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Providing Insight into Assessment Practices in Medical School at One Saudi Higher Education Institution: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to

Ibrahim and Azzah, my beloved parents who have surrounded me with unconditional prayers, encouragement, belief and love, always. They would both be very proud of their Dr. daughter.

Adel, my awesome husband and best friend for sacrificing to make this dream a reality.

Hala and Hassan, my wonderful kids for their unwavering love, patience and belief in me.

Abstract

It is evident across the globe that assessment has become increasingly central to the whole process of higher education (HE) as an important part of the curriculum and the teaching and learning cycle. There is strong evidence in the literature that assessment for learning (AfL) is key for effective student learning and academic progress in HE context, particularly in the medical context. In response to this international movement towards innovative assessment, there are some recent attempts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) aiming to reshape and improve the assessment system. While AfL has been widely promulgated by a growing number of educational researchers, little research is available that considers medical lecturers and undergraduates' experiences and perceptions of such AfL innovations, especially in Saudi learning context. The significant evidence about the influence of assessment on students' learning drives this research to contribute to the Saudi HE reform. This study aims to investigate the practices of assessment and feedback in order to reshape the process of assessment in productive ways to enhance students' learning and academic achievements.

Through a phenomenological research design, specifically interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this thesis aims to obtain deep understanding of lecturers and undergraduate students' lived-experiences and perceptions of assessment in a Saudi Applied Medical Sciences School. In looking to generate an insight into their experiences and perceptions, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 10 lecturers and 5 focus groups with 34 students were conducted in order to explore their experiences of assessment and their perspective of its impact on students' learning. The lecturers and undergraduate students' lived-experiences have been contextualized and interpreted using a dual hermeneutics analysis method in which the phenomenon of assessment was co-interpreted by both participants and researcher.

The data of this study were qualitatively analysed following IPA steps which enables participants' cognitive inner worlds to be explored. The findings reveal that there is a lack of clear theoretical underpinning frameworks of assessment practices in Saudi medical context. This is due to the rapid and major changes to move from the traditional to a new assessment culture. In addition, analysis of the responses shows there is a strong relationship between the medical discipline and assessment practices. Based on this relationship, students become more eager to use innovative types of assessment that require them to participate in their own development. Assessment also has a great influence on students' approaches to learning where students tend to shift between deep

approaches to "understanding" and a surface approaches such as "memorizing", or to a strategic approach involving "a mix of two", depending on the assessment methods used. As seen throughout the study's findings, learners shift between different approaches to learning in order to suit the assessment demands of their modules. In order for policy and practice to support the implementation of AfL in the medical context, there is a need to ensure clarity and relevance of AfL to all stakeholders including lecturers and students. In addition, explicit and flexible models of change and reform should be adopted and sufficient support must be offered for a successful implementation.

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Words cannot express the feelings I have for my husband Dr. Adel and my lovely kids Hala and Hassan for their unconditional encouragement, support, understanding and above all, love.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Nasim Ibrahim A Alghamdi

Signature _____

List of Abbreviation

AfL	Assessment for Learning
ARG	Assessment Reform Group
CETL	Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
FA	Formative Assessment
FG	Focus Group
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
L	Lecturer
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
S	Student
SA	Summative Assessment

Chapter 1 Introduction

Over the last decades, considerable changes and reforms have taken place in assessment system within the context of higher education (HE) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). A new learning culture has emerged in the Saudi HE context, with strong emphasis on the significant influence of assessment methods, strategies and delivery of learning outcomes (Al-Wassia, Hamed, Al-Wassia, Alafari, & Jamjoom, 2015). Generally, assessment plays a vital role in the context of HE, and it needs to be modified and reformed to prepare the millennials for the life-long learning (Boud & Falchikov, 2008). Assessment for learning (AfL) has become a primary factor in empowering students and improve their learning.

The present study sought to explore the educational experiences of lecturers and undergraduate students of assessment practices at medical departments in Saudi HE. The study aimed to determine assessment approaches and purposes whether AfL activities can contribute to supporting learners to be involved and engaged.

1.1 Setting the Scene

It should be noted that over the last decades, there had been extensive reforms in Saudi HE related to improving quality. These changes are due to the establishment of different development plans that focus on reshaping the education system to align it with market demands, national wealth and economic growth. Accordingly, a significant development has been achieved in terms of infrastructure construction, numbers of faculty members, and numbers of enrolled students, alongside ongoing research.

It is evident across the globe that assessment has become increasingly central to the whole process of HE, especially with the increased need to find ways to assure and enhance the quality of educational provision. "In the context of an increasing demand for quality … in education to meet economic and social challenges, many countries now see assessment and evaluation as playing a central strategic role in developing education policy" (Livingston & Hutchinson, 2017, p. 290). Assessment has been recognized as a primary component of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and feedback cycle, with changed focus on outcomes rather than inputs. Thus, assessment should be designed to promote better learning (Miller, Imrie & Cox, 1998). Assessment, according to Brown and Glasner (2003), is an "essential element in the learning process and must not be treated as a bolt-on extra at the end of the

teaching and learning process" (p. 1) rather it can actually shape this process in productive ways to enhance students' learning and help them know how well they are doing and what else they need to do in order to move their learning forward. Assessment is about learning, means it is about what one needs to know and how one can do it in relation to the idea of progression and what to do next to continue progression.

Assessment in HE is widely recognised as an area of practice that needs continued development and a systemic examination of the ways in which assessment can help and support students' learning is required. A report conducted by the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP/RBAS, 2006) provides a good example. The report analysed the Quality Assessment of Education Programmes in 23 Arab Universities, including the KSA, and assessment was identified as the most practice need to be re-shaped and improved. The limited use of assessment approaches and methods with over reliance on traditional (standardized) evaluations (ibid) were the main deficiencies, which affect the development of important skills including behavioural, cognitive and communication skills.

The focus on the traditional assessment approaches directs students' attentions to pass an exam or to achieve higher grades, rather than to the actual learning. Traditional approaches and methods of assessment lead to adopting inappropriate approaches to learning and increase anxiety among students (Heywood, 2000). Thus, Race (1995) suggests that "assessment must be made part of the learning experience; if not it is time wasted" (p. 69). Norton (2004) affirms that:

> … assessment needs to be used to drive the learning process in a way that will encourage students to actually engage in meaningful learning rather than just perform the necessary assignments (p. 693).

However, although the notion of assessment has been extensively studied, its influence on learning do not always yield motivating outcomes (Al-Kadri, Al-moamary, Roberts, & Vleuten, 2012). This reflects the complexity associated with assessment and learning and emphasises the need for further research in order to explore this area.

The KSA has sought to take advantage of best experiences and practices of assessment internationally. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in KSA has funded a number of activities related to the development of assessment in and out of the Kingdom (Al-Kadri et

al., 2012). The MoHE has also funded different projects that focus on learning-focused pedagogy to assessment and learning. Learning-focused pedagogy will be discussed in Section 3.6.2 (p. 62).

Over the last decade, the HE in the KSA have started to challenge their reliance on teacher-directed assessment including traditional methods of assessment (primarily examinations) (Darandari & Murphy, 2013). Some recent changes to assessment reflect a move toward learning-focused approach. This can particularly be noticed in the medical context, "many of the recently established medical colleges adopted a more student-centred approach" (Al-Shehri et al., 2013, p. 144). Thus, the emphasis is shifted from teaching to learning.

Despite advocates of applying the new culture of assessment in the KSA, it is needed to understand the complexity of taking these approaches of assessment and applying them into practice. It is not smooth process as this research project has been conducted in a 'results orientated' environment as Saudi HE which is still dependent upon marks and grades for classification of degrees. This requires clear and gradual recognising and appropriation the process for an effective implementation of new modes of assessment, which is unlikely to be attained in a short period of time in such culture. Therefore, such assessment should be reframed especially for medical institutions, considering the experiences and perspectives of lecturers and students of the different factors that shape the practices of assessment and the aspects that seem to help and hinder the learning, in addition to students and lecturers' experiences, views and perspective of the practices of feedback that allow for students to accommodate and benefit from this feedback.

1.2 The Motivation for the Study and Filling the Research Gap

Considering the current climate of change in education systems in Saudi HE and the complexities of the transition from the traditional to modern teaching/learning and assessment purposes and procedures, it gives me the motivation to undertake this study, especially when it is consistent with the Saudi Vision 2030. One of the main aims of the Saudi Vision 2030 is to develop and restructure education sectors to show adaptability in the face of the global development. It can be noted that AfL fitted well with the objectives of this reforms, since AfL can fulfil some these overarching objectives including inclusivity, lifelong learning, active citizenship and employability.

This study is designed to develop an understanding of current practices of assessment in Saudi HE as there is little literature regarding this issue especially in medical context. As assessment is conceive as a learning experience, it becomes necessary to focus on the lecturers and learners' experiences (Torrance & Pryor, 1998). Mezirow (1996) argues that "to understand others, one must gain access to their lived-experience so as to clarify and elucidate the way they interpret it" (p. 160). Thus, it will be worth undertaking studies to understand the nature of assessment in the medical context capturing lecturers' and learners' lived-experiences and perspectives of assessment practices. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there has been no studies so far have been conducted in KSA concerning both lecturers and undergraduate students' lived-experience and perspectives towards assessment that contribute to students' learning within Applied Medical Sciences Schools.

In addition, this study looks at the assessment practices in an Applied Medical Sciences School, an institution that plays a vital role in the lives and health of people and has a significant influence on the community and their future. In this study, which is contextualised in the field of medical education, there is a need to understand how assessment fits in with the mores and epistemological foundations of the context of medical disciplines and how the assessment practices and its associated feedback helped or hindered students' learning and development in these faculties.

The researcher hopes that this study encourages the provision of increased support for and interest in the application of innovative assessment in medical and health care context, in KSA. It is also hoped that the findings of this research offer ways of overcoming those hurdles, which appear to prevent learners from engaging fully in learning process; and to identify instances of good practice, which could serve as a model for assessment that contribute to learning across the health care education institutions in KSA.

1.3 Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this qualitative study is to explore in detail, ten lecturers' perceptions and experiences of assessment practices within medical contexts. In addition to the interviews with lecturers, five focus group with undergraduate students will be conducted in order to explore in-depth their lived experiences and perceptions. The research approach taken in this study is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is a systematic methodology that seeks to gain a deep understanding of the participants' lived experience through the dual

interpretative work (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Detailed examination of IPA is offered in Section 4.2.2 (p. 70).

Therefore, as the aim of the research is to make meaning and interpret of lecturers and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment practices, three explorative research questions were developed. "Research questions in IPA projects are usually framed broadly and openly. There is no attempt to test a predetermined hypothesis of the researcher; rather, the aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 28).

Research Questions:

1. From lecturers and students' experiences, what factors have shaped practices of assessment in medical classrooms?
2. What aspects of learning assessment as perceived by lecturers and students seemed to help or hinder students' learning?
3. To what extent, do lecturers and students understand feedback as a means to enhance students' learning?

1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

The organisation of this thesis consists of eight chapters, including the present introduction chapter. This is detailed in the following order:

i.   Chapter One: Introductory chapter that gives an understanding of the motivation and significance of the study, research questions and aims, in addition to the structure of the thesis.

ii. Chapter Two: Presents the study context, the KSA, with brief background, and administration and policy of Saudi education system. It also presents the development of HE sector including a presentation of the Saudi Vision 2030 and its influence in the development of the Saudi education system, especially in the context of HE. Finally, a brief presentation of medical education in KSA follows with a focus on teaching/learning and assessment in clinical context.

iii. Chapter Three: The literature review begins with a detailed review of the literature surrounding AfL, beginning as a dichotomy between FA and SA, attempts to reconnect the two concepts and the development of understanding AfL and the development of assessment in HE sectors from a sociocultural perspective for. The

literature that underpins the chosen sociocultural approach is reviewed and the key conceptual constructs that are used to analyse the data are theorised from a sociocultural perspective. It then provides a close examination of different AfL principles in search of whether these principles share a social constructivist underpinning. Assessment in clinical context follows with focus on the importance of professional competence in clinical context and how it might be assessed. Finally, main areas from AfL literature in relation to this study are then identified.

iv.   Chapter Four: Provides the methodology employed in this study: a qualitative investigative methodology situated in phenomenology and hermeneutics coupled with an idiographic perspective; a triangulation method of different data collection methods and sources. It also clarifies the method and stages of data analysis used in the thesis.

v.   Chapter Five: Presents the qualitative data results and the key themes drawn from the collected data using one-to-one semi-structured interviews with lecturers.

vi.   Chapter Six: Presents the qualitative data results and the key themes derived from the focus-group semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students.

vii.   Chapter Seven: Addresses findings relating to the three research questions and provides a discussion in light of literature.

viii.   Chapter Eight: Draws a conclusion for the study by providing reflections on the research aims as well as major findings of this research. It also outlines guidelines for policymaking and practice, in addition to the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2   Research Context: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide background about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in order to provide insight of the environment and the context in which the research is located. This chapter reviews, at the outset, the nature of the administration system of higher education (HE) in the Kingdom and highlights the education policy and philosophy. A brief history of the development of HE system will then be presented, and the current trends in the economy, as well as the government's HE objectives in the development plan in order to have an idea of the motives behind the educational assessment need for reform. The chapter will then focus on assessment in Saudi HE: the dominance of traditional (standardized) assessment and recent developments in the Saudi educational system, which has shifted the focus to a constructivist theory of learning. This will be followed by review of the significance of medical education in the Saudi context and how it is developed and improved before moving on to the central feature, which is the education current trends in assessment in medical context. The rationale behind this chapter is to provide a context of where the study is conducted to provide insight into how the research questions arose and to situate the study.

2.2 Brief Background of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The KSA is an Islamic country in which Islam is the official religion; it was established by King Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud in 1932 (Aljughaiman & Grigorenko, 2013). Islam governs all aspects of life in the KSA, including the education system (Oyaid, 2009). Arabic is the official language of KSA (Al-Sadan, 2000). Accordingly, the strong Islamic faith and Arabic language and traditions can reflect the life culture in the kingdom (Al-Rasheed, 2010; Terrill, 2013). The Saudi society has been inspired by the Islamic principles and this system of thought intends to hold the fundamental and foundational sources of Islam.

KSA's geographical position at the heart of the Islamic and Arab worlds, which is one of the three pillars of the new vision of reform (see p. 13) _ located in the Arabian Peninsula in the southwest corner of Asia, at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa. It occupies four-fifths Arabian Peninsula with an area of over 2 million square kilometres and it is

considered to be the largest among the Middle Eastern countries (Hamdan, 2013; Hilal, 2013; MoE, 2019).

The total population of Saudi Arabia, according to the General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia, was 34,218,169 million in 2018, including expatriates (General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia, 2018a). Saudis constituted 62.15% of the population and immigrants make up around 37% of the total population, according to UN data (2017). The oil industry (as will be discussed later) brings into the country a large number of people from foreign countries as KSA forms "a joint project partnership in order to establish an integrated world-class on-shore rig" (ibid). Most specialized workers are American or European; additionally, Egyptians as well as Asian workers have long migrated to the KSA (Zuhur, 2011). At the same time Saudi Arabians have been sent out around the world for decades, especially to United Kingdom and United States of America to learn and bring in new skills (ibid). This diversity has a fundamental impact as it broadens the insights and perceptions and enables those involved to experience differences in assessment and evaluation purposes and be more likely to accept changes in methods and strategies within Saudi education system. Hence, understanding the different purposes and approaches to assessment is crucial to all people, especially people who are moving to HE level.

KSA has an oil-based economy (which was discovered in the country in 1936) and the economy of KSA is heavily dependent on industries of crude oil (Nurunnabi, 2017). The country supplied 12.8% of the world's crude oil and can be expected to continue in the future (ibid). This leads KSA to be one of the most important nations to produce oil in the world, ranks as the largest petroleum exporter (CIA, 2019).

However, decreasing the Kingdom's dependence on oil for the supply of energy is at the forefront of Saudi government policy and research. In an increasingly global business and rapidly developing world, the development of the future economic, political and social aspects of KSA are of immense interest and relevance to Saudi industries, businesses and academics operating. KSA is making great efforts to improve the investment environment and to reach a diversified economic base. Thus, the Saudi government has established a new strategy to increase the productivity of the economy and reduce the dependence of oil (Hamdan, 2013; Hilal, 2013). The success of this new strategy depends in large measure on reforms in the education system; thus, it sets out an ambitious road-map for education reform in the KSA. This reform is an important factor to make modifications to assessment in HE, especially in medical context. Medical staff are coming from around the world, yet they have

similar targets in assessing students in the profession in the KSA. So, it is important to understand the different purposes and approaches to assessment, within the process to new culture of assessment.

However, before discussing the development of assessment in Saudi HE, it is necessary to have an understanding of both the main governing bodies in the Saudi educational system and the policies of education in the country. This information is important because, the Ministry of Education is the highest authority through which all changes to assessment, teaching and learning are planned and approved: any future inclusion of assessment for learning (AfL) principles and policies would have to come through them.

2.2.1 Administration of the Saudi Educational System

In KSA, the official bodies, such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), centralised administration to make decisions on educational matters (Alreshidi, 2016). The Saudi MoE, which was established in 1954 (Oyaid, 2009), is accountable for administering the education system. In 1975, the KSA Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was established and it was in charge of supervising the implementation of the educational policies in HE (Oyaid, 2009). It also supervised and managed scholarships, international academic collaboration, and educational centres aboard. However, in 2015, the two ministries were merged into one entity, the Ministry of Education to unify policies of the Saudi education system (MoE, 2019). As this demonstrates, both the MoE and the MoHE are extremely influential and important for the development of assessment practices in HE. As the education system has been developing over 60 years, different stages of understanding assessment and progress toward AfL in school sector, has been the main focus of research, which can affect the implementation of assessment policy in the HE sectors. Additionally, assessment approaches need to be recognised within a continuum from school to HE.

The Saudi MoE aspires to produce an exceptional educational system that builds a universally competitive knowledge-based community striving to:

- Raise the quality of education outcomes.

- Increase the effectiveness of scientific research.

- Encourage creativity and innovation.

- Develop community partnership.

- Promote the skills and capabilities of students (MoE, 2019a).

Thus, it aims to provide education to all in an appropriate educational environment within the framework of the kingdom's education policy.

In addition, since very beginning, Saudi HE has received enormous governmental support; new universities, scientific and applied colleges were opened, and huge funds were allocated in budgets for HE. The HE institutions have scientific and applied majors in different areas and modern approaches for scientific research and future planning have been adopted.

2.2.2 Policy of Education in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The policy in KSA is a top-down centralised policy with all decisions controlled and administrated by the government (Alreshidi, 2016). The top-down policy in education is an activated "state control model" (Johnson, 2004, p. 77), where MoE is authorized to make decisions on all teaching and learning domains. This also involves multiple aspects related to education, such as the curriculum, teaching methods and materials (Nunan, 1989). This information is important because, as part of this study, the participants were asked if they perceived that AfL should be adopted and what are the challenges that they might face the implementing of AfL in the medical context. Moreover, it has a major influence on individual lecturers in HE as they might have limited experience of knowledge of the range of AfL use and choice. While some lecturers only experience a comprehensive system, others who had been abroad will have experience of other assessment approaches.

The General Educational Policy of Saudi Arabia was established in 1970 and includes 236 articles that outline the overall goals and purposes of education in Saudi Arabia. Educational policy is an essential part of the Saudi government general policy which was derived from Islamic philosophy. Thus, the educational policy, including gender segregation policy, is implemented in accordance with the Islamic comprehensive system of life. In addition, the Saudi MoE vision aims to establish a clear educational system that builds a "Globally Competitive Knowledge-based Community" (MoE, 1995). The MoE has the mission to provide an appropriate educational environment within the national education policy framework. Based on the education policy document, the MoE sets seven goals for HE, as follows:

1. Making students more aware of Islamic culture and their duty to God to make their skills useful and fruitful.

2. Preparing citizens who are scientifically and intellectually capable of doing their duty in the service of their country, and the progress of their nation, in keeping with the Islamic faith.

3. Giving gifted students the opportunity to continue postgraduate education in all fields.

4. Taking a positive part in the field of academic research which contributes to global progress in literature, science, and innovations.

5. Encouraging research and applied research to serve Islamic ideals, and assisting the country to take a leading role in the building of global civilization based on sound principles.

6. Translating useful research and academic works into Arabic.

7. Providing training to enable graduates who are already in employment to update their knowledge and skills (MoE, 1995).

Recently, the Saudi education system and its policy have been criticised as they have not been improved since it was established in 1970 (Qahtani, 2010; Al-Issa, 2009; Alharbi & Madhesh, 2018). For instance, Qahtani (2010) proposes that although it fulfils its role, the Saudi policy addressing education needs to be redefined and reframed. He also claims that it is not rational or logical to apply a policy that was designed for a different purpose and circumstance. He argues that education reform in KSA is crucial at this stage as there is an accelerated rate of international development which has led many to call for modifications and alterations. Al-Issa (2009) also argues that the education policy is subject to change consistent with the changes and development of the Saudi societies and the related cultures. The modern education policy, as argued by Al-Issa (2009) should regard a number of principles that reflect current social and cultural values, economic and political variables of these values and consider these cultural needs as well as the future requirements.

Consequently, the limited available literature on the subject reflected a lack of clarity in terms of the assessment policies, plans and initiatives in KSA. This means assessment objectives, strategies and implementation are not explicitly explained within the Saudi culture. Thus, identifying current assessment practices and perspectives of possible

improvements and modifications are necessary, before any changes and reforms can be introduced or implemented.

2.3 The Development of Higher Education Sector

In the last two decades, the Saudi HE has witnessed rapid growth as it has been an central element of the economic development in KSA (Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014; Alsadaawi, 2010). During this time, the Saudi government has sustained direct and substantial regulations over almost all aspects of education system to build an educated and skilled workforce in an attempt to compete in the global economy. The Saudi government has sought to promote education innovations for long time now via directing HE towards establishing better learning environments. Improving the quality of teaching and learning and upgrading the quality of education is an essential factor in raising learners' performances.

It should be noted that there were many projects for the development of Saudi HE, perhaps the most important were the Kingdom's National Development Plans which began in 1970. The National Development Plans of Saudi Arabia take the form of strategic documents that are released every five years, which mainly outline the strategies of socioeconomic development and include targeted aims to achieve these strategies over a five-year period, including the education system (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2005). The latest project was the 10th Development Plan which was released in 2015 and runs over a 5-year period. It places emphasis on education development as key to economic diversification (General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia, 2018b). This project included various objectives to improve the outputs of education and HE considering the values, concerns and improvement in the Kingdom. However, this project becomes less important and less relevant because of the release of the Kingdom's modern Saudi Vision 2030 and the National Transformation Program which flows from it in 2016. "Commentary on the release, content, and intention of both the National Transformation Program and the Saudi Vision 2030 was overwhelmingly supportive, positive, and complementary nationally, regionally, and globally" (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018, p. 36). The achieving of these aspirations is envisaged via development of education in KSA (ibid).

As these recent general aims seek to foster better learning environments, it could be argued that improvement of assessment practices is of key importance, as it is known to be an essential factor in raising learners' performances (Black & Wiliam, 1998). It might be

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suggested that assessment practices, such as adopting FA, and the development of better student-centred pedagogical strategy, which promote critical thinking, learner autonomy and participation, would be of use in ensuring the success of these developments (ibid).

2.3.1 Saudi Vision 2030

In 2016, the Saudi Vision 2030 was announced providing a "roadmap" for the KSA to financially and economically diversify. It states:

> Our goal is to attract and retain the finest Saudi and foreign minds, and provide them with all they need. Their presence in the Kingdom will contribute to economic development and attract additional foreign investment… We will close the gap between the outputs of higher education and the requirements of the job market… To this end, we will prepare a modern curriculum focused on rigorous standards in literacy, numeracy, skills and character development. We will track progress and publish a sophisticated range of education outcomes, showing year-on-year improvements… we will build a centralized student database tracking students from early childhood through to K-12 and beyond into tertiary education (higher and vocational) in order to improve education planning, monitoring, evaluation, and outcomes (Saudi Vision 2030, P. 37 - 40).

The Vision 2030 created to support KSA's ongoing development plan, and it is based on the three main pillars where the country has strong competitive advantages. These key pillars include: the status of the Kingdom as the heart of the Islamic and Arab worlds, the intention of the Kingdom to evolve into a global hub by taking advantage of its unique strategic location connecting three continents, Asia, Africa and Europe, and finally the determination to become a global investment powerhouse to stimulate the economy and diversify revenues (Saudi Vision 2030, 2016). To put simply, the three main pillars of Vision 2030 are to secure the Kingdom as a vibrant society, a flourishing economy and an aspiring nation. Achieving these objectives, the Saudi Vision 2030 has sought to reshape the education system with attention to alignment between national education goals and economic development.

The National Transformation Programme identifies 37 strategic initiatives, which intend to contribute significantly to the targeted goals of the programme and the Vision 2030. The success of Saudi vision and National Transformation Programme depend on large measure of reforms in the education system, especially in HE sector. MoE has exemplified the great significance of education in contribution to the economic growth as:

1. Education sector is considered as one of the vital sectors that has close connection with society and has strong connection in developing national economy.

2. Education is contributing in transition of the economy from dependence on one source of income to economy depending on mind-sets with high skills, creative, and productive human energies.

3. Education system encourages dependence on reliability and safety resources, programs and projects, opening up investment opportunities, and eventually generate professional opportunities.

4. Education is contributing in developing human capital, and also contributing in acquiring the requirements and needs of labour market (MoE, 2019b).

The Saudi MoE has introduced a significant alteration, restructuring HEIs to reflect the developing process in both national and international domains (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013; MoE, 2019). Indeed, the objectives of the national transformation programme and Saudi Vision 2030 of what the KSA has sought to achieve through development of education become apparent (Mitchell & Alfuraih, 2018).

However, while the KSA is demonstrating significant enthusiasm and energy to influence the development process in its HE, under the kingdom's current social climate, achieving the goals and commitments outlined in Vision 2030 will be challenging. "Many Saudi universities lack quality institutions, standards, effectiveness, and efficiency" (Alharbi, 2016, p. 171). Furthermore, the historical disposition to learning among Saudi students is heavily focused on traditional mode of learning (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013).

To be effective, the education system must produce a workforce who are able to advance the country economically in order to meet the country's requirements. Without a skilled and educated workforce, it will be challenging for Saudi Vision to meet its target objectives. To adapt to this new era, there is a need for process of strategic planning in relation to a robust system of assessment to confirm that the education has been embedded and assimilated into the skill base of the Kingdom. The following section will highlight the main features of assessment in Saudi HE.

2.3.2 Assessment in Saudi Higher Education

Educational assessment can, and indeed should, improve and inspire the processes and outcomes of education, teaching and learning (Gordon & Rajagopalan, 2016) as it is considered a powerful learning tool that can enhance learning and education. "If assessment design aligns with educational outcomes and instructional methods, it improves the quality of education and supports student learning" (Fuentealba, 2011, p. 157). However, "various organisations in charge of knowledge acquisition find it difficult to conduct proper student assessment even after designing effective education systems. As a result, they end up having a wrong impression of student performance" (Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014, p. 883). In KSA, assessing students' learning is a very high concern of education policy makers, with the intention to improve students' performance, although assessment is not explicitly mentioned in the documents (Alafaleq & Fan, 2014).

Alhareth and Al Dighrir (2014) suggest that it is widely believed that the standards of teaching, curricula, materials and facilities of the Saudi educational system do not reach the standards in education expected by a wealthy and large country such as KSA. For example, the Saudi education system addresses subjects that not of interest to the students and the rely on rote memorization of learning rather than understanding and then on summative assessment (SA) of students' learning (Darandari & Murphy, 2013; Al-Hakel, 2007; Alhammad, 2010). Rugh (2002) states that "rote memorization of basic texts continues to be a central feature of much of the educational system of Saudi Arabia even today". Thus, rather than developing deep and meaningful learning and understanding, the process of learning and teaching are narrowly focused on passing tests (Al-Kadri, Al-moamary, roberts & vleuten, 2012).

In KSA, assessment usually comes in the form of traditional (standardised) tests, where students are tested individually using pen and paper to answer written questions which include essays, true or false, gap fill and multiple choice questions (Darandari & Murphy, 2013; Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014). This means that the assessment is still at a measurement level (Al-Sadan, 2000; Alotabi, 2014). While this assessment is still of importance for measurement purposes, the dominance of this type of assessment seems to have had a negative impact on students' learning (Alsadaawi, 2010). This focus on traditional assessment that might hinder learning has been criticized by many researchers for decades (see, for example, Black & Wiliam (1998a) and Irons (2006)). This dilemma has been also a subject of discussion among researchers within Saudi context (Al-Sadan, 2000; Darandari

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& Murphy, 2013; Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014). These traditional assessment methods are limited in expanding the concept of learning as they only assess particular cognitive s functions and skills related to ability of memorizing the acquired information through courses (Taras, 2005). Thus, considering the current practices of assessment and changes to develop these practices is a demand for Saudi education system.

Despite the evidence regarding the negative features of assessment in Saudi context, it has been revealed that the new emerging learning culture has strongly emphasized the significant effect of assessment methods, strategies and delivery on learning outcomes (Al-Wassia et al., 2015). The potential of modern assessment culture (i.e. adopting FA in Saudi classrooms) has been explored and deployed to improve and maintain student learning and performances (Al-shehri, 2008; Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014; Alotabi, 2014; Kariri, Cobern, & Bentz, 2018). For example, Alotabi (2014) suggests that adopting FA must be a fundamental component of Saudi education system. This suggestion is backed up by evidence (Hutchinson & Hayward, 2005) through which the authors describe the interest in FA as a "quiet revolution" transforming all levels of education around the world. Indeed, it is reported that the modern and innovative assessment including implementation of FA and formative feedback, has a positive influence on Asian student learning in general (Al-Kadri, 2015; Kariri et al., 2018; Quyen & Khairani, 2016). The issue of assessment, its origins, purposes and principles will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

However, based on the top-down assessment policy, which is a dominant state model in KSA, the application of innovative assessment is not free from challenges (Quyen & Khairani, 2016). Many barriers concerning cultural and local contextual factors while implementing new and innovative assessment culture have been found as teaching, learning and assessment activities are strongly influenced by traditional view. The challenge is how educators and learners, who are socialized into traditional practices of assessment deal with the modern assessment modes (ibid).

The following section will briefly discuss the development of medical education in Saudi Arabia. It will then investigate currently practices of assessment in Saudi medical school and some challenges that face the application of new assessment culture.

2.4 Medical Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Education, in the Saudi medical context, has been changing and developing rapidly. There were a significant report and calls for changing medical education among the Saudi medical community (Bin Abdulrahman, 2008; Hassanien, 2018; Telmesani, Zaini, & Ghazi, 2009). These report and calls for change were due to the concerns related to the disadvantages of classic teaching-focused pedagogies with copious educators, which has limited the opportunities for more effective learning-focused pedagogies (Al-Gindan, Al-Sulaiman, & Al-Faraidy, 2000; Al-hazimi, Al-hyiani, & Roff, 2004). Following this traditional didactic system that leads to the poor teaching and learning environment, in addition to the overcrowding of the curriculum and inclusion of irrelevant topics (Elfaki, 2004; Al-Shehri, 1999; Shawky, 2001; Milaat, 1994) has raised the desire to reform the medical education in KSA (Bin Abdulrahman, 2008).

These debate and concerns were the drive for reform of education in the medical context, which was mainly towards more self-learning and learning-focused pedagogies (Bin Abdulrahman, Harden, & Patricio, 2014; Bin Abdulrahman, 2008). Teacher-centred approach and student-centred approach will be discussed in detail later in Chapter 3.

Medical education reform in KSA are developing in a continuous manner through reporting and sharing experiences with local and international institutions (Elfakey et al., 2015). This movement toward innovation in a number of medical education programmes, with the dedication of international institutions and organisations to recognition and excellence, had been witnessed in Saudi medical context (ibid). There were also a rapid establishment of new medical schools which follow more modern and innovative programmes and have established international partnerships with elite educational societies (Telmesani et al., 2009).

However, these processes of development and establishment of new medical schools and programmes were not entirely smooth. This excessive expansion posed a new set of challenges. These challenges, as discussed by Al-Shehri et al. (2013) "became more complex and beyond the mere need of establishing new medical colleges and recruiting competent faculty to cope with an increasing demand by community health services" (p. 138). Dealing with design of curricula, educational strategies of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as development of instructional material are additional challenges facing medical educators,

especially when the number of schools is expected to further increase within the next decade (Al-Shehri et al., 2013).

Therefore, there is a need to undertake a systematic planning regards these potential challenges. The present phase of expansion and reform of teaching/learning and assessment will be discussed as follows.

2.4.1 Teaching/Learning and Assessment in Saudi Medical School

Globally, the current trend in medical education changed to integrate both horizontal among the disciplines and vertical between basic and clinical sciences (Cooke, Irby, Sullivan, & Ludmerer, 2006; Woods, 2007). Without robust cross ties and links to different clinical applications, students will face difficulties at the transition phase to clinical internships (Hoffman, Hosokawa, Blake, Headrick, & Johnson, 2006). Teaching and learning within the medical context can be understood as combined processes where an educator assesses learning needs, establishes specific learning objectives, develops teaching and learning strategies, implements plan of work and evaluates the outcomes of the instruction.

In line with evolution, Saudi medical schools adopted modern curricula and up-to-date teaching technologies. In order to develop the student's skills and training them in different practical applications, many schools have started to adopt a triangular model of clinical teaching/learning and assessment (TMCTA) (Figure 1) (Abdelaziz & Koshak, 2014). This model framed to adopt variable methods of teaching/learning and assessment in the clinical setting. This aimed to help medical learners polish their talents, inspire the spirit of creativity, and provide the society with skilled and qualified workforce. TMCTA are categorized into three main types according to where they can be conducted include, classroom-type settings, health services-based settings, and community service-based settings (Abdelaziz & Koshak, 2014).
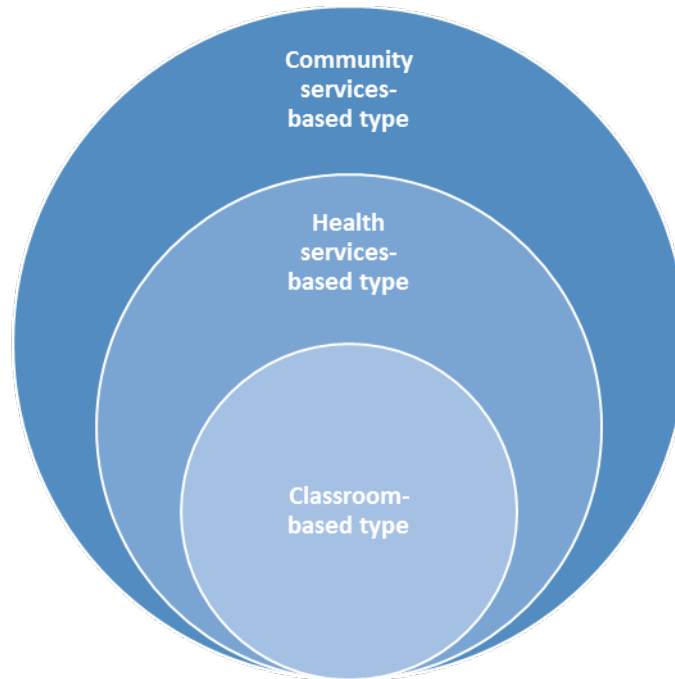
Figure 1Three angles of the triangular model of clinical teaching/learning and assessment.

Characterizing this model identifies different methods of assessment and instruction that build up and develop this target model (Table 1). "TMCTA is affordable and feasible within the local Saudi medical education context" (Abdelaziz & Koshak, 2014). They argue that to benefit from this model, "a variety of timely and ongoing student assessment tools were incorporated on the basis of their relevance to both educational objectives and methods of instruction within each of the categories… These methods can be used for continuous assessment that adds to the summative assessment of students in a certain module or for formative assessment and feedback" (p. 63). Integration and variation of instructional and assessment methods accelerate the accommodation of the students' different learning styles and increase the assessment validity. Susan et al., in their study in 2009 concluded that the integrated module was successfully developed and implemented and resulted in improved students learning and achievement. However, although the assessment impact on learning behaviour of learners has been well documented and reflected in the move toward AfL or 'assessment as learning' (Bin Abdulrahman et al., 2014), the process did not achieve its desired goal as it faced with staff resistance to the changes from the old methods that they used to apply (Elfakey et al., 2015). This is because staff were not well trained in such methods and difficult to be convinced with the value of these methods in the process of medical education (ibid).

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Categories of TMCTA	Subcategories (methods of instruction)
I Classroom-type settings	Ordinary classrooms • Tutorials • Seminars • Problem-based learning • Directed self learning • Microteaching • Interactive lectures • Practical laboratories of basic medical sciences Skills laboratory: depends on utilization of • Manikins • High fidelity simulations • Simulated patients • One-on-one training • Video demonstrations • Role playing
II Health service-based settings	• Bedside teaching • Shadowing • Training in outpatient clinics • Training in emergency settings • Training in diagnostic units • Training in rehabilitative units
III Community service-based settings	• Training in primary health care settings • Site visits • Family visits • Occupational health settings • Community diagnosis activities • Student-centered research projects

Abbreviation: TMCTA, triangular model of clinical teaching/learning and assessment.

Table 1Identified instructional methods under each category of the triangular model of clinical teaching/learning and assessment

As can be seen in Table 1, assessment, in Saudi medical schools, seems directed at different domains of Miller's model (Miller, 1990); Miller's pyramid (Figure 7) will be discussed in detail later in Section 3.5.2 (p. 47). Assessment of medical students "emphasizes all domains of assessment from lower domains such as factual recall to higher domains such as evaluation or synthesis" and it also stresses the importance of higher domains including critical thinking that promote learners' progress (Amin, Kaliyadan, & Al-Muhaidib, 2011, p. 103). Al Kadri et al. (2011) argue that students' knowledge, skills and abilities to perform in clinical setting are all assessed within this model. "Ideally, assessment in the clinical years should focus on students' ability to organize thoughts, link theoretical knowledge to patients' management, communicate with patients and the environment and elaborate on patients' conditions. It should also focus on students' clinical skills and work" (Al Kadri et al., 2011, p. 555). Thus, AfL helps to recognize the differences between all domains on Miller's pyramids (Al-kadri, Al-kadi, & Vleuten, 2013). AfL is implemented in Saudi medical

classrooms to help students practise and learn how to solve problems on a daily basis through real clinical experiences (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Al-kadri, Al-kadi, & Vleuten, 2013). Amin et al. (2011) stress the importance of AfL methods that increase the students' understanding and performance through their clinical courses.

2.4.1.1 Challenges of Implementing AfL

Introducing AfL in Saudi medical classrooms has become a demand due to its importance in increasing the education quality and the learning outcomes. However, it should be noted that for KSA, the practices and implementation of this assessment is rather new which might be associated with a number of barriers and obstacles. So, it would be of benefit to know what the challenges of implementing AfL are and what hinders its effectiveness. Therefore, the next section will discuss the factors may influence the implementation of AfL as a new learning culture in Saudi medical settings.

Al-Wassia et al. (2015) found that the primary strategy of assessment in Saudi medical school was still traditional (standardized) type, despite all the effort to implement AfL in these schools. Their research showed that the educators were primarily concerned with summative outcomes, with little concern for the formative needs of their students. The challenge lies in how lecturers and students, who are strongly influenced by traditional practices of assessment, deal with the new modes of assessment (Quyen & Khairani, 2016).

While the main goal of AfL is "teaching students how to learn", traditional assessment have high visibility where lecturers are often oriented to "teach to the test", and learners are encouraged to meet the course requirements at the expense of learning development (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Black, 2015; Yin & Buck, 2015). Al-Wassia et al. (2015) suggested several reasons why faculty members frequently do not use FA. They spoke of time-consuming and the additional workload as challenges that face teachers when implementing AfL. Most researchers, even in non-Saudi studies, note that teachers' practices of AfL are hampered by time constraints and demanding workload (Bramwell-Lawler & Rainford, 2016; Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Kariri et al., 2018; Falk, 2011; Jackson & Marks, 2015). Unique, perhaps, to Middle Eastern universities, and more specifically to Saudi Arabian universities, are challenges resulting from very large classes (Kariri et al., 2018; Quyen & Khairani, 2016). The larger number of students per classroom might hinder the implementation of AfL.

There is a fundamental lack of understanding in the concept of AfL among educators and very little understanding of how to use it in the classroom setting (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Kariri et al., 2018; Quyen & Khairani, 2016). Educators' different understandings of AfL constitutes an obstacle as it ranges from understanding the role that it plays in enhancing learning to merely equating it either with measurement or as a "process of co-enquiry" (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008, p. 2). The lack of a common understanding among educators in Saudi medical schools indicates that the implementation new assessment culture is inconsistent and leads to anxiety (Amen, Ahmed & Alostaz, 2016).

There are also sociocultural challenges specific to the Saudi culture, including the hegemonic power relationship between tutors and students. This power relationship is due to a cultural belief among Saudi society that knowledge mastery is only possessed by the tutor (Al-Wassia et al., 2015). Where the teacher is omnipotent, students are afraid to debate with their teachers, and teachers resent questioning and debate (Kariri et al., 2018). So, alternative assessment, such as peer-assessments, may be less appreciated in such cultures (Yan & Cheng, 2015). In Bramwell-Lalor & Rainford's (2015) study, it has been found that teachers can have difficulties implementing, AfL as they were reluctant to release their own control, even though teachers knew intellectually that FA required a shift toward students' control of their own learning, and to be engaged in peer learning and peer assessment.

However, although the use of AfL in new learning cultures is challenging, the extensive discourse showed similar challenges of AfL implementation in some developed, high-income countries, such as, the USA and the UK. Much research suggests that using AfL does not come naturally for teachers, particularly in a new learning culture. Nilsson (2013), for example, found that new teacher feels awkward using AfL and formative interaction in their classrooms. Nilsson suggests that in order for new teachers to understand how to use AfL in their classrooms, they needed to have experienced instruction where AfL was used.

It is clear that very little time and research has been devoted to the formal study of AfL implementation and development in medical education within the Saudi context. The gap found in research on AfL in medical context and growing evidence about the impact of traditional (standardized) systems of assessment constituted the need to explore how lecturers and students perceive AfL in the Saudi context and address the research questions as outlined earlier.

2.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter the background of KSA and the environment and the context in which the research is located were discussed. Then the context and structure of the educational system administration and policy in the KSA was explored. It showed that the HE system in the KSA has been through many changes and development plans, with focus on the Saudi Vision 2030 and how it will impact HE, especially medical sector. In order to encourage student learning, constructivist theory, which emphasises integrated model of teaching, leaning and assessment, has become more dominate in medical education, which is now seeking to substitute traditional methods with critical thinking and analysis. However, despite the fact that many educators have emphasised the importance of AfL as an effective way to promote learning (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Harlen, 2005; Hayward & Spencer, 2010; Stiggins, 2002), implementing AfL as a new learning culture in Saudi medical school and in other academic settings is still challenging. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical foundation of this study. It will also provide a more in-depth review of AfL and assessment in medical school.

Chapter 3   Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Assessment for learning (AfL) has gained growing international prominence due to its relevance in educational systems at all levels (school and higher education) (Carless, 2016; Gan, 2019; Hutchinson & Hayward, 2005; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Mumm, Karm & Remmik, 2016; Sambell, 2011). The debate on assessment in higher education (HE) is a complex one because it has multifarious elements. These elements include the relationship between the student and tutor; the feedback and feedforward that occurs between tutors and students and the values lecturers and students hold about effective methods of teaching, learning and assessment. These are crucial to the success or otherwise of the assessment practices in HE. This research project grew from my early attempts to implement a more formative learning environment within a dominant summative assessment (SA) culture.

As the previous chapter discussed the assessment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) context, this chapter reviews the literature on the issues related to the assessment from international and wider perspectives. This chapter has 5 sections. The first section discusses a brief background of the term and explores the origins of the formative assessment (FA) and demonstrates its connection with AfL. The relationship between FA and SA will be explored in the second section and why it is important to understand this relationship. In the third section more recent literature will be reviewed, including the definition of AfL and the emphasis on theoretical underpinning of the AfL. The fourth section the principles of AfL. Finally, this chapter will conclude by highlighting some key themes that are identified from AfL discourse in the fifth section.

3.2 A Brief History of Assessment for Learning

Assessment is a fundamental process that is required to promote learning and ultimately achievement and the idea behind using assessment in education is to help students to advance their learning (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008; Brink, 2017; Hayward, 2015; Livingston & McCall, 2005; Mumm et al., 2016). Thus, the use of assessment to enhance students' learning is an essential aspect of effective teaching and learning processes. "Assessment for Learning" is a term that has surfaced in the scholarship of teaching and learning in the last decades. In her work, Gipps (1994, p. 25) used the term "assessment for learning" to describe a change

from a traditional model of assessment to a more in-depth assessment of "the structure and quality of students' learning and understanding." The history of assessment for learning and the relationship between formative assessment and summative assessment have been discussed widely in the literature (e.g. Lau, 2013). The following sections will discuss these issues in more details.

3.2.1 Assessment for Learning and Formative Assessment

"Assessment for leaning" is sometimes referred to as "formative assessment"; the terms will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. The term (formative assessment) was used in 1998 by Black and Wiliam in their meta-analysis on the positive effect that FA has on students' learning as will be discussed in the following section. The work of Black and William has influenced policy makers, practitioners and researchers in understanding the relevance of FA practices in promoting learning outcomes. However, there seems to be a quiet and accepting transition from the use of 'formative assessment' to 'assessment for learning' (Bethan, 2002). Wiliam (in Bethan, 2002, p. 48) comments that he "mourn[s] the loss of the term 'formative'", as he feels that "the formative dimension, the requirement to form the direction of future learning, places a slightly stronger imperative on a teacher to really make it count whereas AfL can actually sound like a prescription to assess in order for the student to learn". It can be seen from this point that FA is increasingly seen as AfL. This uncovers the importance of understanding of what these two concepts mean in the context of HE.

FA and AfL are terms that are often used interchangeably, however, Stiggins (2002) makes an important point that AfL and FA are not the same:

> Assessment for learning is about far more than testing more frequently or providing teachers with evidence so that they can revise instruction, although these steps are part of it. In addition, we now understand assessment for learning must involve students in the process (p. 761).

This puts an emphasis on the relevance of engaging students in the assessment process. This distances the process of AfL practices from a conception of micro-testing and puts the emphasis on the relevance of engaging student in the assessment process. However, this statement does not only bring in FA, it could also bring in SA which could increase the conceptual lack of clarity. Stiggins and Chappuis (2006) prefer the term AfL to FA. They claim that the term FA has been narrowed by the testing industry and "it refers to a system of more frequent summative assessments administered at regular intervals" (Stiggins &

Chappuis, 2006, p. 1) ignoring its significant influence on students' learning. Hence, it is necessary to study the origins and literature surrounding FA and SA before focusing on the theoretical underpinning of AfL in the following section.

