



CHECKPOINTS OF LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS ON FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives, practices, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of elementary teachers on formative assessment in selected public schools in Tagum City, Davao del Norte. There were ten elementary teachers selected using purposive sampling technique: five participated in in-depth interviews, and five participated in focus group discussions. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that teachers' practices included monitoring students' continuous progress through daily checks, observations, exit tickets, and performance tracking; guiding instructional decisions by adjusting teaching strategies, identifying learning gaps, and planning interventions; supporting student growth by providing timely feedback, encouraging reflection, and building learner confidence; personalizing learning strategies based on students' individual needs, pace, and abilities; and promoting interactive engagement through collaborative activities, peer assessment, and real-life connections. Teachers experienced challenges such as dealing with diverse and varied learning abilities, managing environmental constraints like large class sizes and limited resources, and experiencing time and workload pressures related to multiple responsibilities and assessment demands. As coping mechanisms, teachers applied instructional adjustments and flexibility, utilized collaborative and peer support, practiced reflective and emotional self-regulation, and innovated and adapted available resources to meet classroom needs. Furthermore, teachers shared insights highlighting the importance of providing feedback and tracking progress to enhance student motivation, using data-informed instruction to guide teaching decisions, aligning classroom assessment with school-wide performance goals, and implementing targeted instructional support based on assessment data. The results of this study are significant to teachers, learners, school administrators, Department of Education officials, and future researchers, as they provide a deeper understanding of formative assessment practices and contribute to the development of effective strategies that support responsive, data-driven, and student-centered learning environments.

KEYWORDS: formative assessment, elementary teachers, qualitative research, thematic analysis, Tagum City, Philippines

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment is a vital tool for supporting student learning by monitoring progress, identifying misconceptions, and guiding instruction (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Wiliam, 2013). Despite its benefits, teachers face challenges such as large class sizes, diverse learning needs, limited resources, and exam-oriented practices, which make consistent and individualized support difficult.

Globally, implementing formative assessment remains challenging. In countries like China and Vietnam, teachers struggle to apply it effectively due to exam-driven systems and limited capacity to provide meaningful feedback (Xiang et al., 2020; Phuong et al., 2025), highlighting the importance of teacher readiness and skills.

In the Philippines, formative assessment is emphasized in DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 as a process of gathering and using evidence to guide instruction. It includes strategies such as feedback, peer assessment, and self-assessment to improve learning (Cagasan et al., 2016).

However, challenges persist, especially in resource-limited areas like Sulu, where limited materials, training, and contextual factors affect implementation (Hassan, 2021). Although training improves outcomes, consistent institutional support remains necessary (Majid et al., 2021).

Locally in Tagum City, formative assessment is often practiced in basic forms, such as quizzes and questioning, with limited alignment to objectives. This reflects a gap between policy and classroom practice.

Despite its importance, existing studies focus mainly on outcomes or training and give limited attention to teachers' perspectives and real classroom experiences (Cagasan et al., 2016; Xiang et al., 2020).

This study addresses this gap by examining how teachers understand, implement, and reflect on formative assessment in their daily teaching.

The findings are significant for improving teacher training, instructional practices, and policy support, helping strengthen formative assessment implementation in schools.

Research Questions

1. What practices do elementary teachers use in implementing formative assessment in their classrooms?
2. What challenges do elementary teachers face in the implementation of formative assessment?
3. How do elementary teachers cope with the challenges encountered in implementing formative assessment?
4. What perspectives do elementary teachers hold regarding the role of formative assessment in supporting student learning?



Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in the Assessment for Learning (AfL) Framework by Black and Wiliam (1998), which views assessment as an integral part of teaching that guides instruction rather than simply measuring learning. It emphasizes continuous feedback, evidence gathering, and instructional adjustment as part of daily classroom practice (Wolterinck, 2024; Taras, 2010).

