

Investigating the Perceptions of School Teachers on Classroom Assessments and Practices of Primary Education at Parwan Province, Afghanistan

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Abstract

Classroom assessment plays a crucial role in shaping teaching practices and improving learning outcomes in primary education. This study investigates how school teachers perceive and implement assessment practices in classrooms at Parwan province. The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of school teachers on classroom assessment and practices in primary Education in Parwan province, Afghanistan. A mixed-method of research (qualitative and quantitative) was employed to collect the data of the study. A total of 40 school teachers were randomly selected to participate in this study. A questionnaire consisting of 10 items based on Likert-scale was designed to gather the participants' perceptions. In addition, five school teachers were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview in order to collect the qualitative data of the study. The findings of the study indicate that most teachers view assessment as a tool to support learning rather than merely assign grades. Teachers favored creating their own assessment tools, gave timely feedback, and integrated peer and self-assessment. Moreover, participants valued diverse assessment strategies such as classroom questioning and end-of-unit exams. However, challenges such as large class sizes, lack of training, limited resources, and the absence of standard rubrics were commonly reported. Overall, the study concludes that while teachers demonstrate a positive attitude towards using assessment to support learning, there is a strong need for targeted professional development, standardized tools, and greater resource availability to enhance assessment effectiveness in primary education.

Keywords: Assessment, Education, Practices, school, Classroom and Perceptions.

Introduction

The goal of education is to influence students' behavior in a constructive and meaningful way. However, the extent and quality of such changes are strongly shaped by assessment practices (Wong, 2007). Assessment is therefore considered a crucial component of the

educational process, occupying a significant portion of instructional time (MacBeath, Galton, & Steward, 2004; Zolfaghari & Ashraf, 2015). It is estimated that assessment-related activities account for between 10% and 50% of classroom time (Stiggins, 1992). Beyond measuring learning outcomes, assessment enables teachers to reflect on their instructional practices, enhance teaching quality, increase student motivation, and identify learners' needs (Brookhart, 1999a; Martinello et al., 2011).

Educational assessment provides the foundation for drawing conclusions about students' learning and development. It is a systematic process of collecting and using evidence about students' knowledge and skills to improve teaching and learning. In classroom contexts, assessment serves as a continuous source of information that supports instructional decision-making and helps monitor students' progress. It also plays a vital role in identifying learning difficulties and misconceptions (Monteiro et al., 2021). Black and Wiliam (1998) define assessment as any activity undertaken by teachers and students to gather feedback that can be used to modify teaching and learning activities.

Classroom assessment, in particular, is central to the teaching-learning process, as it includes all forms of evaluation conducted by teachers to support student development (Brookhart & McMillan, 2020). Teachers use various assessment practices, including formative, summative, and alternative assessments, to evaluate student learning and inform instructional decisions (Brown, 2017; Rivera-Lacia, 2019). These practices include techniques such as written tests, classroom observations, questioning, feedback, and self- or peer-assessment.

Despite its importance, assessment at the primary school level often faces challenges related to how it is understood and implemented by teachers. Teachers' perceptions of assessment significantly influence their classroom practices. In many cases, there is a gap between teachers' beliefs about assessment and their actual implementation in classrooms, which can negatively affect the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. This issue highlights the need to explore how teachers perceive assessment and how these perceptions shape their practices in real classroom settings.

Understanding teachers' perceptions and practices is essential because assessment is a fundamental element of the teaching-learning process, particularly in primary education. If assessment is misunderstood or improperly implemented, it may lead to ineffective teaching practices, unfair evaluation, and reduced student motivation and performance. Therefore, examining teachers' perceptions and actual practices can help identify gaps, inform professional development programs, and align assessment practices with educational goals. This, in turn, can support policymakers, school leaders, and educators in improving the quality of education.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how primary school teachers perceive and implement classroom assessment. Specifically, it seeks to examine teachers' perceptions of assessment and to identify the assessment practices commonly used in primary school classrooms. In line with these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: What are the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding assessment and practices in education? What assessment practices do primary school teachers implement in their classrooms? Furthermore, the study tests the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions of classroom assessment and practices.

