

A STUDY OF SENIOR ASSISTANT TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL USES OF TESTS

Thu Thu Zon¹, Hmwe Hmwe Ko²

Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests. This research is based on six categories: student evaluation/grades, student motivation, instructional planning, time usage, student self-concept/ test anxiety and teacher self-concept. Quantitative research design and descriptive survey method were used in this study. A total of 200 senior assistant teachers from seven schools of Yangon Region, 100 senior assistant teachers from four schools of Bago Region and 100 senior assistant teachers from seven schools of Ayeyarwaddy Region. All participants completed the Educational Testing in Schools Survey (ETSS) (Delwyn & Deborach, 1991) and Mentor Teacher Survey (MTS) (Franklin & Jennifer, 2007) Questionnaire and demographic information. The reliability of questionnaire was shown to be satisfactory by the use of Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = 0.70$). Based on the results of descriptive analyses, it can be said that the sample senior assistant teachers in this study were high in perceptions in the instructional uses of test ($\bar{X} = 134.08$, Standard Deviation = 12.75).

Keywords: test, teacher-made test, perception.

Introduction

Education is very important as a basic foundation for development of a country, especially in developing countries like Myanmar. Myanmar views education as a basic human needs, an integral part of the quality of life, a support for moral and social values, and an instrument of economic productivity. The programs initiated for education in Myanmar are ambitious and inclusive for student: developing a problem-solving and creative orientation towards institutions and social issues, promoting national unity and eliminating discrimination, learning to work cooperatively with others, and developing self-reliance.

Recent education reforms have profoundly influenced the meaning and role of education and the development of the Myanmar education system. In addition, the education sector is contributing to the preservation of national identity and national values through programs that raise consciousness of the wealth of Myanmar's history, and form strong commitment to the safeguarding of Myanmar' rich culture and time-test traditional values in the face of the deluge of alien culture and values. So, all of the professional educators such as teachers, principals, and stakeholders in educational society must have the strong responsibilities to implement it.

Test plays an important role in today's schools and others aspects of life. Tests are tools designed to be used in making human decisions. Thus, tests must be known how to use and interpreted correctly. Testing not only assists and encourages teachers to improve their teaching effectiveness on student but also points out students' strengths and weaknesses in learning in various subjects by their test scores. Paper and pencil tests like classroom test and teacher-made tests are being used with considerable success for measuring degrees of student achievement.

Teachers control their students how to learn, how to read, how to write, and how to answer the tests. So, the teachers should know about the importance of lessons they teach and

¹ Dawei Education Degree College

² Yangon University of Education

how to test these lessons, and should have good attitudes to teach and to test. The teachers' attitudes or perceptions concerning testing are very important. Therefore, professional educators should know how the teachers feel about testing in classroom.

Classification of Teacher-Made Tests

There are variety of ways in which teacher-made tests (or for that matter commercially published tests) can be classified. One type of classification is based up on the type of item format used essay versus objective. Another classification is based upon the type of stimulus material used to present the problems to the students – verbal and nonverbal. Still other classification may be based upon the purposes of the test and the use of test results, criterion-referenced versus norm-referenced; achievement versus performance; and formative versus summative evaluation. Teacher will now consider the various classification schemes in general detail. It should be recognized at the outset that these classification schemes are not mutually exclusive. For example, a test may be of the essay type, but the student may be required to react to a picture or music that he hears, and the results may be designed to assist the teacher in correctly placing him at an appropriate step in the learning (instructional) sequence (Mehren, 1984).

Planning the Teacher-Made Test

Good tests do not just happen. They require adequate and extensive planning so that the instructional objectives, the teaching strategy to be employed, the textual materials and the evaluative procedure are all related in some meaningful fashion. One of the major errors teachers commit when preparing classroom tests is inadequate planning. Too often, teachers feel that they can begin thinking about the preparation of their tests one or two weeks before the test is to be administered. Most often than not, they leave it until the last possible moment and rush like made to prepare something (Mehren, 1984).

The test may be either too easy or too difficult. Professional item writers are seldom able to write more than ten good items per day. It would therefore be unrealistic to expect the ordinary classroom teacher to be able to prepare a 50-item test if she begins thinking about her test only a few days before it is scheduled. The solution to the problem lies in adequate planning and in spreading out the item-writing phase over a long period of time (Mehren, 1984).

