



Impact of the Use of Rubrics on the Performance of Students

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Declaration

I declare that the Dissertation titled Impact of the Use of Rubrics on the Performance of Students is submitted to the BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL), BRAC University in partial fulfilment of the degree MA in TESOL. This paper is the result of my personal investigation; it has not been presented and submitted wholly or in part for any other degree.

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Key words

Attitude, Devpro, Impact, Medhabikash, Performance, Perspectives, Rubric, Tool, Assessment

Abstract

Rubric is one of the tools teachers use to assess students' performance. This research focuses on whether or not the use of rubrics has any impact on students' performance. This study has reviewed the impact from both students' and teachers' perspectives. To this end, a questionnaire survey was conducted among 18 students of BRAC University. Another questionnaire survey was conducted among 46 Medhabikash students of BRAC University. In addition, a topic was provided to the same group of students (Medhabikash students) to write an essay. The same topic was given again with a set of rubrics to write another essay with a view to observing the differences. Besides, a semi-open ended questionnaire was administered among 8 teachers from the same University to see their perspectives about the impact of rubrics on the students' performance. The results show a significant impact of rubrics on students' performance along with a strong positive attitude of both students and teachers towards the use of rubrics. A wide scope of further research is open in this area.

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Assessment

Assessment is one of the precepts without which it is impossible to determine the students' achievement. Not only students' achievement, it is also impossible to see for a teacher whether or not they are successful in transmitting the knowledge to their students accurately. Besides, there is a significant impact of using rubrics on students' performance, especially in English classroom. First of all, it is generally true that no two human minds work in an identical fashion. Students might emphasize on their own focused aspect during a performance, while the teachers might have something else in mind to focus on. Therefore, perhaps rubrics with their structured direction can remove these discrepancies of thoughts. Added to that, rubrics help students to arrange their performance as it should be. Moreover, it could save students vital time during performance avoiding focusing on any unnecessary point.

1.2 Background

The term rubric has been used in English since the 1400s, making it as old as it is interesting. The root of rubric refers to the color red or red earth. The Oxford English Dictionary gives an example of the term used in 1607: "this marrow of a deer in sheep's milk with rubric and soft pitch, drunk every day, helps the digestion and obstructions." Another meaning, closer to how it is currently used in education, is the heading of a chapter or division of a book, written or printed in red ink or underlined in red for emphasis. In 1658, Philips stated that a rubric is "a noted Sentence of any Book marked with red Letters."

Educators today use rubric to refer to a category of behavior that can be used to evaluate performance. The term is currently so popular that no one writing a funding proposal would ignore laying out the rubric for evaluating the program's success. Today's rubrics involve creating a standard and a descriptive statement that illustrates how the standard is to be achieved. For example, a rubric for judging an essay would list everything a student needs to include to receive a certain grade on that essay. Generally, the rubrics also would specify what is needed to achieve different levels of performance, such as what is needed for an A, B, etc.

1.3 Context

Rubrics are often used by teachers to grade student work but many authors argue that they can serve more important roles as well. When used by students as part of a formative assessment of their works in progress, rubrics can teach as well as evaluate. Used as part of a student-centered approach to assessment, rubrics have the potential to help students understand the targets for their learning and the standards of quality for a particular assignment, as well as make dependable judgments about their own work that can inform revision and improvement.

Many research have been carried out abroad such as Goodrich Andrade (2000), Andrade and Ying Du (2005), Heidi and Ying Du (2007), Wolf and Steven (2007), Reddy (2007), Wand and Ying Du (2009), Malini and Heidi (2010), Diab and Blala (2011), and Heidi Eshun and Osei-Poku (2013) to see whether or not rubrics have any impact on students' performance along with some other purposes. However, in Bangladesh, there are few institutions that use rubrics to assess students' performance. There are even fewer institutions that have carried out research to see whether their use of rubrics have any impact on the students' performance. Thus, this study is a timely endeavor to examine whether or not rubrics have any impact on students' performance, from both teachers' and students' perspectives.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify whether there is any impact of rubrics on students' performance, and to see the essay score before and after the use of rubrics to see if there is any difference. To this end, the present paper aims to find answer to the following questions:

1. Do rubrics have any impact on the performance of students?
2. Do rubrics have any positive impact on the performance of students?
3. Do rubrics have any negative impact on the performance of students?

1.5 Result

The research has found out that students strongly believe that rubrics have impact on their performance. Besides, the teachers too believe that rubrics have impact on students' performance. In addition, some teachers are of the opinion that if rubrics can be made in a way

so that students feel interested to use, it would make learners autonomous. More importantly, when there is no teacher, and a student needs help, rubrics can play that part. However, one teacher expressed concern about the fact that rubrics can also restrict the students' potentiality and creativity which they would have if they were assessed otherwise.

1.6 Significance, scope and definition

Rubrics are rating scales - as opposed to checklists - that are used with performance assessments. They are formally defined as scoring guides, consisting of specific pre-established performance criteria, used in evaluating students' work on performance assessments. Rubrics are typically the specific form of scoring instrument used when evaluating students' performances or products resulting from a performance task (Martler: 2001). Many studies have been conducted around the world on how to form rubrics for assessment, some are on analytic and some are on holistic rubrics, except Bangladesh where the concept of rubrics is a very new one let alone using them in educational institutions. Many more research studies have been carried out abroad on the use of rubrics in the class for formative and summative assessments and its impact on students' performance. Therefore, this researcher finds it very important to look into this area where there is great potentiality to work on. Considering the current unexpected political condition of Bangladesh for which the researcher could not work among University students who could not attend the class due to the forced closure of academic work, this research carried out an empirical study with a set of rubrics on a group of (residential) students called Medhabikash students.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This study included one questionnaire survey among the BRAC University students at tertiary level with a view to examining their attitude towards the rubrics and whether or not their teachers use rubrics in their classes and whether they think rubrics are important or not. One semi open-ended interview was conducted among the teachers of the same University to look into their accounts of rubrics. Whether they think the use of rubrics is important and whether they have any influence on their students. Besides, the purpose of that interview was to see their attitude towards using rubrics. Most importantly, the researcher wanted to examine the differences in their accounts, students as well as teachers. This research also included one more questionnaire survey among some 64 students of HSC examination candidates to see their views of use of

rubrics. To that end, a set of rubrics were designed for Medhabikash students (HSC examinees) based on what they had to write an essay. Initially they had to write the essay without rubrics, and later they had to write the essay without (or with?) the rubrics on the same topic. The scripts were scored by several teachers of BRAC University.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

2.1

Rubrics orient us toward our goals as teachers. We use them to clarify our learning goals, design instruction that addresses those goals, communicate the goals to students, guide our feedback on students' progress toward the goals, and judge final products in terms of the degree to which the goals have been met. Instructional rubrics help teachers clarify their expectations and focus on instruction. Instructional rubrics help their students understand the goal of an assignment and focus their efforts. Instructional rubrics help teachers give more informative feedback to their students without spending every evening and weekend on their task. Instructional rubrics allow teacher to assign more challenging work than they otherwise could. Instructional rubrics keep teachers fair and unbiased in their grading. They will admit that they struggle with the temptation to assign grades based in part on irrelevant things such as effort or fondness – but not much. Rubrics keep them honest.

