is more important than learning. Also, he argues, they are associated with ability, rather than effort. He argues that assignments should be motivated by other things than rewards. The task in itself should be valuable. (128-132) There is a risk with grades as they can make low-attaining students think that they lack ability and this is of course a factor that decreases motivation among these students. Another disadvantage of grades is that they can encourage students to compete with other students, instead of improving their own achievement. (Black et al. 11)

Hill and Flynn (92), on the other hand, do not think that rewards have a negative effect on motivation if used in the right way. Rewards are most effective if they are used when students have attained a certain level of performance. Students should not be rewarded only because they have completed a task, this can have a negative effect on motivation. They continue by stating that praise is a more effective reward than gold-stars.

5 Results and Analysis

The questionnaire was answered by 46 students, 24 girls and 22 boys, from three different schools. Also, three teachers, one man and two women, from these schools answered another questionnaire. The schools were all visited in person, which provided an opportunity to clarify questions that some of the students had difficulties answering. Some students in each class were missing due to illness, and as a consequence the questionnaire was not answered by as many students as originally planned. Also, one boy only answered three of the eleven questions and has been excluded from the result. Otherwise there was no fall-off in the study

as a whole. Even though the students were given clear oral and written instructions on how they should answer the questionnaire, some answered in a way that was impossible to interpret. For example, a few students marked more than one alternative, made-up their own alternative between yes and no, or simply did not answer. These types of answers have been counted as “invalid”.

The result from the questionnaires will be analysed one question at a time, starting with the general answers from all three classes, then continuing with how the students' opinions coincide with the teachers' opinions. The questionnaires can be found in appendix 1 and 2. The tables that are not included in the analysis are enclosed as appendices.

5.1 The Questionnaire

5.1.1 Question 1 - Do you know how your teacher assesses you in English?

23, or 50%, of the students answered that they know how their teacher assesses them in English, while 20 (43.5%) wrote that they do not know how they are assessed. The remaining three students' answers (6.5%) are counted as “invalid”. The teachers were not asked if they thought their students know how they are assessed, but rather *when*. This was to see if the teachers make clear to the students when they assess. Two of the teachers answered that they believe students are both aware and unaware of when they are being assessed, while the third teacher answered that her students know when they are being assessed.

However, the teachers also provided examples of assignments students know are being assessed. One teacher commented that the students are aware of assessment when they hand in assignments or have tests, but during class this is not always the case. The second teacher said that the students are not aware that everything they do or do not do is carefully assessed. The third teacher tests her students on their homework every week, and they also have tests and assignments to do regularly.

It seems as if the teachers only inform the students about assessment when they use summative and formal assessment as tests and essays. (Anderson et al. 246) This could explain why only 50% of the students know how they are assessed. Since formative assessment is an interaction between teacher and student, and sharing assessment criteria is important to involve the students, (Gioka 146) not knowing how or when the assessment is done is not compatible with formative assessment.

5.1.2 Question 2 - Give examples of assignments you do in order for your teacher to know what grade to give you.

This was an open question where the students were able to give several examples. The total amount of examples is 152, which means that, on average, each student gave 3.3 examples. It is important to bear in mind that the examples given by the students do not describe everything they do in class. However, it gives a good idea of the assignments students remember, and also the ones they think are most important. For the sake of readability the examples have been divided into groups, which will be presented in the table below. The group named “other” contains examples given by five or fewer than five students and includes projects, group work, grammar, translations and working with the textbook. For a more detailed table see appendix 4.

Assignment	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Test	26	56,5%
Oral production	24	52%
Homework	22	48%
Written production	21	45,5%
Reading	18	39%
Listening	15	32,5%
Activity in class	6	13%
Other	17	37%
Do not know/no answer	3	6,5%

Around half of the students have given tests, oral production, homework, written production and reading as examples of assignments they do to be graded by their teacher. All of these, except perhaps oral production, are examples of more formal and summative assessment. (Anderson et al. 246) These methods are deeply rooted in us, as Smith writes (227) and shows the problem pointed out by Shepard (10), namely that teachers do not get to practice formative assessment, and instead they use traditional methods in class. More informal examples, like activity in class, were mentioned only by a few students.

