

# THE EFFECTS OF THE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Bearing in mind that the formative assessment of the students' achievements in the Republic of Kosovo, as a new paradigm in assessment, is implemented relatively late in relation to other Balkan countries, this paper aims to present the effects of the use of the formative assessment in Kosovo's primary schools on students' motivation.

This research has a qualitative paradigm and descriptive design, i.e. it analyses whether the pedagogical documentation regarding the relation of the formative assessment and students' motivation is in line with the theoretical knowledge. In the same time, the research has a quantitative paradigm, i.e. it analyses the teachers' attitudes towards the effects of the formative assessment on students' motivation. The obtained data are processed with the frequency analysis from the SPSS, the descriptive statistics for each variable (M = mean, Mo = Mode and SD = standard deviation), and the value of the statistics (Spearman's rho correlation). The research indicates that, so far, the pedagogical documentation that refers to the connection between the formative assessment and the students' motivation in Kosovo is in correlation with the theoretical insights worldwide, and that teachers' have positive attitudes about this relation.

*Key words: formative assessment, students' motivation, Kosovo.*

## 1. Introduction

Assessment for learning is widely applied by education systems around the world because of its effectiveness. It helps teachers understand where the students are in relation to the learning outcomes and provide them with feedback on areas of improvement to achieve the specified learning outcomes. The main purpose of the formative assessment is to build students' knowledge, values, and attitudes. The advantage of this assessment is that teachers are able to help their students orient themselves towards the educational goals and learning objectives and achieve the competences foreseen in the subject curriculum. Another advantage of the formative assessment is that, based on the difficulties students may encounter at work, teachers may plan to eliminate obstacles and to use more appropriate concreting tools, thereby keeping the students engaged, constantly active and on track. It particularly gives motivational effects on improving students' learning. According to Boston (2003) formative assessment is a common feature of classroom practice. It represents a range of more and less formal techniques that teachers can use to gain an understanding of what the students in their class have and have not mastered yet and adjust their instruction in response. William (2011) describes that the formative assessment role is to collect and interpret evidence about the current level of students' learning, and to use this information to tailor teaching and learning

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to students' needs and thereby strengthen further learning. Thus, it can be said that it is a process of assessment carried out by teachers to help students improve their performance, gain new knowledge and apply their skills in daily life and during the teaching process. It is also aimed at modifying teaching activities in favor of improving the performance of teachers and students' achievement. Diggelen et al. (2016) and Voinea (2018) also find out that formative assessment, as an educational element has enriched teaching and learning in general as well as assisted educational institutions and policies in theory and practice. The importance of formative assessment as a means to raise the quality of students' performances is pointed out by Menéndez et al. (2019), finding that the formative assessment appears to be a good strategy for enhancing collaboration between students during the learning process, and by Gustafson et al. (2019), stating that the formative assessment has effects on early reading development, and that it enhances critical reading skills and language comprehension skills. It is known as assessment which increases the motivation of students to learn because it makes them feel co-owners of knowledge and learning and this, ultimately, leads to increased learning outcomes.

## **2. Review of the literature in the field**

Broadly speaking, the motivation can be defined as Myers (1996: 6) said as a need or desire that serves to energize behavior and to direct it towards a goal. The motivation is extremely important in the teaching and learning process, thus many researchers have recognized and acknowledged the positive correlation between the formative assessment and the students' motivation. Black & Wiliam (1998) state that the formative assessment is an essential part of the teaching practice and its implementation enhances the students' motivation. They argue that students should be involved in the learning outcomes, in order to acquire motivation to learn. Further, according to them, teachers and students should discuss the assessment and the learning outcomes and as a result students become aware of their own cognition. Said & Al-Homoud (2004) indicate that the motivation can determine interest in a subject, habits, and success and define students' motivation as "willingness, need, and desire to participate in, and be successful in the learning process". Stiggins (2005) confirms the positive connection of the formative assessment and the students' motivation, and points out the role of teachers in helping students to enhance their motivation. As Black and Wiliam (1998), he also indicates that teachers should include students in the assessment, thus students will take responsibility for their own learning. Komljanic & Marsh (2008) conclude that formative assessment both in Hong Kong and Slovenia has a significant impact on students' motivation. Cauley & McMillan (2010) confirm this positive connection between the formative assessment and the motivation and provide several techniques for formative assessment that can enhance the students' motivation. They also find out that there is a relation between the feedback and the motivation. According to McMillan et al. (2010) the students' motivation is extremely important and it refers to the students' activities, orientation towards the goal and self-efficacy. They reveal that the formative assessment can contribute to the students' motivation. Weurlander et al. (2012) exploit interviews with students and show that students perceive the formative assessment as external motivator that encourages them to study more. Viering (2016) believes that formative assessment helps students in developing motivation and persistence because formative assessment shows students that ability can be improved and achieving the goals is not something that they cannot reach. Saoud (2016) suggests that if the formative assessment is practiced in the classroom, the students are highly motivated to learn. Moss & Brookhart (2019) argue that the formative assessment can act as strong toll to increase the students' intrinsic motivation.

