An Application and Re-Evaluation of Borg's Self-Assessment Tool for English Language Teachers (2018) in the Iranian EFL Context88

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Abstract

Due to the growing universal interest in teaching quality and methods of evaluating teaching efficiency, teacher self-assessment could enhance teachers' sense of agency and contribute formatively to their personal and professional development. This study aimed to apply and re-evaluate Borg's Self-Assessment Tool for English Language Teachers (SAT) (2018) in the Iranian context. To collect the required data, the original questionnaire, consisting of 48 Likert Scale questions in nine thematic areas, along with eight additional open-ended questions developed by the researchers was administered to 102 professors at Islamic Azad University (North, Central, and South branches) teaching TEFL and English Translation courses at different academic levels. The qualitative and quantitative analyses of the responses to the Likert Scale questions revealed relative but not complete conformity with those of Borg (2018). Some major differences were observed between the frequencies of the options chosen by the participants in both studies with Iranian professors having provided a more positive self-assessment of their abilities in different areas. There were also differences between the ways in which the participants assessed themselves in terms of the nine categories of the questionnaire. Moreover, in response to the open-ended questions of the present study, some of the participants stated that the questionnaire is biased both educationally and culturally and in favor of ESL teachers in developed countries. Therefore, the researchers find the questionnaire still far from vast usage and, in line with Borg [1], believe that its content demands further study.

Keywords: *Re-evaluation, Self-assessment, Teacher evaluation, Teacher self-assessment*

1. Background

Reflecting on the result of one's work or assessment is a crucial factor in improving oneself. To meet this goal, both teachers and learners must be evaluated in a dynamic educational system [1]. Researchers, educators, and policymakers across the political spectrum acknowledge the critical role that teachers play in students' academic (and non-academic) achievements. This has led governments, states, and local districts around the world to apply an array of policy measures concerning teacher licensure, salary, and evaluation in the hope of increasing the quality of their teaching force.

Teacher evaluation should draw on multiple sources of information. One such source is teacher self-assessment [2]. It is claimed that self-assessment is a global growing concept in evaluation through creating autonomy in the area of self-improvement and self-efficacy [3]. Self-assessment is a powerful method for personal development. In the theory of teacher change, self-assessment is recognized as an enabling factor in professional growth [4]. Teacher self-assessment may be defined as "the process of self-examination in which the teacher uses a series of sequential feedback strategies for the purpose of instructional self-improvement" [5].

The focus in self-assessment is on formative development as opposed to summative evaluation. The underlying assumption is that teachers are capable of functioning in an autonomous manner for the purpose of improving their instruction [5]. In other words, self-assessment empowers teachers and allows them to take charge of their own improvement. Furthermore, the involvement of teachers in the process

of evaluation is identified as the key element of noticing their status as professionals [6]. Moreover, Self-efficacy is a capacity that is believed to be an indicator of a teacher's confidence that they can successfully perform specific teaching acts. self-efficacy contributes significantly to human motivation and attainment. Both teachers' motivation to use formative assessment and their ability to do so are related to their relevant self-efficacies [3]. Based on the reported benefits of teacher self-assessment all around the world, self-assessment is much more recommended than other methods of teacher assessment [1]. Consequently, the main focus of this study was a re-evaluation of Borg's questionnaire, which is the most recently developed questionnaire in the field of teacher self-assessment.

2. Method

2.1 Research Questions

This study targeted the following questions:

1. To what extent does Borg's self-assessment tool for English Language Teachers (2018) produce consistent results in the Iranian EFL context?

2. What are Iranian EFL teachers' comments on the relevance, clarity, coverage, and value of this questionnaire?

3. In what ways could the questionnaire be further developed in the view of Iranian EFL teachers?

4. What is the overall attitude of Iranian EFL teacher towards this questionnaire?

2.2 Instruments

A questionnaire consisting of 48 multiple-choice Likert Scale items in nine sections (Borg's SAT [1]) and 8 open-ended questions was used to collect the required data for this study.

2.3 Participants

A total number of 130 male and female 130 professors teaching TEFL and Translation courses at different branches of Islamic Azad University participated in this study. They were between 40 to 60 years of age. The majority of the participants had less than 10 years of teaching general English experience; however, most of them had taught academic English for more than 25 years.