3.2.2 The Dichotomy of Assessment Literature

The interchangeable use of AfL and FA by some is possibly to emphasize the formative role of assessment during the learning process and to create a conceptual distance from SA purposes. Sadler (1989) maintained that formative criteria for assessment are to inform students about their learning progress and achievement. However, writers such as Black and Wiliam (2006) and Newton (2007) highlighted the difference between formative and summative evaluation purposes. Terminological distinction between FA and SA has focused on function and timing (why and when assessment happens). While SA has been seen as the best means in terms of accountability for certification, FA has been confined mainly to classroom activities and learning development. SA puts the emphasis on judging, grading and certifying students (Bloom, Hastings & Madaus, 1971). This arguably emphasizes students' disengagement in the assessment process. On the other hand, FA is seen as any task that creates feedback for students about their learning (ibid). The aim of FA then is to enable teachers to engage students during the assessment process. This arguably allows teachers to know the areas that may require subsequent instruction. Accordingly, learning "can be made more pertinent and beneficial" (Bloom et al. 1971, p. 20). Through this learning where FA plays a significant role, Bloom (1976) asserts that FA is much more superior to SA. This means that FA can be used to improve students' summative performance. This relationship between FA and SA is significant to this thesis and will be considered in more detail in Section 3.2.3 (p. 28).

The central concept behind FA is to "contribute to student learning through the provision of information/feedback about their performance" (Yorke, 2003, p. 478). Black and Wiliam (1998a) argued that FA is all-encompassing activities carried out by teachers, or/and by their students. This offers information that can be used as feedback in an attempt to amend and improve the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, Sadler (2016) asserted that FA concerns enabling students to understand the standards and objectives to be achieved and the level of their performance. FA is then to guide both the students and teachers in taking necessary action to close gaps.

It is important to note that FA represents a significant shift in acknowledging the role of assessment in the learning process, rather than its role in classification, categorisation and/or measurement purposes. This "paradigm shift", according to Gipps (1994), implies that the traditional model of assessment should be abandoned which presented a serious dichotomy in the assessment processes. That demand to shift creates a significant challenge to those in education generally and for HE in particular.

The traditional view, as demonstrated by Gipps (1994), suggests that there is an "unidimensionality" in which "the items in a test should be measuring a single underlying attribute" (Gipps, 1994, p. 6). Consequently, under this view, the use of assessment methods and practice are usually constrained by examinations or standardised tests. Gipps (1994) argues that focusing on measuring the individual's "ineducability" as a psychometric paradigm feature is problematic. However, Taylor (1994) has a slightly different view, he thinks there is no problem with the model itself, it is rather about how an individual understands and uses the model. Although these authors have slightly different views, it appears that they agree that the new model of assessment promotes the understanding of human development.

Gipps (1994) argued that the traditional models assume that intelligence is innate and fixed, spread in normal distribution across the people. Thus, judgement as a traditional view of assessment focuses on classification, categorization and selection. The argument is that this model of assessment focuses on the limits of each student. This puts the emphasis on the norm-referencing judgment (Lau, 2016), where students are compared with one another and ensures that all students are assessed and interpreted in the same way.

Unlike norm-referencing judgment, criterion-referencing is the key to the emerging assessment idea (Gipps, 1994; Taylor, 1994). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure assessment is able to help learners to achieve the desired outcomes. Hence, instead of measuring innate and fixed intelligence, assessment is used in measuring the processes and products of educational experiences. Thus, it cannot be assumed that unidimensionality and different methods of assessment must be used to identify multi-dimensionality in the context of HE.

As discussed above, scholars call for a shift from the traditional psychometric model to an emerging model of assessment that engages everyone. However, while some lecturers are motivated to move towards the emerging model of assessment, this may be against their underlying beliefs of learning and teaching (Lau, 2016) or other external pressures, such as

culture. Thus, lecturers might choose to stay with the (convenient) traditional model of assessment. This might create an issue in HE.

3.2.3 Rebuild the Relationship between Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment

The previous section highlighted how the harmful dichotomy between FA and SA in the attempt to promote AfL has unintentionally been created by research. The bifurcation between those two assessments is no longer useful considering that when SA is carefully rehabilitated and designed may also have positive impacts on teaching and learning processes (Bennett, 2011; Kennedy, Chan, Yu & Fok, 2006; Lau, 2016). It could then be argued that educators in HE are encouraged to understand the importance and purposes of re-thinking the relationship between both purposes of assessment in practices. The attempts to re-connect FA and SA will be identified as follows.

Rebuilding the relationship between FA and SA is not a new challenge. In the last two decades, there have been some attempts in the literature to challenge this dichotomy and re-establish the link between FA and SA. In Scotland, for example, the "Assessment is for Learning" project was introduced to integrate both FA and SA into a cohesive assessment system (Condie, Livingston, & Seagraves, 2005; Hayward, Priestley & Young, 2004; Hayward, 2007; Hayward & Spencer, 2010) alongside ongoing research. Elsewhere with respect to assessment in HE, terms such as "learning-oriented assessment" was used to represent good assessment that attempts to transcend distinctions between FA and SA (Carless, 2007; Carless, Joughin & Mok, 2006).

Biggs (1998) was one of the first to discuss AfL, following Black and Wiliam's (1998) review. Black and Wiliam's review was criticized for rejecting the SA influence on learning. Biggs (1998) also argues that FA and SA are not mutually exclusive, but rather there is strong interaction between them. He shows that, both assessments are crucial to learning achievement through assessment practice.

Biggs (1998) explains that it is widely perceived that SA has negative impacts on learning, although its influence on students is stronger than the FA. As Harlen (2005) argues if we integrate FA and SA, the latter will dominate. This is because SA, within the HE sector, is strongly combined with students' future and linked with their emotions. Nevertheless, this can be in the interest of the argument to rebuild the relationship between SA with its powerful partner and rival FA. Harlen (2005) suggests that this positive effect of SA together with FA

should be synthesized so both assessment work together and support each other as a powerful enhancement to learning. Aligning assessment for summative purposes with different learning activities including formative tasks and opportunities would promote and enhance learning, and students would actively engage with the learning process.

Hence, instead of seeing FA and SA as "two different trees" as suggested by Black and Wiliam (1998), both types of assessments should be seen as the "backside of an elephant" (Biggs, 1998, p. 108). This metaphor suggests that FA and SA are essentially connected and they both support each other. Taras (2007) explains Biggs' metaphor as follows, "each limb must work with the other in order for the whole to work; the animal is stronger as it is better balanced and without one back leg the elephant would fall over" (Taras, 2007, p. 64). To put simply, FA and SA need to be connected and to work together, rather than seeing FA and SA as different functions. Hence, instead of abandoning the traditional model of assessment as argued by Gipps (1994), we need to think in depth about different purposes of different sorts of assessment and how these assessments can work in harmony to foster learning in the context of HE.

Therefore, the dichotomy between FA and SA has challenged practitioners in education generally and in HE particularly to reconsider the fundamental idea of FA and SA to work in harmony. Arguably, these two assessments should not be seen as contrary to each other. Instead, portraying FA and SA as partners in a relationship is a key feature of AfL which can support and enable student learning. Then AfL can includes both formative and summative functions as it focuses on students' learning and development. It should be noted that the understanding of AfL has been significantly improved in both research and practice in the context of HE (Bloxham & Carver, 2014). However, there is still fundamental confusion among teachers, lecturers and educators with regard to AfL theory and practice (Taras & Davies, 2013). Such major confusion often prevent AfL innovations from being implemented (Gulikers, Biemans, Wesselink & Van Der, 2013). Detailed examination of the origins and theoretical underpinning of AfL follows.

3.3 Assessment for Learning: Assessments to Enrich Student Learning

The relationship between assessment and learning and the capacity of assessment to impact upon the quality of learning has been discussed extensively within HE (Beaumont, O'Doherty, & Shannon, 2011; Gibbs, 2010; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Race, Brown,

& Smith, 2005; Sambell, 2011). Race, Brown, and Smith (2005), for example, assert that assessment has become one of the driving forces for students' learning more than ever before. This growing interest on AfL suggests a focus of improving students' learning (Murtagh, 2010). Accordingly, it appears that there is a significant movement in the assessment culture within the HE sectors where the essence of AfL is promoted to help to provide information for both students and teachers to improve the learning and teaching process and reduce excessive focus in judgment, classification and categorization (Kennedy, Chan, Fok, & Yu, 2008). In this thesis, the term AfL will be used throughout. Thus, this thesis intends to investigate "assessment for learning" and some related factors surrounding the term.

3.3.1 Contextualising Definition of AfL

The term "assessment for learning" was first used in 1992, by Mary James to distinguish between FA and SA purposes. Later the term was emphasized by Gipps (1994) to describe the shift from a traditional model of assessment that included "checking whether the information had been received", as discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 3.2.2, p. 26), to a more holistic view of assessment focusing on "the structure and quality of students' learning and understanding" (Gipps, 1994, p. 25). These movements reflect an understanding of the need to build and maintain students' learning through focusing on assessment.

In the early 2000s, the term AfL came into common parlance to give emphasis to the purpose for which assessment is undertaken with regard to the functions of both FA and SA (Wiliam, 2011). In 2002, the Assessment Reform Group (ARG) used ten principles to narrow the understanding of AfL. They consider it as "the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there" (ARG, 2002, p. 2). These principles state that AfL:

1. is part of effective planning

2. focuses on how students learn

3. is central to classroom practice

4. is key professional skill

5. is sensitive and constructive

6.   fosters motivation

7.   promotes understanding of goals and criteria

8.   helps learners know how to improve

9.   develops the capacity for self-assessment

10.   recognizes all educational achievements (ARG, 2002, p. 2).

The ARG's definition demonstrates the key components of AfL, for instance defining and sharing learning criteria and intentions, students and teachers' collaboration in classroom through questioning and discussion, formative feedback, self- and peer-assessments, etc. These techniques have been presented as a list to provide a common understanding of AfL. The purpose of these practices is to help to reduce the gap between the current level of students and the desired objectives and also increase the students' self-monitoring of their own learning. This means that AfL focuses on the learning process and helps students fill their learning gaps (Sadler, 1989). If these elements of AfL are used efficiently, it might effectively enhance learning and instruction.

However, the ARG definition of AfL is widely understood as strategies or techniques that help in providing scaffolds for learners to construct their knowledge (Glasson, 2009). The argument here is that the implementation of AfL tends toward superficial and mechanical level in which AfL is being reduced to a set of strategies. This severely constrained the potentials for learning.

However, the superficial implementation of AfL techniques and strategies as only controlled by teachers led Marshall and Drummond (2006) to create a distinction between the "letter" and "spirit" of AfL, as will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.2 Moving from the "Letter" to the "Spirit" of AfL

Some AfL research assume that AfL that focusing on promoting an understanding of goals and criteria, giving feedback, helping learners know how to improve and developing the capacity for self-assessment reflects a purely constructivist approach (Cowie, 2005a; Marshall & Drummond, 2006; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Murphy & Hall, 2008). A constructivist approach to learning "focuses attention on the mental models that a learner employs when responding to new information or to new problems" (James, Black &

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McCormick, 2007, p. 17). A constructivist approach puts the emphasis on students' interests and helps them to construct knowledge on schemas of prior knowledge by providing them with scaffolding instructions (Hmelo-Silver, Duncan, & Chinn, 2007). Hence, within a constructivist perspective, AfL provides learners the cognitive scaffolds to help them be expert learners who are able to construct and develop knowledge individually.

However, this constructivist view of AfL is challenged. Bredo (1994) criticised the focus on an individual model of learning where "mind is separated from its physical, biological, and social contexts" (Bredo, 1994, p. 26). Instead, AfL is a shared interaction in a social environment between teachers and students and students and peers (Sfard, 1998). Elwood (2006) puts forward the notion that assessment is a complicated cultural process, where the relationship of the learner, the teacher and the task are examined in the social and cultural context they exist in. When this context is strong enough, there is a clear impact on process of assessment, and so it must be understood fully. Without this, AfL fails as a way of facilitating a global approach to education which is not affected by culture or impacted by teacher personality (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 6). A sociocultural perspective can empower teachers into discussing their context's unique characteristics, which can allow learner autonomy to be developed. In turn, the process of learning then becomes the responsibility of the more independent learner.

The theoretical basis of AfL considers learning from a sociocultural perspective. In this regard, Marshall and Drummond (2006) stated that the most autonomy in students was developed by teachers who understood the value of social interaction and sharing the responsibility of learning with their students, with the help of AfL practices. In turn, teaching with the spirit of AfL could happen when the classroom built an environment where socially constructed learning is created. As a result, AfL is facilitated to the point where a culture of cooperation is established amongst teachers and their students, impacting subsequent assessment (Brookhart & Moss, 2009, p. 12).

AfL has strong progressive characteristics and is not an unwavering outlook on the teaching and learning processes (Marshall & Drummond, 2006). In order to fully appreciate AfL, the work of Dewey's and Vygotsky's describes that an understanding of learning and the pursuit of autonomy is important, where the teacher facilitates these actions by encouraging learners to take part and interact. This will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.3 The Sociocultural Theoretical Perceptive

The origin of sociocultural theories can be traced back to the work of Dewey and Vygotsky; the key notion of the theory is that learning is a social process. This section identifies some key ideas that informed the understanding of AfL as a social negotiation of meaning, based on the work of Dewey and Vygotsky.

The American psychologist, John Dewey (1859–1952), and the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) were highly influential reformers in education context in relation to the sociocultural theories of learning. Their approaches to learning are most helpful in establishing and extending the relationship between assessment and progression towards independent learning (Bredo, 1997). Both Dewey and Vygotsky held a broadly similar perspective of the socially constructed nature of learning and understood the notion of progression toward learners' autonomy, although they differed at significant points in their understanding of learning (Glassman, 2001).

Dewey (1916/1991) argued "that education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process that involve" (Dewey, 1916/ 1991, p. 38). He believed that the understanding develops through social interaction and "scientific inquiry" rather than through a symbolic teaching about a concept. This suggests that learning process should involve a clear interaction between students and teachers in a social environment. He argued that situating learning within the social context is important because engaging students in active learning helps them to conquer and destroy "self perpetuating prejudices" (Dewey, 1910,1997, p. 25).

Bredo (1994) maintained the situated view of learning as postulated by Dewey. Bredo sees learning as a distinct from locating learning in the head through symbol-processing of learning:

> activity as involving a transaction between person and environment that changed both.... Dewey focused on "doings and undergoings" which reciprocally change the character or structure of both person and environment, creating a joint history of development.... making mind immanent rather than transcendent. Cognition as situated; the activities of person and environment are viewed as parts of a mutually constructed whole (Bredo, 1994, p. 24).

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On basis of the above argument, a situated view of learning involves thinking and action that cannot be separated. Through reflection and dialogue, individual can explore more deeply into experience. In his work, Vygotsky (1978) argued that learners actively construct their own knowledge and meaning from experience. Vygotsky highlights that construction of knowledge is a social process that begins firstly from interactions within social environment (interpsychological). This is constructed later within an individual (intrapsychological). This emphasis on social interaction is one of the core ideas that forms part of his theoretical framework.

Vygotsky highlighted the role of culture and language as appropriate tools of engaging individuals in the achievement of greater social cohesion (Glassman, 2001). Language was realized as a tool that mediates activity especially when adults use tools such as language words, and signs to interact with individuals to complete a task. This helps individuals internalise learning and a ground for understanding their next task (Vygotsky, 1978).

Looking through the lens of sociocultural theory, the role of the teacher is to ensure that all students can work in a social environment and have the ability to collaborate in order to construct new knowledge and understandings. This arguably means that during interaction and collaboration, students learn from each other (e.g. their teachers and their peers). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is fundamental in peer collaboration. When learners are in their ZPD, "scaffolding" helps them to extend beyond the actual developmental level and achieve their learning targets (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is the difference between what individuals can do with or without help.

Vygotsky's defines ZPD as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). He argued that rather than focusing on students' actual development levels, the focus should be on helping students to achieve their potential development level under guidance from more advanced individuals or in collaboration with others.

Rogoff (1990) drew from Vygotsky's work that the unit of analysis is no longer the properties of the individual, but rather the sociocultural activity that involve these individuals in actively participating in socially constituted environments. Vygotsky believes that the role

of education is to provide learners with experiences which are in their ZPD, thus promoting and motivating their individual learning.

Gipps (1994; 2002) applied Vygotskys' notion of ZPD to support her claim on assessment that reflects and supports the learning process among students. In particular, ZPD is central to her argument regarding the shift away from assessment of learning. With a Vygotskian underpinning, Gipps (2002) identifies four key aspects that relate to assessment:

> The critical role of tools in human activity and implications of offering assistance and guidance during the course of an assessment... The inseparability of the social, affective and cognitive dimensions of action and interaction and hence the implication that learners should be assessed not in isolation and in competition but in groups and social settings... The relationship between expert and apprentice…and the implications of this for the assessment relationship... (p. 74).

Drawing from Vygotsky's thinking, AfL views learning as a process in social settings in which assessment is considered as a key in enhancing learning. Furthermore, promoting this social construction of knowledge through assessment do not only focus on interactions between teachers and their students, but also on the use of different tools, such as peer-assessment and feedback. It can be argued that AfL can capture students' future learning through creating an environment that supports learners to internalise different tools, instead of helping them to achieve certain outcomes in isolation to learning tasks.

AfL practices, within the sociocultural framework, are positioned within the broader social and cultural context of learning settings. "The social structure of the practice, its power relations and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). This helps understanding AfL within a sociocultural context as an interactive process in which the teacher and students engage in discussion aiming to enhance and advance teaching and learning and encourage learners to become the owners of their own learning. Thus, Dewey's and Vygotsky's desire to promote autonomy where teachers can facilitate learning through engaging learners in assessment process is crucial to the "spirit" of AfL. This puts the emphasis on the realization of learner' autonomy and development of their self-confidence as the guiding principles of teaching and learning while implementing AfL in classroom.

Therefore, AfL practices in a sociocultural classroom is conceptualised as cultural and dialectical process to empower learners to increase their understanding and their control over the learning process. From a sociocultural view of AfL, it was positioned as practice that occurs within daily pedagogical practices (Mansell, James, & Newton, 2009; Sardareh & Saad, 2013).

The next section examines the major sets of principles that guide and inform the implementation of AfL that foster students' learning, engagement and autonomy.

3.4 Critiques of Assessment for Learning

Christodolou (2016) noted that the anticipated improvements in learning as a result of engaging in AfL approaches had not occurred (p. 20). Indeed, some researchers, e.g., Coe (2013) believed that there was little evidence to support the position that AfL would result in enhanced achievement. Swaffield (2009) and Black (2015) argued that the potential advantages from AfL approaches had not been achieved because of an inadequate relationship between AfL strategies and learning theory. Stewart (2012) drew on Dylen Wiliam's contention that "there are very few schools where all the principles of AfL, as I understand them, are being implemented effectively" (p. 24). This evidence strongly implies that AfL has rarely achieved its potential within the school context. Bennett (2011) offered a powerful critique of AfL including five major areas of concern: professional development, measurement, domain dependency, effectiveness and definitional issues (p. 5). He argued that progress in AFL has been hindered by these problems.

Bennett (ibid) suggested that since AfL as a concept can refer to both an instrument and a procedure, this creates a definitional issue. He argued that when different concepts such as formative assessment and assessment for learning are referred to, each with distinct meaning, the complexity is exacerbated (p. 7). He reasoned that when a faulty procedure is followed, the performance of an instrument will be limited regardless of its level of scientific and rigorous development, while a procedure may similarly be let down by an inappropriate instrument, thus making the instrument against procedure distinction problematic (p.7). Accordingly, for AfL to be successful, it should be conceptualised as an instrument or method developed with a specific intention and combined with an effective procedure (p. 7).

AfL has also been subject to critique on the issue of effectiveness. Claims of significant learning gains from assessment activities that has been backed by empirical findings have

been challenged. Errors in these findings have been reported by Stobart and Hopfenbeck's (n.d.). Baird et al. (2014, p.45) draws on this work to support Bennett's findings, pointing out the common erroneous attribution of meta-analysis to the study undertaken by Black and Wiliam (1998).

Concerning the issue of domain dependency, it has been suggested that AfL should be embedded within different fields of knowledge acknowledging the differences that emerge in different domains, if it is to be effective (Bennett, 2011). Bennett (ibid) places more emphasis on cognitive-domain understanding in teacher practice, as well as advocating a more sensitive approach to the "intellectual tools and instrumentation" (p. 15) used within different domains.

A further area of challenge for AfL, professional development, is concerned with the extent to which teachers and other educators' have the necessary knowledge and skills to analyse and use findings from learners' class-based activities to support their learning. As Pellegrino et al. (2001, p. 42) explained, the actual knowledge that a learner has gained cannot be confirmed with complete precision, therefore a level of imprecision is inevitable. Indeed, an educator may be unable to accurately identify the reason for a student or set of students' shortcomings in understanding, even if there is clearly a problem. The reasons underpinning the lack of comprehension should rather be something that learners establish, facilitated by the educator, because observable errors may have numerous sources. Bennett (2011) noted that it was essential to create an environment where students can work with teachers to explore educational challenges. However, the efficacy of this process rests on the educator's proficiency and their cognitive domain knowledge. AfL, thus, involves assessment where the assessment must be as accurate as possible, considering the principles of measurement science beside developing teacher's expertise in inference.

The final issue that Bennett identifies concerns the educational context of the schools where AfL is to be adopted. He argues that high-stakes accountability testing of students impacts upon assessment practices within classrooms and a coherence between the two must be built "from the ground up" if it is to exist effectively (Bennett, 2011, p. 20). Swaffield (2009) argues that insufficient attention has been paid to key elements of the AfL process by Government in England. She states that "the AfL strategy practically ignores the process and pedagogical values and the underpinning principles" (p. 13). Nevertheless, AfL's potential benefits are still emphasised by Swaffield (2009, p. 14), who states that the advantages cannot be readily dismissed. Bennett (2011, p. 21), despite his critique, also

considers there to be significant potential for AfL. Ultimately, the path for further strengthening AfL's progress in education is to engage critically with it, rather than either providing a rationale for its complete dismissal or accepting its ideas and practices uncritically.

Overall, a deeper understanding of AfL among learners, educators and policy makers needs to be enhanced through the formulation of more strategic approach to AFL, one that takes into consideration the issues raised by its strongest critics.

3.5 Assessment for learning principles

There are an increasing number of principles guiding the good practice of AfL in the literature. For example, the AfL principles proposed by ARG in addition to the Assessment is For Learning project launched in Scotland as discussed earlier (p. 28), were useful guides for checking on the nature of various AfL practices to support the learning purpose of all assessments. Both studies take a school perspective.

In response to the sustained efforts to develop the learning state within HE sector, there is now extensive acknowledgment of the importance of defining assessment strategies which focuses specifically on improving and inspiring learning. There are a number of influential approaches which provide a good underpinning to identify the most effective and influential characteristics of AfL (i.e. Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Nicol, 2007a, 2007b & 2009; Rust, O'Donovan, & Price, 2005; Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). Their proposed approaches and principles are generated explicitly to address the strong link between assessment and learning in HE.

However, assessment and feedback approaches still need further understanding and development, especially in HE, even with some advances in policy and practice. Bloxham (2016) argued that assessment appears to be resistant to change and remains one of the most "conservative features" in HE. A number of studies regarding students' opinions shows that assessment and feedback are major sources of dissatisfaction among those students (Soilemetzidis, Bennett, Buckley, Hillman, & Stoakes, 2014). These results highlight the need of assessment reforms. Recently, Brown (2015) asserted that

> If we want to improve students' engagement with learning, a key locus of enhancement can be refreshing our approaches to assessment (p. 106).

Reforming approaches to assessment is key to improving learning and education. It is recognized that this issue is undoubtedly nuanced, complex and highly situated phenomenon, thus in what follows some principles that have influenced the development of AfL are discussed. As the AfL literature has been heavily influenced by these principles, it is important to identify them and understand their significance in order to better understand and inform the spirit of AfL implementation and development.

3.5.1 Conditions under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004)

Reviewing the principles in which assessment promotes learning, Gibbs and Simpson (2004) develop a number of conditions in relation to the development of effective assessment and feedback processes. Gibbs and Simpson's 11 conditions (Figure 2) can be grouped into 5 key themes include: 1) Quantity and distribution of student effort, 2) Quality and level of student effort 3) Quantity and timing of feedback, 4) Quality of feedback and 5) Student response to feedback. These five themes are further clustered into two main themes: student effort (Conditions 1-4) and feedback (Condition 5-11).

Quantity and distribution of student effort
- Condition 1: Assessed tasks capture sufficient study time and effort
- Condition 2: These tasks distribute student effort evenly across topics and weeks

Quality and level of student effort
- Condition 3: These tasks engage students in productive learning activity
- Condition 4: Assessment communicates clear and high expectations to students

Quantity and timing of feedback
- Condition 5: Sufficient feedback is provided, both often enough and in enough detail
- Condition 6: The feedback is provided quickly enough to be useful to students

Quality of feedback
- Condition 7: Feedback focuses on learning rather than on marks or students themselves
- Condition 8: Feedback is linked to the purpose of the assignment and to criteria
- Condition 9: Feedback is understandable to students, given their sophistication

Student response to feedback
- Condition 10: Feedback is received and attended to
- Condition 11: Feedback is acted upon by the student to improve their work or their learning

Figure 2 Conditions under Which Assessment Supports Students' Learning, Gibbs & Simpson (2004)

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) suggest that the use of assessment and the impact this assessment has on learners' effort should be rethink in HE. Later, Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet (2007) criticise the large volume of SA that decrease the study time students spend on their course. The findings of Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet's study highlight the need to reconsider the

number of assessment tasks used in each course, in addition to the distribution of these tasks. Based on Gibbs and Dunbar-Goddet's study, it appears that there is a link between different conditions (i.e. Condition 1 & 2) and focusing only on one condition will not enhance students' learning.

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) also stress the impact of feedback on students' learning as reflected in 7 conditions mentioned in Figure 2 above. While conditions 5 to 9 arguably have emphasised what teachers should do to provide feedback, conditions 10 and 11 focus on students' engagement with the provided feedback. However, the feedback seems to be largely controlled by the teachers and students' role is limited to receiving and attending to that feedback.

The conditions set out by Gibbs and Simpson (2004) is criticized by limiting the role for students while focusing largely on the role of teachers in assessment. However, these conditions are the first set of guiding principles to promote students' assessment in the context of HE.

3.5.2 A Social Constructivist Assessment Process (Rust, O'Donovan & Price, 2005)

A social constructivist assessment process was advanced by Rust, O'Donovan and Price (2005). This process has since informed further development and research in the assessment literature and their impacts on the wider HE sectors. The work of Rust, O'Donovan and Price involves building a shared understanding of academic standards between lecturers and students. Relating this work to AfL does not seem to be easy. However, the later work, Price and O'Donovan (2006) put the emphasis on "students need to understand the assessment task, criteria and expected standards, and subsequently their feedback so they can develop their learning and improve future performance" (Price & O'Donovan, 2006, p. 100).

Price and O'Donovan (2006) maintained that providing explicit assessment information and criteria through course specifications or learning outcomes ignores sharing of shared understanding of assessment process, criteria and task. Hence, Price and O'Donovan (2006) and Rust, et al. (2005) suggest a model of assessment process based on the social-constructivist approach to teaching and learning (see Figure 3). According to Rust, et al. (2005), "many problems in current practice could be overcome and the student learning experience greatly enhanced if a social constructivist approach is applied to the assessment

process" (p.232). This arguably could enhance learning and high achievement of learning among students because AfL is situated with social circumstances.
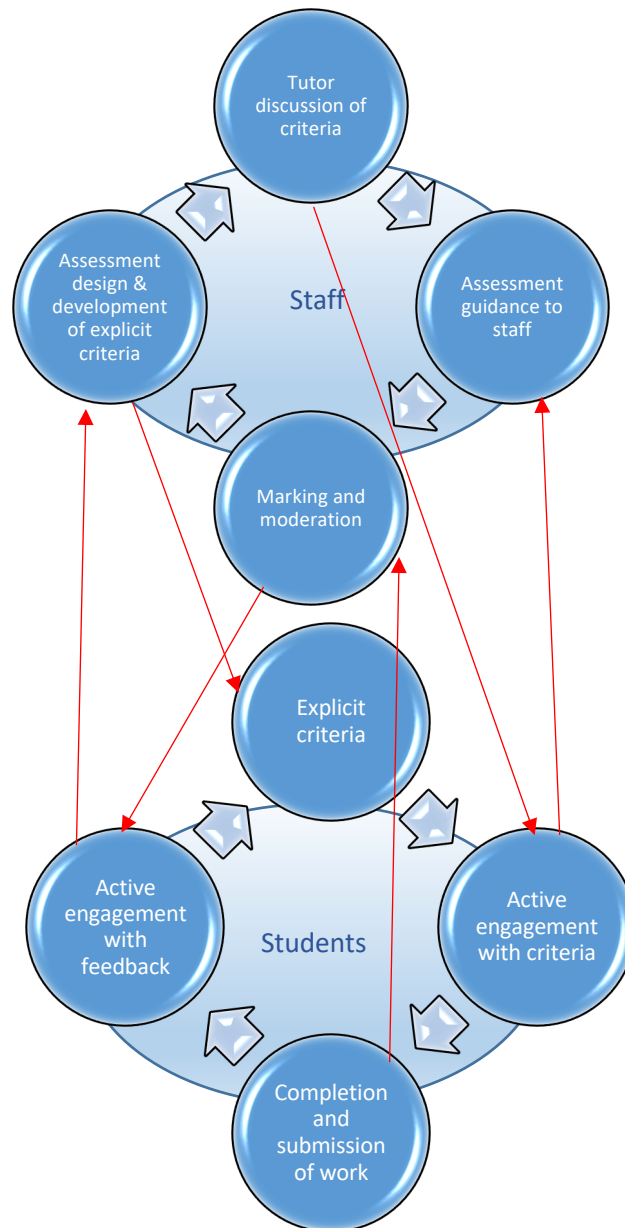
Figure 3A social constructivist assessment process: one dynamic system, Rust, O'Donovan & Price (2005)

Based on Rust et al.'s (2003) model, assessment is a process that involves different interactions between teachers and students, as illustrated in Figure 3 above. The focus of this model is to actively engage both lecturers and students in the process of constructing, developing and applying assessment criteria and assessment feedback. A social constructivism theory underpins AfL, hence, it is important not to view AfL as set of fixed processes represented in the model. Rust, et al. (2005) maintain that assessment criteria should be aligned with learning outcomes and overall teaching, learning and assessment

processes. Arguably, teachers should provide students with opportunities to be engaged in understanding the assessment criteria and assessment feedback.

This model by Rust, et al. (2005) is the only set of principles that views AfL as a process. In addition, this model represents the assessment process from both teachers' and students' perspectives and interactions and a more balanced role of both of them. This model has its benefits in emphasising that assessment is a complex process that involves interactions between teachers and students.

3.5.3 Twelve Principles of Good Formative Assessment and Feedback (Nicol, 2007a and 2009)

Nicol has different versions of AfL principles, suggesting that assessment is a complex area that requires revision and review. The different versions of assessment principles are often confusing for practitioners in HE. This section will therefore review the last version and highlight the key messages from this version.

Nicol highlighted twelve principles in Figure 4 below. Each principle of these twelve principles has questions which help teachers to review their assessment processes.

Nicol referred to a conceptual model of self-regulated learning of Butler and Winne (1995), which emphasises students' active role in learning. This model of self-regulated learning may make students socially isolated. Nicol (2007a and 2009) put the emphasis on the importance of feedback from others (i.e. teacher, peers) and interactions and engagement between teacher-student and student-student. Nicol's twelve principles therefore are underpinned by a social-constructivist viewpoint as put a great emphasis on the importance of dialogue and social engagement.

Nicol focuses on students' empowerment through stressing the importance of student involvement and self-evaluation and reflection in learning. Distribution of students' time and effort on challenging learning tasks and giving them choice in topics, methods, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments are overarching themes of empowering students as introduced by Nicol.

1. Help clarify what good performance is (goal, criteria, standards)
- To what extent do students in your course have opportunities to engage actively with goals, criteria and standards, before, during and after an assessment task?

2. Encourage 'time and effort' on challenging learning tasks
- To what extent do your assessment tasks encourage regular study in and out of class and deep rather than surface learning?

3. Deliver high quality feedback information that helps learners self-correct
- What kind of teacher feedback do you provide - in what ways does it help students self-assess and self-correct?

4. Provide opportunities to act on feedback (to close any gap between current and desired performance)
- To what extent is feedback attended to and acted upon by students in your course, and if so, in what ways?

5. Ensure that summative assessment has a positive impact on learning*
- To what extent are your summative and formative assessments aligned and support the development of valued qualities, skills and understanding?

6. Encourage interaction and dialogue around learning
- What opportunities are there for feedback dialogue (peer and/or tutor-student) around assessment tasks in your course?

7. Facilitate the development of self-assessment and reflection in learning
- To what extent are there formal opportunities for reflection, self-assessment or peer assessment in your course?

8. Give choice in the topic, method, criteria, weighting or timing of assessments
- To what extent do students have choice in the topics, methods, criteria, weighting and/or timing of learning and assessment tasks in your course?

9. Involve students in decision-making about assessment policy and practice*
- To what extent are your students in your course kept informed or engaged in consultations regarding assessment decisions?

10. Support the development of learning communities
- To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes help support the development of learning communities?

11. Encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem
- To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes activate your students' motivation to learn and be successful?

12. Provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching
- To what extent do your assessments and feedback processes inform and shape your teaching?

Figure 4 Twelve principles of good formative assessment and feedback, Nicol (2007a and 2009)

Nicol's twelve principles promote the active role teachers and students play in creating AfL. In the twelve principles of good formative assessment and feedback (Nicol, 2007a and 2009) the importance of dialogue and social engagement are stressed. Nicol (2009) explains that the framework which is introduced by Nicol (2007b) assist the application of the twelve principles, in order to improve especially, although not limited to, the first-year student experience. Nicol (2007b) introduces a framework with two dimensions (Figure 5) to assist the implementation of those principles.
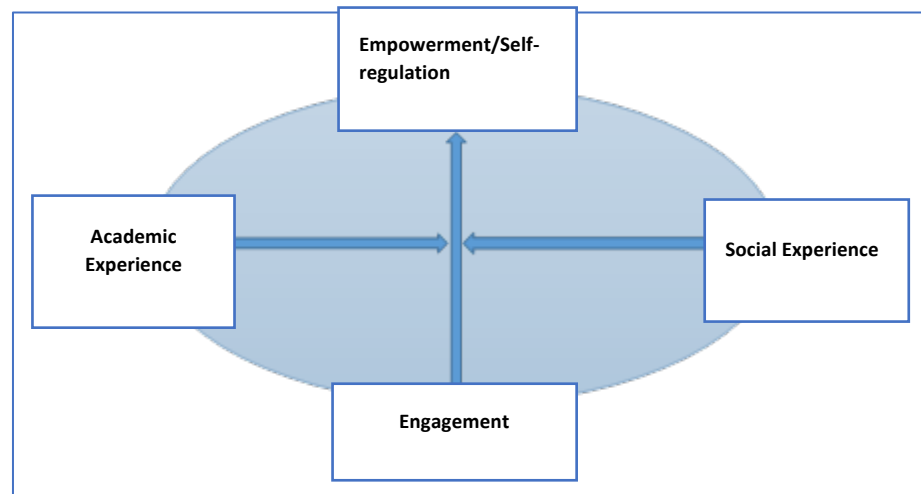
Figure 5Assessment and Feedback Practices: Dimensions of Implementation, Nicol (2007b)

As can be seen from Figure 5, there are two dimensions of assessment and feedback implementation. These involve the engagement-empowerment dimension and the academic-social dimension.

The engagement-empowerment dimension refers to the principles that enable students to become self-regulated learners. This dimension, according to Nicol (2009), comes from the idea proposed by Astin (1984) and Tinto (2005), 'engage' and 'involve' students socially and academically lead them to be successful in their studies.

Nicol (2009) maintains that engaging students does not necessarily empowering them. He states that the guiding principles for FA involves creating an atmosphere that gives students control of the learning situation through sharing responsibility to empower them. This dimension was also viewed through Vygotsky's idea of scaffolding as it "depicts the progressive reduction of teacher 'scaffolding' as students develop their capacity for self-regulation" (Nicol, 2009, p. 20). As discussed earlier in this Section 3.3.3 (p. 33), Vygotskian underpinning views learning as a social process before it can be internalised by the students. Therefore, Nicol's engagement dimension should be between lecturers and students, and students themselves. As students are socially engaged in the learning environments, they internalise the tools necessary to learn and therefore empower themselves.

3.5.4 Six Conditions of Assessment for Learning: The CETL's Model (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013)

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning's (CETL) specific aim was the development of best AfL approaches across the institution. The CETL is "one of 74 centres of excellence established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2005" (Sambell et al., 2013, p. 7). The key purpose for AfL of CETL is to support students in taking responsibility for evaluating, judging and improving their own performance. This idea of autonomous learning expressed in their definitions of AfL signifies a constructivist approach which were underpinned by Nicol (2007b and 2009) twelve principles of good assessment and feedback as discussed earlier Section 3.4.3 (p. 40).

The model of AfL discussed in Figure 6 below was developed by CETL and led by Kay Sambell and Liz McDowell. This model consists of six inter-related conditions with intention to transform teaching, learning and assessment environments holistically (Sambell et al., 2013). It aimed to achieve a better integration of teaching, learning and assessment processes.
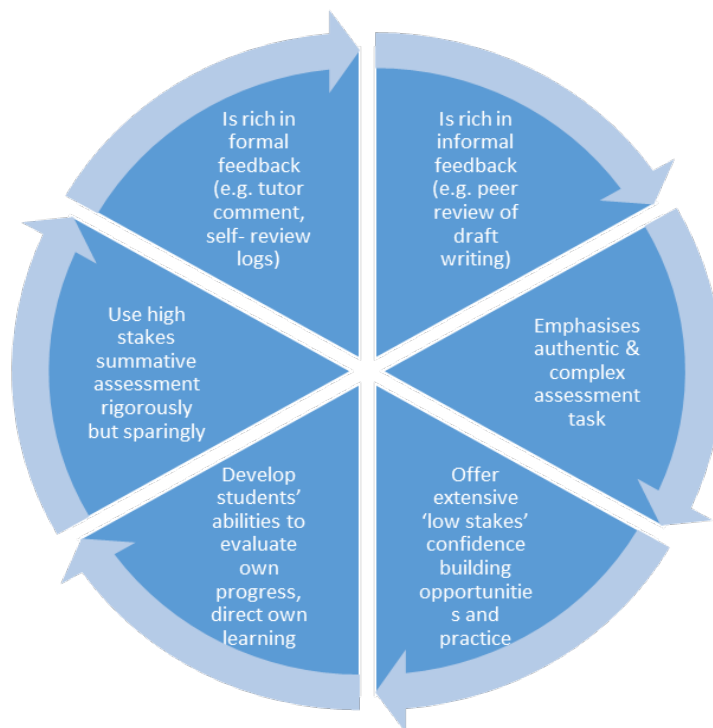
Figure 6The CETL's model: the six conditions of assessment for learning

This model is described as a feedback-rich learning environment that has FA at the core aiming to enable all learners to progress. This model is the only set of principles that divides feedback into formal and informal. The divide stresses feedback is not solely the

responsibility of lecturers, but also teacher-student and student-student dialogic feedback from a range of formal and informal collaborative learning activities, which seem to have a strong social constructivist underpinning. This interactive teaching and learning processes enable students to play an active role in their own learning, rather than simply expecting teachers to perform that role for them.

This model stresses the authenticity and complexity in assessment methods and content. This demonstrated the importance of enabling learners to construct their own meaning of the world. Authentic assessment encourages students' engagement in their learning. Authentic assessment will be discussed in more detail in Sub-section 3.5.3.4 (p. 53). Sambell et al. (2013) maintained that engaging students in learning activities and feedback gives them opportunity to actively understand, interrogate and challenge the standards, outcomes, and criteria used for the evaluation. This leads to active learning that increasingly enable learners to take control of their own learning and its assessment. This directs students to learn in real-life situations and with increased opportunity for application and assessment of their own progress and attainments; which supports autonomous learning.

Promoting a balance between the use of both FA and SA is another feature of this model of AfL. Interestingly, the term 'formative assessment' and 'summative assessment' were not used in defining these conditions but opts for low stakes and high stakes assessment. However, as argued by McDowell, Sambell and Davison (2009), the "high-stakes summative assessment is used rigorously but sparingly, so that formative assessment can drive the learning offering students extensive opportunities to engage in the kinds of tasks that develop and demonstrate their learning, thus building their confidence and capabilities before they are summatively assessed" (p. 60). Later, in their book, Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery (2012) have changed the model and rather than using the term "low stake" and "high stake", they have replaced them with FA and SA.

According to McDowell, Wakelin, Montgomery and King (2011), these six conditions should be viewed as an overall approach rather than see them as isolated techniques. Viewing these conditions as a cohesive approach positively influences learners experiences (Sambell et al., 2013). They argue that "our model was developed as a means of trying to ensure that participating teachers developed sophisticated levels of assessment literacy which could be use as basis from which to critically interrogate and inform their practice" (p. 8).

From the different sets of principles discussed in this section, it is clear that there are some commonalities across all principles, such as, provide and engage students with explicit expectations, provide and engage students with useful feedback, engage teachers and students in constructive dialogue. These principles of AfL aim to place the student at the centre of the learning process (Crooks, 1988). However, it is crucial to not see these models and principles as a quick fix to achieve the desired outcome. This implies that AfL is much more than a set of simple strategies or principles to be implemented by educators, but rather move more towards AfL which has learning at its core and help learners to feel empowered in their learning.

Ultimately, all the principles of AfL are interrelated and interacting in which learning effectively promote students' engagement and autonomy in a social environment. Thus, AfL must be conceptualized as an integral part of cultural and dialectical process that support students to act as partners in learning and to exercise increasing levels of control over their learning.

3.6 Assessment in Clinical Context

Medical and health science education innovations involve the introduction of new pedagogies associated with medical school development (Schubiger et al., 2019). Schubiger et al. (2019) maintained that these pedagogies are common practices that aim to enhance the learning environment with the capacity to boost students' learning. These pedagogies would arguably provide an enabling clinical environment for students learning as well as facilitate the development of critical and analytical skills. This is established through applying innovative assessment processes using complex and diverse strategies such as role modelling, questioning the student and providing feedback. Fahy, Tuohy, Butler, and Cassidy (2011) highlighted the fundamental role assessment plays to enhance the success of learning experiences and to enable students to develop professional competencies in clinical context.

It was noted that assessments are designed prospectively to improve students' competencies through the integration of core knowledge and clinical skills (Epstein & Hundert, 2002; Wass, Vleuten, Shatzer, & Jones, 2001). Miller (1990) introduced a simple competence pyramid to assess the clinical competencies of the learners within the medical context. In an attempt to highlight Miller's pyramid methods of assessment, it is necessary to understand the concept of "clinical competence" from the context of this study.

3.6.1 Professional Competence in Clinical Context

In recent years, the concept of competence from the clinical perspective has been extensively discussed (Fahey et al, 2011; Holmboe, Sherbino, Long, Swing, & Frank, 2010; Helminen, Coco, Johnson, Turunen, & Tossavainen, 2016). This is important because competence, in clinical context, is vital to patient's life and health; it is further a critical concept to medical education and medical disciplines as a whole. However, the concept has evaded precise definition because of lack of agreement among scholars within the discipline as discussed by Cowan, Wilson-Barnett, Norman and Murrells, (2008) and McMullan et al. (2003).

Regardless of a lack of conformity, three main concepts appear to increase the understanding of the term competence. These concepts include competence being viewed as "the performance or behaviour approach", "the generic approach" and "the holistic approach" (McMullan et al., 2003).

The behavioural perspective, defines competence as the ability to perform physical tasks that, includes the integration of psychomotor, cognitive and affective tasks, in addition to the psychological element (Girot, 1993).

Competence, from a generic approach, is seen as a set of transferable skills essential for improving performance. These skills or attributes include knowledge, problem-solving and critical thinking capacity (McMullan et al., 2003).

As a holistic integrated model, Gonczi (1994) argues that competence is context-bound and draws on attitudes, values, knowledge, skills and professional judgement to perform in specific situations. It also includes the capacity for reflective practice, in addition to values and ethics. This arguably, integrates attributes such as performance to conceptualise the term competence.

It is important to note here that the holistic conception of competence may be of relevance to clinical learning situations and innovative assessment culture. Applying a holistic approach, which is used in this thesis, enables individuals to accept the concept, in addition to developing more precise competence standards and assessment instruments (Cowan et al., 2008). Ideally, assessment of knowledge (what the student knows) aimed at improving a student's overall performance (what a student does when he/she performs), in addition to increasing the capacity of students to discover and build new knowledge. Arguably, this is

where authentic assessment could be found. Epstein and Hundert (2002) defined competence in medicine as,

> the habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values, and reflection in daily practice for the benefit of the individual and community being served. Competence builds on a foundation of basic clinical skills, scientific knowledge, and moral development. It includes a cognitive function— acquiring and using knowledge to solve real-life problems; an integrative function—using biomedical and psycho- social data in clinical reasoning; a relational function—communicating effectively with patients and colleagues; and an affective/moral function—the willingness, patience, and emotional awareness to use these skills judiciously and humanely. Competence depends on habits of mind, including attentiveness, critical curiosity, self-awareness, and presence. Professional competence is developmental, impermanent, and context-dependent (Epstein & Hundert, 2002, p. 226).

Competence, as argued by Carr (2004), builds on a foundation of scientific knowledge, clinical skills, and moral growth. He maintained that it has several domains:

a) Cognitive function: this involves acquiring and using knowledge for problem-solving.
b) Integrative function: this is the use of psychosocial and biomedical data in clinical reasoning.
c) Relational function: this is the ability to connect effectively with others (i.e. carers, patients and colleagues).
d) Affective and moral function: this is the ability to use skills such as willingness, patience, and emotional awareness to address human problems.

With the above, one can argue that clinical competencies are a mix of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes which medical staff are expected to possess in a specific clinical context to enhance and maintain patients' health. An effective assessment of clinical competence is fundamental to this process; hence it is essential that all of these facets of clinical competence are assessed.

3.6.2 Assessment of Clinical Competence- Miller's Framework

One of the striking features of literature all through is that it appears to steadily develop from Millers' pyramid (Vleuten et al., 2010). Miller's framework (see Figure 7) conceptualises

the essential aspects of clinical competence. Figure 7 below suggests the methods of assessment in medical education. It is the way of placing clinical competence in both educational and work settings (Miller, 1990). The assessment of the clinical competence starts with the knowledge components of competence and ends up with the components of competence to practise. It arguably could be that professional competence increases as we move up the pyramid. This shows that assessment tasks resemble real life practices.

