

THE MAKING OF THE ASSESSEE: A CRITICAL REVIEW ON STUDENT POSITIONING IN RECENT MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

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There have been numerous calls from researchers to revisit the purpose and practices of mathematics classroom assessment. Not much has changed; students' role in mathematics assessment is still the one of *receiver*. Traditionally, the division of roles in the classroom assessment of mathematics has been straightforward: Teachers conduct assessment by taking the position of an assessor, while students are the ones being assessed. This 'natural' position for students as the assessee has been discussed, questioned and connected with reduced student agency in mathematics (Nieminen, 2020; Nieminen & Tuohilampi, 2020) and more broadly in education (Boud & Falchikov, 2006).

In this study, we critically approach classroom assessment of mathematics by investigating how students are positioned in research concerning classroom mathematics assessment through a systematic literature review. We aimed to create a snapshot of contemporary research on the topic; thus, we reviewed 77 journal articles from 2015-2020. Drawing on the Foucauldian conceptualisations of power, agency and subject positioning in a way they have been operationalised in the field of mathematics assessment (cf. Nieminen, 2020), we problematised and deconstructed the 'natural' opposition of assessee/assessor. The deconstructive analytical process sought for discourses that maintained and disrupted the subject position of 'the assessee in the research articles.

What was identified in our analysis were the four overarching and prevalent discourses identified as part of the assessee's position deconstruction; these discourses maintained the position of the assessee, and were all prevalent across the data segments. *The measurement discourse* positioned the assessee as the receiver of assessment practices, seeing the assessee as a source for data collection, analysis and comparison. *The medical discourse* blurred the boundaries between medical and pedagogical through psychological and cognitive language, emphasising the psychometric premises of mathematics assessment. *The performance discourse* framed the assessee not as a learner but as a performer whose achievements needed to be rendered visible and promoted through effective assessment practices. Finally, the *monitoring discourse* highlighted how mathematics assessment was expected to steer the assessee towards certain kinds of learning and studying processes, positioning the assessee as the object of monitoring.

We argue that all these four discourses limit the agency of the 'assessee' (cf. Nieminen, 2020). Furthermore, our findings indicate that 'the assessee' is, above all, an individual, not a communal learner. We call for re-thinking of student positioning in assessment, not as mere receivers but as resourceful and communal thinkers and doers of mathematics.

References

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