A Study of Authentic Assessment Based on Classroom Observation

Yao ZHENG¹, Rui HUANG¹,*, Xuyin LI¹, Xiao-hui ZHUANG² and Yilin FANG³

¹School of Foreign Languages, Jimei University, 361021. P.R. China
²Experiential Middle School of Haicang, Xiamen, P.R. China
³Xiamen Experiential High School, Tongan, Xiamen, P.R. China

*Corresponding author

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Abstract. Authentic assessment has aroused the general concern of educators after it was raised in the later part of the 1980s. This paper analyzes and probes into the authentic assessment through classroom observation and questionnaires in order to find out some effective ways to promote students’ overall sustainable development. By comparing the use of the authentic assessment in English classroom in China and the West, the researcher discovers not all the teachers are willing to accept and adopt authentic assessment in classroom teaching, what’s more, the application of authentic assessment is also quite difficult. Meanwhile, most of the students still lack the sense of self- and peer-assessment. Aiming at these issues, this paper proposed some approaches for improving teaching quality by authentic assessment. The result shows that it is necessary to strengthen students’ ability to how to evaluate scientifically in English learning, including self-assessment and mutual assessment. It also suggests that teachers should try to recognize authentic assessment and consciously improve their expertise in practice.

Introduction

In the new English curriculum and teaching reform, the assessment of students is the core. In accordance with the requirements of “Standard English Curriculum”, to evaluate students in their English studies, these aspects: setting up the evaluation mechanism of both learning process and learning results, highlighting the combination of formative and summative evaluations, and the combination of quantitative and qualitative evaluations; emphasizing the diversification of objectives, contents, and means of evaluation; and stressing the principle of making study serves its practical purpose concerning the development of students’ comprehensive capability in the application of language. Authentic assessment that is under the influence of the Fourth Generation of Evaluation(1989) caters to the needs of the reform, advocating that the assessment runs through teaching process, and suggesting that students show their knowledge and abilities through solving tasks, to get their adaptive ability and creativity for real life. Therefore, the authentic assessment meets the requirements for new curriculum reform and it has great reference values for student assessment.

As a new concept of educational assessment in China, authentic assessment advocates the integration of assessment into the teaching process, by involving students in solving real tasks similar to daily life or real situations, to show students about the comprehension of knowledge and skills and cultivate their competency of adapting to and creating in reality. Whether in terms of knowledge and skills, or from the perspective of emotional attitude and values, authentic assessment not only responds to the demands of the new curriculum reform, but also builds up students’ interest in learning, ability of practice and spirit of innovation. This thesis attempts to explore authentic assessment in English teaching and to find some effective ways to improve English teaching and assessment in order to promote students’ overall sustainable development.
Aspects of Authentic Assessment

To lay the foundation of authentic assessment further analysis, the three aspects in this part would be introduced. They are the concept, the characteristics, and the significance.

The Concept

The concept of authentic assessment was first raised by Grant Wiggins in 1989[2]. As a branch of assessment, authentic assessment serves as an alternative to traditional testing in measuring student achievement. According to O’Malley and Valdez Pierce, it involves “procedures for evaluating student achievement using activities that represent classroom goals, curricula, and instruction or real-life performance”[3][23], which can be devised by the teacher, or in collaboration with the student by engaging students’ voice.

Contrasted to multiple choice standardized tests, authentic assessment tends to focus on contextualized tasks. It is the measurement of intellectual accomplishments that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful. According to Meg Ormiston, “authentic learning mirrors the tasks and problem solving that are required in the reality outside of school”[4][2-3], which enables students to demonstrate their competency in an authentic setting. This means that a physics assessment should involve doing physics by performing experiments and solving problems the same way that a real-life physicist would. An authentic assessment concerning history requires students to ask questions, do independent research, and formulate answers to their questions, just like real-life historians do.