Evaluation criteria are the factors that an assessor considers when determining the quality of a student's work. "They are the conditions a performance must meet to be successful" (Wiggins, 1998 in Oakleaf, 2006, p 187). Other authors define criteria as a set of indicators/guides/list of measures/ qualities required for a student to meet an outcome. Listing of criteria enables the 'conceptualization and definition of standards, especially in hard-to-define areas such as critical thinking, problem solving, team skill etc'. It provides for 'criterion-referenced discrimination of performance' and enables monitoring of students learning against each criterion.

Scoring strategy of rubrics could be for scoring a product or process in its entirety, i.e. holistic. Given its approach of overall evaluation, holistic rubrics do not provide detailed and diagnostic feedback of the strengths and weaknesses of the product/performance (Mertler, 2001, Moskal, 2000). Scoring strategy could also be for scoring each criterion separately for eventual aggregation to form an overall score, i.e. analytic. Analytic rubrics have a part-to-whole; criterion-by-criterion judgment approach which makes multidimensional assessment possible.

The literature on rubrics states that the detailed feedbacks provided by these are useful for guiding the improvement of Second Language (SL) at an aggregate as well as at an individual student level (Klenowski, 1996; Simon and Forgette-Giroux, 2001). Apart from feedback to the students, the information so gathered is believed to serve as ‘instructional illuminators’, facilitating the process of planning of instruction as well as improvement of course design (Popham, 1997; Petcov and Petcova, 2006).

Students use rubrics to support their own learning and academic performance. Using rubrics helped them focus their efforts, produce work of higher quality, earn a better grade, and feel less anxious about an assignment (Heidi and Ying Du, 2005). Fourteen undergraduate teacher education students (six female and eight male Caucasian, middle class Midwesterners) participated in topical interviews in focus groups. Three of the groups included four students. Because two women could not attend their scheduled focus group interview, one of the female groups had two students. Each student had completed Dr. Andrade’s 200 – educational psychology course with a field placement prior to the interviews. The course and field experience involved regular use of rubrics, including co-creating rubrics in class, formal rubric-referenced self-assessment, and teacher feedback.

Students’ comments regarding rubric use were consistently positive. They liked the fact that rubrics let them know “what’s expected” and contrasted it with the “guessing game” they felt they had to play when teachers did not provide a rubric or some sort of guidelines for an assignment. In fact, the most commonly cited purpose of rubrics was to communicate the teacher’s expectations and thereby provide “direction”. Students also noted that rubrics help identify strength and weaknesses in their work when used to give feedback, and that knowing “what counts” made grades seem fair. Both the male and female students talked at length about how they used rubrics and about the results of rubric use. They found no evidence of gender differences in the data.

Students have positive attitudes toward self-assessment after extended practice; feel they can effectively self-assess when they know their teacher’s expectations; claimed to use self-assessment to check their work and guide revision; and believed the benefits of self-assessment include improvements in grades, quality of work, motivation and learning (Heidi and Ying Du , 2007). Fourteen undergraduate teacher education students (six female and eight male Caucasian,

middle-class US Midwesterners) participated in focus-group interviews. The groups were segregated by gender in an attempt to capture any gender differences in students' responses. Three of the groups included four students. Because two women did not attend the scheduled focus-group interviews, one of the female groups had two students. In order to ensure participants had experience with formal self-assessment and enough "depth of experience with the phenomenon [to] describe their experience articulately", participants were recruited from the first author's former class lists. Each participant had completed the professor's introductory educational psychology course in 2000 or 2001. The focus group interviews were conducted in spring 2002.

The analyses revealed that the students' attitudes toward self-assessment became more positive as they gained experience with it. Students said that if they self-assessed academic work at all, they usually did it in terms of what they knew about their teacher's expectations. Students felt they can self-assess effectively and are more likely to self-assess when they know what the teacher expects. Students reported using criterion-referenced self-assessment to check on their works in-progress, to guide revision and/or to reflect on their understanding of the topic. Students believed there were multiple benefits of criterion-referenced self-assessment like higher grades and better academic work.

Adult students have a greater appreciation for rubrics because they reduce uncertainty; clearly articulate the issues that an instructor feels are important and provide the students with a link between assignment, expected outcome, and learning objective. (Bolton, 2006). This hypothesis was tested with a convenient sample of over 150 adult undergraduates and graduate students enrolled in accelerated business degree programs at Averett University. During twelve management courses, students were graded on individual papers, individual presentations, and group projects, using rubrics that were provided to the students when the assignment was made. During the final meeting of each class, students were asked to complete a questionnaire that included questions regarding the use of rubrics. Following administration of the questionnaire, students participated in focus group discussions that reviewed that actual use of the rubric in the course.

Rubrics “give you a guideline and show exactly what is expected.” “You know what the standards are when preparing assignments” (Bolton, 2006). This helped students pay more attention to primary content and reduce their efforts to add unnecessary material to assignments. Instructors observed that clear articulation of expectations resulted in reduced conflict over grades and limited potential for successful grade appeals.

From the instructor’s perspective, rubrics provided considerable value. Through careful preparation of rubrics, critical issues that students should focus on were identified. Students also saw rubrics as a valuable grading tool. They routinely commented that rubrics provide “immediate” and “positive feedback.” Students valued the rubrics because they help to “tell you about your weaknesses.” This in turn allows students to focus their efforts and improve performance on subsequent assignments. Occasionally, students expressed dissatisfaction with rubrics. In more than 150 sets of student’s comments, the most common weakness identified was the potential for rubrics to limit students’ creativity in preparing assignments. When queried, students indicated that rubrics create a “restrictive environment with little room for interpretation.” Other students countered this comment by describing the benefits provided by clear guidance and known grading criteria.

Diab and Balaa (2011) carried out a research to develop specific rubrics for assessing critiques in English 202, English as a foreign language course at the Lebanese American University to explore the effectiveness of these rubrics on students’ writing and to investigate students’ attitudes and reactions to the use of these rubrics. After development of the rubrics, students wrote an in class critique of an article, using the rubrics as a guide. Based on teachers’ comments and grades on the rubrics, students revised and wrote the second draft. Students were then administered an anonymous online survey asking them of feedback on the use of rubrics. A t-test comparing students’ grades on the first and second drafts revealed significant difference suggesting that use of the rubrics helped students effectively revise their drafts. The survey results support this hypothesis because students revealed positive attitudes and reactions. Based on the findings, they recommended that consistent use of well-developed rubrics can enhance outcomes for English learners enrolled in writing courses.

Seventy-eight undergraduate students enrolled in three sections of English 202 in spring 2009 participated in the study, representing a mix of major fields and years of study. Thirty-five students completed the online survey. They were in different years of study (11 seniors, 11 juniors, and 13 sophomores), and the majority were majoring in business, reflecting the general undergraduate students body at LAU (what is LAU?). Taking Stevens and Levi's guidelines for writing critiques provided in the course book *Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum* into consideration, they identified three main dimensions that included: content, organization, and language. The content dimension would contain specific descriptions and performance standards for each section of the critique. In developing these analytical rubrics, they also considered detailed, multilayered rubrics, but when shared with students, they were found to be "too complicated" and not "user-friendly." Thus, a set of specific analytical rubrics for writing a critique was developed.