On the other hand, there are researches that find out that the formative assessment do not affect the students' motivation, as those of Balan & Jönsson (2018) who argue that there is no

correlation between the clearness of the assessment criteria and the students' motivation, and of Simon (2019) who recognizes the relevance of the formative assessment, and especially the role of the feedback in promotion of the students' motivation. Unfortunately, his research shows that there is no significant relation between formative assessment and the students' motivation.

However, from the above it can be seen that most of the researches support the view that there is a strong relation between the formative assessment and the students' motivation.

### **3. Methodology of the research**

This research has a qualitative paradigm, i.e. it analyses the pedagogical documents connected with the effects of the formative assessment on the students' motivation in the Republic of Kosovo and brings them into relation with the theoretical insights. In the same time, the research has a quantitative paradigm, i.e. it analyzes the teachers' attitudes towards the connection of the formative assessment and the students' motivation.

Therefore a general hypothesis is established: the pedagogical documentation and the teachers' attitudes towards the existence of correlation between the formative assessment and students' motivation in the Republic of Kosovo is in line with the positive theoretical insights worldwide. In order to prove this hypothesis, an analysis of the pedagogical documentation in the primary education referring to this topic has been done, and a questionnaire has been conducted. The population consists of primary education teachers as the most responsible for the implementation of the formative assessment and direct barriers of these changes. The sample consists of 101 teachers from the following primary schools in Kosovo: "Metush Krasniqi" – Rogacica, "Asllan Thaci" – Karaqeve, "Deshmoret e Kombit" – Kamenica, "Fan Noli" – Kamenica, "Dituria" – Shkabaj, "Zenel Hajdini" – Dolen Lupch, "Rexhep Mala" – Topanica, "Rilindja" – Madzunaj, "Pavarësia" – Prishtina. The questionnaire is constructed using the Likert scale which examines the degree of conformity with the claims, ranging from strongly disagreeing to fully agreeing. The questionnaire consists of 3 claims which are connected to the general hypothesis. Teachers' perspectives on these three claims are examined using the frequency analysis from the SPSS, the descriptive statistics for each variable ( $M$  = mean and  $SD$  = standard deviation), and the value of the statistics (Spearman's correlation). The presentation of important data for each claim is done using tables and graphs.

## **4. Results and discussion**

### **4.1. Qualitative analysis of pedagogical documentation**

Given that now in Kosovo, according to the Curriculum, students are assessed in relation to the learning outcomes and competences, it can be understood that for effective assessment, teachers must have continuous and continuous interaction with their students. Good and timely assessment planning would certainly be a sufficient condition for a reliable and valid assessment.

Formative assessment in the Republic of Kosovo has officially begun to be applied in the 2016/2017 school year. Piloting the implementation of the new Kosovo Curriculum started in the 2013/2014 school year, initially in 10 schools, continuing in the 2014/2015 school year, in 82 schools. The piloting is completed in the 2015/2016 school year.