Examples of authentic assessment categories include:

• Story/Text Retelling
• Writing Samples
• Brief Investigations
• Demonstrations
• Simulations and role plays
• Studio portfolios, strategically selecting items
• Projects/Exhibitions
• Teacher Observations[3][4-5]

The Characteristics

Below is a detailed discussion of prominent characteristics of authentic assessment.

Authenticity

(1) The task assessed

The task assessed refers to the task posted by the teacher to achieve certain teaching goals and to be done by the students in classroom. Authentic assessment emphasizes the reality of the task assessed, as a way to cultivate knowledge and competency of students to face and handle realistic problems. Therefore, the task presented is relevant to real life, complicated, uncertain and open-ended. The criterion situation reveals a variety of real life situation that students may encounter in future professional field or career, rather than the impractical ones.

The academic achievement

Archbald and Newmann raised the concept of “authentic academic achievement”[5]. The core of authentic academic achievement is that students integrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and self-inclinations that they already grasped and apply them in new meaningful circumstances, which aims at cultivating high-level thinking and problem-solving ability that benefit both the individuals and the whole society. The authentic academic achievement gained includes the production of knowledge, disciplined enquiry, and values beyond assessment. Actually, the authentic academic achievement is the result of the authentic task assessed.

The method of conduct

When applying authentic assessment to student learning and achievement, educators and/or teachers use a wide variety of methods or tools to evaluate, to measure, and to document the
academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students, such as portfolios, observations, and performance assessment. Then they apply corresponding concrete criteria related to “construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and the value of achievement beyond the school”\textsuperscript{[6]} to find out if students reach a certain standard and make authentic feedbacks. Diverse assessment methods will contribute to the multi-perspective, multi-dimensional demonstration of students, thus making the assessment more authentic.

Besides, authentic assessment is largely a kind of direct assessment, which enables not only the authentic collection of the developmental status of students but also their real performance. The information collected is shown by directly-observed learning outcome that are perceptible by the public.

**Students Centeredness.** Adhering to the student-oriented philosophy, authentic assessment advocates students to develop their knowledge and skills so that students are able to apply them in the similar real situation. Through creative activities, students are able to cultivate, to display and to prove their own wisdom, ability, emotion and attitude. It is of great significance for the reform of assessing students in the present stage of China.

The purpose of assessment

The ultimate purpose of authentic assessment is to encourage students to promote their overall sustainable development. The basic idea of “development” is to look at students in a developing and dynamic way. This philosophy of assessment attaches more importance to students’ growth in the future and sustainable development than current studies. Authentic assessment aims not only to improve students’ original level, but also to maximize their potentials and strengths to the fullest. It also aims to understand and to serve students’ needs for lifelong their development.

First, authentic assessment no longer defines students as passive test-takers but valuing their active participation, and granting them more autonomy during the process of assessment. With students as the subject of assessment, self-development are accessible by reflecting, adjusting and polishing their learning processes and results. Also, the collective spirit and sense of cooperation are expected to be nurtured from the mutual assessment among students. Second, through authentic assessment, students are respected, including their individuality and differences.

The content of assessment

The content of assessment puts emphasis on the integration of knowledge, skills and affection. Authentic assessment concentrates on the emotional attitudes and values of students, advocating the correct understanding of the subject they learn, the positive learning attitude and healthy character towards life. For example, in English learning process, to know about and comprehend foreign cultures could cultivate students’ global consciousness and vision, further arousing the affection toward their own culture by comparative study.

**Diversity of Standards and Methods.** Given various subjects, grades, students’ characteristics, and teaching background, the standards and methods of assessment could not remain exactly the same. What teachers should do is to make diverse standards and methods in order to adjust to different teaching environments and to the actual situations, achieving a balance between explicit standards and personalized ones through different methods.

The Significance

From the connotation and characteristics of authentic assessment, it clearly states that it is beneficial to the students being assessed. By providing students with timely, effective feedbacks, it is helpful in stimulating the students’ interest, motivation and positive attitudes. What’s more, authentic assessment encourages the involvement of all the students. During the process of assessment, the students function as the main subjects while the teachers are only organizers and coordinators. An equal relationship between teachers and students is formed in the interaction.