Adaptation of Miller's Pyramid of Clinical Competence (1990)
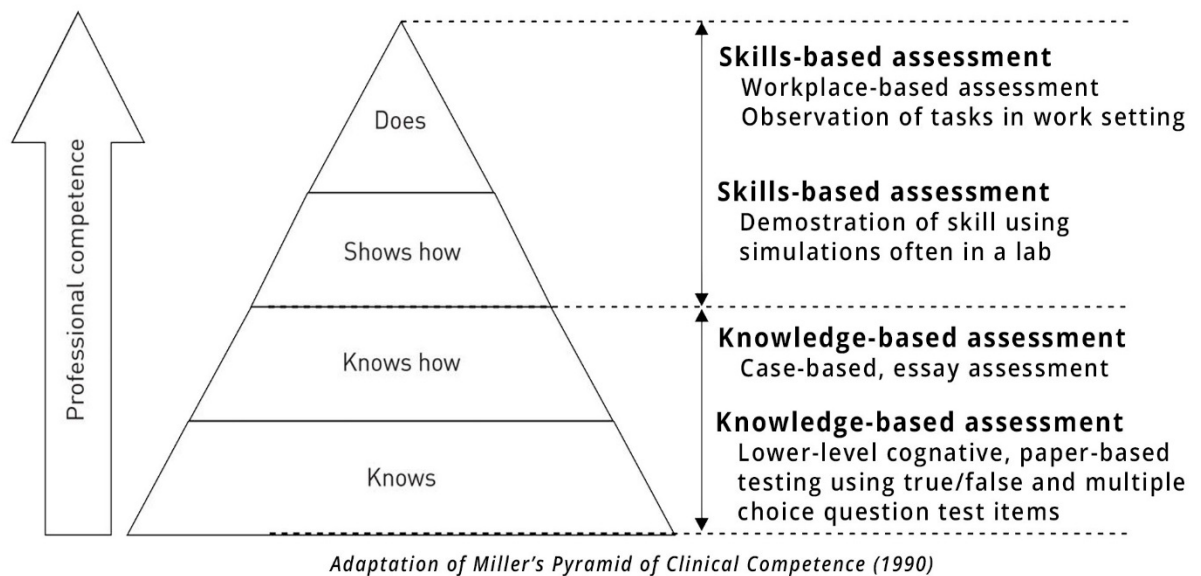
Figure 7Miller's pyramid for the assessment of clinical competence

Miller's pyramid for assessment of clinical competence (Figure 7) includes four levels: knows, knows how, shows how and does.

According to Carr (2004), assessment of knowledge in level 1 of Miller's pyramid is performed by traditional assessment tools such as written tests using true/false and multiple-choice questions test. In level 2 of the pyramid (knowing how), assessment methods such as case presentations and essays are often used to assess students' work. It is important to note that level 1 and 2 (knowing and knowing how) do not always indicate the application of knowledge in the real-life clinical settings.

On the other hand, "assessing levels 3 and 4 of Miller's triangle is more challenging" (Carr, 2004, p. 65). The top two levels of Miller's pyramid depend on students' performance in a performance situation. From the analysis of the literature methods that aimed at assessing skills and performance fall into these two levels. Simulation, as example is the popular method of assessing students' skills and performance. It is a teaching/learning strategy used to replicate the real clinical scenario (i.e. replace real patients with artificial situations with

some degree of reality). In the assessment process, students interact with these objects and are assessed based on the level of their performance. Role-play model is another example; it is a situation in which a student or staff member act as a patient who has a particular problem (i.e., epistaxis) and the task involves examining the patient through taking history, physical examination of the condition as well as creating differential diagnosis. These types of assessment tasks are tailored towards training purposes. Simulation and role-play experiences allow assessment of students in a less stressful environment, though it might not decrease associated fears of failure with live patients (McCallum, 2007). Arguably, such a kind of an environment might increase student competence and self-confidence within real health professional environments (Porter, Morphet, Missen, & Raymond, 2013).

While level 3 (showing how), including simulation and role-play, aims at demonstrating learning. Level 4 (doing level) aims at integrating performance into practice through workplace-based assessment. Workplace-based assessment, according to Norcini, and Burch (2007), refers to the assessment of everyday activities undertaken in the real-life context. So, to ensure effective assessment of clinical skills, students must be directly observed in real-life situation. Through these types of assessment, it is argued that lecturers can prepare and equip students in this stage of their learning for the internship year (the clinical year), which is based on applying their knowledge in workplace. For example, the student is expected to show his/her ability to assess patients and carry out necessary procedures that are needed in real-life situations such as conducting a physical exam and taking detailed health care history. It is argued workplace-based assessment will improve students' performance and lead to learning in the real-life clinical setting through the provision of feedback (ibid).

In their study of assessment, Kulasegaram and Rangachari (2018, p. 9) suggest that Miller's pyramid provides a "comprehensive organizational framework for assessment" as "no single method can be the magic bullet for assessment" (Vleuten et al., 2010, p. 708). The critical element that featured in Miller's model is it "ensure alignment between objectives, delivery, and the assessments. The particular assessments can be used are dictated by available resources and the context in which learning occurs" (Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018, P. 9). The application of all levels of the pyramid in medical and health science context, where students are undergoing multistage assessments, is notably succeeded (Fahy et al., 2011). This arguably shows that assessment requires students be able to apply their basic knowledge in addition to clinical skills, ethics and values in order to be prepared for the expertise needed to replicate the learnt knowledge in more authentic situations. This shows that assessment

should focus on extension of knowledge and generative skills to obtain an explanation of clinical concepts. It results in success especially in solving problems relating to these concepts (ibid). Kulasegaram and Rangachari (2018) maintained that real assessments present trainees with the challenge of learning new knowledge instead of just testing the existing knowledge in order to develop the clinical competencies. Hence, it could be argued that the focus on student-centred learning approaches and learner autonomy through assessment is required which reflects clinical competence development (Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018). This suggests that AfL is part of transforming learning pedagogy and instructional design to reflect learning-focused pedagogy. However, AfL to support student-centred approaches and learner autonomy in medical and health care sector is still in development worldwide (Kulasegaram & Rangachari, 2018). Student-centred approaches and learner autonomy will be discussed in more details in Section 3.6 (p. 58).

Therefore, it is essential to prepare students for future and life-long learning of how to use existing knowledge to scaffold the acquisition of novel ideas or concepts. Thus, assessing students' adaptability of using knowledge to deal with novelty and uncertainty is needed (Schwartz & Martin, 2004). The role of AfL in enhancing clinical competence of learners will be discussed as follow.

3.6.3 AfL to Support Clinical Competence of Learners

One of the major goals of an AfL approach is enhancing deep learning experience of learners to make them stand well in the future (Sambell, 2013). It is evident in the literature that AfL principles were applied and proven within the clinical context to support clinical competence, as will be discussed in this section. The idea of supporting clinical competence include noting the importance of sharing explicit assessment criteria with students; engaging students in dialogue, providing the opportunities for students to make use of feedback, etc. Arguably the development of clinical competence is a consistent process that is guided and facilitated by AfL's different sets of principles which were discussed earlier Section 3.4 (p. 36). This can facilitate the move toward student-centred approach, foster learners' autonomy and support the deep approaches to learning. The principle of AfL to support clinical competence can be summarized as follow:

1) Engage students with explicit and high expectations
2) Appropriate use and balance of formative and summative assessment
3) Capture and distribute sufficient study effort and time

4) Emphasise authenticity and complexity in the content and methods of assessment

5) Engage staff and students in constructive feedback and dialogue

6) Facilitate the development of self- and peer-assessment and reflections

7) Encourage positive motivational beliefs and build students' confidence and self-esteem

3.6.3.1 Engage Students with Explicit and High Expectations

Engage students with explicit and high expectations is one of the principles of AfL approach. To discuss this principle in respect to clinical context, it is necessary to clearly articulated learning goals, criteria or standards. As noted earlier, assessment forms a key part of the learning process in clinical context. Taras (2005) suggests that it is critical to compare student's performance against a set of criteria based on specific goals. In particular, health professional students need to be assessed in relation to criteria in order to be made competent to practice their profession as well as, ensuring the safety of the public (Duffy, 2003).

Arguably if the goals are not clearly defined, it will create a "gap between current learning and intended learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Burgess and Mellis (2015) suggest that well-defined assessment criteria make it easier to provide guidance based on the performance that are observed in a clinical setting. "It is most helpful when it concentrates on the performance, rather than the knowledge required for the task" (Norcini & Burch, 2007, p. 866).

Engaging students with an explicit set of criteria promotes a partnership in teaching and learning process, contrasted with a situation where the teacher is in a position of expert (Leach, Neutze, & Zepke, 2001). It is important to support both students and teachers in a clinical setting to be engaged fully in sharing the assessment expectations in order to promote competence. Moreover, Locke and Latham (1990) argued that identifying the objectives of assessment benefits feedback for students as these objectives will increase students' commitment to achieve them. Therefore, medical students need to have a clear understanding of learning and performance objectives which maintain staying focused on the task of achieving competence (Norcini & Burch, 2007).

3.6.3.2 Appropriate Use and Balance of Formative and Summative Assessment

With the growing focus on the performance of health professionals, assessment needs to make overall judgment about students' level of responsibility, fitness to practise or/and their

clinical competence. The literature highlights two key variations in the purpose of assessment within medical context include assessment for licensing and certification examinations and "program-specific assessments with mixed formative and summative goals" (Epstein & Hundert, 2002, p. 230). However, "if assessment focuses only on certification and exclusion, the all-important influence on the learning process will be lost" (Wass et al., 2001, p. 945). Hence, the focus here will be in the assessment that incorporates formative and summative functions aiming to contribute to students' learning. Epstein (2007) argued that assessment is educational, if it reinforces students' intrinsic motivation to learn and has a significant influence on their learning and practice development.

As widely argued in the literature, to promote learning, assessment should be formative, by for example, practising two-way feedback in which to build their scientific knowledge and clinical skills. FA can provide feedback that orient the student who is approaching a relatively unstructured body of knowledge.

While SA, on the other hand, might not provide sufficient feedback to drive learning (Schuwirth & Vleuten, 2004), it has been demonstrated that assessing without feedback can still support learning (Kornell, & Rhodes, 2013; Kornell, 2014). This might be because students tend to study those things they expect to be tested on. Thus, even in the absence of feedback, SA may influence learning and act as a facilitators to further practice or training (Epstein, 2007).

Assessment of clinical competence, which is designed with respect to formative and summative functions is necessary (Wass et al, 2001). This raises a challenge for medical educators as they need to plan and design assessments with mixed formative and summative goals whilst on placements.

3.6.3.3 Capture and Distribute Sufficient Study Effort and Time

Clinical workplaces are dynamic learning environments which are "characterized with high workload and conflicting demands of service and training" (Embo, Driessen, Valcke, & Vleuten, 2010, p. 263). Thus, medical educators must recognize that clinical competence develops over time through experiences and learners need time to develop as practitioners (Cowan et al., 2008; Skøien, Vågstøl, & Raaheim, 2009). The above statement suggests that there is a need for sufficient distribution of students' effort over time in order to maintain and develop students' clinical competence. Evidence shows that educators who work under pressure to assess students' fitness to practise and develop professional competence within

a relatively short time might unintentionally put students under the pressure of constant assessment during placements (Morris, 2011). It was noted that large volume of SA and marking contributed to their stress (ibid).

In nursing educational practice for example, there are two types of clinical placement namely block placement and distributed placement (Birks, Bagley, Park, Burkot, & Mills, 2017). Block placement, which was finalised in Australia in 1992, is a style of students' training prior to the transfer of nursing education at the university sector. This type is in form of apprenticeship, which give students much experience and it incorporates full-time placement for a period of weeks (Kevin et al 2010).

On the other hand, the distributed model arose from a National Review of Nurse Education recommendation that emphasized introducing nursing students to practice in a range of clinical settings (Kevin et al. 2010). This requires students to attend placement and classes concurrently and this could be distributed as, for example, three days of classes and two days in the clinical setting every week (ibid).

Birks et al. (2017) maintained that there is less pressure in nursing students when assessment tasks are distributed over time and has a positive impact on their academic achievement. This also promote understanding and self-confidence among the students. This arguably shows that distribution of assessment tasks creates learning opportunities in clinical setting. It helps learners in making clinical decisions and acquiring new clinical knowledge and skills while practising in clinical setting (Levett-Jones, Gersbach, Arthur, & Roche, 2011).

3.6.3.4 Emphasise Authenticity and Complexity in the Content and Methods of Assessment

In medical education, the critical role of experiential learning plays in promoting students' learning and competence in real-life experience is highlighted. A wide range of methods, including those called authentic assessments should be used in the medical context to assess clinical competency and performance to enhance student progression (Poindexter, Hagler, & Lindell, 2015). Authentic assessment is defined as "an assessment requiring students to use the same competencies or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life" (Gulikers, Bastiaens, & Kirschner, 2004, p. 69). Thus, authentic assessment is essential in this context to ascertain students are able to apply the knowledge they acquire to real-world settings as a way of integrating learned knowledge with clinical skills and attitudes (Wu, Heng, & Wang, 2014).

Authentic assessment tasks, hence, should replicate real-life situations, standards of performance and challenges that professionals usually face in the field. It can serve as a powerful approach of assessing intellectual ability or achievement because "it requires students to demonstrate their deep understanding, higher-order thinking, and complex problem solving through the performance of exemplary tasks" (Koh, 2017, p. 1). Koh argues that authentic assessment is considered effective in assessing students' clinical competence in professional environment.

Use of clinical case is one example of authentic assessment that lecturers can adopt for the development of competent professional medical students. A case presents a real-life learning scenario describing complex situations requiring medical students' application of knowledge to explore a problem and make decisions that help in solving real problems. Wu et al. (2014) argued that authentic assessment promotes learning and assessment processes that involve the development of cognitive, personal, ethical, and functional competence in professional and real-world situations. This shows that a shift in focus from teaching to learning requires contemporary medical education to identify student-learning outcomes. This arguably prepares students to increase complex clinical competence that requires "clinical reasoning, decision-making, communication, team-work and leadership" (Wu et al., 2014, p. 2).

In addition, dialogue and discussion regarding the clinical case between students and lecturers and students and peers can stimulate clinical reasoning and decision-making skills (Cowan et al., 2008). This establishes an important foundation for the development of professional competence. This leads to "development of learners' confidence; enriched learning through self-, peer- and teacher-assessments; development of knowledge, skill competencies and critical thinking skills; and increased awareness of caring attributes and communication skills" (Wu et al., 2014, p. 5).

The above arguments suggest that assessment, especially in a medical context, should involve multiple interconnected components that learners have the capacity to learn from one another using different assessment procedures (i.e., exams, feedback, simulation, etc). This would therefore enable the adaption to change the process of teaching and learning (Holmboe, Sherbino, Long, Swing, & Frank, 2010). Understanding these interactions and the process of adaption to change is essential for creating, maintaining, and constantly improving clinical competencies. Al Kadri, Al-Moamary, & Vleuten (2009) suggest that efforts to achieve more clinically relevant experience with adequate balance between the different types of assessment are required.

3.6.3.5 Provide and Engage Students with Constructive Feedback

It was noted that feedback provides an important impact on learning and the development of competence among learners. Sultan and Khan (2017) viewed feedback as a dynamic process that involves both the learners and clinical supervisors at the centre. This arguably is meant to provide constructive feedback on student's performance with a view to improving their clinical skills; "feedback on clinical performance is essential for effective student learning in clinical practice" (Clynes & Raftery, 2008, p. 409). It could be argued that educators emphasizing constructive feedback would increase performance (ibid). It is critical for educators in clinical context, need to give continuous feedback with concrete recommendations for improvement of clinical practice and decision-making process (Wu et al., 2014). In addition, Al-Kadri, Al-Moamary, Al-Takroni, Roberts, and Vleuten (2012) maintained that feedback is effective if it promotes a deep approach to learning.

Some barriers were noted to prevent the implementation of effective feedback. These include lecturers and students' different conceptions and understanding of feedback, students' fear of negative comments, as well as inadequate educators' understandings or skills (Al-Haqwi, Al-Wahbi, Abdulghani, & Molen, 2012).

Thus, establishing dialogical processes in the medical context between teachers and learners and learners and peers through interaction between them which promotes more participation and allows greater flexibility of roles (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018). It could be argued that a reciprocal orientation built into feedback exchanges should involve two key elements. These are dialogical approach to feedback and the interaction process between teachers and students.

The power of communicative dialogue between teachers and students in deepening their relationship and improving students' understanding reflects on their competencies in clinical context (Al-Kadri et al., 2012). Communicative dialogue is recognized as a core competence of nurse education, effective communication and dialogue between students and clinical educators help students in developing professional competence and growth (Wu et al., 2014). The benefits of the dialogue are seen as the opportunity of enough time for reflection and discussion. This is useful in learning environment, especially the learning environment that enhances development of reflection and student's feedback skills and opportunities for self-assessment.

3.6.3.6 Facilitate the Development of Formative Self- and Peer-Assessment and Reflections

Self-assessment is seen as an important skill for lifelong learning (McDonald & Boud, 2003; Boud, 1995). To improve clinical competence, self-assessment should "form an important element in the overall assessment strategy" (Cowan et al., 2008, p. 904). Enrichment with self-assessment skills facilitates medical students' enhancement of their autonomy and empowerment in learning and reduce the educators' unilateral assessment (Al-Kadri et al., 2012). It was noted self-assessment motivates students and increases their interest which contribute to their clinical competence.

In similar way, peer-coaching and assessment were noted to contribute to the professional competence of the learners (Wu et al., 2014). The power of the strategy is that each member is seen as accountable. This arguably shows that students are vested with interest in his/her own learning and in that of their peers (Gibbs, 2010).

Andrew et al. (2008) argued that peer-assessment is a key pedagogical tool that helps learners to reflect on their own performances and that of peers. Applying this strategy of assessment helps medical students to discover their strengths and weaknesses and learn the essential knowledge and skills to better perform a task. Scott (2017) reported that peer-assessment has resulted in increased student comprehension. This shows how students would be accountable for their own and their peers' learning by assessing each other.

Self- and peer-assessments increase students confidence and develop their capacity to take ownership of their learning process (Evans, 2013). Self- and peer-assessments are considered as powerful motivational approaches, especially in clinical situations. This is because it leads to the development of learner' confidence and enriched learning and development of critical thinking skills; in addition to fostering communication skills and caring attributes. Hence, self- and peer-assessment remain valuable due to its impact on the development of students' learning and clinical skills and competencies.

In addition, reflection is seen as a tool for facilitating learning as a key component in AfL (Boud, 1995) and forms an important component of most health professional courses (Dalley et al., 2009). A reflective learning strategy was earlier developed by Brookfield (1998). This strategy places "praxis at the heart of facilitation", in which learning occurs with both the educator and students at the centre actively reflecting and analysing practice incidents together (Brookfield, 1998, p. 10). It is considered as a key pedagogic tool to promote

learners' ability to engage in reflective practice and to determine their competence as reflective practitioners (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2009).

In their early work on facilitation, Brockbank and McGill explored the prime role of informal reflective dialogue between educator and student (Brockbank & McGill, 2007). Reflective dialogue is a two-way process fostering feedback exchange and enriching learners' ability to develop the skills of giving and receiving feedback. However, the strategy puts educators under pressure due to its time-consuming nature in practice environment. To overcome the constraints placed on educators' time, Brockbank and McGill (2007) proposed "the use of student triads" to promote reflective dialogue. However, the evidence supporting this in medical education remains limited.

3.6.3.7 Encourage Positive Motivational Beliefs and Build Students' Confidence and Self-Esteem

AfL is influential in teaching and learning in the health care education; it is arguably seen as a facilitator for the students' development of self-confidence and clinical competence. A study by Brown et al. (2003) shows that effective assessment, in healthcare context, improves students self-confidence and competence for daily clinical situations while other researchers (such as Suliman & Halabi, 2007; Demirören, Turan, & Öztuna, 2016) reported development of self-efficacy.

Moreover, there are relative changes in student beliefs during clinical teaching/learning and assessment which revealed greater growth in clinical competence for the medical students (Blum, Borglund, & Parcells, 2010). There is a relationship between appropriate students believes, self-confidence and self-esteem and increased clinical competence related to assessment. For example, students who are "experiencing simulation as a primary mode of learning nursing assessment and skills would report greater self-confidence and receive higher competence ratings from faculty than students learning using traditional approaches" (Blum et al., 2010, p. 9).

In conclusion, practices linked to AfL in clinical context may be more likely to engage students in the development of their own learning and can extend or increase autonomy. "The features of AfL are however strongly inter-related suggesting that it should be seen as an overall 'approach' rather than a set of techniques which can be dropped in to different teaching and learning contexts" (McDowell, et al,. 2011, p. 762). Marshall and Drummond (2006, p. 135) maintain that the implementation of these practices "becomes much more than

the application of certain procedures… but about the realization of certain principles of teaching and learning". Therefore, a conceptual change is needed, where the educator's intention is to maintain and enhance student leaning and understanding (Sambell, Brown, & Graham, 2017). When used well, Prosser and Trigwell (1999) suggest, AfL is most likely to support a higher quality student approach to learning and can contribute to development of clinical competence.

3.7 Key Themes from AfL Literature

From the review of related literature on AfL in relation to sociocultural perspective, two key aspects promoting students' learning development were identified. These factors include students' approaches to learning and learner-centred pedagogical approach. These factors will be discussed in the following sections.

3.7.1 Students' Approaches to Learning

It is acknowledged in the literature the significant impact of assessment practices on students' approaches to learning (Al Kadri et al., 2009; Crooks & Mahalski, 1985; Gibbs, 1999; Rabah, Cassidy, & Narayana, 2018; Ramsden, 2003; Scouller & Prosser, 1994; Thomas & Bain, 1984). There is a considerable impact of assessment on students' approach to learning. Ramsden (1991) classified approaches to learning into three groups. This includes deep approach, strategic approach and surface apathetic or superficial approach.

In essence, deep learning approaches are related to the students' intentions to understand and construct meaning out of the content of learning, which might be relevant to practical situations. Surface approaches to learning, on the other hand, refer to students' intentions to learn ideas by memorisation and reproduction the factual contents of study materials (Gijbels & Dochy, 2006). This arguably does not relate to real practice and with time the students tend to forget the content memorised. Strategic approaches to learning refer to using both deep and surface approaches to learning, these ideas will be discussed below.

3.7.1.1 Deep, Surface and Strategic Approaches to Learning in HE

The terms surface and deep approaches to learning were first used in 1976 by Marton and Säljö. It has been subsequently developed by Biggs (1987); Entwistle and Ramsden (1983/2015). The terms are extensively discussed and described different learning approaches in HE context. Ramsden (1991) classified approaches to learning into three

domains include surface apathetic or superficial approach, deep approach and strategic approach.

The surface approach to learning refers to students' intention to complete assessment tasks acquiring a grade, a mark or a qualification instead of becoming interested and understanding the content (Biggs, 1987). In addition, the different components of the task are seen as disconnected and discrete (Biggs, 1987). Hence, students see tasks as external impositions and isolated phenomenon instead of understanding or reflecting on them. This shows that students rely on memorization for the purpose of meeting the assessment requirements (Biggs, 1987; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983/2015).

In the surface approach, students are treated as passive learners and lack the quality acquirement through deep approach to learning. Thus, learning approach denotes how students prepare themselves for the further stage of life and what quality they achieve through the HE programmes.

On the other hand, students using deep approach are motivated to understand learning content and fully take an active part in their learning and studies processes. It could be argued that students who are inclined the deep approach become critical learners with the capacity to analyse, synthesize and evaluate ideas. This also contributes to successful applications of ideas with a view to getting underlying meaning of the task. Deep learning mostly allows linking tasks with real-life situation. The properties of this application are to allow students using their personal experiences and other relevant knowledge to apply them in real-life context (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983/2015; Biggs, 1987). Thus, it could be argued that deep approach enables students to acquire desired knowledge, skills and personal attributes. It empowers the learners to optimize their potential, understanding and reasoning capacity. It fosters self-directed and lifelong learning.

The debate between these approaches to learning favours the deep approach with argument that surface approach is "inappropriate and should be discouraged as they are consistently associated with poorer quality learning outcomes" (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999, p. 92). In contrast, Prosser & Trigwell (1999) argue that in adopting a deep approach "students have an intrinsic interest in the task and an expectation of enjoyment in carrying it out" (p. 91).

It was noted that relevant system of assessment, in addition to good teaching practices promote students' interest in a subject. This is key factor for implementation of deep

approaches to learning in HE. Evidence suggests that learners' background knowledge and level of interest are leading to deep approaches to learning (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983/2015).

However, some educationalists have express concern about avoiding the application of a surface approach in teaching and learning (McMahon, 2006; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). In her work with Chinese learners, Webb (1997) noted the use of the surface approach to learning is helpful; in most Chinese learning processes rote memorisation was prominent rather than understanding. Webb (1997) justifies: the "back and forth movement" between the surface and deep approach to learning referring to the complexities of learning (Webb, 1997, p. 206). It was noted searching for understanding and meaning making are different for different learners.

It should be noted that students can study through using both surface and deep approaches to learning. This is referred to as a strategic approach to learning (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983/2015). Learners who prefer a strategic approach to learning often use "cues and clues" about assessment (Ramsden, 1979). Those learners are motivated by learning that leads to positive outcomes, so using both deep and surface approaches to learning are more appropriate to them. Strategic learners' major aim is to achieve a good outcomes with the help of organized learning and studying methods and time management (Cebeci, Dane, Kaya, & Yigitoglu, 2013).

Bloxham and Boyd (2008) observed that the learning approach is "not a fixed characteristic of an individual but is influenced by their perception of the learning environment" (p. 17). For example, the learning experience of each student is not controlled by the teacher/lecturer, but rather influenced by the way they approach the task. Evidence suggests that it is the learning environment that informs the learning approach adopted by each individual student. That kind of environment promotes sharing learning outcomes, questioning, self- and peer-assessment, and feedback to promote active participation of students. It is noted that interaction with learning through active participation suggests that AfL promotes an appropriate and realistic learning approach.

3.7.1.2 AfL that Support Students' Approaches to Learning

Rowntree (1977/2015) shows that assessment practices have a serious influence on how students' approach their learning. This involves what students need to do develop within the learning environment. What is seen to be desirable for students in HE is the deep approach

where they seek meaning and understanding from their learning, instead of the surface approach to learning which is considered as inappropriate for HE (Vermunt, 1998). Further evidence shows that deep approach to learning is more realistic for students in HE especially when an AfL environment exists (McDowell et al., 2011).

It is recognised that high-quality learning and teaching in HE could be achieved by educators, especially by taking full responsibility in assessment and other related elements in the teaching and learning. This system arguably constructively aligned to promote deep learning approaches. The deep approach to learning is tending to be implemented with an appropriate AfL environment (McDowell et al., 2011). It shows that experience, engagement including teacher and peer support were found to be significantly positively correlated with the deep approach to learning (Wil, 2006). Implementing AfL into the classroom teaching and assessment processes is associated with students meaningful deep learning approach.

Peer-assessment, as an example of AfL practices, helps in generating a deeper learning approach, so learners who are making use of peer-coaching and support are more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning (McDowell et al. 2011). It was also noted that students who are engaged in a collaborative work leads to creation of dialogue with both their peers and teachers. This dialogue with peers and teachers can foster deeper learning and understanding (Sambell, Brown & Graham, 2017). Therefore, students' use of peer-assessment is critical element of peer support and practices. This has the potential to support students in taking more ownership of their own learning. There is "significant positive correlation between a deep approach to learning and the positive rating of peer support" (McDowell et al. 2011, p. 761).

Accordingly, AfL has strong relationship with the deep approaches to learning as demonstrated by Al-kadri, Al-kadi, & Vleuten (2013); Gan, Hoi, & Schumacker, (2019); Gibbs, Simpson, James, & Fleming (2004); Sambell et al.m (2017); McDowell et al. (2011). Thus, AfL is a useful tool for educators to adopt in their classrooms in order to foster students' learning. The predominant focus on assessing students to just let them pass an assignment hinders the adoption of deep learning approach (Al Kadri et al., 2009) in the era of their preparation for professional environments. Millennium students need to be effective sense-makers when they encounter new knowledge, rather than just memorizing facts (Sambell et al., 2017).

However, practices linked to AfL might not always lead to deep approaches to learning. It depends on the practices and implementation, which determines whether or not AfL encourage a deeper learning approach. It could be argued that the theoretical underpinning of AfL and its guiding principles aims at the quality of the learning processes in a social environment rather than outcome-focused taking greater responsibility for students' learning and development.

This arguably represents an important step toward successful adoption of a range of learner-cantered approach as a theoretical framework for assessment practices. Thus, learner-centred approach is considered relevant for promoting learning and understanding among students (Sambell et al., 2017) as will be discussed below.

3.7.2 Learner-Centred Pedagogical Approaches

There is an increasing interest in student-centred thinking as part of AfL application in and out of the classroom (Sambell et al., 2017). This was meant to avoid the application of teacher-centred approach in the assessment process. Prosser and Trigwell (2014) make distinction in the application of teaching approach at university between teaching-centred and learning-centred pedagogies. The teaching-centred strategy is described by Harden & Crosby (2000) shows that it is a situation which the teacher being the knowledgeable dispenser of knowledge to students who are considered to have known nothing. This traditional teacher centred pedagogy assumes that teacher has the primary responsibility for communicating knowledge to students. This arguably shows that teachers command greater expertise on knowledge sharing and construction. They are considered to have the monopoly to decide the structure and content of learning in the classroom settings.

> The teacher (a) is the dominant leader who establishes and enforces rules in the classroom; (b) structures learning tasks and establishes the time and method for task completion; (c) states, explains and models the lesson objectives and actively maintains student on-task involvement; (d) responds to students through direct, right/wrong feedback, uses prompts and cues, and, if necessary, provides correct answers; (e) asks primarily direct, recall-recognition questions and few inferential questions; (f) summarizes frequently during and at the conclusion of a lesson; and (g) signals transitions between lesson points and topic areas (p. 366).

Teacher-centred pedagogy is described on the premised of active teacher and a passive learner.

In contrast, the learning-centred strategy focuses on the learners and their power to participate in the development of their own learning rather than relying on the teacher's dictate of learning. The key argument of learner centred approach capacity to change and develop student understanding (Harden & Crosby, 2000, p. 335). Dear (2017) maintained that student-centred learning "is an approach to education that has become endemic across all levels of education over the past decades" (p. 719). It could be noted there is a paradigm shifts from teaching dominated learning to an emphasis on learning that give the student's power to learn. This reflects notions of HE learning which is "… more often than not, a synthesis of ideas from constructivist, socio-cognitive and situated perspectives, where learning is regarded as a process whereby individuals construct knowledge and understandings as they interact with the social environment" (Hawe & Dixon, 2017, p. 1).

This shows that the teacher is not the primary source of knowledge but rather a facilitator who guide students in their learning.

> (a) teachers are a catalyst or helper to students who establish and enforce their own rules; (b) teachers respond to student work through neutral feedback and encourage students to provide alternative/additional responses, (c) teachers ask mostly divergent questions and few recall questions, (d) students are allowed to select the learning task and the manner and order in which it is completed, (e) students are presented with examples of the content to be learned and are encouraged to identify the rule of behavior embedded in the content. (f) students are encouraged to summarize and review important lesson objectives throughout the lesson and the conclusion of the activity; (g) students are encouraged to choose new activities in the session and select different topics for study, and (h) students signal their readiness for transition to the next learning set (pp. 366- 367).

In a student-centred strategy the teacher acts as role model with the capacity to change and develop students through assessing and challenging their ideas through questions, dialogue and practise (Prosser & Trigwell, 2014). This move toward learning-focused can promote students' skills and enhance their knowledge through taking more responsibility for their learning.

This shows that it is important to create an appropriate learning environment to take place through assessment. This is relevant considering the pivotal role for lecturers in creation of appropriate learning experience (Daley & Nisa, 2016). AfL practices allow lecturers to

facilitate and guide student's learning through participation, but also to create an authentic learning experience that increases autonomous learners. Learner-centred assessment activities are embedded features of classroom practice while lecturer's role is significantly important to maintain discussion and participation.

Learner-centred approach is most likely to increase student learning capacity (Prosser & Trigwell, 2014). They show it is possible to encourage students to think critically, creatively and deeply by using learning-centred pedagogy.

Entwistle and Ramsden (1983/2015) argued that active students are more able to have the intention to understanding, engage with and operate in subject. This suggests that learning is about developing students understanding, which puts them in a good position to achieve the high-quality outcomes as anticipated in HE. To help students achieve this shift, they must be actively involved in learning process by interacting energetically with content, constructing the learning outcomes, preparation and assessment, making use of evidence and relating concepts to everyday experience.

The conceptual shift in HE perspective toward learning-focused pedagogy shows the importance of the new approach to assessment to have potential influence on student learning (Brew, 1995). Within student-centred assessment, Neill and Mcmahon (2005) stress the importance of students' role as active participants in their learning. In addition, involving student to make meaning in understanding of how the assessment process actually occurs. Students have a tendency to display mutual respect within the student-teacher relationship in the assessment process. Formative, creative and active modes of assessment foster the focus on the process of knowledge construction and the deep understanding and increase responsibility and accountability and increase sense of autonomy in the learner.

3.7.2.1 AfL Practices are Bridges to Greater Autonomy

Student-centred approaches are associated with pedagogy to develop the learner's sense of ownership in their learning through active participation, dialogue and active relationship with others, as will be discussed in Sub-section 3.6.2.2 (p. 65). The student-centred approach support learners in developing "…an independent, lifelong learning capacity. This promote students investment in the learning process, with full autonomy for their own development" (Winstone & Millward, 2012, p. 1).

The term autonomy is associated with students' development of independent mind. However, defining autonomy is challenging since it associated with other terms such as independent learning, self-direction and self-instruction, which can be used interchangeably in the literature (Meyer, Haywood, Sachdev, & Faraday, 2008). Thus, for clarification, the terms independence and autonomy will be used interchangeably within this study.

In this research, autonomy will be seen from the perspective of Chene (1983), who looked at autonomy as "one's ability to choose what has value, that is to say, to make choices in harmony with self-realisation" (p. 39). An autonomous learner has capability to integrate "…whatever he or she learns in the formal context of the classroom with what he or she has already become, as a result of developmental and experiential learning" (Little, 1995, p. 175). This does not rule out the possibility that an independent learner might choose to work with peers, within a small group or under the guidance of a tutor. This shows the desire and understanding for the reason of sharing (ibid). The autonomy process gives the learner the capacity in making decisions freely with some level of degree of choice. However, from sociocultural perspective, it is not possible to neglect the teacher's role during the learning process. This is particularly relevant for AfL practices, since it considers the teacher's significant role in engaging students and creating opportunities for discussion and learning.

3.7.2.2 Learning Through Participation and Dialogue

In his sociocultural model, Vygotsky (1978) highlights the importance of teachers and learners' engagement in social discussion and dialogue for learning to take place. Participation is considered a key to the integrated cultural process. In his participatory modes of learning, Coffield (2008) maintained that learning occurs where students are central to the process of learning. This shows that increased familiarisation and participation with learning is key to learning construction. The student develops expertise through participation in the social interaction, however, participate appropriately is not an easy social activity for all students (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). This puts the emphasis on the "teachers, and more experienced colleagues, peers and mentors... to open up practice to learners by engaging them in the joint enterprise, enabling them to feel able to negotiate meanings and experience mutuality, and extending their access to the repertoire of the tools of the community" (Murphy et al., 2008, p. 113).

The practices of AfL as patterns of participation (Cowie, 2005b) are influenced by certain factors. These factors include cultural and social contexts as well as cognitive factors.

Stiggins (1997) maintained that students' participation or engagement in the assessment process is a key to student-centred assessment. This shows that within student-centred assessment the teacher plans multiple tasks to encourage participation, as Marshall and Drummond (2006) argued teachers play a pivotal role in recognising and planning ways to enhance a range of factors that foster participation. This involve engaging students in evaluating their peers' work, which could help students in developing social interaction and meta-cognitive skills. This helps students to focus their attention and work toward achieving learning goals. Evidence shows that students who are participating in self-assessment and assessment of others people's work become more likely to understand and to be engaged with the learning outcomes which reflects on their performance (Klenowski, 2009).

In addition, students' belonging to and participating should be shaped through dialogic exchange and reflective assessment. Establishing dialogical processes between teachers and learners and learners and peers through interaction and allow greater participation and flexibility in learning. This arguably might lead to fostering engagement in learning (Klenowski, 2009). It is suggested that dialogue make students active participants in learning, which is central to the construction of knowledge. Participation, in consequence, is shared and negotiated process between the teachers and student, thereby balancing both the support and the challenges students experience in the learning process. Hence, dialogue as participatory model of learning and process of feedback enhance mutual relationships among learners.

However, although dialogue has been recognised as a mean of enhancing leaning, the process is still limited. Students are still placed outside the decision process where they can only participate in a conversation with no real engagement. Accordingly, students are more likely "to be denied opportunity to develop autonomy and independence" (Massey & Osborne, 2004, p. 359). This might lead students to feel disempowered.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter begins by presenting a brief background of AfL and FA, and the confusion surrounding the terms, which created a dichotomy between FA and SA. However, the difficulties to implement of FA can be echoed here to the attempts to reconnect both assessments. As this chapter has shown, the various attempts to reconnect FA and SA in the literature has highlighted the need to view AfL in a different way, raising above all the confusions.

The chapter then tries to contextualise the definitions for AfL with emphasis on theoretical underpinning of the AfL. This is followed by critical examination of AfL different sets of principles through a sociocultural theoretical lens that frames AfL as a social interaction between teacher, students and tasks.

This chapter ends up highlighting some key themes surrounding AfL including assessment for leaning in clinical setting, leaner-centred approach and students' approaches to learning. The key message from this chapter is that without an explicit sociocultural underpinning, assessment will be taken on board by policy makers and practitioners in an instrumental and piecemeal fashion. It is important for practitioners in medical context to recognise that AfL is a process involving different meaningful approaches to learning with an emphasis of students' role in the learning process.

The following chapter will discuss the chosen methodology employed in this study and explain the method of qualitative dataset analysis used and its stages.

Chapter 4   Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The pervious chapter reviewed the literature concerning assessment. This chapter describes and justifies the chosen methodologies used to conduct this research. Research methodology is considered an essential component, as it leads the research process and directs the researcher engaging in the inquiry (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998). Kothari (2004) explains research methodology is undertaking research in a systematic way to study the research problem. Kothari (2004) argues that "it may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically" (p. 8). It is dealing with the different stages that researcher adopts to solve the research problem accompanied by the logic behind them.

This exploratory study seeks to obtain familiarity with a phenomenon and gain deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of assessment and its associated feedback in Saudi HE to achieve new insights into it. It has been undertaken in response to the recent changes to the HE environment driven by the Saudi government. The interest of this research in lecturers' and learners' experiences and perceptions led to phenomenological research approach, particularly Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996), in addressing the research questions:

1. From lecturers and students' experiences, what factors have shaped practices of assessment in medical classrooms?
2. What aspects of learning assessment as perceived by lecturers and students seemed to help or hinder students' learning?
3. To what extent, do lecturers and students understand the practices of feedback as a means to enhance students' learning?

This chapter discusses the underlying reasons for using qualitative research, in line with the main aim of the thesis. It provides the rationale for choosing the particular research philosophies, approaches and strategies required to critically examine the issue under study. Once the theoretical foundations underpinning the research methodology are established, an overview of data collection methods and then the ethical issues and the role of reflexivity are considered and addressed. Finally, steps to IPA of the data are provided.

4.2 Research Philosophy

The choice of methods is determined by philosophical assumptions (Brannen, 2005) and thus, the researcher's very first task in any given research is to clarify their basic philosophical stance. Within educational research, there are generally considered to be two main paradigms or philosophical stances to the production of knowledge, namely positivism, and interpretivism (Bryman, 2016; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Flick, 2018; Gray, 2012). Positivism is an approach to science based on reality exists external to the researcher; it can be objectively obtained through the scientific inquiry process (Flick, 2018; Gray, 2012). In contrast, interpretivism focuses on the way of making sense of subjective reality and attaching meaning to it, asserting that there is no obscure truth or objective reality. Interpretivist researchers believe that understanding of the individual's experiences is as important as focusing on explanation, prediction and control.

The root of an interpretivisim approach comes from the idea that instead of methods merely exposing pre-existing knowledge, they produce new knowledge. This approach includes social-constructivism (centred on that the world is interpreted and constructed by individuals in the society), ethnography (centred on cultures and societies) and phenomenology (centred on understanding of an individual's lived-experience) (Cal & Tehmarn, 2016). In this study, a phenomenological approach has been adopted as an interpretative underpinning approach in order to explore lived-experience of study's participants.

4.2.1 Phenomenology

As one type of interpretive paradigm, phenomenology is widely used in social sciences studies (Cal & Tehmarn, 2016), as the study of the structures of consciousness and experience. Van Manen (1990) stated "phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for what makes a 'some-thing' what it is – and without which it could not be what it is" (p. 10). The focus of phenomenology emphasises on this deep understanding of human lived experiences of an educational phenomenon (Van Manen & Adams, 2010). The aim of phenomenology, as described by Dowling (2007), is "the rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear in order to arrive at an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience" (Dowling, 2007, p.132). To sum up, phenomenology aims to gain a deeper understanding of an individual's lived experience from subjective and constructed world.

Indeed, phenomenology goes beyond being only a research approach to being a philosophy with both epistemological and ontological stances having a big impact in the development of knowledge (Gill, 2014; Gray, 2012; MacKey, 2005; Van Manen & Adams, 2010). According to Laverty (2003), epistemology is "the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known" and ontology is "the form of nature of reality and what can be known about it" (Laverty, 2003, p. 12). Elsewhere with respect to education, it has been translated into "the philosophical study of the nature of educational reality and how there may be different perceptions of what is known" (Jackson, 2013, p. 52). This suggests that perceptions of the realities of teaching and learning processes are shaped by the meaning given to them (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, different realities are interpreted in varieties of ways that leads to re-forming the contextual reality.

The epistemological (descriptive) phenomenology, which is developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), focuses on describing the essence of everyday experiences where the preconceived experiences of the researchers were bracketed (Gill, 2014; Laverty, 2003; McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009). Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) expanded Husserl's epistemological phenomenology by adding ontology, he developed hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009).

Heideggerian phenomenology aims to expose a deep understanding of the meaning of Being as "hermeneutic", moving toward higher interpretation level (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger "did not see consciousness as constituting the world. For him, people are experienced as being in the world, not apart from the world" (Thawornphun & Manunpichu, 2010, p. 68). Laverty (2003) described the Heidegger claim as that "to be human was to interpret" (p. 24), where every counter with a phenomenon entails an interpretation that is affected by his/her background. Crotty (1998) stresses the interpretative role of the researcher who is required to seek an understanding of the meaning of 'Being', rather than just knowing things. Hence, the researcher is a vital component of a research as Being in the participants world (McConnell-Henry et al., 2009). The role of the researcher will be discussed in Section 4.6 (p. 80).

4.2.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a Method

Interpretative phenomenological analysis, which was developed by Jonathan Smith (1995), "concurs with Heidegger that phenomenological inquiry is from the outset an interpretative process" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.32). IPA is an approach to experiential,

qualitative research that attempts to gain detailed investigation of individual's lived-experience (Smith et al., 2009). Underpinning IPA's theoretical foundations lie within phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography as discussed by Smith and Osborn (2015) as follow:

> Phenomenology is a philosophical approach, initially articulated by Husserl, which aims to produce an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions. IPA recognises that this is an interpretative endeavour because humans are sense-making organisms. In IPA, therefore, the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them. Finally, IPA is idiographic in its commitment to examining the detailed experience of each case in turn, prior to the move to more general claims (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 40).

Similar to Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, IPA focuses on the interpretive nature of inquiry seeking to obtain insider perspectives of the phenomenon under study (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, IPA depends heavily on a phenomenological stance that perceives individuals' own perception and views of the world as primary (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA is also tied by an idiographic approach that focuses on the particular as opposed to the universal aiming to understand each case in detail prior to making general claims (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, IPA allows the study of subjective experiences, and then develop an understanding of the individual's account of the processes by which he/she make sense of his/her experiences.

IPA, therefore, seeks a detailed examination of how an individual makes sense of his/her personal experience and social world. Shinebourne (2011) defines IPA as follow:

> IPA tries to understand what the world is like from the point of view of the participants. At the same time, it acknowledges that this understanding is always mediated by the context of cultural and socio-historical meanings. Therefore, the process of making sense of experience is inevitably interpretative and the role of the researcher in trying to make sense of the participant's account is complicated by the researcher's own conceptions (p. 44).

IPA is primarily "…concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event, as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or

event itself" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). IPA, then, is a "complex understanding of 'experience' invokes a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meaning, which are unique to the person's embodied and situated relationship to the world" (ibid).

IPA is described as a "dynamic process" with interpretative nature that emphasises the engagement and the reflexive role of researchers in the interpretation of the participant's experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). IPA researcher tries to explore in detail participants' lived-experience and how can they make sense of their personal experience and social world. Hence, the role of IPA researcher is to collect "detailed, reflective, first-person accounts from research participants. It provides an established, phenomenologically focused approach to the interpretation of these accounts" (Harper & Thompson, 2011).

The IPA analytical process is described in regard to the dual interpretation process or double hermeneutic, with emphasis on the researchers' role of interpretation of the participant's experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This means that IPA researcher seeks to explore and understand participants' lived-experience and how they make sense of their own experience. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), IPA research then incorporates aspects of both types of interpretation, which make the analysis comprehensive and rich.

In this respect, IPA is described as a dynamic and iterative process where researcher has an active role. Flexibility in IPA is a key as it allows for researchers' personal experience to add clarity and value to the interpretation process (Smith, 2011). However, Wagstaff, Nolan, Wilson, Tweedlie and Holland (2014) argue that the IPA researcher's interpretative role may introduce bias. The flexibility, hence, in most accounts, brings both potential benefits and challenges to IPA studies.

This study involves a qualitative, inductive approach that seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the views, perspectives and experiences of lecturers and undergraduate students in one Saudi HEI – Applied Medical Science School– about what makes for effective assessment to learning. It seeks to explore the main aspects of the learning assessment as perceived by students that seemed to help or hinder their learning. This study also aims to understand experience of lecturers regarding the practices of feedback as a means of enhancing students' learning, as well as students' understanding of assessment feedback and how they perceive feedback. Finally, the students' use of feedback as a mean to self-regulate their own learning is explored.

4.3 Research Strategy

This research is grounded within interpretivism/phenomenology approach and it attempts to investigate the way in which individuals perceive their lived-experiences. Interpretative research tends to be inductive in nature, with qualitative research methods typically being used (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative research mainly investigates phenomena in its natural setting and attempts to understand it by exploring empirical sources, with methods including interviews, focus group, case studies, etc. Whilst exploring phenomena in the natural setting, qualitative research employs multi-methods to collect, interpret, explain and generate meaning from data (Anderson & Arsenault, 1998, p. 117). Qualitative research is deemed to be highly effective for gathering, analysing and interpreting data regarding issues that cannot be easily quantified (Bradley, 1997, p. 31).