In order to determine whether the learning objectives are being reached, assessments are generally regarded as the foundation of any educational system. Almost all assessments function as individual evaluation systems, despite the fact that they take many different forms. Their goals are to evaluate student performance over a range of demographics, collect feedback, and measure the impact of the teaching-learning process (Pinkus, 2009). Assessment is essentially a teacher's ability to consider the individual success levels of each student. As a result, the purpose of assessment is to help teachers understand students' knowledge and how they use it, not only to evaluate students' exam scores (Brookhart, 2001). The distinguishing features of the entire process, however, continue to be what and how to assess. Many educators find the teaching-learning process tedious, particularly in the early stages of their employment (Gardner, Pyke, Belcheir, & Schrader, 2007).

The degree to which language teachers really use their assessment abilities to assessment practices differs from the degree to which they believe they do. Language teachers may often fail to translate their theoretical assessment knowledge into actual classroom practice, according to a number of recent studies on English language assessment conducted around the world (Crusan, Plakans & Gebril, 2016). Similar findings have also been found in studies carried out in the Turkish context, where the majority of researchers concluded that teachers struggled to put their knowledge into practice in addition to finding a relatively low level of assessment literacy on their part (Hatipoğlu, 2015). For instructors of all subject areas, teacher training programs must therefore strive for a deeper comprehension of evaluation at both the knowledge and practical levels. Here, a related issue for researchers and teacher trainers alike is locating sufficient evidence of comprehension.

Seven competencies are listed by Stiggins (1999) as being relevant in most situations. According to him, teachers should work on their ability to clearly explain the purpose of an assessment, clearly explain what is expected of them, apply appropriate assessment techniques, create and practice high-quality assessment exercises and carefully thought-out marking criteria, steer clear of offensive assessment practices that are typically motivated by prejudice and bigotry, and use assessment as an instructional intervention. While secondary instructors typically choose an objective format, primary teachers typically favor informal evaluations like questions and observations in addition to regular paper-pencil tests (Suah & Ong, 2012).

The assessment problem is still the most crucial in the delicate field of education. Determining the type and scope of learners' processes and development is an integrated process (Bell, 2001). The teaching and learning process depends heavily on assessment. Malcolm (2007) asserted that assessment is both a part of and a means of directing instruction. Schafer (1993) asserted that teachers evaluate students for between thirty and fifty percent of their class time. Poor assessment practices can therefore lead to poor decision-making in the context of teaching and learning. Teachers can identify the discrepancy between what was taught and what students are actually learning thanks to assessment.

Material and Method

The current study explores the perceptions of school teachers on classroom assessment and practices in primary education. A mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research was carried out to collect the data.

Participants

The target population of this study consisted of 50 primary school teachers, and sample size determination was guided by the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Therefore, 40 school teachers in primary education of Parwan province were randomly selected to participate in this study. The participants included of 30 males and 10 females with different ages and years of teaching experiences.

Research Design and Instrument

Since this is a mixed-method study, a Likert Scale questionnaire was designed by (Cheema, Siddiqui, & Massod, 2022) was used in order to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire consists of 10 statements with options from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For collecting qualitative data of the study, a semi-structured interview consists of five open-ended questions was used.

Data Collection

The quantitative data of this research was collected from 20 school teachers in primary education of Parwan province. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants individually to respond the close ended statements within 20 minutes. The distribution was done randomly. The researcher has explained some concepts of questionnaire and the purpose of the research to the participants in order to respond honestly. After 15 minutes, questionnaires were collected from the participants. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interview with five teachers out of the 20 participants. The participants responded to the questions which is included their comments, suggestions and some challenges they face in assessment practices.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics by SPSS²⁷ in order to find out the mean, SD, and percentages of each item. The participants' responses coded, calculated and analyzed accordingly. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically using open, axial, and selective coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Open coding generated initial codes from the transcripts. Axial coding grouped these codes into broader categories. Selective coding refined these categories into five final themes: assessment types and implementation, challenges, feedback methods, training, and teachers' suggestions.