According to Tannenbaum\textsuperscript{[7]}, authentic assessment is beneficial in the following situations:

- It focuses on documenting individual student’s growth over time, rather than comparing students with one another.
• It emphasizes students’ strength (what they know), rather than weaknesses (what they don’t know).
• It considers the learning styles, language proficiency, cultural and educational backgrounds, and grade levels of students[7].

To sum up, authentic assessment greatly builds up students’ confidence and ability. For teachers, authentic assessment changes the process of assessment into that of education and guidance, realizing the organic integration of teaching and assessment [8][16-17]. The focus of assessment is thus switched from test scores to the acquisition of knowledge and to maximize students’ potentials. That’s why it promotes the teaching quality and efficiency. Furthermore, authentic assessment offers information for students to make decisions.

Overview on Current Research Situations of Authentic Assessment

Since the fundamental knowledge of authentic assessment has already been discussed, this part would shift on specific discussions about the research situations in both the United States and China. The aim is to compare the different developmental stages and research situations between the two countries.

In the United States

Improving educational standards and quality has always been the theme of American education reform. Authentic assessment, which was rooted in Dewey’s philosophy of empirical education, emerged in the outcome-oriented education reform and school restructuring movement between 1980s and 1990s in America[9].

In 1983, the National Commission for Quality Education issued a report entitled “The country is in danger, education reform is imperative”, calling for improving the quality of education through high standards of education goals[10]. This had an unprecedented impact on the curriculum, teaching and assessment throughout fundamental education. The reform attempted to improve the standards and quality of education by requiring school districts and teachers to take responsibility for and explain the result of the test. Therefore, test became a tool for improving the quality of education that could be easily popularized and a large number of standardized tests entered American schools. Every state adopted mandatory reform measures to ensure the results of the test, changing teaching methods of school. To get a good grade was taken as the standard in assessing teachers, students, schools or even school districts.

This is a top-down reform. When the reform measures reached the school level, they usually took the form of rules and regulations. The public comparison of test scores between schools by the mass media put teachers under great pressure. So they began to examine and reflect on the effectiveness of the test as a means of assessment. Many teachers thought that standardized tests had brought trouble to their teaching and made them busy handling the tests besides teaching. What’s worse, the feedbacks of test results have always been lagged behind, which made it difficult to diagnose and improve the quality of teaching. The content of test is of little relevance to the teacher’s daily classroom instructions. It failed to improve students’ academic achievements, resulting in the repetition of low-level knowledge and stifling of their potentials to develop. The high-level thinking ability of students actually was imprisoned.

In the process of criticizing and reflecting on standardized tests, front-line educators began to become the backbone of educational reform. Their enthusiasm deeply touched the educational decision-making departments in all levels of the United States, and accelerated the process of student evaluation reform in state and school districts. Guided by the concept of authentic assessment, many states have devoted special manpower and material resources to develop new student assessment tools, and carried out various assessment experiments.

At the same time, the national policy of United States also put forward new requirements for labor education in the future, regarding the students’ practical ability and comprehensive ability as the necessary qualities of the future labor force.[10] In addition, contextualized learning theory began to make itself conspicuous and then gradually became the mainstream of learning ability. It tried to
combine academic teaching, vocational education and social practice, and tried to make achievements in the cultivation of the advanced ability of people. Under these circumstances, authentic assessment gradually became the mainstream of assessment reform of students [10].

After that, authentic assessment became the assessment reform trend that swept across the western countries and regions of North America, Europe and Australia. The prosperity progress of authentic assessment is not only about a reform in the field of assessment, but a reflection of the reform in educational philosophy, learning method and educational mechanism.