It is crucial to use an emergent design of qualitative research, as it enhances the research flexibility, which is vital when attempting to gather detailed information about a topic. Flick and Kardorff (2004) employed qualitative research methods to increase the flexibility of their research when exploring phenomena, since it helped them to obtain a more profound understanding. It is asserted by Flick (2018) that qualitative research is highly beneficial for use when investigating questions of "why" as opposed to "how many", and this shows how qualitative typically generates a wider understanding and a full picture of the issue instead of merely outlining it. The importance of qualitative research in generating vital contributions to the existing knowledge in the education field has been highlighted by Merriam (1998), who explains that such research concentrates on exploration, gaining insight, and understanding the topic of the population under study (p. 1).

Qualitative research typically explores and addresses how individuals interpret, understand and make sense of the environment around them. By investigating the perceptions of people who have experienced a specific event, this enables a researcher to obtain and understand "multiple perspectives" of the phenomenon. Kumar (2019) points out that qualitative research is beneficial for producing a detailed analysis of the individuals' experiences. Here, a researcher can attempt to attach meaning to the words and actions of the participants where the researcher is trying to reconstruct meaning behind respondents' words and actions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) point out that attaching meanings to the opinions and behaviours of participants is the best technique for obtaining detailed responses, as opposed to merely listing their actions and words.

Nonetheless, the present research it not focused on making systematic generalisations to other individuals, (Martella et al., 2013, p. 319) but intends to offer a clear and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions of assessment and feedback processes within the given context. In this way, the present research findings are not applicable to other contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). However, this is not indicative that the findings from qualitative research are not generalisable. Some researchers such as Cohen et al. (2011) suggest that the concept of generalisable could be replaced by the words trustworthiness or transferability when used in different situations.

4.4 Data Collection Methods

In order to elicit in-depth and detailed information of the phenomena under investigation, combining qualitative research methods are employed in this study: semi-structured one-to-one and focus group interviews. These two instruments remain the most common data collection methods in qualitative research in general and are used with increasing frequency in IPA research (Harper & Thompson, 2011; Palmer, Larkin, Visser, & Fadden, 2010; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). Both types of data collection are similar in that they are conversational as they facilitate the researcher and the participants' engagement in a dialogue and allow for open responses in the participants' own words. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups also give flexibility and space for unexpected topics to appear, which allow for further investigation and more detail.

Since the data collection was conducted in the KSA, translating the instruments and transcripts was required. Back-translation procedure was selected as it involves translating the data from English to Arabic and vice versa with the equivalent chances of evaluating both versions (Brislin, 1970). Brislin (1970) argues that this technique is most common and highly recommended within cross-cultural settings, in addition to its efficiency in other studies within the same context (the Arabic context) (i.e. Alkhannani, 2016; Al-Makhalid, 2012). The back-translation technique, According to Brislin (1970), follows a specific process (Figure 8).

First stage
Translate the original transcript (Arabic) to the target language (Engilsh) and then the grammar of the target language should be checked

Second stage
Translate the target transcript (English) back to the original language (Arabic) and the original transcript checked

Third stage
Conduct pre-tests before the main research commences
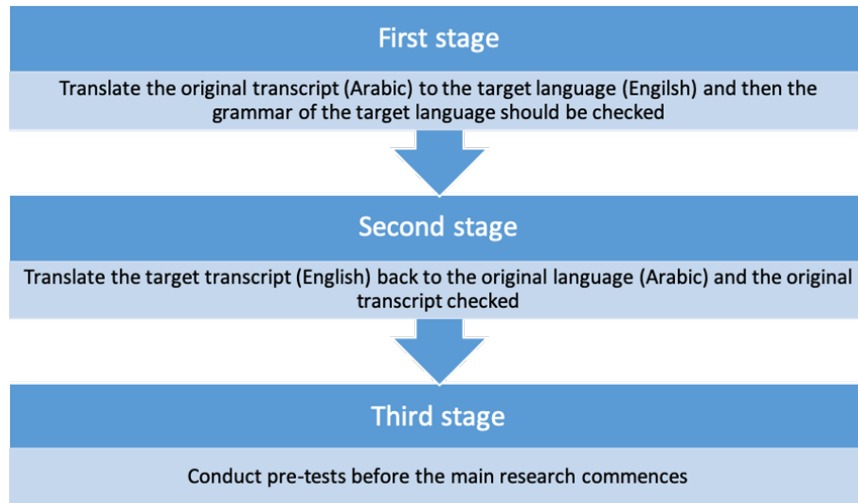
Figure 8Back-translation procedures

4.4.1 Study Population and Sampling

In qualitative research, the typical sampling approach can be characterized as purposive, in order to draw a deep picture of the topic of interest for greater insights and understanding (Patton, 2002). Likewise, IPA research follows the same approach, through purposive (non-random) sampling (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Smith et al. (2009) claim that "sampling must be theoretically consistent with the qualitative paradigm in general, and with IPA's orientation in particular. This means that samples are selected purposively … because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience". The essence for adopting a purposive sampling strategy is based on assumption that certain categories of individuals or groups of individuals who experience the phenomenon of interest may have important, different or unique perspective on this phenomenon.

The participants of this study were purposely selected from two relatively homogeneous groups. "Analysis is explicit that homogenous samples work best in conjunction with its philosophical foundations and analytical processes" (Robinson, 2014, p. 27). The participants involved in this study are lecturers and final-year undergraduate students in School of Applied Medical Sciences at one Saudi institution. All participants who were invited to voluntarily participate in the study are from the female section, since the researcher is female, due to gender segregation policy in all Saudi institutions. The rationale of conducting an IPA study with homogenous sample is to better comprehend and better understand the perceptions among the individuals' lived-experiences. Furthermore, it is necessary that all volunteers studied have experienced the same phenomenon in order to discuss their lived phenomenal experience.

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As for the research population, it is important to determine the sample size needed for the research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In IPA research philosophy, small sample sizes have been required seeking for depth, rather than the breadth of data that allows development of insightful analyses (Smith et al., 2009). It has been claimed that, the size of the participants can be between 2 and 25 (Alase, 2017), however, there is no rule considering how many participants should be involved (Pietkiewicz, & Smith, 2012). In this study, 10 lecturers were included in semi-structured one-to-one interviews that lasted from half an hour to more than an hour. In addition, five semi-structured focused group interviews were conducted with 26 final-year undergraduate students. Each focus group was attended by 4 to 6 participants and lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. Recruitment of the volunteers was organised and conducted by the researcher, she was given the chance to speak to the lecturers and students about the study and organise time for the interviews.

4.4.2 Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured one-to-one interview format is selected to be conducted with 10 lecturers in order to elicit participants' accounts of their experiences of the phenomenon. Interview, according to Kvale (1996), is the "interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (p. 14). Semi-structured interviews offer opportunities to the study's researcher to ask questions in a convenient order and to engage participants in a productive discussion around a particular phenomenon which help defining the areas to be explored. The predetermined questions allow the interviewer to remain in overall control of the direction of the interview where participants can also explain, clarify and elevate original or unexpected ideas. In addition, Bryman (2008) asserts that "questions may not follow on exactly in the outlined on the schedule. Questions that are not included on the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on things said by interviewees. But, by the large, all the questions will be asked, and a similar wording will be used from the interviewee to interviewee" (p. 438).

This method is deemed crucial to research as it allowed for a more in-depth enquiry of lecturers' perceptions and also allows for the opportunity to give a more detailed explanation of the research aims. It allows exploration of the underlying responses and provides an opportunity for obtaining immediate clarification about responses or actions (Robson, 2011). The essence of adopting an interview approach is that it is a helpful and relevant qualitative method help understand the lecturers' beliefs, thoughts and views deeply and explore issues more thoroughly within the context of KSA.

Despite all the advantages of semi-structured interviews, collecting and analysing data through semi-structured interviews were criticized as time consuming process. However, there is a preference for adopting this method as it provides greater flexibility to focus on each participant's personal stories and experiences and to explore differing perceptions about assessment and feedback. Another reason why semi-structured interview is an apropriate tool that the questions could be rephrased and presented in several ways, as the interviews conducted in participants' first language (Arabic). And finally, the individual semi-structured interviews with lecturers are easier to reach target respondents.

4.4.3 Focus Group

Individual interview with undergraduate students was considered as an instrument to discuss issues related to assessment and feedback in detail with students, but it has been replaced by series of focus group. This is mainly to make the discussion process less tense and less stressful for participants. Another rationale is that it is expected that students' participation in group-discussion would enhance and motivate dialogue between them as well as providing support and prompts for students to reflect on their experiences and thinking. Morgan (1988) argued that the use of focus group to collect data is one of the most common methods in educational context.

Focus group is designed in which a group of selected individuals is brought together to engage in a guided discussion of a specific given topic (Cohen et al., 2011). Morgan (1988) defines focus group as "a form of group interview, though not in the sense of a backwards and forwards between interviewer and group. Rather, the reliance is on the interaction within the group who discuss a topic supplied by the researcher yielding a collective rather than an individual view" (p. 9). The significant benefit to group discussion lies on the utilization of using group dynamics in obtaining original data and new insights through participants' interaction (Taylor, Bogdan, & Vault, 2015). Ideally, participants can freely present and discuss their thoughts, attitudes and perceptions of the phenomenon of interest.

The objective of using focus group interview in this study is to gain rich data on students' perspectives and thoughts of assessment and feedback they had experienced. Using a focus group approach gives the undergraduate students opportunities to talk about their experiences and share their thoughts and ideas of assessment and whether it has a positive or negative impact on their learning. Palmer et al. (2010) noted that a focus group can be attractive as it allows and encourages a larger sample and different voices to be heard at one

sitting. However, while it gives the chance to explore the participants' different stories and experiences, some students do not freely express and share their experiences with others. Thus, moderator needs to encourage each student to express his/her opinion and state his/her own thought on a particular issue.

4.4.4 Triangulation

Using multiple data methods and sources generated an internal validity and reliability to the study through the triangulation of the data. The use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research help to improve an overall understanding of a given phenomenon and develop the research validity and reliability (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Clifford, French, & Valentine, 2010). Mathison (1988) elaborates this by saying:

> Triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology (Mathison, 1988, p. 13).

The use of triangulation has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy that strengthens a study and develops a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon by elevating the validity (Patton, 2002). Additionally, it can help to avoid potential problems with trustworthiness and credibility and increase understanding of a phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014; Clifford et al., 2010; Golafshani, 2003).

Triangulation was employed in this study through convergence of information from different sources (lecturers and students) using different methods (individual interview and focus group) to find areas of understandings and experiences of assessment in an Applied Medical Sciences School at one Saudi institution. Drawing on many different sources for triangulation, "researchers can use different sources to try and maximize their understanding of a research question" (Clifford et al., 2010, p.106). In addition, using multiple method triangulation refers to collect and interpret data to increase the insightful understanding of the research questions (ibid).

4.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues directly relate to the integrity of a research work; hence they cannot be ignored (Bryman, 2016). Research ethics is defined as standards of behaviour guiding the conduct of researchers with respect to how they protect the rights of individuals who participate in the study or those that can possibly be affected by the research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The attempts to ensure that the interests, sensitivity, privacy as well as physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is taken into account, such that the study participants do not come to any harm from their participation in the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This can be achieved by ensuring clarity concerning the nature of the agreement between the research participants and the researcher, obtaining the participants informed consent prior to data collection including how the data would be used and reported (Miles et al., 1994).

The researcher followed the guidelines of the Ethics Committee of University of Glasgow (University of Glasgow, 2017) in the development of this thesis, which required an application for ethical approval of the research. It was the university requirement for the researcher to submit a form to the Ethics Committee of University of Glasgow, which outlines the ethical considerations and sets out how the identified ethical issues would be addressed prior to fieldwork and data collection. This application for ethical approval was granted (see Appendix 3).

In line with the ethical considerations identified in this study, volunteers were given information about the study before any interview was conducted with both lecturers and students (see Appendix 4 & 5) including the aims and objectives of this research. Both lecturers and students were entitled to inquire and ask questions before signing the written consent (see Appendix 6 & 7). Volunteers in this study were made aware that the interview and focus group discussions would be recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Participants were reminded that all information which is collected about them would be kept confidential, through use of anonymization to maintain data confidentiality and reliability of the responses. However, participants had been made aware that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee within a focus group. Detailed explanation was provided to participants about issue of confidentiality and why it is important for all involved to respect confidentiality. All focus group members were asked to maintain confidentiality of information shared in the focus group as mentioned in the consent form.

When confirming consent, all interviewees were made aware that their participation in this study is voluntary and they were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Although the removal of data is possible for participants in one-to-one interviews, the removal of data provided in the focus group interviews may be less able to be achieved. This is due to the difficulty of removal of a section of dialogue from the recording, in addition to the potential for any removal of data might influence the sequence and understanding of other data. However, no participant withdrew from the study.

4.6 Ensuring Quality in IPA Research

Yardley (2000) clarified that as opposed to quantitative inquiry, investigator objectivity, guaranteeing impartiality, identifying comprehensive truths and ensuring replicability and generalisability are not the aims of qualitative study. With regards to IPA, Pringle et al. (2011, p.23) outlined how the aim is to accurately reflect the respondents' provided data in a manner that is valid and clear, as opposed to establish an overarching truth or response. Rather, every participant's perception of a phenomenon should be obtained, clarified and construed by the research under IPA. Even so, as Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) and Smith (2011) emphasised, validity and dependability should not be overlooked during qualitative inquiry. Pringle et al. (2011) explained that veracity and high standards are not measured in a similar way to quantitative studies, yet qualitative methods can still commit to such principles. However, as Smith (2011) and VanScoy and Evenstad (2015) related, IPA and other qualitative methods should not be held to common validity and reliability benchmarks posited in certain specifications.

Both seasoned IPA investigators and those new to the method can benefit from the numerous suggestions by other IPA analysts, which I followed for my own research to guarantee its high standard. Possessing a concerted focus, obtaining strong interview data, effectively evidencing the themes derived from respondents' data, expanding on the themes, descriptive as well as interpretation of data, identifying distinct as well as congruent trends through the analysis, are all aspects of IPA (Smith, 2011). Furthermore, impact and significance, lucidity, transparency, thoroughness, dedication and sensitivity to context are elements to consider (Yardley, 2000; Langdridge, 2007; Smith et al., 2009). Regarding the latter element, understanding respondents' sociocultural circumstances, use of the extant literature to situate the study, alongside the analyst's robust theoretical knowledge, are all significant. A thorough research method and analytical approach to the subject defines dedication and

thoroughness. Meanwhile, appraisal of the methodological and theoretical basis of the study and adherence to ethical processes inform transparency and lucidity. Finally, the subject-specific theoretical, applied and social contribution of the research defines its significance and impact. Ultimately, qualitative research methods are inherently fluid according to requirements, which should inform the conditions focused on by qualitative analysts (Yardley, 2000).

In attempt to ensure the quality of this research, I adopted a framework proposed by Yardley (2000) and endorsed by Smith et at (2009). It has been proposed that researchers need to be sensitive to the context of the research by being aware of the need to establish a rapport with their participants and to consider the influence their role as a researcher may have on their interviewees. Yardley (2000) identifies four characteristics of quality research involves sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and importance and impact. Each quality criterion will be discussed separately in the following sub-sections.

Sensitivity to Context

Cognisance of sociocultural variables, purposive sampling and engagement with existing research all show sensitivity to context. Moreover, as Wojnar and Swanson (2007) and Clancy (2013) stressed, the analyst's personal experiences and perspectives of the phenomenon, alongside those of the respondents themselves, leads to a two-strand hermeneutical procedure that should be understood by the IPA analyst. My aim has been to focus on Applied Medical Sciences School undergraduate learners and lecturers' personal life stories. Because the Saudi medical environment shows a clear shortcoming in the application of assessment (Alkadari, et al, 2012), IPA's contextual constructivist approach, focusing on clarifying, explicating and evaluating students' narratives, offered the possibility to comprehend assessment activities in this environment.

Respect for the respondents' sociocultural environment was shown, which was facilitated by my understanding of the environment based on my own Saudi Arabian background (discussed later in Chapter 4.8). This informed my position as an IPA analyst in framing my research queries, while also focusing on comprehending the lived experiences of the participants more effectively by compartmentalising my existing understanding. Additionally, the participants were told that if they felt awkward about anything, they were under no obligation to provide an answer to a question, as well as their being no correct

responses to my questions. As Rubrecht (2004) stipulated, the capacity to listen in a deferential and focused manner is an important aspect of focus groups, alongside one's own contributions.

Commitment and Rigor

Implementing a data collection, analysis and results presentation strategy that is methodical, choosing a relevant sample, as well as having comprehensive data, all ensure dedication and thoroughness. In terms of thoroughness, providing a comprehensive analysis of the results was carried out. As Smith et al. (2009) posited, meticulousness of the analytical process, alongside a data collection procedure that is attentive to the respondent, are necessary during IPA research.

Precision was a priority during every interview's transcription and rendering. Considerable time and work are necessary during the back-translation and transcription stages; precision was ensured through back-translation of the English into Arabic again, having initially transcribed the digital audio verbatim. The participants were then approached to verify the meanings and present the findings. In this manner, the data collection process could be evidenced in its rigour, while I could develop a close understanding of the data. Section 4.8 presents the data analysis process; in accordance with Smith et al.'s (2009) IPA method, this is thorough, methodical and dialogical.

Transparency and Coherence

Given that revealing the nature of truth is not the major focus of IPA, analysts must be able to critically appraise an IPA study method and finding, thus making transparency and accessibility particularly crucial (Langdridge, 2007). Accordingly, the relativist basis of this IPA research, as well as my interpretivist position epistemologically speaking, are both clearly stipulated in this chapter to guarantee transparency. Moreover, transparency incorporates ethical considerations (Yardley, 2000). Prior to all focus groups and interviews being initiated, all questions that the respondents had were resolved, while it was explained that anonymity would be ensured through codes and pseudonymisation. Lahman et al. (2015) noted that pseudonyms are often considered carefully, whereas I assigned them randomly. The data analysis results are provided in chapters five and six. Direct quotes from the research transcripts were presented to show how the interview information connected to the themes, thus strengthening lucidity and transparency.

Impact and Importance

Applied or theoretical pertinence of findings outside of the sample parameters of the study informs its significance and impact. Clearly delineating the boundaries and sample population is important so that peers can comprehend the relevance of the research to particular issues and fields, as well as transferability. Furthermore, the extent to which subjective truth and understanding of phenomenon is revealed informs the utility of the study. The significance of this study for Saudi Arabia's medical education field and further inquiry is outlined in chapter eight.

4.7 The Role of Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a key feature of qualitative research. Robson (2011) defines reflexivity as the understanding of the perspective, value and history of others. Furthermore, Willig (2013) highlights the significance of the researcher when carrying out a study and in generating the knowledge that is ultimately produced. She describes the researcher as a thinker, (someone with an individual epistemological stance) who can influence the research process. Reflexivity is, therefore, crucial for the researchers in the present study. A key strength of interpretivism is its recognition of a researcher as a co-constructor of knowledge and understanding, and not as an unbiased or neutral instrument with the sole purpose of measuring a phenomenon (Willig, 2013).

Heidegger created a framework of understanding, which is made up of three aspects. Firstly, the concept of fore-having (all individuals are part of a sociocultural background that influences their interpretations). Secondly, there is fore-sight (sociocultural backgrounds enable interpretations) and finally, fore-conception (sociocultural backgrounds allow for interpretations to be predicted) (Benner, 1994). It is, therefore, presumed by the IPA that researchers are not able to remain neutral when exploring individuals' experiences. Instead, they form part of the process.

IPA is based on the assumption that researchers have their own experiences and are pre-reflective, meaning that they play an active role collaboratively with participants in co-creating interpretations of phenomena (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 176). This is a double hermeneutics process, in which the participants and research co-create the interpretations. In pre-reflective activities, researchers have to accept their own positionality when exploring the phenomenon and employ epistemological reflexivity (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

Furthermore, researchers must investigate their own understandings regarding how stories are told, and they can do this by exploring patterns, paradigms and outliers. Flood (2010) also adds that the researcher has to address their own preconceptions by conducting reflexivity during the data analysis process.

The current IPA study exists inside the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm, which allows exploration and iterpretation of the lecturers and students' experiences of assessment to improve learning in the medical context. This study adopts a subjectivist perspective. Emphasis is given to the fact that I am the researcher creating knowledge of assessments in Saudi medical schools, by establishing a two-way interaction narrative with the participants, in order to correctly depict their individual experiences. However, it is not clear if the researcher can maintain her position in this line of inquiry. At certain points, the researcher must remove herself from the data, and makes decisions about the data, the next questions to ask and what topics to pursue. This insider/outsider perspective will be discussed in the following section (Section 4.8) of this chapter.

However, it is recognised that there are some limitations and challenges in the research approach. First, there are dualistic tension between the search for experiences commonality between participants and the idiographic commitment which creates a challenge for the IPA researchers. The focus on finding connections across cases can lead individual experiences to be obscured, which is against the idiographic underpinning of IPA. Noon (2018) argues that "whilst it is possible for respondents to be represented on opposite ends of a single theme, unless the study is of a single case, there is limited opportunity to generate unique themes" (p. 81). Second, questions concerning transferability and representativeness of findings are raised due to the small sizes samples. However, Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez (2011) argue that "fewer participants examined at a greater depth is always preferable to a broader, shallow and simply descriptive analysis of many individuals" (p. 756). Thus, IPA is very cautious about general claims.

The level of 'discomfort' experienced by IPA researchers is predicated upon the selected sample size. I did experience tension between elucidating common themes and committing to IPA's idiographic pledge, however, it can be considered an erpowering point to this study. Although looking for commonalities across cases has an effect on the study's idiographical emphasis, it has been possible to highlight the particular idiosynrasies of individuals within shared higher order concepts.

4.8 Insider and Ousider Debate

"When it comes to data collection as well as analysis, the researcher is closely involved (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 55). The researcher can be an insider, discussing the particular characteristic, position, or experience being examined with the participants, or an outsider to the common features shared by participants. Regardless, the personality of the researcher, as well as their relationship with the social group being researched, is an important and unavoidable part of any study.

Qualitative researchers such as IPA researchers are insiders, who are able to analyse the participant experiences as partners, with unique closeness to the personal stories shared by the participants. It should be noted that the researcher's status as an insider or outsider is not solidly described in qualitative research and is occasionally decided on a situational basis (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In turn, being an IPA researcher, I have awareness of the roles of insider as well as outsider, as put forward by Dwyer and Buckle (2009). Although I am aware of my insider role as a Saudi citizen who shares the same culture, characteristic, and experience, I sometimes saw myself as an outsider more than an insider. This is due to being a person who spent the last 10 years in a foreign country to complete post-graduate study whilst there have been massive and rapid changes during these 10 years in Saudi HE due to the vast reforms and impacts of globalisation.

The effect of insider epistemology must be taken into account by any IPA researcher when they are insiders to a study sample. Asselin (2003) states that the insider researcher should collect data with an open mind, and not take into account whether they know anything about the matter being researched. It was also stated that, while the researcher could be a member of the culture being analysed, they might not have a clear understanding of the subculture at hand, as all participants are unique in their values and beliefs (ibid). As a result, this could bring conflict as the researcher tries to move away from their idea of 'self' and instead offer a summary of the participants' outlooks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Instead of taking this matter into consideration from a dichotomous viewpoint, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) instead feel that researchers can be insiders as well as outsiders, instead of only one or the other. As a result, with this dualist stance, the outsider role can be enacted in conjunction with the position held under the qualitative approach that a researcher only takes on an insider stance.

However, there are complexities inherent in occupying the space between. Perhaps, "as researchers may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher (which includes having read much literature on the research topic), we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions" (Dwyre & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). Acker (2000) argues that the insider/outsider debate cannot be completely resolved and instead of bringing this issue to a close, it would be helpful to find a way to work creatively to be both.

4.9 Data Analysis Procedures

This section presents and discusses the process and steps of data analysis and interpretation of the semi-structured one-to-one and focus group interviews. The data obtained for this study were analysed as soon as the data from each method were collected. The steps to IPA were employed for the analysis of the collected data as suggested by Smith et al., (2009) and Smith & Osborn (2003).

4.9.1 Steps to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Once transcribed and translated the scripts were formatted, the analysis took place and was only undertaken by the researcher. Steps to IPA were adopted with in-depth attention that allow the hermeneutic circle to be constantly cyclical and, in IPA terms, enlivened. IPA consists of six steps: reading, re-reading and initial notes, identifying initial themes, clustering/connecting themes, final themes, analysis of other cases, and comparing cases (Figure 9) (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003). I have adapted these steps in a way that fits with my research as I repeated step one with all the participants before moving to step two to find a pattern of emergent themes, so step five was merged with the first step. Following these principles of IPA, relevant themes were extracted and developed to superordinate themes, subordinate themes, and emergent themes.

Reading, Re-reading and Initial Notes

- Familiarising with the data by listening to the interview and focus group disscussion and reading the transcript in detail.
- The right-hand margin being used to annotate what is interesting or significan.

•Identifying Initial Themes

- The left hand margin being used to note emerging themes.
- Moving towards a higher level of abstraction which uses more educational terminology. This step was repeated throughout the transcript and where a theme was repeated, the same theme title was used.

Clustering/Connecting Themes

- Identifying connections between initial themes.
- The clustered themes were then checked against the transcript again to ensure the broader themes linked back to the words of the participant. This reflects the iterative nature of the process.

Final Themes

- Deriving the final superordinate themes by looking for patterns between the cluster themes.
- Producing a table of themes, giving each cluster a name to represent superordinate themes (Smith

Analysis of Other Cases

- Listing the emergent superordinate themes on a page andand repeated steps 1 - 4 with the remaining transcripts.

Comparing Cases

- Comparing the superordinate themes to identify similarities and differences.

Figure 9Analysis of data: steps to IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2003)

4.9.1.1 Reading, re-reading and initial notes

The IPA first step comprises familiarization with the data through concentrated listening to the recordings several times and reading the data verbatim and the back-translation in detail. While doing so, I could also determine the pauses that occurred in the interviews and discussions as well as the intonation and stress patterns which was beneficial for the analysis process. While carrying out the first step, I used the transcripts' right-hand margin to write my notes and to annotate what was significant or interesting. This involved making both descriptive comments (describing what had been said) and conceptual comments (analysing what had been said at a more conceptual and interrogative level) (Smith et al., 2009). This included making contradictions, associations, commenting on similarities and differences, summarizing, echoes, implications in addition to the conceptual coding that has interpretive nature (ibid).

The coding process also took place at this stage and identifiers were replaced by a code for each participant. Coding, according to Ryan & Bernard (2003) is an essential stage at data analysis that starts once the data is obtained. As part of coding the data, participants from interviews were referred to with the letter L as an abbreviation for lecturers and each interviewee given a number from 1 to 10. In addition, FG was selected as an abbreviation for focus group and they were given numbers from 1 to 5; the letter S was selected as an abbreviation for students as participants within the focus groups and they were given a number from 1 to 6 for each focus group. This process of codifying the data with the participants' initials by using L, S and then numbers to refer to the data and the reading re-reading process, writing notes and organising the data provided me with initial thoughts about overall findings.

4.9.1.2 Identifying initial themes

Moving towards a greater level of abstraction took place at the second step. I extracted possible themes from the transcripts, and they were noted in the left-hand margin, this was repeated throughout the transcript (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The initially identified themes were linked to literature to ensure themes would be included when reporting findings from this study. I have done step one and two manually using paper, pen and memo notes; the transcripts were printed out for this step.

4.9.1.3 Clustering/connecting themes

In this step, I aimed to identify connections between initial themes. This was done through writing the emergent themes on sticky notes to easily identify potential connections and clusters between them. This was followed by checking the clustered themes in opposition to the whole transcript once more to make sure the broader themes are linked to participant words. This displays the iterative nature of this process. This step has been shown alongside step 4.

4.9.1.4 Final themes

Within this step, the patterns between the cluster themes led to identification of the final (superordinate) themes. This sometimes involved having subordinate and emerging themes on sticky notes to move and group them easily. After deciding the final themes and the other themes, I produced a table of themes (Table 2), demonstrating the clusters of emergent themes and the clusters of subordinate themes which led to superordinate themes (Smith and Osborn, 2003).

Superordinate themes	Cluster/subordinate themes	Emergent themes
The use of formative assessment	Sharing learning expectations	Illustrating course objectives and criteria
		Students should be aware of assessment expectations
		Reward for fulfilment / punishment for non-fulfilment of assessment criteria
		Feedback must linked back to course objectives and criteria
		Defined standards help to improve students performance
		Learning outcomes are defined by policy makers
	Elicit Evidence of Students' learning	Gathering evidence of students' learning through interaction in labs
		Discussion help to know students' understanding
		Peer discussion help to examine students' understanding
		Asking questions to measure students learning
		Gather evidence about their understanding through observation
		Follow students' progress during the training period
	Formative elements within summative assessment	Corrective feedback during the final exam
		Formative element while preparing presentation
		Formative element while preparing research
		Periodic exams is feedback for students on their own learning before the final exam
		Formative element during training at hospital
	The use of self-assessment	Importance of self-assessment
		Formal/informal self assessment
		Self assessment against checklist
	The use of peer-assessment	Benefits of peer assessment
		Support/ Against peer-assessment
		Peer assessment needs training

Table 2Steps Three and Four of IPA: Clustering/connecting themes and final themes

4.9.1.5 Comparing cases

This final step aims to "explore patterns and relationships within and between conceptual groups, thinking about how different themes come together to help us understand further the participants' experiences" (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999, p. 232). As a final step, the superordinate themes of all participants were compared looking for similarities and differences and searching for patterns, connections and tensions.

Occurrences of subordinate themes across lecturers are checked in order to ensure representation of sub-themes in at least half of the participants for each group, although Smith et al. (2009) state that all participants should be represented (Table 3).

Subordinate theme	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L 10
Sharing learning expectations	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Elicit evidence of students' learning	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	
The use of self-assessment			√	√		√	√		√	√
The use of peer-assessment			√	√			√	√	√	
Formative element within summative assessment	√	√		√			√	√		

Table 3 Occurrence of recurring themes across lecturers

Tables of the occurrences of subordinate themes and summarised quotes from participants (Table 4) which illustrated these themes were also gathered within this step. Summarised quotes from each transcript were listed within each of the sub-themes, to ensure the representation of individual voices, which is essential in idiography (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). Page numbers were also added to assist locating the original quotes from the transcripts as presented in Table 4 below.

Subordinate themes	Summarized quotes from participants (page number)
Sharing learning expectations	**L 1:** … you must to be clear with them (students). I mean I tell them that to pass a specific module, you have to fulfil certain criteria that need to be accomplished in a specific range (P. 2) **L 2:** … each module has principles, basics and goals that I want students to concentrate in. I shall inform them (students) about all goals of the curriculum which must be achieved… (P. 2) Well! We tell students at the beginning of the term about the learning outcomes of each module and what they are expected to learn, (P. 7) **L 3:** I mean certain criteria that I care about must be fulfilled by the end of the term, so student can move on to the next level (P. 1) At the beginning of the term… I will let them have a background about all topics that I will deliver and all the requirements… (P. 5) Feedback shall be based on all the objectives that you have planned (P. 7)

Table 4 Subordinate themes supported by summarised themes

Through consciously making the effort to compare cases and introduce the tables, my understanding of the data inter-relationship become deeper and my ability in interpretation become more confident.

4.9.2 Writing up IPA Findings

IPA studies are usually written up as narrative accounts (Smith et al., 2009) allowing the reader to make sense of the researcher's sense-making of the data. After creating the final tables of themes (Table 5 & 6) emerging from each set of the empirical data (interview and focus group), I have applied Smith et al.'s (2009) approach to write up this study. They argue that there is no explicit distinction between analysis and writing up in IPA research – "as one begins to write, some themes loom large, others fade, and so this changes the report" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 110).

As I started to write, the subordinate themes from the interview with lecturers were refined, revised, adjusted and regrouped. At the beginning, three themes that emerged from interviews in regard to lecturers' perspectives and experiences of assessment before, within and after the learning experience which remain consistent throughout, although they have been renamed. Within this process, however, my understanding of the lecturers' understanding and attitude toward assessment changed as emerged through the analysis that the sense of the superordinate and subordinate themes changes. The emerging of the superordinate theme about lecturers' understandings and attitudes toward assessment in the analysis process helps the fluency of the narrative account. It became one of the most interesting and striking findings that aided the understanding of how culturally situated the assessment in such environment.

In contrast, the subordinate themes that emerged from the analysis of the focus group generated three superordinate themes after the process of modifying, refining and regrouping. The three superordinate themes are students' experiences and attitudes toward assessment, students' use of assessment (learning and development) and challenges associated with assessment and they remained constant throughout the process.

Drawing from tables of themes (Table 5 & 6), writing up IPA findings will provide information and interpretations of how the data were reported and developed from these tables. During this stage, the process became expansive again, themes had to be illustrated, explained, discussed and presented in a narrative account.

As with other methodologies, it is possible for IPA researcher to write the 'findings' and 'discussion' as separated chapters – where the finding chapter includes the thematic analysis whereas discussion chapter links the analysis back to literature, or merge both features into

a one 'findings and discussion' chapter (Smith & Osborn, 2008). I adopted the former style to write 'findings' and 'discussion' chapters separately as I found this aided presenting the rich data I have collected more clearly. In addition, it gives the opportunities for other researchers and academics to pose questions, possibilities and opportunities to apply the outcomes of this research to their own context and students. Smith and Osborn (2003) maintain that

> …the readers make links between the findings of an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature. The power of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context (p. 56).

The findings will be presented in two main chapters: lecturers' experience of assessment and students' experience of assessment, and under each one there are sub-sections discussing the main themes in detail. Teasing out the meanings and the critical points that I want to make sense of to answer the research questions will come in the following chapter.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the rationale of using the qualitative research approach in this study, which is an approach that helped attain the main aim of exploring the experiences of lecturers and students in Applied Medical Sciences School in the Saudi context. It explained the research tools and how these research tools helped to investigate the central research aim. This offered a justification of the design of this study to obtain detailed and rich accounts regarding lecturers and students' experiences and perspectives of assessment in Saudi medical school. The use of multi qualitative methods helped triangulate this study to increase its validity and support the research into assessment experiences in the Saudi medical school. Finally, I have adapted the steps to IPA to analyse the data and created a number of tables that helped deepen my understanding of the data inter-relationship and aided me in the interpretation process.

The following two chapters will present the findings from the two sets of data emerging from the two qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews with lecturers and focus groups with undergraduate students and the themes identified in relation to the main aims of the current study.

Chapter 5   Lecturers'   Experiences   of Assessment

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter set out the research methodology for this study and its focus on the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore and understand the participants' lived experiences and perspectives of assessment in one Saudi higher education institution (HEI). It also presented the process of analysing each set of data emerging from the two qualitative research methods, presenting tables of themes from each research tool and interpreting the findings.

This chapter begins by presenting the superordinate and subordinate themes drawn from the collected data using semi-structured interviews with lecturers using IPA analysis. IPA, as discussed in the previous chapter, is concerned with the depth and texture of individual experience (Noon, 2018), and hence requires the production of rich narratives. Participants' lived experiences and perceptions are very important and are essential if this study is to offer broad insights into current practices of assessment through exploring the conditions and factors that create this reality and construct its possible impacts. This offers opportunities to use the data to create a model for policy and wider decision-makers in key institutions to serve as a framework to inform the design of future practice.

Table 5 and Table 6 (see below) present issues related to assessment practices in Saudi Applied Medical Sciences School. However, before exploring these issues, it is important to explore the culture shift currently underway which leads to the themes. The culture shift in KSA is from assessment being for judgment, classification and categorization to assessment for learning (AfL). This will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow. It is considered a fundamental shift in thinking amongst lecturers and students living in a society where individuals are employed and appointed based on their qualifications. A focus on qualifications is not a guarantee of a focus on learning. Therefore, moving toward assessment for formative purposes become a priority for lecturers who need to know how to encourage students to learn more effectively, in order to improve and adjust their own teaching, and for students themselves who need help to find out how to improve their learn and make better progress.

However, one of most common dilemmas associated with assessment is that lecturers practise assessment for classification and categorization purposes and have already survived these approaches being done to them. This increases their resistance to change and, at least in part, explains the why these old-fashioned forms of assessment still permeate HE practices in Saudi today.

This chapter considers the lecturers' lived experiences of assessment practice at the Saudi HEI. Following the approach to data collection described in Section 4.8.1 (p. 82), each interview was analysed using IPA. The focus was to explore how lecturers understand assessment and do identify their experiences with assessment and their attitudes toward it.

There were challenges in deciding how to introduce and present the data. In relation to decision making process, different concepts and perceptions from interviewees affected ways of thinking and how things are perceived. There are connections between all of the superordinate themes, however, for the purpose of presentation, I have presented the themes in a particular way to present them as clear and comprehensible. Table 5 shows how superordinate themes (n=4) and subordinate themes (n=13) from the interview's transcripts were refined and arranged to emerge as the following final table of themes.
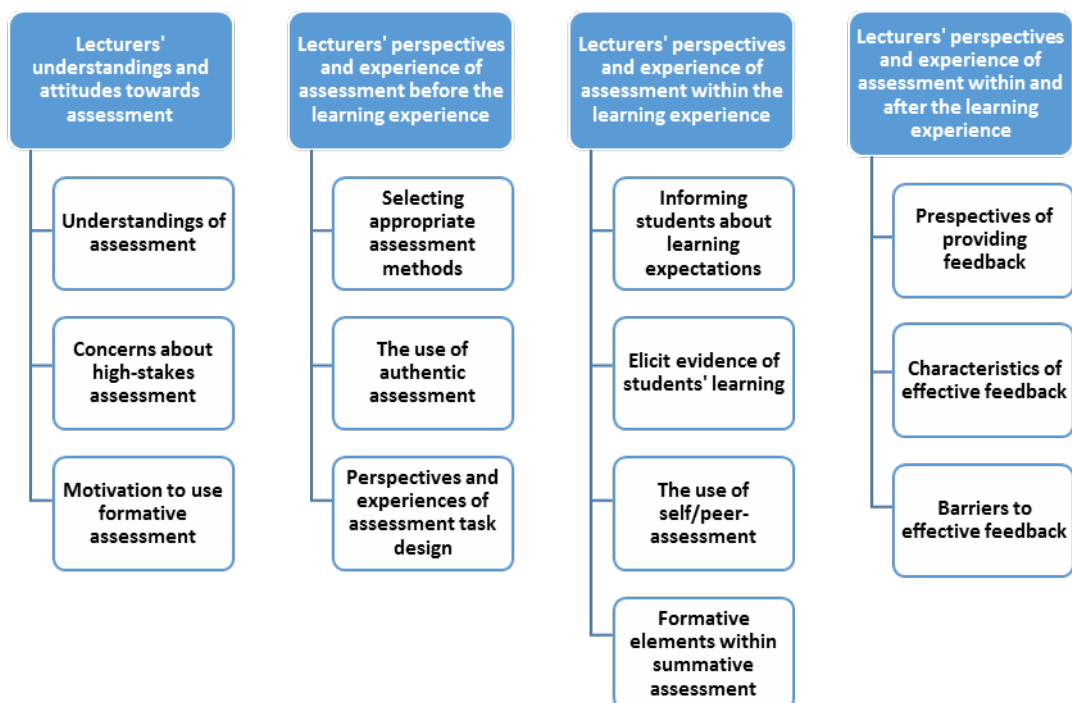
Table 5 *Final table of themes (Lecturers' Experience of Assessment)*

The order of superordinate themes has been chosen to begin with the examination of themes of understandings and attitudes, then moving to explore perspectives and experiences of

assessment before, within and after the learning experience. These themes explore lecturers' understandings of and attitudes toward assessment influences in first how they prepare and design the assessment, second, how they go about their assessment practice and, third, how important they think feedback is.

Figure 10 (below) clarifies the relationship between the identified superordinate themes and demonstrates the inextricable links and interactions between them. The interrelatedness of the superordinate themes is illuminated through bidirectional arrows.
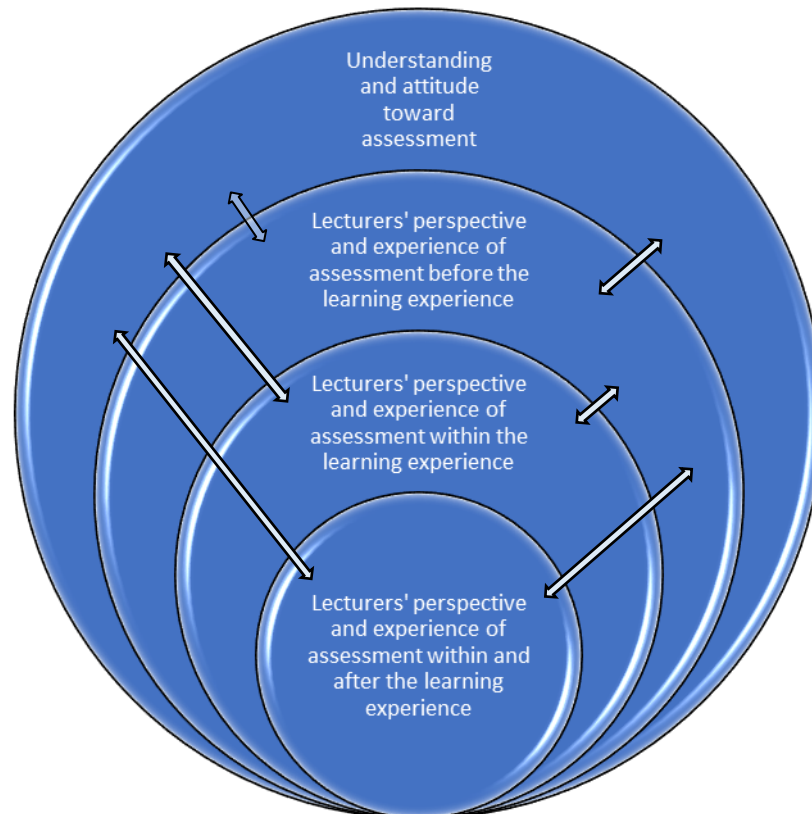
Figure 10 Relationship between superordinate themes

5.2 Lecturers' Understandings and Attitudes towards Assessment

Initially, I sought to gather data about lecturers' experiences and perspectives of assessment before, within and after the learning experience, in order to present a deep picture of the assessment practices in the institution. However, first, there was a need to look closely to how lecturers understand assessment and to explore their attitudes toward it. This theme affects the understanding of the other themes, presented in Table 5, how they prepare and design the assessment, how they go into their assessment practice and how these affect the

learning process. This theme was helpful to understand and interpret the study findings in order to address and to discuss the research questions.

5.2.1 Understandings of Formative Assessment

It is clear from all the lecturers' responses that formative assessment (FA) is not at the forefront of their minds when talking about assessment. Their understandings of assessment are largely summative. For example, when they were asked about what assessment meant in general, although one participant highlighted the importance of assessment, she described it as a judgemental tool and said:

> Assessment is a must. I mean at least it determines who is the good student who can proceed forward, who can graduate and have the same name of profession, such as nurse or doctor and other than that… (L1).

The choice of phrase such as "good student" and the focus on graduating and using qualities of an end point as a profession in the statement above indicates that the purpose of assessment was understood as a judgment of students' performance at the end of learning process and as a source of evidence to decide on possibilities of transition to the next stage. However, later in this section, illustrations of lecturers' understandings where AfL was used as a pedagogical tool to enhance learning will be offered later in this chapter.

Three lecturers out of ten showed a lack of knowledge about the terminology. However, when the terms were explained to them, they understood the concept of AfL, for example, (L6) said, "I know the concept but not the term". In addition, uncertainty surrounding the formative assessment term and purpose is apparent even amongst other participants who demonstrated their knowledge of the term. There appears to be much confusion surrounding the idea of FA as exemplified in the following quote:

> I have been through this, which is a kind of assessment and evaluation that… umm but what bears to my mind now is that it is a continuous assessment that provides quick and continuous information about student performance during the semester… umm I'm not sure (L9).

The lecturers highlighted and described some types of activity used in the classroom that could contribute to students' learning, although it was difficult to encourage them discuss in more detail.

Despite their lack or limited of knowledge of the term, indirect evidence suggested that participants were enacting elements of the process of FA as demonstrated through interpretation of each interview.

For example, participants who claimed that they do not know what FA is, later mentioned a number of uses of FA in their courses during the interview. For example, participants discussed the role of feedback in helping students improve their learning:

> ...I mean I show her the error at the same time and how it could be fixed, I mean to show her the area where the defect is. The goal is to let her learn not only judging her because in the near future when she is working as a nurse, she will be aware of the correct way of doing it (L1).

> … we not only train their skills, but we monitor their performance, what are the steps that they should take to do a specific skill, we observe their performance and advise them on how to improve, and give them marks for everything they perform (L2).

> … you should help her until the student take higher level (L7).

From the statements above, phrases such as "the goal is to let her learn", "we observe their performance and advise them on how to improve" illustrated that lecturers had applied FA practices that help to improve students' learning during the learning sessions. However, these practices were still embedded in a fundamentally deficit model of learning. Rather than developmental, the process was essentially still judgmental as lecturers used languages such as "error", "fixing", "defect" and "judging" and the described using marks to assess students. The use of a deficit assessment model may not lead to learning improvement that FA promises.

5.2.2 Concerns about High-Stakes Assessment

Traditional written exams occupied a large part of assessment in the School of Applied Medical Sciences as the data suggested. As will be seen throughout this section, lecturers "mainly focus on exams for students' evaluation, and the large amount of their (students') final score depends on their performance in the examinations" (L9). However, five lecturers recognised the dilemma of assessing students' learning through exams even if they still used exams as an essential part of their assessment. For example, (L1) described examinations as

"the necessary evil". Considering the following quotations, exams were described as not fair, not reliable and not an effective tool to enhance students' learning:

> … examination is not fair, because there might be a clever student who understand and learn well but she might have certain circumstances during the examination time, so she couldn't do well (L3).

> we depend on the students marks in examination whether she get 100%, 70% or so on; and at the end we have a student who doesn't understand and doesn't have skills or proper knowledge (L4).

> We shouldn't depend 100% on the marks of the examinations to say this is excellent and this is not. Some students may have social or psychological circumstances and many different things affect bright students during examinations time, because we are humans (L7).

The data reveal that lecturers believed that using examinations to assess students' progress presents a dilemma as examinations do not represent a true assessment of the integration of students' knowledge, skills and understandings. Although lecturers relied on examination marks as a sign of the students' achievement, they understood that relying on exams may present a challenge as low marks during exams did not necessarily represent the real understanding and learning.

In addition, lecturers' choice of terms such as "bright students" and "clever students" suggests what Dweck (2016) would describe as a fixed mindset where individuals believe their qualities are fixed traits and hence cannot change. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, lecturers actually hold quite disparate views as some, for example, believed that students in the medical environment can learn and develop their clinical skills through practising in real-life environments.