Malini and Heidi (2010) wrote a review of the empirical research on the use of rubrics at the post-secondary level, where they identified gaps in the literature and proposed area in need of research. Studies of students' responses to rubric use suggest that graduate and undergraduate students value rubrics because they clarify the targets for their work, allow them to regulate their progress and make grades or marks transparent and fair. The undergraduate and graduate business students (N = 150) in Bolton's (2006) study asserted that rubrics enabled them to engage in important processes, including identifying critical issues in an assignment and, thereby, reducing uncertainty and doing more meaningful work, determining the amount of effort needed for an assignment, evaluate their own performances in order to get immediate feedback, especially on weaknesses, estimating their grades prior to the submission of assignments and focusing their efforts so as to improve performance on subsequent assignments.

Heidi, Wang, and Ying Du (2009) investigated the relation between long and short-term rubric use, gender, and self-efficacy for writing by elementary and middle school students. They included 307 students in a convenience sample of volunteers in 18 elementary and middle school classes. After they accounted for missing data, including students' absences from school during 1 or more days of the intervention, the actual sample size for the statistical analysis was 268. Of the classes, 9 were in a public school, with a population largely lower to middle class and white, 7 were in a private school for girls, and 2 were in a private school for boys. Both private school

populations were largely middle to upper-middle class and white. All three schools were located in the Northeastern United States. Of the 18 classes, 13 were English or language arts and 5 were history or social studies.

Results revealed that girls' self-efficacy was higher than boys' self-efficacy before they began writing. The authors found interactions between gender and rubric use: Average self-efficacy ratings increased as students wrote, regardless of condition, but the increase in the self-efficacy of girls in the treatments group was larger than that for girls in the comparison group, and long-term rubrics use associated only with the self-efficacy of girls.

2.2 Summary

All in all, it could be said that rubrics help students focus on their works, produce work of higher quality, earn better grade and feel less anxious about their assignment. It also helps them to know what their teachers expect from them. Rubrics provide them necessary direction to check their own work and evaluate their performance. Besides, rubrics successfully reduce their uncertainty about their work. It also reduces significantly the possibility of adding unnecessary material to their assignment. Most important of all, rubrics help students get immediate feedback identifying strengths and weaknesses immediately after the work. Therefore, rubrics have an immense implication on students' performance.

2.3 Pedagogical implication

The result of this study will significantly help all the teachers in Bangladesh to include rubrics in their assessment process. Students will also see how rubrics can help them to perform as accurately as possible. Rubrics will also help them to attain better grades. Besides, this will also help students to be autonomous being able to judge their own work. In addition, guardians will also have an answer to why their children's assessments are justified. However, rubrics have to be set up in a way, so that students also have opportunities to exercise their creativity. As for teachers, they can be above the common suspicion of being biased in terms of giving unjustified grades to one of their favorite students. Besides, a teacher can play a vital role outside the class being able to help students, which is only possible by using rubrics. Most important of all, even though students expressed their opinion about doing better performance, it at the same time

expresses their inner desire of getting better grades in their exam, and as teachers, our duty is to help them attain that goal in every possible way we can.

Chapter III

Methodology

3.1

According to Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model, there are five hypotheses; 'affective filter' is one of them. According to Stephen Krashen (1981), when there is less mental anxiety, less physical fatigue, there will be more output. In the assessment process, students undergo all these difficulties, especially, when they sit for examination. Besides, when students are given any assignment or project work, their mental anxiety is no less than their examination. This is due to the fact that they do not know exactly where to put emphasis, what to look for, how much emphasis they should give on different elements of an assignment. When they know what they have to include and what they do not have to include and how much emphasis they have to put on different elements, they feel a sort of relief and they can produce their best product as much as possible. Besides, it also gives them a sense of independence, a sense of autonomy, when they know what they have to do and why.

3.2 Method

For this research, both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been applied. A questionnaire was designed for the BRAC University students. For the BRAC University teachers, a semi-structured questionnaire was framed. As for the Medhabikash students (at Dev Pro, Development Professionals), a group of HSC examination candidates very brilliant in terms of their SSC result, a questionnaire survey was arranged. Besides, a set of analytic rubrics were made for writing an essay. Next, an essay writing test was administered among these Medhabikash students, first without rubrics, then, with all those rubrics to see the difference. The essay scripts were checked by several teachers from the BRAC University.

3.3 Research design

The questionnaire for the students of university and DevPro (Development Professional) were designed to elicit information about the participants' personal information, their concept about the use of rubrics, about the impact of rubrics, their suggestion for the future use of rubrics, and if they have anything else to share apart from the point mentioned in the questionnaire. A

questionnaire for the BRAC University teachers was constructed to obtain their concept about the impact of rubrics, inclusion of rubrics in institutions, role of rubrics, challenges of using rubrics, and anything else if they want to express. However, a set of analytic rubrics was designed on the basis of five criteria namely, thesis statement, a body (including three paragraphs), conclusion, organization, and grammar. There were four descriptors arranged in order of their highest – 5 - to the lowest – 1 - weight. The total marks were 25. Of essay result, one sample statistics was carried out to see the Std. Error Mean, one sample test was conducted to reject the null hypothesis, and a Pearson chi square test was done to see the independence of the sample.

3.4 Participants

The data were collected from BRAC University students and teachers, respectively 18 and 8 in number. Among the students, there were 10 girls and 8 boys, and among the teachers, there were 4 female and 4 male teachers. Initially it was intended to include 10 boys and 10 girls to make a balance among data in terms of sex, 10 girls were found, but 10 boys were not found. It was observed that boys were not as willing as girls were. Similarly, the research intended to include 5 male and 5 female teachers. Nevertheless, two participants' data could not be collected.

This research also included another group of students otherwise known as Medhabikash students. Every year BRAC University offers a full bright scholarship for couple of months to a group of students from across the country based on their humble background but brilliant results. The aim of this project is to provide the student with the standard-education – like the one provided at BRAC University. Since these students have brilliantly succeeded in their SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination in spite of their humble background and low or middle standard institutions in the remote areas of their home district, if they are given high quality education just like the one provided by BRAC University, they could perform much better in their upcoming exam like HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate).

These students stay at DevPro center for about three to four months. As soon as these students finish their education, they sit for HSC examination. Based on their result they sit for admission test in different public universities. DevPro center is located in Niketon near Gulshan 1 circle 3

in Dhaka. The complete sample included 46 students. Of which almost 50% were girls and 50% were boys.

3.5 Instruments

A questionnaire survey was conducted for all students, University students and Medhabikash students, and an open-ended written interview was arranged for the teachers. In addition, an essay topic was given to the Medhabikash participants without rubrics (first time) and with rubrics to see the difference the rubrics make. For students, a questionnaire survey was arranged, and for teachers, an open-ended written interview was conducted. Questionnaire survey was carried out for the students, because it would be easy for the students to put a tick mark against a point which attempted to elicit their opinion rather than explaining all points essential for the questionnaire. For the teachers, it was easy to explain all the points they thought necessary for the explanation of a point. Again, equal number of teachers (in terms of sex) were included to make the data as representative as possible. After collecting the data, they were analyzed in quantitative and qualitative manner. It was a quantitative one for the students, and it was a qualitative one for the teachers.

Analytic rubrics use discrete criteria to set for more than one measure of the level of an accomplishment for a particular task, as distinguished from holistic rubrics, which provide a more general, uncategorized description of overall dimensions of quality for different levels of mastery.

