**////Title: New Insights into the Effectiveness and Benefits of Student Self-Assessment**

**////Standfirst:**

By asking their students to complete self-assessment exercises, educators can encourage the development of their students. These methods rely on a student’s ability to evaluate their own skills, knowledge, and other qualities, and use their self-assessment to make improvements. Professor Heidi L. Andrade [An-draid] at the University of Albany recently reviewed 76 empirical studies focusing on student self-assessment. Her review paper offers interesting insights about the effectiveness of self-assessment and its association with achievement and self-regulated learning.

**////Main text:**

To support students in their learning, educators often use student self-assessment practices. These can take the form of indicating their confidence in having mastered certain content, outlining their strengths and weaknesses in reflective essays, and comparing their work to the expectations set by the teacher. What these activities have in common is that they involve assessing one’s own skills, knowledge, or performance in a specific discipline, rather than relying on the teacher as the sole source of judgment in the classroom.

Over the past few decades, some educators have been conducting research aimed at better understanding the purpose and effectiveness of self-assessment methods, as well as how students perceive them and potentially learn from them.

Professor Heidi L. Andrade at University of Albany recently reviewed the results of 76 empirical studies focusing on student self-assessment, most of which were carried out between 2013 and 2018. Her review paper provides new insights into the associations between student self-assessments and assessment by others, actual academic achievement, and self-regulated learning.

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Past studies have gathered mixed results about the consistency between student self-assessments and teacher-awarded grades, and the extent to which they influence their performance and academic growth. According to Professor Andrade, one reason for this could be that self-assessments can be carried out in numerous different ways, some of which might be more effective than others.

In her paper, she used the findings gathered in the studies she examined to provide a general overview of self-assessment and its relationship to academic achievement and learning. For instance, she analysed the results of a study where teachers asked students to estimate what marks they would get on a test.

The study found that the marks that students assigned to themselves tended to be higher than those they received from their teachers, particularly when students were told that self-assigned grades would count towards their final grade, and for students who tended to achieve lower grades. Similar studies also found that younger students and males more commonly overestimated their abilities compared to older students and females.

While these studies offer insight about overestimation biases in self-assessments, Professor Andrade points out that none of them really considers the value of self-assessment for collecting feedback that students can use to improve their work and deepen their learning. In fact, studies that framed self-assessment measures as tools to learn and gather feedback found that student assessments were far more consistent with those provided by external evaluators.   
  
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In her paper, Professor Andrade thus highlights the importance of discerning between formative and summative self-assessment. While the former is aimed at enhancing learning and gathering feedback, the latter is perceived as a test or an additional academic evaluation.

When taking a closer look at these two different aims of self-assessments, Professor Andrade discusses the importance of what is assessed and why it is assessed. She suggests that exercises in which students estimate their learning process, as well as their performance in academic assignments, are among the most effective forms of formative self-assessment. This is because they allow students to reflect on their work, revise it, and re-learn skills or curricular material. This formative approach to self-assessment is contrasted with summative self-assessment, for example asking students to assign themselves a grade. Professor Andrade points out the obvious problems with self-grading and urges educators to use self-assessment practices only to help students reflect on and improve their work.

The self-assessment of qualities, abilities, and competency, on the other hand, might not always be relevant to instruction and learning, as they can be more related to an individual’s confidence and self-perception compared to their academic performance. According to Professor Andrade, self-assessments of competence are only useful, in formative terms, when students are offered opportunities to work on the skills and abilities they are assessing.

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In addition to considering the importance of what self-assessments are evaluating, Professor Andrade outlines some of the main ways of gathering self-assessments, including the use of traffic lights to show how well students felt they understood a topic explained in class, checklists, rubrics, reflective essays, and exercises that ask students to review their work in terms of the criteria on a checklist, with an eye for improvement.

Based on the studies she reviewed, Professor Andrade concluded that self-assessments that follow scripts prompting students to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the assignments they submitted are particularly effective formative tools. In fact, students who engaged in these activities were found to be more self-regulated and better able to identify what was expected from them.

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Overall, Professor Andrade’s review paper suggests that if used correctly, self-assessments can be highly valuable formative tools, as they can promote students’ academic growth and constructive reflection.

Her paper also outlines the limitations of some past studies focusing on self-assessments. This included, for instance, the use of experimental tasks that are unrealistic and unrelated to the academic assignments that students typically complete, as well as not allowing students to regulate and organise their own studying for the assignments they complete during experiments.

Finally, Professor Andrade also reviewed studies examining how students perceived self-assessment exercises. Interestingly, she observed that while younger children typically have a poor understanding of these methods and why they are implemented, third-level students generally have a good grasp of their purpose and find them to be valuable learning tools.

In the future, Professor Andrade’s recent work could inform the development of more effective student self-assessment tools, particularly those focused on promoting self-regulated and self-directed learning.

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This SciPod is a summary of the paper ‘A Critical Review of Research on Student Self-Assessment’, from *Frontiers in Education.* DOI: 10.3389/feduc.2019.00087.

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