The teachers also provided examples of assignments they do in class. All three gave tests as an example, as well as oral and written production. Two of the teachers also mentioned activity during lessons. Other examples they gave were homework, reading books and grammar. One teacher wrote that she used “most methods” to assess her students, because it is a continuous process.

5.1.3 Question 3 - Give examples of assignments you would like to do to show your teacher what you know.

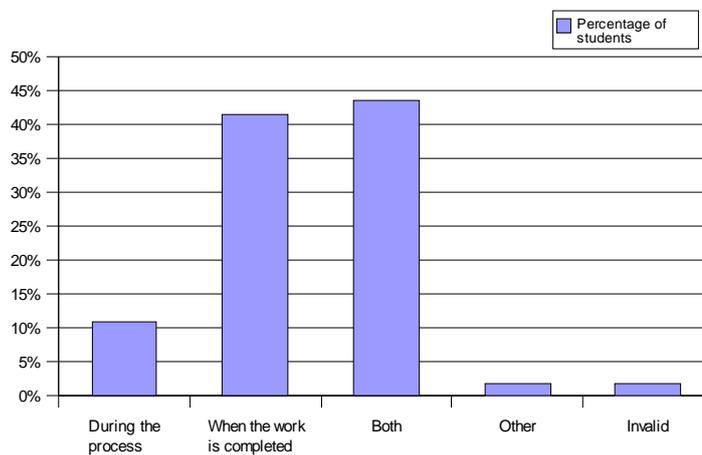
This was also an open question, where students were asked to give several examples. However, this question seems to have been harder for them to answer than the previous one, since only 64 examples were given. That gives an average of 1.4 answers per student. The examples have been divided into groups, shown in the table below. The group that has been named “other” in this table contains examples stated by three or fewer students. For a more detailed table see appendix 5.

Assignment	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Other	14	30,5%
Oral tasks	12	26%
Nothing besides the things we do	9	19,5%
Tests	8	17,5%
Writing tasks	6	13%
Make a movie/play	4	9%
Reading	4	9%
No answer	6	13%
Invalid	1	2%

As shown in the table, there is a wider spread between the answers to this question and the students have given very diverse answers. Also, 32,5% of the students could not come up with any examples of assignments they would like to do. Instead they did not answer the question, or simply answered that what they do in class is sufficient. This could be looked upon in two

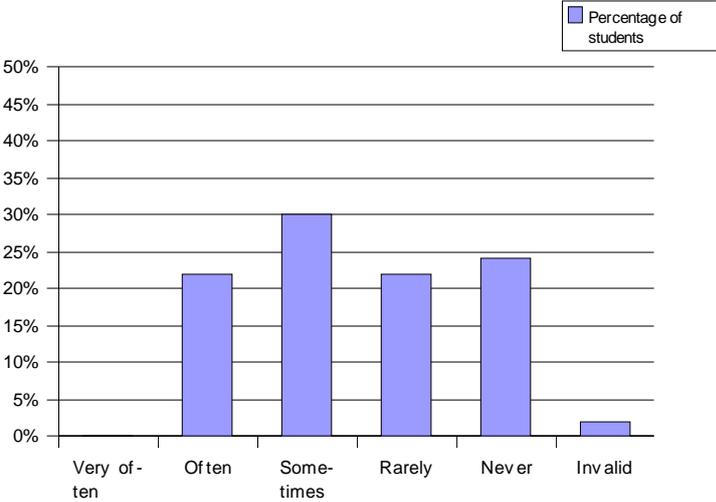
different ways. It could be a sign that the teacher has succeeded in giving diverse assignments that the students find interesting and good. However, it could also mean that the students do not reflect upon their own learning, or that metacognition is low (Gipps 24), because they rarely get the opportunity to influence the assignments that are given. Many of the examples given are still more formal methods, like tests and writing tasks. However, it seems as if the students want to do more informal tasks to demonstrate what they know. Even though these methods are not regarded as highly objective, unlike more formal methods, (Shepard 6) they do promote learning. (Black et al. 59)

