

IMPROVING STUDENT EVALUATION A STUDY OF FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract: This study examines assessment practices in educational institutions; we are focusing on the relation between assessed content and assessment methods. It seeks to identify common types of assessments and determine how effective they are in improving teaching and learning. The findings reveal that teachers primarily rely on summative assessments, with factors like age and professional training and shaping their approach. Older educators tend to stick to traditional summative methods, while younger teachers blend formative and summative techniques, signaling a shift toward a more balanced assessment model. The study emphasizes the importance of ongoing professional development in helping teachers adopt diverse and effective assessment strategies. By exploring how teacher characteristics and training influence assessment practices, this research provides valuable insights for shaping education policies and reforms. Ultimately, it promotes student-centered learning through flexible and inclusive assessment methods that address the needs of diverse learners.

Keywords: assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, teacher training, professional development, educational reform, student-centered learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment plays a crucial role in understanding students' knowledge and improving their learning experience by collecting data to track progress and refine teaching strategies (Smith et al., 2020). This study highlights the ongoing nature of assessment and the importance of student involvement in identifying learning styles, strengths, and needs to foster adaptability and recognize achievements. It emphasizes active engagement in the assessment process, promoting collaboration and participation (Johnson & Brown, 2018). More than just measuring progress, assessment drives learning, shapes teaching strategies, and motivates students (Jones, 2019). This research explores both formative and summative assessment methods, underscoring the value of pedagogical documentation in capturing students' overall development (Brown & Smith, 2021). Addressing a significant gap in research on primary school assessment practices, it aims to provide insights into regional approaches. This study examines teachers' perspectives on different assessment methods, exploring variations in attitudes based on factors such as age, experience, class size, and training in assessment strategies (Spahiu et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2022). By analyzing these differences, it offers a deeper understanding of the complexities of assessment and its impact on teaching and learning, advocating for necessary changes to enhance student performance.

Research Objectives: What are the differences in formative and summative assessment practices among primary school teachers? How does teacher age, years of service, class size, and training influence the selection of assessment techniques?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment is a cornerstone of education, playing a vital role in fostering student learning and achieving educational objectives. It encompasses various elements, including preparation, content delivery, exercises, and evaluation, all of which contribute to knowledge acquisition, skill development, and reflective thinking (Gojkov, 2003). However, assessment methods are often scrutinized for their limitations, such as prioritizing memorization over critical thinking and lacking objectivity (Gojkov, 2013). Guiding principles from works like *Assessment of Student Development: A Teacher's Guide* emphasize the integration of assessment into teaching strategies to support student progress (Havelka, Habib, & Baucal, 2003). These principles align with administrative guidelines that advocate for fairness, transparency, and clarity in assessment practices. Diaz-Rico (2012) underscores the critical role of assessment in shaping instruction, identifying student needs, and refining teaching strategies to enhance learning outcomes. Fair and accurate assessment is fundamental to student success. Educators must ensure clarity and equity in their evaluation methods while understanding the distinct roles of formative and summative assessments in supporting student growth (Sagor, 2008).

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is an ongoing and informal process that provides valuable feedback to both students and teachers, enabling adjustments to teaching strategies and identifying areas for improvement (McKay, 2006, p. 21). By continuously monitoring student performance, process, and progress, teachers can make data-driven instructional decisions and implement targeted interventions (McKay, 2006, p. 22). Observation, a key formative assessment

technique, allows educators to assess students in real-time without disrupting the learning environment (McKay, 2006, p. 22). Diaz-Rico (2012) highlights that skilled observation—whether formal or informal—enables teachers to tailor instruction to individual student needs while tracking progress across multiple curriculum areas (McKay, 2006, p. 22).

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment, on the other hand, evaluates student learning at the end of a specific instructional period, typically through internal or external exams, teacher evaluations, or standardized tests (McKay, 2006, p. 22). This approach is widely used in traditional education systems, often leading to grade-focused learning rather than deep knowledge acquisition. Students may adopt a strategic approach to earning marks rather than exploring concepts meaningfully, a concern highlighted by Biggs and Tang (2007) in *Teaching for Quality Learning*. Conducted in the final weeks of a semester or academic year, summative assessments can create significant anxiety, as grades are often final and impact future opportunities. Common summative assessment techniques include oral and written exams, essays, and standardized tests, which serve as key tools for measuring learning outcomes. However, excessive reliance on summative assessment can inadvertently prioritize performance over meaningful engagement with learning material.

We have to emphasize the importance of considering linguistic diversity in assessment practices, particularly in ESL classrooms. Incorporating effective language teaching strategies can enhance learning outcomes, ensuring assessments are inclusive and reflective of diverse student backgrounds.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire will be distributed to three primary schools to understand the types of assessments teachers use and their awareness of the importance of evaluating both what they teach and how they assess it. The data will be analyzed using SPSS and presented in tables for clarity. In addition to exploring assessment methods, the study will look at the overall teaching and assessment environment. Participants will include all English teachers from sixth to ninth grade, as well as other staff involved in assessment. The findings will help draw meaningful conclusions and provide practical recommendations for improving assessment strategies.