To overcome the concerns about the limited nature of examinations, a variety of assessment methods were proposed by lecturers. Two lecturers suggested that continuous assessment as a means of offering more accurate assessment of students' performance:

> The continuous assessment always gives you the accurate assessment, because you are working with them throughout the whole year or the whole term (L3).

… continuity of assessment because assessment is an ongoing process that occurs before, during and after teaching time (L9).

In addition to assessment to be 'continuous', some lecturers argued that "there must be variety" (L4) of methods of assessment. (L1) also contended that "I think effective assessment contains different methods not only one method, for example, not only the final exams" (L1). However, there is still "a strong tug-of-war" (L1) about what is the best assessment method to assess students' learning to improve their performances and achievements. There was a diversity of assessment methods used by different lecturers. These different perspectives suggested that there may be a confusion between the methods and the purposes of assessment. This will be discussed in the next chapter in more detail.

Despite many concerns about exams, given the culture in Saudi, it is likely that examinations will continue to play a significant part in the overall assessment picture. Exams are still seen as the most important tool that "challenges students' knowledge … so the exam should cover the whole curriculum, all different levels to examine to what extent each student understands several aspects" (L8).

5.2.3 Motivation to Use Formative Assessment

There is a general consensus by all 10 lecturers that assessment for formative purpose might have a positive impact on students' learning as stated by (L3) "it is so clear that formative assessment positively impacts student learning". Lecturers showed an awareness of the importance of assessment for formative purposes as a need for positive transformation of the education system. For example:

It (formative assessment) helps to move to more student-centre learning (L4).

This new generation has great capabilities and skills, quite different from what we used to, and the means of assessment that was valid in our time is no longer useful these days… This modern type of assessment involves students in responsibility of their own improvement (L9).

The awareness of the role of FA to support student-centre learning and its relevance for improving students' capabilities suggests that lecturers had recognised FA as a significant potential benefit to student learning. Using FA can help improve student learning in a number of aspects include creating independent learners, which can have a major impact on students' progress and improve motivation towards learning.

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Building students' self-confidence was also identified by lecturers as an impact of FA on students' learning. However, they caution that increased self-confidence is often associated with having high marks, for example, (L8) said that "formative assessment techniques increase confidence and then the final marks, and in contrary higher score increases self-confidence". Three lecturers, however, have a very different view, which suggests that students need to build self-confidence by more than just grades:

> … it (formative assessment) might increase students' confidence in herself and her abilities, allowing her to develop faster and progress faster that umm using the traditional way and take the lead on development of her own performance (L9).

The statement above also suggests that promoting independent learning in students is a further positive impact of FA on students. (L8) also argued that FA "encourages students' independency, teach them the responsibility of their own learning… they love to be in charge of their own learning to pass the model with a very high mark". Although learners' active participation in their own learning and building self-confidence are presented by lecturers as a result of good assessment practices, that is often overshadowed by the need to make sure that students pass the module and get high marks.

5.3 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experiences before the Learning Experience

From the data analysis, lecturers put a great deal of emphasis on different methods of assessment. The assessment methods used within the Applied Medical Sciences School were diverse and reflect the nature of the subject. For example, (L9) stressed the importance of using different assessment tools "that measure the different skills of each student based on the nature of each subject" (L9). These methods included examinations, written and practical assignments, the graduation project, work placements, including reflective assessment, and other performance and oral tasks. Lecturers' selection of appropriate methods of assessment, their use of authentic assessment and their perspectives and experiences of assessment task design will be discussed as sub-themes in more detail in this section.

5.3.1 Selecting Appropriate Assessment Methods

Choosing the appropriate method of assessment had been highlighted by all lecturers. Although the traditional written exam occupied a central role assessment practices as

discussed earlier (p. 93), this situation was partly balanced by the inclusion of written and practical work, in addition to other assessment approaches and projects. The data emerging from the study reveal that lecturers supported the use of diverse methods of assessment. (L9) affirms that "the diversity of assessment methods, and the use of non-traditional assessment methods, which are not limited to the paper and pen". Lecturers felt that using various types of assessment that are consistent with the nature of the scientific material may have a real impact on deepening the understanding of different topics in the students. They, therefore, relied on alternative assessment methods appropriate for the scientific material they provide as will be elucidated further in the following sections of this chapter.

From the data analysis, it could be seen that lecturers tended to use different techniques when assessing their students. These techniques include (arranged from the most to least common: practical performance (including laboratory and field-work), oral presentation (including case presentation), role-play, written assignments including essays, writing care plans and field reports, designing learning materials for the public, visual assessment and work placements (including reflective assessments).

Assessing students' practical performance is the most common and preferred approach identified by six lecturers. This technique "involves a series of mini practical sessions conducted under timed conditions", (L3) explained that "in laboratory, we have part of the scientific materials as training". This assessment approach offers the potential to assess a wide range of interpretative, analytical and practical skills through a form of performance, for example, carrying out a blood test, pre- and post-surgery care, etc. This technique was further illustrated as follow:

> Assessment task called "mini hospital" is a good example. Students will work in the lab as they are in hospital; they create cases and treat them as real patient. The idea is that each time, students … as community health workers provide advice and information for the patient. They can assist with pre- and post-natal care, give nutritional advice and help individuals to get well in a way that suits their community… and through this I can assess their performance (L9).

The data suggest that this type of assessment can be authentic as it reflects real-life situations in the work place environment. This will be further discussed in Section 5.3.2 (p, 103).

Oral presentation is another popular tool of assessment mentioned by seven lecturers, for example, (L2) suggested they "already assess them (students) through presentations" (L2). The lecturers used presentation as an assessment tool aiming to engage students and promote their learning:

> the activities they engage with you is preparing presentations for example, … they can co-operate with you, discuss and interact while they are preparing the presentation (L3).

> there must be presentations, because it could contribute to their learning (L4).

> students could learn more, understand more, engage more through performing presentations. And the benefits not only for the presenter but for all of her colleagues and for the teachers as well (L9).

Other than the benefits of making presentation, lecturers also talked about the way of performing presentations. Students are asked to give a presentation "in groups or individually" (L5) to develop team work and leadership skills, and this approach could be combined with other assessment approaches to a particular topic for example, students "could be required to make associated brochure or prepare a kind of handout, a simple one" (L10).

In addition, students are sometimes also asked to work through a case study in which they are invited to identify a problem and to propose possible solutions. This kind of assessment is seen as an invaluable of assessing students' understanding and to help them to recognise links between theory and practice. Students would then be invited to prepare an oral presentation to present their case and to discuss findings with their peers as a means to deepen their understanding:

> … there are many evaluation methods in nursing, like giving a student a case it's called case presentation, I give her a scenario that I have a patient for example in the emergency department or intensive care, or in ward in medical or surgical, whatever. Then I mention the complaint of the patient, I let her imagine the case, and then I ask her to give me diagnoses. And depending on all these inputs, the student will start to work, search through internet, read books… of course I trained her before on similar cases, she must be trained once and twice while I'm with her, and then I let them do it as a presentation task.... And then I let them present it in

front of each other to discuss … the case presentation or the scenarios are considered as very good methods of evaluation as the student live the situation as they are in real life (L7).

Role-playing is another assessment approach used in Applied Medical Sciences School by four lecturers. Using role-play model to assess students' learning is intended to have students think critically through a scenario and increase their self-confidence, making them aware of the issues they need to deal with during the simulation. This is perceived to offer an authentic role-play experience. (L9) explained that:

Role playing technique helps student to think critically and immediately, allows a learner to assume the role or tasks of a job by practicing or simulating real working conditions and act out real life roles or fictional performances. … it helps building confidence and creative communication with medical team, which lead to develop problem solving (L9).

Lecturer found role playing to be a very effective tool that can help students to deepen learning and understanding of dealing with real situations as those discussed above. In addition, lecturers illustrated the importance of role play:

… we work on the assumption that I'm a role player and they're sharing the story with me; discuss about equipment they will use so I can measure their understanding. We prepare our lab and our equipment, everything assessed by certain points; students can assess their own work against the checklist that I gave them… (L4).

While students are involved in role-playing technique, lecturers observed their students' performances and assessed them in order to offer them feedback that can be used to promote their learning. (L4 and L7) explained as follow:

I monitor them, measure their understanding and support them (L4).

I can observe students' performance and assess and give them feedback of how to improve (L7).

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However, lecturers' description of the kind of support they offered to their students is to general and do not explains how students' performance would improve based on their feedback.

Another assessment approach that is widely used (five lecturers) is a written assignment where learners are required to write an essay on a specific topic within given parameters, for instance, time limit, word count, use of a particular source etc.

> I teach evidence-based nursing … I should ask her to do some work during the year to be trained to prove the evidence. For example, make an essay about "how should I wash my hands? With soap or with alcohol?" as a student I don't know, so I should surf Google and type the keywords, and see all researches done on hand-washing, whether with water and soap or with alcohol, I should search the biggest possible amount of resources to know how to deal with the evidence? It is just like if I am a bee sucking the nectar of the flower; scientific researches is the flowers, and honey is the evidence, which is the result. And at the end, we found that there's no significant difference between washing hands with soap and water or with alcohol, the only different is on the time spent in washing hands, do I wash my hands like that (describe), or stay and wash my hands in the right way. Thus, whatever I used here doesn't make any difference, and this is called evidence-based nursing, and we applied on everything. Another example, if I'm in surgical section, should I change buy Betadine or by Java; I don't know, I have all the products in front of me what should I do? The target is to let the wound heal quickly, so I should use a material that let the wound heal quickly, I don't have any information about it. So, I need to do the research again regarding this issue and derive a result, which prove that Betadine is 1000 times better, and so on. Therefore, I tell the student to choose any topic that she wants to search in, invented the key words, then she goes search for what she thinks would be helpful and print them out like at least 10 papers. Then she brings them to me, and we discuss about her choice, give her advice to concentrate in specific thing in the research and so on. This works during the year are simple, but it trains students to do researches … (L8).

A written essay is sometimes combined with an oral presentation as discussed pp x-y "because it could contribute to their learning. It increases their self-confidence, as they search, read and write to show their best and also because it improves their linguistic skills" (L4). Combining two or more assessment techniques could contribute to students' learning

as it allows to assess variety skills including interpretative analytical and practical skills. This is a key point that will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Students are also required to write a care-plan. Within a care plan, students are encouraged to recognise problems and to offer hypothetical solutions; assessing students' ability as care providers is a very helpful approach to assessment that encourages students to rehearse processes that will part of their real working lives. The following quotation illustrates this approach:

> … when we are in the hospital, I give the student assessment that she should do to the patient from head to toes …; we teach her how to do the assessment for the patient, and how to make nursing care plan, and she must know what are the health problems that the patient suffers from. Then she updates me, and this is another skill that we teach students. After she made the good nursing care plan, which means that she read in books about the case and she knows the health problem, then I make assessment for her to work and to learn in the real life (L10).

Assessing students' capability of writing care-plan is the core for the nursing work, as (L7) indicate "the care plan is so important for the nurse, and that's what I stress to work on". This assessment approach helps in developing a higher-order thinking skill, such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. However, there is no enough evidence from evidence emerged from interviews suggest how lecturers would assess students to help them improve this skill.

From the analysis of the interviews, it emerged that making or designing something for other students or for public is another means of assessing students that was identified by two lecturers, L9 and L10. Within this assessment approach "student should provide advices and information about various health subjects to the community" (L9). The two lecturers maintained that this way of assessing student progress may help to broaden the knowledge of individuals on a specified or agreed topic. The following quote by L9 explains how an individual can benefit from the prepared materials carried out by students in Applied Medical Sciences School.

> … when someone with no idea about the disease comes to the topic and browsing the album, he/she will have a clear picture of the disease and its symptoms,

diagnosis and its treatment and its side effects and everything to do with the disease and how to protect yourself to get affected umm I main the safety issues (L9).

This quote suggests that having students create albums that contain different aspects about a particular disease has dual benefits for the students and for members of public. (L9) explained "student begins to collect information about the disease and begins to collect photos and videos and writes their comments and takes notes under my supervision. They can search the scientific articles about something and photograph this part and add it to the album". On the other hand, (L10) was using another way of making or designing materials, she illustrated as follow:

> I asked group to do a brochure for COPD illness, and the other to make a brochure for lung cancer, and so on for different illnesses. They also should focus on health education of the patient and do a brochure for example in a nice way, and give the brochure to the patient, and ask him to follow the instructions; this is another way of assessment (L10).

Designing such assessment tasks increases students' knowledge as well as building their humanitarian skills in dealing with people. This can help students to be engaged with their reality and future life.

Reflective journal is also identified as a useful approach to gathering assessment information. Students are asked to record their learning over a period of time to relate their experiences, e.g., to demonstrate how classes, new knowledge, practices, people, are, influencing their learning. This is associated with narrative and reflective commentary as a means of supporting the development of learning process. Only one lecturer (L9) discussed using this type of assessment with her students as a means of promoting their learning. She argued d that a reflective journal is "very effective and made a difference in their performance". In addition, the use of a reflective journal, according to (L9), is less stressful for students than other types of assessment, which makes it favoured by students, "students prefer reflective journal rather than mmm for example exams. I find that they are less pressured; less stress and they are so creative".

To conclude, the lecturers identified a wide range of assessment strategies and tactics to assess students' learning, in ways that lecturers perceived would best fit with the nature of the materials they are teaching. There was little agreement about the best assessment

methods to enhance students learning as (L1) said "until now, we don't have a proven way to call the best". The next section will focus on lecturers' focus on authenticity when assess their students to make their experience close to real work environment.

5.3.2 The Use of Authentic Assessment

The use of authentic assessment appears to be high on most lecturers' agenda when talking about assessment. All lecturers made reference to the importance of active learning and having assessment that reflects as closely as possible the real-life, work place environment. This is exemplified in the following quotations:

> … make sure she is ready for real life application when she is working as nurse … I should assess their application on real life (L3).

> I benefit that while the students are still in university before they go to the year of excellence, I know the following: does the student deserve go to the year of excellence, can she develop her skills as a graduate student or after finishing all the courses … (L5).

> The evaluation should not measure the information to the extent that it measures their readiness for the work environment (L9).

From these quotations, it is clear that lecturers' paid attention to assessing their students' readiness for the work environment that their students will face in their future workplace. This suggests a belief that authentic assessment can help to develop, the knowledge, skills and understandings and attitudes necessary for them to work in the environment that they are moving into. Authentic assessment is perceived to be an effective means of transformative education because it seeks to discover whether students can apply what they have learned in the classroom and solve problems in authentic real-life situations. Whilst lecturers focused their explanations on making "the application here (in university) close to the real-life experience" (L6), they were less clear about what characterised authenticity in assessment.

The data suggest that real-life application was one of the techniques lecturers identified as a way to achieve authenticity through assessment. For example:

> I evaluate them on how they do this skill perfectly as they are in real environment, all students should be assessed on the real-life application (L4).

Lecturers placed a great emphasis on students performing applications similar to those they will encounter in the real world.

> If I am now at the lab to make a new kind of assessment, instead of examining the student in a certain part, I give her a situation, I am medical-surgical, so I'm going to deal with women, children and others. That means the students should face all types of cases in the lab while I am observing her working and give her confidence on how to improve her nursing skills, so they will not get shocked when they face similar cases in real life. This is modern type of assessment (L8).

The quote above suggests that students' demonstration of skills, knowledge and attitudes within the real-life practical context create an authentic model for assessment of their learning. In addition, exemplifying and presenting real cases to their students within the context of real practical activities were also perceived to promote realistic contexts for student learning. The following quote explains how lecturers were using this technique to link theory and practice:

> … linking assessment task to reality and giving examples of real cases is really effective way to engage students in learning the course materials, for example explaining a situation and demonstrate the whole situation to them umm by acting, showing videos and so. Then asking them to anticipate the type of disease and how to treat it is very effective to improve students' learning. Through discussions and ideas exchange, students can raise their level of thinking and develop their problem-solving skills (L9).

The data suggest that engaging students in thinking about what they will face in real-life helps students to imagine real cases and know how to deal with them in practical reality. For example, L7 reported, "the case presentation or the scenarios are considered as very good methods of evaluation as the student live the situation as they are in real life".

From the data analysis, lecturers highlighted that they see themselves as preparing students to enter the labour market as they recognised the need to prepare students to work in all fields identified in the Saudi vision 2030. Lecturers "have to work to achieve the vision of the kingdom that aims to substitute the Saudi citizens instead of foreigners in all field" (L9).

Although lecturers paid greater attention to developing students' knowledge and skills, the humanitarian aspect was evident through the data analysis due to close association with

students' future work. Lecturers put humanity at the heart of their agenda when assessing students as it is perceived to be such a crucial part of in their work with patients. For example:

> You give her more self-confidence and develop the humanitarian sides; especially we are dealing with patients, with crow and with critical positions in the hospital as she works in the future there (L1).

> I can give train the humanitarian side of the nurse and how to deal with patients and medical staff in real life, and then I can assess her fairly (L7).

> Their assessment is not only about knowledge, but it includes their way of dealing with patients and whether they cared and emphasized. It is a humanitarian task, if I am an example to them, they will deal in the same way with the patients. I am also keen to clarify and assess the humanitarian aspect and to comply with the values, especially in a Muslim society that ensures the privacy of the individual (L9).

The statements imply that through authentic assessment, students would be more likely to develop disciplinary knowledge and to develop their humanitarian, caring aspects.

To conclude, authentic assessment seemed to help lecturers see students as active participants, who can work on relevant tasks, instead of passive recipients of obscure facts. This appeared to help lecturers to move towards more student-focused approaches. However, this required time and effort from lecturers to construct and to improve their approaches to assessment. In order to address the complex application of authentic assessment, it might be helpful to create authentic assessment rubrics defining what will be assessed and the requirements must be met.

5.3.3 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experiences of Assessment Task Design

The design of specific tasks is no less important than selecting an appropriate method of assessment. The lecturers took into consideration a number of factors when designing assessment tasks that suited the students' abilities and encouraged them to thrive in their learning. Lecturers identified a number of factors that influenced their task design. These factors arranged by their frequency in the transcripts include lecturers' knowledge about students' differences and needs, lecturers saving students effort and time (including group work), paying attention to students' voice and sharing sufficient information about assessment tasks with students. However, task design is often overshadowed by the

importance of summative assessment, for example, (L2) laid emphasis on the need to make sure that student pass the module and "to make the weak student succeed and the clever student take high marks" (L2). The choice of words "weak student", and "clever student" views students' ability as a fixed quality, which means that either a learner can or cannot pass a module.

The data reveal that lecturers focused on principally when designing an assessment task was students' different capabilities and needs. They perceived that understanding how students learn and designing appropriate assessment tasks is a vital part of effective teaching. This factor was identified by eight lecturers as exemplified below:

> Each student is good in a specific area. I mean you can find a student better in oral exams than another student that you assess in practical exams. Also, sometimes there could be a student is better in practical work more than if you assess him by assignment … depends on high quality of teaching (L1).

This quotation suggests that lecturers understood that "student's capabilities differ from one to another" (L4) and the students should be giving the chance to demonstrate achievement in the areas in which they have strengths (L1) added that "by giving each student a space to be creative in the field he/she like… then we will have different ways and different performance for students" (L1). This allows to understand how students can learn and enables to plan assessment tasks accordingly.

However, judgment and classification were clearly seen as a key party of the assessment process from the language used. The following quotation illustrates this issue:

> First thing you put in consideration, is issues that over look over all of our students, of all levels, so you're trying to give them the chance to get good marks and let them benefit from the assessment (L4).

> when I put a question in the exam, I know that this question is for the moderate student, and this other question for the excellent student, and another question for the weak student who just want to pass (L6).

> We should know the student who is able to achieve the best result, so I put a little part in the exam for the excellent student, and most of the questions are in the level of the majority of students, and another little part for weak students (L10).

The statements above show that there is a very strong focus amongst lecturers to use assessment to test students and classify them. For some lecturers the focus was on marks and argue that students' results must be varied according to capability differences between them rather than using assessment to improve their learning. It seems that lecturers commonly used assessment to classify students to show their rather than design assessment to meet their differences. As (L3) said "I should examine every student to show their differences and to show their effort, not all of them are equal" (L3).

A second feature of task design identified as important by lecturers lies in their concern to prepare students to have sufficient information about an assessment task. Four lecturers stressed the importance of providing students with clear guidelines about the assessment task as (L8) described "assessment is not a trick made for the student" and the only aim is to "measure the understanding of the student and the creativity in specific part" (L8). The following statements illustrate the importance of providing sufficient information about assessment task:

> … you just give them obvious guidelines (L5).

> the most important part of the evaluation is that the student must have sufficient information beforehand (L7).

> The most important point is that student must know how to be assessed and when (L9).

This further described by (L8) and (L9) as follow:

> The student must know what the assessment method is, I illustrate to them what are the main points that assessment depends on, and what are the skills that will be measured (L8).

> Talking about assessment task, start by explaining to them the important aspects and the points that will be judged for but at the same time try to support them so that they show their best, because these students have great energies and ideas (L9).

From the statements above, it is clear that presenting appropriate information about assessment tasks and avoiding ambiguity is consist with the subtheme: informing students about learning expectation as will be discussed in Section 5.4.1 (p. 110). This could promote

a positive impact on students' learning, however, (L5) limited her understanding of the benefit of this factor to linking the sharing of expectations to obtaining a good mark.

> you find that they got better marks, because the inter into the examination and they have a background about its nature (L5).

Lecturers' also expressed a concern to limit the pressure of assessment on students' effort and time   They acknowledged the importance of saving students' effort when they were preparing assessment tasks and argued that this would help to foster students' learning as "they are working throughout the whole term… This kept them engaged with you all the time and decrease the pressure on them on exams' time" (L9).

The data analysis suggests that, lecturers were following the school's policy that requires them to distribute student effort evenly across all important topics over an extended period of time. The following statements explains this concept:

> I tell them that 60% of the final mark will be on the theoretical work and it also includes the three quizzes, and 40% will be on the practical part, 10% of them for the activity… so the students can collect marks throughout a long period of time and through different tasks (L3).

> The course is divided throughout the term to many things such as quizzes, activities, final exam and practical exam… the activities could be open … we have two quizzes and one midterm exam, which is quiz number one, midterm and then quiz number 2…. The total score of all these must be 100%. Student's score must not be always 100%, some students hit the score of 100% and some not (L5).

It is clear from the quotations that lecturers were following the specified course description where it focuses distributing students' effort. However, their awareness of the importance of distribution was linked to marking their students work rather than assessing students' learning formatively.

As the data suggest, lecturers recognised their students' preference of distributing their effort throughout the term. However (L9) explained that, even though she felt the structure of her current assessment profile is preferred by her students, she felt that she was still over-assessing students as she had to follow the school's assessment policy:

Students prefer performing different methods of evaluation during the whole term rather than focusing only on the final exams, they find that less pressured, less stressing and umm. But I still feel I over-assess them sometimes, as they have to perform the variable tasks with different subjects! It is tiring for me and for her… I'm trying to kind of varying between different assessment techniques for the extra activity, but as you know I have to follow to the students' assessment system of the department. I mean I cannot write my own assessment system that fit with the materials that I'm teaching (L9).

The description from (L9) highlighted a tension created by the departmental policy and hence the heavy workload on students since they were required to perform tasks for all the subjects. This puts limitations to the idea of distributing student effort and time. He also felt that the University's policy in standardising assessment often failed to take into account the differences between different subject disciplines. However, (L7) identified how she can both follow the school assessment system and save the students effort:

… in materials that are theoretical and practical, there will be no much marks to let student spend effort and do the presentation, instead they can do group discussion during the time of the lecture as a seminar… I don't want the students to spend so much effort to prepare many things and at last she will only get 3 marks, this doesn't worth effort (L7).

Lecturers also asked students to work in groups to reduce their workloads.

I prefer that students present the information in front of me in a seminar, in a group not individually, every 6 or 7 students in one seminar (L5).

To conclude, lecturers showed an awareness of the impact of different factors they considered when choosing appropriate methods of assessment on students' learning. However, even when lecturers understood that selecting appropriate assessment method was important for students' leaning, the school policy led them to continue to use assessment methods that included a strong element of high-stakes testing and their focus was still on students' marks and students' classification.

5.4 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experiences within the Learning Experience

FA approaches were in evidence in the reported practices of lecturers in a number of ways that will be discussed in detail in the following subsections. These subsections include informing students about learning expectation with their students, gathering evidence of their students' learning through observing students' performance, involving students in in-class discussion and questioning them to explore their understanding, self- and peer-assessment and using SA formatively.

5.4.1 Informing Students about Learning Expectations

From the data analysis, one common theme that emerged is the lecturers' awareness of students' need to have a clear understanding of what the assessment expects them to do and how the assessment relates to the course. When teachers made learning expectations clear, they perceived that it allows students to take personal responsibility for their learning and adjust their progress toward course goals throughout the year. This assessment information was usually given by the lecturers during the first lectures as a general introduction, as exemplified as follow:

> At the beginning of the term… I will let them have a background about all topics that I will deliver and all the requirements. We have a number of criteria for the material, for both theoretical and practical section that must be reached. And also, I tell them that 60% of the final mark will be on the practical work and it also includes the three quizzes, and 40% will be on the theoretical part, 10% for the activity… (L3).

> At the beginning of each term, explain to the students exactly what they are expected to do, what they have to achieve by the end of the term (L9).

> From the first lecture, I give them the course specifications and tell them how to study the content, umm you have to be judged on this and that in the theoretical part, the periodical tests will be like so and so (L10).

The quotes above suggest that lecturers were keen to inform students about assessment expectations from the beginning of the course but that the information focuses most on summative purposes. Information was overshadowed by the need to pass the module, the distribution of marks across assessment tasks and the need to keep student retention rates

high. In addition, as will be seen throughout this section, there is no presence of the students' voice in any of the interviews, which is clear as lecturers used language such as 'I tell them', 'I explain to the students', 'I give them', etc.

It is also noted that lecturers confirmed that they provide the information "at the beginning of each term" and there is no evidence of sharing or discussing these issues with the students during the term. Some lecturers were content with the availability of assessment information in the module handbook or Blackboard, as ways to communicate assessment expectations to students and believed that the responsibility to find assessment information lay with rest on students themselves. This is demonstrated in the following quotations.

> She (student) should get prepared from the copy that she has in hand (handbook) and come to the lecture and know what she is expected to learn and what she is expected to be evaluated on… (L8).

She also added:

> Blackboard is really a good thing… So, the students should know how to use it, to study, and how to enter and download the exercise and know what is expected from them to do and to solve and how to send it (L8).

From data analysis, lecturers made it clear that students should be aware of what they are expected to accomplish by the end of the course. The importance of this may stem from being associated with the need to pass the course through the fulfilment of assessment requirements or expectation. This is exemplified in the following quotations as follows:

> … I mean I tell them (students) that to pass a specific module, you have to fulfil certain criteria that need to be accomplished in a specific range. And students' evaluation depends on that, is she eligible to go forward... So, it is very important to students (L1).

> I mean certain criteria that I care about must be fulfilled by the end of the term, so student can move on to the next level (L3).

> … they (students) need to meet the course requirements to pass to the next level (L10).

Meeting the requirements associated with each level is an essential part of ensuring that an individual progress to the next level. The data indicate that those students who meet the assessment criteria are entitled to move on to the next level.

It seems that lecturers outlined of assessment information as an institutional requirement rather than something that should primarily be used to engage students with assessment. The data further show that seven lecturers interviewed had not appeared to actively engage with students to make expectations clear. Hence, it seems likely that lecturers and students may have different understandings of assessment criteria.

Although respondents recognized the importance of informing students about assessment requirements, it did not mean students are actively engaged with what they are studying or understand the relevance of what they have learned. The availability of assessment information does not mean students will engage with the assessment information or understand what is expected of them. Only three lecturers indicated that they actively engaged with students to make explicit assessment expectations.

> … I remind them by the pre-discussed criteria that they must follow, are they all fulfilled? And then I give them comments in their prepared assessment task based on fulfilment of these criteria, I say for example you did this well but not that for example, it should be revised again, and when we get close to the final evaluation, I have to be sure that they all are oriented by these criteria (L4).

> … the feedback must support them to meet the course criteria (L7).

Evidence from the data analysis suggests that actively engaging students with clear assessment information and criteria could help students become more active in their learning and help them to think more actively about where they are now, where they are going and how to get there.

In terms of standards, only one lecturer mentioned standards beyond marking criteria. It was not clear how most lecturers engaged with students about assessment standards, however, one lecturer argued:

> There must be clear, definable set of assessment standards of what the student should know and be able to do. Therefore, it is essential that the student be aware of her level and what she had already achieved and what she must achieve so that

she can create a positive change. It's important to me too to make objectives that fit their abilities and performance (L9).

This quote suggests that this lecturer believed that a clear set of standards would enhance students' learning experiences and could help close the gap between the current level and the required level. This evidence would also provide leverage for those who have to argue for increased resources needed to carry out effective assessment. This could help to promote improved practices by facilitating the evaluation of the students' current achievements and provide feedback that would be of assistance to students to improve their own learning.

To conclude, there is a consensus amongst all lecturers that assessment requirements should be clearly communicated to the students. This focus on provision of assessment information was undertaken to ensure compliance with education policies rather than a commitment to encourage students' engagement with this information. It is also indicated that passing the module and the possibilities of the transition to the next stages are the main assessment purposes.

The gap between student understanding and lecturer usage of assessment criteria must be taken into consideration. It is worth considering the potential positive impact of helping students to develop a clear understanding of lecturer expectations through dialogue regarding the assessment criteria.

5.4.2 Eliciting Evidence of Students' Learning

The importance of eliciting evidence of students learning emerged as a subordinate theme from the analysis of the data. Lecturers were providing a variety of ways of collecting evidence and using them as a pedagogical tool to help enhance students' learning. Eliciting evidence of students' learning through dialogue was the most common practice amongst lecturers as illustrated in the following quotation:

> I prefer discussion more than the traditional way like slides presentation or anything else that they just follow, no. We discuss with them everything to see their opinions as feedback from students about their acceptance of the scientific material, their understanding of umm... In the light of our discussions, I can correct and support them to the right way. By this way our lecture is more interactive, more effective and more umm we can say supportive than being a formal lecture by for example a doctor and students sitting in the classroom (L1).

When listening to students talk, lecturers sought evidence to build a clearer picture of what learners know, what strategies they were using to learn, and how they feel and think about the content. This information helped teachers to construct baseline information about students' current learning, where to go with their learning and how. Recognizing the level of students' understanding through dialogue did not only play a role in the development of their learning, but it also increased awareness of the difficulties facing the students. Dialogue was also seen as a helpful strategy to explore possible ways of tackling problems as exemplified in the following quotation:

> Knowing students' level of understanding is important aspect when collecting information of students' learning and that could be done by discussion with them… Engaging students in discussions could also help students to overcome some obstacles they are facing. Sometimes, an improvement in student's performance will be noticeable… Identification of the problem could help resolve it (L9).

Engagement in dialogue helped students and lecturers to think, explore ideas, solve problems, make connections and form a better understanding as L9 declared "through discussions and ideas exchanging, students can raise their level of thinking and develop their problem-solving skills". The influence of the interaction through dialogue on students' learning was further promoted within practical and clinical sessions. The following quotation exemplifies the idea that practical and clinical work has a positive impact on students' learning:

> … practical has more interaction, which contribute to their learning because I can know their level of understanding. Students understand and achieve more when educational material has practical work (L2).

The statement suggests that dialogic practice is a way of leading learning change, as it was considered by lecturers as an effective tool to achieve the development of students' learning within practical and clinical contexts.

Another strategy for gathering evidence of students' understanding and learning identified by the lecturers was through observation during laboratory and clinical demonstrations. From the data analysis, seeking evidence of learning was most commonly carried out by observation of student performance, in particular their gains in knowledge, changes in attitude and their development of skills. Observing students' performance over a period of

time and providing them with constructive feedback was perceived to be a very helpful strategy which enabled students to learn by doing and enabled lecturers to assess students' learning and development. The following quotes exemplified this issue:

> … we do this (observing student performance to give feedback) in the hospital but without any final evaluation, you know; we call it training, we don't evaluate them in hospital, and this is only for them to learn and to progress. If the student needs to apply anything, she shouldn't be left alone, there must be monitoring. … I should be there as a responsible person from the department to teach her the right way, or a well-trained person who can monitor her to see her understanding and teach her during application (L3).

> I can observe student' performance and attitude as a nurse, assess her and give feedback of how to improve (L7).

The lecturers made a clear distinction between the focus of assessment being learning and progress,' training' and judgment, 'evaluation'. The lecturers observed the students performing the assessment, identified what they performed well and supported them by providing feedback on areas for development. However, the process appears to be lecturer driven. One lecturer argued that observing students' performance could be a passive process that leads either to heightened anxiety or total 'shut down' (L9) in the learner. None of the respondents identified their strategies for observing their students, nor the time this process involved or their frequency of their observations.

Oral questioning is another powerful tool that lecturers reported using to elicit and explore student learning. One lecturer suggested that questioning aids students' cognitive growth, enhances their learning and enables them to internalize next steps in learning. (L3) was enthusiastic about the use of questions as an effective strategy to assess student understanding and their ability to summarize content as exemplified in the following quotation:

> I may ask them questions during the lecture to attract their attention, measure their understanding, or I ask any student what she has understood from the lecture, what is the conclusion of the lecture and what are the main points that we talked about in the lecture, this is kind of feedback to me about their learning (L3).

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From the statement above, it appears that the lecturers' most common goal was typically at the remembering level of the Bloom's taxonomy (1956) and they did not require learners to use higher levels of taxonomy, e.g., critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Recalling facts at the end of the session does not explore whether or not learners have learnt or understood information.

However, higher-level questions were used by (L8) as she was asking questions not only to explore students' learning but also to encourage deeper, critical thinking and enhanced problem-solving skills:

> I need to know how much information student learn and benefit from, and I want to encourage them to think more deeply and critically, not only using recalling style. I may give them a situation related to the information that I've been delivering to them and I asked them some critical thinking questions to examine the critical thinking and the problem-solving skills, and to see how they answer my questions, encourage them to think and to react (L8).

From the statements above, it was evident that L8 saw benefit in varying questions in each session between lower- and higher-level questions. Questions, she argued, should also be designed to elicit feedback that the teacher can use to determine next steps in instruction. For example, "sometimes, I asked two or three questions, to measure their understanding and make decisions for the next part" (L8). She believed that this would help to increase student participation and encourage active learning,

To conclude, the quality of FA depends, in part, on lecturers' strategies to obtain evidence of student learning, based on the learning objectives and outcomes with a focus to build lecturers/students similar understanding of instruction. While lecturers were keen to gather information and evidence of their students' learning to help them to move forward, it seems that there remained an emphasis on rote and superficial learning. Therefore, a question should be raised here about the effectiveness of these practices to enhance students' learning.

5.4.3 The Use of Self-/ Peer-Assessment

Self- and peer-assessment are key aspects of AfL practice that emerged as a subordinate theme. For self-assessment, six lecturers believed that assessing their own work helped students to examine their own understanding and learning. This, they argued, was key to help identify areas for development in student learning. The data suggested that lecturers

believed that self-assessment encouraged students to understand what is considered good quality work and increased their potential to progress and achieve.

> … (over time) they (student) became able to work to develop their own learning and know what is consider a good or poor piece of work (L10).

> … they (students) should be prepared; they should examine their own progress, where they stand and where to go (L4).

The use of this approach had the potential to shift practice towards a more learning-focused pedagogy where learners defined their learning objectives and identified ways of making progress towards them.

Evidence from interviews suggests that developing reflective skills helped undergraduates think through their current performance to identify areas in their learning that required development. Students could use this information to improve their learning, by focusing on areas they have already recognised as requiring further development. One participant incorporated self-assessment and reflection within their assessment. She believed that students' ability to critique and self-evaluate was a "critical" strategy for learning, for example:

> … sometimes I make a worksheet, and students can do their own assessment, you see by yourself the level that you have reached, what level you are at, do you think that you are weak? How can you move forward? I'm not going to give you a mark, but you are going to put it to yourself. Then I make an answer sheet, and I tell them I'm not going to assess anyone of you, and ask them to depend on the model answer, and each one does the self-assessment and see her errors and difficulties (L6).

> The students measure their own comprehension, how? First, I explain all the steps to them while I apply the procedures in front of them. Then I ask them to repeat the same procedures, there must be error in their application (laughter). Then I repeat it again, so they can compare themselves with what I am doing again and then will be able to notice the errors that have been done. The best way to teach student in our field is to give her chance to practice it herself, to make mistakes and to notice these mistakes herself (L9).

The quotations above show that self-assessment can help students to draw a clear picture of their understanding and to identify gaps in their knowledge in order to work to overcome

them. However, although the lecturers realized the importance of self-assessment to promote students' leaning, there remained a summative purpose as lecturers used phrases, such as "level that must be reached", "putting out marks", "good and bad work" and "errors and difficulties".

Whereas none of the lecturers was against the idea of self-assessment, peer-assessment was a more controversial issue amongst some participants. For five participants, peer-assessment was something that was seen as key to student learning, and they were already facilitating some forms of peer-assessment especially during student presentations or performances in practical work as exemplified in the following quotations:

> There is a presentation part, we specify topics that not in the curriculum but it's related to the curriculum, students sit in groups, learn how to make a fruitful group discussion and also learn how to be co-operative with each other's, give constructive feedback and this contribute to their overall learning, understanding, mmm different skills and even problem solving skills … they discuss it with each other before presenting in front of me and other students. (L8)

> It is very important for the student; I can let a student do a procedure and ask her colleague to assess her by using checklist and give comments … so student should focus on which tools that she needs in this particular procedure, discuss her choice with her peer and take their feedback; then she can start to make their procedures, and this type is considered as an assessment to the students (L7).

Although participants showed their support for peer-assessment and feedback, it remained a source of concern as it created some tensions among students as (L7) explained:

> This is very effective but not for all students, sometimes students compete with each other, so I have to choose students that are close to each other and I know that they are friends and can deal with each other. But if I know that they don't like each other's through their looking, talking and dealing with each other, this kind of evaluation may cause a problem. So not all students can make comments or evaluation for each other's (L7).

On the other hand, there was strong opposition to this type of assessment by three lecturers. One participant considered students at this age to be very sensitive to others' comment. She

thought assessment was a teacher's responsibility as he/she was best acquainted with their students' needs.

> Never, I don't encourage them to do so because the girls in this age are very sensitive towards each other's comments or judgments. I never give a chance for one to assess the other or talk about her work, even if she comes with her and she's going to talk about each other's, I stop them. Assessment must be forming their teacher who is familiar with the scientific content as well as familiarity with students' level, differences and need and hoe to deal with them (L5).

Another participant believed that students were not yet prepared to undertake this form of assessment:

> Peer assessment takes time for the students to learn how to do it correctly. They are not ready; I mean I have some limiting conditions of course; I guess these conditions are not available now. At least they need training (L6).

The quotation above suggests there is a conflict between using peer-assessment and feedback for learning and for judgement. These two lecturers understood the use of peer-assessment as a judgmental tool and disregarded its utility for learning development.

To conclude, students' assessment of their own work or that of others promote their comprehension of assessment criteria and the intended learning outcomes. In addition, setting clear expectations for student performance is a key component of self- and peer-assessment. However, there is no evidence from the current data to suggest that students are involved in the development and understanding of assessment criteria which is a central aspect of self- and peer-assessment. Instead, it was often considered to be a teaching and learning activity, rather than a valuable strategy to enhance and promotes students' understanding.

5.4.4 Formative Elements within Summative Assessment

While the lecturers most commonly referred to assessment as summative, there was evidence of the use of formative elements as a pedagogical tool that associated assessment practices with the teaching and learning processes. Lecturers' descriptions of assessment practices included different types of formative elements but commonly, there appeared to be a lack of deep understanding of FA amongst lecturers meant that there was little consistency in how feedback was used to support the development of student performance. In addition, the

uncertainty of whether or not formative assessment was included during the teaching and learning process suggested that opportunities was often missed to encourage students' engagement and support their improvement.

For most lecturers, elements of FA were part of the assessment process although the assessment strategies still meet summative needs. Different tools such as, presentation, essay, and field application were used during the final exam. Lecturers made formative use of SA where the information derived from SA help to develop students' leaning and performance.

The data from this study suggested that formative assessment emerged when students were preparing their presentations. Although (L2) used presentation as an assessment task to summatively assess students' learning, providing them with constructive feedback was also a priority for the lecturer:

> … students are in regular contact with me, they come back to me, send me emails while preparing their presentations, I see what they've done, and give them constructive feedback on how to improve. I mean there are some points that I remined them about in each presentation, such as objectives, introduction, references are very important and the conclusion as well as the content, they must deep understand what they will present in order to develop; it's a superior than having good mark (L2).

In addition, lecturers referred to assessing students' written work as a means to increase their self-confidence and improve communication skills. For example:

> … because it could contribute to their learning. It increases their self-confidence, as they search, read and write to show their best and also because it improves the language … (as a group work) they must participate and discuss and then they divide the topic to many parts, and everyone work on her part, and then meet again and discuss to amend. Then they can submit it to me or print it, and I assess it and give my feedback and I check if all the points are covered well or not, and if they make it the right way or not, if there is any notes or corrections I give it to them again and they make all the amendments, in the end I will do the evaluation, and give them the final mark (L4).

Evaluating students while they were learning in the field, i.e. in hospital also included a formative assessment element. For example, (L10) provided feedback to students before the final evaluation allowing them "to re-demonstrate" to advance their learning. She said:

> … if the performance checklist is out of 20 marks, I cannot make the student pass if she gets 75% in the semester work; I have to let her make the training again, I support her and give her comment to improve her performance in the practical work… regarding the work in the hospital I have to make her competent and advance her learning by adapting pace, challenge and content of activity, she must work hard to avoid doing any mistakes with patients, that's why I'm letting them do re-demonstration, and re-demonstration until her evaluation be 75%, can I let her make bypassing for this gap, which results on more development. For all the semester I don't let her be less than 75% (L10).

Lecturers provided feedback to students during the practical exam. However, these comments only corrected their current mistakes. (L1) explained this:

> In the final exam, the last batch, what I made was for obstetrics & gynecology, first I asked the student if she did a mistake in certain area to encourage her to think, and then I taught her what is supposed ideally to be so and so; and the mistake was in that area, for example you missed to fix The speculum somehow it was not correct and it is supposed to be 40 degrees while you entered it at 90 degrees; and another problem you didn't do low precision for spectrum. Do you see? I show her the error at the same time and how it could be fixed, I mean to show her the area where the defect is. The goal is let her learn not only judging her because in the near future when she is working as a nurse, she will be aware about that (L1).

Despite the different descriptions and understandings as outlined in the statements above, a common consensus that arose from these descriptions was that FA was seen as an everyday activity and part of the role of the teacher. Combining and integrating both assessment for and assessment of learning was perceived to enhance and enrich students' learning.

Lecturers argued that FA and SA could work together effectively if implemented properly. However, there were other barriers to good practice; compared to SA, FA was not perceived to motivate students as powerfully as SA to encourage them to work on the development of their own learning. There was also a strong perception that students were only motivated by

marks, and that if assessment did not have a mark associated with it, students would not do it. For example:

> … they (students) are most keen do have good marks… Students are most keen to grades, even in international activities, like Diabetes International Day, when you say that there are no marks on attending and the participation is voluntary as it would only increase your awareness and contribute to your knowledge, they will not attend, (chuckles) marks are most important for them (L2).

However, another participant took advantages of this situation to encourage her students to be independent learners. This is exemplified in the following quote:

> I always take advantage of this point with my students, for example I tell them you will not be able to take a good mark if you have not followed my advices, discuss, ask, and co-operate. So, they work on themselves until you finish these procedures right, as the marks is their priority (L10).

This quotation suggests that final year undergraduate students must be prepared for novel and changing situations as students may find themselves in unexpected situations, Therefore, FA is essential as it enables individuals to take the lead to improve their performance and identifying gaps in the competences they must have in the future.

However, questions have been raised regarding the critical role that FA can play in student learning if lecturers have insufficient knowledge about it and its importance in developing students' learning. For some lecturers, FA seemed to be an additional activity for students that would only occur if lecturers could find the time and space to fit it in. This attitude towards FA sits uncomfortably with the literature on assessment for learning.

5.5 Lecturers' Perspectives and Experiences of Assessment within and after Learning Experience

Evidence emerging from the data shows that giving feedback during the learning process was perceived to promote learning and improve students' learning outcomes. The data show diverse perspectives and experiences of lecturers in providing feedback to their students. All lecturers agreed on the importance of providing feedback to students' learning. For example, (L7) reported "feedback is important to improve the performance of the students" (L7). Feedback was seen as an effective tool to impact positively on students' learning regardless

of the differences of views on how to provide this feedback or the obstacles they faced when providing it. This will be discussed in the following sub-sections: lecturers' perspectives of providing feedback, the characteristics of effective feedback from lecturers' point of view and the challenges of providing feedback.

5.5.1 Lecturers' Perspective of Providing Feedback

The data suggest that lecturers recognised the importance of feedback in improving students' learning. This is exemplified as follows:

> It (feedback comments) makes a big difference in students' performance (L5).

This is further reported by (L9) when she explained the significance of the ongoing feedback in developing students' learning:

> I also see that the ongoing feedback has a major role in the development of the student. Because the student recognizes his strengths and weaknesses through that feedback, he exploits and develops strengths, takes into account weaknesses and works to improve them (L9).

The statement above suggests that each student has strengths and weaknesses, and ongoing feedback can help to recognise these strengths and weaknesses in order to improve them. Feedback can help students exploit and harness their strengths in learning and encourage them to face their weakness and to overcome them. On-going feedback was seen as a key element of effective learning and development; giving effective feedback to students on their progress immediately and regularly was perceived to promote students' performance. The issue of timely and regular feedback will be further illustrated in Section 5.5.3 (p. 125).

The data also suggest that feedback must be provided in a way that was appropriate for students' "age, their little experience, their community and the surrounding circumstances" (L6). Giving feedback to students must reflect individual characteristics, such as, student age and experience. Lecturers perceived that feedback should be simple and detailed to enable students to understand and act upon it. On the other hand, external aspects were also important such as the outside environment and/or community culture. For example:

> We have enormous human abilities, creative people who embrace their talents … they need constructive feedback that consist with their evolution they are living these days, they need to be assessed in way that suit this evolution (L9).

The statement above suggests that lecturers' awareness of the importance of new approaches to assessment and feedback should be consistent with students' enormous qualities and with more developed situations.

In addition, lecturers stressed the importance of feedback being given to the student in an amicable and friendly manner. (L1) described that as follow:

> I think the feedback is very important to the student, because we don't treat the student like a criminal that must be punished (L1).