5.1.4 Question 4 - I most often experience that I get assessed



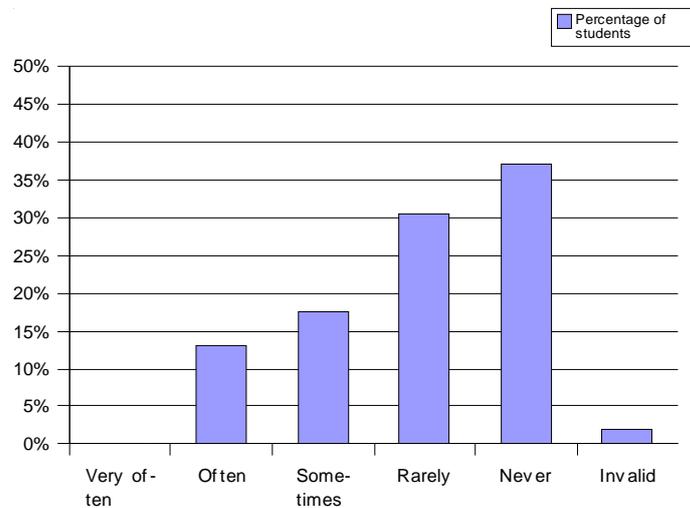
Fisher and Frey (4) describe formative assessment as feedback during the learning process and summative as a way to judge student knowledge after the learning process. Most students, 43,5%, answer that there is a mixture between summative and formative assessment in their classroom. However, 19 students, or 41,5%, answered that they experience that they are assessed when the work is completed. Only five students, 11%, answered that they are assessed primarily during the process, and only one chose the open alternative “other” and explained that assessment occurs during the talks between teacher, student and parents that are held each semester. All three teachers answered that the assessment takes place both during the process and when the work is completed. This shows that the teachers are aware of the fact that summative and formative assessment must be combined.

5.1.5 Question 5 - How often do you get to plan subject areas and the way these areas are assessed?



This question is actually really two questions in one, and one boy commented on this with the following statement: “I get to plan lessons, but not the way they are assessed” (my translation). This should of course be taken into consideration when the results are interpreted. However, it is an important question because it reveals how much the students are involved in planning subject areas and the way these are assessed. Quality assessment should involve both students and teacher. (Butler and McMunn 7) Also, the curriculum stresses the importance of involving students in the planning and evaluation of the daily education. The results from this question are evenly distributed between “often-never”, with almost 1/4 of the answers each. Considering what is said in the curriculum, “never” and “rarely” should not even be options that the students consider, because schools should ensure that the students are involved. The results are positive in the way that more than 50% answered “often” or “sometimes”. Still one of the teachers answered that she “never” involves the students, and one answered “rarely”. The male teacher responded that the students are involved “sometimes”.

5.1.6 Question 6 - How often do you get to assess your own result after a test or assignment?



In spite of the importance of self-assessment, stressed both in the curriculum (17) and in the most recent research done in the area (see Dysthe 21 among others), more than 65% answered that they “rarely” or “never” get to assess their own results. This correlates with Tilestone (59-60) who says that self-assessment is one of the best methods to make students develop, but it is used the least in the classroom. One of the teachers answered that her students “never” get to self-assess, while another wrote that they “rarely” self-assess. The male teacher, on the other hand, answered that his students “often” get to self-assess, a reply that does not correspond to the answers made by his students.