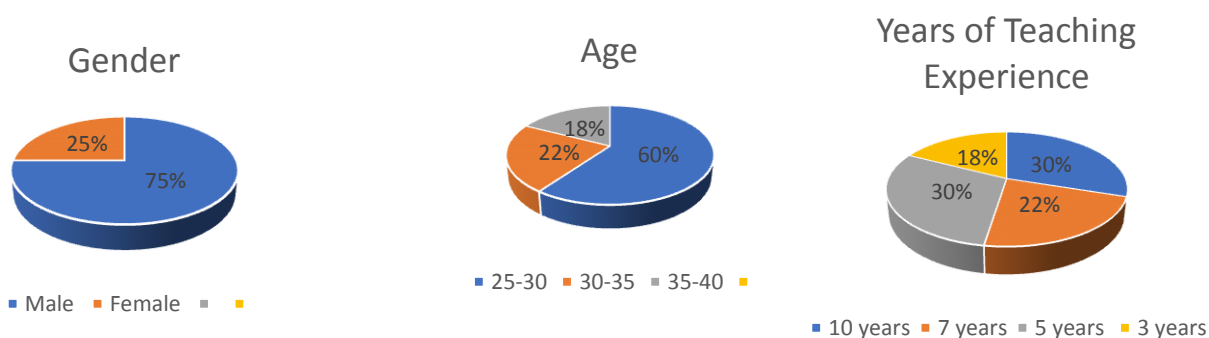
Demographic Information .

Table 1.

Age	Gender		No.	Percentage
25-30	M= 20	F=4	24	60%
30-35	M=5	F=4	9	22.5%
35-40	M=5	F=2	7	17.5%
Total	30	10	40	100%

Teaching Experience	Gender		No.	Percentage
10 years	M= 10	F=2	12	30%
7 years	M=5	F=4	9	22.5
5 years	M=10	F=2	12	30%
3 years	M=5	F=2	7	17.5%
Total	30	10	40	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 40 participants (30 males, 10 females). The age distribution shows that most participants (60%) were aged 25–30 years, followed by 22.5% aged 30–35, and 17.5% aged 35–40, indicating a relatively young teaching population. Regarding teaching experience, 30% had 10 years, 30% had 5 years, 22.5% had 7 years, and 17.5% had 3 years, reflecting a mix of early-career and experienced teachers.



Quantitative Findings

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of School Teachers’ Perceptions on Classroom Assessments							
Statements	No.		Mean SD		Percentage		
	M	F	Mean	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Assessment results should be used more for student development than for assigning grades.	30	10	2.80	0.523	85%	10%	5%
Teachers should have the autonomy to design their own assessment tools.	30	10	2.85	0.489	90%	5%	5%

I believe assessment can reduce learning inequalities when used effectively	30	10	2.85	0.489	90%	5%	5%
I write true/false questions to assess my students	30	10	2.85	0.489	90%	5%	5%

In order to answer the first research question, this data was found and analyzed. First statement in the questionnaire (Assessment results should be used more for student development than for assigning grades) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.80, SD=0.523) from 20 participants 85% of them agreed, 10% of them were neutral and 5% of them disagreed. Second statement in the questionnaire (Teachers should have the autonomy to design their own assessment tools) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.85, SD=0.489) from 20 participants 90% of them agreed, 5% were neutral and 5% of them disagreed. Third statement in the questionnaire (I believe assessment can reduce learning inequalities when used effectively) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.85, SD=0.489) from 20 participants 90% of them agreed, 5% were neutral and 5% of them disagreed. Fourth statement in the questionnaire (I write true/false questions to assess my students) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.85, SD=0.489) from 20 participants 90% of them agreed, 5% were neutral and 5% of them disagreed.

Tabel 3.

Descriptive Statistics of School Teachers' Perceptions on Classroom Assessments

Statements	No.		Mean SD		Percentage		
	M	F	Mean	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I write fill in the blank questions to assess my students.	30	10	2.60	0.681	70%	20%	10%
I write multiple choice questions to assess my students.	30	10	2.55	0.759	70%	15%	15%
I write essay type questions to assess my students	30	10	2.80	0.523	85%	10%	5%

Fifth statement in the questionnaire (I write fill in the blank questions to assess my students) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.60, SD=0.681) from 20 participants 70% of them agreed, 20% of them were neutral and 10% of them disagreed. Sixth statement in the questionnaire (I write multiple choice questions to assess my students) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.55, SD=0.759) from 20 participants 70% of them agreed, 15% were neutral and 15% of them disagreed. Seventh statement in the questionnaire (I write essay type questions to assess my students) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.80, SD=0.523) from 20 participants 85% of them agreed, 10% were neutral and 5% of them disagreed.