It is clear from the quotation above that the lecturer realized that feedback should be part of a constructive relationship between lecturers and students. The illustration used by one lecturer "criminal that must be punished" shows that the lecturer believes learning is not a judgmental process that aims to criticize students on their weaknesses or their mistakes, but rather it is more constructive and communicative in nature. This might also imply that more traditionally, assessment was used in less positive ways.

The data show that this formative atmosphere, which is based on communication and discussion between lecturers and learners was more common in practical learning situations as discussed in (Section 5.4.2, pp 113-114). Two lecturers agreed that "in the practical work, it (feedback) makes a big difference" (L5). This was because the nature of relationship between students and lecturers in practical contexts was more interactive.

However, feedback was often linked to low performance as discussed by three lecturers. (L2) explained the influence of feedback on students' learning:

> mistakes, if I found a mistake, I correct it in a way that they understand it, for example I say, you did a mistake here and you should do umm for example you have to do it this way … and a noticeable change on their performance will occur (L2).

(L4) said:

> … if the performance is weak, I tell the student at the same moment (L4).

Lecturers used phrases such as "mistakes", "correct"," weak" when talking about feedback. This suggested that feedback that often links were made between feedback and students' poor performance.

To conclude, lecturers recognized the importance of feedback as a valuable tool for promoting progress. However, although feedback was used in feedforward for future learning, it was often linked with poor performance which could limit its effectiveness.

5.5.2 Characteristics of Effective Feedback

There was consensus amongst all lecturers on the importance of feedback in the development of student learning as described in the prior sub-section, however, they differed in describing the characteristics of effective feedback. These characteristics included: group vs. individual feedback, positive and negative feedback and ways of providing feedback.

Group vs. individual feedback was the most discussed characteristic by lecturers. Feedback was offered to students individually and focused on improving their learning or performance, while feedback to groups was considered more appropriate if most of the students in a given context needed similar reinforcement or were making consistent mistakes:

> Sometimes I give group feedback to help them all to improve, but if a student has special need or special problem, I call her personally explain to her and show her what she has done wrong and how she can move forward (L2).

> I'm trying to give her comments in private, and this is often happening with all students, except in case of direct application because these benefits other to avoid falling into the same mistakes (L9).

> When it's a general problem for all students, I told them all as group that for example there's a part in the nursing plan care is not correct you all have the same problem. But if it is individual problem, I would give them in private (L10).

These quotations suggest that lecturers used group feedback while students were working in labs or if there was a general problem experienced by all students. In contrast, providing individual feedback was offered if the student had a specific problem in her learning. (L10) suggested, "I give comments to her in private and tell her weaknesses and encourage her … but I don't embarrass her in front of them" (L10). By using word 'embarrass', she showed concern about how the student might feel if offered feedback in front of her colleagues. Two other lecturers also paid attention to the student emotions:

> The important thing about feedback also I think that if you feel that it might hurt the student, make it individual and be in privacy. I mean if you noticed something

about a student or you felt that you might hurt him/her, the feedback should be in privacy (L1).

she will feel humiliated when I tell her in front of her colleagues that her level is low, I shouldn't talk to her in front of her colleagues, I talk to her alone, because maybe she's having a psychological or social problem, so the student will start to love me, and start to respond to me and understand the material (L7).

From the statements above, lecturers believed that feedback should be given in private, especially if there was anything potentially negative or embarrassing for the students. A number of lecturers recognised that individual feedback should make students feel valued and be motivating. However, not all lecturers recognised the importance of motivation. Other lecturers used different language, 'low level', 'special need' or 'special problem', 'falling in mistakes' suggesting comments based on ideas of categorization, rather than having a formative purpose.

In contrast, greater awareness of the purpose of feedback was illustrated by (L1) when she explained that feedback comments were not only related to mistakes but the focus could also be on promoting student progress:

I think that the feedback that I give to the student is not only on something bad happened, how to overcome umm or what the mistake is. It is not just to focus on their mistakes, but rather it should be a positive feedback. Why not to encourage the student and tell her you did well. I guess if I told her you did well, next time the student would be better three times. Correct? You give her more self-confidence… (L1).

The data suggest that feedback was not only provided to criticize student's work or to show them their weaknesses, but there were comments on improving good performance that might encourage students, motivate them and increase their self-confidence.

The data suggested that criticism "may be negatively reflected on her performance" (L9), and lecturers believed that negativity would not contribute to students' learning. (L6) commented that "I like to improve students' learning more than criticizing their learning" (L6). It could be understood from this description that criticism would not foster students' learning. She further clarified that:

… in this age, they are so sensitive to criticism. We shouldn't use criticism to not hurt the student feelings. We should encourage them, in align with learning construction, and that will not work while criticize them (L6).

From this statement, the lecturer argued that due to the sensitivity of their age, students should be given positive feedback that helps to construct their learning and negative feedback comments that may hurt their feelings should be avoided. The constructive feedback should be positive, supportive and encouraging for further development. Thus, criticising student was not perceived to be consistent with learning development.

(L9) suggested the use of "sandwich feedback" is helpful as it involves praise followed by criticism followed by more praise to reduce any unpleasantness when giving someone negative feedback. She reported:

This is called the sandwich method, which is a start with praise, clarification of weaknesses, and then praise (L9).

The use of this method was argued to increase students' acceptance of criticism. A sandwich feedback, as argued by L9, was not only used to praise students' efforts but it was also an "effective way to modify their learning through the corrective feedback that is sandwiched between two layers of praise". Although, it was suggested that the information would appear more pleasant or acceptable, lecturers were clear that feedback must be "complete, accurate" and "factual". Hence, providing feedback was perceived to be more effective when it reinforced positive work and then identified what needed to be done for further improvement.

How best to provide feedback comments also emerged as an important issue for lecturers; (L4) suggested "there is an important point, whether the comment is positive or negative, I should deliver it in an attractive and positive way" (L4). The importance of thinking about how best to provide feedback was also highlighted by L7:

Even if the students make anything wrong, I should choose the way to deliver the comments, which makes student change and develop, not by saying out this is your weaknesses. Nobody's going to accept negative comments and try to get improved and change her performance (L7).

The quotation above suggests that choosing the way in which feedback is offered to students is an important issue that lecturers perceive will have an impact on student's development.

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The lecturer focused on the human aspect of the process, recognising that criticism is unlikely to encourage students to learn. Since students are likely to respond better to comments presented to them in a more positive manner, feedback should be expressed in a constructive way to have a better opportunity to improve their performance.

Evidence emerging from the lecturers suggests that different forms of feedback were used by lecturers in the classrooms including oral, written and electronic feedback. Interviews and oral feedback were most common forms of feedback carried out by lecturers. All lecturers identified oral feedback as an effective strategy to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and to provide them with constructive guidance on areas for improvement. However, (L7) argued that oral feedback was not as successful as written feedback in supporting students and encouraging them to improve:

> the oral comment is not working with all students especially when it's in front of their colleagues I have a written file for each student, I must let her read my written comments, in every time she does anything, I let her read the comment and we discuss about all the comments that I've written … and I tell her that I'm supporting her to improve (L7).

The quotation above shows that the lecturer was keen to ensure that the student read the feedback submitted to her and had the chance to discuss it with the lecturer. Lecturer's statement "I tell her that I'm supporting her to improve" showed her eagerness to make her role in the process explicit as a means of building a good relationship with her students. This suggests that she sees academic guidance in the context of a positive relationship as a constructive was to impact on student learning development.

In addition, electronic feedback comments were another way of giving feedback to students. For example, (L5) who was a strong proponent to this type of feedback arguing that:

> … this way keeps their privacy. And you can give tons of comments, while having much time in communication, it's not necessary to do it at work times in university, because in university you have certain routine and your time is really tight. So, you can communicate with students at any time while you are comfortable and she's at home comfortable too. It is also making the students accept your comments more as it is more emotional, as it starts by sending emojis. And there is privacy no one can see or hear what we are saying (L5).

The statement above suggests that using electronic feedback to provide feedback to students was perceived as effective for several reasons. First, it kept students' "privacy" as it was considered by lecturers as one-to-one feedback. Second, it offered flexibility both of lecturer and student time as it could be created and used at any convenient time. In addition, sending comments with "emojis" could make connections with the "emotional" and students were perceived to interact and to use related comments more often.

The data suggest that regular and timely feedback was considered by five lecturers to be an important consideration when giving feedback to students. They recognised the need to provide students with regular and timely feedback, which, they argued was most likely to have an impact on their performance:

> For the feedback of practical sessions, I give them comments at the same moment of application, if the performance is weak, I tell the student at the same moment… improvement is noticed (L4).

> Also, I think comments should be immediately after the assessment. Take me as an example, if someone tell me a comment after a while, I feel it is hard to get benefits from, so what do you think about a student that she is still in the stage of building her education and personality (L9).

The lecturers' statements above show lecturers relating their own practices in providing feedback to their own experiences of receiving feedback; that feedback on learning should be as timely as possible. Lecturers were clear that the purpose of feedback was improvement as illustrated by lecturer 8, "this is so important, you will find an improvement at the end" (L8). The sooner a student receives feedback within the learning process, the more effective and constructive it was perceived to be for his/her learning.

In contrast, two lecturers agreed that "feedback is so important at the end of the session" (L5). (L1) explained that:

> I think at the end of each session, at the end of each clinical demonstration and the end of every nursing operation that you make, there should be feedback given to the students … the feedback is useful for their learning process (L1).

However, this might raise a concern that students might disengage and not connected the feedback with the action if the moment was lost.

The data suggest that lecturers believed that feedback should be used in conjunction with learning outcomes. For example, (L3) suggested that feedback must be "based on all the objectives that you have planned" (L3). Lecturers 4 and 7 also emphasized that feedback must be based on specific criteria, "feedback works best if it links to identify learning goals" (L4).

Evidence emerging from the lecturers suggested that for feedback to be effective, a learner was required to have a goal, and to be working toward achieving this goal, and should receive goal-related comments about the work. (L4) commented that students should be reminded of the criteria while they were working through the assessment task and that it is important to provide feedback that relates to these particular criteria "I remind them by the pre-discussed criteria that they must follow, are they all fulfilled? And then I give them comments in their prepared assessment task based on fulfilment of these criteria" (L4). Hence, students must be explicitly reminded about the goal they are working towards and provided with feedback to help them to achieve that goal.

5.5.3 Barriers to Effective Feedback

The data from lecturers presented ample evidence to show that lecturers agreed on the importance of providing feedback to students. However, evidence from the data also pointed towards a number of barriers to effective feedback. Almost all lecturers suggested that providing feedback might be challenging in a number of ways, for example, (L8) maintained that "it has certain obstacles". The challenges that were mentioned by lecturers included students' response to the feedback, community culture, students' drive to achieve good marks, the large number of students and the limited time available during classroom sessions.

Lecturers identified students' lack of response to feedback comments as a barrier to improvement in learning. When feedback was provided to the students, "they just ignored them (feedback comments)" (L3). The statement suggests that lecturers recognised that students did not easily accept others' comments on their own work.

Three lecturers attributed the culture of the community as another challenging aspect when providing feedback. For example, "it depends upon cultures, I mean the cultures role us here. The cultures have a role in providing feedback" (L2). She suggested that the community culture had affected the "students' acceptance" of the feedback provided as students did not

accept the feedback that showed them their weaknesses. This issue was explained by (L4, L6) as follows:

> The community culture became a challenge; we have to put their culture into consideration (L4).

> We have to abide rules, and we cannot make changes, but we're trying to make improvements … interconnect with them with their language, let them understand (L6).

The statements above suggest that students' culture, where individuals do not easily accept criticism, should be taken into consideration. In addition, the feedback comments should be delivered to students in a language that suit them, for example, "interconnect with them with their language, let them understand". To encourage students' use of the lecturers' comments, (L9) suggested using the sandwich feedback method as discussed earlier (p. 127).

One lecturer saw no obstacles with students in accepting and using her feedback comments. (L10) had sought to build students' acceptance of her comments by developing a close relationship between her and her students:

> To be honest, they accept my comments, I don't have obstacles when I'm telling them my comments, because I told them from the first lecture that they are like my daughters (L10).

The statement suggests that, at least in some cases, building relationships has an impact on the extent to which students in KSA accept their lecturers' comments.

However, lecturers also argued that students were still very focused on achieving good marks. For example:

> … they are keen to have good marks… Students are most keen to grades (L2).

> … students have a target which is how many marks I will get at the final (L6).

Lecturers understood that marks were a priority for students. Two lecturers took advantage of this context:

> If the marks are not deducted from the student, she will never listen to the advice of how to improve, she will never learn and be better, she will not improve next

time … so this will encourage her to focus, follow my comments, and do self-evaluation (L3).

I always take advantage of this point with my students, for example I tell them you will not be able to take a good mark if you have not followed my advices, discuss, ask, and co-operate. So, they work on themselves until they finish these procedures right. As the marks is their priority, so we can go through everything and discuss and co-operate to improve their learning which absolutely will result in their final marks (L10).

The quotations above suggested that since marks were a priority for most students, they could be motivated to use feedback if they were clear how the use of feedback could lead to getting a higher mark. However, the lecturers' purpose was to "encourage her to focus, follow my comments, and do self-evaluation".

Lecturers also suggested that other barriers for giving effective feedback were limits on their time and the large number of students in their classes. These issues were commonly seen as related issues, as they resulted in insufficient time being available to spend with the students. For example:

the number is also a problem, if the number is big and it is supposed to let each one of them learn a certain skill and do it by her own until apply it … but we have limited time (L4).

you give a comment about a technique for two students or 10 is better than giving comments to 20, you feel that you cannot focus on each students' performance and can't deliver information to them on how to improve in such limited time (L5).

This is very important, but unfortunately practicing time is too short, let me explain it, if the curriculum is six hours students spend three hours in theoretical lectures and 3 hours in practical work; and this means it is only one day. In addition, I have 14, 15 or 20 students and I don't have enough time to do that type of assessment (L7).

Although number of students and time constraints were considered barriers as addressed limiting the benefits from feedback, (L8) suggested two possible solutions: larger teaching spaces and more staff.

> … we need a larger place, or more staff so we work at the same time, which means that the students can follow me step by step, have dialogue around each point while we are working to ensure their understanding and then go to another and another, it needs a bigger area and more facilities (L8).

To conclude, the analysis of lecturers' views revealed mainly positive attitudes to feedback. They identified key characteristics of effective feedback but recognised that providing feedback to students was not an easy task and posed significant, practical challenges that might reduce its positive impact on students' learning.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key findings from interviews with lecturers through four, interrelated main themes. The inextricable links and interactions between these themes reflect the richness and complexity of enacting assessment in KSA. The first theme, lecturers' understandings and attitudes towards assessment, might appear to offer a context within which the other themes (lecturers' perspectives and experiences before, within and after the learning experience) might be understood. Within the first theme, it appeared that assessment practices were embedded in what could be interpreted as a deficit model of learning, where the balance of assessment attention was focused on judgment rather than development. However, there were concerns about an over reliance of assessing students' learning through high-stakes testing and therefore a variety of assessment methods were proposed by lecturers to overcome concerns about the limited nature of examinations. The importance of assessment for formative purposes inherent in more recent policy was recognized as having the potential to contribute to the positive transformation of the education system. Thus, there is a need to move from situation where rehearsal for tests drove practice rather than using assessment to enhance learning and promote better standards.

This chapter also discussed lecturers' perspectives and experiences before, within and after the learning experience. Before the learning experience, lecturers considered a number of factors including which of a range of different methods of assessment (including authentic assessment) would be most appropriate to use and how to design different assessment tasks. Within the learning experience, lecturers recognized the importance of informing students about assessment expectations from the beginning of the course and of eliciting evidence of students' learning as learning developed. Furthermore, while often lecturers referred to

assessment as summative, formative elements emerged in their descriptions of practice as a pedagogical tool associated with assessment practices during the teaching and learning processes. Lecturers also recognised the importance of feedback to improve students' learning. After the learning experience, lecturers differed in their perceptions of characteristics of effective feedback including group vs. individual feedback, positive and negative feedback, ways of providing effective feedback (oral, written and electronic), and when feedback was most helpful. There were also different barriers to effective feedback from different lecturers' point of view. These challenges included the extent to which students responded to the feedback, the KSA community culture, the large class sizes, students' focus on high marks and the limited time available during class.

From these findings, it is clear that while there is evidence of good practice in relation to AfL, there are gaps between what the literature advocates and what is actually happening at the Applied Medical Sciences School in terms of AfL. The specific gaps and possible underlying reasons will be explored in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6   Students' Experiences of Assessment

6.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by presenting the superordinate and subordinate themes drawn from the data collected from 5 focus group interviews with undergraduate students using IPA analysis. IPA, as discussed in the previous chapter, is concerned with the depth and texture of individual experience (Noon, 2018), and hence requires the production of rich narratives. The focus for the analysis of each focus group using IPA was to explore how undergraduate students understand assessment and to identify their experiences with assessment and their attitudes toward it.

The analysis of the data emerging from the focus groups undertaken with undergraduate students generated three main themes: students' experiences and attitudes towards assessment, students' use of assessment (learning and development) and challenges associated with assessment. Table 6 shows the superordinate themes (n=3) and subordinate themes (n=10) emerging from the focus groups' transcripts after process of noting, modifying, refining, and regrouping.
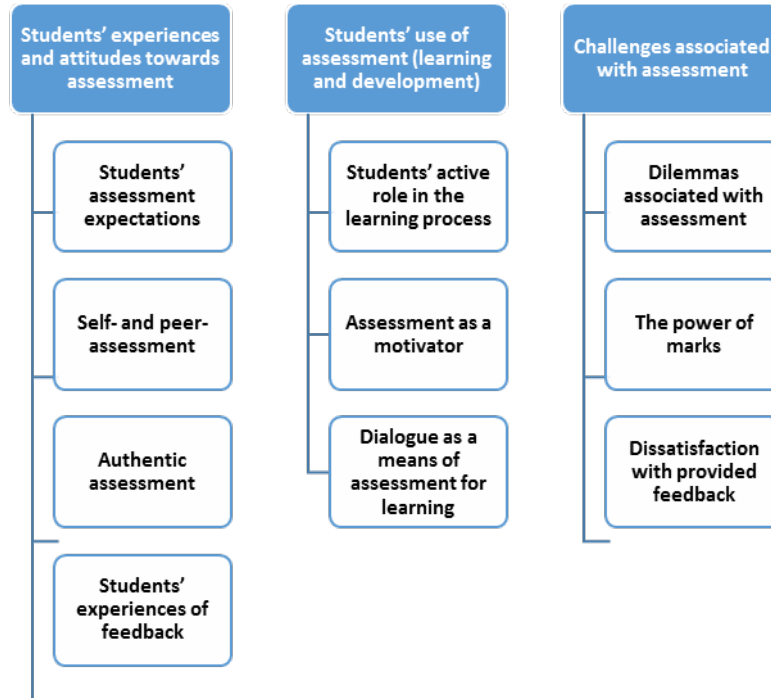
Table 6Final table of themes (Students' Experience of Assessment)

6.2 Students' Experiences and Attitudes towards Assessment

From students' descriptions of their assessment experiences, it was clear that most of the assessments students referred to were of a summative nature, reflecting the strong focus on summative assessment (SA) by their lecturers, although there was no references to either the terms 'formative assessment' or 'summative assessment'. However, there is evidence of formative assessment (FA) being practised across different modules, despite students not being familiar with the phrase, such as in-class discussions of case studies, clinical and laboratorial simulations, and conducting a graduation project with the opportunity to re-work and re-submit before the final submission. Evidence from focus groups indicates that students' have a heightened awareness of the ways in which assessment influences their learning whether FA and/or SA. The following sub-themes, assessment expectations, self- and peer-assessment, authentic assessment and students' experiences of feedback, illustrate their experiences and attitudes toward assessment.

6.2.1 Assessment Expectations

From the data analysis, it is clear that students recognized the importance of having clear assessment expectations and criteria as a key factor to promote students' engagement with the learning and assessment process. "If it (assessment) is based on good criteria and clear criteria, it can be effective for our learning" (FG1, S6) and "there shall not be any ambiguity" (FG3, S5). However, although students in all focus groups demonstrated an understanding that assessment criteria are crucial for the learning experience, they argued that the learning outcomes are often only there because it is important for the module design. For example, "I don't feel it is important for us, I just feel it is important for the design, it must be there just like the book cover". Moreover, there were still some students who have no idea about what the assessment criteria were. This was further discussed within the first group discussion:

> Student No. 3: yeah, I agree. The criteria and principles must be very clear and understandable…
>
> Student No 4: Wait, wait! What are you talking about? What do you mean by assessment criteria?
>
> (All Laugh)
>
> Student No. 5: Is it the assessment information and requirements…

Student No 3: The list of what we suppose to achieve, which is written at the beginning of each syllabus and also in the Blackboard. The list that said (sic) at the end of the module, it is intended that the student will be able to do blah blah blah. (FG1)

These statements indicate that students were provided with general assessment information and criteria, either in the student handbook or on Blackboard. However, from students' discussions, it is clear that they were not actively involved in discussing the learning goals and the standards to be expected in their work. This appeared to limit their engagement with the assessment and learning process, for example:

… they are important, but they are not sufficiently explained and detailed. Sometimes it seems general and vague (FG1, S6).

… there was not a lot of explanation in it, so we can understand what is required (FG2, S1).

These statements suggest that there is a lack of communication between lecturers and students about assessment criteria which affect students, limiting their passion for learning. For example, "I do not like to be forced to do something, it will better if she (lecturer) lets me understand her point of view to accept it and then listen to me and understand my needs, so we can both move forward" (FG3, S6).

Perhaps most concerning from the focus groups are students' comments suggesting that the information in the handout and on Blackboard is not explained nor detailed. This leads to students' misconceptions of how they are assessed. For example, one interviewee described the lack of communication about assessment information as follows "I feel like I'm in a battlefield, ready for any attack at any time. I can't expect what is the following step" (FG2, S4). The choice of language is interesting "battlefield" and "attack" are both strong terms. It is almost as if her conception that the lack of communication between lecturers and students makes learning sounds like a conflict. This could have a negative impact on the students' and lecturers' relationships and the language suggests that there is an increase in the level of tension amongst students.

Putting assessment criteria and requirements in Blackboard and/or handout without discussion raises concerns around the effectiveness of this as a means of engaging students with assessment and learning processes. It was clear from comments made by students that they felt a need to communicate and connect constantly, and lecturers need to offer

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environments that promote and support these connections. This was exemplified by S1 in (FG5) "I prefer the person talking with me, listen to me and be aware of my thoughts and then correct me and my way of thinking and understanding". This reflects the shift towards new learning modes through pedagogical dialogue as will be discussed in Section 7.4.2 (p. 187).

Indeed, the evidence from focus groups suggests that the assessment criteria used are generic. They do not link to individual courses or tasks and thus students often find it difficult to relate the criteria to individual tasks as will be seen through the discussion later in this chapter.

6.2.2 Self- and Peer-Assessment

The analysis of data suggested that the use of self- and peer-assessment was seen by students as not planned in the curriculum offered by lecturers; none of the students referred to any form of self- or peer-assessment which had been organized by lecturers. However, students would self- and peer-assess each other and use these strategies as a way to promote their own learning. Hence, students recognized the valuable role of self- and peer-assessment in developing their own learning.

All students from the (FG2) shared the view expressed by S4 about the importance of self-assessment:

> It (self-assessment) is desired. Through it, I can identify my skill gaps, where my knowledge is weak and where I am umm like perfect or doing well; then I worked on how to develop and reward myself in turn (FG2, S4).

The statement above also suggests that students understand the importance of self-assessment as a part of the learning process. One student suggested that the quality of self-assessment would be further developed with more experience. For example:

> It is important that I assess my learning regularly and I think it is a natural process, I am sure that it comes with the experience. Whenever I have grown up, assessing myself will develop further. We do not know how to assess ourselves now on something scientifically new for us. But you (the researcher) may know how to assess yourself when you conduct a research or other stuff, because you had the experience. If one's experience increased, that one will be more able to identify herself and know much how to assess further and better (FG2, S5).

However, some students were concerned that they might not assess themselves properly. For example, "I feel that I do not know how to assess myself in the right manner; you know what I mean, if I am required to do a piece of work, I will do it as best as I can, I will not notice if it is right or wrong, I cannot move it further!!" (FG2, S5). Peer-assessment was perceived to be another important feature to help promoting students leaning. Students suggested that it was often helpful to have another party assess their work and give constructive feedback, "sometimes I feel that it is better when someone gives me feedback, in addition to the feedback you give to yourself" (FG3, S5). Students refer to the importance of peer-feedback as a factor that helps to enhance their learning.

> It will certainly benefit if we held meetings with each other as students or asked help from persons other than the lecturers (FG2, S4).

> My friends are the source of valuable feedback, they helped me to develop my learning more than the lecturers did (FG5, S3).

The quotations above suggest that many students did value peer-feedback and found it a helpful strategy to promote effective learning. Although there may not have been any lecturer led peer-assessment, students were keen to organize their own meetings for peer-assessment and feedback.

However, from data analysis, it also appeared that some students had less confidence in peer-feedback as they perceived that peers had limited experience, for example:

> … we give and share information among us according to our experiences. But sometimes, we have no resolution or answer for a certain thing and need the lecturer to advise us (FG1, S6).

> Frankly I am not interested in peer assessment as much as I am concerned about the lecturer's assessment or other responsible person. Because those students who are of the same level, may make the same mistakes that I did (FG2, S6).

It is clear from the statements above that peer-assessment was perceived by some to have limited influence due to peers' limited knowledge and experience, while the lecturer was understood to be a more capable assessor of their work and better placed to offer insights to move their learning forward. The formal role of lecturers as assessors was also recognized. For example, "it is just the person's opinion and finally, the lecturer's opinion is the necessary one" (FG2, S1).

To conclude, students do value the role of self- and peer-assessment in the development of their learning. However, they had some concerns about depending on those types of assessment due to their peers' limited experiences, although students still held a belief that these assessments could contribute to their learning.

6.2.3 Authentic Assessment

The data emerging from the study demonstrate that students referred to a number of authentic, practical assessments as examples of good practice within their modules. These practices include the use of clinical and laboratorial simulations, for example:

> The practical application, I like to be assessed in real life application the most … because when I apply what I study and I will know where I am stand, so by this way the information will be confirmed. So, I can apply what I've learnt in real life (FG1, S1).

> That is true, practising in the hospital when lecturer observes my performance and assists me, develop my understanding. So, I make connection between the theoretical matters and what I will typically face in the field (FG2, S6).

> For me, I like the practical things, I feel that I can learn more through the practical works, and the best is to assess me on something that replicate the real-life situations and challenges to make difference in my understanding of the matters. It means that I may search for it before, learn from my faults, and learn from the practical thing that I currently conduct (FG3, S3).

The quotations above illustrate a clear theme emerging from the analysis. Authentic assessments that replicate real-world challenges and principles of performance are the preferred approach for all students. This approach provides students with ample opportunities to develop their learning and extend their scientific knowledge and professional skills. From students' descriptions such as: "when I apply what I study, I will know where I stand, so by this way the information will be confirmed" and "I make connection between the theoretical matters and what I will typically face in the field", it is clear that authentic assessment helps students to close the gap between theory and practice. This highlights how real-life applications can support students to transform their theoretical knowledge into practice. Thus, authentic assessment is seen by students to be vital as it encourages them to actively participate in their own learning, through working on a task that they perceive to be of relevance to their future career.

Students perceived that this assessment approach offered the potential to assess a wide range of functional and cognitive factors, in addition to personal and ethical competence as a core to their profession. This is exemplified as follow:

> … our performance must be assessed in real life application regularly as well as the moral and humanitarian aspects which cannot be seen in the pen and paper exams. In addition to that, in the hospital, with the patients, everything must be done quickly; they can't wait until I remember what already learnt. Especially, in operation section, you must have experience, no one will educate you when you hold the profession (FG4, S2).

The quotation suggests that undergraduates appreciated more authentic ways of assessment; they expressed a high preference for tasks that they perceive to be 'real'. Their understanding of the critical role of authentic assessment while they were still learning reflects an awareness of applying knowledge in the real-world and achieving safe, high-quality care for patients. Students' direct participation in shared patient care through authentic assessment and feedback arose as a key feature for students' learning in medical school. Students perceived that the real-world contexts assisted in helping them towards future success in their professional lives, as were thus seen to be assessment tasks that were motivating and worthwhile, instead of just being assessment as a requirement of passing a module. This was particularly important for the students in medical and clinical contexts.

Nevertheless, although students seem to value more authentic ways of assessment, students in all focus groups reported that there were not enough high-quality assessment tasks that reflected real-life situations:

> When we started the first training in the hospital, we got surprized, I feel that we studied things different from what we applied, because we have to learn how to apply everything in reality (FG2, S5).

> We usually go to hospitals for one or two weeks by the end of the year, and we are divided into groups, and go interchangeably. Therefore, there isn't enough time for learning. I can't remember such as mentoring or other things that I learnt theoretically when I go to the hospital, so I feel overwhelmed that I can't apply everything I've learnt for the whole semester during that day (FG4, S4).

The students' use of words "surprized" and "overwhelmed" reflects the difficulties students experienced when applying knowledge from university into practice. The choice of the word "surprise" suggests that aspects of their experience in hospital were unexpected. The term "overwhelmed" suggests that they feel pressured by the work and may be finding the experience difficult to cope with. This raised their desire for more authentic, practical assessments to help close the gap between theory and practice. The evidence suggests that integrating students' knowledge and skills in close authentic assessment activities is demanding and beneficial for students' learning.

6.2.4 Students' Experiences of Feedback

Feedback appears to be the area where students raised most concerns. The data emerging from the study revealed that students were clear that feedback should help to enhance their learning. For example, "feedback helps me to correct, improve and move forward" (FG4, S2). Although the data analysis portrays a general consensus about the critical role of feedback for the development of students' leaning, there were misunderstandings amongst a number of students when they were asked about feedback. This appeared in two focus groups, for example:

Student No.1: Feedback? No, we do not receive any.

Student No.3: Is it the lecturer's comments on our works?

Student 5: yeah…

Student No.2: I think feedback is the corrective comments.

Student No.5: Comments come at the end and also through discussion, but not all the lecturers provide us with them (FG1).

Students' statements such of these above suggested that there were some confusions amongst students about the meaning of the word "feedback", and they used word "comments" as a signifier to express lecturers' feedback. However, in later group discussion, students used the word "feedback" in English in ways that suggested a deeper understanding of its meaning. This confusion suggests that insufficient attention had been paid to what feedback actually is. This suggests that perhaps lecturers do not spend sufficient time either explaining what feedback is, what feedback can students expect to receive or indeed what action should they take in relation to feedback.

Despite the apparent confusion amongst students when they first heard the word feedback in the focus groups, they put a great deal of emphasis on the significant role feedback played in the development of their own learning. Students in all five discussion groups showed their understanding of the importance of lecturers' feedback to promote their learning, for example:

> It is the best way to develop my learning for the better (FG3, S3).

> … feedback will benefit and help me in improving my own learning (FG4, S4).

> This feedback does only benefit me at present, but also, it benefits me after that _ later (FG5, S4).

The quotations above suggest that students understand the potential of feedback to have a positive influence on their own leaning and progress. Students did value feedback as a way to improve their own learning as they used words such as 'improving learning', 'develop for better' and 'the benefits for present and future'.

However, although they understood that feedback is very closely linked with their achievement, retention and progression in theory, they suggested some feedback comments did not serve these goals but rather "they are only useless words" (FG5, S3). These negative reactions to feedback seem likely to limit students' motivation and engagement with feedback and the likelihood of the student using the feedback to inform future learning.

The data also suggested that students perceived and interpreted feedback differently. Through the discussion in (FG3), it was clear students differed in reading, interpreting and using the feedback:

> Student No.2: Some lecturers provided feedback on … the references that I used, the wordings. I get disappointed as the feedback are only on the format or style that I used, I feel that I worked hard for nothing and that I only focus on the show which the lecturer is only interested on. But what about the information which I worked hard to collect? The lecturer shall tell me whether the information is right or wrong and she shall tell me about my right or wrong direction.

> Student No.3: But this is very important …

> Student No.6: But it should not be the basis of assessing my work.

Student No.3: No, there is for example Harvard style and it means that umm there is a basis for conducting the research. Thus, in the future, you will say I will check the comma, line and others according to the lecturer comments. If the lecturer did not say these comments, I will neither understand nor develop.

Student No.2: Of course, this basis must be considered, but sometimes they give us activities where they review and comment on the show, colours and method of coordination; I am a failure in this matter, why they do not assess me based on the content I present!! (FG3).

The students' discussion above illustrates the variation in how feedback can be read, interpreted and used by students. While for example, S2 found the feedback on references and use of language to be of little value suggested that it would not contribute to her overall learning, S3 found that feedback on referencing was critical to her to develop her research skills and to move learning forward not only in the current task but also for future tasks.

This again highlights the kinds of problem created when there is a lack of shared understanding of assessment criteria between students and their lecturers. This was found to be particularly pertinent in generating students' dissatisfaction with the provided feedback as will be discussed later in Section 6.4.4 (p. 158).

The data emerging from the study reveal that, from students' perspectives, the effectiveness of the feedback depends on different features. For example, "it must be designed in a way or another to clarify the strengths and weaknesses" (FG2, S4). In addition, students understand the role constructive comments play to enhance students' learning and help to move their learning forward:

If the feedback comments are directive, they will be very useful than being just correcting the errors, because if I am dealing with a research and the notes are corrective, I will only correct the standing words, for example: asking me to use a certain reference or method, etc. It will be more useful for me. The directive notes are more useful than corrective notes (FG1, S2).

For example, in the graduation research project, the lecturer tells us things that will benefit us later, as the lecturer claims. Such as the references, when I am writing a long paragraph, I must have more than 'reference' to produce an excellent paragraph that will benefit me later. This feedback will benefit us currently and in the future (FG2, S3).

The statements above suggest that students value the constructive feedback that they can use later in other tasks more than feedback that is directed only to the correction of their current mistakes. In particular, they appreciated advice where the comments could be applicable to other tasks.

In addition, students praised commentary on their learning that focused on motivation. For example, "it is better that the lecturer motivates me through positive feedback … So, I will not feel that my work is all wrong and that all my efforts are useless, I am working hard, and I want to be appreciated. It is good to be balanced" (FG3, S2). Motivation, students reported, increased their self-efficacy which had a positive impact on their learning and progress.

In addition, the data suggested that having dialogue and discussions with lecturers helped them as students to build a good relationship. A positive student-lecturer relationship was identified by students as a crucial part of their making progress. Effective discussions were perceived by students as a helpful strategy to clarify what action they might prioritise to move forward:

> … through dialogue with her (a lecturer), I would better understand her point of view and I can express my ideas, concerns and development plans. You know what I mean? I may have better understanding of what is needed, what is missing and so and forth only through dialogue, I can create new things and solution, instead of just receiving written comments in a piece of paper, you know what I mean (FG5, S2).

The statement above suggests that dialogue between staff and students can be a highly effective type of feedback. This encourages students to think critically about their work and to reflect on what they need to do to improve it. This approach appeared to increase students' comprehension of what mattered in their learning and to encourage them to see their learning from a new perspective.

Giving feedback in a timely manner and recognising the importance of feedback kept confidential were identified by students as crucial characteristics of effective feedback. These features were identified in all five focus groups:

> The feedback shall be in the same moment to be able to remember it. If the feedback came later, I will not remember what I've done. The immediate feedback will be

kept in my mind and it must be like one-to-one type, so I will take seriously (FG3, S2)

Individually, between the doctor and me and directly in the same time, when the doctor directly talks to me after lecture, which makes me critically think about it (FG4, S2)

From the quotations above, giving feedback timely and individually to students deepens their engagement with ideas and encourages greater critical thinking.

6.3 Students' Use of Assessment (Learning and Development)

This superordinate theme focuses on how students used assessment information to adjust their learning strategies. It considers how assessment information can help students to move beyond what they have learned to what might be learned next, in order to plan and lead the next steps in their learning. Three sub-themes will illustrate students' use of assessment as a tool for learning, these subthemes are: students' active role in the learning process, assessment as motivator and dialogue as a means of assessment for learning.

6.3.1 Students' Active Role in the Learning Process

It is clear from all the five focus groups that the use of alternative assessment tools helps students to play a crucial role in the development of their own learning. They contrasted a student-centred approach with more traditional one. "In the traditional way, the teachers explain and read everything in the lecture, and the student only listen, without performing any role. But as you (other participants) mentioned, doing researches, presentations or the lab works, and having such an active role, is very useful for our learning and helps us to progress" (FG1, S1). Students showed their awareness of how different assessment tasks helped them develop their cognitive skills to "cope with accelerate development in different fields" (FG4, S2) as well as higher-level skills such as, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and collaboration.

> It improves our dealing with the things, lets us aware of our hidden skills and share information and experiences to find answers for umm a problem and the lecturers can help us on that (FG2, S4).

When I search and see more than one website and reference, I will learn more, as I will analyze, compare, umm I mean identify the problem and try to solve it (FG4, S2).

This give chance to communicate with other students and deals with them in a good manner. I'm independent person, so working in groups makes me trusting others more and gives me great confidence among the group, I mean being able to clearly communicate my thoughts and ideas with members and we accomplish the task together. It became important for me to work with others as I will work with medical crew (FG4, S4).

It is interesting that S4 in (FG2) used the word "hidden" suggesting that she had the skill but had no opportunity to practice it and to use it within the teacher-centred approach. Having such an active role through performing different types of assessment tasks helps students to recognize their skills and enables them to use these skills. In addition, recognising the importance of collaboration with peers allows them to identify and value their own contributions. For example, S4 in (FG4) argues that group work helps build her trust in her team members and offers her opportunities to practise her communication skills helping her to communicate more clearly her thoughts and ideas. The skills and abilities that students develop while performing assessment tasks, would perhaps lead to learning improvement and prepare them for further stages.

Students explained how they could play an active role in the development of their learning through performing different assessment tasks. For example:

I personally prefer presentation because the first thing it gives me confidence in … when I started studying at the university, I began to conduct presentations, deal with people, and stand in front of them and feel the people may benefit from me, which made me challenging myself to learn more and share with others. This gave me confidence while I am speaking, communicating and delivering the information, so I can be an active learner and that would benefit me. When I am about to conduct a presentation, I shall search for the information myself and thus it will be kept in my mind (FG3, S2).

I prefer to make a file as it is quickly adjusted and complete. It is easy because I will reflect on what I did and learn in the hospital and it is interesting in the same time because I know new different things and share with my colleague to benefit them as well… I mean that I will learn by practice and reflecting on these practices.

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I will definitely learn… it focuses on what we did and learned in the hospital. This mean that it is a presentation of what we made which might include pictures, personal notes and so on. That helps us to reflect on our learning (FG3, S4).

… writing an essay is part of self-learning which means that I benefit from and will not depend on only one source represented by the lecturer. There may be new studies, but the lecturer sometimes teaches us topics lasted for many years. When I conduct a research by myself, I find out new information that I can update the information by this self-learning that makes me effective. At the same time, I develop the other skills and abilities of me when I search for and read and discuss with the lecturer (FG5, S2).

From the quotations above, students presented their experiences of being active learners through performing different assessment tasks such as, presentation, reflective files and writing an essay and its impact on enhancing their overall learning, expanding their knowledge and improving their self-confidence. They also showed how they can not only take personal advantage from their assessment tasks but also recognise the potential that such approaches have to benefit others as they use phrases such as "learn more and share with others, communicating and delivering the information and share with my colleague to benefit them" (FG3, S2).

To conclude, the active participation in the development of their own learning through performance assessment tasks, rather than being passive learners, increases students understanding and promotes their learning. Gaining experiences through active participation is perceived by students to have a positive impact on both broadening their knowledge and encouraging the development of higher-order skills.

6.3.2 Assessment as a Motivator

The analysis of the evidence emerging from the focus groups provides examples of students' reflection on assessment as motivator:

Assessment may work as a motivator for me. I feel if I work hard on tasks, umm it is like a way to encourage myself to learn more, to promote my skills and support others in the same time (FG4, S1).

Imagine if there is no assessment, it would be hard for me to be diligent and feel inspired, I will not feel the responsibility of my learning… Assessment encourages

me to learn more because it urges me to study hard, feel the responsibility of developing myself, and seriously feel the thing await me, patients who need my help (FG5, S1).

The statements above suggest that performing an assessment task can motivate students to learn more, to be more active in their own learning and to collaborate with others. It also helps them to build self-confidence and increases their feeling of responsibility for taking care of patients in the future. Students' uses of phrases such as "encourage myself to learn more, to promote my skills and support others" and "feel the responsibility of developing myself" indicates that assessment with more formative functions can motivate students and build in them a greater sense of responsibility.

However, grades had also a significant motivational influence on students. Five students only referred to grades as a motivator for them to learn, for example, "if there are no marks on the assessment task, I will not work or study hard" (FG4, S4). While an extremely interesting correlation is observed between grades and external motivation such as having "a respected job" (FG4, S4).

From the analysis of focus group evidence, it emerges that for assessment to act as a motivator for students to learn, attention had to be paid to the learning environment. One student in (FG5) suggested that the assessment would motivate them to learn only within the context of an appropriate environment:

> In terms of improving performance, assessment can motivate me to learn and improve my performance based on existing environment. For example, if there are people whom I am not comfortable, I will not benefit, and my performance will not be good. But if there is a good relation between them and me, I will be of the best performance because I am comfortable in the environment in which I am, follow their advice and freely communicate with them (FG5, S3).

The quote above refers to the importance of dialogue and discussions in a trusted environment as a main feature of assessment that motivates students and leads to high quality learning. The student also pointed to the importance of group composition "if there are people whom I am not comfortable" implies that if group members make one another feel uncomfortable, then this lacks of connection can have a negative impact on an individual's learning, "my performance will not be good". The next section will discuss the influence of dialogue between student and lecturers on students' learning.

6.3.3 Dialogue as a Means of Assessment for Learning

The data also across all the discussion groups indicated that students understand the valuable role dialogue plays in promoting their understanding. For example, dialogue was discussed extensively in FG5 where students described dialogue between them and their lecturers and between them and peers as a form of assessment that involves moving forward and makes a positive difference to students' overall learning:

> I love dialogue with the lecturers, oh my God; I love it the best. I mean when the lecturer speaks to me not only about my performance, I have many questions, I am a curious student so much that there may be things I understand wrong. So, I ask the lecturer about different things, these things may not be related to the lecture, but I want the lecturer to listen to me, assess my understanding of the world around me. If the lecturer uses the traditional method, I cannot bear it, meaning that I prefer the person talking with me, listening to me and be aware of my thoughts and then correct me and my way of thinking and understanding … Yes, because sometimes I have the wrong idea and talk about thing not related to the lecture leading to have a wrong concept, and thus through dialogue, the lecturer corrects it. I already have a lot of misconceptions, and thus informal dialogue with the lecturer corrects my mistakes in way that I feel like umm friends! (FG5, S1).

This student identified a range of areas that matter in building strong relationships between lecturers and students in KSA. The choice of the word "love" and repeating it "love it the most" is very different from conventional language of learning in KSA. The choice of terms emphasizes the passionate feeling the student has about the new dialogic-based approach, in contrast to her comments on the traditional method where she says, "I cannot bear it". The student's choice of these strong words reflects a dramatic change in the relationship between students and lecturers; from the traditional passive relationship to building a new relationship "like … friends" – one that students prefer.

The students had also made reference to having "many questions", being "curious" and wanting to identify and change her misunderstanding, which implies a shift in students' interest towards meaningful and deep learning. This student wanted to go beyond the confines of the taught curriculum, for example, "I ask the lecturer about different things, these things may not be related to the lecture", "my understanding of the world around me". Feeling actively engaging in dialogue with their lecturers help students to be effectively

engaged in the learning process, correct their misconception and "expands the student's perception of the world" (FG5, S3). She also added:

> As long as we have friendly communication, a more self-confidence will be made. I will not feel like: oh she criticize me, I am not doing well, but rather I will be confident and accepts her point of view… (Lecturers' names- L7 & L10) is the two lecturers mostly working hard to communicate with us, we are having like kind of umm conversation about our dreams, concerns, yeah stuff like that, I want to see many like them (FG5, S3).

The dialogic interactions between lecturers and students can enhance students' self-confidence and increase trust in their lecturers to share their "dreams, concerns, yeah stuff like that" with them. The context of sharing dreams and aspirations goes beyond the traditional passive relationship between lecturers and students in KSA and emphasizes the influence dialogic-based approach had in building trust and deepening the relationship between lecturers and students.

6.4 Challenges Associated with Assessment

Despite the diverse and many positive students' experiences and perspectives of assessment in the Applied Medical Sciences School, some common assessment challenges can be identified. These challenges are clustered as three main sub-themes: dilemma of traditional assessment, the power of marks and dissatisfaction with provided feedback, which will be discussed in detail as follow.

6.4.1 Dilemmas Associated with Assessment

From the data analysis, it was clear that almost all students from all focus groups had clear attitudes towards traditional written examinations, an assessment approach that occupied a large part of assessment in the School of Applied Medical Sciences as discussed earlier (p. 93). Students expressed the opinion that high-stakes assessment had a detrimental effect on their learning process. Students from all focus groups saw examinations as limiting their learning.

> … along the year, I feel like I am learning new things as well as all other students in the quizzes and so; and umm throughout the year our marks too. But when the

time of the final exam comes, I fell that what I have learned is evaporated (FG2, S4).

Examinations is limitation, means to restrict further learning (FG4, S2).

What would the exams benefit me at? (FG5, S2).

The quotations above illustrate the common perception amongst students that high-stakes testing hindered their learning and development. While students perceived that they progressed in learning throughout the year through engaging in alternative assessment methods such as dialogue, quizzes, presentations and practical work, they perceived that exams would restrict further learning. Some students suggested that examinations even affected their prior learning. As one student commented, "what I have learnt is evaporated" and she attributed this evaporation to the exam.

In addition, high-stakes examinations were perceived to create feelings of worry, anxiety and apprehension among students. Students' views about high-stakes examinations were always associated with words such as "unfair, stressing, tiring, frustrating, etc.", for example: "generally I think exams reflects tension and worry" (FG4, S1). The anxiety associated with high-stakes examinations appears from students' explanations to be especially acute at this stage of their studying at the University where good marks were perceived to be necessary for future career success:

I may have done my best in this final year, but the mark was not in the form which I wanted, due to the pressures associated with examinations (FG5, S2).

I'm a little afraid in preforming the exam than in the presentation. Three days, four days or a week before the exam, I get stressed because I do not want to lose a mark (FG5, S1).

The quotations illustrated a theme common amongst students. Preparing for final examinations often caused feelings of anxiety or nervousness amongst students. These concerns, however, were not only associated with the examination itself, but emerged with any other type of assessment method that aim to summatively assess students learning and to judge or classify their learning. For example:

When the evaluation starts in the form of presentation or essay or whatever, I became tense instead of creating and doing my best … I focus on the outcome, I

mean the full mark, instead of giving priority to being satisfied with the quality of prepared work or improve my understanding (FG4, S1).