5.1.7 Question 7 - Does your teacher explain the goals and objectives with assignments?

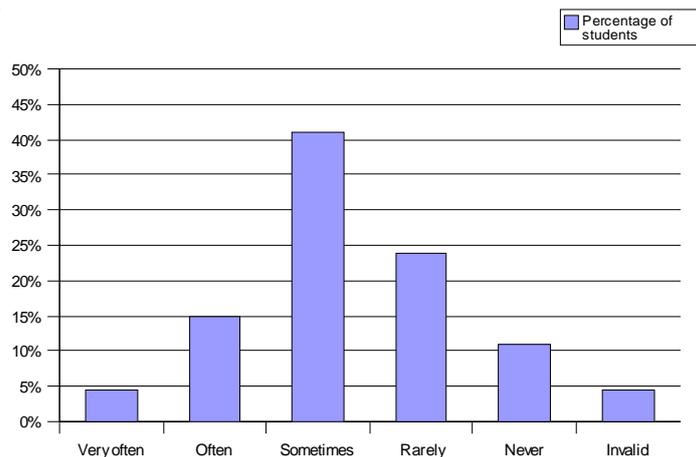
A majority of 82,5%, or 38 students, answered that their teacher explains the goals and objectives with assignments clearly. Being clear about goals and objectives is one cornerstone of quality assessment. (Butler and McMunn 7) However, these results prove that Butler and McMunn were wrong about the lack of information about goals on the part of the teacher. (134) Two of the teachers answered that they feel that they explain the goals and objectives clearly, while one wrote that she was not so certain. She explained this by writing that she tries to explain and instruct, but for many of her students that might not be enough and repetition is very important. This is supported by Dysthe et al. (129) who write that it is important to work with the criteria, not just make them visible.

5.1.8 Question 8 - Do you know what the curriculum and syllabus are?

Compared to the previous question, only 50% of the students know what the curriculum and the syllabus are, while 43,5% do not know about these documents. The teachers were asked if their students are familiar with the curriculum and syllabus and two of them answered yes. The third teacher, on the other hand, answered that her students both are and are not familiar with the curriculum and the syllabus. She further explained that they know the different parts that are assessed, but that it is not easy to understand the requirements completely. The question that was given to the teachers was somewhat deeper, to see whether or not they explain the documents to the students. It might be difficult for students to answer if they are familiar with the curriculum and syllabus, because even if they know what the documents are they might not fully understand them.

The gap between this question and the previous could be explained by the fact that the teacher explains the goals with an assignment for the students without involving the curriculum or syllabus. The goals are therefore clear to the students, but not the documents that control the goals.

5.1.9 Question 9 - How often do you talk with your teacher about what you need to work on to get better in English?



41% of the students feel that they “sometimes” get the chance to have personal conversations about their development in English, while almost 35% experience that they “rarely” or “never” talk with their teacher about their development. The latter result indicates that the teachers do not use formative assessment continuously, as formative assessment is a way for the teacher to provide feedback during the learning process. (Fischer and Frey 4) If formative assessment is used, the answers should have been “very often” or “often”, because, as Havnes and McDowell (6) state, assessment should be seen as communication between teacher and student. However, compared to the previous scale-questions, some students have answered “very often”, which is positive. The teachers have answered that they “sometimes” or “often” talk with their students.

5.1.10 Question 10 - Would you like to talk more with your teacher about your development in English?

74% or 34 students in the three classes would like to talk more about their development in English with their teacher. This also indicates that formative assessment is not used in these schools, because if assessment was done throughout the learning process, there would not be a need for more talks between teacher and students. The students should be involved during the whole process of learning. (Butler and McMunn 7) The male teacher answered that he does not want to have more talks with his students about their development. The two female teachers, on the other hand, would like to talk more with their students. Both of them write that there is not enough time for this as lessons are needed for other things and because they teach too many students. These answers describe the problem stated by Shepard (12), namely that it is not known how well socio-constructivist views on classroom assessment work in practice.

5.1.11 Question 11 - What help do you want from your teacher to develop in English?

This was the last question of the questionnaire. It was rewritten after the pilot study, but to keep it in the questionnaire was a risk, as it was not clear whether or not the students would understand it. In fact, several students misunderstood the question and one boy wrote that it was irrelevant and difficult to answer, and that everyone has problems that they do not want to share with everyone. Many of those who misunderstood the question wrote what they wanted to improve with their English, or that they already got the help they wanted. This did not answer the question and reveals a lack of metacognition. Metacognition is important because it is a “second-order form of thinking” that promotes self-awareness. (Gipps 24) The question was not asked to find out what students have difficulties with, or if they get sufficient help. Rather it was a way to find out about students' self-awareness and what help they want from their teacher, as the role of the teacher according to the socio-constructivists is as a helping hand. (Smith 221)

The total number of examples given is 56, which is less than the other two open questions and gives an average of 1.2 examples per student. The examples are very diverse, but for sake of clarity, examples given by two or less students have been grouped together as “other”. For a more detailed table see appendix 9.

