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Article

Concepts and Practices of Student-Centered Assessment among Filipino Senior High School Teachers: A Qualitative Case Study

Bernard M. Paderes
San Francisco High School
Jonnalyn T. Constante
De La Salle University - Manila
Mary Grace P. Dela Cruz
Far Eastern University High School - Manila
Stephen Allen M. Dy
Holy Child Catholic School

Abstract

This study explored the concepts and practices of student-centered assessment among Filipino senior high school teachers. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews with seven senior high school teachers from both public and private schools in Metro Manila. The findings reveal that teachers conceptualize student-centered assessment as a continuous monitoring and feedback mechanism, as well as a field-specific application of knowledge. In practice, teachers integrate formative and summative assessments and utilize performance tasks to assess student learning. However, challenges in implementing student-centered assessment include limited conceptual understanding of the approach, preference for traditional assessment methods, and misconceptions about certain assessment techniques.

Keywords

Student-centered assessment, Filipino senior high school teachers, formative and summative assessment

Corresponding Author:
Bernard M. Paderes, San Francisco High School
Email: Bernard.paderes@deped.gov.ph

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Introduction

Student-centered learning (SCL), also known as learner-centered teaching, is a constructivist, personalized, and self-directed approach to education (Emaliana, 2017; Kang & Keinonen, 2018; Murphy et al., 2021). It fosters a participatory, collaborative, and democratic learning environment (Tabulawa, 2003; Dupin-Bryant, 2004). In practice, SCL is implemented through teaching strategies such as small-group discussions, project-based learning, problem-solving activities, debates, student-led feedback, and flexible learning arrangements (Tang, 2023). Unlike traditional teacher-centered lectures, this approach prioritizes learners and the learning process rather than teachers and content delivery (Blumberg, 2008). This paradigmatic shift—from instruction to learning—has transformed perceptions of the educational process: no longer viewed as a mere transmission of facts from teacher to student, education is increasingly seen as an empowering process in which students actively construct knowledge (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Although student-centered learning encompasses a wide range of educational practices, Glowa and Goodell (2016) highlight four foundational principles: it is personalized, competency-based, accessible anytime and anywhere, and promotes student ownership.

To enhance the quality of education, the Philippines enacted Republic Act 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, which introduced a major shift to the K–12 curriculum. A central feature of this reform is its emphasis on student-centered learning, aiming to support the holistic development of learners by placing them at the core of the educational process. The law promotes pedagogical approaches that are inquiry-based, reflective, and differentiated to address diverse learning needs. However, the idealized portrayal of the student-centered approach has contributed to a false dichotomy—framing learner-centered teaching as inherently good and teacher-centered instruction as inherently bad (Del Valle, 2021). In reality, these two approaches represent opposite ends of a continuum, with a wide range of teaching practices situated in between (Chen & Tsai, 2021).

Student-centered learning has also reshaped the role of classroom assessment. Traditionally, educational assessments—often associated with testing—were used to measure an individual's knowledge of basic facts and procedures in order to estimate proficiency in a given curricular area (Pellegrino, 2001). These traditional assessments typically take the form of true/false, multiple-choice, short-answer questions, or essay tests (Dikli, 2003). However, assessment practices have since shifted toward promoting learning and development by providing meaningful feedback—not only to students but also to teachers and other stakeholders working toward educational goals. As a result, formative assessments have gained prominence, reframing evaluation as an opportunity for learning rather than merely a tool for scoring, sorting, or classifying students (Duncan & Cohen, 2011).

Student-centered assessments emphasize authentic learning experiences that allow students to engage with real-world problems and construct their own understanding (Sturgis & Patrick, 2011). Rich et al. (2014) identified five student-centered assessments: take-home exams, short-answer tests, formative assessments, audience response systems, and learning style inventories. Take-home exams promote retention, as students often review.

Statement of the problem

The present study aimed to explore Filipino senior high school teachers' concepts and practices of student-centered assessment. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the participants' concepts of student-centered assessment?