Ideally, every test should be reviewed critically by other teachers, to minimize the deficiencies noted earlier. And this requires that classroom teacher adequately plan her test and write her own items in advance. All of the deficiencies discussed earlier are related in one way or another to inadequate planning. Before the classroom teacher (or for that matter, the professional items writer) sits down to write her test items, she must ask herself a series of questions. The two most general questions the classroom teacher must consider are (1) what does want to do? (2) what is the best way in which I can accomplish my goal? (Mehren, 1984).

Purpose of the Test

Evaluation can aid both the pupil and the teacher. To be helpful, classroom tests must be related to the teachers' instructional objectives, which in turn must be related to the essential skills and knowledge, (2) measuring growth over time, (3) ranking pupils in terms of the teachers' instructional procedures, and eventually to the use of the test results. But what are the

purposes of the test? Why is the test being administered? How well the test results be used by the pupil, teacher, counselor, administer and parents. Classroom achievement tests serve a variety of purposes, such as (1) judging the pupils' mastery of certain achievement of particular instructional objectives, (4) diagnosing pupil difficulties, (5) evaluating the teacher's instructional method, (6) ascertaining the effectiveness of the curriculum, (7) encouraging good study habits, and (8) motivating students. These purposes are not mutually exclusive. A single test can and should be used to serve as many purposes as possible. The classroom teacher not hope that because a test can serve many masters, it will automatically serve her intended it cannot do so with equal effectiveness. It is essential that the teacher know the major use of the test results. Otherwise, educators fear that she will not be able to prepare a test that will be most useful to her or her pupils (Mehren, 1984).

The following checklist should assist the test constructor:

1. Specify the course or unit content.
2. List the major course or unit objectives.
3. Define each objective in terms of student behavior.
4. Discard unrealistic objectives.
5. Prepare a table of specifications.
6. Decide upon the type of item format to be used.
7. Prepare test items that match the instructional objectives.

Then, in order to further relate testing to teaching the teacher should:

8. Evaluate the degree to which the objectives have been learned by the pupils.
9. Revise the objectives and/or teaching material and/or test on the basis of the test results (Mehren, 1984).

Differences between Standardized and Teacher-Made Achievement Tests

Teacher-made and commercially published standardized achievement tests are more alike than different. Where there are differences, they are more a matter of degree than intent, since the purpose of each is to measure pupils' knowledge, skills, and ability. Any test that has a representative sampling of the relevant content (that is, possesses content validity) and that is designed to measure the extent of present knowledge and skills (from recall of factual material to the higher mental processes) is an achievement tests, regardless of whether this test was constructed by the classroom teacher or by professional test makers. The major (but not the only) distinction between the standardized achievement test and the teacher-made test is that in a standardized achievement test, the systematic sampling of performance (that is, the pupil's score) has been obtained under prescribed directions administration. They also differ markedly in terms of their sampling of content, construction, norms, and purpose and use (Mehren, 1984).

Teachers' Perceptions on the Assessment

Perceptions is the action of seeing and perceiving through the sensory organs. It is a process of perceiving, discriminating, and transmitting stimuli from the surrounding through human sensory organs, interpret and store them in the brain. It can be in the form of image, imagination, thinking, opinion, idea or impression (Sang, 2003).

The teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment have not been entirely positive. The teachers are sensitized to the importance of fostering classroom environment that prioritizes affective principles such as self-confidence. Teachers seek a learning atmosphere based in large

level of anxiety within the classroom while affirming the students' efforts to learn the language. Some opponents to classroom testing view achievement testing as being counter to these factors as such tests, they might argue, heighten students' anxiety and frustration. Low test scores, some suggest, might have the adverse effect of disempowering students, subsequently lowering their motivation to learn. In addition, achievement testing might be viewed as being psychologically threatening to the teachers themselves as students' substandard test performances could reflect negatively on the job that the teachers are doing in the classroom. Due to these factors, some teachers avoid incorporating assessments into the classroom. However, avoidance and/or failure to implement the tests could have an adverse impact upon students. In addition, non-implementation of achievement tests could lessen the likelihood for subsequent improvements in the curriculum and/or classroom pedagogy-improvements that could benefit both learners and teachers. A more critical look at goal(s) of classroom testing within the larger framework of the classroom may help to clarify some of the possible misconceptions regarding assessment. Teachers' perceptions will be ascertained by analysis of their statements and behavior in order to see how they influence teachers' decision-making and general performance. Teachers start the teaching profession with preconceived thoughts and attitudes, gained experiences as learners and teachers that shape their performance in the classroom (Prabhu, 1990).

