ABSTRACT

Objective: To assess the perception of students regarding the usefulness of formative assessments.
Study Design: Cross-sectional descriptive study.
Place and Duration of Study: Islamic International Medical College, from January to June 2015.
Materials and Methods: A structured questionnaire was distributed to 150 medical students. Response rate was 90%. There were six questions regarding the scheduling, strategy and components of formative assessment while four questions were regarding the effectiveness of formative assessment in learning.
Results: It was found out that majority of the students (60%) were satisfied with placement of formative assessments in each module while 76.3% agreed that assessment were arranged regularly, though 22% disagreed with assessment plan. About 64% students agreed that it facilitates learning process and motivates students to learn more. On the other hand only 20% students disagreed with its role in learning. Feedback and remedial were relatively weaker as only 33% students thought that feedback was effective and timely while most of students disagreed but were satisfied with remedial offered by each discipline.
Conclusion: The medical students consider formative assessment an important tool to enhance their learning process. More efforts are required to enhance the usefulness of formative assessments by improving the quality of feedback and the remedial offered for improvement.

Key Words: Assessment, Constructive Feedback, Learning, Remedial Measures.

Introduction

Formative assessment is the process used by teachers and students to recognise and respond to students’ learning in order to enhance learning. It helps in learning by generating feedback information that is beneficial for both students and teachers. It is suggested that feedback enables students to reconstruct their understanding and skills and hence improve their performance. Rick Stiggins concluded “most of the teacher change their instructional strategy according to the demand of the students or modify their teaching modalities according to their students' needs, hence owning their own learning.” Michael Scriven derived the term in 1967, during those times information gathered through formative evaluation was used to assess the effectiveness of a curriculum and guide school system choices to adopt a suitable curriculum. Later on Allal and Lopez traced the history of formative assessment from Scriven's original definition of “formative evaluation” of educational programs, found out that term “assessment” had “progressively replaced ‘evaluation’ during 1967. Benjamin Bloom used the term in 1968 in his book Learning for mastery and he described the role of formative assessment as a tool for improving the teaching-learning processes for students and how it can be accommodated in content. Formative assessment is the only mean by which subsequent educational decisions can be altered. The true purpose of formative assessment is fulfilled when it is applied on a frequent and regular basis to see students’ progress and understanding and helps to identify their learning needs and adjusting the teaching appropriately. It is a midstream tool that is used by teachers to measure student understanding of specific topic or skill they are teaching. Formative assessment is said formative because it leads to adjustments according to learners need to form new learning because every formative assessment is followed by feedback provided to students regarding their performance and taken from students regarding content, learning and teaching strategies etc. Therefore it helps teacher to adjust or modify their learning strategy and student
Results
Response rate was 90% as 135 filled questionnaires were received. Results were analyzed by using SPSS 21 for each while compiling the results male to female ratio was ignored. Most of the students (60%) were satisfied with placement of assessments in each module by concerned disciplines. However 76.3% agreed that formative assessment were arranged regularly by each discipline although 22% disagreed with assessment plan. About 64 % students agreed that it always facilitates learning process and it also motivates students to learn more. On the other hand only 20% students disagreed with its role in learning. However very few number of students i.e. only 33% agreed that feedback was provided to them in time and remedial measures offered in each discipline were helpful in their learning.

Table I: Frequency of students response on usefulness of formative assessment estimated by using 5-point Likert scale (N=135)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Parameters of Likert scale</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Most of time</th>
<th>All the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Placement in each module</td>
<td>Suitable Placement</td>
<td>4 (10.4%)</td>
<td>30 (22.2%)</td>
<td>91 (69.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Regularity in assessment plan in each module</td>
<td>2 (1.5%)</td>
<td>30 (22.2%)</td>
<td>103 (76.3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of formative assessment in their learning</td>
<td>Helpful in learning process</td>
<td>1 (0.7%)</td>
<td>21 (15.6%)</td>
<td>86 (63.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhances Motivation</td>
<td>2 (1.5%)</td>
<td>23 (17.0%)</td>
<td>86 (63.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of feedback and remedial measures</td>
<td>Timely feedback Given</td>
<td>6 (4.4%)</td>
<td>26 (19.3%)</td>
<td>45 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remedial Measures used if required</td>
<td>10 (7.4%)</td>
<td>15 (11.1%)</td>
<td>68 (50.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
Formative assessment is strongly emphasized over summative assessment in a competency-based education program. It underscores the development of proficiency through conscious practice. This concept underlines the need for effective instruction, mentoring, and feedback to the students. The content, plan, rate and timing of assessment are important factors to establish an assessment policy in any medical school.

This study was designed to evaluate the process of formative assessment and perception of student's
Therefore, formative assessment can be used in medical education to assess need, progress of medical students and to recognize and remediate the suboptimal performance of students. The optimum placement of formative assessment in each module for each subject with properly arranged effective constructive feedback to students may provide students to improve their learning.

Recommendations
- Implementation: It should be the integral part of program design. It should be implemented gradually but consistently.
- Enabling environment: the institution should provide an environment which nurtures the development of faculty and create awareness about need of formative assessment.
- Faculty training: Faculty should be trained to construct creative methods of assessment and to give timely and quality feedback. It has maximum effect on student's learning and future performance.¹⁴
- Student's training: students must be informed about formative assessment and reason why it is carried out. They should know how to receive feedback and improve their weaker areas.
- Student's feedback: it should be taken in routine to check the effectiveness of formative assessment in developing their concepts, modifying the way of delivery of content.
- Role of department of medical education: they should incorporate formative assessment in curriculum without compromising the content.
- Periodic evaluation of curriculum: regular formative assessment feedback given and taken from students may help in evaluation of curriculum.¹⁵

Conclusion
Expanded use of formative assessment should be followed by prompt feedback, and stress on remedial measures in order to enhance usefulness of formative assessments.

REFERENCES