The first states involved in the reform were Arizona, Maryland, California, Michigan, Vermont, and Kentucky. They led the way in stopping the basic competency tests at the state level and took authentic assessment instead. Some of the experimental programs included: “Reading and Writing Assessment” in New Hampshire; “Mathematics Skills Assessment” in California; “Comprehensive Assessment of Students’ Achievement” in Arizona, and “Authentic Writing Assessment” in Illinois [11][32]. Although some states still use multiple choice and judgment tests in their state exams, standardized test was no longer the only way to assess students. The states did not just design tests to see if students have chosen the right answers but began to pay attention to the actual life experiences of students and their abilities to solve practical problems. The test gradually added open questions, writing and reading items, trying to test the students’ performance and practical ability in specific situations.

In other words, although the forge and spread of authentic assessment in US is hard, it has gain a huge momentum for growth in the present and in the days to come.

In China

While reflecting the current research results, educators and/or teachers in China is still in the developing stage of authentic assessment. There are basic factors:

First, the research of authentic assessment in China started relatively late while great progress has been made. Although it started relatively late compared to foreign countries, great achievements and progress have been made in recent years. [12][7] One of the outstanding manifestations is that the number of monographs, papers and periodicals of authentic assessment is small but increasing gradually.

Second, the content of research is relatively rich. Chinese researchers have studied theories and works of foreign countries, and tentatively put what they learn into practice. They did trial design and implement them in certain subjects, which is of great significance to the introduction of authentic assessment. The existing researches mainly focus on three aspects: introducing foreign experiences, constructing the theoretical system, and carrying out practical explorations. Among them, the combination with specific disciplines to explore the authentic assessment takes up a relatively large number of the researches. However, the outcome was still not rich enough to exert great influence on the teaching field [8][4-6].

Nowadays teachers mainly assess students by standardized tests. While learning documentation provides rich data about students’ learning results, in practice, teachers find that standardized tests are labor-intensive them to analyze thoughtfully in order to give accurate feedbacks to the learners. In addition, learners may also resist the new practice for being accustomed to the traditional language tests [12][43-44]. In language learning classes, students are made to learn lower-order knowledge and skills, like memorizing the words, reciting the articles, taking a lot of grammar notes, because they have to take a large number of tests. Mid-term, final, and entrance examinations to senior high schools or colleges seem to be the only criteria to judge whether students have mastered what they are supposed to master. The standardized tests overemphasize the grades and results but neglect many factors in the learning process, like learning style, interest, attitude, motivation, affect, and other factors. These tests actually undermine students’ intrinsic motivation, interest, and persistence.

New curriculum calls for new assessment concepts and forms. Now, a common idea that authentic assessment is an important category of educational assessment has been reached. It has attracted the interest of a number of researchers and teachers in this field. The increased interest in
authentic assessment is based on two major issues: current assessment procedures do not assess the full range of essential students’ outcomes, and teachers have difficulties using the information gained for instructional planning.

The Result of Research and Analysis of Authentic Assessment

This part centers on two direct ways of research that are adopted to get relatively accurate results: the classroom observation and the questionnaire.

The Findings of Classroom Observations

To reflect more clearly the usage of authentic assessment, focus on the teaching and learning process is of great value. Therefore, the researcher attended English classes in primary schools and tried to illustrate the effect of authentic assessment by comparison. The learning material is “Unit 6 Asking the way” of Grade Five. There were three teachers whose classes have been observed. The main reason for such observation is that each class has its distinct weaknesses and strengths.

Teacher A, is a young female teacher who has taught English for two years. Though she doesn’t have many teaching experiences, she has the smallest age gap with students and she knows their psychological state better. Teacher A wants her students to develop an interest in learning English and to truly learn from her class.

Teacher B, a female teacher of about 35 years old, is very proficient in the operation of teaching skills. She is familiar with the teaching methods and understands her students’ ability and their level of learning. She is indulged in the improvement of students’ test score. Unsatisfied as she is with the current education situation, she feels it is beyond her power to change.

Teacher C is an experienced female teacher who is going to retire soon. Her class is observed as she knows clearly the teaching points and difficulties of students. She can usually depend on her years of classroom experiences instead of busily preparing for the class.