The relationship between perceptions and behavior of the teachers on the assessment is complex. Perceptions are said to determine behavior, yet social psychologists have about the validity of the links between perceptions and behaviors, since perceptions and behaviors are often divergent. Very little progress has been made in solving the longstanding problem of the relationship between perceptions and behavior (Krebs & Schmidt, 1993). Concerning the complexity of the relationship between perceptions and behaviors, Fishbein (1970) carried out three experiments to predict overt behavior from attitudinal variables. He showed the importance of the individual's intention to perform a given action in a given situation. Teachers' perceptions towards the performance of a given teaching approach may be an indicator of their perceptions. It has been assessed that perceptions/behavior relationship is a cause-effect relationship which would mean that attitudinal change could be an important facilitator in the effective implementation of any teaching. It is not enough for teachers to merely understand the underlying theories and principles of any approach; they have to change their perceptions and behaviors on the assessment in order to implement an approach successfully (Kennedy, 1996).

Importance of the Study

Assessment is one of the processes/activities that characterize the school system and many things/components and persons in the system can be, and have actually been assessed. Usually, the learners in the school system are the principal focus in assessment, and various tools have been utilized for this purpose. One major tool for assessment has been the test. Testing or assessment has been a process of gathering quantitative estimates of the amount of knowledge, skills, traits or characteristics possessed or acquired by learners in the school system. Tests are administered on learners at various stages of their learning/educational experience, and testing produces scores or data on the basis of which some crucial decision are taken. So, the use of results of assessment becomes a crucial issue in the school system, and in the entire educational enterprise (Nenty, 1997).

The quality of human development process refers essentially to the quality of education, and the quality of education is largely operationalized as the quality of teaching that goes on in

schools. Over the years, the public has become increasingly inquisitive and bothered about the activities going on in the schools, and also about the results are producing in their products (graduates). Governments, communities, proprietors, employers, parents and learners themselves have had reasons to worry about the results and products schools are producing. Thus, the use of student achievement scores as the basis, or one of the bases, of assessing the quality of teaching/teachers has become a dominant issue in education and in educational research community (Heyneman, 1983, Tsang, 1988).

Assessment and testing have strong effect on the lives and careers of young people. Decisions taken within and by schools influence the prospects and opportunities of their pupils and of even greater importance are their results of national tests and examinations. When the results of tests and examinations are used to pass judgments on the teachers and schools, they also affect the ways in which pupils are taught. Given their importance, it is essential that results of summative assessment should reflect and influence school learning in the best possible way. Testing in schools is usually thought to serve only the purpose of evaluating students and assigning them the grades. Those are important reasons (Heyneman, 1983, Tsang, 1988).

Based on the above reason, this study aimed to investigate perceptions of the senior assistant teachers toward their own classroom testing. By knowing teachers' perceptions toward their own classroom testing, we can understand how teachers see the importance of teacher-made tests, how they plan an effective teacher-made test, how they see the usefulness of teacher-made tests for student evaluation and/or grades, student motivation, instructional planning, and effects of teacher-made tests on time usage, on student self-concept or test anxiety and on teacher self-concept. After that, teachers believe that they are in control of their own classroom testing for instructional purposes, and can encourage students to perform in classroom tests appropriately (Heyneman, 1983, Tsang, 1988).

Previous Research

Student Evaluation/Grade: Delwyn L. H and Deborach M. S, (1991) have attempted to investigate teachers' perceptions of assessment in many different ways. In their study, teachers reported that short, frequent tests were better for evaluation of students. They also reported that almost all of their students achieve their best on classroom tests. They agreed that tests should not be the sole determiner of grades. The teachers reported giving partial credit on tests. They did not find cheating to be a problem, and they felt that tests do not create unhealthy student competition (Delwyn L. H & Deborach M. S, (1991).

Student Motivation: According to Delwyn L. H and Deborach M. S's (1991) research, the teacher felt that students were motivated to study harder and more effectively when tested and that students preferred shorter tests to longer, infrequent ones. Test taking was felt to be a valuable learning experience (Delwyn L. H & Deborach M. S, (1991).

Instructional Planning: Regrading the instructional planning (Delwyn L. H & Deborach M. S, (1991), in their research, discovered that the teachers agreed that classroom tests are important instructional tools, and that tests help them focus on what they will teach. Their tests were reported to be based on curriculum objectives and to reflect their own instructional emphasis, redirected instructional emphasis, and improved student learning.