The AfL framework is used in this study to examine how teachers implement and reflect on formative assessment, including how they gather and interpret evidence of learning to guide instruction. It also helps identify gaps between teachers' understanding and actual practices, emphasizing their role in improving teaching and learning.

The study is also guided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which explains how teachers' actions are influenced by their attitudes, social expectations, and perceived ability to implement formative assessment. This framework helps explain differences in how consistently teachers apply assessment strategies (Wolterinck, 2024).

In this study, TPB is applied to explore how teachers' beliefs, motivations, and contextual challenges—such as time constraints and institutional demands—affect their use of formative assessment in daily teaching.

Additionally, Schön's Reflective Practice Theory (1983) highlights the importance of reflection in improving teaching. It distinguishes between reflection during teaching and after teaching, enabling continuous improvement of instructional practices (Machost & Stains, 2023).

This theory helps examine how teachers reflect on their assessment practices, adjust strategies, and use feedback to enhance learning outcomes, emphasizing reflection as a key component of professional growth.

Overall, these three theories collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how teachers implement, reflect on, and improve formative assessment. They highlight the role of beliefs, reflection, and instructional decisions in shaping effective teaching and meaningful student learning.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Understanding Formative Assessment: Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs

Education has shifted toward learner-centered approaches, where formative assessment supports active learning through continuous feedback and monitoring (Kaya et al., 2021; Amirian, 2025). Unlike traditional tests, it promotes deeper understanding by focusing on improvement rather than memorization (Karaçöp & Inaltekin, 2023). Rooted in the work of Scriven and Bloom, formative assessment guides instruction through ongoing feedback and adjustment (Ninomiya, 2016). It is now viewed as an interactive process involving both teachers and learners, closely linked to self-regulated learning and requiring strong teacher assessment literacy (Carless, 2017; Wiliam, 2017; Lei, 2025).

Theoretical frameworks further explain its application: Assessment for Learning emphasizes feedback and learner involvement (Wiliam, 2009; Wolterinck, 2024), the Theory of Planned Behavior highlights how beliefs and perceived control influence teacher practices (Ajzen, 1991; Zhan et al., 2024), and Reflective Practice Theory stresses continuous improvement through reflection (Schön, 1983; Anderson, 2019).

However, teachers' beliefs do not always translate into practice due to workload, limited support, and contextual barriers (Guado & Buersema, 2020; Ahmedi, 2019). Factors such as self-efficacy, institutional expectations, and cultural influences also affect implementation, often leading to inconsistent use (Shafii et al., 2025; Kang & Lam, 2024). Thus, there is a need for more context-based studies to understand how teachers apply formative assessment in real classrooms.

Experiences and Practices: Teachers' Implementation of Formative Assessment

Formative assessment strategies, such as questioning, observation, and journaling, help teachers continuously monitor student understanding and adjust instruction (Dayal, 2021). Feedback plays a key role by guiding improvement, while peer and self-assessment promote reflection, responsibility, and active learning (Evans, 2021).

Various strategies—including questioning, reflective tasks, and feedback loops—support continuous learning, though they are often underused due to limited training and strong emphasis on summative assessment (Carney et al., 2022). The integration of data-driven tools further enhances assessment by helping teachers track progress and respond proactively to learning needs (Stanja et al., 2023).

Informal methods like exit tickets and mini-quizzes provide immediate feedback, supporting a more interactive and growth-focused classroom environment (Ndlovu, 2025; Khursheed & Alwi, 2023).