Table 4.**Descriptive Statistics of School Teachers' Perceptions on Classroom Assessments**

Statements	No.		Mean SD		Percentage		
	M	F	Mean	SD	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I always use objective type tests to assess my students	30	10	2.60	0.754	75%	10%	15%
I provide timely and constructive feedback to my students based on assessment results	30	10	2.85	0.489	90%	5%	5%
I involve students in the assessment process (e.g., peer or self-assessment).	30	10	2.65	0.671	75%	15%	15%

Eighth statement in the questionnaire (I always use objective type tests to assess my students) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.60, SD=0.754) from 20 participants 75% of them agreed, 10% of them were neutral and 15% of them disagreed. Ninth statement in the questionnaire (I provide timely and constructive feedback to my students based on assessment results) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.85, SD=0.489) from 20 participants 90% of them agreed, 5% were neutral and 5% of them disagreed. Tenth statement in the questionnaire (I involve students in the assessment process like peer or self-assessment) results in descriptive statistics the mean score (M=2.65, SD=0.671) from 20 participants 75% of them agreed, 15% were neutral and 10% of them disagreed.

T- Test Findings

Table 5. Independent sample t Test between male and female teachers' perceptions teachers on classroom assessments and practices.

Statements	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence interval
								Lower	Upper
Development vs grades	0.42	.52	-1.08	38	.287	-0.30	0.28	-0.87	0.27
Autonomy	0.36	.55	-0.74	38	.465	-0.20	0.27	-0.74	0.34
Reduce inequalities	0.51	.48	-1.90	38	.065	-0.53	0.28	-1.10	0.04
True/false questions	0.33	.57	-1.87	38	.070	-0.57	0.30	-1.18	0.05
Fill-in-the-blank	2.84	.10	-4.73	38	.000	-1.20	0.25	-1.70	-0.70

Multiple choice	0.64	.43	-1.52	38	.137	-0.40	0.26	-0.93	0.13
Essay questions	3.12	.08	-2.02	38	.050	-0.47	0.23	-0.94	0.00
Objective tests	5.91	.02	-3.24	38	.003	-0.90	0.28	-1.47	-0.33
Feedback	0.71	.40	-1.17	38	.250	-0.33	0.28	-0.90	0.24
Student involvement	0.28	.60	-0.76	38	.452	-0.20	0.26	-0.73	0.33

According to the results of the independent sample t-test on the ten statements of the questionnaire, the analysis indicated a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions regarding the statement, "Fill-in-the-blank" ($p < .001$). Similarly, significant differences were found for "Objective tests" ($p = .003$) and "Essay questions" ($p = .050$). Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers' perceptions on these three assessment items. It can be concluded that gender plays a meaningful role in shaping attitudes toward specific assessment formats within primary education classrooms.

Specifically, the data suggest that male and female teachers hold differing views on the use of fill-in-the-blank questions, objective tests, and essay questions. This divergence may reflect deeper pedagogical beliefs and assessment priorities, with female teachers potentially preferring alternative assessment methods or holding different standards for these formats, while male teachers may view them more favorably. The significant differences point to the need for further discussion and professional development when designing or revising assessment practices to ensure they reflect a balance of teacher perspectives and student learning goals.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In order to answer the second research question which explores how school teachers implement assessment practices, the challenges they face, and the ways they provide feedback to students five out of twenty school teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews based on purposive sampling criteria (teaching experience, grade level, and willingness to participate). These five participants were asked five open-ended questions, developed by the researcher based on a review of relevant literature (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Earl, 2013; Hattie & Timperley, 2007), to share their perceptions on assessment practices.

Qualitative Findings

Types of Assessments and Ways of Implementation

The first interview question looked to identify types of assessment and the ways of implementation that teachers use. The participants noted that formative and summative assessments are common way to assess students and written tests as well. To implement formative assessment, they design some activities, daily questions regarding the lesson and peer assessment. To implement summative assessment, they design end of unit tests. One of the participants said: "I design my tests based on the level of the students in order to check the understanding of the students easily".

Challenges in Assessment

Second interview questions looked for challenges when the teachers implement assessment practices. Participants noted that having large classes with more than 50

students in one class is a problematic issue. Lack of trainings and workshop in case of assessment practices can be the considered problem. One of the participants in Parwan province said “lack of equipment and standard rubrics are big challenges in our school”.

Ways of Giving Feedback

Third interview question looked for giving feedback after assessment. Participants noted that verbal or oral feedback is common in our school. But one participant said written feedback is beneficial for recognizing the mistakes and he said that “*I use from written feedback for my students*”. Some participants stated that meeting weaker students individually can be the useful way for giving feedback.