Usage of Time: Result of Delwyn L. H and Deborach M. S's (1991) research clearly explained that the teachers indicated that testing is worth the time it takes, but they did not have enough

time to properly prepare the tests. They further noted that they do not use strict time limits on their classroom tests.

Student Self-Concept/Test Anxiety: Delwyn L. H and Deborach M. S, (1991) found that there was agreement that test results can have a negative effect on some students' self-concept. Teachers reported that academically strong students do not dislike taking tests and academically weak students dislike taking tests. They seem to feel that time should be set aside to practice test taking strategies when they reported that the student would benefit from these exercises.

Teacher Self-Concept: Research conducted by Delwyn L. H and Deborach M. S, (1991) has also proved that teachers seem to feel they had autonomy in deciding what tests are to be administered in their courses, and they feel comfortable with their ability to interpret their own test results. But the teachers reported feeling that college inadequately prepared them to use classroom tests effectively and that they could use tests more effectively if they knew more about them.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the senior assistants' perceptions or attitudes toward their own classroom testing. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of test
2. To observe the differences in perceptions toward classroom testing according to teaching experiences
3. To examine the differences in perceptions between the teachers in urban area and the teachers in rural area toward classroom testing
4. To investigate the differences in perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of test by gender and by region

Design and Procedure

Sampling. Subjects of the study are the senior assistant teachers from four selected high schools in Bago Region, seven selected high schools from Ayeyarwaddy Region and seven selected high schools from Yangon Region. A total of 400 senior assistant teachers (200 from urban area and 200 from rural area) participated in this study.

Research Method. Quantitative research design and descriptive survey method were used in this study.

Description of Survey Formulation. All participants completed the Educational Testing in Schools Survey (ETSS) (Delwyn & Deborach, 1991) and Mentor Teacher Survey (MTS) (Franklin & Jennifer, 2007) Questionnaire and demographic information.

Instrumentation. In this study, the questionnaire consists two sections A and B. the purpose of section A was to collect biographical data about each respondent. The participants were asked furnish personal details such as gender, senior assistant teachers' service, total services, their teaching grade and subject, and questioning experience. The purpose of section B was to gather data about the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers on the instructional uses of tests. The questionnaire for the perceptions has a total of (54) items and is composed of six categories.

To explore the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers, the Educational Testing in Schools Survey (ETSS) questionnaire was used in this study. This instrument was adopted from the Educational Testing in Schools Survey (ETSS) (Delwyn & Deborah, 1991). It consisted of (45) items. And then, Mentor Teacher Survey (MTS) (Franklin & Jennifer, 2007) was also used to explore the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers. Therefore, (9) items from MTS were also added to this instrument. The final version of the Educational Testing in Schools Survey (ETSS) questionnaire contained (54) items. The ETSS ($\alpha = 0.839$) is a five point Likert-format (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) instrument.

Data Collection. A survey was conducted with ETSS instrument (ETSS & MTS). The required data were collected during December 2013 and January 2014.

Data Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics of Six Categories on the Perceptions of the Senior Assistant Teachers on the Instructional Uses Tests

There were the survey items grouped into six categories in this study. The first three categories contain the items that measure the usefulness of teacher-made tests, the last three contain the items measuring the effect of the teacher-made tests (See Table 1).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Six Categories

Category	Number of Items	Mean	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation
Student Evaluation/Grade	15	54.48	3.63	6.63
Student Motivation	5	18.73	3.75	2.69
Instructional Planning	11	41.90	3.80	4.20
Time Usage	5	17.85	3.57	2.23
Student Self-Concept/ Test Anxiety	8	26.60	3.33	26.60
Teacher Self-Concept	10	36.25	3.63	4.19

The above Table 1 showed that the mean rating of the senior assistant teachers from instructional planning was the highest among the six categories. Therefore, they agreed that teacher-made tests are useful for instructional planning and can help to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

Table 2 Mean Comparison of the Perceptions of the Senior Assistant Teachers on the Instructional Uses Tests by Gender

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Total Test Perception Score	Male	30	128.17	18.56	3.39
	Female	370	134.56	12.06	0.63

The mean score of female teachers was greater than that of male teachers in the instructional uses of tests (See Table 2).

Table 3 The Result of *t*-test of the Perceptions of the Senior Assistant Teachers on the Instructional Uses Tests by Gender

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Total Scores	-2.661	398	.008*	-6.39

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level

According to the result of *t*-test, it can reasonably be said that female teachers felt more having test knowledge than male teachers on uses of tests (See Table 3).