Globally, implementation varies by context. In Vietnam and China, exam-oriented systems remain barriers despite reforms (Vu & Peters, 2021; Kang & Lam, 2024), while in the United States, stronger policy support and access to resources promote effective use (Kesler, 2024). Overall, successful formative assessment depends on teacher competence, professional development, and supportive systems that prioritize learning over testing.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and understand participants' meanings and experiences related to formative assessment (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Instead of relying on numerical data, it focused on rich, descriptive information gathered from participants' words and behaviors, allowing deeper interpretation of lived experiences and decision-making processes (Tenny et al., 2022; Bouncken et al., 2025). In this study, the approach was used to examine teachers' perceptions and practices in real classroom settings, capturing their experiences, reflections, and challenges, including how they interpret student progress and adjust



instruction. Through interviews and narrative accounts, the method provided meaningful insights into how teachers apply formative assessment in practice. The study specifically used a general qualitative research design, which allows in-depth exploration without strictly following a single qualitative tradition. This flexible approach combines elements from various methods and uses inductive techniques such as coding and thematic analysis to identify patterns and meanings from the data (Kahlke, 2014). It was suitable for exploring teachers' practices within real classroom contexts, considering challenges such as large class sizes, limited time, and policy guidelines. Overall, this design enabled a deeper understanding of teachers' assessment practices by focusing on their experiences and perspectives, generating rich, contextual data that reflect classroom realities and inform future teaching practices and educational policies.

Research Participants

Qualitative research emphasizes rich, in-depth insights drawn from participants' experiences, serving as the main source of understanding in real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In this study, participants were public elementary teachers handling Grades 3 and 6 in Tagum City, who play a key role in preparing students for large-scale assessments and developing foundational skills. The study involved ten participants: five for in-depth interviews and five for focus group discussions, ensuring diverse perspectives and minimizing bias. These methods captured both individual and shared experiences, supporting data depth and credibility (Roller, 2020; Cortini et al., 2019).

Purposive sampling was used to select participants with relevant experience in formative assessment, ensuring that the data collected were meaningful and grounded in actual classroom practice (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants met specific criteria, including teaching in public schools in Tagum City, having at least three years of experience, and handling Grades 3 and 6, while those outside these criteria were excluded. These criteria ensured that participants were experienced educators capable of providing reliable insights into formative assessment practices in key grade levels.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential in qualitative research as it transforms raw data into meaningful insights that reflect participants' lived experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, it ensured that teachers' perspectives were accurately interpreted and represented in relation to formative assessment practices.

This study used thematic analysis to identify patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It enabled the researcher to examine teachers' practices, beliefs, and challenges, providing a deeper understanding of formative assessment in classroom contexts.

The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase process, including familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2019), ensuring systematic and credible findings.

Interview and focus group data were transcribed and coded, then grouped into themes such as feedback, classroom challenges, and learner diversity. The process was iterative, allowing themes to emerge while staying aligned with the study's purpose.

To ensure credibility, the study applied member checking, triangulation, and reflexive journaling to validate findings and minimize bias (Patton, 2015).

Ethical standards were maintained through secure data handling and the use of pseudonyms, ensuring confidentiality and authenticity. Overall, the analysis was systematic, ethical, and grounded in real classroom practices.

Trustworthiness of the Study

This study ensured trustworthiness by applying credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to strengthen the accuracy and reliability of its findings (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility was ensured through triangulation and member checking, allowing comparison of individual and group data and verifying that findings reflected participants' actual experiences (Stahl & King, 2020; Patton, 2015; Birt et al., 2016).

Prolonged engagement was also applied by building rapport and gaining contextual understanding, ensuring authenticity without extending beyond the study's scope.

Transferability was achieved through thick description, providing detailed accounts of participants and contexts, enabling readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Purposive sampling further supported transferability by selecting teachers with varied experiences, ensuring diverse and relevant insights (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Dependability was ensured through an audit trail that documented all research processes, allowing others to trace how findings were derived (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The use of overlapping methods, such as interviews and focus groups, strengthened consistency by validating findings across multiple data sources (Anney, 2014).

Clear methodological descriptions also enhanced transparency, enabling replication and evaluation of the research process (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability was ensured by grounding findings in data rather than researcher bias, promoting objectivity and neutrality (McLeod, 2024).

The researcher acknowledged personal assumptions and reflected critically to minimize bias, ensuring that interpretations remained faithful to participants' views (Berger, 2015).

