Social Studies Teachers’ Perceptions and Awareness of Alternative Evaluation Strategies in the First Three Stages in Jordan

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess social studies teachers’ perceptions and their awareness of alternative evaluation techniques in Jordan. The researcher used the descriptive design. To achieve the study goals a survey was distributed over 186 male and female teachers randomly selected from Jordanian public schools in Irbid city in Jordan. The study result revealed that teachers showed understanding of different alternative evaluation techniques. Also, it indicated that there is not statistically significant different of using alternative evaluation on all variables (gender, academic qualifications and years of experience).

Keywords:
Alternative Evaluation,
Social Studies.

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Introduction

The world has witnessed improvement in various fields in life, which calls for preparing an educated generation. The teaching and learning process seeks to achieve the various learning outcomes associated with the curriculum, and for this, the learner’s acquisition of these outcomes requires the use of evaluation strategies. Alternative evaluation is considered one of the contemporary trends and strategies in the field of achievement evaluation as one of the outcomes of the learning process, and the alternative evaluation takes multiple names, realistic, original, or alternative evaluation. This type of evaluation aims to measure higher mental capabilities and focuses on important learning processes that can be developed inside and outside the school framework and follow their development (Qatawy, 2007). Alternative evaluation also occurs when the test is anchored in real-life experiences, rather than just using simple questions for easy-to-score answers (Wiggins, 1998). The alternative evaluation is a new way and a logical transfer to get rid of traditional practices based on learners’ retrieval of knowledge (Al-Omari & Shehadeh, 2010). Actually, the traditional evaluation will not help students’ be able in the future to solve problems, decision maker or have a necessary skill. Al-Bashir & Barham, [2012] confirmed the importance of performing alternative evaluations that consider student learning level and effective quality output of the educational process. Evaluations or, tests are one of the most common means of evaluation that aim to promote learning, especially when used in a real way. However, students are expected to express learning by conducting meaningful missions (Abed & Abu Awad, 2016). The rationale for using the alternative evaluation students can learn in different ways and showing consideration for individual differences (Nasri, 2010). Before the alternative evaluation is used in the schools, teachers’ perceptions on alternative evaluation should be conducted and analyzed. This is because; teacher is an important member of change in teaching and learning. If the teachers have positive perceptions on alternative evaluation, they will support the alternative procedures and this will succeed in reality.

Social studies classes help students to gain various knowledge, diverse life skills, several concepts and values. This can be realized through an organized educational process (Çalışkan & Kaşıkçı, 2010). Social studies teachers same as other teachers for other subjects can investigate the students’ achievements among various evaluation methods. These procedures are divided in two main groups of traditional and alternative evaluation. Traditional evaluation includes general evaluation instruments that focus on intellectual abilities (Caloukan & Yiittir, 2008).

Problem Statement
There is a scarcity of literature regarding the extent to which Jordanian social studies teachers use alternative evaluation techniques and their perception of the value of alternative evaluation. This problem is further complicated since this study is situated at Irbid educational Directorate which is the second largest educational Directorate in Jordan. From the researchers experience most of the teachers use paper-pencil test strategy in assessing students’ skills in social studies classes. However, there is a necessity to use authentic evaluation strategies that assess real skills for students as alternative evaluation which measures higher mental skills. After investigating research studies in this field, the researchers found that there are no studies conducted in alternative evaluation strategies which applied in social studies classes in Irbid/Jordan. The study aimed to examine social studies teachers’ awareness and their perceptions towards alternative evaluation. The study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. To what level are social studies teachers’ aware of alternative evaluation?
2. What are social studies teachers’ perceptions about using alternative evaluation methods in their teaching?
3. Are there differences in perception and awareness about alternative evaluation methods regarding gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience?