This may affect students' passion for learning and development as students' language became very specific, very mechanistic as they spoke of tension, outcomes and marks suggested their feelings of discomfort at being summatively judged and classified.

Perhaps one of the most concerning issues that appeared from the focus groups was a clear perception amongst students that they were forced to use specific methods of assessment and had no right to share their views about these methods:

> Generally, I do not like to be obligated to do anything. For example, when I do not like to conduct a research, I do not like to be forced to do so. Or for example, I do not like anyone obligating me to conduct a presentation (FG2, S5).

> It shall not be mandatory, as when something is mandatory, it will be difficult to accept it. The best is to be optional; or at least for example, they can ask me, after determining the activity, whether I want or do not want to perform such activity (FG2, S3).

The quotations suggest that losing their "personal" voice when engaging in assessment is a major concern for students, and that this led to a lack of engagement with the learning process for some students. They recognised the importance of sharing the responsibilities of deciding on the assessment methods, for example:

> We are not students in the primary school; some of us are mothers, married and some have taken house's responsibilities and other duties, it means that we are adults. I have my own life and my voice must be heard about… our preferred method (FG2, S5).

> It is according to the student's opinion or the thing that suits the student, it is not necessary that the lecturer decides everything to the student. For example, the assessment is conducted in a certain way, no, the best for us is to be given the free options. Or at least discuss your choice with us, we are adult now, we have to share the responsibility (FG3, S6).

The students realised their rights as learners with voice, and the capacity to share opinions, decisions and responsibilities. Students should be able to negotiate different aspects of

learning including assessment methods as "adults" suggesting a meaningful and effective acknowledgment of students' voice.

The data also suggested that students felt aggrieved about the volume of assessment tasks throughout the term. One student was shocked when counting the number of assessment tasks, students had to perform:

> If we have an average of umm let's say seven subjects and we have to do 3 quizzes for each subject during the term and midterms, that means umm (counting) nearly 30 may be, with no mention to the finals and other activities and tasks!!Oh God (FG3, S4).

The heavy workload was clearly overwhelming for students and consumed their efforts. It also might distract students from focusing on developing their learning as, for example, this student was spending time quantifying how many assessment tasks she had to perform. For example, "I do not have time to really understand what I am supposed to learn as a nurse, because I have to perform lots of tests and tasks and get good marks" (S2, FG5). This implies that the large number of assessment tasks might hinder deeper learning as the students focused only passing these tasks and getting higher grades rather than maximising their learning.

This focus on SA increased students feeling of stress and anxiety, for example:

> … it is exhausting that we must finalize the essay in a certain period, so I want to finish it before we start exams and other assignments or my marks will decrease (FG1, S5).

> We are bound by time and we are restricted to perform each assignment by deadlines … Therefore, I prefer group work tasks as we must divide the work among us, one of us makes a questionnaire and another start a chapter and so on, so we can get good marks with less effort. It is impossible to stay without doing a thing (FG3, S2).

Students found most of their deadlines were bunched together. This indicates that there is an ineffective distribution of their study effort throughout the year via the timing of the submission of assessments. Students commented that they are often stressed:

> There shall be time devoted to each essay and such time shall not within six other subjects as the load is very high for us

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Another issue why do they set the midterm tests within only two weeks? All at once!! (FG3, S3).

It is necessary to take into consideration the student's time; this means that I could not write an essay for each lecturer in the same period of time (FG3, S6).

From students' descriptions it appeared that students' time and effort to study were driven by performing assessment tasks. Such bunching of tasks meant that students often found their effort and time unevenly distributed throughout the year.

To conclude, there is clear evidence of the importance of the relationship between the lecturers and students. This associated with the importance of students being actively engaged and having discussions with their lecturers during the learning and assessment processes. In addition, the role of lecturers is also acknowledged within these processes and whether those lecturers listen carefully to students' ideas, voices and to their ways of working.

6.4.2 The Power of Marks

While students question the validity of high-stakes assessment in relation to their learning as discussed in the previous sub-theme, they recognise the importance of gaining high grades for their future. S4 in (FG4) believes that she is working hard during the year aiming for good marks; she expressed that by saying: "I have to focus on my marks to have a good job" (FG2, S4). Thus, the purpose of learning becomes strategic as students focus on their final scores.

Although students understood the influence and potential benefits of wider approaches to assessment on their learning, they still tended focus on how to achieve higher marks in high-stakes testing. This might go against the idea of developing learning through different assessment tasks. For example:

There are 20 marks for each subject. There are quizzes. I do not care much because only 5 marks are allocated to the total score … but the exam has the lion's share of the marks (FG3, S4).

The data suggest that gaining good grades through performing high-stakes testing is a priority for students, and their thinking of what really matter in assessment is often limited to the idea of gaining good grades or avoiding losing marks, as they repeatedly used

expressions such as "working hard to have a full marks, having A+" or "do not like to lose lots of marks" etc. This focus on high marks was commonly associated with comments on the psychological effect of such pressure on them, for example:

> That thing is really frustrating. I lost lots of marks, although I still think that my answers were correct. Actually, I broke because I got that bad mark (FG4, S3)

> I shocked with the bad grade and could not discuss it with the lecturer. I got really frustrated… I need to know why did I get a bad mark and how can I improve and develop myself (FG4, S4).

The quotes above suggest examples of the kinds of impact low scores had on students. Students' choice of words "broke", "shocked", "frustrated" suggesting a range of negative emotions. "Broke" is particularly strong suggesting that the student is collapsing under the strain. However, students also showed their awareness of the importance of feedback to be associated with the provision of marks, for example, "I need to know why did I get a bad mark and how can I improve and develop myself". Students recognized that feedback is central to learning, as S2 in the same discussion group commented: "marks only tells us whether the answers were true or not, but feedback helps to know the mistake and correct it, improve and move forward" (FG4, S2).

Nevertheless, students were dissatisfied because some lecturers were using feedback summatively to decrease scores, for example:

> Yes, when a lecturer asks us to do essay, so we go, for example, search, prepare and give her the first-draft. Assuming that every essay has ten marks, if I have wrote the essay and gave it to the lecturer, I may not obtain the full marks because the essay may be incomplete; but even if I do amendments after she gave me the feedback and before the final submission, she might decrease my mark because she gave me the feedback. I mean that in the essay, marks must not be decreased for receiving feedback because I am here to learn, and I am still in the learning cycle. I feel my grades are a price for this feedback (FG1, S3).

> … it is also happening with essays and activities, for example, when the lecturer asks me to revise and modify, she decreases 1 or 2 marks every time I receive feedback. The feedback is supposed to be something between me and the lecturer, for developing of my work, my mark must not be decreased… she must only mark the final version (FG1, S5).

The evidence suggests that feedback is often used by lecturers summatively to decrease final marks, ignoring the developmental potential of feedback. For example, "the feedback is supposed to be something between me and the lecturer, for developing of my work, my mark must not be decreased". Students understood the importance of feedback, for example, "marks must not be decreased for receiving feedback because I am here to learn, and I am still in the learning cycle" and they showed their dissatisfactions of decreasing their grades each time they receive feedback, "grades are a price for this feedback". The feedback that is simultaneous with decreasing marks might make marks a priority for students as they follow their lecturers' feedback only to improve their marks. In fact, students expressed frankly that they followed their lecturers' feedback, even if they were not convinced by it to avoid losing marks:

> I have to respond to them even if I am not assured because the marks are controlled by them, we have no choice (FG2, S5).

> This is what she wants, so I have to stick to it because she is the one who will correct and give a mark (FG2, S1).

From the above quotations, it appears that feedback did not fulfil its central purpose as a means of developing students' learning, and marks were still students' main focus as S2 stated: "for the stage where we are, the marks are the most influential factor" (FG5, S2). Students in the last year of their studies are most influenced by the drive to have good grades as they aspire to get a good work position. This is because the community culture which deems that the students with higher marks can get better job opportunities. This is exemplified in the following quotations:

> The society wants the full mark only, so if you tell someone that you understand and doing well, he/she wants the evidence, most people depend on grades only (FG4, S3).

> I may have the skills and proficiency… but the society see only the grades to have a respected job (FG4, S4).

These students' views suggested that the community culture drives them to aspire to achieve the highest scores. However, the data also suggest that this culture is beginning to change, and attention is moving from students' grades alone to broader concern with their wider performance and skills. For example:

But now, in the medical field and in hospital work, they did not rely on the marks but take into account the practical skills. In the internship year when we are applying clinically, they don't know anything about your abilities, but by time they see your skills and your comprehension. Jobs now don't choose on the basis of grades, although some hospitals still choose upon grades. I see this is a good method (FG4, S1).

Yeah! These students also take recommendations from doctors. Teaching and training us in hospitals do not focus on our results, but rather on how we can overcome problems and difficulties, how to improve our practical skills and communication skills, solve problems, deal with patients and their families and others… There is a spread understanding that the nurses, who are clever and always have high marks, are not necessarily the same in real-life applications (FG4, S2).

From the students' statements above, it appears that the culture of student assessment is shifted from focusing on classification and categorization to more formative purposes, although there is still resistance for this shift. It is clear from students' responses that they liked this change and find it fairer rather than relying only on results from the final exams. For example: "I feel exams are unfair" (FG4, S4). This student explained that she perceived exams as unfair because they focused only on memorising skills and ignored other skills. Thus, students also reported their perception that exams were unreliable as a means of discerning achievement because "exams don't depend on our understanding, instead on what you memorize, it doesn't matter if you understand or not. Not all students have a good memory!!" (FG3, S4).

6.4.3 Dissatisfaction with Provided Feedback

Although students were clear that feedback was there to help them learn and improve as discussed in this chapter, they identified a range of issues they had experienced that left them dissatisfied with the provided feedback. The major problems that students highlighted included feedback being illegible and a lack of informative details on how to improve. For example, "there was not a lot of explanation in it, so I can understand what is required" (FG2, S1). In addition, students are often given one-word feedback that they found of limited use:

She made red lines and said: "modify them" or some crossed out, with no correction provided (FG1, S1).

she asked for modifications; as we now work for the graduation project, for example when there is something missing, she says "there is something missing", or if there are spelling mistakes, wrong date, etc. They comment on different things and say "modify it"! What?? What does she mean by that? (FG1, S5).

In the graduation project, the feedback was verbal between the lecturer and us, she noticed us of some things, such as "expand more here and so", OK? What's next? It's just like shallow comments, I wonder how it will benefit us later (FG2, S3).

These insights from students suggest that the lack of detailed feedback often impacts on students' engagement with this feedback. This restricted their use in further tasks as referred to by S3 in (FG2). In a similar vein, another student also commented:

… if she only says: "wrong, right, I don't like so, you didn't say that", I feel like it is so vague, I might manage with the current task but there is no details of how to develop another such piece of work (FG4, S4).

Pointing to the students' mistakes with a lack of explanation of why and how students can improve, left students with an impression that the feedback was summative in nature. Such feedback served only to justify the given grade and was limited to determining the errors. However, there were other instances where students pointed to an opposite concern where providing too detailed feedback also caused problems:

If the comments are too much, the student will fed up and it would be impossible to make use of anything. We will become sick of these comments and will not give them any attention (FG1, S4).

Providing too detailed comments led some students to revolt against them and try to ignore them. Thus, the amount of feedback was critical in determining the learning gains and had to be carefully adjusted by the lecturers.

The data emerging from the study revealed that the delay in providing feedback was another concern for students as feedback was perceived to lose its effect in promoting learning if the gap was too long. This led to feelings of resentment in some of the students. For example:

… (if) the feedback comments are not in the same time, I feel like there is no connection, as I moved further from that point or I cannot even remember, for example, I feel like (pause) what are you talking about? (FG1, S5).

> … the delay affects my progress … when these things delayed, we will not finish on time, time will kill us and the final exams may come while I have not finished dialing with them (FG1, S6).

The statements above suggest that students understand that they were most likely to benefit from feedback if they received it in a timely manner and prior to performing the next assignment. Students questioned the reason of delaying the feedback. For example, S2 in (FG4) commented "She replied, for example, later at any other time, so why she did not provide it at that time?" (FG4, S2).

In addition, students were not satisfied with receiving comments after finishing the assessment task and preferred receiving regular feedback while undertaking the task:

> … the first part of the research, the lecturer does not tell us that: "this is incomplete thing or incorrect" on time. And once we finish a whole thing, she tells us if this part is complete or not, she didn't tell us part after part and step by step (FG1, S6).

> at the last part of my assignment, I start correction, which means I make my assignment again, meaning return to the beginning (FG1, S2)

> when we get feedback comments from the doctor, we seem like umm we have to do our assignment again as if we made nothing. Also, the lecturer does not give us complete information at the first time and does not follow us, but she comes and asks us to repeat some things again and so on… I mean when feedback comments are made at irregular intervals, they will not be effective and will not be accepted by anyone (FG1, S3).

These students' comments exemplify the common concern that when there was regular feedback, this helped to save students' time and effort and allowed them to learn and improve while performing tasks. However, it appeared that students' use of feedback was mostly to correct the current tasks and thus despite student preferences, it would seem that there are still questions to be asked about the contribution of lecturers' comments to deepening students' learning.

The lack of shared understanding of assessment criteria between students and their lecturers was found to be a particular cause of students' dissatisfaction with the provided feedback. Students, commonly, did not understand the basis on which the feedback comments were provided. Students shared a view expressed by S6 in (FG2): "I do not feel that there is a

basis on which she assesses us, I can't link these comments with assessment criteria …to let us understand and engaged". It is clear that many students struggled to understand the basis of provided feedback. As such, simply providing the feedback to students without offering opportunities to discuss any issues did not seem to be enough to engage students and improve their learning. This is illustrated by S4 in (FG5) when she said "usually, the lecturer gives us a topic and asks us to conduct a presentation … I do not know what she is assessing me at, why she gives such comments, I know nothing". These experiences where students misunderstood the purpose of the task and how feedback related to their task performance or who misinterpreted the feedback, sometimes seemed to be detrimental to students' trust of their lectures. This is exemplified as follow:

> It is also subjective from the lecturer's side. Like maybe she will give student higher mark because she did something impressive, and this is affecting our marks. I mean she will give us lower marks and negative comments in comparison to that student. There is no base on how they assess our work, and this is unfair (FG1, S5).

> yeah, yeah! Like for example, writing a report of a laboratory practical, Ok? You will find 15 different reports; each student thinks this is the perfect one. You know what I mean? It is all subjective (FG1, S3).

> I see that it (feedback) is not based on anything other than on her own opinion (FG2, S1).

They believed the provided feedback by lecturer is "unfair" as it "is all subjective" and it is only based "on her opinion". This suggests that although system tends to be criterion-referenced, students believed it is norm-referenced, for example, "she will give us lower marks and negative comments in comparison to that student".

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the key findings from focus group interviews with undergraduate students. It revealed that many of students' assessment experience are a direct result of their lecturers' actions. For example, learning outcomes are generic that used for purposes of curriculum design rather than as a means to communicate with students are reflected in students' lack of understanding of what their assessment is trying to achieve. In addition, students showed their awareness of how different assessment tasks helped them develop their cognitive skills to "cope with accelerate development in different fields" as well as

higher-level skills such as, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills and collaboration. However, the limited use of different assessment approaches including authentic assessment, self- and peer-assessment are all reflected in students' experiences. Moreover, students put a great deal of emphasis on the significant role feedback played in the development of their own learning, however, it appeared that insufficient attention had been paid to what constitute an effective feedback.

The second theme considers how assessment information can help students to move beyond what they have learned to what might be learned next, in order to plan and lead the next steps in their learning. The active role students played through participation and dialogue leads to developing students' understandings and promoting their learning. Gaining experiences through active participation and dialogue is perceived by students to have a positive impact on both broadening their knowledge and encouraging the development of higher-order skills. One major gap between students and lecturers' experiences is around dialogue as effective feedback. While lecturers reflected on their effort in attempting to provide feedback, students recognized the importance of two-way communication and dialogue as a way of effective feedback. Thus, dialogue and discussions in a trusted environment as a main feature of assessment that motivates students and leads to high quality learning.

Despite the diverse and many positive students' experiences and perspectives of assessment, some challenges were identified in third theme. First, students expressed the opinion that high-stakes assessment had limited their learning. Second, although students understood the influence and potential benefits of wider approaches to assessment on their learning, they still tended focus on how to achieve higher marks in high-stakes testing. Third, students identified a range of issues they had experienced that left them dissatisfied with the provided feedback. These challenges raise the importance of re-considering the students' role in the learning process and rebuilding the relationship between lecturers and students as will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7   Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters (Chapters 5 & 6), presented the key themes drawn from the qualitative data (interviews and focus groups). They offered deep insights into participants' interpretations of their experiences through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis IPA. IPA was a particularly interesting approach as it is concerned with multiple and individual narrative experiences where participants through telling their stories allow evidence to emerge that is based on individual and collective experiences.

In this chapter I return to the research questions and to address these, I have divided the chapter into three sections to reflect each of the research questions listed below:

1. From lecturers and students' experiences, what factors have shaped practices of assessment in medical classrooms?
2. What aspects of learning assessment as perceived by lecturers and students seemed to help or hinder students' learning?
3. To what extent, do lecturers and students understand feedback as a means to enhance students' learning?

This chapter considers findings relating to the research questions in the context of extant literature and published research.

At this stage in the write-up process of IPA research, I draw attention to three important points. First, during the process of making meaning from the findings I fully recognise the difficulty and ethical sensitivity of working with and within the dual hermeneutics during the process of making sense from the results. I discussed the possibility of sharing the evidence and checking meaning with participants, but both lecturers and students said that the timing of this process in the context of my PhD would mean that they were being consulted at a time when they were under particular assessment pressures and being asked to read and comment on transcripts would be an additional pressure. Thus, as the researcher responsible for interpreting evidence, I have taken particular care to consistently refer back to participants' transcripts, taking into consideration my analytical notes to ensure that I am reflecting as accurately as possible the words of participants to ensure the quality of the work presented.

Second, while recurring themes have been developed based on a cross-case analysis, I have not dismissed the significance of the individual voice in the evidence that emerges in this chapter. Thus, as appropriate, individual quotes are used throughout the discussion. When an individual voice is used, this is acknowledged in the text.

Third, this chapter refers to existing research and extant literature, however, there are still some significant gaps in the literature – such as the consideration of powerful knowledge while assessing medical and healthcare students – and these gaps have added an additional challenge to the study's theoretical underpinning. More positively, these gaps motivated me to engage with a broader field of literature to enrich the interpretation of the study's findings.

7.2 From Lecturers and Students' Experiences, What Factors Have Shaped Practices of Assessment in Medical Classrooms?

The evidence emerging from this study suggests that there were four major sets of factors that shaped assessment practices in medical classrooms: lecturers' conceptions of assessment, cultural and prior assessment experiences, institutional factors and the influence of the medical discipline.

The first theme explores lecturers' different conceptions and beliefs of assessment which are then reflected in their practices. These different levels of understanding about assessment need to be contextualised in the current climate of reform within the Saudi educational system.

The second and third themes discuss hierarchical culture: the cultural context for assessment experiences, the hierarchical nature of life in Saudi Arabia, the lecturers' own cultural assessment experiences and the impact of those on their current assessment practices. The hierarchical culture where lecturers are seen as powerful experts who hold control over the teaching and assessment process was appeared from the evidence. However, lecturers do not only enact these hierarchical relationships with students, in turn they also have hierarchical relationships imposed on them by the institutions and professional bodies as will be discussed in the third theme.

The fourth theme discusses the influence of the medical discipline on this study in a Saudi context and this makes an original contribution to the field. This dimension focuses on assessment of the needs of students who have both to gain scientific knowledge and to use

that knowledge in real-world contexts. This interaction of theory and impact on practice asserts the critical role of lecturers and students in the development of the learning process. This partnership is key to the production of powerful knowledge which the students can use in their professional lives. The originality in this study is the contextualization of the ideas within the medical discipline in KSA and issues emerging from this will be tackled in Chapter 8.

7.2.1 Lecturers' Conceptions of Assessment

The evidence emerging from Chapters 5 & 6 identifies as a major theme that lecturers' conceptions of assessment play a critical role in determining of nature of the instructional activity and the ways in which lecturers engaged with the learning process. Particularly, the nature of the assessment activities carried out in the classrooms starts from the premise that lecturers hold different beliefs and these different beliefs impact on the quality of their teaching and assessment processes. This finding is consistent with wider evidence which found that lecturers' conceptions of teaching, learning, and assessment influence their ways of teaching and in turn these have a strong influence on students' learning (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Savasci-Acikalin, 2009). Lecturers' conceptions of assessment have a significant effect on their professional activities and decisions (Opre, 2015; Vandeyar & Killen, 2007). Recognising lecturers' conceptions of assessment does not only provide insight into their practices and pedagogy, but also provide a means for understanding the relationship between lecturers' assessment conceptions and students' learning outcomes (Opre, 2015).

For the purposes of this research all lecturers were asked to describe their conception of assessment. From that analysis, three main categories of assessment conceptions emerged illustrating differences in how lecturers view assessment.

The first category included lecturers who view assessment as a measurement of students' ability, learning and understanding. This category was by far the most common as five lecturers (L2, L4, L5, L6, and L8) offered definitions focused mainly on ability, measurement and classification.

> Assessment is measurement. It measures student's achievement of a specific skill … to give her fair and accurate grade (L5).

As seen from the statement, the lecturer's focus is upon marks and grades as a classification and measurement tool.

The second category included lecturers who use assessment to build good relationships with students, and to develop students' learning and understanding, but assessment is still related to measuring students' learning. This understanding of assessment was identified by four lecturers (L1, L3, L9, and L10), for example:

> Some people think that assessment is arbitrary process, especially students, but assessment as I understand is an interaction, connection and development process between me and the students, because I want her to reach a certain goal, she must have a certain score, and she must learn and understand as she will be responsible for patients (L10).

Although the lecturers' understanding of assessment focused on moving learning forward, there was still a focus upon measuring and grading.

In the last category, only one lecturer (L7) described a deeper conceptualization of an assessment process that sought to integrate both FA and SA purposes as a mean to provide support for students. This lecturer had a stronger focus on learning than the lecturers in the previous two categories.

> … assessment is a complex process that it's related to the learning development and learning judgment,... It is a move from teacher-focused to students-focused strategy. Student at this age should take the lead over her learning and be responsible person (L7).

The balance between ascertaining the learning development and learning judgment indicates a more sophisticated understanding of the assessment process. This lecturer understood the relationships between FA and SA to impact students' learning. She also showed an understanding of the importance of moving towards a more student-focused approach acknowledging the importance of students' active roles in the learning process.

The three categories represented different understandings of assessment purposes. While some lecturers had an understanding of using FA and SA as approaches to enhance students' learning, other lecturers remained committed to assessment of learning as the central purpose and aimed to measure learning and achievement. Differing conceptions of assessment leads to varied understandings and uses of assessment, as discussed by Vandeyar and Killen (2007). This variation in how lecturers understand assessment suggests that there is a culture shift underway in educational assessment system in KSA. It is argued that the process of transmission and change (in any culture) is always likely to be slow or "less adaptive

depending on the environment" (Creanza, Kolodny & Feldman, 2017, p. 7783). The environment cannot be ignored and in Saudi culture, the shift from assessment as judgement to assessment for learning and judgement is a major challenge. Professional learning in Saudi has to recognise this and, individuals in the Saudi context, should be encouraged to think both about new ideas and innovative practices in assessment and to reflect on the potential of these alternative practices for enhancing learning opportunities for students in their own societies.

Evidence emerging appear to suggest that this climate of change in assessment system and procedures in Saudi HE is having a significant impact on assessment uses and abuses. For example, as illustrated in Chapter 5, although lecturers did not seem to fully understand AfL, they were using some of its principles as a pedagogical tool to enhance students' learning during the teaching, learning and assessment process. Through the analysis, it appeared that lecturers were practising AfL principles although they identified these not as assessment but as good teaching practices. Thus, it may be that the differences between what they say and what they really do in their classrooms reflects some confusion in their understanding of what AfL is.

Here, again it could be argued there are significant implication for professional learning for the lecturers. Lecturers need to "understand what is to be learned; how pupils learn, and how they can promote and support that learning; how best to gather evidence about learning; and how to interpret and use that evidence to plan for better learning" (Livingston & Hutchinson, 2017, p. 290). These characteristics are described by other authors as what constitutes assessment literacy. To become assessment literate, lecturers have to understand the essential goals of assessment and what assessment evidence might reveal (Brink, 2017; Gardner et al., 2010; Stiggins, 2002; Stiggins, 1995).

Developing from social constructivist theories of learning, Livingston and Hutchinson (2017) argue that current school teachers' understandings of AfL should be considered when planning for their professional learning. They should be also supported to understand how to apply theoretical assessment knowledge in real contexts and "make informed decisions about ways of developing and changing their assessment practice, appropriate to their own context" (Livingston & Hutchinson, 2017, p. 297). This could be of relevance to lecturers in HE. Understanding lecturers as learners is a key factor if Saudi Arabia is concerned to take forward its policy aspirations and make a positive difference in teaching, learning and assessment processes.

Several studies have highlighted similar findings related to the importance of professional learning and inquiry for fostering effective AfL in classroom contexts and with specific subjects. For instance, in the UK, the King's-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment project (i.e. Black et al., 2003); in Scotland, the Assessment is for Learning project (i.e. Hutchinson & Hayward, 2005; Hayward et al., 2004; Hayward & Spencer, 2010); in addition to a number of studies of Formative Assessment by the OECD (i.e. Sebba, 2006). Professional learning is vital if assessment is to be developed and sustained at the centre of professional classroom practice.

7.2.2 Cultural Assessment Experience Issues

The context of the culture in KSA played a key role in maintaining certain roles for lecturers in the assessment process. The sense of hierarchy, as part of Arab culture, which expects lecturers as holders of expert power to have control over the teaching and assessment process appears from participants' description in Chapter 5 & 6. Lecturers who have expert power are assumed to have enough knowledge and expertise to provide students with the required information, knowledge or guidance and the capability to assess students' learning summatively to measure their understanding, for example:

> The assessment is measuring, I measure the student's understanding, how much points did I deliver to them and how much did they gain (L6).

Assessment in the Saudi context is still largely controlled by lecturers and is seen as a crucial part of the responsibility of lecturers. From lecturers' explanation in Chapter 5, it seems that they feel responsible for the teaching and learning process and expect students to willingly follow their instructions.

> … provide them (students) with quick and continuous information about their performance during the semester … and their performance is improved accordingly … (L9).

Taras (2002) suggests a possible reason for this reluctance to involve students in the assessment process. She believes that the assessment and feedback processes are "at the heart of tutor identity" (Taras, 2002, p. 504) and thus tutors are unwilling to share them with students. Nearly twenty years on this remains an issue in KSA. However, students showed more awareness about the importance of sharing the responsibilities of assessment with lecturers, for example, "we have to share the responsibility" (FG3, S6). Students' confidence, capacity and motivation to learn, and their willingness to improve their

performance are influenced by the extent to which they have an active role in the development of their learning experience of taking responsibility of their learning. Research has suggested that hierarchal power relationships where students are left in largely passive roles do not encourage students to understanding their own approaches to learning, build their sense of responsibility and their ability to cooperate, nor promote their critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills (Wu, Heng, & Wang, 2014).

In addition, due to the cultural diversity among lecturers and students, there were examples where almost a sense of cultural imperialism appeared as an underpinning factor that affected the approaches of some lecturers:

> I think that students should be more serious about their studying habits than what they are now. If I make a comparison between Saudi and (lecturer's nationality) student, for example the courses here are much smaller; I feel it as a teacher but I can't tell its technique, I taught a huge content in (lecturer's country), and student had no time for fun, they were doing a hard work, and it is obligatory, also here everything is obligatory for Saudi students, but endurance of students varies, students here want always to comfort themselves, they don't want to be responsible, but I try to put pressure on them to work hard, want them to be hard workers, and have self-motivation, and be independent … (L10).

It is important to note that although this quote might be regarded as a kind of cultural imperialism amongst some lecturers who are not themselves from the KSA, it is not clear that this is a widely held view amongst those lecturers. Cultural imperialism, according to Tobin (2007), is the imposition of different facets of culture by one community on another, and "the imposing community forcefully extends the authority of its way of life over the other population by either transforming or replacing aspects of the nondominant community's culture". This is contrary to AfL intentions and purposes that recognise the importance of the need to adjust to respond to cultural diversity. There is a need to maximize culturally inclusive assessment (Friedrich-Nel & Kinnon, 2015). This inclusivity could be encouraged through using multiple and varied methods of assessment since different approaches are more appropriate to students' different cultural backgrounds and the lecturer's reflections sit uneasily with the desire expressed by students to be more actively involved in assessment processes. The importance of multimethod assessment system from the participants' point of view will be discussed later in this chapter.

Evidence from Chapter 5 suggests that lecturers' practices of assessment are influenced by their prior experience of assessment where, as students, their own assessment experiences often reflected a traditional model of assessment. For example, one lecturer referred to her role as a learner when reflecting on her own previous experience as a student:

> I don't think I tended to argue with my teachers, I hadn't tended to discuss the methods of assessment or the timing, we had to accepted it, not only me, all of my colleagues, we believed they are experts in the field… But the new generations want to be convinced, they want to share the decisions with me about the type of assessment, the timing and they are expecting commentary about each step, each mark (L4).

This quotation highlights a traditional but perhaps not widely- reported issue that "one assessed one's students, as one had been assessed as a student by academics who assessed, as they had been assessed…" (Elton, 2010, p. 645). It may be that one reason why the hierarchical approach to assessment is still in existence as lecturers still want to assess their students in similar ways to how they have been assessed in the past. However, the millennial generation needs to be assessed in a way that is more appropriate with the revolution they are experiencing. To thrive in the fourth industrial revolution, students need to be adaptive, creative and independent. "The fourth industrial revolution is characterized by the fusion and amplification of emerging technology breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, automation and robotics, multiplied by the far-reaching connectivity between billions of people with mobile devices with unprecedented access to data and knowledge" (UNESCO-KEDI, 2017). This revolution is shifting how individuals live, learn and work. It is, therefore, worthwhile taking some time to consider exactly what kind of shifts students are experiencing and how assessment can create benefits for 21st century students.

7.2.3 Institutional Factors

While it has been argued in Chapter 3 that lecturers in HEIs tend to have more autonomy to choose and develop assessment strategies, methods and purposes, lecturers in this study were still faced with major external pressures, mainly emerging from professional bodies. This is largely as a result of the top-down policy in KSA, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The University policy has played a major role in maintaining certain practices of assessment amongst lecturers and students. Lecturers argued they were restricted by University policy to "the specified course description" (L5). This also demonstrates the kind of hegemonic power relationship which exists between the institutions and professional bodies and the

lecturers. Their reaction to regulations imposed by the professional bodies, as discussed in Chapter 5, highlights some potential tensions within assessment. This is similar to Tuck's study when interviewing lecturers about their experience of assessing students' work and giving them feedback, lecturers place a much heavier emphasis on their actions as institutional requirements (Tuck, 2012).

From participants' descriptions in Chapter 5 & 6, students' assessment is divided into two parts as theoretical and practical assessment.

> … we use different assessment strategy to measure each skill as proposed by the college, for example there are marks on the periodic, practical exam, the final exam and the assignments as activities … (student) must work hard in tasks to get better marks (L5).

It seems that the lecturers focus is mostly summative in order to meet the institutional requirements, which reflects a strong teacher-centred approach. The literature of assessment in HE also reflects a similar story. For instance, Elton and Johnson (2002) state that assessment in HE has long been focused on summatively assessing students through traditional (standardized) testing. Elton and Johnston (2002) note that over the last few decades, assessment in HE is "still pervaded by a largely unreflective traditionalism" based on final written examinations.

However, the importance of high-stakes assessment has been recognised as they indicate standards to be aimed for and enable monitoring, developing and raising these standards. These assessments lead lecturers, students, and schools to focus more and put more effort into their work to improve the final results. However, to enhance learning and to raise standards, greater attention should be paid to assessment as learning that places close and thoughtful attention on the role of the students.

However, it would seem appropriate that at both institutional and national levels, assessment policy should be reconsidered and tailored based on lecturers' responses to the institution's policies and requirements that impact on their practices of assessment. In addition, students should be giving more autonomy and more authority in the realm of assessment. These suggestions will be discussed later in the Chapter 8.

7.2.4 The Influence of Medical Discipline

The discipline plays a part in influencing assessment policy, practices, attitudes and purposes (Jessop & Maleckar, 2016). Indeed, the context within which assessment is enacted, i.e., the discipline, is often considered to play a major role in informing lecturers' decisions about which specific assessment methods to use. The practices of assessment associated with particular subject disciplines have been discussed by a number of authors (such as, Norton, Norton, & Sadler, 2012; White & Liccardi, 2006). In addition, although many authors have written about the effect of the discipline on teaching processes, they have remained silent on the subject of assessment processes (for instance, Shulman, 2005a; 2005b). However, since assessment is so closely aligned to the practices of teaching and learning (Carless, 2006), it can be reasonably assumed that there would be assessment differences as well.

Participants' responses (detailed in Chapters 5 & 6) suggest that the choice of approaches to assessment selected by participants is strongly influenced by the context of the medical and health care sciences. A closer look at the detail of the interviews identifies that the influence of the medical context on lecturers' assessment decisions is often implicit. For example, when explaining their chosen assessment methods, lecturers would use words such as the "the logical method" (L4) or that the assessment methods they have chosen are "obviously … the appropriate ones" (L2). It appears that their decisions about which assessment methods to select are based on the nature of the medical profession. Shulman's (2005b) identified a concept of "signature pedagogies" which he defined as:

> …a mode of teaching that has become inextricably identified with preparing people for a particular profession (Shulman, 2005b).

Teaching students has to include understanding the discipline. This is an essential part of what should be taught in order to prepare students as professionals. This may explain the participants' focus on the importance of authentic assessment for students' learning. This issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

The analysis of evidence emerging in the previous two chapters (Chapter 5 & 6) suggests that there are intertwining needs; student have to gain scientific knowledge and the need for that knowledge to be embedded in real-world contexts. This combination should lead to learning which the students in the medical context can use in their professional lives. This approach would seem more likely to lead to an ethos amongst both students and lecturers where progression is focused towards learning that is both educationally and professionally

desirable and interesting. In addition, referring to the fact that in medicine not all knowledge is contested reinforces the strong demand to teach new knowledge that is transmitted by lecturers and applied by students in real vocational and life contexts.

It is often assumed that teaching knowledge is a process of transmitting knowledge from a lecturer's head to students' heads (Morris, 2011). This reflects a model of teacher-centred learning where the lecturer is the knowledge dispenser. Although the metaphor of transmission is too mechanical and takes no account of the active involvement of the students, encouragement to apply this knowledge in real-life situations can lead to performance improvement in clinical assessments that promote a deep learning approach (Norton, 2004). The power of teaching appears here where, in this context, the lecturers' role is to work with students to ensure that they have a body of knowledge. However, lecturers have to enable students to move beyond the knowledge that they acquire to the application of knowledge within experience. This is far more than memorizing information where learners have a passive role.

Thus, the knowledge learned at a university must be powerful and allow students to feel empowered by it. "The value, and the power of the discipline lie in its animating principles which must be grasped by learners if they are to be empowered" (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 206). The word "power" means being able to do something that has an outcome or influence, hence powerful knowledge should have a powerful influence on those who have it.

The concept of "powerful knowledge" was introduced by Michael Young (2007) to re-establish the importance of knowledge in the development of teaching and the curriculum. He claimed that the main purpose of education is to impart knowledge that helps students to think and understand beyond the limits of their experience. Young argues for the entitlement of every student to have access to knowledge that is "better, more reliable and nearer to the truth about the world we live in and to what it is to be human" (Young, 2009, p. 107). Powerful knowledge provides new ways of thinking and explanations and "can provide learners with a language for engaging in political, moral, and other kinds of debates" (Young, 2007, p.14). Gericke et al. (2018) developed the idea from Michael Young explaining the powerful knowledge as "subject specific coherent conceptual disciplinary knowledge that when learnt will empower students to make decisions, and become action-competent in a way that influence their lives in a positive way" (Gericke et al., 2018, p. 1). However, "beyond the need for a clearer conceptualisation of powerful knowledge within this context,

the translation of this concept into practice through the curriculum may pose challenges" (Harland & Wald, 2018, p. 621).

The notion of powerful knowledge has been developed in the school sector and used as a useful construct in areas across the curriculum, especially but not only among history, economy, law and geography subject specialists. I would argue that the concept is also relevant for medical education. In addition, although the idea of powerful knowledge has not been developed in a university context, the idea of powerful knowledge seems just as appropriate for teaching in the university since it focuses on higher order skills and more epistemological insight.

Powerful knowledge is the knowledge that enables learners to think about, and do things, that they could not do without this knowledge. By framing knowledge around conceptual understanding in this way, Moore (2007) suggests that critical-realism presents a different understanding of knowledge. He argues that the very status of knowledge is compromised, "knowledge is experientially conflated with knowing and it is always someone's knowing" (p. 28). Nevertheless, it also "accepts that reality is socially constructed" (Easton, 2010, p.120). This tension between these two contradictory positions was resolved by critical-realists by arguing that:

> …the world is socially constructed but not entirely so. The "real" world breaks through and sometime destroys the complex stories that we create in order to understand and explain the situations we research (Easton, 2010, p.210).

Critical realism, therefore, suggests an inherent subjectivity in the production of knowledge, which is not invalidated by conflicting alternative perspectives (Watkins, 1994; Finlay and Ballinger, 2006). Thus, knowledge is rooted in critical realism (Bhaskar, 1978) and the social cognition paradigm (Fiske and Taylor, 1991).

Hence, the term "social-realist perspective" is used to encapsulate the two theoretical branches, the sociocultural branch which puts emphasis on the situatedness of practice and the realist position that important knowledge emerges through disciplinary discussions and is therefore transitive. To the social-realist, "education is powerful if it orientates students in time and asks them to consider the way in which the discipline … works – how accounts are constructed and how they might be interrogated" (Joseph & Darius, 2017).

To social-realists, this necessitates a curriculum built around disciplinary knowledge which, although socially constructed, offers the best opportunities to develop for thinking in this way. Young labels this powerful knowledge and writes,

> [Powerful Knowledge] refers to what the knowledge can do or what intellectual power it gives those who have access to it. Powerful knowledge provides more reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world and acquiring it can provide learners with a language for engaging in political moral and other kinds of debates (Young, 2008, p. 14)

Put simply, social-realism accepts that knowledge is socially constructed and therefore transitive, but that "knowledge is of something intransitive that is both independent of the knower and unchanged by knowledge; this reality of that knowledge transcends the circumstances of its production" (Joseph & Darius, 2017, p. 634).

7.3 What Aspects of Learning Assessment as Perceived by Lecturers and Students Seemed to Help or Hinder Students' Learning?

To address this research question, three themes have emerged from this study's data. These themes are "telling" and "sharing" learning outcomes, integration and variation of assessment methods and functions and encouraging authentic assessment to build clinical skills.

"Telling" and "sharing" learning outcomes is the first theme that shows varied understandings of the AfL principle "sharing learning outcomes" among lecturers and students. Most lecturers understand learning intention as a thing that needed to be provided to the students to help them to learn, i.e. "telling", whereas students stated their preference to be engaged in deeply understanding and planning toward positive achievement of learning outcomes, i.e. "sharing" (Hayward, 2013).

Integration and variation of assessment methods and functions is the second theme where participants were aware that there are a number of complex and varied approaches to assessment, which are necessary to meet the needs of a diverse learning population. This awareness highlights the importance of using a range of approaches to give students opportunities to develop their learning. However, lecturers and students take different

positions in relation to different forms of assessment in terms of their influence on students' learning.

Within the third theme "encouraging authentic assessment to build clinical skills", both lecturers and students recognised the important contribution that authentic assessment could make for learning development. Within this theme, the use of authentic assessment rubrics has been recognised to be a powerful motivational strategy that enhances students' learning and development in real-life situations.

7.3.1 "Telling" and "Sharing" Learning Outcomes

It has been identified in research (e.g. ARG, 2002; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Hayward, 2013) that sharing clear assessment criteria is essential to AfL. From the evidence presents in Chapters 5 & 6, there is, however, variation between lecturers' and students' experiences and perspectives on understanding the AfL principle "sharing explicit assessment criteria". Lecturers believed that they had met the requirements of this concept asserting that the information about assessment criteria and learning outcomes was provided at the beginning of each module through either the module handbook or Blackboard. For example:

> At the beginning of each term, I explain to the students exactly what they are expected to do, what they have to achieve by the end of the term (L9).

> … each module has principles, basics and goals that I want students to concentrate in. It is crucial to inform them (students) about all learning outcomes which must be achieved… I illustrate all the learning outcomes (L2).

The quotes suggest that lecturers' understanding of what sharing learning criteria means is limited to providing students with the assessment criteria. However, this is not enough, provision of the text does not mean that students have a meaningful understanding of or an effective engagement with the assessment criteria and expectations. The use of words such as "explain, inform and illustrate" reveals that lecturers do not really understand the deeper meaning of the AfL principle "sharing learning expectations". Sharing learning objectives does not mean merely writing them on the handout and/or on Blackboard, but rather requires lecturers and students to engage in discussing these objectives and criteria and ensure there are a shared understanding of what is required form the students.

Evidence from Chapter 5 appears to suggest that lecturers also have limited consciousness of students' lack or misunderstanding of these expectations. This lack of consciousness is

related to the problem that they were not actually engaging the students in dialogue around the assessment purposes or requirements This lack of clear understanding of the process of sharing assessment criteria is an issue raised by many authors (for instance, Glover & Brown, 2015; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kim, 2013; Rust, Price, & O'Donovan, 2003; Sadler, 1989) where commonly the focus is on the provision of criteria rather than on student engagement. This focus on provision of assessment information creates a hierarchical relationship which runs counter to a central premise of AfL which is to move away from a teaching-focused approach to a learning-centred approach to assessment. The development of learning outcomes entails students' involvement in taking more responsibility to construct their own learning by better understanding learning and how it is assessed (Mascolo, 2009; Rust, 2002).

Evidence presented in Chapter 6 reveals that students show a greater understanding of the essence of "sharing" learning outcomes. Students understand the significance of dialogue to deepen their understanding and engagement, for example:

> So that, I end up dying because I misunderstood what she (lecturer) asked me to do. But what if we discuss before performing the task about what we are expected to perform and she makes sure we understand their point of view (FG1, S2).

The choice of the phrase "I end up dying" suggests that the student experienced emotional distress related to the gap between lecturers and students' understanding of assessment requirements. This suggests the importance of the shared understanding of what is required from students. A shared understanding of assessment criteria between lecturers and students is a key issue. Carless noted that students "are on the same wavelength as we are" (Carless, 2006, p. 231). Sharing learning criteria, in essence, means that students comprehend what those objectives mean, bearing in mind students' understanding of the assessment criteria may be different from lecturers. Lecturers need to "communicate clear goals … and students do need to understand what counts as good or bad if they are to orient their effort appropriately and put in enough effort" (Gibbs & Simpson, 2003, p. 15) since students will interpret and respond to these goals according to their knowledge of the subject and the level of their intellectual capacity (Yorke, 2003).

Thus, lecturers must work with students to develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria as these are crucial to their learning experience (Panadero, Andrade, & Brookhart, 2018; Rust et al., 2005; Yorke, 2003). Building a strong relationship between lecturers and students, in addition to effective communications and dialogue between lecturers and

students about assessment expectations might promote a shared understandings of learning outcomes which will reflect on students' performance.

The analysis of evidence from interviews with lecturers also indicates a lack of understanding of student voice as a valuable factor in the development of the complex processes of learning in HE. There is strong evidence (Lundy & Cook-Sather, 2015) that it is important for students to develop confidence if they are to engage effectively in academic and social learning experiences. Deepening students' understanding of assessment criteria has a role to play in that process. Such confidence enables students to realise their rights as learners with voice, audience and impact (Lundy & Cook-Sather, 2015). This suggests that there remains work to be done in KSA to meaningful and effective acknowledge the importance of students' voice in education.

It was noted that the appropriate use of assessment has been linked with the development of students' voice and the enhancement of their capacity to articulate learning and achievement (Rae & Cochrane, 2008). The "assertion of students' rights is a call for cultural shift away from an adult-centric, infantilizing and disempowering set of attitudes and practices towards a culture that supports students as among those with the right to take their place" (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 370). Thus, curriculum and assessment can be negotiated through institutional practices to be drawn from student voices. Employing student voice might be a tool to contribute to students' learning in the HE sectors. In addition, support should be offered to promote a culture shift towards one that embraces students' rights by having them being brought to the planning process when curriculum assessment and pedagogy are being designed.

Considering lecturers' and students' needs to share a common and clear understanding of assessment criteria, including the use and sharing of assessment rubrics "have the potential of promoting learning and/or improving instruction" (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007, p.139). Sharing assessment rubrics with students could contribute to developing a better understanding of the criteria. A rubric was defined by Wiggins and McTighe (2007) as a "criterion-based evaluation tool, consisting of a fixed measurement scale (such as four score points) and descriptions of the characteristics for each score point" (p. 87). Using rubrics does not only have the potential to provide clarity and direction for the learning goals but can also encourage students' self-reflection using the rubric in order to engage them in the details of their own learning. As the students use rubrics, they begin to think about their own work in different ways, noticing areas that may be weaker or stronger.

Rubrics can also assist the process of peer-assessment and encourage students to reflect collectively on their own and others' learning. In addition, using rubrics for self-assessment helps learners to be more confident to take responsibility of their own learning development (Jokelainen et al., 2013). However, lecturers need to check for student understanding of these rubrics to ensure an accurate peer-assessment. This could be through, for example, engaging students in clear and in-depth discussions of assessment criteria and rubrics. For instance, the research that was undertaken by Harrington et al. (2003) where students were allowed to mark a piece of work, after comprehensive discussion of assessment criteria and rubrics. Harrington et al. (2003) found that the more students are involved and engaged in discussion of assessment rubrics, the more they are likely to understand and use them to foster and improve their own learning.

7.3.2 Integration and Variation of Assessment Methods and Functions

From the evidence presented in Chapter 5 & 6, it appears that lecturers and students are aware of the fact that using a range of assessment methods is important, particularly in the medical setting. This is argued to be a fair way to accommodate every student's interests and needs. Combining different assessment methods was perceived to be valuable and was used by lecturers, as L1 states that "as much as there are multiple means of assessment, as fair as it could be enough, by giving each student a space to learn and be creative in the field he/she like" (L1). Using diverse and complex methods of assessment gives students more opportunities to demonstrate their clinical skills and knowledge and to improve their learning. However, it seems that lecturers were using different assessment methods for summative purposes as they still focused on students' results as an objective rather than how valid the assessment was as a means of discerning students' competence as nurses or social workers. Consistent with the desire to test the breadth of students' knowledge, as discussed in the Section 7.2.4, (p. 172), different assessment techniques were predominantly used in order to test students' knowledge and skills. Exams, for instance, were suggested to be the most important tool to provide evidence that "challenges students' knowledge … examine to what extent each student understands several aspects" (L8).