An audit trail further supported confirmability by providing a transparent record of data collection and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



Finally, study limitations—such as sample size and scope—were acknowledged to maintain transparency and avoid overgeneralization, strengthening the credibility of the findings (Shenton, 2004).

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Practices of Elementary Teachers in Implementing Formative Assessment in their Classrooms

A careful analysis of the participants' responses resulted in the identification of five (5) major themes that reflect the common practices of elementary teachers in implementing formative assessment.

Table 1

Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Practices of Elementary Teachers in Implementing Formative Assessment in their Classrooms

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Monitoring Continuous Progress of the Learners	• executing regular, daily checks of student understanding. • observing students during activities to note behavioral skills. • utilizing exit tickets to gather data at the end of each class. • conducting oral questioning to gauge immediate comprehension levels. • checking seatwork and daily outputs to identify trends. • tracking individual performance trends over an extended period. • applying diverse strategies to gain a complete picture of learning like concept mapping and worksheets.
Guiding Instructional Decisions in Teaching	• adjusting teaching strategies based on classroom observations. • identifying learning gaps to prevent students from falling behind. • planning interventions using real-time information. • pausing lessons to review difficult concepts when confusion is detected. • determining student readiness to proceed to the next topic. • designing follow-up activities tailored to specific learner needs. • refining future lesson plans based on data from exit tickets.
Supporting Student Growth in Learning Journey	• tracking development over time rather than focusing solely on grades. • providing timely feedback to help students reflect on their learning. • normalizing mistakes as a fundamental part of the learning process. • building learner confidence through consistent guidance and support. • encouraging risk-taking by keeping assessments "low-stakes." • guiding students toward reaching their full potential. • facilitating self-correction through immediate instructional feedback.
Personalizing Learning Strategies based on Students Style	• responding to unique and individual learning paces. • scaffolding tasks for struggling learners using visual aids. • challenging advanced learners with specific extension activities. • designing simple and meaningful activities suited to the learners' level. • conducting one-on-one guidance sessions for those needing extra help. • utilizing manipulatives for concrete, hands-on understanding. • adapting instruction to reflect actual, real-time classroom needs.
Promoting Interactive Engagement to Students	• implementing peer assessment to foster active student participation. • facilitating group discussions to clarify and develop ideas. • integrating interactive games to make the learning experience enjoyable. • utilizing "think-pair-share" to support shy or pressured students. • encouraging collaborative problem-solving during class activities. • promoting peer mentoring to boost student accuracy and confidence. • connecting lessons to students' real-life experiences and scenarios.

Challenges Elementary Teachers face in the Implementation of Formative Assessment

After analyzing the participants' responses, Table 2 revealed three major themes describing the challenges encountered by elementary teachers in implementing formative assessment.



Table 2
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges Elementary Teachers face in the Implementation of Formative Assessment

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Dealing with Diverse and Varied Learning Abilities of Students	• responding to diverse learning paces and addressing varied reading levels and academic abilities within a single classroom • handling diverse special needs (e.g., ADHD, language barriers) • managing different learning abilities during the assessment process • ensuring individual attention despite varying student needs • having difficulty in balancing lesson pacing to prevent struggling students from falling behind • having difficulty in designing assessments that fit all skill levels and learning styles • addressing students' overdependence on peers during collaborative tasks
Having Difficulty in Dealing with Environmental Constraints	• having difficulty in monitoring the students due to its number • having difficulty in conducting assessments due to limited resources and manipulatives • having difficulty in balancing activity implementation while ensuring students' safety • having difficulty in assessing students due to distractions and lack of engagement • having limited access to technology for digital or automated assessments
Experiencing Time and Workload Pressures	• having multiple subject demands alongside assessment preparation • having difficulty in dealing with heavy workloads and administrative tasks • having difficulty in providing timely feedback while maintaining lesson flow • lacking opportunity to check all student outputs immediately

Elementary Teachers' Coping Mechanisms with the Challenges in Implementing Formative Assessment

After a thorough analysis of the participants' responses, the data revealed four (4) major themes that describe how elementary

teachers coped with the challenges in implementing formative assessment. adaptability, collaboration, resilience, and creativity in addressing classroom challenges.