Literature Review
One of the first steps in understanding alternative evaluation is to have clear definitions of the terminology involved. Alternative evaluation occurs when testing is anchored in real-life experiences, rather than merely using simple questions to gain easy-to-score responses (Wiggins, 1998). Students are evaluated according to criteria that are important for performing a specific task. They are asked to demonstrate their control over the necessary knowledge by using the information to complete the specific task, thereby demonstrating their level of understanding. A variety of formal and informal, student-centered evaluation strategies may be utilized to accomplish this. Experiments, exhibitions, portfolios, curriculum-based evaluations, and journals are a few examples of the different types of evaluations that can be used. While alternative evaluation can take on many forms, Fuchs (1995) identified seven guidelines necessary in developing quality alternative evaluation:

1. The evaluation must measure important learning outcomes.
2. It should address the three basic purposes for evaluation: deciding instructional placement, deciding formative evaluation, and diagnosing educational problems.
3. The evaluation should provide clear descriptions of student performance that can be linked to instruction.
4. It should be compatible with a variety of classroom instructional models.
5. It should be easy to administer, score and evaluate.
6. The evaluation should communicate learning goals.
7. The information generated should be accurate and useful. (p. 2-3)

In addition to considering these seven guidelines, teachers should also define student outcomes, develop benchmarks against which student performance can be compared, develop flexibility in the system to accommodate for individual differences, and use various methods for gathering data to develop quality evaluation (McLaughlin & Warren, 1995).

Wiggins (1998) proposes several standards for determining if an evaluation is truly authentic. The first is to determine if the task in some way mirrors the way a person’s knowledge is tested in a “real-world” setting. It should also duplicate, as much as possible, the specific situations in which the task would occur in the workplace, civic or personal life. Also, the task should require higher-level thinking skills, such as judgment and innovation. Students must perform a task demonstrating his or her knowledge of the subject. The evaluation should require an integrated use of skills, as opposed to isolated elements of performance. Finally, if the goal is for students to produce high-quality products or performances, then they must be allowed to improve upon those products or performances. A performance-feedback-revision-performance cycle allows students to improve continually through receiving feedback on areas of their performance/product that need improvement, being allowed to revise it and then performing the task again. An example of this is the type of evaluation used when students are learning to play an instrument. They perform, are critiqued, adjust their performance, and perform again. This same cycle can be used to improve student performance in many areas.

Standardized Testing versus Alternative evaluation

Why are not standardized tests enough?
With the school reform movement of the 1970s many nations around the world called for an increase in educational accountability. This call for accountability led to the implementation of systems of standardized tests. These tests were easy to administer to large groups and easy to score (Montgomery, 2001). School began to publish the test scores in their communities, which resulted in competition between schools and teachers. With an increased pressure to obtain better scores, schools began to teach to the test (Montgomery, 2001). Unfortunately, most standardized tests evaluate basic skills and not higher order thinking skills. In a study by Darling-Hammond (2000), it was noted that since the 1970s basic skills scores have increased slightly while evaluations of higher-order thinking skills indicate a decrease in virtually all areas.

In moving to standardized testing, it was presumed that assessing all students using the same format would create fairness in testing (O’Neill, 2000). Test companies normally conduct several reviews of their tests to eliminate bias. Content-area experts and minority groups are among those who typically review the tests (Stiggins, 2001). However, many critics have voiced their concern that the tests still are tainted by bias. Some of the criticisms revolve around the fact that the very process used to construct tests, the choices of content and the use of a single method, usually multiple choice, produce tests with built-in cultural and educational biases that favor some ways of understanding and demonstrating knowledge over others (O’Neill, 2000). A decade ago, Frederiksen (1984) wrote that the “real test bias” is that “multiple-choice tests tend not to measure the more complex cognitive abilities” p.1. The test bias, the critics say, results in low-income and minority students not being exposed to curriculum that teaches the higher-order level thinking skills (O’Neill, 2000). It is doubtful that any process, no matter how complex, could lead to the total elimination of bias in standardized testing. While most advocates of alternative evaluation do not call for a total elimination of standardized testing, they do recommend a system that provides for a variety of evaluation methods. For example, the principles and indicators for student evaluation systems, developed by the National Forum on Evaluation (August 28, 2007) suggests that excellence can be shown in a variety of ways. According to their principles, “evaluation systems allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning”.