The methods employed in this research paper are as follows:

Descriptive Method: This method will be used to describe the content and problem of the research, providing an overview of the subject. **Modeling Method:** This method will unify theory and practice by applying theoretical concepts in practical situations. **Comparative Method:** This method will compare primary and secondary data related to the research, as well as independent variables. **Analytical Method:** Data obtained from surveys with teachers in elementary schools, will be analyzed to draw final conclusions. The surveying method involves conducting surveys of teachers in primary schools to verify the facts discussed in the paper. The primary school selected for the research sample are primary schools," which encompasses primary and lower secondary education levels.

Independent variables or factors are: Independent variables include educators' ages, years of administration, class size, participation in courses and trainings, attitudes toward extra trainings, and beliefs about the efficacy of summative versus formative assessment methods. These variables also encompass attitudes toward consolidating assessment methods.

Dependent variables consist of educators' attitudes toward the potential outcomes of using various assessment methods during teaching. These include attitudes toward student individual differences, monitoring student development and progress through formative assessment, and collaboration with colleagues, parents, and other institutions to enhance student outcomes through assessment.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH DATA

Primary school questionnaire results

Table 1: Demographic data: age
How old are you?

<i>How old are you?</i>	<i>Results</i>
20-25	2
26-30	9
31-40	10
40+	0

Source: Authors' Source

Based on the results on table 1, it can be seen that approximately half of the teachers are 26-30 years old and the other half 31-40, thus there is early-career and mid-career teaching staff.

Table 2: Demographic data: gender

<i>Gender (put an X)?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Female	14
Male	7

Source: Authors' Source

Regarding gender, Table 2 shows that 71% of teachers are female and 29% are male.

Table 3: Demographic Data on Qualifications

<i>What is your qualification?</i>	<i>Results</i>
BA degree/MA degree/PhD degree	20
Teaching Certification	1
Teaching Licensure	
Other	

Source: Authors' Source

Based on table nr 3, it can be seen that from 21 teachers, 20 have BA/MA/PhD degrees, only one with teaching certificate.

Table 4: Demographic data- Experience Part I

<i>How long have you been working as an English teacher/professor?</i>	<i>Results</i>
1 year	7
5 years	7
10 years	5
more than 10 years	2

Source: Authors' Source

Based on the table nr 4, 7 teachers have one year of teaching experience, another 7 have up to 5 years, 5 have between 5 and 10 years, and only 2 have more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Source: Authors' Source

Table 5: Demographic Data - Experience Part II

<i>What level of education do you teach in?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Primary	4
Lower secondary	7
Upper secondary	10
Other	

Source: Authors' Source

On this question, 4 teachers teach in primary schools, 7 in lower secondary and 10 in upper secondary.

Table 6: Assessment training form

<i>What form of training was this?</i>	<i>Results</i>
School based training	13
Seminar training	8
Online training	2
Other (explain)	
USAID	
GIZ	

Source: Authors' Source

Table 6 shows that 13 teachers have attended school-based training, 8 seminar training and 2 online training.

Table 7: Book/Material to curricular relevancy

<i>Do you believe that the books/materials you are using match the curricular requirements?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Yes	15
No	6
Other: please specify	

Source: Authors' Source

Table 7 shows that 15 teachers believe that the books and materials they use fulfill curriculum requirements, whereas 6 think that the materials used do not meet curriculum requirements.

Table 8: Common student assessment forms

<i>Please circle three forms you used most often in student assessment:</i>	<i>Results</i>
Oral testing;	19
Written tests from school textbooks;	9
Written tests downloaded from internet;	3
Written tests from web pages reserved for members;	5
Peer assessment;	2
Self-assessment;	2
Written essays;	7
Student presentations	13
Student posters;	2
Other	1

Source: Authors' Source

Table 8 reveals that 19 teachers use oral testing, 13 use student presentations, 9 use written tests from school textbooks, 7 use written essays, 5 use written tests taken from internet websites, 2 use peer assessment, self-assessment, and students' posters, and 1 teacher uses other forms.

Table 9: Common student assessment forms used by teachers

<i>What kind of assessment do you commonly use?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Formative	1
Summative	
Combined	18
Other: please specify	2

Source: Authors' Source

Based on Table 9, 18 teachers use a combination of assessment methods, 1 primarily uses formative assessment, and 2 use other methods.

Table 10: Results reliability

<i>How reliable are the results you obtain from testing students?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Fair	
Good	4
Very good	12
Excellent	3

Source: Authors' Source

According to Table 10, 63% of respondents consider their results very reliable., 21% consider their results to be of good reliability, and 16% perceive them as fully reliable.

