Proceedings of the International Conference on

THE NEW FRONTIERS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

高等教育教與學質量保證的發展與前瞻
國際學術研討會論文集

Edited by
Vivian Lei Ngan Lin

Proceedings of the International Conference on

THE NEW FRONTIERS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

'高等教育教與學質量保證的發展與前瞻'
國際學術研討會論文集

Vivian Lei Ngan Lin (Ed.)

Proceedings of the International Conference on
THE NEW FRONTIERS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

RUBRIC SYSTEMS FOR ASSESSING STUDENTS' CREATIVE WORKS:

Ways of Enhancing Undergraduate Assessments in Universities

Saumya Liyanage

Senior Lecturer, Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance,
Faculty of Dance and Drama,
University of the Visual and Performing Arts – Colombo

This paper explores how rubrics can be used to ensure the quality of assessments in undergraduates' creative projects. For the last two years the Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance at the University of the Visual and Performing Arts in Sri Lanka has experimented ways of assessing students' creative works in their undergraduate examinations. It has been noted that rubric systems for assessment have been very effective in identifying students' skill levels. Furthermore, using a scoring rubric for creative work allows students to understand the skill levels that the assessor will be looking for in the assessment process. This paper thus argues that using rubrics to replace the blind assessment system in the appraisal of creative works enhances the effectiveness of teaching and the quality of learning and assessment of this aspect in higher education.

Keywords: Rubric, scoring rubric, assessment, creative works, learning

INTRODUCTION

Using rubrics for assessing undergraduates' competencies in their learning achievements has been an increasingly popular method in the current educational setting. Empirical evidence has shown that these approaches of validating students' achievements in their learning have been relatively successful in contrast to the traditional summative assessment methods (Reddy & Andrade, 2010; Andrade & Du, 2005; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

This paper thus explores the use of rubric systems in assessing drama students' creative works at the Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo, Sri Lanka. For the last two years, using rubrics to assess acting and directing students' creative works have shown students' motivation of achieving set skills and competencies in their performance assignments. Furthermore, these rubrics have been able to broaden the scope and the transparency of assessing performance assignments and been able to develop quality assessment criteria. In this paper therefore, I will discuss how rubrics can be functioned in various ways in students' learning process. In line with this, rubric is discussed as a method of assessing and setting particular benchmarks for skills assessments. In so doing this paper suggests the application of rubric in undergraduates' performance

projects and argues that these rubrics can lead to higher order skill development and can avoid subjective judgements dominated in the performance assessments in drama and theatre discipline.

RUBRIC AS A LEARNING TOOL

Rubric is 'a document that articulates the expectations for an assignment by listing the criteria or what counts, and describing level of quality from excellent to poor' (Andrade 2000; Stiggins 2001). The term rubric comes from the original Latin *Rubrica Terra*, meaning 'the use of red earth centuries ago to mark or signify something of importance' (Marzano, Pickering & McTighe, 1993). According to Andrade (1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2001 & 2005), rubric works as a twofold tool in teaching and learning activities. First it is an 'instruction tool' for teachers who are expecting certain skill achievements in students learning. For instance, a rubric allows tutors to facilitate their students to reach intended learning outcomes (ILOs) that are set in a learning activity. Through providing intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in a rubric, students are able to identify what learning outcomes and knowledge or skill levels are expected from that particular learning activity. Wolf and Stevens (2007) argue that rubrics can 'improve teaching, provide feedback to students, contribute to sound assessment, and are an important source of information for program improvement' (2007, p. 3).

An example of a Sri Lankan university will be cited below to demonstrate how cognitive and skill levels that students should accomplish are often hidden or implicit in theatre programmes. In an assessment conducted at the Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance at the Univeristy of the Visual and Performing Arts, Columbo, third year students were asked to write a short play, produced and performed it in front of a panel of judges. When the results were released a group of students were dissatisfied with the outcome of the results they got. A group of students protested and submitted a letter asking a revision of the given results. They argued that they were not satisfied with the ways that the panel of judges worked and judged their creative outcomes. In this particular situation, tutors failed to provide a satisfactory answer of why they had given unsatisfactory marks to students' directorial and acting works. This resulted in misunderstandings and distrust towards the assessors and the subjective judgments in assessment process.