Following the revision of the Curriculum, pilot schools (excluding vocational schools) were leading schools in the implementation of new subject curricula under the new Kosovo Curriculum. In the school year 2016/2017 the implementation of the new Kosovo Curriculum has started in all schools of Kosovo (excluding vocational schools), initially with the elementary grades for each pre-university level and the implementation of the new

Curriculum will include all classes in the school year 2020/2021, with the implementation of new subject curricula.

The formative assessment system in Kosovo is regulated by the Law of pre-university education, and in particular by Curriculum framework of pre-university education of the Republic of Kosovo and the Administrative instruction, AI/08 (2016). Curriculum framework is the basic document that regulates the pre-university education. It describes the goals and principles of the pre-university education, the students' key competencies, curriculum areas and courses, as well as the types of assessment and assessment of students' achievements. According to the Curriculum framework, there are six competencies that have to be achieved by students: competence for communication, thinking, learning, and life, work and environment, as well as personal and civic competence. These competencies enable students to achieve quality and inclusive education and are necessary both in students' professional and personal development. Competences are defined as broad abilities to apply knowledge, skills, attitudes, routines, values, and emotions independently, practically and meaningfully. The purpose of the Administrative instruction is to specify the parameters of the students' assessment which is connected with the abovementioned competencies. According to the Guide for teachers for curriculum implementation in schools (2016), the formative assessment will be focused on obtaining evidence of learning outcomes/learning objectives and criteria for success, supporting the peer and self-assessment based on criteria for success, providing feedback on students' performances based on criteria for success, testing and reporting on students' achievements progress based on criteria for success. Thus, all stated before is inevitably connected with the students' motivation because students have to be motivated to achieve all the competencies listed in the Curriculum framework.

Further, the Administrative instruction, though indirectly, stresses out the students' motivation and its connection with the formative assessment in three chapters. Chapter 3.4.1. states that formative assessment should be implemented by engaging students in classrooms, homework, quizzes, debates, presentations, essays, tests, portfolios, projects, cabinet work and other teachers' and students' defined activities. Therefore, it is obvious that students should be highly motivated to participate in such activities and that the teachers' encouragement in enhancing their motivation is inevitable. The effects of the students' engagement and the use of various techniques on increasing the students' motivation are in accordance with the findings of Stiggins (2005) and Cauley & McMillan (2010). Chapter 3.4.3. points the significance of the constructive feedback that will guide students' progress and this indicates the power of the feedback when it is direct to the promotion of the students' motivation, which is in correlation with the findings of Simon (2019). Chapter 3.4.4. indicates that the information obtained from this type of assessment is used to organize guidance to support students according to their needs, potentials and interests and this claim support the claim that the formative assessment is directed towards the promotion of the students' motivation. From the above, it can be concluded that the pedagogical documentation on the impact that formative assessment has on students' motivation is in positive correlation with the theoretical insights, i.e. it stresses the significance that the formative assessment has on the students' motivation.

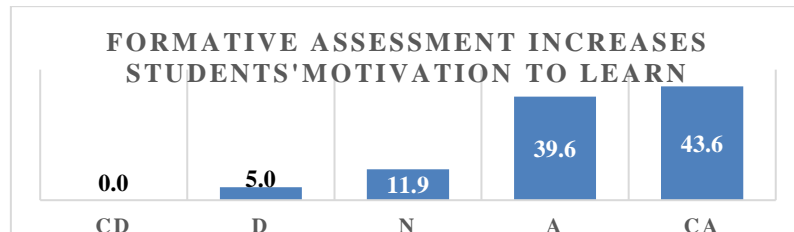
## 4.2. Quantitative analysis of teachers' attitudes

Hypothesis: Formative assessment increases students' motivation for learning.