2. How do the participants practice student-centered assessment in their classrooms?

3. What are the challenges of implementing student-centered assessment in their classrooms?

Significance of the study

This study addresses the contextual gap in local literature regarding how student-centered assessment is understood and conducted by senior high school teachers in a developing country context, where the concept may be misconstrued and resources limited. The findings may offer valuable insights for teachers, administrators, researchers, and other education stakeholders in aligning classroom practices with student-centered principles. These insights can inform educational support systems, professional development programs, curricular enhancements, and policy reforms.

Literature review

On teachers' concepts of student-centered assessment

In investigating student-centered assessment practices, it is important to understand teachers' conceptualizations and beliefs about student-centered learning. According to Apps (1989), teachers' learning beliefs refer to their working philosophy regarding the nature of learners, educational aims, subject matter knowledge, and the teaching-learning process. Ferranco (2022) explored junior high school teachers' beliefs about student-centered learning and how these influence classroom practices. The study identified three possible relationships between beliefs and practices: (1) beliefs directly influence practices; (2) practices shape beliefs; and (3) there is a misalignment between the two. Cross-case analysis revealed that participants' beliefs often did not align with student-centered principles; instead, their practices were teacher-centered and pragmatic. These beliefs were shaped by both formal education and teaching experience. Similarly, Trinidad (2020) found that higher education faculty had a limited understanding of student-centered learning, often equating it with instructional strategies (e.g., skills development) and classroom management (e.g., student engagement and motivation), while neglecting critical areas such as assessment practices and classroom power dynamics—both of which are essential components of student-centered learning.

In a large-scale study, Rural (2021) surveyed 408 mathematics teachers from various schools in the National Capital Region using Brown's Conceptual Orientation of Assessment-III (2004) and a researcher-made questionnaire based on the Department of Education's Policy Guidelines Classroom Assessment for the K-12 Basic Education Program. The results show that teachers strongly agree that assessment is essential for both upholding teacher and student accountability and enhancing the teaching-learning process. They also strongly agree that assessments should be standards-based, support concept development, and serve both formative and summative purposes.

On teachers' practices of student-centered assessment

Recent research in the Philippine context has examined how teachers across different subjects and curriculum settings apply both traditional and student-centered assessment strategies. Villon (2023) studied the assessment practices of teachers in three schools implementing both the Philippine and Singaporean elementary mathematics curricula through interviews and classroom observations. The study found that teachers from both curricula employed similar formative and summative assessment strategies. Formative practices included oral questioning, board work, textbook-based seatwork, group tasks for exploration and differentiated instruction, chapter quizzes, journal writing, and strategy sharing. For summative assessment, both groups used periodic multiple-choice tests.

Similarly, Namoco and Zaharudin (2021) explored the assessment practices of secondary science teachers and the factors influencing them. The study revealed that teachers used both conventional and constructivist approaches in formative and summative assessments. Conventional methods included quizzes and reflections for formative assessment, and long quizzes and quarterly exams for summative assessment. Constructivist strategies involved multimedia projects, group presentations, and problem-based tasks evaluated with rubrics.

Reyes (2023) identified emerging assessment practices that cooperating teachers shared with pre-service English language teachers. These included observations, questioning, oral and written formative assessments, and authentic tasks such as multimedia projects, roleplays, and character sketches based on literary texts. Some of the factors that they consider in designing assessments include lesson objectives, student abilities, and lesson content.

Challenges of implementing student-centered assessment

Some studies have revealed that both teachers and students face challenges in implementing student-centered assessment. For instance, Trinidad (2020) found that Filipino students and teachers generally perceive assessment as a means of evaluating acquired knowledge and skills and assigning grades at the end of the term. This suggests that the assessment approaches currently used in the Philippines may not reflect "assessment as learning," a key feature of student-centered assessment.