I need help with	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Other	17	37%
Further explaining/more lectures	10	22%
I get all the help I need	7	15%
Almost everything	4	9%
Clearer assessment to know what I need to improve	4	9%
More assignments	3	6,5%
I do not know/no answer	11	24%

The diverse answers prove that the help students want from their teacher is very individual and that most students know quite well what they need help with and how they can develop. However, many students answered that they do not know what help they want from their teacher, which shows a low degree of metacognition.

The teachers were also asked what they regard as good feedback. The male teacher answered that he tries to sit with each student after a test or a project is returned. Together with the student he then goes through all the past results from the semester and talk about grades. The second teacher answered that the best feedback is to encourage students to speak English every lesson and to sit together and analyse their written work. The third teacher wrote that she tries to give them feedback on what they do and how they have developed by talking to the students about the different areas they have worked with. Most of these suggestions of good feedback are summative, as they occur at the end of the learning process. (Fisher and Frey 4) All three teachers involve the students, but the focus seems to be on the completed tasks.

5.1.12 Comparison between schools

It is important to point out that there are differences between the schools in the different questions. The table below illustrate the most stated answer from each school on each question, except for the open questions which are not included. The table also shows whether or not the teachers' answers corresponded with those given by their students.

Question	School 1	School 2	School 3	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	When the work is completed	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both
5	Often	Never	Sometimes	Sometimes	Never	Rarely
6	Rarely	Never	Rarely	Often	Never	Rarely
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes and No
8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
9	Sometimes	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Sometimes	Often/Sometimes
10	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Only two questions, 7 and 10, were answered alike in all three classes. The same result can be seen among the teachers, where only question 1 and 4 correspond completely. Also, in the first school, only 3/8 answers matched between students and teacher. In the second class the correspondence was higher with 6/8, and in the last school 7/8 answers correspond.

6 Conclusion

The hypothesis stated in the beginning of this essay was: “Teachers use assessment methods that are mainly summative and as a consequence student involvement in the assessment process is low, with too little focus on the goals of the education”. The primary aim has been to find out whether or not this is true. The first part of the hypothesis, concerning summative assessment methods, has proven to be quite difficult to answer. This is due to the fact that summative assessment can be used in a formative way. However, some of the results indicate that mainly summative assessment is used in schools.

Firstly, only half of the students know when they are being assessed, which is not compatible with formative assessment that stresses communication between teacher and student. Secondly, when asked to provide examples of methods that are used, both students and teachers gave answers that are traditionally connected with summative assessment such as tests and essays. When asked what kind of assignments students want to do, the answers were diverse with a mixture of formal and informal assignments. Also, most students experience that they sometimes get to have personal conversations with their teacher. 74% of the students do not think these occasions are sufficient and would like to have more conversations about their development. However, 43,5% of the students experience that they are assessed both during the process and when the work is completed, which means that there is a mixture of formative and summative assessment. This answer was supported by the teachers. On the other hand, 41,5% answered that they are assessed when the work is completed, or in a summative manner. Since the answers were so close in this question, a conclusion cannot be drawn. The overall impression of these results is that summative assessment is most commonly used in schools.

This study shows that student involvement in the assessment process is low. Students are more often involved in planning subject areas and the way these are assessed than in the actual assessment process. 65% of the students answered that they never or rarely get to self-assess, a method that has proven to be a good way to involve students in their own learning and to make them develop. Also, many students do not know what kind of help they want from their teacher, which indicates low self-awareness. One of the greatest advantages of involving the students in the assessment process is that it raises self-awareness.

The positive side of this study is that 82,5% of the students feel that the goals and objectives of assignments are clearly explained by their teacher. Students know the goals of education, even though only 50% are familiar with the curriculum and the syllabus, which is unfortunate. A possible explanation is that the teachers explain the goals without involving the documents behind them.

The secondary aim of the essay was to find out whether or not students' and teachers' opinions coincide. In this question there is a great difference between classes, but in a majority of the questions asked they do coincide between the teachers and their respective class.