**Claim 1:** Formative assessment increases students' motivation to learn.

Attitude	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
No. of teachers	0	5	12	40	44

Table 1: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 1

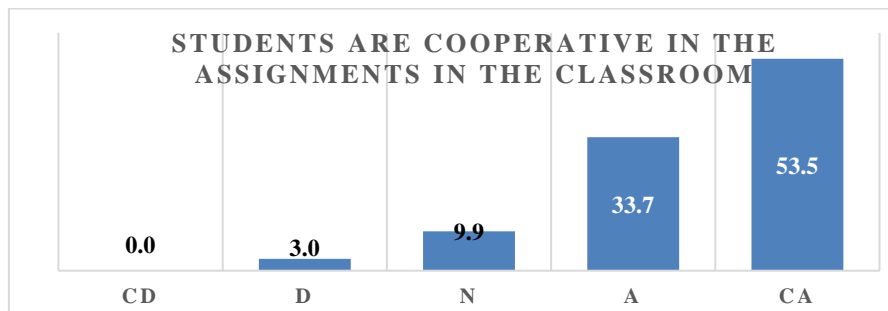


Graph 1: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 1

**Claim 2:** Students are cooperative in the assignments in the classroom.

Attitude	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
No. of teachers		3	10	34	54

Table 2: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 2

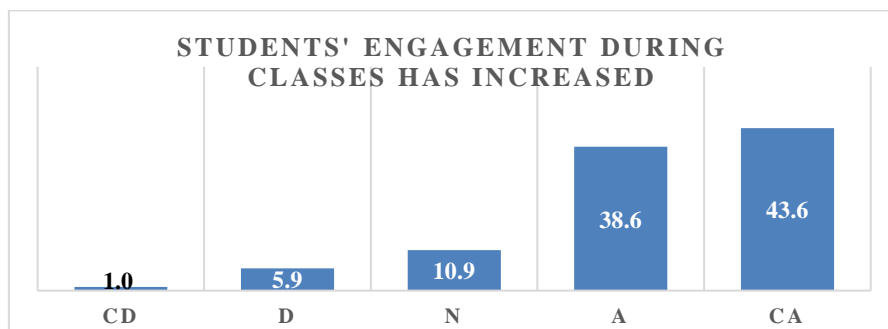


Graph 2: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 2

**Claim 3:** Students' engagement during classes has increased.

Attitude	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
No. of teachers	1	6	11	39	44

Table 3: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 3



Graph 3: Frequency analysis – Teachers' attitudes on claim 3

From the frequency analysis, the following statistical data can be observed. Both graphical and tabular presentations of the data show that the opinion of the teachers is very positive regarding the effect of the formative assessment on the students' motivation to learn. The results from the first claim show that 43.6% of the teachers completely agree with the claim that the formative assessment increases the students' motivation to learn and that 39.6. 0% of the teachers agree with the claim. This means that 83.2% of the teachers think that applying formative assessment motivates students to learn. However, there are number of teachers who think that formative assessment does not affect students' motivation to learn, though none of the teachers chooses the completely disagree alternative. Thus, only 5.0% of the teachers have a negative opinion on the impact the formative assessment has on the students' motivation, and it can be said that this result is negligible.

As for the second claim, it is clear that students' collaboration is of utmost importance because this collaboration motivates students to achieve better results. Thus, 53.5% of the teachers completely agree with the claim and 33.7% of the teachers agree, which means that 87.2% of the teachers have recognized and acknowledged the relevance of the collaboration on the students' motivation, i.e. have positive attitudes regarding this claim. Only 4.0% of the teachers completely disagree with this claim.

In relation to the third claim, it is obvious that there is a connection between the students' classroom engagement and the motivation, primarily because if the students are motivated to learn, the classroom engagement will undoubtedly increase. 82.2% of the teachers recognize the relevance of the connection between the motivation and increase of the students' engagement, i.e. 38.6% completely agree and 43.6% agree with this claim. Only 5.9% of the teachers have negative opinion, i.e. 1.0% of the teachers completely disagree while 6.9% disagree with the claim. These statistics show that even the insecurity is expressed by very few teachers or only by 10.9%.

Therefore, the three claims that emerge regarding the special hypothesis *Formative assessment increases students' motivation for learning* are consistent as 84.2% of the teachers have positive and only 5.3% of the teachers have negative attitudes.

		<b>Statistics</b>		
		Formative assessment increases students' motivation to learn	Students are cooperative in the assignments in the classroom	Students' engagement during classes has increased
N	Valid	101	101	101
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		4,22	4,38	4,18
Median		4,00	5,00	4,00
Mode		5	5	5
Std. Deviation		,844	,786	,921
Minimum		2	2	1
Maximum		5	5	5

Table 4: Statistics

From the statistics in table 4, it can be seen that the mean of the chosen alternatives for all three claims is above 4, indicating that the absolute majority of the teachers agree and fully agree with the claims. These results are also justified by the values of the standard deviation in the table and they show that the teachers support the formative assessment as assessment that motivates students to achieve better results.