This mismatch between student-centered principles and teachers' pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices is evident in several local studies. For example, Alonzo et al. (2023) identified issues in aligning teachers' assessment practices with the principles of outcomes-based education. The study, which involved six technology and livelihood education teachers in the Philippines, used focus group interviews and an analysis of at least two lesson plans per participant. Findings revealed unclear learning outcomes, limited assessment strategies, and misalignment between intended skills and assessment tasks. Other issues included incoherent assessment activities, low emphasis on criteria and standards, overreliance on written tests, disconnection between assessment and instructional activities, and a general preference for teacher-centered over student-centered assessment practices.

Several studies have also focused on specific aspects of student-centered learning. For example, Lansangan and Orleans (2023) examined the experiences of Filipino secondary science teachers in assessing students during flexible learning. They identified two types of obstacles: direct and indirect. Direct obstacles included a lack of stable internet connection and teachers' limited proficiency in adapting assessment practices to a flexible platform. Indirect obstacles involved students' mindset, motivation, and the integrity of assessments. Despite these challenges, opportunities also arose. Teachers reported that assessing students in a flexible learning environment helped them appreciate the value of reflection, collaboration, inquiry, and professional development.

Another study by Hatmanto and Rahmawati (2023) investigated the attitudes and challenges of implementing differentiated instruction in English language classrooms in the Philippines. One of the challenges mentioned was designing formative and summative assessments that suit the varied needs of students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study was conducted in two senior high schools in Metro Manila. One is a large integrated public high school in Quezon City that offers both junior and senior high school programs. The other is a private senior high school in Manila's University Belt, affiliated with a well-known university system.

The participants were purposively selected based on the following research criteria: (1) they are currently teaching at the senior high school level, and (2) they scored high on the Learner-Centeredness Scale (Menachery et al., 2008), a six-item questionnaire rated on a five-point Likert scale (0–4), with total scores ranging from 0 to 24. A score of 18 and above was considered high in learner-centeredness. All participants were given consent forms prior to completing the scale, which informed them of the possibility of being invited for an interview. All interviews were audio-recorded with the respondents' consent. Of the 22 teachers who answered the scale, seven scored high and were selected as the participants of the study.

School code	Teacher code	Grade level	Strand/Subject area
A	T1	11	HUMSS - Filipino
	T2	12	HUMSS - Filipino
	T3	12	HUMSS - Social Science
	T4	12	TVL - Computer
B	T5	11	STEM - Mathematics
	T6	12	STEM - Science
	T7	12	STEM - Physics

Design and procedure

The present study followed a qualitative case study approach. More specifically, it is an instrumental case study—a type of case study that aims to gain insight into a broader phenomenon (Stake, 1995 as cited in Cropley, 2022). In this study, the researchers explored the concept and practice of student-centered learning and student-centered assessment among Filipino teachers from both public and private schools, teaching different grade levels and subjects, without intending to make comparisons among them.

A total of 22 teacher-participants were initially approached to take part in the study by completing the Learner-Centeredness Scale (Menachery et al., 2008). When their responses were computed, seven of them scored "high" in learner-centeredness. They were then given a letter of invitation to participate in the study. Upon their agreement, they were asked to sign a consent form explaining the study's purpose and rationale. The form also described how participants were selected, outlined the potential risks and benefits of their involvement, and stated the duration of their participation. Moreover, it emphasized that participation was voluntary, that their identities would be kept anonymous, and that any data collected would be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

The interviews were guided by an interview protocol containing broad questions about the teachers' concept and practice of student-centered learning, classroom assessment, and student-centered assessment, as well as the challenges they encountered in implementing these approaches. The interview sessions lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

The study was conducted under the supervision of a senior faculty member, as it was part of a course requirement. An ethics board review was not sought due to time constraints. However, the study was considered "low risk" based on its scope, intent, and the nature of the questions being addressed.

Instrument

The data for the study were collected through one-on-one, in-person, semi-structured interviews. Interviews are designed to elicit participants' views and opinions and are particularly useful when participants cannot be directly observed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A semi-structured format involves a series of open-ended questions centered on specific themes, while allowing both the interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to probe further and seek clarification (Hancock, 2002).