KEY COMPONENTS OF A RUBRIC

It is vital to discuss the key components of developing a rubric to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Stevens and Levi (2013) stated that four key components are needed for developing a good rubric, namely i. Task Description, ii. Scale Levels, iii. Dimensions, and iv. Descriptions of Dimensions

For Task Description, the tutor should indicate the learning task that students need to undertake. This task can be a specific assignment, a presentation, a performance, a research paper, an essay, or even a field trip. The learning activity should be clearly

described in a lay language to be able to understand its key tasks. Suki Ekaratne, a well-known educationist in Sri Lanka suggests that any learning activity that a tutor proposes as a teaching, learning or assessment task should be accompanied by a Motivational Part and an Instructional Part (Ekaratne, personal commuication, September 2016). The Motivational Part explains why students should follow or undertake a given activity and the benefits or learning outcomes they can achieve by following such task. Ekaratne (personal commuication, September 2016) emphasises that this component is very important as the focus and attention of students need to be drawn towards the task activity in order to make the learning task a success. The Instructional Part is equally vital in the rubrics as it provides step-by-step guidelines on how to follow a learning activity. Stiggins (1999; 2001) argues that students are the key 'assessment users' in the learning situation, therefore they should be able to assess their own works in order to achieve desired set goals. In this sense, the Instructional Part is paramount in providing the guidelines and the goals of a learning task.

Scale Levels indicate how well or poorly a student performs a given task, and are developed between poor-excellent parameters. Yet these performance indicators should be used with 'positive terms' and in non-judgemental ways. For instance, there are terms ranging from 'sophisticated, competent, partly competent, and not yet competent can be used to denote the students' achievements' (Stevens and Levi 2013, p. 1). However, if those levels are more complicated, it is difficult for students to identify the differences between each skill level and how they could distinguish each level of learning or accomplish them.

For Dimension Sections, the rubrics provide a clear differentiation between specific skills that require to be fulfilled in achieving the overall task performance. For instance if tutors want their students to give a presentation on a particular topic, they can identify key skills that students may be required to accomplish in this presentation. Once the requried skills pertaining to presentation activity are explicitly stated, students also can observe and learn the skills that their tutors may expect them to perform at the assessment. Furthermore, as students prepare for the assessment, clarifying the dimensions of presentation skills would help them meet the expectations needed for the assessment. Tutors may also observe and use these rubrics for ongoing feedback.

USING RUBRICS IN PRACTICE: A CASE STUDY

The author's application of rubrics in teaching and assessments is a newly introduced tool for many tutors at the Department. Tutors have been prone to use summertive assessment methods to evaluate creative outcomes of students' theatre productions. Less attention has paid to the 'process' of how students undertake those creative assignments. The 'product' has been more important than the 'process'. Hence, introducing formative ways of assessing students' creative works was a challenging task for both students and tutors.

One of the prevailing difficulties in developing rubrics is that it needs thorough understanding of the skill levels and how to identify different dimensions of a task performance and describe them in details. Furthermore developing a rubric is a time consuming task and tutors are less motivated to do so. Therefore they are very much happy to continue using blind assessment in their exams.

In early 2015, the author conducted a practical class of acting/directing for third year students for one semester. His first learning task was to have students study Harold Pinter's acclaimed text *Party Time*, which was originally written as a play and later adapted as a screen play for the BBC television. During the reading circle, students read the original English text as well as a Sinhala translation.

In the second stage of the process, student directors planned a rehearsal schedule with the production designed. The author observed their rehearsals every week and recorded their progress. He introduced them a rubric to guide them in the rehearsal process (See appendices A & B). After introducing rubrics in the rehearsal process, the author has noticed that rubric can be facilitated to minimise students' absence, help them manage time, maintain work ethics, and enhance interpersonal and soft skills in the rehearsal process. Observing and monitoring the progress of the rehearsal process provided vital information to predict where this production was heading: What areas needed to be improved, commitment of actors, interpersonal relations, teamwork, leadership qualities, peer assessments and many more. Hence, rubrics were used to monitor and provide feedback for actors and directors whose working styles and ethics can be varied and complex as individual human beings.

After four weeks, the team of actors and the 5 directors were prepared to execute the production of *Party Time*. After having preliminary discussions with the directors and production designers, students decided to perform this play in this black box type lecture theatre. Production designers and stage managers prepared the space by mounting lights and covering all the walls with black curtains. Final tech rehearsals were scheduled in the performance space selected. Light rehearsal went really well with costumes, sets and props. Final changes and improvements were made. The production was ready to stage.

The author has prepared the rubric for assessors who had been nominated by the department head to evaluate the production. In the first place, the author knew that introducing new rubrics to evaluate students' acting and directing works would be a challenging task as tutors would need familiarising with the rubric and its components. The author prepared copies of the rubric drafted and circulated them among the assessors prior to the exam date. The author had a preliminary discussion to explain the objectives of using the rubric and its scale levels. In this assessment, 60% of the marks was allocated for the performance. The rest was covered in the rehearsal process.