A set of analytic rubrics were developed to evaluate students essay responses to a particular assessment prompt – “wealthy nations should share their wealth among poorer nations”. The rubrics are designed to evaluate students understanding of thesis statement, ability to support the statement, ability to round up the essay, ability to organize the essay maintaining cohesion and coherence with the least grammatical errors. The rubrics outlined five criteria by which students’ responses were evaluated on 5 point score of which maximum was 5 and minimum was 1.

3.6 Procedure

Students were instructed to write an essay on a given topic in the class. First, the boys were assigned to write an essay in their class. As soon as they finish, they were given a brief on rubrics that were prepared beforehand. After the brief, the students were again assigned to write the same essay using the rubrics. They were allowed to have one day to write the same essay. Accordingly, the following day the essays were collected from them. The same procedure was followed with the girls. Students' essays were collected and scored. Their essays were scored by five teachers according to an adapted version of rubrics. The scoring rubrics consisted of a 5 – point ordinal scale where 0 was the lowest and 5 was the highest score. The rubrics were analytic ones divided into five fundamental parts - thesis – body (three paragraphs) – conclusion, organization, and grammar.

The essays were scored independently by 5 scorers – five lecturers of BRAC University. Averages of the scores were entered into a database. If I believed that the scores were not sufficiently grounded in the scoring rubrics, I checked it again. However, about a month later, a questionnaire survey was conducted among the same group of students to see their perspective. The researcher carried out “One Sample Statistics” to see the “Mean” of students' performance before and after the application of rubrics. In addition, this research also measured the standard deviation to see how much variation or dispersion from the average exists. “One Sample Test” was conducted to test the “Null hypothesis” which in this research assumed that there is no impact of rubrics on the students' performance which eventually proved to be not true. Finally, a “Chi-Square Test” was conducted to see the independence of the sample. This means whether two or more samples came from the same group and whether there is a significant association between them.

As for the teachers, a semi open ended written interview was carried out among 8 teachers. This has been done throughout several weeks, since they had to complete one interview form at their convenient time. Even though I intended to include more teachers – 15 to 20, eight of them returned their filled up form.

3.7 Limitations and recommendation:

There were several constraints during this research. Initially the researcher intended to include 20 students and 10 teachers with equal male and female representation. However, we could not maintain that number, even though we were able to maintain the equal proportion of male and female teachers and students. Secondly, this research intended to conduct an FGD for the teachers, so that a reasonable amount of in-depth data could be collected from them for in-depth analysis and more accurate result. However, we had to be satisfied with a semi-structured-questionnaire for the teachers, because the teachers could not manage a convenient time to be together for the FGD.

This research intended to include an essay writing test for the university students as it did for the Medhabikash student participants known as DevPro students as well, so that the research could trace the impact of rubrics on the students' performance. Nonetheless, the researcher could not do so due the adverse political situation persisting for a while. The class remained suspended for long time, even though the teachers could manage time on Fridays and, sometimes, Saturdays, on which they had to take quite a number of makeup classes. Even though this research managed to set a test for the Medhabikash students to write an essay with and without rubrics, students were only given the rubrics one of two days before the second test. Obviously, this gave them very limited time to be familiar and think about the rubrics to have a clear perception to be able to make constructive comment. Hence, the reflections we have gathered through the question are founded on a very limited and narrow students' exposure to the rubrics. The students were given half an hour lecture before they were handed in rubrics.

As for the political turmoil, we have had one of the worst persisting political crises. It is because of this problem, I could not manage an essay writing test for the university students. Besides, I could not manage to arrange an FGD for the teachers to get an insight into their perception of rubrics.

In the process of investigation it was observed that there are few universities that use rubrics for the assessment of their students, there are even fewer people who might not even know what rubrics are, and how to use them. Therefore, it is highly recommended that one should conduct extended research and discover this highly potential uncharted territory

Chapter IV

Results

4.1

Several positive features were commonly indentified including the use of rubrics that helped to meet teachers' expectation; the use of rubrics that helped them to attain better result, the use of rubrics that worked as a guide for performance, the use of rubrics that helped to establish expectations and standard of performance. The research has also found out that students strongly believe that rubrics have impacts on their performance. Moreover, the essay scores before and after administering the written test showed a significant impact of rubrics on the students' performance.

4.2 Results from university students' questionnaire

Analysis of the university students' questionnaire indicated significant impact and their futuristic attitude towards the use of rubrics. 72% students strongly agree that rubrics help them to know the expectation of their teachers which was followed by 17% who simply agreed with that statement. Second, data show that a significant number of around 72% participants strongly agreed that rubrics helped them to obtain better result. Nevertheless, when they were asked about their suggestion about the future use of rubrics, 72% respondents chose the option 'strongly agree', This also accentuates their being highly motivated by the result after using the rubrics.

Thus, in the end, it could be said that university students experienced an incredible impact of rubrics in their performance. In time, they were so much motivated that overwhelming percentage of students showed great deal of enthusiasm in the hope that rubrics must be included in all course in all the institutions.

4.3 Results from university teachers' questionnaire

All the teachers stated that they use rubrics for standardizing their assessment of the students' performance. Besides, 7 out of 8 said that rubrics would help them improve their assessment of students' performance. In addition, again, 7 out of 8 said rubrics allow students to know what their teacher looks for in their answer. All the teachers, 8 out of 8, are also of the opinion that rubrics should be included in all the institutions to assess all of their students' performance in all

the modules. Besides, they are also of the opinion that rubrics help to enhance the overall performance of all the institutions. In terms of the role played by rubrics, all the teachers think that the use of rubrics would encourage learners' autonomy. In addition, they also think rubrics play the role of a supervisor in absence of a real supervisor.

5 out of 8 teachers strongly agreed that making rubrics is as laborious as time consuming, while the remaining 3 said they only 'agree' with the statement. Moreover 4 out of 8 strongly agree that making rubrics needs specialized knowledge, whereas, other 4 simply agreed with the statement making the answer equal two halves. However, one of the teachers also said that rubrics hamper the creativity of the students, which in turn, impede their latent talent.

4.4 Results from Medhabikash students' questionnaire

Around 80% participants expressed their strong agreement that rubrics helped them perform better when they wrote the essay for the second time. Besides, it is also noted that when they were asked about whether rubrics helped them to determine what their expectation were, about 80% respondents strongly agreed which was followed by 20% people who simply agreed. In addition, there was similar percentage of participants – 80% - who strongly agreed that rubrics guide them when there is no teacher at all. However, when participants were asked about their suggestion, again, a significant number of students – 80% - strongly agreed that rubrics must be included in all course in all the institutions.

Therefore, all in all, it could be said that a significant percentage - 80% of the students agreed with most of the points – proving true the hypothesis of this research that rubrics do have remarkable impacts on the performance of students. Added to that, 80% of their suggestion further bears credibility to the above fact. This high ratio of suggestion also reveals their motivational level. In other words, having observed the result they were highly motivated and wanted to make sure that rubrics are part of all the courses in all the institutions.

4.5 Results from Medhabikash students' essay

From the analysis of the students' essay, form one sample statistics (mention the statistic measure adopted), there is an increase in standard deviation of prior performance - .398, to the

post, 492. In other words, students with rubrics did increase their performance. This also means, statistically there is an increase of average performance.