The Advantages of Alternative Evaluation

One of the advantages of alternative evaluation frequently referred to by advocates of alternative evaluation is the greater opportunity for assessing higher order thinking skills. One reason this occurs is because alternative evaluation emphasizes the process, not the product of learning. Instead of simply memorizing facts, students are allowed the opportunity to build upon their knowledge and develop problem-solving skills (Culbertson & Jalongo, 1999).

As frequently happens with alternative evaluation, the closer the evaluation moves to “real-life” the higher the problem-solving skills that are required. In completing the last column of activities students would be allowed to use various resources such as textbooks, computers, or reference materials. Proponents of alternative evaluation argue that adults have access to resources when completing tasks in the workplace, so providing students with resources to problem-solve in the classroom only mimics the life experiences they will have outside of school. It should also be noted that in American society today, information is available readily through a variety of sources. The internet, television, radio, and other media outlets supply a massive amount of information. Students are well served to if they are taught how to gain access to the information instead of just storing it in their short-term memory through memorization.

Research in learning theory has also influenced the move toward alternative evaluation methods, particularly the move toward constructivism. Constructivist classrooms encourage student autonomy. The framing of questions and analysis of information so prevalent in a constructivist classroom leads naturally into alternative evaluation. The use of open-ended questions, testing of hypothesis, use of raw data, primary sources, manipulatives, and interactive materials which also works well within the more flexible framework of alternative evaluation (Zaytoon, 2007). The final reason for the constructivist theory aligning with alternative evaluation is the great emphasis placed on higher order thinking skills.

Examples of Alternative Evaluation

A wide array of methods is used in implementing alternative evaluation. Some require few resources; some require many. Some can be varied slightly and used with virtually any subject matter. Some are very content-specific. The examples given here are designed to give the reader an idea of the range of areas that can be assessed using alternative evaluation. Educators should try to assure that any method chosen follows research-based criteria for quality such as outlined by Fuchs (1995) or Wiggins (1998).

Checklist

Checklists are valuable instruments when assessing students through observation and can fulfill many roles. They are most often a listing of the traits that teachers and/or students have decided are to be a part of a particular task. Checklists can be used for the entire class or for an individual student. They can assist in keeping track of certain behaviors, skills or note progress. One of the values of this evaluation is that it assists teachers in staying focused on what is important and provide a record of student progress (Strickland & Strickland, 2000).
Rubrics

A rubric is a set of criteria outlining the expectations for a particular assignment. Rubrics require the design of a Likert-type scale to quantify evaluations of performance and a semantic scale that describes different levels of performance for the activity (Stanford & Siders, 2001). Rubrics may either be holistic or analytical. A holistic rubric looks at the assignment, while an analytical one assesses each part separately. The holistic form was chosen because the product produced in the assignment would be considered if viewed in the “real world”. One of the genuine values of rubrics is the way a well-developed rubric will link instruction and learning through evaluation. Also, the feedback provided by a rubric helps the learning process to become more concrete. The final consideration in developing a rubric is to determine what constitutes competency (Stanford & Siders, 2001). Failure to do so, particularly for students accustomed to letter grades, will cause confusion for students on what is “acceptable” and what is “excellent”. On the assignment for example, a score of “2” would indicate competency, a “3” would indicate excellence, and “1” would represent a failure to meet expectations.

Miscue Analysis

Looking carefully at unexpected responses or “miscues” made by students when reading text can provide teachers with a great deal of information. It allows teachers to evaluate the reader’s use of three cueing systems: semantic/pragmatic, syntactic, and graphophonic. In addition, it allows teachers to determine if the reader is using strategies like prediction, sampling, confirming, inferring, or correcting (Goodman, 1973, p. 8-9).

When transcribing the reading session, the teacher uses a specific notation system. When analyzing the miscues, the teacher looks for patterns that will help explain what strategies a reader is or is not using (Strickland & Strickland, 2000). This evaluation leads directly to more effective and individualized reading instruction for the student.