Before classroom observation, the things we did include getting familiar with the learning material to find out the key points and difficult points, the goal of teaching and to make a scale for rating the performance of both the teacher and the students. The goal of the class is to enable the students to ask and point the way in English, and provide helpful, reasonable advice concerning routes and vehicles.

Table 1 and Figure 1 record the usage of authentic assessment and the corresponding outcome. We got the inspiration of design from Xing Wenjun[13].

Table 1. The Usage of Authentic Assessment in Class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Degree [Time]</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A great deal [30 min]</td>
<td>1. Supposing you are a volunteer who help people to get the place they want to go. Place signs of different places in the class to create the situation during teaching. 2. After learning the language point, students begin a role play. 3. Brief investigation. Supposing you are going to visit your friends this weekend. Ask how to get their home and make a simple map, then demonstrate it.</td>
<td>70% direct feedback ; 30% mutual assessment Focus on praising but neglect mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>A few [15min]</td>
<td>1. Group work: discuss their plans for holiday or places they like to go then share with other classmates. 2. Pair work: two students make a dialogue</td>
<td>60% direct feedback; 40% mutual assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A few [10 min]</td>
<td>1. Role play based on the textbook. 2. Share the activities on this weekend.</td>
<td>80% direct feedback ; 20% mutual assessment point out their mistakes immediately</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows that all of the three teachers were able to use authentic assessment in classroom, though the frequency varied from person to person. Teacher A applies authentic assessment in her classroom the most often. However, Figure 1 shows that the learning atmosphere and students’ performance in Class A is the best, but there is a decline in students’ interest and learning outcome in the classroom where authentic assessment is applied less. Therefore, the higher degree of the usage of authentic assessment was, the more students were interested, and the more teaching quality improves.

However, some problems exist. In Table 1, it is clear that Teacher C preferred a more traditional way of teaching. But in Figure 1, the result of study turned out to be good due to her skillful concentration on the teaching content and textbook, even though students were deprived of much interest and pleasure of learning. They were only receivers of knowledge. They were less likely to involve in the classroom activities, so the learning atmosphere was not as good as the researcher expected it to be.

Through observation, Table 1 reveals that Teacher A applied many approaches of authentic assessment but failed to manage the time well. She spent most of the time creating real-life situations for students to learn better so that she didn’t have enough time to explain all the language points involved. Besides, she ignored the function of the textbook, which may resulted in a negative effect to the students. Students’ level of oral English rose while the ability to write and spell attached less attention. Students’ attitude of helping others was developed in the process. The confidence of students was nurtured by teacher’s recognition, while some mistakes were not pointed out effectively.

Table 1 and Figure 1, state that the three teachers observed all carried out authentic assessment by making instructions, that is, teachers still acted as directors in class, and students still lack the initiative to be their own guide. Teachers of younger age accept the concept of authentic assessment better than the elder ones; they would like to give it a try while elder teachers think it unnecessary to change their mode of teaching.

The Findings of Questionnaires

To get direct and first-hand information about English teachers’ knowledge of lesson content and use of the authentic assessment method, the researcher conducted an online questionnaire to 30 teachers in primary and junior schools during the interim. It reveals that most of them had no idea what “authentic assessment” is about before the researcher offered explained what does authentic assessment is about. Prior explanation about authentic assessment method and translation instructions before students started filling up the questionnaire, were given in order to get accurate results. The results are shown in Figure 2 below.

Teachers’ feeling towards authentic assessment
Q1: To what extent do you want to use authentic assessment?
Q2: To what extent do you want to use authentic assessment more effectively?
Q3: To what extent do you find authentic assessment difficult to use?
Figure 2. Teachers’ Feeling towards Authentic Assessment.

(“Where I am Now” means how the subject is using authentic assessment approaches, and “Where I Would Like to Be” refers to the subject’s ideal level of use.)