This study has examined how students and teachers experience assessment. However, it has not investigated the underlying reasons why teachers use certain methods, or why students do not know how they are being assessed. There are both advantages and disadvantages with summative and formative assessment that have not been brought up here. This essay has been somewhat critical against summative assessment, and the hypothesis and investigation do not show the whole area of assessment. Also, it is important to point out that students are not always aware of the whole process of assessment, which means that the results might have been different if only teachers were asked.

It would be interesting to find out more about the reasons teachers have for choosing some methods before others, and above all how they use them. It was problematic to answer the first part of the hypothesis, because the questions asked did not provide any answers to how different methods are used. As a result it is difficult to judge if a method is summative or formative. If the study was to be done again, questions concerning this area would have been added. Also, some questions would have been changed, such as Question 5, which contained two questions in one and consequently cannot provide a reliable result.

Lastly, this study is too small to generate answers from which general conclusions can be drawn. It can, however, be concluded that the answers vary greatly between classes on almost every question. This indicates that the assessment methods used and the involvement of students depends highly on the teacher. Therefore it is very important that teachers are properly educated in questions concerning assessment theories and methods. The new ideas about assessment will only be implemented if teachers are familiar with their advantages, and how they work in practice.

Words used: 7346

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Appendix 1

Enkät om bedömning i ämnet engelska

Det här en anonym undersökning om bedömning. Svara ärligt på frågorna genom att sätta **ett** kryss för det alternativet som stämmer bäst för dig, tänk på att bara välja **ett** alternativ på varje fråga. Svara gärna så utförligt som möjligt på de frågorna där du får skriva själv. I slutet av undersökningen finns plats för dig att kommentera på frågorna, om det skulle vara att så att du vill förklara något vidare.

Tack för hjälpen!

Jag är Tjej Kille

1. Vet du hur din lärare bedömer dig i engelska?

Ja Nej

2. Ge exempel på uppgifter du får göra för att din lärare ska veta vilket betyg han/hon ska ge dig i engelska:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Ge exempel på uppgifter du skulle vilja göra för att visa vad du kan i engelska:

.....
.....
.....
.....

4. Jag upplever att jag oftast blir bedömd:

Under arbetets gång

När ett område är klart

Båda lika ofta

Annat

.....

.....

5. Hur ofta får du vara med och bestämma hur undervisningen i engelska ska se ut och hur du ska bedömas i olika moment?

Väldigt ofta Ofta Ibland Sällan Aldrig

6. Hur ofta får du vara med och bedöma ditt eget resultat efter ett prov eller en uppgift?

Väldigt ofta Ofta Ibland Sällan Aldrig

7. Är din lärare tydlig med att förklara målet med uppgifterna han/hon ger er?

Ja Nej

8. Vet du vad läroplanen och kursplanen är?

Ja Nej

9. Hur ofta pratar du och din lärare om vad du behöver jobba vidare med för att bli bättre på engelska?

Väldigt ofta Ofta Ibland Sällan Aldrig

10. Skulle du vilja prata mer med din lärare om hur det går för dig i engelska?

Ja Nej

11. Vad vill du ha för hjälp av din lärare för att bli bättre på engelska?

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Övriga kommentarer:

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Appendix 2

Questionnaire

Please answer the questions as thoroughly as possible! At the end of the questionnaire you have the possibility to further explain one of your answers or comment on the questions.

Thank you for participating!

1. What methods do you use to assess your students?

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.....
.....
.....
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.....
.....

2. When do you usually assess your students?

During the process

When the work is completed

Both

Other:

.....
.....

3. Do you think your students are aware of when they are being assessed?

Yes

No

Why/why not

.....
.....
.....

