



Achieving a Balanced Assessment Framework: The Role, Principles and Challenges of Integrating Formative and Summative Assessments

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Abstract

Assessment is essential to education because it offers important insights into student learning and the efficacy of instruction. Both formative and summative evaluations are included into a balanced assessment framework to improve learning outcomes while upholding accountability. Students gain a deeper comprehension of the material through formative assessments, which are intended to give ongoing feedback and direct instructional decisions. Conversely, summative assessments examine overall performance and act as indicators of accountability for students, instructors, and institutions. This paper explores the role, principles and challenges of integrating formative and summative assessments into a cohesive framework. Key principles such as alignment with learning objectives, making learning to be continuous and students centred are discussed. Furthermore, challenges including teacher capacity, resource constraints and high cost of assessment procedure are examined. The study highlights best practices for achieving a balanced approach, emphasizing the need for professional development, policy support, and innovative assessment strategies. Ultimately, an effective integration of formative and summative assessments fosters meaningful learning and provides a comprehensive evaluation of student progress.

Keywords: Assessment, Formative, Summative, Balanced framework.

1. Introduction

Educational assessment is process of evaluating and reporting learners' academic preparedness, learning progress, skill development, and educational requirements. It measures students' comprehension levels and how much they have learned from lessons or other study-related activities. It is essential to the teaching and learning process because it offers information on effectiveness and appropriateness of learning instruction. It helps to determine the extent to which students have understood the learning objectives, its feedback assists teachers to adjust teaching strategies to meet the needs of the learners and it facilitates learning by allowing students to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, it aids learning and give students feedback on their work without necessarily using it to determine grades. In order to better align previously set educational objectives with the difficulties faced by educational institutions, assessment helps educational policymakers re-evaluate them (Djedidi, 2018). Assessment can be formative or summative. Formative assessment is an ongoing assessment that teachers employ to inform judgments about the next steps in the learning process as well as to give students feedback on their progress. It serves as an evaluative tool as well

as a guide for students to understand their strengths and areas that need improvement (Morris et al., 2021). In order to better organise the teaching and learning process and raise student accomplishment, formative assessment involves both teachers and students providing feedback during instruction. It also stimulates students' self-regulated learning (Panadero et al., 2020). Formative assessment measures student progress but it can also assess your own progress as an instructor. Examples include Observations during in-class activities, home- work and quiz.

Summative assessments allow students to demonstrate their learning and serve as the final step in the teaching and learning process. According to Mogboh and Okoye (2019), it occurs at the end of the learning period and provide a general assessment of students' performance in relation to predetermined benchmarks or learning goals. The assessment that summaries the information and feedback from learning is called summative assessment. It takes place after the conclusion of a unit of teaching. It can offer data regarding the effectiveness of a course of study. They are typically high-stakes with the grade taking a greater weight than the unit's formative examinations. They are structured and include precise guidelines, standards, and grading criteria to gauge students' understanding. At the end of an educational unit of study, summative assessment determines its value. When developing summative test several factors have to be considered. First and foremost, a summative assessment needs to be valid. In other words, it needs to assess the learning objectives

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or standards that were covered during the unit. Secondly, a summative evaluation needs to be reliable, meaning that its findings should be consistent. In other words, even though it can be difficult in some areas, the assessment should be made to be as objective as possible. It can take various forms including mid-term examinations, a final examination, term papers, a final project, standardised tests, culminating projects, end-of-term papers based on the learning objectives and educational settings (Kariri et al., 2022)

2. Characteristics of formative and summative assessment assessments

Formative assessment is diagnostic in nature. It is an ongoing assessment that the teacher can use to identify the students' strength, weaknesses and learning gaps. It provides the teacher with precise information about the students' level of competency because several tests and quizzes are administered to the students. It is an assessment for learning and a combination of several approaches. According to Menéndez et al. (2019), the main characteristic of formative assessment is its focus on giving teachers and students ongoing feedback during the learning process. By determining areas of strength and weakness, it seeks to enhance learning outcomes and enable modifications to instructional strategies that promotes students' growth. It involves the use of integrated techniques and it is not graded or minimally graded unlike the summative assessment. It is also iterative in nature being an ongoing process integrated into daily classroom activities (Nishizuka, 2022)