The interview protocol was developed in consultation with an external researcher through an inquiry audit to ensure the clarity and relevance of the questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A pilot interview was also conducted with a teacher who shared similar characteristics with the study participants to

confirm that the questions were understandable and capable of generating rich, meaningful data. The interview questions addressed themes such as teachers' understanding of student-centered assessment, their methods of implementation, and the challenges they encounter.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated into English without interpretation to avoid possible alteration of meaning. Afterwards, each researcher got a copy of the transcripts, read through the data, and independently coded meaningful segments. After coding, researchers identified potential themes on their own. The generated codes were then compiled in a shared spreadsheet where the team reviewed and refined recurring patterns through discussion. Representative excerpts were selected to support each theme in the presentation of findings.

Trustworthiness in the study

Trustworthiness was ensured through several strategies. First, member checking was conducted, in which participants were asked to review transcript their interviews to confirm accuracy of their views. Second, an inter-coder audit was performed to ensure consistent interpretation and understanding of the refined data among coders. Finally, a confirmatory audit was carried out by the course facilitator, a senior faculty member, who reviewed the alignment between the raw and refined data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of selected data from the teacher-participants concerning their concepts and practices related to student-centered assessment, as well as the challenges they encounter in its conduct.

Teachers' concepts of student-centered assessment

Sub-theme 1: Student-centered assessment as a continuous monitoring and feedback mechanism that informs instructional decisions

Traditionally, assessment was often synonymous with tests administered at the end of a lesson or unit to measure how much a student had learned. However, a participant described student-centered assessment as an ongoing process of collecting and using data about student learning. Once evaluated by the teacher, the results are discussed to highlight both students' strengths and areas for improvement. This process can be a source of reflection for teachers, which can then guide future instructional decisions.

> *"When we talk about assessment, we do it to evaluate our students' learning. We gather evidence from that, which we can use. For example, to give feedback to the students, to monitor their progress, or to give them an idea of their strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, assessment can also motivate them or provide feedback on their level of competence. As teachers, we can also use assessment as a form of reflection on our students." (T6)*

Sub-theme 2: Student-centered assessment as a practical, field-specific application of learned knowledge

A participant mentioned the concept of authentic assessment, which involves engaging students in real-world tasks that require the meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2005). For this participant, an assessment task should lead to the production of an output that reflects the concepts and skills taught in a particular topic or lesson.

> *"When we talk about assessment—for me, it's the evaluation of what the learner has learned from the particular lesson I taught that day. As for the type of assessment I give—since I teach computer, specifically programming—I use coding tasks. For us, our form of authentic assessment is something like this: for example, if I'm teaching graphic design, I ask them to create a website, something along those lines. That kind of website-related task is what I consider their authentic assessment." (T4)*

Teachers' practices of student-centered assessment
Sub-theme 1: Integrating formative and summative assessments across stages of instruction

A participant highlighted the importance of assessing students before the lesson. This type of pre-instructional assessment helps the teacher gauge the breadth and depth of students' prior knowledge about the topic. Short and simple questions before the actual instruction serve as a diagnostic strategy to inform decisions. Based on the results, teachers can adjust the content or depth of their lessons accordingly. In addition, assessments given after the lesson help determine the effectiveness of the instruction and whether the learning objectives were achieved.

> *"Before I start the lesson, even with just five items, I ask questions to first assess what they already know about the lesson. From there, I can tell if, for example, if their answers are low—like a 5, 3, or 2, or even a 1—I'll know that I need to expand or deepen the lesson. But if I see a 5, or if almost everyone has a background on it, it's easier. So, I can see what needs to be done before starting the lesson. Then, after that, we also have assessments during and after the lesson." (T2)*

Sub-theme 2: Applying conceptual knowledge to create meaningful outputs through performance tasks

This theme illustrates how performance tasks serve as a means for students to transform conceptual understanding into practical outputs. In line with DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, performance tasks emphasize the application of learning. One participant explained how students enrich their prior knowledge by engaging in output-based tasks that reflect both understanding and skill.