4. How often do your students get to plan subject areas and the way these areas are assessed?

Very often Often Sometimes Rarely Never

5. How often do your students get to assess their own result after a test or assignment?

Very often Often Sometimes Rarely Never

6. Do you feel that you are clear about the goals and objectives with your assignments?

Yes No

7. Are your students familiar with the curriculum and the syllabus for English?

Yes No

8. How often do you talk with your students about their development in English?

Very often Often Sometimes Rarely Never

9. Would you like to talk more with your students about their progress?

Yes No

10. How do you best give feedback to your students for them to develop in English?

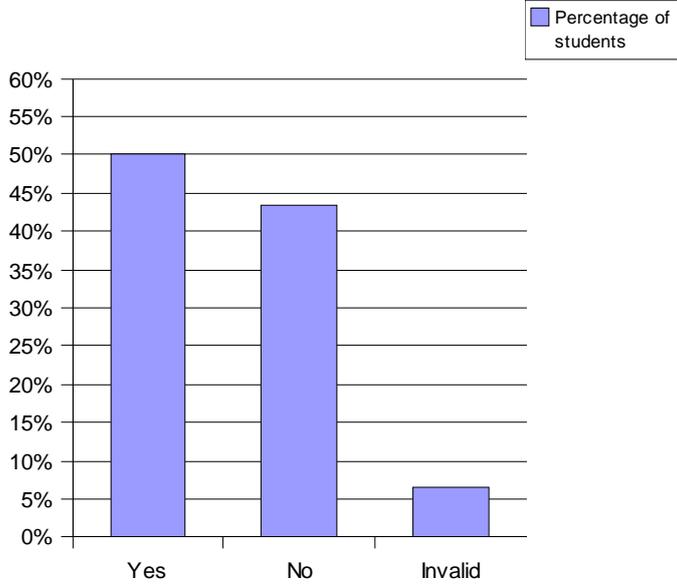
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Other comments:

.....

Appendix 3

Question 1 – Do you know how your teacher assess you in English?



Appendix 4

Question 2 – Give examples of assignments you do in order for your teacher to know what grade to give you.

Assignment	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Tests	26	56,5%
Oral presentation	24	52%
Homework	22	48%
Written production	21	45,5%
Reading	18	39%
Listening	15	32,5%
Activity in class	6	13%
Grammar	5	11%
Translations	5	11%
No answer/Don't know	3	6,5%
English speaking countries	2	4,5%
Group work	1	2%
Record radioshows	1	2%
Project	1	2%
Textbook	1	2%
Handout	1	2%

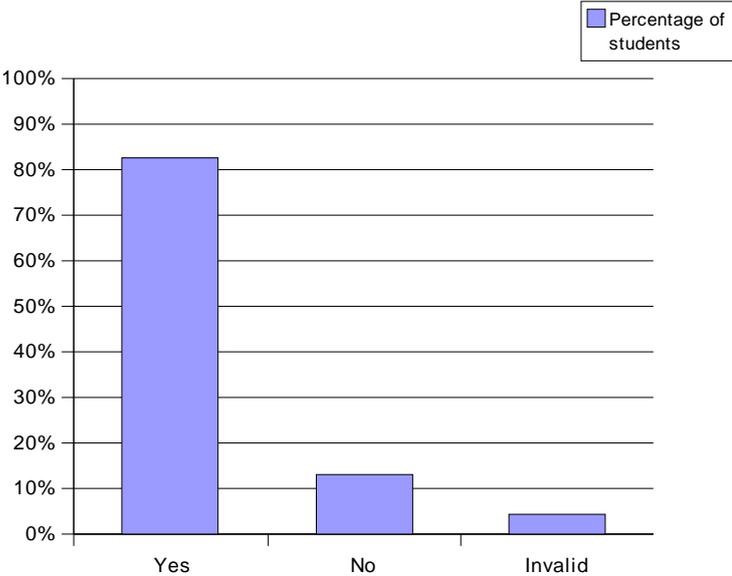
Appendix 5

Question 3 – Give examples of assignments you would like to do to show your teacher what you know.

