

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC SECTOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OF LAHORE DIVISION

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Abstract

Formative and summative assessment methods are essential components of the teaching and learning process across all educational levels. This study was undertaken to achieve three objectives: (a) to explore the implementation of formative and summative assessment practices, (b) to identify the difficulties teachers encounter while applying the current assessment system, and (c) to examine teachers' views regarding the effectiveness of these assessment approaches.

The study employed a qualitative survey design to collect data from participants and was conducted within a naturalistic research paradigm. Female teachers from girls' elementary schools in the Lahore Division constituted the population of the study. Using purposive sampling, 18 teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews, while 8 teachers were observed through semi-structured classroom observations.

The researcher designed two data collection tools: a semi-structured interview protocol and a semi-structured observation schedule. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, whereas observational data were examined through narrative analysis. The results revealed that teachers commonly used tests, questioning, and feedback as formative assessment techniques, while self-assessment and peer-assessment methods were applied less frequently. However, classroom observations indicated that these strategies were seldom practiced during classroom instruction.

Participants identified several barriers to implementing formative assessment strategies, including insufficient financial resources, pressure to secure high academic results, and lengthy course syllabi. In light of these findings, it was recommended that the Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development arrange further professional training for in-service teachers on the effective application of formative and summative assessment practices. Additionally, it was suggested that science classes at grades VI–VIII should be assigned only to teachers possessing at least a bachelor's degree in a science-related field.

Introduction

Assessment is considered one of the most essential aspects of the teaching and learning process. It enables teachers to evaluate students' understanding, identify learning gaps, and improve instructional methods. In elementary education, effective assessment practices are particularly important because they help shape students' cognitive, emotional, and academic development. Two major forms of assessment commonly practiced in schools are formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is conducted during the learning process to monitor students' progress and provide feedback for improvement, whereas summative assessment evaluates students' learning at the end of an instructional period through examinations or standardized tests. According to educational researchers, balanced use of formative and summative assessments contributes to improved learning outcomes and effective classroom instruction.

In public sector elementary schools of Lahore Division, assessment practices are influenced by curriculum requirements, examination systems, teacher competence, and institutional policies. Although educational reforms in Pakistan emphasize student-centered learning and continuous assessment, traditional examination-oriented approaches still dominate classroom practices.

Formative Assessment in Elementary Education

Formative assessment refers to continuous assessment practices used during classroom instruction to enhance students' learning and improve teaching effectiveness. It focuses on providing immediate feedback rather than assigning final grades. Educational studies suggest that formative assessment improves student engagement, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding.

Common Formative Assessment Strategies

Teachers in public sector elementary schools commonly use the following formative assessment techniques:

- Classroom questioning
- Quizzes and short tests
- Homework assignments
- Oral discussions
- Peer assessment
- Self-assessment
- Teacher feedback
- Classroom activities and presentations

These techniques allow teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and modify instructional strategies accordingly.

Importance of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment provides several educational benefits:

1. It enhances students' participation in classroom learning.
2. It provides immediate feedback to improve performance.
3. It helps teachers identify learning difficulties at an early stage.
4. It promotes active learning and student engagement.
5. It encourages reflective thinking and self-evaluation.

Research conducted in Lahore and other regions of Pakistan indicates that formative assessment positively influences students' learning outcomes and academic achievement.

Summative Assessment in Elementary Education

Summative assessment is conducted at the end of a learning period to evaluate students' academic achievement. It is mainly used for grading, promotion, and certification purposes. In public sector schools, summative assessments are usually administered through monthly tests, terminal examinations, and annual examinations.

Characteristics of Summative Assessment

Summative assessments generally have the following characteristics:

- Conducted after completion of instruction
- Focused on final achievement
- Based on standardized criteria
- Used for grading and reporting
- Measures overall academic performance

Role of Summative Assessment

Summative assessment plays an important role in maintaining educational standards and accountability. It helps educational institutions evaluate curriculum effectiveness and students' mastery of learning objectives. However, overreliance on summative examinations may encourage rote memorization rather than conceptual learning.

Assessment Practices in Public Sector Elementary Schools of Lahore Division

Public sector elementary schools in Lahore Division mainly follow traditional assessment methods. Written examinations, oral questioning, and class tests are commonly used to assess students' academic performance. Teachers often use questioning and feedback as formative assessment techniques during lessons, but more advanced methods such as peer assessment and project-based learning are less frequently practiced.