Summative assessments are regarded as cumulative because it analyses a student's overall comprehension of the material over a predetermined period of time, often encompassing a wide range of topics, abilities, and concepts covered during that time. It is less frequent, usually high stake and occurs after teaching. According to Sah, (2021), summative assessment is conclusive in nature since students' knowledge and abilities are thoroughly evaluated at the end of a learning phase, usually at the completion of a unit, course, or academic period.

3. The Role of formative and Summative Assessment

Formative assessment encourages active participation of the students and helps to develop critical thinking in students. It cultivates a supportive learning environment that encourages student engagement and self-reflection (Ndoye, 2017). It fosters risk-taking and experimentation. The teacher administers many tests and eventually chooses the one in which the students perform best. It provides feedback to the students and teachers. Formative assessment feedback offers substantial advantages for student motivation. It enables the teacher to identify misconceptions in students' learning and appropriate correction will be done. It creates a low stress learning environment and motivates the students by emphasising on their academic growth.

On the other hand, summative assessment serves different purposes and has considerable implications for education. It offers a quick overview of students' overall performance with respect to preset benchmarks or learning goals (Mogboh & Okoye, 2019). Summative assessments are frequently used as the foundation for granting degrees, certificates, or diplomas. A student's final grade or certification has an impact on his/her academic advancement or qualification. Bazvand and Rasooli (2022) states that the results of summative assessments play a crucial role in deciding students' grades, certifications, or development at the end of a learning period. Testing students in order to formally recognise their competencies is known as assessment for qualification and certification. Summative assessments assist in determining if students can be promoted to the next stage of education or training. Summative assessment results have a variety of effects on policy decisions, instructional practices, and curricular planning. It enables students' performance to be compared against a standard or benchmark. Students are more motivated to interact with the content and give it their all when they are aware that their performance will be assessed and reported.

4. Principles for a Balanced Assessment Framework

Formative and summative assessments are combined in a balanced assessment framework to efficiently support and evaluate learning. It leads to comprehensive understanding of students' learning, improved teaching strategies and better decision-making for stakeholders. Summative assessments are used by administrators and legislators to ensure accountability, and formative data is used to assist classrooms or schools that require improvement. In order to ensure meaningful learning, accurate evaluation and fair measurement of students' progress, assessment must be guided by key principles. The role of assessment must be well defined and it must align with learning objectives and instructional goals. Learning objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. The mnemonic SMART—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound—can be used to describe the elements of a well-written learning objective (Skrbic & Burrows, 2014). Assessment should be continuous and integrated. Formative assessment gives continuous feedback into the learning process while summative assessment is used to validate learning outcomes at key milestones. Combining both forms of assessment makes it a continuous process. Continuous assessment entails the methodical and rigorous examination, reflection, and modification of learning strategies. It is an integral element of the teaching process and a crucial instrument in the effort to ensure the quality of education (Abejehu, 2016). It is an ongoing evaluation in the classroom (Samiullah & Anjum, 2017) and it entails evaluating learning strategies in a methodical and careful approach, as well as reflecting on and adjusting them. These data are used to help teachers

better understand their students, plan and oversee instruction, and create a positive classroom environment. It must also have holistic view of students' learning by using numerous assessment methods to capture all facets of student learning. These include examinations, projects, tests, peer reviews and quizzes. It also helps to capture a wide range of skills and knowledge already acquired by the students. Some students may be at a disadvantage if only one assessment method is used. Providing a variety of methods eases stress and creates more equitable chances for achievement. It assists students in monitoring their progress and making improvements over time. Learning should be students-centred by encouraging self-assessment and reflection which foster growth mindset. By shifting the focus of knowledge acquisition from teachers to students, student-centred learning places the task of information acquisition and interpretation on students, with teachers serving as facilitators (Kang & Keinonen, 2018). Student-centred learning emphasises students' active participation, engagement and independence in order to put them at the centre of the learning process. It replaces the conventional teacher-centred approach with one that emphasizes each student's unique needs, interests, and skills. It involves empowering students to guide their own education, proceed at their own speed and exhibit their knowledge in a way that genuinely demonstrates their comprehension. Assessment load must also be balanced. According to Tomas and Jessop (2019), assessment load is an overall measure of the burden that stakeholders bear during an evaluation practice, based on a variety of characteristics which include total number of assessments, scheduling, volume of summative and formative tasks. An over-assessment is heavy workload of assessments that are seen as more summative and having high stakes while an under-assessment is a low assessment load. By adhering to these guidelines, teachers can develop a balanced framework that promotes ongoing learning, fosters development and guarantees impartial and insightful assessment.

5. Challenges in Balancing Formative and Summative Assessments

The two forms of assessment serve different yet complementary purposes. Although all forms of assessment are necessary for a thorough analysis of students' learning, successfully combining them poses several difficulties. It is time consuming. While covering the curriculum and getting students ready for summative tests, teachers frequently find it difficult to administer frequent formative evaluations. Also, providing meaningful feedback for formative assessments requires additional time. Additional resources are needed to combine both assessments and may not always be easily accessible. These include software, platforms and gadgets that aid in the teaching, learning and evaluation processes. They are referred to as digital and technology tools. According to Hidayat et al., (2023), a lot of research has been done to demonstrate that educational technology is a

better formative assessment tool than paper-based and web-based formative assessment methods because technology is changing so quickly. Available technologies make it simple for teachers to administer weekly assessments to ascertain if the students understand the material being taught (Jahnke & Liebscher, 2020). Also, assessments using educational technology are interactive, provide students instant feedback on their understanding, and create an engaging and dynamic learning environment (Dishon & Gilead, 2020). The high cost of assessment procedure in terms of human resources and physical and digital material can be another challenge. The human resources needed for an effective assessment are the teachers, assessment specialist and technology support staff. The physical and digital materials are printed and digital worksheets for continuous assessment, textbooks and question banks. Teachers' proficiency in developing test items is essential to effective and efficient assessment. It is frequently disregarded and yet has a significant impact. It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of teachers having test construction skill and maintaining assessment quality given the central role that assessments play in educational systems. In the current day, training for teachers is a crucial prerequisite and component of all educational activities, including creating a conducive learning environment, developing and implementing curricula and conducting assessments (Zulfiqar, 2016)

6. Recommendations

- I. Teachers should define clear learning objectives and align assessments with curriculum standards
- II. Teachers should use variety of assessment methods in order to make data-driven and informed decisions about students' performance
- III. The challenges in balancing assessments should be adequately addressed by the policy makers
- IV. Educators should develop clear assessment guidelines for the teachers
- V. Encourage collaboration between teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

7. Conclusion

Educational assessment is a cornerstone of effective education systems. Formative and summative assessments must be strategically integrated to provide a balanced assessment framework that improves student learning and precisely gauges achievement. Educators must embrace defined assessment concepts, such as alignment with learning objectives, a variety of assessment techniques, and prompt feedback, in order to achieve an effective balance. Technology can help with this integration by making exams more accessible and offering data-driven insights. However, professional development, encouraging policies, and flexible evaluation techniques are needed to solve issues including time restraints and teacher readiness.

Conclusively, a balanced assessment system encourages a comprehensive educational experience that supports both academic success and growth. Teachers may foster an environment where students are inspired to learn, grow, and achieve by consistently improving assessment procedures.

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