Portfolios

No discussion of alternative evaluation could be complete without discussing portfolios. In recent years, they have increased in popularity. Portfolios provide teachers and students with a system for compiling student products across settings throughout the school year. They are valuable tools in the documentation of student progress and development. Typically, portfolios are in folders or notebooks and sorted by category or content-area. Not all portfolios fulfill the same purpose, and that purpose will determine the contents of the portfolio. Portfolios can contain a wide variety of information in a great many forms. Writing samples, drawings, teacher observations, results of standardized tests, videotapes, and checklists are just a few examples of what might be contained in a student’s portfolio (Daniels, 1999).

Since the very contents of the portfolio are determined by its purpose, the first step in developing a good portfolio is to determine its purpose. Portfolios can be content-specific, for example, a writing portfolio. They can demonstrate learning across content areas, or they can be a continuous record of a student’s progress during his or her academic career (Strickland & Strickland, 2000).

Next, specific criteria must be set and understood by teachers and students. Lack of specific criteria will lead to confusion about the content and the quality of the material to be placed in the portfolio. Many teachers develop a rubric for the portfolios to help clarify their expectations students.

Portfolios offer many benefits. They can motivate students to improve their performance; assist teachers in identifying individual student needs and help teachers to evaluate student progress. In addition, portfolios can act as a bridge between quantitative and qualitative evaluation data, producing a more complete picture of the student, allowing teachers to view their abilities as well as disabilities, strengths as well as weaknesses. Portfolios also offer the opportunity for evaluating students from diverse backgrounds with methods that match their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

There are, of course, some drawbacks to portfolios. Teacher time is perhaps the biggest barrier to implementing portfolios. Teacher time is perhaps the biggest barrier to implementing portfolios. Teachers must change the structure of their class to include time for student conferences and record keeping. Many educators are also concerned about the lack of consistency in portfolio design and the lack of criteria in their evaluation. These aspects raise questions about the feasibility of using portfolios for large-scale evaluation purposes (Daniels, 1999). However, researchers and practitioners continue to experiment and improve this evaluation method.

Performance-based Evaluation

This method requires students to either carry out a specified activity or create a product that is achievement related. Students may demonstrate proficiency by carrying out a series of activities in the appropriate sequence or by doing something in the correct manner. Examples of this could include musical performances, reading aloud or carrying out a motor activity. Proficiency may also be demonstrated by the creation of products that meet standards of quality. The product must exist separate from the performer as in the case of term papers or science fair exhibits. To provide a quality evaluation of student achievement performance-based evaluation must meet several criteria. The task to be performed must be communicated clearly. Students must understand what is expected of them. Additionally, the task must be worth doing or compelling. It must elicit the intended skill or product (Stiggins, 2001). This is the major flaw in many performance evaluations.
The task frequently does not address the intended skill and so becomes an instructional activity as opposed to an authentic evaluation of the skill. Also, the quality performance evaluation must be practical. It must be feasible for students to carry it out. Performance evaluations that require expensive resources, have too many steps or that place some students at a disadvantage are not practical (Stiggins, 2001). One of the areas that can fail the practicality test is a science fair project. If the teacher requires students to spend a great deal of money on equipment or materials a barrier can be placed in the way of poor students completing the task.

Increasing Student Success Through Improved Classroom Evaluation

No one method of evaluation is appropriate for all settings. Even the staunchest supporters of alternative evaluation do not preclude the use of other methods (Montgomery, 2001). What is really needed is to increase the expertise of all involved in evaluation and thus increase the quality of evaluation (Stiggins, 1999). Studies in Britain have consistently reported sizable gains in standardized test scores are directly attributable to improvement in teacher’s classroom evaluation practices. The researchers noted that improved formative evaluation assisted the students who had been achieving at a lower rate and thereby reduced the spread between abilities in the classroom (Black & William, 1998). Clearly, the education of pre-service and in-service teachers in the skillful utilization of evaluation tools is a vital component of improving the success of our students.