In the traditional teaching settings, what the assessor does is that s/he provides marks according to the experience, expertise, or the way s/he interprets a particular

performance. This type of assessment approach could lead to subjective judgements and may result in bias and unequal marking between panel members. The author observes that if a particular benchmark is set for a performance through designing a rubric and providing basic guidelines, contradictions between assessors, unequal marking and subjective tendencies can be minimised.

As shown in Figure 1 below, this rubric model is designed for assessors to mark actors' works in and off performance situations. Furthermore, actors headshots were introduced to identify them during performance and this turn was an out of box thinking in the traditional assessment setting. Traditionally, identification of individual actors was not mandatory in the summative assessments. Once the performance was over, students were called upon to stand in front of the panel and asked to call out their student numbers. Marks were then given by the assessment board. Furthermore there was a conception in the faculty that providing students' identification could lead to bias and negative results in assessment process. Yet, as the author has observed, particularly in the acting discipline, it is very much needed to identify individual to be able to evaluate their progress and development in the performance task.

STUDENT NUMBER DD/11/175	RUBRIC SYSTEM					
	In Performance		Off Performance			
	Physical Action 30%	Psychical Action 30%	Journal 15%	Viva 15%	Attendance 10%	Total marks 100%
Student Photo						

Figure 1. Summary of a scoring rubric for performance practice assessment

The above figure provides a summary of how the author has identified different skill levels of an actor and how s/he is being assessed through a rubric system. There are two key knowledge areas the author has identified in the actor's learning process. In the section 'Off Performance' the actor's pre-performance tasks are evaluated. For instance, during rehearsals and aftermath of performance, skills such as journal entries, viva and attendance are knowledge production areas that need to be evaluated. In the previous assessments at the Department, actors' rehearsal process, their reflective log entries and attendance have not been critically evalu

ated. However, because the rehearsal process is a place where the knowledge generation is happening, these areas need to be taken into consideration if one needs to evaluate the overall skills of an actor. The section 'In Performance' provides details of the actor's live performance. There are two main sections in it: Physical Action and Psychical Action. In the physical action sections, the assessor evaluates the actor's physical, vocal and character behaviours. In the psychical action section, the assessor considers actor's memorisation, concentration and imagination.

DISCUSSION

Party Time was a successful performance project conducted at the Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance, University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo in 2015. This learning assignment provided many tutors as well as students an opportunity to learn different ways of knowing and skill development in a performance project. For the first time, rubric system for assessing students' creative works was tested in this project and further expanded to many subsequent performance projects designed by the author.

The application of rubrics to evaluate students' pre-performance works such as diary entries of rehearsals, viva and attendance also confirmed the value of skills and knowledge that are generated within the performance making process and the need of assessing them in order to evaluate students' overall contribution. Furthermore different rubrics models (see appendices) allowed students to evaluate their colleagues' contributions to the creative process and monitor the progress of the production.

For the first time, the assessment criteria were open to students and they knew how their tutors were going to assess their acting and directing processes. Key skills and sub categories were explicit to student feedback and during rehearsals, and students were able to make sense of what level and competencies that they would have to improve to get high marks. Providing a rubric system and making skills and competencies explicit allowed students to see what level they should demonstrate in each category and how peers demonstrated skills akin to rubrics. In this way, students have become 'effective users' of rubric and in another sense they evaluate their own works (self evaluation) as well as their peers' works (peer evaluation) within the given context. Furthermore it is observed that by setting these evaluation criteria for performance projects, students are able to learn specific skills and competencies required.

CONCLUSION

This paper explores the use of rubrics in the drama and theatre programme to enhance the quality of undergraduate education in universities. Rubrics have been increasingly used assessment method for many disciplines in primary and higher education sectors and this paper is particularly discussed about developing rubrics for undergraduates' performance projects. Furthermore a scoring rubric was introduced to facilitate actors' work in the live performance setting. Using these rubric models in the learning process and assessing students' creative works confirmed that rubric can open up the implicit knowledge pertaining to performing arts and further make accessible to evaluate them in performance situations. Further, it is observed that students have been able to develop more confidence and trustworthiness towards their evaluation process and the evaluation becomes very much transparent for both students and tutors. However evaluating human skills in performance situation is a complex task. Thus this paper suggests further explorations and research needed to improve and design appropriate rubrics for performance practices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Andrade, H. & Du, Y. (2005). Student perspectives on rubric-referenced assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 10(3), 1-11.