2.4 Procedure

Initially, the questionnaire was given to the participants. To obtain the cooperation of the teachers and increase the accuracy of their responses, the researchers explained the purpose of the research to them and guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. However, only 102 questionnaires were returned. There was no time limit for answering the questions. The data were collected over a three-month period, and once the filled questionnaires were received from the participants, the researchers went through the process of data analysis.

3. Results

First, descriptive statistics were computed for the respondents' scores on each section of the questionnaire as well as for their total scores on the same device. Then the normality of score distributions was checked. The Cronbach Alpha reliability of the questionnaire was equal to 0.93, which was satisfactory. The percentage frequency distribution of the nine sections of the questionnaire is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage Frequency Distribution of the Nine Sections of the Teachers' Self-Assessment Questionnaire

	I am not sure how to do this.		I can do this but not very effectively.		I can do this quite well.		I can do this very well.	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
(1)	0	0	1	1	9	8.9	92	90.1
(2)	1	1	2	1.8	13	12.8	86	84.4
(3)	0	0	2	2	9	8.9	91	89.1
(4)	0	0	8	7.9	29	28.5	65	63.6
(5)	1	1	4	3.9	9	8.9	88	86.2
(6)	0	0	3	3	20	19.5	79	77.5
(7)	0	0	6	6	20	19.7	76	74.3
(8)	0	0	0	0	7	6.9	95	93.1
(9)	2	2	19	18.6	21	20.6	60	58.8
Total	0	0	2	2	19	18.6	81	79.4

The primary analysis of the data revealed that, similar to Borg's study [1], the professors' responses across the nine sections of the SAT questionnaire were positive. When the overall mean score of the multiple-choice items was calculated for each participant, it was found that 18.6% of the responses were "I can do this quite well", and 79.4% of the responses were "I can do this very well" in this study, while in Borg's study 44.9% of the responses were "I can do this quite well", and 53.6% of them were "I can do this very well". In both studies, the participants chose "I can do this quite well" or "I can do this very well" across the nine sections more than the other responses.

The SAT questionnaire also included eight short-end items about the participants' views of certain aspects of the questions such as their clarity, coverage, and relevance. In Borg's study the responses to this part of the questionnaire were quite positive in general. However, in the present study, some of the participants found the questionnaire biased and in favor of ESL teachers in developed countries. Some other participants believed that this method of assessment is not reliable enough because in some communities, particularly in the East, people are not used to giving direct responses to the questions, and that is why they often provide an understatement or overstatement of their own capabilities.

4. Conclusions and Discussion

In this study, the primary analysis of the data revealed that self-assessment across the nine sections of the (SAT) questionnaire was positive and in line with the findings of Borg [1]. The respondents' high self-assessment scores in both studies could be a reflection of their profile as experienced university professors in the present study and a self-selecting group voluntarily engaged in a professional development MOOC on ELT offered by a British university in Borg's study [1]. Nevertheless, the researchers found that there was a statistically significant difference among the Iranian respondents' mean scores on the nine sections of the questionnaire. The participants obtained the highest mean score on the section on "Assessing the Learners", believing that they had a higher level of competence in this area. However, in Borg's study, the teachers believed in their higher level of competence in "Managing resources".

Furthermore, the results confirmed that in both studies, the lower part of the list was dominated by the items related to 21st century skills (for example, critical thinking and problem solving or leadership and personal development). As mentioned before, in response to the open-ended questions of the present study, some of the participants believed that the questionnaire is educationally and culturally biased and working in favor of ESL teachers in more developed countries. However, in Borg's study, the responses

to this part of the questionnaire demonstrated the participants' positive attitude to SAT in general. Some other participants in both studies believed that this method of assessment is not reliable enough because teachers inevitably are susceptible to inflated self-assessment since admitting limited competence may function as a threat to their professional identity and status.

The findings of this study demonstrated the fact that the SAT questionnaire is still far from global use. Moreover, as also emphasized in Borg [1], the SAT questionnaire needs further study in terms of its content. It also seems necessary to combine the SAT questionnaire with classroom observation to provide a more revealing picture of what teachers are really capable of doing. In addition, the inclusion of the participants' demographic features in interpreting the results of the questionnaire is a must in case the ultimate purpose is to introduce it as a globally reliable and valid teacher assessment tool. This study aimed to re-evaluate Borg's questionnaire in the Iranian EFL context. However, to the extent that the participants may not have accurately reflected the entire population of EFL teachers, the interpretations of the results of this study could not be widely generalized.

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