Table 3
Essential Themes and Core Ideas on Elementary Teachers' Coping Mechanisms with the Challenges in Implementing Formative Assessment

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Applying Instructional Adjustments and Flexibility	• modifying assessments on the spot based on observed difficulty • slowing the pacing of the lesson to prevent student confusion • changing the assessment format from written to verbal • simplifying complex activities into manageable steps • clarifying instructions step-by-step when learners are confused • providing additional examples and modeling to guide understanding • using visual aids as scaffolding for struggling learners
Utilizing Collaborative and Peer Support	• implementing peer mentoring to support students who are struggling • collaborating with colleagues to share effective strategies • observing other teachers to learn new assessment approaches • joining professional learning communities for shared problem-solving • sharing best practices with peers during planning sessions • organizing group discussions to clarify concepts for the whole class • seeking collective solutions to common classroom challenges
Practicing Reflective and Emotional Self-Regulation	• reflecting on lesson failures to improve future planning • managing personal frustration when activities do not work as planned • staying calm and composed during stressful classroom situations • evaluating the effectiveness of instructions post-lesson • maintaining a positive attitude despite assessment setbacks • identifying personal areas for growth in assessment implementation • revising activities based on student performance data



	• adjusting future approaches based on realized instructional needs • modeling resilience for students when faced with learning difficulties
Innovating and Adapting Resources	• creating own instructional materials when resources are scarce • using online resources to find alternative assessment tools • maximizing available classroom materials for interactive lessons • simplifying activities to fit the existing classroom environment • developing manageable assessment strategies to save time • adapting digital tools for automated data tracking when possible • tailoring support to meet the specific learning needs identified • designing extension activities for advanced learners to maintain engagement • integrating fun and engaging elements into low-resource assessments

Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of Formative Assessment in Supporting Student Learning

After a thorough analysis of the participants' responses, Table 4 revealed four (4) major themes that describe the perspectives

of elementary teachers on the role of formative assessment in supporting student learning.

Table 4

Essential Themes and Core Ideas on Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of Formative Assessment in Supporting Student Learning

Essential Theme	Core Ideas
Giving Feedback, Tracking Progress, and Taking Ownership of Learning Fuel Engagement and Motivation	• frequent, interactive linking of assessment tasks to lesson objectives • immediate feedback for mistake correction and confidence-building • visible progress tracking with motivating and guided support • student ownership and responsibility for the learning process • creating a safe learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing ideas
Driving Data-Informed Instruction	• aligning assessment with specific learning goals • establishing clear expectations to guide student focus during tasks • using assessment results to inform instructional decision-making • conducting periodic analysis of assessment data for planning instruction • providing targeted support for learners identified as needing assistance • utilizing diverse assessment tools such as checklists and performance tasks
Aligning School-Wide Assessment to School Performance	• integrating assessment into everyday school-wide practices • conducting school-wide review sessions through collaborative data planning • promoting consistency in assessment practices across classes • discussing common learning gaps during collaborative meetings • establishing continuous feedback loops between classroom assessment and school goals
Intervention and Instructional Support Based on Assessment Data	• identifying instructional gaps to address misunderstandings immediately • facilitating self-correction through teacher guidance during tasks • monitoring class progress to adjust whole-group instruction • promoting active participation through the use of manipulatives and idea sharing • implementing simple and clear activities such as games and mini-quizzes for young learners • supporting concept internalization to strengthen learners' readiness for major assessments

Chapter 5

DISCUSSIONS

Practices of Elementary Teachers in Implementing Formative Assessment

Elementary teachers integrate formative assessment into daily instruction by continuously monitoring learner progress, guiding instructional decisions, supporting student growth, personalizing learning, and promoting engagement. They assess understanding through questioning, observation, and outputs, allowing real-time instructional adjustments to address learning gaps (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Teaching becomes flexible and responsive as strategies

are shaped by student performance and needs (Carless & Winstone, 2023). Teachers also focus on learners' development over time by providing feedback and opportunities for reflection, helping build confidence and responsibility (Sadler, 2021). Moreover, differentiated instruction and scaffolding ensure inclusivity and responsiveness to diverse learners (Tomlinson, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978), while interactive strategies enhance participation, collaboration, and deeper understanding (Karaman, 2021; Li & De Luca, 2014).