Andrade, H. G. (1997a). Understanding rubrics. *Educational Leadership*, 54(4).

Andrade, H. G. (1997b). Student self-assessment: at the intersection of metacognition and authentic assessment. In Proceedings of American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Andrade, H. G. (2000). What do we mean by results?: Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. *Educational Leadership*, 57(5), 1-7.

Andrade, H. G. (2001). Understanding rubrics. Available at www.middleweb.com/rubricsHG.html

Andrade, H. G. (2005). Teaching with rubrics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. *College Teaching*, 53(1).

Jonsson, A. & Svingby, G. (2007). The use of scoring rubrics: reliability, validity and educational consequences. *Educational Research Review*, 2, 130–144.

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. & McTighe, J. (1993). *Assessing student outcomes: Performance assessment using the dimensions of learning model*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Reddy, Y. M. & Andrade, H. (2010). A review of rubric use in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(4), 435-448.

Stevens, D.D. & Levi A. J. (2013). *Introduction to Rubrics: An Assessment Tool to Save Grading Time, Coney Effective Feedback, and Promote Student Learning* (2nd ed.). Stylus Publishing, Sterling, Virginia

Stiggins, R. J. (1999). Assessment, student confidence, and school success. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 81(3), 191–198.

Stiggins, R. J. (2001). *Student-involved classroom assessment* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Wolf, K. & Stevens, E. (2007). The role of rubrics in advancing and assessing student learning. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 7(1), 3-14.

ASSESSMENT FOR ACTING AND DIRECTING STUDENTS
3rd year Undergraduates
INTRODUCTION OF THE RUBRIC SYSTEM

Semester I - 2015
Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance

This document provides the general introduction for the assessment process to be conducted by the faculty in the forthcoming acting and directing exams.

Key guidelines
a. Preparation

Assessors should evaluate student directors planning and preparation of the acts given by the supervisor.

b. Exploration

Assessors should evaluate student director's approaches to the given text, style, and his/her understanding of the text and its implications in the current socio-political settings.

c. Rehearsal

Assessors should attend the rehearsal process of each candidate and evaluate how each director approaches to the rehearsal process. Further assessors should consider the progress of the rehearsal process and how the director manages the rehearsal process.

d. Performance

Assessors should look into the final performance task and assess the creative and technical specifications of the execution of the given piece.

e. Review

Assessors should review the overall approaches of the director's work including his/her records of the written materials (Director's Diary) on the given task and the director's review on the task during viva assessment.

d. Attendance

Assessors should consider the marks given by the faculty in attendance of the overall study unit and include them in the final marking sheet.

Instructive Rubric for monitoring Student Directors' rehearsal process

Rubric Model for assessing Directors' creative process

Student Number DT/12/.............		Selected Scene No:			Duration of the Performance:
REHEARSAL PROSESS			FINAL PERFORMANCE		
PREPARATION 10%	EXPLORATION 10%	REHEARSAL 20%	PERFORMANCE 40%	REVIEW 10%	ATTENDANCE 10%
Overall Marks					
Special Remarks					

Instructing Rubrics for monitoring Student Actors' Rehearsal Process

Rehearsal Process *Party Time* **by Harold Pinter**				
Name of the Director: **Student Number:**				
	Excellent **4**	**Very Good** **3**	**Fairly good** **2**	**Poor** **1**
Working with the text	Demonstrate depth of the text and analysis	Engagement is meaningful and developing	Engagement is fairly good	Demonstrate poor engagement
Creative interpretation	Provide creative and progressive approaches	Provide creative inputs	little attention to interpret	No interpretation
Work with actors	Attentive to actors' issues and maintain a good relation	Maintain a good relation with actors	Little attention to actors	Poor working relation
Provide instructions	Attentively provide instructions	instructions provide	Little instructions provide	No instructions provide
Managing rehearsals	Manage rehearsal with ease	Prioritise rehearsals	Little attention	No attention
Maintaining interpersonal skills	Excellent in personal relations	Fairly good	Less killed	Poor relationships
Maintain work ethics	Give high priority to ethics	Consider ethics	Less attention to ethics	No ethic consider
Workplace health and safety	Take action to implement workplace safety	Enough attention	Little attention	Not attention
Work with backstage crew	Demonstrate regular meetings and productive discussions	Regularly maintain a good relation	Irregular connections	Not connection
Maintain a rehearsal log	Clear and continuous log entries with precision	Maintain regular log entries	Do not demonstrate regular logs	No use of a log
TOTAL MARKS				