To test the null hypothesis, 95% confidence interval was set. We obtained 0.00% test value which means the rejection of the hypothesis that rubrics have no impact on students' performance. In other words, rubrics have a significant impact on students' performance.

This research also conducted a chi-square test to test the independence of sample. The value of Pearson chi-square test is 145.775 which appear to be higher than the value of 95% interval. In other words, this means students will perform better with rubrics without having been appeared in the first test without the use of rubrics.

Chapter V

Discussion and analysis

5.1 Analysis of the questionnaire for university students

For this research, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied. There were 18 participants in total. In the first phase, university students were asked to complete a questionnaire containing five major parts to find out their involvement with the use of rubrics, their attitude towards the use of rubrics; whether they thought the use of rubrics has any impact on the performance. Besides, they were asked about their suggestion for the future use of rubrics followed by the last option and that was if they had any other point to make other than the given points.

Under the first major part, participants were asked about their personal information like gender, and the level of education. They had two options “Yes” and “No” to choose from. In the second major part, they were asked about their concept about the use of rubrics. There were two sub-points: (a) whether they know about the use of rubrics, and (b) if their teachers use the rubrics to assess them. They had five options to choose from namely; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The third major part – which is the most important of all – was about the impact of rubrics on their performance. There were two specific questions under this major section: (a) whether rubrics help them to attain better result, (b) whether only rubrics can ensure what teachers want from them. They were given the same 5 options as before.

Chart - 1

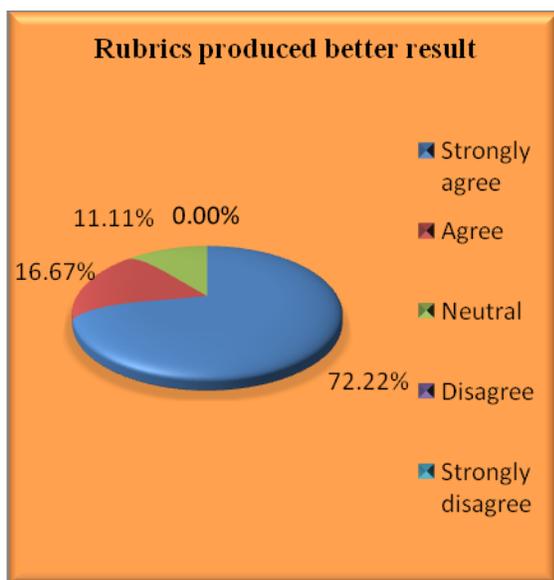
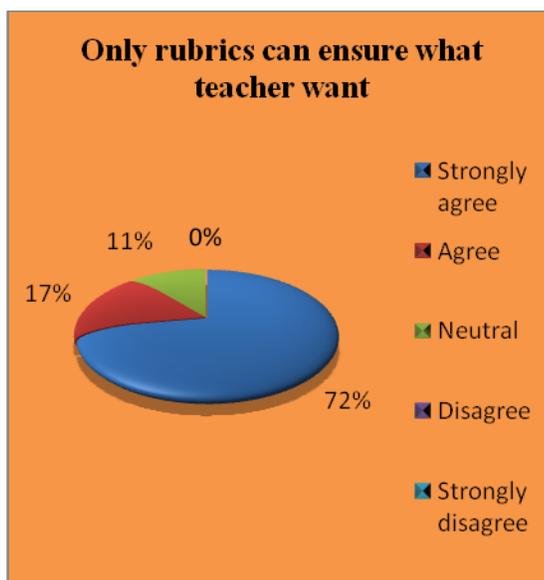


Chart -2



Out of 18, 14 respondents said they strongly agree that rubrics helped them perform better. Two participants said they agree and two other remained neutral (please, see chart 1, result is shown in percentage). When they were asked whether only rubrics ensure what a teacher wants from a students, 16 out of 18 strongly agreed and only 2 other said they agree that only rubrics help them to fulfill their teachers' expectation (Please see chart 2, result is shown in percentage).

Chart – 3

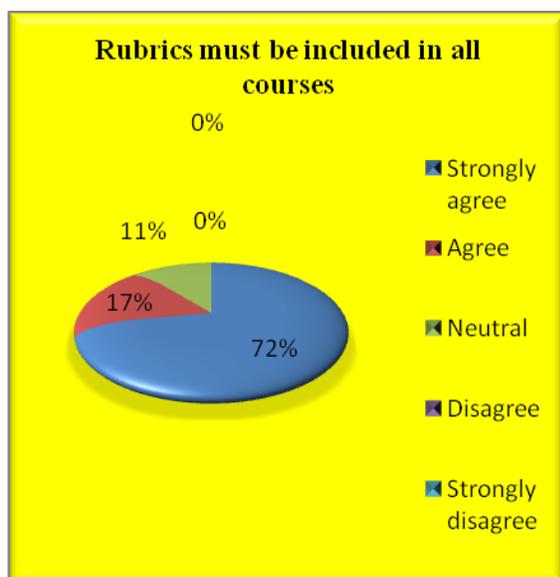
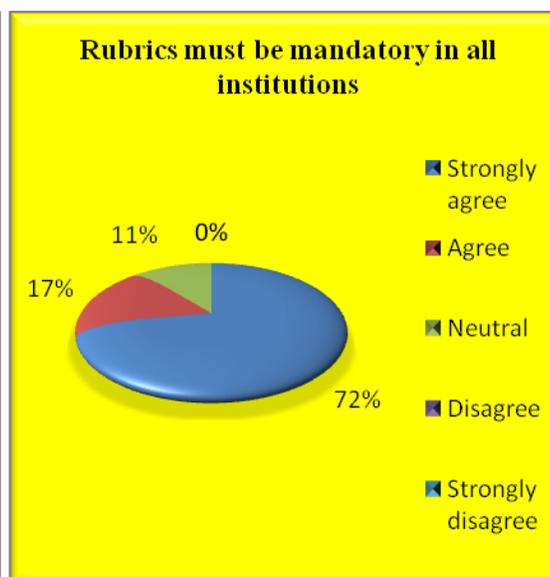


Chart – 4



The fourth major part was designed to inquire about their suggestion for the use of rubrics in all courses in all institutions. 16 out of 18 students said that they strongly agree that rubrics must be included in all the courses, while only 2 respondents said that they agree with the statement (please see chart 3, result is shown in percentage). The next statement was about whether rubrics must be mandatory in all the institutions – where the figure shows the same result as the previous one. In other words, 16 said they strongly agree and 2 said they agree that rubrics must be compulsory in all the institutions (please see chart 4, result is shown in percentage).

5.2 Analysis of the semi-structured questionnaire for the university teachers

This research included a semi-structured questionnaire survey for the teachers. Initially, our intention was to include at least 10 teachers and the number was supposed to be equal from both gender. However, two of the participants did not return their questionnaire form. As a result, there were 4 male and 4 female participants. There were five major parts in the questionnaire namely; impact of rubrics, inclusion of rubrics in institution, rule of rubrics, challenges of using rubrics, and anything else they wanted to include other than what had already been mentioned.