Table 11: Factors affecting class assessment

<i>What factors can affect the class assessment?</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Class layout</i>	1
<i>Number of students in classes</i>	10
<i>Insufficient test groups</i>	1
<i>Cheating</i>	6
<i>Discrepancy between teaching and assessment</i>	1

Source: Authors' Source

According to Table 11, 10 teachers believe that class size affects assessment outcomes, 6 consider cheating a factor, and 3 selected other factors.

Table 22: Selecting assessment topics

<i>How do you choose assessment topics when designing a test?</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>I choose them myself</i>	6
<i>I ask students what they would like to be tested</i>	2
<i>I follow the course syllabus</i>	4
<i>I choose those which match the course objectives</i>	10
<i>I have another way. What is it please?</i>	

Source: Authors' Source

Based on table 12, 10 teachers select test topics based on course objectives, 6 choose them independently, 4 follow the syllabus, and 2 ask students for input.

Table 13: Frequency of Goal Setting for Consistent Assessment

<i>Do you set goals in developing consistent assessment?</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Always</i>	14
<i>Usually,</i>	4
<i>Sometimes</i>	2
<i>Rarely</i>	1
<i>Never</i>	
<i>If yes, please explain how you set goals?</i>	

Source: Authors' Source

Table 13 illustrates the frequency of goal setting for maintaining consistent assessment practices. It shows that 67% of teachers consistently set goals for assessment development, 19% do so usually, 9% sometimes, and 5% rarely.

Table 34: Importance of assessment for language learning

<i>Do you provide verbal instructions when students take tests?</i>	<i>Results</i>
<i>Always</i>	15
<i>Usually,</i>	1
<i>Sometimes</i>	5
<i>Not at all – they have written instructions</i>	

Source: Authors' Source

Table 14, indicates that **15 teachers always provide verbal instructions, 1 usually does, and 5 do so sometimes** when students take tests.

Table 45: Providing verbal instructions during tests.

<i>What is the role of success criteria when compiling tests?</i>	<i>Results</i>
Scale (1 = least important, 5 = most important)	
1	
2	
3	1
4	7
5	14

Source: Authors' Source

Table 15 indicates that 14 teachers rated success criteria as highly important (5), 7 rated it as 4, and only 1 gave it a 3, showing that most teachers consider success criteria essential when designing tests.

5. RESULTS

This study investigates the use of assessments in primary schools, focusing on both formative and summative methods. It evaluates how these methods align with the content being assessed and their effectiveness in enhancing teaching and learning outcomes.

Key findings include:

Prevalence of Summative Assessments: Summative assessments remain more commonly used, particularly by older teachers. This trend is largely influenced by experience and training, where traditional, end-of-term evaluations are the norm.

Adoption of Combined Assessment Methods by Younger Teachers: Younger educators, however, tend to use a combination of formative and summative assessments. This suggests a shift toward a more balanced approach that incorporates continuous feedback alongside final evaluations.

Importance of Professional Development: A critical insight from the study is the need for ongoing professional development. Teachers, especially those with more experience, would benefit from training that encourages a wider range of assessment techniques, supporting both teaching and learning enhancement.

Alignment of Assessment with Content: The study also points to a need for a better alignment between the content being taught and the methods of assessment. Ensuring that assessments are relevant to the curriculum can improve their effectiveness in measuring student progress.

6. DISCUSSION

This study explores the challenges Albanian students face when learning English as a foreign language, particularly the grammatical mistakes they make during the learning process. Recognizing these difficulties is essential for educators to develop targeted teaching strategies that address students' specific needs. The findings also contribute to the broader discussion on assessment practices in primary education. The research highlights the widespread use of traditional summative assessments, emphasizing the need for more diverse and student-centered evaluation methods. While older teachers often view traditional assessments as reliable measures of student performance, younger educators are more open to incorporating formative assessment techniques, signaling a shift toward more dynamic evaluation practices. The study further underscores the importance of continuous professional development to equip teachers with effective assessment strategies. Meaningful changes in assessment practices require collaboration among teachers, policymakers, and educational institutions to foster inclusive and student-focused learning environments.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to explore the assessment practices of primary school teachers, focusing on the methods used, the factors influencing these practices, and their alignment with educational goals. Key findings revealed that while traditional assessments remain common, there is a shift toward more formative and student-centered approaches. Teachers' practices were influenced by factors such as access to resources, professional development, and location, with urban schools benefiting more in these areas. The implications of these findings suggest a need for enhanced professional development, particularly in rural and resource-limited schools, to support diverse assessment methods. Moreover, aligning assessments with broader educational objectives, like critical thinking and creativity, is crucial. Future research should explore the impact of different assessment types on student outcomes and the role of technology in assessment. Overall, this study highlights the importance of supporting teachers in adopting effective assessment practices that enhance student learning and achievement.

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