Figure 2 reveals that teachers show a degree of enthusiasm to authentic assessment. In A1, 66.67% of the teachers think they have already used authentic assessment in their classes. 66.67% of the teachers are willing to use a lot of authentic assessment in the days to come. However, the notion is not fully recognized. A very small portion of teachers does not think authentic assessment is necessary in their teaching. In A2 data, 70% of the teachers want to improve their skills of authentic assessment, which is a relieving discovery. A number of them though would like to stay where they are now instead of making any change. As for the difficulty in applying authentic assessment, A3 shows 90% of the teachers find it hard to use the method; only 10% think that they are qualified users.

(2) The way of assessment

Q1: To what extent do you ask students to rate their own performance?
Q2: To what extent do you ask students to rate each other’s performance?
Q3: To what extent do you give students feedback about their performance?
Q4: To what extent do you give parents feedback about their child’s performance?

Figure 3. The Way of Assessment.

(“Where I am Now” is how the subject is using authentic assessment approaches, and “Where I Would Like to Be” is the subject’s ideal level of use.)

In Figure 3, A1 and A2 data, gives an analysis that very few of the teachers apply self-assessment (6.67%) or mutual assessment (3.33%) a lot in the process of teaching. All of the four methods of assessment mentioned are all used often, but not to a great frequency. Varied as the methods, almost all the teachers have developed the consciousness of assessing their students. Actually, they are
using authentic assessment only that they were not aware of it. The percentage of the teachers who never ask students to rate their own performance is 23.33%, and that of the teachers who never ask students to rate each other’s performance is 36.6%. These teachers prefer to give students immediate, direct feedback by themselves. There is a huge room for these teachers to improve their assessing ability. It’s a good sign to see most of the teachers feel like promoting their current skill of assessment.

(3) The efficiency of application.
The data, 7(23.33%) of the teachers have the confidence in clearly defining levels of student performance. 6(20%) of the teachers plan scoring rubrics before using assessments to a great deal. There are only 4(13.33%) of the teachers who compare student performance to a certain standard a lot. 6(20%) of the teachers usually inform students about scoring criteria before judging. 9(30%) of the teachers feel great concern about the time required to use their methods of assessment.

That is to say, although the application of authentic assessment draws the attention of many teachers, not many of them can use it very effectively.

Sharing of authentic assessment.
This data, 86.67% of the teachers surveyed share teaching strategies for authentic assessments. However, known from the result, it shows that the teachers who talk much of authentic assessment with their colleagues only account for 10%. What’ worse, 7(23.33%) of the teachers had never talked about authentic assessment with their colleagues. The data prove that teachers of the same subject attach great attention to interacting with each other as a way to share their teaching experiences. However, the researcher observed they discuss less over assessment strategies.

Ways to Improve Teaching Quality by Authentic Assessment
Solving problems is always more important than merely discovering them. The researcher suggests three feasible solutions to the problems that occurred in the implementation of authentic assessment.

To Strengthen Students’ Consciousness and Ability of Assessment
The implementation of the "student-oriented" method of authentic assessment could not be separated from the active participation of students. In order to better implement authentic assessment, first of all, the teacher should create a democratic, harmonious, and an equal, atmosphere in the class, so as to stimulate students’ subjective consciousness. At the same time, teachers should play a key role in regulating the method. This kind of classroom atmosphere is helpful, in terms of communication and understanding, between teachers and students and latter playing their own initiative and creativity. Secondly, the method also motivates teachers to pay attention to the individual differences of students and to maximize the role of students in class. There are many differences in intelligence and ability among students. It is unscientific and unrealistic to test students with unified assessment content, to require students to use unified assessment standards, or to assess students by unified methods. Lastly, to give students enough space to have fun in their own assessment should be encouraged in classroom. Only when teachers give students enough space to participate in all aspects of assessment, could students truly experience the fun of independent assessment, so that they would be more willing to participate in authentic evaluation.