Training Programs and Workshops

Most of participants said the we haven’t had sufficient training programs and workshops regarding assessment practices yet. One of participants claimed that we in our district had a training workshop regarding assessment and teaching but it was just for specific teachers not all teachers.

Teacher’s Suggestions

Participants had some suggestions regarding assessment practices in order to make it better.

1. Provide more training programs and workshops
2. Provide well-structured and standardized rubrics
3. Technological supports (audiovisual tools)
4. Encourage peer-assessment
5. Parental involvement

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and practices of school teachers in Parwan province regarding assessment in primary education. Findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources offer a clear understanding of how teachers implement assessment, the challenges they face, and their attitudes toward assessment practices.

The quantitative results indicate that most teachers use assessment primarily as a means to support student learning rather than simply to assign grades. They favor designing their own assessment tools and believe that effective assessment can help close learning gaps. These findings are similar with the work of Shepard (2000), who argued that assessment should be used as a tool for learning, not just for accountability. Teachers commonly reported using true/false and essay questions, while multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank formats were used less frequently. Although some teachers employed objective tests, their views on the usefulness of such tests varied mirroring Stiggins’ (2002) observation that teacher beliefs about assessment formats influence their classroom practices.

Most teachers stated that they provide timely and constructive feedback to students, and some also reported incorporating peer and self-assessment. This is similar with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), who emphasized the value of formative feedback in supporting student self-regulation and learning progress.

The qualitative data reinforces findings and adds further detail. Teachers reported using both formative and summative assessments, including written tests, end-of-unit exams, and daily questioning. This approach was stated by Darling-Hammond (2003), who

clarified the importance of integrating diverse assessment methods into classroom practice to promote deeper learning. Formative practices mentioned by participants also included peer assessment and classroom activities, which help students engage with content more actively.

However, several challenges were also identified. Teachers noted that large class sizes, lack of training opportunities, and the absence of standardized rubrics and assessment tools hinder effective assessment. These issues reflect findings from Guskey (2003), who emphasized that teacher development is critical to successful assessment implementation. One participant also cited limited resources and technology as key barriers to high-quality assessment. This supports the concerns raised by Volante and Fazio (2007), who argued that context-specific challenges often limit the effectiveness of assessment reform in under-resourced schools.

In terms of feedback, most teachers rely on oral responses due to time constraints, but some mentioned the benefits of written feedback in helping students understand and correct their mistakes. Additionally, meeting weaker students individually was seen as a valuable approach. These strategies are supported by Black and Wiliam (1998), who showed that detailed, individualized feedback can significantly improve learning outcomes.

Finally, the lack of ongoing professional development in assessment was a recurring theme in both data sets. Teachers strongly recommended more workshops, clear and standardized rubrics, greater use of educational technology, and increased peer-assessment opportunities to improve assessment practices. Moreover, several teachers mentioned the importance of parental involvement, which supports Brookhart's (1999) finding that family engagement can enhance assessment effectiveness and student learning.

Conclusion

This study investigated how primary school teachers in Parwan Province, Afghanistan perceive and implement classroom assessment practices. The findings reveal a critical gap between positive, learning-oriented perceptions and actual practices due to systemic constraints including large classes exceeding 50 students, absent standardized rubrics, lack of professional development, and limited technological resources. This perception-practice gap is not merely a training issue but reflects deeper systemic failures, challenging the assumption that teacher training alone can solve assessment problems without infrastructure investment. Theoretically, this study supports Black and Wiliam's (1998) formative assessment model and Hattie and Timperley's (2007) feedback framework while concentrating resource scarcity as a critical boundary condition requiring contextual adaptation in conflict-affected settings. Practically, the findings call for sustained, school-based professional development accompanied by material support including standardized rubrics, manageable class sizes, and basic technology. The main contribution of this study is documenting the "implementation dip" in an under-researched context: primary education in Afghanistan. Several limitations must be acknowledged, including the small sample size (N=40), single-province focus, and gender imbalance (30 male, 10 female). Future research should include multiple provinces, larger and more balanced samples, and student perspectives. In conclusion, positive teacher perceptions of formative assessment

are necessary but insufficient without systemic investment in assessment infrastructure; otherwise, the perception-practice gap will persist, ultimately undermining student learning outcomes.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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