Instructing Rubrics for monitoring Student Actors' Rehearsal Process

Rubric for assessing Actors in the Rehearsal Process				
Name of the Actor: **Student Number:** **Group:**				
	Excellent 4	**Very Good 3**	**Fairly Good 2**	**Poor 1**
1. **Working with Directors**	Very attentive to instructions and maintain a good relation	Good attention to directors	Little attention to Directors	Poor attention to directors
	4	3	2	1
2. **Receive Instructions**	Excellent in receiving and providing constructive feed backs	Very good in receiving instructions	Fairy good in receiving instructions	Poor in receiving information
	4	3	2	1
3. **Regular attendance**	Very punctual and maintain regular attendance	Maintain regular attendance	Attend rehearsals but not punctual	Poor attendance and punctuality
	4	3	2	1
4. **Interpersonal relations**	Maintain excellent relationship with others	Maintain good relationship with others	Maintain relationships	Poor in personal relationships
	4	3	2	1
5. **Work ethics in the rehearsal**	Maintain excellent work ethics	Maintain very good work ethics	Maintain fairly good work ethics	Poor in work ethics
	4	3	2	1
6. **Awareness of personal safety and others**	Excellent in personal and others safety	Very good in personal safety	Fairly good in personal safety	Poor in personal and others' safety
	4	3	2	1
7. **Corporation with the cast & crew**	Excellent corporation with the cast and crew	Very good with the cast and crew	Fairy good with the cast and crew	Poor corporation with everyone
	4	3	2	1
8. **Joy fullness and easy to work**	In this section, you can give maximum 2 point for your actor.			
	2	1.5	1	.5
TOTAL MARKS				

Appendix B

Proposed Rubric for Assessing Acting
Department of Drama Oriental Ballet and Contemporary Dance
UVPA – Colombo 2015

Introduction

This criterion is developed for assessing student actor's work in and off performance situations. There are 6 key areas to be assessed 'In Performance" situation. Further there are 8 key areas to be assessed 'off Performance' situations. Total marks of the acting student are calculated combining these two areas of concerned.

IN PERFORMANCE

1. **Physical behaviour**
    In this category the assessor should consider how the acting student uses the physical comportment of the character played. They need to assess whether the actor's movements, gestures and postures are appropriate for the given role and the style of the performance performed.

2. **Vocal behaviour**
    In this category the assessor considers the vocal use of the actor. Particular attention should be paid for the delivery, projection, vocal tone, pitch, and the clarity of the dialogue delivery. According to the style of the performance, the assessor further considers singing, pitch and the rhythm of the voice production according to the situations and the character portrayed.

3. **Character behaviour**
    This category considers how well the actor portrays the role given in the performance in relation to the other roles played. Whether it is a traditional, modern or contemporary performance, this criterion can be adapted to assess the student and her performance according to the chosen text and style. The character behaviour cannot be achieved without above mentioned two components. However there are some other key points that need to be considered in assessing the characterisation of the role that student performs.

4. **Memorisation**
    Memorisation plays a key role in assessing student actor's work. Memory helps the actor to memorize lines, situations, and maintain the consistency and the engagement of the overall performance. Key areas concerned below provide guidance for assessors how and in what ways the actor's tool of memorisation can be monitored and provide marks for the competence performance.

5. **Concentration**
    Concentration is one of the key elements and a skill that the actor should be accomplished. s/he should be able to maintain the consistency of the performance without any drop out or missing the phase of the play. Further the actor should maintain the flow of the scenes and be able to demonstrate the immersion of her/his role in the given situation.

6. **Imagination**

The imagination is the final component that is introduced for assessing students' 'in performance' situations. This element demonstrates how well the actor maintains the creative engagement expected in the performance task and performs beyond the limit of expected outcomes of the acting task.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA ORIENTAL BALLET AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE
FACULTY OF DANCE AND DRAMA

STUDENT NUMBER: DD/11/175		YEAR: Semester II 2015	PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY: *Party Time* by Harold Pinter			DATE:		TOTAL
Student Photo								

IN PERFORMANCE				OFF PERFORMANCE					
PHYSICAL ACTION		PSYCHICAL ACTION		Actor's Journal		Viva		Attendance	100%
Physical behaviour	30%	Memorisation	30%	Reflection	15%	Verbal com.	15%	Lectures	10%
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5	
Vocal behaviour		Concentration		Expression		Argument			
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5			
Character behaviour		Imagination		Language		Nonverbal com.		Rehearsals	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5	
Sub total		Sub total		Sub total		Sub total		Sub total	