To Update Traditional Assessment Ideas and Improve Teachers’ Expertise
On the one hand, teachers should actively expand their horizons and renew their existing assessment concepts, take the initiative to accept, explore, and try new assessment ideas and methods, like authentic assessment. In order for to update their traditional assessment concept, a break in the flow of thought should be made in the following aspects. Firstly, teachers should have a clear understanding of the current status of student assessment. Those who are content with the traditional concept of assessment would surely fail to see clearly the current situation of student evaluation. They could neither see the problems existing in the present situation, nor make a profound analysis of the causes of the problems. Secondly, teachers should have the courage to
accept and to try authentic assessment. As a newly-applied assessment concept in China, the degree of recognition for and application of authentic assessment is not high. There should be a determination to use the new assessment concept to solve the problems in the current situation. On the other hand, the teacher is not only the direct participant and the bearer of the authentic student assessment, but also the direct implementer and organizer of the system. Therefore, the teacher’s accomplishment directly affects the implementation process and the result of such. In this aspect, they should actively improve their professional expertise in order to be more effective in conducting student assessment. Specifically need to constantly learn the relevant theoretical knowledge of authentic assessment. Second, they need to exercise and improve their assessment ability. Ability is always acquired in practice, so teachers should play a good role and assume corresponding responsibility in practice, and actively involve themselves in both the application and the sharing of authentic assessment.

To Optimize the Authentic Assessment System

Authentic assessment is an evaluation method that is very difficult to quantify. This also brings difficulties to the implementation of authentic assessment that it not only takes a long time, but also brings challenges to the authenticity of the method. Therefore, in order to effectively solve the time conflict between effective teaching and assessment for teachers and students, apart from the active advocacy and guarantee of the policy documents, the authentic assessment system should be optimized[15]. More importantly, as a new concept in practice, how to develop a set of practical assessment system that could be used as a guide to practice is an important problem that educators should pay attention to and study in order to implement it efficiently in teaching. Specifically, how to optimize the authentic assessment system needs to be done in the following aspects.

1. to improve the theoretical system of authentic assessment. At present, although there are various works on authentic assessment, most studies are only based on conceptual analysis or theoretical basis to discuss what is authentic assessment. It does not refine the concept of authentic assessment at the practical and operational level and how to implement it for in-depth study and discussion. Because of the absence of a complete evaluation system in theory, many educators do not know how to use the theory of authentic assessment to guide practice, much more how to develop it in practice. There is a need to comprehensively and deeply discuss the authentic assessment at the theoretical level, perfect its theory system, in order to provide support and guarantee for its practical application.

2. to diagnose and resolve existing issues in the system through practice. If the assessment is not put into practice, it is not enough to discuss how to optimize it from the theoretical level. There is a need to include authentic assessment in teaching practice, to discover its practical problems and difficulties, and apply strategies in order to improve the authentic assessment system continuously, and to ensure the authenticity of assessment for effective implementation.

Conclusion

Under the influence of the Four Generation of Evaluation, authentic assessment serves as a method to assess students in a real setting so as to cultivate their abilities to solve real-life issues. This kind of assessment is advantageous for authenticity, student centeredness and varied ways of conduct. To get an overall understanding of the situation of authentic assessment in China, the researcher conducted classroom observations and questionnaire surveys to arrive at conclusion to particular issues. First, not all the teachers are willing to accept the notion of authentic assessment and to adopt authentic assessment in classroom teaching. What’s worse, some of them even have no idea about what authentic assessment is. Second, most teachers find authentic assessment hard to apply and many fail to achieve the desired result. The difficulties lie in time control, transfer of identity, and/or effectiveness of feedback. Third, in the classroom where authentic assessment is used, students still lack a sense of initiative because they were not used to this kind of assessment method.

In conclusion, many teachers have already use authentic assessment in their classroom teaching, whether they conscious or not. Most teachers are willing to adopt authentic assessment to improve
their teaching quality. For students, it is necessary to strengthen their ability to assess, including self-assessment and mutual assessment. For teachers, it is of utmost importance to build up the awareness for self-improvement. It is also suggests that teachers should try to recognize authentic assessment and consciously improve their expertise in practice day by day. Besides, by optimizing the system of authentic assessment, the researcher is confident that it will be applied more efficiently in classroom.

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