> *"For now, for me, no. Maybe in PeTa [Performance Task], yes, we integrated student learning into PeTa because we provide the conceptual part, and then they apply it to create the output. So, they have the prior knowledge, and they just enrich it when creating the output." (T7)*

Challenges of implementing student-centered assessment

Sub-theme 1: Limited conceptual understanding of student-centered learning as an educational framework

Despite high scores on the Learner-Centeredness Scale (Menachery et al., 2008), which suggest familiarity with student-centered principles, the participants' responses reveal a disconnect between theoretical knowledge and its application—particularly in assessment practices. One participant, for example, showed visible discomfort and uncertainty when asked how student-centeredness is implemented in assessment, indicating a superficial grasp of the concept.

> *"I can't answer that—what do you mean by 'do you apply student-centeredness in assessment?' Maybe sometimes. 'Sometimes? Can you give me–' That's really a different kind of question. I'm struggling with it. This is all I can say for now—you go first." (T1)*

Sub-theme 2: Convenience and familiarity with traditional assessment formats

Teachers perceive student-centered assessment as demanding significant preparation time, prompting them to rely on conventional formats such as paper-and-pencil tests. A participant emphasized that while student-centered teaching is manageable, applying the same approach in assessment is challenging. Due to the nature of mathematics as a practice-driven subject, the teacher tends to use traditional assessments like multiple-choice tests and problem-solving exercises.

> *"This is where it becomes a bit challenging, because I believe integrating assessment with student-centeredness is quite difficult in our current setup. When it comes to teaching or practice activities, it's relatively easy. But assessment is more difficult since we usually stick to traditional formats like multiple choice or problem-solving, as Math is really focused on practice. […] Yes, I think I do apply student-centeredness—mainly through formative assessment." (T5)*

> *"So even though, let's say, when you say student-centered, the autonomy of learning is with the student, the workload of assessing them is still with the teachers. And for a student-centered learning approach to be effective, it requires a long time of preparation, which we teachers usually don't have because we're always constrained by time […] it's not fully implemented or it's like only on selected lessons because what usually happens when applying the student-centered approach is lack of preparation." (T6)*

Sub-theme 3: Misconstrued understanding of some student-centered assessment methods

Some participants appear to have misunderstood how certain assessment strategies work. For instance, one participant mentioned peer evaluation, which is typically a procedure where students give feedback on a peer's output or performance. However, when further explained, peer evaluation was described as an activity in which a student prepares a quiz for their peers to answer.

> *"Because what's common is peer evaluation. Whatever they heard from their classmate, that's what they'll evaluate. So they'll know that their classmate was listening. They're ready to evaluate because it's student-centered […] Think, Pair, and Share […] The assessment there is like I made them do a quiz on their own. Right? For each topic – I make them prepare their own quizzes. At least 10 items based on the discussion. So they can see or assess whether their classmates listened or understood what they discussed." (T3)*

Another assessment strategy that seems to have unclear implementation is class reporting. Class reporting refers to the practice of presenting outputs—such as research findings, group projects, performance tasks, experiments, or investigations. However, in the Philippine context, class reporting is a student activity where students are assigned a topic—usually from the lesson—and are tasked with presenting or explaining the content to the rest of the class.

> *"I'm not currently doing this, Sir, but I think the strategy they're referring to is when the students are the ones who report. In reporting, the concept they will teach or share with the class comes from them. As students, they are the source of the information and activities, and as teachers, we just facilitate—checking if what they're saying is correct or if anything is missing. So yes, Sir, everything comes from them." (T2)*

DISCUSSION

This study explored the concepts, practices, and challenges of implementing student-centered assessment from the perspectives of Filipino senior high school teachers. This section discusses the study's findings in relation to previous research.