However, these practices of assessment were not entirely separated from the 'spirit' of the AfL (Marshall & Drummond, 2006). In medicine, effective and efficient learning requires multiple assessment methods to capture all or most aspects of core knowledge as well as clinical competence as proposed by Miller (1991). It is argued that one single method is not

sufficient to capture the ideas. Miller's framework, discussed in Section 3.5.2 (p. 47), shows that these assessment methods evolve to become better tools to enhance students' knowledge, competence and other technical, analytical and communication skills. It is maintained that the acquisition of basic knowledge and clinical experiences and competencies remains a fundamental objective of undergraduate medical education (Baharozvaris, Sonmez, & Sayek, 2010). This is also compatible with the proposed model TMCTA by Abdelaziz and Koshak (2014) as discussed in Section 2.4.1 (p. 18). The benefit of this model, as argued by Abdelaziz and Koshak (2014), is that using a variety of timely and ongoing approaches to student assessment which can be used for formative and summative purposes. Thus, within the medical context, integration and variation of assessment methods and functions seek to develop students' critical thinking skills and improve their application of knowledge in practical settings. In this study, this integration and variation was perceived to improve students' preparation for various clinical tasks.

Therefore, varied methods of assessment were being used for different assessment purposes to potentially open up opportunities for learning development in the medical setting. To enhance medical students' education, Wu et al. (2014) advocate the use of both FA and SA as essential to improve students' understanding and learning. It seemed that testing medical and health care students' knowledge and abilities formatively and summatively was crucial. This is similar to what has been argued earlier (Section 3.2.3, p. 28) that FA and SA are essentially connected and they both support each other.

Evidence from Chapter 5 & 6 appears to suggest that although both lecturers and students agreed on the impact of adopting varied and complex methods of assessment on learning, they took different positions on different forms of assessment. As evidence showed, there is a continuum of using each form of assessment. Peer-assessment, for example, is the most controversial form of assessment where lecturers and students had varied perspective. Within the continuum, lecturers are skewed towards one end where they saw peer assessment as being of little value whilst students are skewed to the opposite end where they saw considerable value in peer assessment. This might at least in part be explained by traditions of lecturers' hierarchical beliefs and their understanding that the processes of high-quality teaching and learning must be led by an expert: the depth of the evidence-base the lecturers have, the more beneficial their teaching is for students. Students, on the other hand, value peer-assessment as effective strategy that enhances their learning. This suggests that students could take greater responsibility for their own learning (Spiller, 2012; Thomas, Martin, &

Pleasants, 2011). Peer-assessment appears to have an emphasis on developing students' autonomy. This, therefore, allows students to actively construct their learning, for example:

> It (peer-assessment) is desired. Through it, I can identify my skill gaps, where my knowledge is weak and where I am umm like perfect or doing well; then I worked on how to develop and reward myself in turn (FG2, S4).

> My friends are the source of valuable feedback, they helped me to develop my learning more than the lecturers did (FG5, S3).

Through peer-assessment, students can identify their own skill gaps. It is argued that peer-assessment is a pedagogical approach that encourages students to gain new perspectives which they can then use to reflect on their own and their peers' performances (Andrew et al., 2008; Klein & Fowles, 2009). Andrade (2005) maintains that enabling students to use peer-feedback to improve their learning also increases their willingness to exercise peer-assessment more often. This gives students an enhanced sense of their own agency and their own power to learn the necessary knowledge and skills to perform a task.

Evidence from Chapter 6 reveals that peer-assessment and feedback as an informal practice that enriches students' learning experiences. However, students expressed concerns about their ability to assess their peers due to lack of deeper experience. For example:

> I can't give a fair assessment for someone's piece of work unless I have a clear understanding of what she is trying to relate to (sic) the knowledge she is trying to present (FG4, S3).

Students understand the importance of peer-assessment as a means of learning but feel a lack of experience and limited knowledge to do so. As suggested by Cassidy (2006), students' lack of capability and feeling of being ill-equipped leads to negative consequences. This suggests a need for more effective communication between students and lecturers concerning the use of appropriate tasks and activities and, in particular, the need to support and foster student/lecturer and student/student dialogue. This re-emphasises the need for lecturer and student discussion. Having space to agree learning outcomes results in students having a greater degree of ownership of learning and assessment processes (Orsmond, 2004).

Therefore, lecturers should use assessment rubrics to increase students' confidence to take ownership of the learning process. This has the potential to lead to better learning and increased motivation. Furthermore, as students attain greater autonomy in the assessment

process, levels of support and the amount of direction offered by the lecturer can be allowed to fade over time.

7.3.3 Encouraging Authentic Assessment to Build Clinical Skills

The data revealed no debate between lecturers and students about the importance and influence of authentic assessment in developing students' learning. Authentic assessment is designed to ascertain students' ability to apply knowledge in the real-life experiences (Herrington & Herrington, 2006). Considering that the closer the tasks are to real-world tasks, the deeper the learning and understanding and the more connection could be made between theory and practice. Hence, assessment within experiential teaching and learning processes fosters students' ability to identify and respond to their own learning needs. Ormrod and Casey argued that it is "impossible in a book to teach a person in charge of the sick how to manage, as it is to teach her how to nurse. Circumstances must vary with each different case" (Ormrod & Casey, 2004, p.126). Authentic assessment was perceived by lecturers and students to be helpful in introducing students to ideas and in connecting scientific knowledge to clinical skills. For example:

> It is important to make assessment for her (student) to work, to practice and to learn as she is in the real life (L10).

> The practical application (sic) I like to be trained in real life application the most … because when I apply what I study and I will know where I am standing, so by this way the information will last on my mind. So, I can apply what I've learnt later-in real life (FG1, S1).

Authentic assessment encourages students to respond, interpret and react, as being in real-life environments allow them to apply their knowledge to the process of making decisions. This implies a shift in focus toward more student-focused learning, which is likely to help prepare students in medical and clinical environments for more complex clinical situations. This requires "clinical reasoning, decision-making, communication, teamwork and leadership" (Wu et al., 2014, p, 1). Accordingly, it is crucial that contemporary medical education moves towards a greater attention to identify learning-focused strategies.

However, although both students and lecturers were committed to authentic assessment, they argued that the way courses were designed left insufficient opportunities for authentic assessment. The findings emerging from both interviews and focus groups highlighted a gap

between the espoused preference for authentic assessment and actual practices within the course.

Lecturers often cited as reasons for the gap between aspiration and practice in authentic assessment limited resources on their course or limitations exercised by professional bodies. For example:

> … we need a larger place, or more staff so we work at the same time, which means that the students can follow me step by step, have dialogue around each point while we are working to ensure their understanding and then go to another and another, it needs a bigger area and more facilities (L8).

> Students often go to hospital for a few days, maybe 3 or 4 days only in each term, of course this is very short time. So out of my experience, I think they should spend much time in practical application, I should never make the practical application time, which is the student's specialty, compared with other theoretical materials that the students' study. The practical application should be at least 3 days a week, so I can give her information how to deal with patients and medical staff in real life, and also, I can assess her fairly (L7).

The evidence suggests that insufficient embedding of authentic assessment through the programme causes tension and panic for students when they start the practical learning sessions at hospitals or in other clinical settings. This arguably could be contributing to the gap between what students felt they were learning in the university and what they were practising in the hospital settings. "I receive all the information in a theoretical manner, and when I go to the hospital, I find things other than those I studied. I find different things there and this thing does not help us at all" (FG2, S3). This increases concerns and apprehension among students, which may hinder their learning process.

Undoubtedly, it would be helpful in medical courses to develop pedagogies that introduce people to ideas in building their knowledge in authentic contexts, so this gap between what they are experience in the university and hospital will be less shocking. This could be through tasks that replicate real-life situations. Involving greater levels of simulation or role-play methods in the context of the university, would make it possible to design the assessment to be closer to authentic experience.

In addition, authentic assessment rubrics are a strategy that can be developed and used by lecturers, supported by ongoing feedback, to enhance the clinical practice and decision-

making (Hoke & Robbins, 2011). Whereas assessment rubrics, discussed earlier in this chapter, are helpful tools that gives students opportunities to know what is expected of them, currently, in the medical courses these are very heavily task-related. It could be argued that if the authentic assessment rubrics would see that task as contextualized in the professional setting, the rubric then would not be so task related but would rather be used in real-life practice to enable evaluation of more authentic student performance. The use of authentic assessment rubrics along with case studies to provide real simulation can also be an effective way to increase consideration of professional values to be considered since they replicate real-world challenges (Dellefield, 2007).

Using rubrics within medical and healthcare context would also be an effective way to promote students' autonomy, motivation, confidence and lifelong learning skills to achieve their learning goals (Wu et al., 2014). Such rubrics would also help lecturers to clarify the expected goals and outcomes and modify their strategies of teaching and assessment based on students' progress towards these expectations. Such approaches could support students to have better insights into what constitutes excellence in a professional setting as authentic assessment rubrics can offer a clear summary of performance levels across a scale (Andrade, 2005).

Hence, authentic assessment rubric can be a valuable and powerful tool within clinical settings, especially if associated with individualized, constructive feedback. This can help students in understanding how and why they are assessed and how they can improve their performance in real-life settings. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 8 as a potential contribution of this research.

7.4 To What Extent, Do Lecturers and Students Understand Feedback as a Means to Enhance Students' Learning?

From the evidence presented in Chapter 5 & 6, two major themes emerge, to address this question. The major themes were lecturers' and students' perceptions of providing feedback and dialogue is viewed as feedback.

Within the first theme "lecturers' and students' perceptions of providing feedback", understanding of providing feedback becomes a point of difference between the students and the lecturers. The data show that both groups recognised the importance of feedback as an important part of the learning process. Differences arose between lecturers and students on

who might best provide constructive feedback to best enhance learning. Lecturers mainly saw students as novices and tutors as experts in terms of providing feedback. This position is consistent with the wider hieratical nature of culture in Saudi society. Students, on the other hand, showed greater awareness of the potential value of feedback from other sources, which included peers as a mean to enhance students' learning.

The other theme "dialogue as feedback" reveals that students showed greater understanding of dialogue as a constructive way of generating feedback. Students acknowledge the importance of dialogue with lecturers because it contributes to their overall learning, but this rarely appeared to happen in classroom settings. Engaging students in a dialogue is valuable since it encourages a more active role for students to play in the feedback process where dialogue acts as a means to improve students' self-confidence, autonomy and empowerment.

7.4.1 Perceptions of Providing Feedback

From lecturers' descriptions, it was clear that they understood the value of feedback and put efforts into providing feedback for their students, since they were convinced that feedback helps to support students' learning and improve their performance (Gibbs, 2010). However, their understandings of feedback often convey an attitude of providing written or oral feedback rather than viewing feedback as two-way communication between students and staff. This focus on provision of feedback is against the idea of meaningful engagement with feedback. In this study, lecturers saw themselves as the expert provider of feedback and students are often given the passive role in waiting and accepting the feedback from lecturers. For example:

> I am trying to make supportive written comments and have a compliment parts for the student to accept it (L9).

This misunderstanding of what good practices of feedback is, underpinned by a dominant view of students as passive receptors (Boud, 2007). Based on lecturers' descriptions, the learner-centred and sociocultural underpinning does not often appear when they describe their experiences with the process of feedback.

Sadler's study of new academics (2012) identified that those who were learning how to teach in HE sometimes faced challenges adopting the student-centred approaches to teaching. This means that, within the Saudi context where a new learning culture is just emerging, this process might take time in order to allow for confidence and familiarity to develop.

In addition, evidence from Chapter 6 suggests that students feel they were not able to engage or are simply not given the opportunity to engage with feedback. This may be a result of the dominant view of learning and teaching assessment and the hierarchal relationship between students and lecturers in Saudi culture. Although lecturers want students to make use of the feedback, it seems that students are not encouraged to take a clear and active role in the feedback process. Thus, it will be important to consider how students might best be empowered during the feedback process (Evans, 2013). Lecturers should consider offering their students the opportunities to take the ownership of their own learning, allow them to participate in the feedback process and help them to make use of this feedback.

Nevertheless, evidence shows that students have recognized the value of peer-feedback in developing their own learning; this reflects the importance of peer-feedback as a key factor that helps them to improve their learning. Andrew et al. (2008) consider peer-feedback as an important pedagogical approach that help students obtain new perspectives through the process of reflection. S3 in FG5 recognizes the value of the peer-feedback: "my friends are the source of valuable feedback". This leads students to reflect on and improve their own learning (Andrade, 2005), which foster their comprehension (Klein & Fowles, 2009).

Peer-assessment and feedback, hence, include important features of effective engagement with learning process as was identified by Nicol and Macfarlance-Dick (2006) and by Boud and Molloy (2013). This emphasizes and acknowledges the learners' active role, where students had the opportunities to take the ownership of their own learning and that of others. The use of the active learning-focused assessment strategies, in the medical settings, appeared to "significantly improve academic achievement, facilitate deep and constructive engagement with learning and fostered students' confidence in the use of critical thinking and clinical decision-making" (Yusuff, 2015, p. 271).

However, due to peers' limited knowledge and experience, some students were not comfortable with the notion of receiving feedback from their fellow students. This was discussed by Rollinson (2005) when argued that some students refer to peers' limited knowledge which may decrease the value and utility of the peer-learning process. This emphasises the lecturer's role as a guide for the peer-feedback process as an expert feedback provider. Thus, the lecturers must provide opportunities for students to practise peer-feedback supplemented by their own feedback seeking for greater learning gains and experiences exchanges (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011).

Thus, it is both lecturers and students' responsibilities to work toward partnership in learning and feedback process. This arguably could be through considering the need to create opportunities for students to use guidelines or rubrics with clearly defined tasks to shape their practices of peer-assessment and feedback as discussed earlier.

7.4.2 Dialogue is Viewed as Feedback

Feedback as a dialogue has played a part in engaging and empowering students (Carless, 2006, 2016). The dialogic-based approach is "conceptualised as two-way arrows that links external processes to those internal to the student" (Juwah et al., 2004, p. 7). This dialogic-based approach changes the dynamic between students and lecturers, and underpinned different ways of looking at assessment and feedback. However, evidence from Chapter 5 & 6 appears to suggest that lecturers were only keen to provide detailed feedback to students in how to improve their learning with limited attempts to actively engage those students in effective communication through two-way feedback. This may arguably lead to teacher-controlled forms. On the other hand, students showed a greater awareness of the importance of their active role during the feedback process and how can dialogue with others (lecturers and peers) influences their understandings. On the basis of Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006); Carless, Salter, Yang and Lam (2011); Boud and Molloy (2013), feedback was reconceptualised to be a constructive dialogical process between the learners and their learning community (lecturers and peers). This type of dialogue about academic work either with their lecturers or with peers can assist them to construct their understandings in a meaningful way. Carless (2016) maintained that dialogue is an effective learning tool as "learners make sense of information from varied sources and use it to enhance the quality of their work or learning strategies" (p. 192). This conceptualization is significant for enhancing deep learning since it emphasises the active role played by the students in the feedback process. This arguably shows that dialogue works to improve students' engagement, self-confidence and autonomy and enhance their feelings of empowerment as discussed earlier in Chapter 6.

The utility of dialogue experience was seen in the explanations of some participants of this study, for example, participants from FG5 were collectively agree about the effectiveness of this type of feedback. Students' descriptions of the dialogue illustrated how they understand it as informal and formal acts of feedback. For example, S2 in FG5 summarised a viewpoint of seeing dialogue as informal acts of feedback that she "can express my ideas, concerns and development plans" (FG5, S2). S3 in FG4, in contrast, understand the formal dialogue as:

"…engaging me in some kind of individual discussion …. makes me critically and rationally think" (FG4, S2). Her description of this process as being in "individual discussion" provided an insight of students' perceptions of the dialogic feedback experience in making it both effective and efficient. In addition, obtaining "immediate" (FG3, S2) comments was one of the most effective aspects identified from dialogic feedback by students. Dialogue as feedback has been widely recognised as seems more engaging (Lunt & Curran, 2009), more encouraging (Rhind et al., 2013), more directed (Nemec & Dintzner, 2016) and more effective, convenient and personalized (Carruthers et al., 2009).

Hence, creating and facilitating opportunities for lecturers and students to be engaged in productive formal and informal dialogues about academic work is key. Feedback as dialogue, according to Carless (2016), should be facilitated for lecturers and their students, so they can find opportunities to engage with constructive feedback and carry out productive dialogues. If we understand "assessment processes as inherently about communication, we can enable students to comprehend the language and culture of higher education" (Murphy & Cornell, 2010, p. 50).

However, despite the value of dialogic feedback as stated by students, opportunities to engage in dialogic feedback happens infrequently. This was exemplified from students' perceptions that only two lecturers were engaging them in real conversation and dialogue:

> (Lecturers' names) is the only two lecturers mostly working hard to communicate with us, we are having like kind of umm conversation about our dreams, concerns, yeah stuff like that, I want to see many like them. This give idea if my next stages (FG5, S3).

It is interesting that students talked about dialogue and its importance for their learning; this suggested that lecturers and students have different theoretical perspectives. Students really understand that dialogue between both lecturer and learner and learner themselves helps to construct their learning and expand their understanding rather than just passively receiving information.

Based on a sociocultural understanding, dialogue can be seen as a thread that runs through AfL principles. Dialogue can play a major role in enhancing students' learning and performance. This issue will be picked up later in Chapter 8. This dialogue between lecturers and students is central to many of the principles of AfL. These principles include engaging students with explicit and high expectations, engaging staff and students in constructive

feedback and dialogue, facilitating the development of self- and peer-assessment and authentic assessment and encourage positive motivational beliefs and build students' confidence and self-esteem. This is particularly important for the millennials who value real and relevant communication in all aspects of their lives.

Thus, course-designing teams should consider creating a variety of opportunities for students to be engaged in formal and informal dialogue with their lecturers and with fellow students. Students should be provided with necessary time and space to discuss and reflect upon the provided feedback. Lipnevich and Smith (2008) suggested to offer feedback to students in advance of releasing their marks. This gives students the opportunity to understand and reflect upon the provided comments and creates room for the two-way communication. Based on their research, the practices of dialogic feedback foster a positive level of motivation for students to be engaged with the feedback and reduces their anxiety, which results in their learning (ibid).

7.5 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, the research questions from this study were identified and in the remaining sections of this chapter these were discussed in light of existing research and extant literature. There are several themes that emerge in response to the three research questions. The first question aims to investigate the key factors that influence the assessment methods and purposes within medical faculties. These factors illustrated in four main themes which include lecturers' conceptions of assessment, cultural and prior experiences of assessment and the institutional factor, in addition to the influence of medical discipline.

The second research question sought to identify aspects of learning assessment activities that seemed to help or hinder students' learning, as perceived by lecturers and students. Three main themes emerged from the data in order to address this question. The first themes focused on sharing (not telling) learning expectations, the second identified the need for using different assessment methods and functions and the third theme focused mainly on encouraging authentic assessment to build clinical skills.

Finally, two main themes emerged from the data with aim of addressing the third research question, including lecturers and students' perceptions of providing feedback, in addition to seeing dialogue as feedback based on a sociocultural understanding.

There are also several major themes that increase the originality of this research which will be pick up in Chapter 8. These themes include the lack of theoretical foundation of assessment practices in Applied Medical Sciences School, the influence of medical discipline and the importance of empowering students' knowledge through assessment, the impact of using authentic assessment rubrics and finally dialogue as AfL factor.

Chapter 8   Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This research aimed to explore the assessment practices in Applied Medical Sciences Faculties in KSA through gathering the lived experiences, perspectives and views of students and their lecturers. This enabled current practices of assessment and associated feedback to be identified, as well as aspects of these practices that lead to learning and professional competence in clinical settings. The research questions aimed to investigate the experiences and perspectives of lecturers and students related to the factors that shaped assessment practices, and the impacts of these practices in helping or hindering student learning. In addition, this study seeks to investigate lecturer and student experiences and perceptions of the assessment feedback as an effective way of developing student learning.

Research Questions:

1. From lecturers' and students' experiences, what factors have shaped practices of assessment in medical classrooms?
2. What aspects of learning assessment as perceived by lecturers and students seemed to help or hinder students' learning?
3. To what extent, do lecturers and students understand feedback as a means to enhance students' learning?

As the previous chapter addressed and discussed findings relating to each of the research questions in the light of extant literature and existing research, this chapter summarises this thesis through reflection based on the research aim and questions. In addition, a consideration of the guidelines for policymaking, practices and limitations of this study, as well as recommendations for future research, will follow.

Prior to discussing the points above, I will outline various assertions in order to put the related points into context. As a result of the process of development toward achieving the Saudi Vision 2030, I am aware of the dynamics of HE in the kingdom, including aspects such as sector-specific policy, practice and theory which change consistently, and the ongoing development of new approaches to address educational issues. My research will only explore a snapshot moment in the development cycle of the research topic, and an even smaller snippet in the participants' lives. Secondly, I include no personal judgment or

criticism of any participants (or their university) when making interpretations. Instead, I am committed to representing the voices of the participants throughout the study and making sure that my findings are trustworthy by paying close attention to ethical practice (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, I would like to stress again that the research findings are not meant to be generalizable to a wider population of undergraduate students. Instead, this chapter purports to generate questions, possibilities and opportunities for students and other scholars who may be interested in the findings of this study and wish to consider their application them within their own context. It is the stage where:

> …the readers make links between the findings of an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature. The power of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 56).

8.2 Reflection upon the Aim of this Research

This section presents a critical reflection of the research outcomes. I offer my theoretical interpretations regarding the participants' experiences of assessment and associated feedback, along with their views and perspectives of these experiences. These are addressed under the following sub-sections:

1. There is a lack of clear theoretical frameworks of assessment practices
2. The medical discipline has great influence on assessment choices and purposes
3. The influence of assessment on students' approaches to learning

8.2.1 There is a Lack of Clear Theoretical Frameworks of Assessment Practices

As stated earlier in this thesis, HE in KSA is experiencing a period of rapid and major change (Saudi Vision, 2016). There were attempts to move from the hierarchical view of assessment to a new assessment culture over a few years, where assessment practices aimed to impact on students' learning with a focus on empowering and engaging students to learn by taking responsibility of their own learning. Fundamental to this shift, as the findings and discussion chapters illustrate, assessment practices were applied in a piecemeal fashion without a clear theoretical understanding of why they took certain actions. This led to a lack of clarity and ambiguity in the sector, where the consequence was a lack of clear theoretical frameworks underpinning teaching/learning and assessment.

Without a clear theoretical underpinning, attempts by the researchers to promote a cohesive application of AfL in Saudi HE, especially within medical classrooms, were often in vain. A pragmatic focus can encourage lecturers to adopt a surface approach to AfL. It is important for lecturers to be able to understand AfL in order to shift their wider underpinning teaching theories toward a more learning-centred pedagogy. The sociocultural view of learning and assessment and the shift toward more learning-focused pedagogy, for example through peer discussion, allows student and lecturer interaction and sharing of assessment expectations and aspirations, all of which lead to the conclusion that learning is both process and product. At the same time, the context of the medical profession means that some content has to be taught and assessed in order to ensure the transmission of appropriate knowledge. Studying the underpinnings of assessments as a social phenomenon in the medical context will be discussed in the following section.

Another problem appears within this shift, which is whether lecturers and students hold the same beliefs. As reported in the previous chapter, lecturers and students are sitting in different theoretical positions. Price et al. (2010) highlighted the problem succinctly: "If staff define the purpose and students make the judgment but hold a different view of purpose, how useful is the measure?" (p. 278). In turn, dialogue between lecturers and students may help their understanding and views to converge. Dialogue as a pedagogical tool will be discussed later.

8.2.2 The Medical Discipline Has Great Influence on Assessment Choices and Purposes

The medical discipline has great influence on the pedagogy of teaching/learning and assessment focusing on transmitting facts, knowledge and skills to students. However, this act of knowledge transmitting reflects on a teaching-centred pedagogy, the lecturer is in charge of teaching/learning and assessment processes within this transmission framework, which increases the passive role of students. This is contrary with the aim of AfL. However, as discussed in Chapter 7, these practices of assessing students' gains of scientific knowledge are not entirely separated from the "spirit" of AfL (Marshal & Drummond, 2006). Lecturers and students often understand the importance of summative assessment of learning particular knowledge. This means the focus is on the deep learning of knowledge, where assessment of students' learning serves formative purposes during a teaching session.

In addition, lecturers' assessment of student knowledge gain is deeply embedded in lecturer perceptions of SA for improved teaching and learning. This has challenged the assessment

literature in which SA is not seen as effective for students' learning. It is consistent with the argument in Chapter 3 that the split between FA and SA is unhelpful, and instead an application of both FA and SA is fundamental accompanied with precise curriculum objectives. This way, there can be contributions made to the overall learning through active participation of students in the acquisition of powerful knowledge.

However, evidence appears to suggest that participants have placed a central significance and value upon the final grade of assessment. This is associated with the cultural features of the Saudi system which emphasize that the grade awarded determines the students' access to better professional employment and implies competition as a feature of employment within the medical context. This increases pressure on medical students to achieve high grades, which concurred with MacFarlane's (2016) view regarding assessment in HE:

> …increasingly evaluate social and behavioural skills in a public learning space rather than individual intellectual understanding in a largely private one. Despite the purported benefits for student learning, this performative turn is a cause for concern in undermining their freedom to make choices as learners and rewards game playing behaviours (p. 13).

Thus, implementation and development of a rich medical curriculum and pedagogy allow all students to participate in meaningful learning. This could be through a focus on the creation of a supportive learning environment, where assessing students formatively and summatively as partners in the learning process is deemed by lecturers and students as key, especially in real-world examples. Curriculum, therefore, must be based on the "best knowledge we have" (Young et al., 2014) - the premise of the idea of powerful knowledge. Further, a major professional task of teachers is that of identifying what knowledge is powerful for students in medical and clinical contexts.

8.2.3 The Influence of Assessment on Students' Approaches to Learning

Assessment is perceived as having a great effect on medical students' learning approaches where those students tend to shift between deep approach "understanding", surface approach "memorizing", or strategic approach "a mix of two", depending on the assessment methods used. As seen throughout the study's findings, learners shift between different approaches to learning in order to suit the assessment demands of their modules. This concurs with Peter (2011) who said, approaches can be switched depending on the assessment demands.

Shifting between the three learning approaches is a way that students adopted to suit the assessment requirements of their modules. Gijbels and Dochy (2006) hypothesized that AfL orchestrates student approaches to learning. While FA was appreciated as a way that leads to deep approaches to learning (Higgins, Hartley, & Skelton, 2002), SA has also perceived as a stimulus for hard work, as the student is seen exerting more effort to pass exams or achieve better grades. SA can be also described as a motivation strategy to improve students' learning and achievement, as well as a way to improve their clinical performance and thus enhance patients' safety. This has also stressed the importance of rebuilding the relationship between FA and SA to maximize the educational impact of the assessment process.

Encouragement of authentic assessment of clinical knowledge and skills can improve students' performance and promote a deep learning approach (Norton, 2004). Integrating assessment tasks with real-life settings helps students to compare their current experiences with other relevant knowledge which can lead to an adoption of a deep learning approach (Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Biggs, 1987). "In adopting a deep approach, students have an intrinsic interest in the task and an expectation of enjoyment in carrying it out" (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). Thus, such an approach might enable students to acquire desired knowledge, skills and personal attributes; empower them to optimize their potential; promote deep understanding, reasoning and higher-order thinking; and foster self-directed and lifelong learning. The phenomenographic studies by Newble and Entwistle (1986) and by Smith and Mathias (2007) have revealed that students in the medical context who preferentially adopt a deep learning approach are more likely to have superior outcomes than those who only adopt a surface learning approach.

8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study set out to explore the assessment practices in the medical context of KSA. It sheds light on the culture shift from assessment being for judgment, classification and categorization to assessment for formative purposes. Moving toward AfL becomes a priority within the medical context, where lecturers need to know how students learn better in order to improve and adjust their teaching, and for students themselves who need help to find out how to learn and make progress. This research makes contributions to knowledge through the identification of three main themes:

1. Assessment of powerful knowledge
2. The use of authentic assessment rubrics to foster deep learning

3. Dialogue viewed as a pedagogical feature of AfL

8.3.1 Assessment of Powerful Knowledge

It is important that medical education gives students the opportunities to learn and realise viable ways in order to be equipped to adapt and thrive in the constantly changing healthcare environment. As medical education matters to people, there is a dire need for medical education to focus on preparing skilled learners, broaden their minds and develop their capabilities to ask questions for verification and clarification in conjunction with vast amounts of data and rapidly changing information (Chang et al., 2018, p. 7; Muller & Young, 2008). Thus, it is crucial to prepare medical students to move into the next phases of their professions with a set of self-directed and self-regulated learning skills in order to identify and implement the new information they might need.

To help future medical and healthcare students to be educated, to be capable of understanding the complexity and to be engaged with novel and unique problems, knowledge learnt at university must be specialised knowledge that improves students' ability to think and do things. This knowledge, hence, should give "power to" the students rather than exert "power over" them (Young, 2007).

This general inclination in favour of AfL allows educators to deepen subject content knowledge, and establish suitable methods of its application, meeting wider AfL strategies in the specific contexts of medical classrooms and practices. In the work of Thompson & Wiliam (2008), it is stated that sufficiently advanced content knowledge is a required foundation if lecturers have the ability to put forward useful questions, understand student responses and offer useful feedback which defines areas of improvement. In general, lecturers will change their teaching methodology in line with certain developments based on the information they have about students' understanding of specific content.

Considering the Saudi MoE vision, as discussed earlier (Section 2.2.2, p. 10), that aspires to produce an exceptional educational system that builds a competitive knowledge-based community, assessment in KSA should be re-anchored to a social-realist view of knowledge, re-emphasizing the social feature of the assessment that improves learning. The social-realist position is to redirect the current focus on learning and to locate the learners in the specific context by considering the AfL practices as powerful for their learning. AfL, from this position, could argue for the significance of HE in KSA when building a more socially and culturally just society, in addition to the special role of professionals in building that society.

Despite subject-specific knowledge being a significant factor in teaching in general, this is even more so when teaching in the medical profession. Also, a proficient knowledge of methods of motivating students, evaluating competence, providing constructive feedback, teaching multiple trainee levels while coping with the numerous stressful demands of patient care, research and education are all crucial (George et al., 2006). To generate powerful knowledge, powerful teachers are needed. Powerful in this case does not refer to knowledge as Young perceives it, but rather in terms of the possible influence that they can have on all students when attempting to understand a topic, not just a select few.

Hence, there is a need for highly qualified educators to teach the new knowledge that is produced by scholars and researchers in universities within the medical and health care disciplines. In turn, they can take opportunities to promote an interest in scientific concepts and topics and relate the knowledge they teach to real-life experiences.

8.3.2 The Use of Authentic Assessment Rubrics to Foster Deep Learning

To enable the power of authentic assessment, it is crucial that educators become assessment literate and competent in using authentic assessments to foster learning and mastery of the 21st century competencies. Authentic assessment is effective assessment involving helping students gain powerful knowledge and then integrating this knowledge into practice. An authentic assessment task has a fundamental role in documenting learning using rubrics for assessment, and has a significant influence, as it empowers students to engage in deeper learning experiences and fosters the quality of these experiences.

Creating authentic assessment rubrics can help in defining the real-life tasks that will be used to assess students' learning. It can also help clarify assessment expectations and develop a shared understanding of these expectations. They can also make it easier for students to undertake self- and peer-assessment processes in real settings and help lecturers to close the feedback loop into the learning environment.

However, as they "are not entirely self-explanatory" (Andrade, 2005, p. 29), students need help in understanding authentic assessment rubrics and how they can be used. This denotes the importance of dialogue between lecturers, practitioners and students in order to have a shared understating of these rubrics and how to use them in real-life environments. This will be discussed in the following section.

8.3.3 Dialogue Viewed as a Pedagogical Feature of AfL

A closer look at the participants' responses reveals that dialogue is an effective pedagogical feature of AfL, which fosters students' engagement and empowerment. Dialogue between students and lecturers , and amongst students themselves where they engage in peer dialogue and develop inner dialogue, promote learning and encourage greater engagement and empowerment (Carless, 2006, 2016). Thus, dialogue helps to move the assessment toward the 'spirit' of the application of AfL principles where students sit at the heart of the assessment process. Thus, dialogue requires active participation and respect for the uniqueness of the individual student. "Being an active, engaged and critical assessor, the student makes sense of information, relates it to prior knowledge, and deliberates the strategies and skills involved in taking their learning forward" (Berry, 2011, p. 53).

As we have seen throughout the study's findings, dialogue can be seen as an effective feature of AfL. Dialogue and interaction between students and lecturers help to have a shared and deep understanding of performance targets for students including assessment goals, criteria and rubrics. This will contribute to the student's ability to assess their own progress and that of peers' development, and in turn direct their own learning. Through dialogue, lecturers can encourage positive motivational beliefs and build student confidence and self-esteem. In addition, dialogue enhances student engagement and comprehension of feedback, which is seen in their learning and assists their self- and peer-feedback process. As a result, the feedback process becomes a natural process rather than an additional task for both students and lecturers.

By understanding AfL underpinned by social-realist foundation, it would, therefore, be seen more clearly that involving dialogue between students and lecturers is part of a productive learning process. Through dialogue, students are more likely to see assessment as a way to support and enable the deep learning of powerful knowledge rather than just as information transmission.

However, large class sizes seem to be a barrier. The current growth in class sizes in the Saudi context has made it difficult for lecturers to engage everyone in constructive dialogue. This is where technology can play a crucial role (Nicol & Milligan, 2006; Carless, 2016), especially for the technology literate generation in KSA (Al-Hariri & Al-Hattami, 2017). The comprehensive use of technology to establish a platform for online dialogue between lecturers and their students increases the chance of engaging all students in constructive and

interactive conversations. "It has been suggested that the application of technology should indeed be encouraged and even be incorporated as a routine part of students' daily activities within clinical activities and basic sciences" (Al-Hariri & Al-Hattami, 2017, p. 82). Exploiting their impulse use of technology (ibid) enables advocating major changes to learning and assessment culture. However, this requires further research to explore the use of technology to support lecturer-student interaction.

8.4 Recommendations for Policymaking

The introduction of AfL to develop learning and achievement encourages education policy makers to utilise the outcomes from this research in making decisions regarding the implementation of AfL at the university level, especially in the medical context. Policymakers should:

1. clarify the views on assessment to the educational community in an attempt to promote or prioritise the spirit of AfL in an education system, trying to avoid any confusion of approaches among practitioners.
2. adopt flexible models of change and reform in HE and offer sufficient support for a successful implementation.
3. develop a culture of continuing professional development and support for educators. In this way, educators will continue to engage in learning about learning once they are practising professionals. In addition, continuous academic activities, such as workshops and conferences, should be conducted to build a clear and rich understanding of AfL and spread its culture within academic sectors.
4. involve students and consider their attitudes and perception of assessment to guarantee adequate understanding of AfL with the depth required for effective implementation.

8.5 Recommendations for Practice

While policy and decision making are important for developing an assessment system in HE in KSA, policy makers using planner insights and applying them into practice is no less important. To maximize the educational influence and to avoid the possible negative effects of AfL implementation, it is important to:

1. ensure clarity and relevance of AfL to all stakeholders. As acknowledged in the literature, teachers as well as students' views about assessment could be resistant to

change, thus clear and explicit guidelines become fundamental before the actual implementation begins. Some effort must be made to foster clear understanding of AfL for sufficient transference to practice.

2. ensure AfL is accompanied with precisely written curriculum objectives. Assessment should be designed for medical institutions, with regards to the assessment factors as well as health-education systems, cultural values, and job opportunities.

3. support and stimulate lecturers in the process of its implementation and ensure commitment to the AfL approach.

4. ensure the proper use of rubrics as a reliable method of assessment that can improve instruction, make expectations and criteria explicit and facilitate feedback together with self- and peer-assessment.

8.6 Limitations, Generalisability and Transferability and Future Work

This research project faced certain limitations relating to the context within which the study was undertaken and constraints of time. As with almost all projects, extra resources and time would lead to a richer data sample. Expanding the study to include other medical departments and institutions in KSA would increase the depth of the study. However, choosing the Applied Medical Sciences School in a single Saudi HEI seemed useful, since the central purpose of the study successfully was to obtain detailed evidence that allowed for the exploration of different views and included key participants: lecturers and undergraduate students. However, on reflection, if I were to redesign the study, I would include policy makers as a participant group since they are responsible for all the policies and decisions due to the top-down nature of the education system in the KSA. Further research is needed to identify more clearly the policy and decision-maker perspectives of AfL in the medical setting.

This study faced particular challenges. Smith (2011) recommends between five and ten respondents for an IPA study, where generalisability cannot be derived from a substantial volume of respondents. However, instead of empirical generalisability, theoretical generalisability in relation to IPA has been recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003) as an appropriate focus, because generalisability of findings is not sought through IPA. Accordingly, professional and individual experiences, existing research and IPA

investigation results should all be possible to connect for someone engaging with the study, which sets ts study in a wider context. Thus, as Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) explained, emphasis on cross-environment or cross-group transferability of results is required. Smith et al. (2009) clarified that this theoretical generalisability requires a reader to actively appraise the results in terms of their relevance and impact on their own activities, informed by their current experience and understanding. In the context of this research, the extant research and knowledge foundation can be enhanced by the results here, while Applied Medical Sciences School students and employees will find them to be particularly relevant.

So as to establish the extent to which the results are underpinned by the situation for comparable populations, transferability is significant. This thesis offers a rich and detailed account of the environment within which this study is set to allow readers to reflect on the relationship with their own context. To extend the research in this area, where an Applied Medical Sciences School was the location for this study, alternative dentistry, pharmacy and medical schools with varied learner support systems, pedagogical, testing and learning methods may be the focus of a future comparable study to this one. Additionally, it could be beneficial to undertake a comparative study, for instance with students taking various subjects where their experiences could be contrasted. This emphasises the need for any study to pay close attention to context. Nevertheless, the results' transferability may be diminished due to the specific activity and cultural dynamics of Saudi Arabia, where this study was undertaken.

Given that interviews and focus groups require some degree of experience, my lack of familiarity was a further shortcoming. My ability to carry out interviews was helped significantly by piloting of the research process, although, on reflection, I do not believe that my skills in guiding discussions were as strong when confronted by learners with whom I was unfamiliar. Reflecting on issues raised by Gray (2014), once the interviews and debates started developing naturally, I was uncertain whether or in what manner I should intercede. Perhaps a more experienced interviewer would have been able to probe issues in greater depth. Interviews require different management capabilities which I found challenging, despite having significant experience in constructing discourse in the classroom. On reflection, I think I underestimated the different skills required. Furthermore, in terms of ensuring the respondents are relaxed, I know how important it is to speak slowly, whereas I tended to pose questions rapidly and to speak too quickly. However, I managed to progressively mitigate these weaknesses by writing a critical reflection following every

interview and conversation. In accordance with Gray (2014, p. 474), I ultimately got to the stage where I could manage and moderate the discussion, by around the fifth interview and third focus group.

As the main analysis tools in this study were the one-to-one and focus group interviews, it would be interesting if future research were to extend the evidence base, such as by adding an observation method to collect evidence. This would allow for more in-depth information to be gathered by observing how AfL is being practised in medical settings and would allow the possibility to investigate more deeply student performance and understanding. Additionally, the medical curriculum, particularly the specified course description, should be analysed to see how assessment is addressed. This is because it is apparent that Saudi medical lecturers deeply rely on the specified course description for their teaching and assessment. Future study might also include an analysis of the methods used to teach medical educators how to use AfL effectively, to offer insights into ways in which issues of lecturer control, time constraints and curriculum might be mitigated and thus encourage better student learning. More attention needs to be paid to why AfL matters. Lecturers need to be assured that the time spent in assessment for students' learning is beneficial and will result in greater student understanding and student performance.

As Black et al. (2003) and Hayward and Spencer (2010) found and reflected in these research findings, national assessment attainment results, confidence, participation and enthusiasm of students may all be beneficially affected by AfL. Particularly in Saudi Arabia, AfL studies now should seek to comprehend how the development of learner independence through AfL is affected by cultural and social variables (Tierney & Charland, 2007). Moreover, AfL's further theorisation and application in an effective manner would be improved by additional inquiries into AfL's effect on the development of learner independence in the relationship between that and educator-learner relationships. Experienced educators and learners use particular language and engage in ways that should be explored in such research, so that the improvement of learner independence in medical contexts and AfL activity can be achieved through stronger educator-learner relationships. Explaining how independent learners formulate their identifies in the social environment of the learner-educator relationship, could be pursued through an AfL-connected sociocultural community of practice approach in further studies. Consequently, classroom-based AfL processes may be improved through such research informing learners, policy formulators, analysts and educators' activities.

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Appendices

Ethical Approval

University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

11th January 2018

Dear Nasim Ibrahim A Alghamdi

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: An exploratory study into tutors' and students' experiences and perceptions of formative assessment and feedback at a Saudi university

Application No: 400170068

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 11th January 2018_____
- Project end date: 31st January 2020_____
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf) (Unless there is an agreed exemption to this, noted here).
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:
  https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduatere searchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

Muir Houston, Senior Lecturer
College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer
Social Justice, Place and Lifelong Education Research
University of Glasgow
School of Education, St Andrew's Building, 11 Eldon Street
Glasgow G3 6NH
0044+141-330-4699   Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Participants Information Sheet for Tutors

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet for Tutors

Study title: An exploratory study into tutors' and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment and feedback at a Saudi University

Researcher: Nasim Alghamdi

Supervisors: Professor. Louise Hayward and Professor. Kay Livingston

You are being invited as tutor to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

You are invited to participate in this research project because the study will be attempting to find out tutors' and students' perspective of the current practices of assessment and feedback concentrating on their understanding and experience of the role of assessment and feedback to enhance their learning. The result of this research may be used to provide insight to policy makers in the areas that assessment need improve. It will also give insights to help them implement formative assessment and feedback best practices effectively and successfully.

The participation is voluntary. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study all information you provide will be destroyed and omitted from the analysing.

If you decide to take part in the interview, we will find a mutually convenient time to meet. The interview may take 30 - 40 minutes and with your permission will be recorded by audiotaping. I may wish to quote your exact words in my thesis.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

All personal information which is collected will be kept strictly confidential. You will only be identified by an ID number and you will not be identified in any report or publication. Any information about your name and address will be removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

The results will be written up for my thesis and completed in 2020 approximately. Results may be also made available as publication in articles, book and conference papers. I will give a summary of my findings to all participants if requested. The data and recording will be stored in my computer which will be password protected or locked in the cupboard in my office at University of Glasgow. All electronic or paper copies of data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the project after January 2020. Please note that the data will not be shared/archived or re-used.

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee.

For further Information please contact Nasim Alghamdi, PhD in Education, School of Education, University of Glasgow, email: **n.alghamdi.2@research.gla.ac.uk**
Further information and where to pursue any complaint: this should be the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer **Dr Muir Houston**, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

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Participants Information Sheet for Students

Participant Information Sheet for Students

Study title: **An exploratory study into tutors' and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment and feedback at a Saudi University**
Researcher: **Nasim Alghamdi**
Supervisors: **Prof. Louise Hayward** and **Prof. Kay Livingston**

You are being invited as student to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

You are invited to participate in this research project because the study will be attempting to find out tutors' and students' perspective of the current practices of assessment and feedback concentrating on their understanding and experience of the role of assessment and feedback to enhance their learning. The result of this research may be used to provide insight to policy makers in the areas that assessment need improve. It will also give insights to help them implement formative assessment and feedback best practices effectively and successfully.

If you decide to take part in the focus group, we will find a mutually convenient time to meet. The focus group may take an hour to hour and half with your permission will be recorded by audiotaping. I may wish to quote your exact words in my thesis.

The participation is voluntary. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, physical withdrawal may be possible but the removal of data provided up to that point might be less able to be achieved because of the lack of ability to identify people within a recording and the potential for any removal of data to compromise the understanding of other data.

All personal information which is collected will be kept strictly confidential. You will only be identified by an ID number and you will not be identified in any report or publication. Any information about your name and address will be removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Please note that confidentiality may not be guaranteed, due to the nature of focus groups.

As a participant in the focus group, you should respect the confidentiality of fellow participants. That information shared in the focus group should be treated as private and that it should not be shared with anyone outside of the focus group.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

The results will be written up for my thesis and completed in 2020 approximately. Results may be also made available as publication in articles, book and conference papers. I will give a summary of my findings to all participants if requested. The data and recording will be stored in my computer which will be password protected or locked in the cupboard in my own accommodation. All electronic or paper copies of data will be retained for 10 years after completion of the project after January 2020. Please note that the data will not be shared/archived or re-used.

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Committee.

For further Information please contact Nasim Alghamdi, PhD in Education, School of Education, University of Glasgow, email: **n.alghamdi.2@research.gla.ac.uk**
Further information and where to pursue any complaint: this should be the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer **Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk**

Consent Form for Tutors

University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form for Tutors

Title of Project: An **exploratory study into tutors' and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment and feedback at a Saudi university**

Name of Researcher: **Nasim Alghamdi**
Name of supervisors: **Prof. Louise Hayward** and **Prof. Kay Livingston**

I confirm that I have read and understood Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I understand the need for interview being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

- Both electronic and manual material will be kept securely at all times, in accordance with University of Glasgow Research Guidelines
- The material will be destroyed from research's personal devices once the project is complete.
- The material will be destroyed 10 years after the conclusion of the project, in accordance with University of Glasgow Research Guidelines.
- The material may be used in future conferences and publications, both print and online.

I agree to take part in this research study
☐Yes   ☐No

I agree for audio recording
☐Yes   ☐No

I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
☐Yes   ☐No

Name of Participant: ....   Signature ....
Date ....

Name of Researcher: **Nasim Alghamdi**   Signature ....
Date ....

Consent Form for Students

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form for Students

Title of Project: An exploratory study into tutors' and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment and feedback at a Saudi University

Name of Researcher: Nasim Alghamdi
Name of supervisors: Prof. Louise Hayward and Prof. Kay Livingston

I confirm that I have read and understood Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I understand the need for focus group being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

I acknowledge that I should respect the confidentiality of fellow participants.

I acknowledge that confidentiality may not be guaranteed, due to the nature of focus groups.

- Both electronic and manual material will be kept securely at all times, in accordance with University of Glasgow Research Guidelines
- The material will be destroyed from researcher's personal devices once the project is complete.
- The material will be destroyed 10 years after the conclusion of the project, in accordance with University of Glasgow Research Guidelines.
- All material might be used in future conferences and publications, both print and online.

I agree to take part in this research study
☐Yes   ☐No

I agree for audio recording
☐Yes   ☐No

I agree to waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.
☐Yes   ☐No

I agree to maintain confidentiality of information shared in the focus group
☐Yes   ☐No

Name of Participant .... Signature ....
Date ....

Name of Researcher: **Nasim Alghamdi** Signature ....
Date ....