Regarding the positive correlation among motivation, cooperation and the students' engagement, correlation analysis was performed according to Spearman's rho and the results are as follows:

**Correlations**

			Formative assessment increases students' motivation to learn	Students are cooperative in the assignments in the classroom	Students' engagement during classes has increased
Spearman's rho	Formative assessment increases students' motivation to learn	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,062	,236*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,541	,018
		N	101	101	101
	Students are cooperative in the assignments in the classroom	Correlation Coefficient	,062	1,000	,233*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,541	.	,019
		N	101	101	101
	Students' engagement during classes has increased	Correlation Coefficient	,236*	,233*	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,018	,019	.
		N	101	101	101

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5: Correlations

From the results in table 5 it is obvious that there is statistically meaningful correlation between the first and the third claim and between the second and the third claim. Thus, the results show that the students' engagement and the increased motivation in positive correlation (Spearman's rho, 236 \*). The students cooperation is also in good correlation with the increased students' engagement in the classroom (Spearman's rho, 233 \*). However, it seems that the students' cooperation is less relevant in increasing the students' motivation to learn (.062)

Thus, the results from the qualitative and the quantitative analysis are in favor of the acceptance of the general hypothesis. These results support the theoretical findings on the positive correlation between the formative assessment and students' motivation.

## 5. Limitations of the research

Bearing in mind that the formative assessment in the Republic of Kosovo is implemented relatively late, that there is no researches on the topic and that the pedagogical documentation in Kosovo contains only basic information for the formative assessment, it should be point out that this research has its own limitations. Thus, in order to obtain more detailed picture for the formative assessment in Kosovo, the full implementation of formative assessment at all levels of pre-university education is not only a proposal, but is considered to be an urgent need to improve the pedagogical approach to students and the teaching process as a whole. This means that various aspects of the formative assessment should be examined and surely all the teachers in pre-university education in Kosovo should be included.

## 6. Conclusion

Though this research gives valuable data of the effects that formative assessment has on students' motivation, yet it can be said that the formative assessment adheres to all the principles envisaged for sustainable assessment. Thus, full implementation of formative assessment means adapting classical assessment methods to contemporary methods and in no

way removing other forms of assessment. It should be point out that though several organizations, as the KEC (Kosovo education center), tried to contribute to teachers' training for formative assessment and have prepared several teacher training programs on practical and creative teaching and assessment for teachers in the Republic of Kosovo, yet, this is not enough and it refers to the initial phase of implementing the formative assessment in Kosovo. The changes are inevitable, still, they should be made without underestimating the educational values created for decades plus, given that the latter forms of learning have achieved significant results that are also demonstrated by Kosovo students with respectable results around the world. It will take a long time until tangible and positive results are achieved and pedagogical conditions for analyzing results and applying them to everyday learning are created.

Some of the most basic requirements, regarding the formative assessment, are the following: teachers' training to understand the value of this type of assessment, ongoing monitoring and mentoring of students' progress and development, creating technical opportunities for conducting such assessment in all schools, creating preconditions for accountability regarding the implementation and comparison of results before and after teacher training. At first glance it may seem that these conditions are already met, but in everyday practice there is a need for intervention. There is often a perception among teachers that, despite the changes being implemented by educational structures in Kosovo, the differences are as much to say. The reality is that teachers do not find it easy to change their teaching practices in both pedagogical and practical approaches. A process where responsibility and accountability will be installed in relation to the implementation of conceptual changes first in the planning of the learning process, then in the practical part of the lessons, and the whole process to be guided and monitored by expert groups will certainly to bring her positive results. Given that formative assessment is a process that prepares students to understand science rather than just measuring and comparing learning outcomes, it is understood that a more professional and serious pedagogical approach should be taken by teachers when implementing formative assessment.

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