The first major part contained three sub-points, (a) whether they have used any rubrics for standardizing their assessment of students' work, (b) whether they thought rubrics would help improve their assessment of students' performance and why, (c) whether they thought rubrics would inform about the teachers' expectation, if students were informed prior to the test and

why. All the teachers said that they used rubrics for standardizing their assessment of students work. Beside, 7 out of 8 thought rubrics would help them improve their assessment of students' performance. The reason behind this would be that (sometimes, the teachers assess their students being very much bias. Therefore, rubrics help them stay out of it. Added to that, there would be no impact of human emotion like due to long duration of script checking, and being monotonous. Moreover, the habit of checking the scripts again and again would standardize the assessment itself. In answer to another question which is whether they thought that providing the students with rubrics prior to the test would allow students to be aware of what the teachers' expectation are – again, 7 out of 8 wrote that they would allow students to know their teachers' expectations. This is simply because the rubrics would clearly state all the points students are to cover.

Inclusion of rubrics in institution was the second major point within which there were two sub-points; (a) whether they thought rubrics should be included in all the institution to assess all the modules, (b) whether they thought rubrics – specially the analytic ones, would enhance overall performance of students in all the institutions. In answering the question 'a', all of the teachers said they think rubrics should be part of all the courses to assess students' performance. As a reason all of them said - to make it a summary – they have experienced it throughout their career to assess students with rubrics, and of course their result. As for the second question 'b' again, all the teachers thought that rubrics would enhance overall performance of students in an institution, because, even the weakest students, let alone the weaker ones, would try to meet the criteria set by their teachers, which in turn, enhance their overall performance.

Under the third umbrella term 'role of rubrics' the teaches were asked two questions; (a) whether they thought that the use of rubrics would encourage learners' autonomy, if the answer was "yes" they had to explain, briefly, 'how', (b) whether they thought that rubrics would play the role of a supervisor when there is no teacher, and again if the answer was 'yes or no' they had to illustrate briefly why they thought so. In answer to the first question (a), all the teachers said, 'yes' they think that rubrics would prompt learners' autonomy. Since the students decide their answer according to the highest standard of accuracy. In other words, with the help of descriptors, the students better organize their answer. That is they weigh their answer on the scale set by the teachers. As for the second question (b) all of the teachers said they do believe that rubrics play

role of a supervisor in absence of the real one. As rubrics guide the students to choose the right answer that, in time, brings the highest grade.

In the fourth major point the teachers were asked about the challenges of creating rubrics for their assessment. There were two sub-points, (a) whether it would be difficult and time consuming to create rubrics, (b) whether making rubrics would need specialized knowledge. In both cases they had five options to choose from i.e., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. In regards to the first statement, 5 out of 8 teachers said they strongly agree that making rubrics is a difficult and time consuming task. Other 3 teachers said that they agree with the statement. To answer to the second sub-point – 4 out of 8 said that they strongly agree that rubrics need specialized knowledge, while other 4 simply put the tick in simply ‘agree’.

Last but not the least, under number ‘5’ major point there was one option where teachers could write anything they thought the questionnaire did not address. Interestingly, one of the teachers made an exceptional comment. The respondent wrote a different observation about the use of rubrics, and that is, even though rubrics have positive impact on the students’ performance, they do impede the creativity of the students at the same time. In other words, obviously, sometimes, it is very likely that some students may have some better ideas to write on a topic, however, they do not have any option to put them on the paper but to stick to the criteria set for them by their teachers.

5.3 Analysis of the questionnaire for the Medhabikash Students

Another questionnaire survey was conducted to attain the view of the Medhabikash students to the use of rubrics and their suggestions about the use of it. The sample consisted of 56 students about half of them were girls. The respondents were asked to respond to the questionnaire containing five major parts. The first part was about their personal information – which included the information about their gender and their current status of education. There were two questions in the second part – asking them about what they know about rubrics and whether or not their teachers had used the rubrics to assess their performance. The third part which was the most important part was designed to elicit the information about the impact of rubrics. There were three questions – whether their use of rubrics helped their performance, whether rubrics could ensure what their teachers wanted from them, and whether rubrics guided them when there

was no teacher. The final part contained two statements – whether they thought rubrics must be included in all courses, and whether they thought rubrics should be mandatory for all educational institutions.

In the first major part – personal information- the respondents were to tick at the option they agree with. The respondents were to put tick in the second major parts where they had two options “Yes” and “NO” All students said they know about the use of rubrics when they had to answer whether they know about the use of rubrics. At the same time, all respondents answered “No” to answer that their teacher did not use rubrics to assess them. It is important to mention that all the respondents were given rubrics before they wrote the essay for the second time, and that was the first time they used rubrics to write an essay. Only after this experience they filled up the questionnaire.

Chart – 5

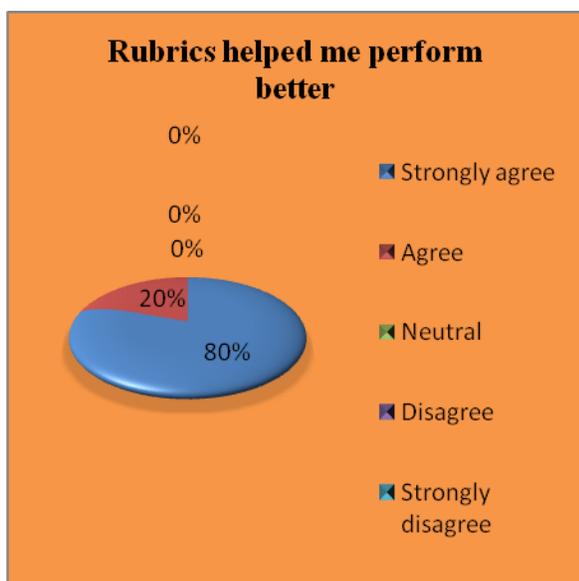
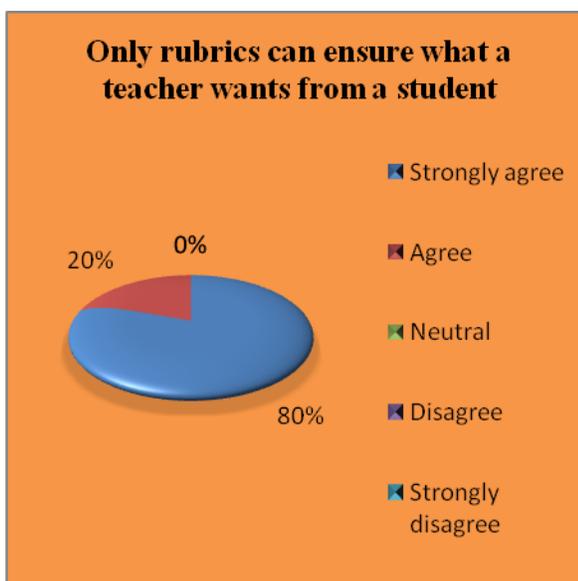