Table 4 The Result of *t*-test on the Perceptions of the Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Rural and Urban

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Total Scores	.63	398	.528	0.81

There was no significant difference between rural and urban in overall mean scores (See Table 4). Therefore, the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests do not depend on location.

Table 5 ANOVA Results of the Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Region

Variable	Region Group	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Total Scores	Between group	202.58	2	101.29	0.62	0.54
	Within group	64616.02	397	162.76		

ANOVA result showed that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers on the instructional uses of tests at 0.05 levels (See Table 5). It can be reasonable to be said that teachers' perceptions of the instructional uses of tests did not depend on regions.

Table 6 ANOVA Results of the Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Senior Assistant Teacher's Service

Variable	Senior Assistant Teacher's Service Group	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Total Scores	Between group	473.05	3	157.68	0.97	0.41
	Within group	64345.55	396	162.49		

The result revealed that difference of the senior assistant teacher's service was not found on the perceptions of test uses (See Table 6).

Table 7 Comparison of Mean Rating in the Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Total Teaching Service

Total Teaching Service	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
1 to 10	119	132.55	12.22	1.12
11 to 20	27	134.26	8.89	1.71
21 to 30	132	134.63	10.06	0.88
31 and above	122	134.93	16.13	1.46

The more knowledgeable, the more experienced a teacher is, the more likely he or she is to use test information for any of the various possible instructional applications (See Table 7).

Table 8 Mean Comparison of the Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Experience of Test Constructing

Variable	Experience of Test Constructing	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Total Scores	No Experience	22	132.68	8.25	1.76
	Experience	378	134.16	12.96	0.67

It was observed that the mean scores were relatively different among perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests by experience of test constructing (See Table 8).

Table 9 Results of ANOVA of Test Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests by Teaching Subjects

Variable	Teaching Subjects	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Total Scores	Between group	1819.86	7	259.98	1.62	0.13
	Within group	62998.74	392	160.71		

ANOVA result revealed that there were no significant differences among the perceptions in the instructional uses of tests by teaching subjects (See Table 9).

Table 10 Descriptive Statistics of the Perceptions of Senior Assistant Teachers in the Instructional Uses of Tests

No	Item	Mean	Percentage %				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
1	Essay tests provide a better evaluation of student learning than multiple-choice tests.	3.19	4	33	8	47	8
2	Short tests given frequently are better evaluation tools than long tests given infrequently.	3.43	4	22.5	7.5	54	11

No	Item	Mean	Percentage %				
			SD	D	N	A	SA
3	Students study harder and more effectively when they know they will be tested.	3.99	2.5	4.5	3.8	69.2	20
4	Almost all my students try to achieve their best on tests given in my class.	3.11	4	38.8	6.2	43	8
5	Testing is helping schools' improvement.	4.19	0.6	1.8	1.8	68.8	27
6	Our school is more interested in increasing test scores than in improving overall student learning.	2.75	6.8	52	6.2	29.2	5.8
7	It is impractical for me to do item analyses on my classroom tests.	2.87	5.5	42	10.5	37	3
8	Testing requires more time and effort than it is worth to me.	4.04	0.8	3.5	3.2	75.5	17
9	Tests results may have a negative effect on some students' self-concept.	3.23	1	26	23	46	4
10	Many of my students are anxious about being tested.	3.40	2	26.8	4.2	60.2	6.8
11	Teachers who complain about testing are usually poor teachers who do not want accountability as profession.	3.41	6.2	22	9	48	14.8
12	Tests give me important feedback about how well I am teaching in each curricular area that is tested.	4.01	0.5	5.2	2	77.8	14.5

SD=Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

About 37% of the senior assistant teachers reported that they do not seem to know whether essay tests are better evaluators than multiple-choice tests. 55% of the senior assistant teachers reported that essay tests are better evaluators than multiple-choice tests. Nearly 65% of the teachers agreed that short, frequent tests were better for evaluation. 89% of the senior assistant teachers felt that students were motivated to study harder and more effectively when they will be taken the test and they did not agree that their all of students try to their best on classroom tests. But some of the students try to achieve their best on tests.

95% of the teachers reported that tests help schools' improvement. Half of the senior assistant teachers reported that their school is interested in improving overall student learning.

47% of the teachers reported that it was practical for them to do item analysis but some of the teachers felt that it is impractical. 92% of the teachers indicated that testing is worth the time it takes.

49% of the teachers agreed that tests results can have a negative effect on some students' self-concept. 67% of the senior assistant teachers expressed concern about test anxiety in their students.

61% of the teachers agreed that teachers who complain about testing are usually poor teachers who do not want accountability as profession. 91% of the teachers reported that tests give them important feedback about how well they were teaching in each curricular area that is tested.

Teachers felt that test results supplied information about students' skills that were already known by teachers and parents. Small number of teachers thought test results were useful especially those from criterion-referenced tests, most felt that the tests given were not useful for planning instruction. This study indicated that teachers usually construct teacher-made tests in their classroom.

Conclusion

To sum up the general findings related to the research questions are summarized as follows. The reliability of questionnaire was shown to be satisfactory by the use of Cronbach alpha ($\alpha=0.70$). Based on the results of descriptive analyses, it can be said that the sample senior assistant teachers in this study were high in the perceptions in the instructional uses of tests ($\bar{X}=134.08$, Standard Deviation=12.75). This study was observed that 77% of the senior assistant teachers were in moderate group about the perceptions in the instructional uses of tests. It was observed that 11 percent were in high group and 12 percent were in low group according to the perceptions in the instructional uses of tests.

According to the independent sample t-test results, there were significant different perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests by gender. This finding argued that of previous research studies (Merlter, 1998) that also showed that no significant gender differences in the instructional uses of tests. There were no significant difference perceptions in the instructional uses of tests by rural and urban. This finding is consistent with the previous research studies that Merlter (1998) found no significant difference between teachers in urban, suburban, or rural schools with respect to their use of traditional assessments. And there was no significant difference on the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests by region and between those who have experience of test constructing and the ones who have not.

As a consequence of this research, there were no statistically significant differences among senior assistant teachers' service, and among total teaching services on the perceptions in the instructional uses of tests. According to the ANOVA result, there was no significant different in the perceptions of senior assistant teachers toward testing by their educational qualification. According to the ANOVA result, there were no significant differences among the perceptions of senior assistant teachers in the instructional uses of tests by teaching subjects.

Concerning the six categories of instructional uses of tests, the mean rating of the senior assistant teachers from instructional planning was the highest among the six categories. Therefore, they agreed that teacher-made tests are useful for instructional planning and can help to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

65% of the teachers agreed that short, frequent tests were better for evaluation. 88% of the teachers reported that tests not only provide the best way to determine what a student has learned but also the student's test performance is a good indicator of what has been learned. 93% of the teachers felt that they find cheating to be a significant problem. 81% of the teachers expressed a concern that student has a negative effect on performance because of his test anxiety. Most of the senior assistant teachers reported giving partial credit on tests. 89% of the senior assistant teachers felt that students were motivated to study harder and more effectively when they will be taken the tests and they did not agree that their all of students try to their best on tests were constructed based on curricular objectives. 95% of the teachers reported that tests help schools' improvement. 86% of the senior assistant teachers agreed that the school's emphasis on test results shows a real commitment to raising student achievement.

47% of the teachers reported that it was practical for them to do item analysis but some of the teachers felt that it is impractical. 95% of the senior assistant teachers reported that they use strict time limits on their classroom tests. 82% of the teachers reported that academically weak students dislike taking tests but academically strong students do not dislike taking tests. 74% of the senior assistant teachers reported that they have considered the possibility of test anxiety and its effects on their students' attitudes. Half of the teachers disagreed that tests create a lot of tension for teachers and students. 82% of the teachers reported feeling that educational college and institution of education adequately prepared them to use classroom tests effectively. 91% of the teachers reported that tests give them important feedback about how well they were teaching in each curricular area that is tested.

Discussion and Recommendation

Analysis of the teachers' responses will be cautious in light of Goslin's (1967) admonition that people may answer questionnaires based on their interpretations of current philosophies about the way tests and test score "ought" to be used, rather than according to their actual practices. Descriptive studies are valuable for getting a sense of teachers' attitudes, however, and the limitations of the instruments do not preclude its test. Cooper and Leiter (1980) urged such analysis, since they feel that testing must be related and integrated with curriculum development, teaching strategies, and purposes of evaluation – and evaluation is further inherently linked to the articulated purposes of school and potential of learners. As Goslin (1965) and Yeh (1978) have found, the more knowledgeable (and correspondingly, the more experienced) a teacher is, the more likely he or she is to use test information for any of the various possible instructional applications. These researchers gave little indication of the quality of the teachers' applications, merely providing evidence on whether teachers use test results at all. This suggests the need for follow-up studies on the effects which in-service testing programs have on the actual practices of classroom teachers. The expectations for such interventions would be that an improvement in knowledge of testing techniques and applications would lead to more effective and extensive use of test information.

In recent years, assessment of student achievement has been receiving the attention of teachers, parents, researchers and educational systems. This attention has highlighted assessment as integral to the teaching and learning process. Current assessment practices need to reflect changes based on new understanding of learning theories, new curricula that are being developed, new knowledge and skills that are necessary for the 21st Century and the accountability requirements of systems and government. In this respect assessment of student

achievement is changing as today's students face a world that demands new knowledge, skills and behaviors that have not yet been defined (Segers et al, 2003). Students, in this fast and ever changing context, need not only develop deep understandings of disciplines but also develop the ability to analyze, synthesis and make inferences as well as think critically and problem solve. Assisting students to develop these knowledge, skills and behaviors and become life-long learners requires changes in the assessment processes at the school and classroom level.

This study provides evidence to suggest that teachers' performance in the classroom and perceptions toward testing is a combination of many factors. Teachers' knowledge, skills and experiences, and ill-preparation of teachers are included in these factors. Stuart (1999) contended that a curriculum that falls in the hands of teachers that fail to interpret is no better than the worst curriculum. Although the current practices at school level do not favor classroom assessment, well-managed classroom assessment could result in improvement of educational standards.

Good teachers are essential for the effective functioning of education system and for improving the quality of learning process. Field research on how teachers use tests in the classroom and whether their use is effective is a topic that needs additional study. Teacher educators should pay particular attention to the results from surveys of teachers on the use of tests so as to help them use testing time more effectively. Job satisfaction enables teachers to put their best to do the assigned work. Thus, the senior assistant teachers were examined in this study with the aim to investigate the perceptions of the senior assistant teachers on the instructional uses of tests.

Teachers' intuition and judgement are two key elements essential in the everyday classroom. No good substitutes can be found for these two elements. Without intuition, teaching is lean and somewhat mechanical. Intuition can be enhanced and teaching enriched when information is added to assist in the instructional process. Most practicing educators tend to separate testing from teaching.

Based on the results from the survey, it appears that teachers continue to be supportive of test use in the classrooms. Teachers believe that classroom tests are helpful for instruction and evaluation purposes. They also believe that they are on their own in testing for instructional purposes. The teachers are requesting more instruction in the design and development of creative classroom assessments along with greater knowledge in the uses of them for instructional planning. But greater emphasis in teacher training programs should focus on the coverage of practical considerations in the design and development of classroom assessments along with instruction on the basic measurement principles for evaluating various approaches to classroom assessment. The concern the teachers expressed was that the level of formal preparation they had in evaluation and measurement was not adequate for the present demands in the classroom. The view of female teachers more strongly favoring the concerns for test taking materials than male teachers may relate to the subject matter demands. This difference would reflect that male teachers seem to be less aware than the female teachers of the debilitating effects of test anxiety despite the overwhelming evidence that motivation is a major determinant of students' interest and achievement in teaching. A major thrust of a teacher training program could focus on providing teachers with activities that could help students develop positive motivation for male teachers. Such a program could provide teachers with activities which encourage students to do well and develop strong interests in learning by having the students develop a sense of control in their school work, positive success-failure attributions, intrinsic motivation, and be free of undue

anxiety and stress in the learning situation. It appears that such training is crucial to teacher knowledge of and use of tests. Teacher development of achievement tests, or alternative approaches to student assessment, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the particular kind of measure to be administered, their commitment to use of that measure, and the availability of linkages between the measure and instructional improvement will be critical.

These results suggest that teachers believe they are in control of their own classroom testing for instructional purposes. Two third of teachers felt that test can only evaluate what is easy to measure. It can be seemed that most of the teachers need to construct complex items which measure higher level of learning outcome. 88% of the teachers reported that tests not only provide the best way to determine what a student has learned but also the student's test performance is a good indicator of what has been learned. Teachers felt that test results supplied information about students' skills that were already known by teachers and parents. Although the senior assistant teachers taught different subjects, their perceptions in the instructional uses of tests were not different. They report being comfortable with their ability to interpret and analyze test results but yet report that tests could be used more effectively if they knew more about constructing and interpreting them. Given the shortness of time for preparing tests, the teachers prefer to give tests frequently on the belief that students study harder and more effectively when they know they will be tested. Teachers believe strongly that many of their students would benefit from a program that teachers test-taking skills and the test results may have a negative effect on some students' self-concept. As the current movement for educational reform takes shape in teacher-made tests, the teachers need to continue to stress the importance of having high quality classroom assessment tools for use.