Assignment	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Oral tasks	12	26%
Nothing besides the things we do	9	19,5%
Tests	8	17,5%
Writing tasks	6	13%
No answer/Don't know	6	13%
Reading	4	9%
Make a movie/play	4	9%
Handout	3	6,5%
Listening	2	4,5%
Individual tasks	1	2%
Anything that gives me a higher grade	1	2%
Group work	1	2%
Textbook	1	2%
Translate	1	2%
Homework	1	2%
Grammar	1	2%
Work with the computer	1	2%
Spelling tasks	1	2%
Invalid	1	2%

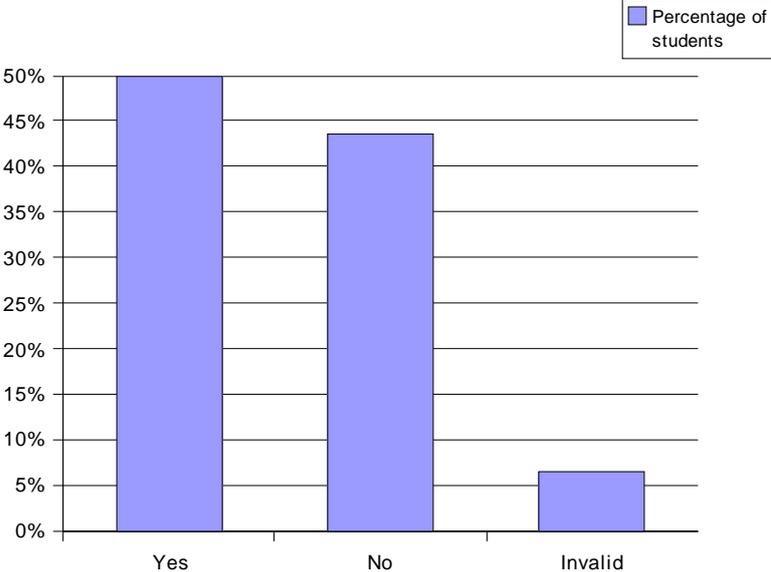
Appendix 6

Question 7 – Does your teacher explain the goals and objectives with assignments?



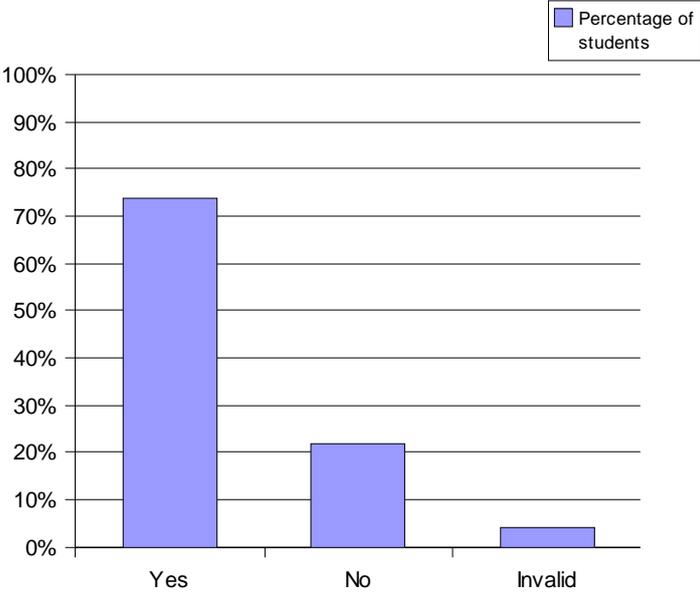
Appendix 7

Question 8 – Are you familiar with the curriculum and syllabus?



Appendix 8

Question 10 – Would you like to talk more with your teacher about your development in English?



Appendix 9

Question 11 – What help do you want from your teachers to develop in English?

I need help with	Total number of answers	Percentage of students who gave this as an example
Don't know/no answer	11	24%
Further explaining/more lectures	10	22%
I get all the help I need	7	15%
Almost everything	4	9%
Clearer assessment to know what I need to improve	4	9%
More assignments	3	6,5%
Homework	2	4,5%
Improve reading/listening	2	4,5%
Positive criticism	1	2%
Improve my grammar	1	2%
Invalid	1	2%
Help with talking/pronunciation	1	2%
Help with writing	1	2%
Be surrounded by the language	1	2%
Reading texts connected to pictures	1	2%
More fun activities	1	2%
Working with the computer	1	2%
Nervousness	1	2%
More grammar	1	2%
I have to work harder myself	1	2%
Group talks with the teacher as a monitor	1	2%