Challenges in Implementing Formative Assessment

Despite its benefits, teachers face challenges in implementing formative assessment, particularly in managing diverse learning abilities, environmental limitations, and time and workload pressures. Learner diversity makes it difficult to create inclusive assessments, balance pacing, and provide individual support (Hopfenbeck et al., 2023; Bernardo, 2020). Environmental constraints such as large class sizes, lack of resources, and limited access to technology hinder effective monitoring and engagement (Cisse et al., 2021; Li & Ni, 2022). Additionally, heavy workload and limited time restrict teachers' ability to provide timely feedback, analyze data, and check student outputs, ultimately affecting the quality of assessment practices (Shafii et al., 2025; Heritage, 2018).

Coping Mechanisms of Teachers

To address these challenges, teachers demonstrate flexibility, collaboration, reflection, and innovation. They adjust instruction in real time by modifying tasks, pacing, and assessment methods based on learners' needs (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Karaman, 2021). Collaboration with colleagues and peer-assisted learning strategies support both instruction and assessment practices (Carless, 2017; Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Teachers also engage in reflective practice by evaluating lesson outcomes and improving strategies (Schön, 1983; Wiliam, 2013), while managing emotions to maintain a positive learning environment (Day & Gu, 2010). Furthermore, they innovate by creating instructional materials, adapting resources, and integrating available tools to sustain effective assessment practices (Li & Ni, 2022; Parmigiani et al., 2025).

Teachers' Perspectives on the Role of Formative Assessment

Teachers view formative assessment as essential in enhancing student learning through feedback, data use, alignment, and intervention. Providing timely feedback and tracking progress motivate students and encourage ownership of learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiliam, 2013). Teachers use assessment data to guide instructional decisions and identify learning gaps, making teaching more responsive and effective (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Sadler, 2021). They also emphasize aligning assessment practices across the school to improve consistency and performance (Boström & Palm, 2023). Additionally, formative assessment enables timely intervention and instructional support, helping learners overcome difficulties and achieve deeper understanding (Xu & Brown, 2016; Heritage, 2018).

Implications for Teaching Practice

The findings highlight that formative assessment should be viewed as a flexible and reflective process that supports effective teaching and learning. Teachers need strong assessment literacy, including the ability to design meaningful tasks, provide timely feedback, and use data to guide instruction. Schools play a key role by supporting professional development, encouraging collaboration through structures like LAC sessions, and reducing workload to allow time for reflection and planning. Emphasis on differentiated instruction, reflective practice, and strong communication among stakeholders can further promote inclusive, learner-centered classrooms.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should involve a larger and more diverse group of participants across different regions and school settings to enhance the applicability of findings. Comparative and longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into how formative assessment practices vary and develop over time. Including perspectives from students, parents, and school leaders can broaden understanding, while further studies on professional development, collaboration, school culture, and teacher well-being can help improve formative assessment implementation.

Concluding Remarks

The study shows that formative assessment plays a vital role in improving teaching and learning by helping teachers monitor progress, guide instruction, and support student growth. Despite challenges such as diverse learner needs, limited resources, and time constraints, teachers demonstrate resilience and adaptability through various strategies. Formative assessment is not only a method of evaluating learning but a continuous process that enhances instruction and promotes meaningful learning. Overall, it serves as a powerful tool for creating responsive, learner-centered classrooms and improving educational outcomes.

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