Limitation of the Study

A larger and more representative sample should be used. Moreover, this study can be perfected if it can take into account other participants such as primary assistant and junior assistant teachers.

Suggestions for Further Research

It may be worthwhile to undertake studies in the following areas in order to understand some of the issues raised in this study.

1. A study to investigate the apparent gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom practices should be conducted. This study has established that there is a mismatch between what teachers' responses and what they practiced in the classroom. Investigating this mismatch between teachers' methodological theories and their classroom practices could provide understanding that could help teacher preparation programs develop ways to close that gap.
2. A similar study on the perceptions toward testing could be conducted in the primary assistant and junior assistant teachers, preschool teachers, students and parents.
3. An investigation of how teachers analyze students' error in each subject could provide knowledge crucial to improving teachers' assessment for learning practices. Without teachers being able to analyze students' work accordingly, it would be hard for the teachers to plan and support the students meaningfully. Teachers' analysis of student errors is part of classroom tests.

Acknowledgements

We would like to offer our respectful gratitude to Dr. Kay Thwe Hlaing (Rector, Yangon University of Education), Dr. Pyone Pyone Aung (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education), Dr. May Myat Thu (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education), Dr. Khin Khin Oo (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education), and Dr. Nyo Nyo Lwin (Pro-Rector, Yangon University of Education) for allowing us to do this study. And we would like to express our honorable appreciation to Dr. Khin Hnin New (Professor and Head of Department, Department of Educational Psychology, Yangon University of Education) for her kindness, encouragement and valuable comments for our study. Moreover, we would like to special thanks to all participants of this study.

References

- Delwyn, L. H., & Deborach, M.S. (1991). Teachers' Perceptions of the Instructional Uses of Tests. *Advances in Program Evaluation, Volume 1B*, 163-188. JAI Press Inc.
- Dorr-Bremme, D. W., & Herman, J. L. (1986). *Assessing student achievement: A profile of classroom practices*. Los Angeles, CA: Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California.
- Fishbein, M. (1970). The prediction of behavior from attitudinal and normative variables. *Journal of experimental social Psychology*, 6(4), 466-487.
- Franklin, C. A., & Snow-Gerono, J. L. (2007). Perceptions of teaching in an environment of standardized testing: Voices from the field. *Researcher*, 21(1), 2-21.
- Goslin, D. (1965). *The use of standardized tests-in American secondary schools and their impact on students, teachers, and administrators*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Goslin, D. (1967). *Teachers and testing*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Heyneman, S. (1983). Education during a period of austerity in Uganda, 1971-1981. *Comparative Education Review*, 27(3), 403-406.
- Kennedy, C., & Kennedy, J. (1996). Teacher attitudes and change implementation. *System*, 24(3), 352-360.
- Krebs, D., & Schmidt, P. (1993). *New directions in attitude measurement*. New York.
- Mehren, W.A. (1984). *Measurement and evaluation education and psychology*. Japan: CBS College Publishing.
- Merter, C.A. (1998). *Classroom assessment practices of Oihio teachers*. Conference paper: EDRS.
- Nenty, H. J. (1997). *Basic assessment skills for classroom teachers*. Unpublished manuscript. Institute of Education, National University of Lesotho, Lesotho.
- Probhu, N.S. (1990). There is no best method – Why? *TESOL Quarterly*, 24(2), 161-176.
- Sang, M. S. (2003). Student development, teaching-learning process & evaluation. *1st Edition First published 3003*, 74-88.
- Segers, M., Dochy, F & Cascallar, E. (eds). (2003). *Optimising New Modes of Assessment: In Search of Qualities and Standards*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht.
- Stuart, J. (1999). *College Tutors: A Fulcrum for Change*. Brighton: Center for International Education.
- Tsang, M. C. (1988). Cost analysis for educational policymaking: *A review of cost studies in education in developing countries*. *Review of Educational Research*, 57, 181-230.
- Yeh, J. (1978). *Test use in schools*. Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education and Welfare/National Institute of Education.