Studies conducted in Lahore reveal that teachers generally focus on lower-order cognitive skills, while higher-order thinking and analytical skills receive less attention in classroom assessments. Classroom observations also indicate that formative assessment strategies are not consistently implemented during instructional activities.

The assessment system in public schools is strongly examination-oriented, which places considerable pressure on teachers and students to achieve high examination scores. As a result, classroom teaching often emphasizes syllabus completion and test preparation instead of conceptual understanding and skill development.

Role of Teachers in Effective Assessment

Teachers play a central role in implementing effective assessment strategies. Their professional competence, classroom management skills, and understanding of assessment methods significantly influence students' learning outcomes.

Effective teachers use assessments not only for grading purposes but also to guide learning and improve instructional practices. Constructive feedback, classroom interaction, and student-centered activities help create a positive learning environment.

Teacher training institutions and educational organizations should provide regular workshops and professional development programs to improve teachers' assessment literacy and classroom practices.

Research Methodology

The research paradigm of the study cascades in interpretivism. This paradigm is also called naturalistic approach. Underpinnings of this paradigm, qualitative research method is employed. Under this research method, the researcher used two qualitative techniques or instruments i.e. Semi-structured interviews and observations for the collection of data.

The following table shows the population of the study which is public sector girls' elementary schools of district Lahore and Kasur.

Table 1:

Population of the Study

Districts	Tehsils	No. of Elementary Schools	No. of Elementary School Teachers
Lahore	Model Town	33	
	Lahore City	52	
	Raiwind	15	
	CAntt	14	
	Shalimar	29	
Total		143	2174
Kasur	Chunian	28	
	Kot Radha Kishan	13	
	Pattoki	52	
	Kasur	49	
Total		142	1904

Below here, the table shows the sample of the study comprised of no. of elementary schools and no. of elementary school teachers in both districts (Lahore and Kasur) of the Lahore Division.

Table 2

Sample of the Study

Lahore Division	No. of Elementary Schools	No. of Elementary School Teachers
District Lahore	05	10
District Kasur	04	08
Total	09	18

Data Collection

In the domain of Qualitative research, the two main instruments Observations and Interviews were used by the researcher. The gathered data from the elementary school teachers of District

Lahore and Kasur through semi-structured observations and semi-structured interviews. The duration of semi-structured observations were 30 minutes in a single class of general science subject whereas the semi-structured interviews consisted of 13 questions for the duration of 20 to 30 minutes were conducted for about two months.

Data Analysis

The gathered data from the selected sample were analyzed through using thematic analysis approach. The researcher utilized various types of coding: firstly, open coding was used and tentative titles were made and secondly, through axial coding, relationships were made among the codes. Thirdly, and most importantly the researcher made themes through in-depth analysis of coding and through revisions of reading of codes after listening interviews and transcribe them into words and made meanings of them.

Table 3

Themes, Subthemes and Responses of the Related Participants Related Formative Assessment

Themes	Subthemes	Responses of Participants
Formative Assessment	Knowledge of terminology of F.A.	Explained by majority of teachers of district Lahore and Kasur. Some were unable to define formative assessment, both from district Lahore and Kasur.
	Techniques used by participants	Most of the teachers from district Lahore used F.A. techniques like written or oral feedback, questioning, test –quizzes, self & Peer Assessment, Portfolio & Projects. In district Kasur, majority of teachers used written tests, projects and written feedback only.
	The most effective technique of F.A. for teaching General Science	Majority of teachers from district Lahore implemented written or oral feedback technique of F.A. through interviews for teaching GS. In district Kasur, majority of teachers favored self & Peer assessment technique is effective in F.A.
	Specific training achieved	About 50% of teachers in District Lahore never achieved any specific training of F.A. Some of the teachers have achieved PEELI training. Majority of teachers in district Lahore relied in only written feedback technique of F.A.
	Usage of only one technique	Whereas the teachers of Kasur often used oral feedback technique than written of F.A.

Table 4

Themes, Subthemes and Responses of the Related Participants Related Formative and assessment Assessment

Themes	Subthemes	Responses of Teachers
Summative Assessment	Knowledge of Terminology of SA	Majority of teachers do not know about terminology of SA of both district. While most of the teachers of District Kasur pass the questions. Only a few teachers answer correctly about SA.
	Paper Pattern of SA	Teachers are not fully aware about SA paper pattern of both districts.