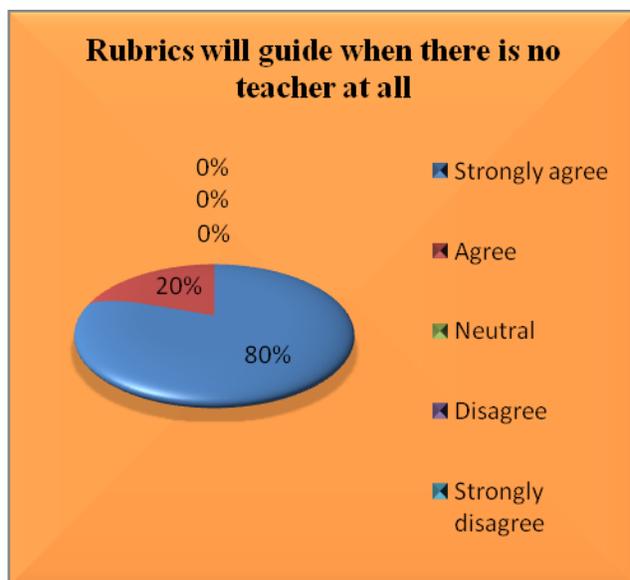
Chart – 6



In response to the third major part where there were three statements asking about the impact of rubrics – they had five options to choose from namely; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. 41 respondents ticked that they strongly agree and 15 ticked they simply agreed answering to the first statement – use of rubrics helped them perform better – which is 73% and 27% respectively (please see chart 5, result is shown in percentage). 39 participants strongly agreed and 17 participants agreed when responding to the second statement – rubrics

can exactly ensure what they want from them – which is 69 and 31% correspondingly (please see chart 6, result is shown in percentage).

Chart – 7



Answering to the last statement – rubrics would guide them when there is no teacher – 40 respondents ticked they strongly agreed and 16 respondents put tick on agree (please see chart 7, result is shown in percentage). In the major part four – participants were asked about their suggestions for the future use of rubrics. 42 participants marked strongly agree that rubrics must be included in all courses while 14 participants ticked agree (please see chart 8, result is shown in percentage).

Chart – 8

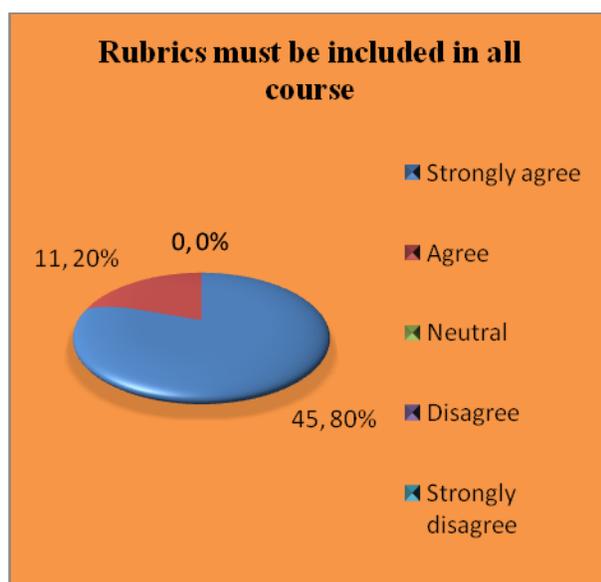
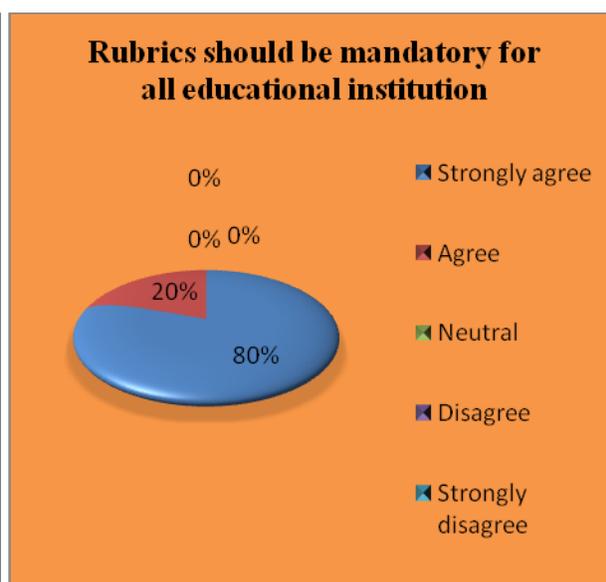


Chart – 9



As for the last statement about their suggestion – whether they thought rubrics should be mandatory for all educational institutions. 45 respondents, which is 80%, strongly agreed and 11 respondents, which is 20%, agreed (please see chart 5, result is shown in percentage). In the last major part, the participants had an option to express anything rather than what had already been mentioned, surprisingly they did not mention anything.

5.4 Analysis of the rubrics for the Medhabikash students to write an essay

The participants were given a topic to write an essay titled “Wealthy nations should share their wealth among poorer nations”. About a week later, the same group of students was given the same topic to write the same essay one more time to find out if any difference existed. In other words, this research wanted to see the impact of rubrics on their performance. To this end, a set of analytic rubrics were designed totaling the score 25 (please see the appendix - IV). The students had to score on five criteria having the same value i.e. thesis statement, body that included three paragraphs, conclusion, organization, and grammar. In each case the descriptors were arranged in order of their importance – from the descriptors carrying the highest mark 5 to the one carrying the lowest score 1. This research did not set a benchmark for “pass” or “fail”, since its aim was only to see the impact of rubrics on their performance.

5.5 Analyses of the essay score for Medhabikash students

Table 1: One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Before use of Rubics	46	14.33	2.700	.398
After use of Rubics	46	20.41	3.337	.492

The statistics of the essay scores suggest a significant increase in the average performance of the students as they used rubrics. Estimation of population parameter with this sample size will yield a std. error of the mean .492 in table 1, which means approximately 65% of the students' score will fall within the range of 19.92 to 20.91 (mean \pm 1 std error of mean) and approximately 95% of the student's score will fall within the range of 19.43 to 21.39 (mean \pm 2 std error of mean) in a Normal distribution. There was an increase in standard deviation of performance from the prior and to the post use of rubrics. The inherent implication in this regard would be that students without instruction had almost similar understanding of expressing a thought and a less variation in understanding the way an idea could be forwarded. However, after the rubrics were instructed, the students with in depth understanding of language had a relevant bolster that helped them express their skill. Nevertheless, students with less comprehension of language could not relate them, thereby, not been able to express the idea in a way desired leading them to a comparatively lower performance.

Table 2 : One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Before use of Rubrics	35.984	45	.000	14.326	13.52	15.13
After use of Rubrics	41.487	45	.000	20.413	19.42	21.41

To test our research objective whether the use of rubrics had significant impact in improving student's performance, we set the one sample test of independence in two tailed normal distribution and set our hypothesis that use of rubrics had no significant impact in improving student's performance; where we find that there is 0.00% chance that the null hypothesis would be true. This requires a clear explanation. Since in test of independence we set our Hypothesis, there is no impact of the prior sample on the later one i.e. the use of rubrics had no significant impact in improving student's performance. We set our 95% confidence interval and tested the hypothesis on both tailed. Our rejection region for the null hypothesis, therefore, is $< .025$ ($100-95\%= 5\%$ which is divided by 2) on either side of normal distribution. Since our test value is 0.00% which is much less than 2.5%, we reject our null hypothesis, meaning the use of rubrics HAS significant impact on the student's performance. Besides, there are 0.00% chances of cases when use of rubrics will have no such impact.