Methodology

This study utilized a quasi-quantitative design. Data was interpreted using a self-reported questionnaire that employed a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). Descriptive statistics, t-test, and Cronbach Alpha were employed in this study.

Participants

The total population of social studies teachers in Irbid directorate consisted of 350. The participants sample consisted of 200 teachers who were randomly selected to participate in this study. 186 surveys were returned. The rate of return was 93.5.

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of three domains. The first domain consisted of demographic data, while the second and third domains measured the frequency of awareness of alternative evaluation and teachers’ perceptions as well. The Scale considered as follows: 1-1.66 low, 1.67-3.33 moderate, 3.34-5.00 high.

Validity and Reliability

Face validity. Ten faculty members from the College of Education at Jordanian universities and ten social studies teachers reviewed the questionnaire. Feedback was made as suggested by reviewers to clarify some words and items. The final survey consisted of (11) items.

Reliability. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to test the reliability for calculating the internal consistency for each domain. The internal consistency was 0.78. This means that the reliability coefficient was satisfactory for the purpose of this current study.

Table (1) shows the value of the stability coefficient related to the questionnaire as well as the study fields.

Table 1. Stability coefficient and total stability using Cronbach's alpha formula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Item numbers</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Table 2 shows demographic data for teachers who participated in the study. A total of 186 teachers participated in the study. 48.9% of the participants were males while 51.1% were females. 42.5% of the participants have less than 10 years of teaching experience while 57.5% have more than 10 years of teaching experience. 74.2% of the participants have a bachelor’s degree and 25.8% have a graduate degree.

Table 2. Teachers’ demographic data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of experience:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or less</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>42.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results showed high degree of social studies teachers’ awareness of alternative evaluation with a mean of 3.78 as shown in table 3. The teachers showed high degree of understanding of different alternative evaluation strategies with a mean of 4.03.

Table 3. Level of Awareness of Alternative Evaluation Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have complete understanding of different alternative evaluation techniques</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that the understanding I have is enough to use alternative evaluation techniques.</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.771</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I have studied alternative evaluation techniques to improve my understanding</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.805</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have attended in-service trainings about the use of alternative evaluation techniques</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.080</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results showed high degree of favorable perceptions of social studies teachers regarding alternative evaluation strategies with a mean of 3.78 as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Level of Perceptions of Alternative Evaluation Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questioner Item</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. To me there is a clear difference between traditional evaluation techniques and alternative evaluation techniques.</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Evaluation techniques enable me to observe my students’ performance throughout the academic year (semester).</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.831</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Alternative evaluation techniques should be regularly used in student evaluation processes.</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.891</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I usually use the alternative evaluation techniques to assess the performance of my students</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Alternative evaluation techniques are more constructive as compared to traditional evaluation techniques?</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.052</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. To develop my understanding I would like to attend any in-service training</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.156</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In my opinion, alternative evaluation techniques make teachers’ work easier.</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.048</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>.584</td>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are there differences in perception and awareness about alternative evaluation methods regarding gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience?

There are differences in awareness only about alternative evaluation methods between males and females in favor of females. Also, there are differences in awareness and perception about alternative evaluation between bachelor and graduate degree in favor of bachelor degree. Moreover, there are differences between teachers who are their experiences 10 years or less and more than 10 years in favor of 10 years or less (see table 5). To investigate these differences MANCOVA was employed (see table 6).
Table 5. Differences in perception and awareness about alternative evaluation methods regarding gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>awareness</th>
<th>Perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>academic qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 or less</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more than 10</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 shows that there are not statistically differences in perception and awareness about alternative evaluation methods regarding gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine social studies teachers’ perceptions and their awareness of alternative evaluation techniques. The findings were organized and discussed according to the research questions.

The first research questions dealt with examining the extent to which social studies teachers are aware of alternative evaluation methods. The research findings show that social studies teachers have high awareness to use alternative evaluation in their teaching process. This result can be attributed to teachers’ skills in using some techniques of alternative evaluation and their qualifications about alternative evaluation methods. Furthermore, this finding can also be attributed to social studies teachers’ understanding that each alternative evaluation tool has the capacity to reveal the strengths and abilities of students’ knowledge and learning. In other words, social studies teachers could use the tool which will best serve the goals of evaluation process as they are aware of the advantages of alternative evaluation to provide information about students’ abilities and their performance. Prior research studies such as Duban and Kucukylmaz (2008), Guven and Eskiturk (2007) and Ozda et al. (2007) support these findings.

One of the greatest impacts on evaluations comes from how evaluations are viewed. Evaluations to some extents are used as an end point to measure the understanding of how much the student learned. This way of thinking needs serious revision and would require teachers and schools to undergo a cultural shift. Shepard (2000) argues, “our aim should be to change our cultural practices so that students and teachers look to evaluation as a source of insight and help instead of an occasion for meeting out rewards and punishments” (p.10). For teachers and schools to undertake this cultural shift, it must have difficult conversations about the purpose of an evaluation. Is an evaluation simply to gather data on students? Or is it an opportunity to check and see areas of strength and weakness to reflect on understanding? Shepard argues that evaluations will be more
effective in the middle of the teaching and not just at the end (2000, p. 10). Evaluations that are conducted correctly can also have an impact on the relationship between teachers and students.

The second research questions examined social studies teachers’ perceptions about using alternative evaluation methods in their teaching. The results indicated to the high degree of favorable perceptions of social studies teachers regarding alternative evaluation strategies. This result can be interpreted to the teachers’ beliefs and attitudes of the importance of these evaluation techniques in teaching and learning process.

Recent trends in cognitive psychology within the past two decades encouraged universities to prepare teachers to engage students in activities that promoted design and creation as opposed to recalling and remembering. Academics began to refer to the former as “performance-based evaluations” instead of the traditional “pen-and-paper evaluation” (Wineburg, 2001). For example, Stanford University’s Teacher Evaluation Project (TAP) developed these performance-based evaluations and measured educators’ ability to prepare students for these types of evaluations.

Consequently, current teacher education programs infuse preservice teachers with current knowledge about evaluation pedagogy. This pedagogy also needs to be extended to in-service teachers so that they are up to date in their teaching and evaluation practices.

The third research questions examined if there were statistically differences in perception and awareness about alternative evaluation methods based on gender, academic qualifications, and years of experience. The results indicated no differences between teachers based on gender, academic qualifications and years of experiences. A possible interpretation of this could be that these teachers have had the similar exposures and opportunities for understanding of alternative evaluations throughout their education.

Conclusion

Based on this study’s results, social studies teachers showed high levels of awareness regarding alternative evaluation techniques; however, the data shows that teachers are showing resistant to using alternative evaluation techniques in place of traditional evaluation techniques. Also, teachers do not fully understand the purpose of alternative evaluation techniques. This can be attributed to teacher preparation programs focus only on traditional evaluation techniques. It would be important for teacher preparation programs to educate preservice and inservice teachers regarding the importance of alternative evaluation techniques. Professional development workshops and programs should be offered to inservice teachers regarding current trends in evaluation and evaluation.

Typically, alternative evaluations techniques are intended to help teachers discover students’ weaknesses and strengths with respect to their learning. They are intended to help teachers understand students’ skills and abilities.

It is widely believed in the literature that no one method of evaluation is appropriate for all settings. Even the staunchest supporters of alternative evaluation do not preclude the use of other methods (Montgomery, 2001). What is really needed is to increase the expertise of everyone who is involved in evaluation and thus increase the quality of evaluation and evaluation (Stiggins, 1999). Studies in Britain have consistently reported sizable gains in standardized test scores are directly attributable to improvement in teacher’s classroom evaluation and evaluation practices including alternative evaluation techniques. The researchers noted that improved alternative evaluation techniques (e.g., formative evaluation) assisted the students who had been achieving at a lower level and thereby reduced the spread between abilities in the classroom (Black & William, 1998). Clearly, the education of pre-service and in-service teachers in the skillful utilization of alternative evaluation techniques is a vital component of improving the success of students.

References


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