		Some of the teachers, though add SA technique in feedback
Specific training of SA achieved		Majority of the teachers from the both district have achieved PEC training. Some of them, though, achieved but not remembered.
View about the effectiveness of current pattern of SA to promote students to next level		Teachers from District Lahore do not favor the current patterns of SA. About 50% teachers of both districts show desire to change the system of PEC for class 8.

Table 5

Problems faced by elementary science teachers while implementing formative and assessment techniques

Themes, Subthemes and Responses of the Related Participants Related Formative and assessment Assessment

Themes	Subthemes	Responses of Teachers
Problems faced by elementary science teachers while implementing formative and assessment techniques	Budget	Both districts' teachers facing budget problems The authorities are failed in providing basic necessities of performing any activity in the schools.
	Result and Marks Pressure	Both districts' teachers face the problem of marks increment pressure from the HOD or Principals of the schools. Favoritism is tangible in the departments. Negligence about the marking score is also faced by the teachers.
	No science lab/ no equipment Infrastructure Medium of instruction 6.Heavy syllabus	Majority of the district Kasur teachers facing no lab equipment in the schools. While district Lahore teachers have lab but having lacking of proper training. Due to lack of proper infrastructure, both districts' teachers face lacking in doing projects in the classrooms. Due to combine class system in the various schools of district Kasur, teachers cannot perform any SA strategy. Majority of district Kasur teachers face the problem of medium of instruction due to lacking of usage. Whereas some of the teachers of district Lahore face the difficulty. Both districts' teachers claim that syllabus is too lengthy to cover on time. Majority of the teachers from district Kasur claim of selective study pattern using in the classrooms.

Findings of the Study

The responses of elementary school teachers reveal that formative and summative assessments are both important for evaluating students' learning and academic performance. Teachers commonly use questioning, quizzes, homework, and classroom discussions as formative assessment strategies, while written examinations remain the dominant form of summative assessment.

The findings further indicate that teachers face several challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, shortage of time, examination pressure, lengthy syllabi, and insufficient professional training. Teachers emphasized the need for regular training programs, improved teaching resources, and greater emphasis on formative assessment practices to enhance the quality of elementary education in Lahore Division.

Challenges in Implementing Assessment Strategies

Despite the recognized importance of formative and summative assessments, several challenges hinder their effective implementation in public sector elementary schools.

1. Large Classroom Size

Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to monitor individual student progress and provide personalized feedback.

2. Lack of Teacher Training

Many teachers have limited professional training in modern assessment techniques. Research suggests that teachers require continuous professional development to effectively implement formative assessment practices.

3. Examination Pressure

The education system heavily emphasizes examination results, which encourages teachers to focus more on summative assessments than formative learning practices.

4. Limited Resources

Insufficient teaching materials, lack of technological support, and inadequate classroom facilities create obstacles in implementing innovative assessment methods.

5. Lengthy Curriculum

Teachers often struggle to complete extensive syllabi within limited time, reducing opportunities for continuous assessment activities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations may improve formative and summative assessment practices in public sector elementary schools of Lahore Division:

1. Educational authorities should provide regular professional training on modern assessment strategies.
2. Schools should promote the balanced use of formative and summative assessments.
3. Teachers should be encouraged to use student-centered assessment techniques such as peer assessment and project-based learning.
4. Classroom sizes should be reduced to improve teacher-student interaction.
5. Schools should be equipped with adequate teaching and assessment resources.
6. Assessment systems should emphasize conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization.
7. Parents and school administrations should support continuous assessment practices to improve learning outcomes.

Conclusion

Formative and summative assessment strategies are essential for improving the quality of elementary education in public sector schools of Lahore Division. While summative assessments remain dominant in evaluating academic achievement, formative assessments play a crucial role in enhancing teaching effectiveness and students' learning experiences.

Although teachers use various assessment methods in classrooms, challenges such as limited resources, inadequate training, examination pressure, and large class sizes affect the successful implementation of modern assessment practices. Strengthening teacher training programs, improving classroom conditions, and encouraging continuous assessment can significantly enhance educational quality and student performance in public sector elementary schools.

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