In terms of concepts, two main ideas emerged: the formative role of assessment and the importance of task authenticity. The findings related to the formative role of assessment suggest a shift from the traditional notion of assessment as a summative evaluation toward the end of instruction. This aligns with Trinidad (2020), who reported a similar movement away from assessment as merely a measure of learning. Conversely, it supports the findings of Rural (2021), who emphasized that assessment plays a critical role in enhancing the teaching-learning process and in supporting concept development.

Regarding task authenticity, teachers understood this as assigning students tasks where they could apply field-specific knowledge. This is consistent with Sturgis and Patrick's (2011) view that authentic assessment engages students in real-world problems. Similarly, Namoco and Zaharudin (2021) found that authentic, constructivist strategies—such as multimedia projects—are increasingly being used to reflect real-world tasks.

In terms of practices, the integration of both formative and summative assessments, and the application of conceptual knowledge through output-based tasks, were highlighted. The use of both types of assessments supports earlier studies which found that teachers employ formative strategies like observation, oral questioning, and quizzes to check prior or current understanding (Namoco & Zaharudin, 2021; Villon, 2023; Reyes, 2023).

Lastly, teachers identified key challenges in implementing student-centered assessment. A significant concern was the limited understanding of the student-centered approach, which echoes Trinidad's (2020) findings that this approach is often confined to teaching strategies, with little application in areas such as assessment or classroom power dynamics. Additionally, the continued dominance of conventional assessment methods (e.g., paper-and-pencil tests) and the misinterpretation of strategies such as peer evaluation and class reporting were also observed, supporting the findings of Alonzo et al. (2023).

CONCLUSION

The study explored the concepts and practices of student-centered assessment among teachers in a developing country context. Specifically, it examined how teachers understood student-centered assessment, how this understanding translated into classroom practice, and the challenges they encountered during implementation. Findings suggest that teachers view the student-centeredness of assessment in terms of its potential to facilitate the teaching-learning process and yield practical outcomes. However, while teachers generally understand student-centered principles, these are often hindered by challenges such as limited practical training, misinterpretation of key methods, and the continued reliance on traditional assessment strategies.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the study's approach and limited data collection methods, the findings are not intended to be generalized to a larger population. This limitation was primarily due to time and resource constraints, as the study was conducted as part of a course requirement. Nevertheless, the study offers valuable insights and raises awareness for other researchers interested in exploring the phenomenon. The researchers recommend that future studies involve larger, more diverse samples and employ a range of data collection methods—such as classroom observations, document analysis, and focus group discussions—to provide a more comprehensive understanding and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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Authors' Bio notes

Bernard M. Paderes is a senior high school teacher at San Francisco High School in Quezon City. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Adamson University and is currently pursuing a Master in Learning and Teaching, with a specialization in English Language, at Far Eastern University–Manila. His research interests include teacher cognition, classroom assessment, and critical theory.

Jonnalyn T. Constante, RPm is the Senior High School Section Head of the Student Discipline Formation Office at De La Salle University. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, graduating cum laude, from Cavite State University–Main Campus. She is currently pursuing a Master in School Guidance and Counseling at Far Eastern University–Manila.

Mary Grace P. Dela Cruz is a licensed professional teacher and the current Academic Affairs Coordinator at FEU High School. With nearly seven years of experience teaching Physics and Chemistry, she has developed expertise in designing learning materials and managing academic programs. She has also facilitated training programs, presented research, and delivered talks on science education. She is currently pursuing a Master in Learning and Teaching, with a specialization in Science, at Far Eastern University–Manila.

Stephen Allen M. Dy is an elementary Science teacher at Holy Child Catholic School, Inc. in Tondo. He graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor in Mathematics and Science in Elementary Education from Philippine Normal University–Manila. He is currently pursuing a Master in Learning and Teaching, with a specialization in Science, at Far Eastern University–Manila. In 2023, he was recognized by his institution for excellence in lesson planning and demonstration teaching.