The result is quite obvious. Given the null hypothesis was rejected, our study has clearly developed the idea that use of rubrics has indeed an impact on student's performance provided they have the prior knowledge to grasp the concept of rubrics and that they are capable of expressing a certain thought in standard language. This result brings the students to a certain domain that helps them guide expressing a certain thought with the help of rubrics.

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	145.775 ^a	120	.055
Likelihood Ratio	89.139	120	.984
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.385	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	46		

a. 143 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

Chi-square test is the test of independence of the sample i.e.; whether two or more samples come from the same group. The Chi square table has been formulated to test the hypothesis that the students in the first group are different from those of the second group. From the table, it is obvious that Pearson chi square value is 145.775 which are quite higher than the value of 95% confidence interval. Hence, it is proved that the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the students in the first group are different from the students in the second group. The significance here is important, because if we select different group of students who did not appear in the first test but appeared in the second test with the instruction of rubrics, they will perform independently. In this regard the students will perform better with the rubrics regardless of the fact that they did not appear in the first test.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

6.1

Rubrics make the assessment process more valid and reliable; their real value lies in advancing the teaching and learning process. The best rubrics allow evaluators and teachers to draw on their professional knowledge and to use that professional knowledge in ways that the rating process does not fall victim to personal emotional variations or limitations of human information processing. Rubrics make the learning target clearer. If students know what the learning target is, they are better able to achieve it. Rubrics is likely to play a more effective role with a complex task, a task that takes more time, more thinking and carries more value than a simple one for the students.

Rubrics show instructional design and delivery. When teachers have carefully designed their expectations or students learning in the form of rubrics, they are better able to keep the main learning targets at the front and center as they choose instructional approaches and design learning environments that enable students to achieve their outcomes. Rubrics provide students with a tool for self-assessment and peer feedback. When students have the assessment criteria in hand as they are completing a task, they are better able to critique their own performance. A quality of a professional is the ability to accurately and insightfully assess one's own work. In addition, rubrics can also be used by classmates to give each other specific feedback on their performances.

As for the teachers, rubrics make the assessment process more accurate and fair. By referring to a common rubric in reviewing each student product or performance, a teacher is more likely to be consistent in his or her judgments. A rubric helps to fix judgments because it continually draws the reviewer's attention to each of the key criteria set earlier so that the teacher is less likely to vary her application of the criteria from student to student. Furthermore, when there are more than one rater, the consistency across these rates is likely to be higher when they are all drawing on the same detailed performance criteria. In addition, there is one more benefit and that is rubrics do not leave any chance for the students to complain about grades at semester's end.

Nevertheless, a serious concern with rubrics is it appears to be a difficult task to create them, especially writing the descriptions of performances at each level. With that in mind, rubrics should be developed for only the most important and complex assignment. Another challenge with rubrics is that if poorly designed they can actually reduce the learning process. The challenge then is to create a rubric that makes clear what is valued in the performance or product. On the other hand, the problem with having no rubric, or one that is so broad that it is meaningless, is to risk having an evaluation process that is based on individual prejudices. Therefore, a rubric should be neither too narrow nor too broad.

6.2 Further research

To conclude, the present investigation has presented important findings in terms of one University – BRAC University – and one subject – English - in Bangladesh context. The researcher proposes that further research should be done in different disciplines in different Universities and all educational institutions – specially the major public and private ones - whether and how far the use of rubrics affects the performance of students. Educators, policy makers and intelligentsia cannot afford to ignore the pedagogical significance of rubrics on student's performance that obviously leads to the overall performance of all the students of our country as a whole. Education ministry should take necessary steps to ensure that all the institutions use the rubrics in all courses across all fields – science, arts, commerce, etc.

This researcher strongly recommends that rubrics should be made mandatory in all the educational institutions throughout the country. Especially, in English all the four skills should be assessed based on the analytic rubrics. This is more justified considering our socio-economic condition where all the instructors are not equally qualified in remote areas all across the country. This is where rubrics can play a vital role to maintain equal standard. Policy makers should make sure that all the instructors have essential academic training to make their own rubrics.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire for university students

Disclaimer: This information will be used only for academic purposes and will not be disclosed to anybody or any organization.

I. Personal Information:

(Please tick)

Gender Male Female

Level: University

II. Concept about rubrics:

(Please tick)

a. Do you know about rubrics?

Yes No

b. Do your teachers use rubrics when they assess you?

Yes No

III. Impact of rubrics:

a. Only rubrics can exactly ensure what a teacher wants from a student:

(Please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

b. Use of rubrics produced better performance (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

c. Rubrics must be included in all courses: (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

d. Rubrics must be mandatory in all institutions: (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

IV. If there is anything else, please briefly write:

.....
.....

- b. Do you think rubrics will enhance the overall performance of students in an institution? How?

3. Role of rubrics:

- a. Do you think the use of rubrics encourage learners' autonomy? How?

- b. Do you think rubrics play the role of a teacher when there is no teacher at all? Why?

4. Challenges of using rubrics:

- a. Is it difficult and/or time consuming to make rubrics? Please explain?

- b. Do you think making rubrics needs specialized knowledge? Please explain?

5. Is there anything else that you think is important to know about the use of rubrics? Please write in brief.

Appendix III

Questionnaire for Medha – Bikash students

Disclaimer: This information will be used only for academic purposes and will not be disclosed to anybody or any organization.

V. Personal Information:

(Please tick)

Gender Male Female

Level: University

VI. Concept about rubrics:

(Please tick)

a. Do you know about rubrics?

Yes No

b. Do your teachers use rubrics when they assess you?

Yes No

VII. Impact of rubrics:

b. Use of rubrics helped me perform better:

(Please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

b. Only rubrics can exactly ensure what a teacher wants from a student: (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

c. Rubrics will guide me when there is no teacher: (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

VIII. Suggestion for rubrics:

(Please tick)

a. Rubrics must be included in all courses: (please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

c. Use of rubrics should be mandatory for all educational institutions:

(Please tick)

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

IX. If there is anything else, please briefly write:

.....
.....

Appendix IV

Analytic rubrics for writing essay:

Scores	5	3	2	1
Thesis	Thesis is precise, knowledgeable, and answers the prompt directly	Thesis is to a large extent clear, knowledgeable, and somehow answers the prompt	Thesis is not precise, and barely answers the prompt	Thesis is missing or not recognizable at all
Body (Three paragraphs)	Completely supports the thesis by providing concrete and relevant facts or example or details	To a large extent support the thesis by providing relevant facts or example or details	Barely support the thesis by providing relevant facts or example or details	Does not support the thesis at all
Conclusion	Precisely finishes the essay by rounding up the thesis or main supporting ideas	To a large extent finishes the essay by rounding up the thesis or main supporting ideas	Barely finishes the essay by rounding up the thesis or main supporting ideas	Does not finish the essay by rounding up the thesis or main supporting ideas at all
Organization	Cohesion and coherence properly maintained	Cohesion and coherence maintained to a large extent	Cohesion and coherence barely maintained	Cohesion and coherence not maintained at all
Grammar	No errors, no mistakes (regarding subject verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, etc.) at all	One or two mistakes, but no errors (regarding subject verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, etc.)	Contains some major errors and some major mistakes (regarding subject verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, etc.)	Full of errors and mistakes (regarding subject verb agreement, spelling, punctuation, etc.) that hamper the communication totally

Source: Montgomery 2000, 326.

Teacher's comment: