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PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN PRIMARY SOCIAL SCIENCE CLASSROOMS IN DHAKA CITY

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Abstract

This qualitative study considers primary school teachers' perceptions and implementations of formative assessment in their Social Science classrooms in Dhaka. Through in-depth interviews, observations in selected schools, and literature reviews, the study documents the conceptualization of the assessment by the teachers, what they currently do, and the barriers they face.

The results can point to a stark contrast between teachers' perception and actual practice. Most teachers feel that formative assessment is the best kind of assessment to facilitate learning, but the limited array of their concrete practices in the classroom usually covers only such things as verbal questioning and written exercises for students to undertake. The study also finds that they supply a number of reasons preventing them from practicing these methods to the fullest extent: large numbers of students in classes, heavy time constraints, and lack of training in this regard. In additional to these are a strong systemic orientation towards high-stakes summative examination and a dearth of resources for making the best use of this assessment.

The study closes with some recommendations on how to bridge this gap. For assessment to become more meaningful and dynamic, formative assessment must be embedded into lesson planning. The study also recommended enhancing teacher training, encouraging collaborative approaches to teaching, and ensuring that schools provide adequate administrative support. By addressing these issues, we assist teachers in harnessing the potential of formative assessment for deeper learning.

Keywords: Formative Assessment, Primary Education, Social Studies, Teacher Perceptions, Classroom Practices, Educational Assessment, Instructional Improvement, Bangladesh Education System

1. Introduction

During the last ten years, Bangladesh has achieved noteworthy progress in primary education expansion. Now that the country has assured basic access, attention is gradually shifting toward improving quality. It was in this regard that formative assessment is regarded in greater measure as a constructive force for change in education. Traditional exams, after all, judge learning only at the very end of instruction, whereas formative assessment is a continuous cycle of feedback with respect to learning given to both teacher and student during the process.

Formative assessment allows teachers to identify in real-time students' strengths and weaknesses and adapt their teaching accordingly. In primary Social Sciences, where critical thinking, discussion, and contextual understanding are vital, when applied well, formative assessment can foster learning through observation, reflection, and participation.

But formative assessment can only be effective if valued and continuously embedded in the teaching practice, followed by proper training and institutional support. This study focuses on how these aspects unfold in the particular setting of primary schools in Dhaka.

2. Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The primary focus of this research is to study how formative assessment is perceived by and practiced among primary school teachers of Social Sciences in Dhaka. Since much has lately been said about improving the quality of education, with a highly suggested process of learning that is student-centered and feedback-driven, this study aims to learn about the present formative assessment method, constraints faced by teachers when putting them

to practice, and finally, the existing gap between perception and ground reality. The feedback that will be generated through this study will be useful for forming the basis for future teacher training, curriculum planning, and policy formulation toward more meaningful and effective assessment practices.

Objectives of the Study

- **To explore primary school teachers' perceptions** of formative assessment in Social Science classrooms in Dhaka.
- To investigate the current practices of formative assessment employed by these teachers during classroom instruction.
- **To identify the key challenges** that hinder the effective implementation of formative assessment in primary Social Science education.

3. Literature Review

Formative assessment is an ongoing, classroom-based process that involves gathering evidence of learning and using it to inform instructional decisions (Black & Wiliam, 2010). It differs from summative assessment, which evaluates student achievement at the end of a learning period. Formative assessment is widely recognized for its capacity to enhance teaching and learning within classroom settings. There is an increasing focus on formative assessment as education systems all over the world try to incorporate 21st-century skills in their curriculums. Formative assessment has been considered one of the best approaches to teaching and assessing 21st-century competencies, which are crucial in addressing the current economic challenges. There is a positive influence of formative assessment strategies on students' motivation, engagement, and achievement (Wqfubwa, 2020).

Formative assessment, which encourages continuous and interactive feedback, is essential for supporting and improving the teaching-learning experience giving insights that lead to the adjustment of techniques and directions to meet the student's needs. Typically, when formative assessments are utilized the outcome of this assessment not only improves student achievement, in addition, promotes student collaboration to foster cooperation and engagement (Menéndez et al., 2019). One of the most important aspects of formative assessment in teaching is that it gives feedback which is a support in learning. For students, it informs them about their position in the learning process. For teachers, it measures comprehension and guides the planning of future lessons (Allali & Ghouati, 2025).

Research indicates that the majority of educators are aware of formative assessment fundamentally, but tend to find it difficult to implement it in practice. Helping educators improve their understanding of formative assessment is an important step toward creating conditions for effective use of formative assessment by educators (Kaya et al., 2021).

A systematic review conducted by Schildkamp et al. (2020) synthesized findings from 54 studies to uncover critical teacher prerequisites for the effective use of formative assessment: Knowledge and Skills, Psychological Factors and Social Factors. Teachers need firm assessment literacy, including data literacy and pedagogical content knowledge-a knowledge base that enables them to interpret assessment data and make instructional decisions. The teacher's attitude toward formative assessment and ownership of that assessment, as well as the perceived autonomy of instructional decision-making, are key factors. Such assessment environments encourage the sharing of assessment practices and support among peers. Professional Learning Communities help exchange ideas and strategies that promote positive culture around formative assessment (Schildkamp et al., 2020).

Formative assessment practices have been found to increase students' academic achievement and attitudes toward the class significantly and to affect their self-regulation skills. In formative assessment, students are trying to make up for their deficiencies by taking responsibility for their own learning instead of just trying to get a good grade. In this respect, formative assessment ensures that students are able to cope with negative factors such as high levels of examination and grading (Ozan & Kıncal, 2018). Research indicates that formative assessment serves to successfully attain curriculum outcomes in primary schools while describing challenges in implementation. Furthermore, aspects of teacher training and teacher experience are determinants of how well teachers implement formative assessment practices to enhance learning (Neziri et al., 2025).

When using formative assessment (FA) strategies, educators are frequently faced with these and other equally serious challenges. Instructors develop various FA strategies, but implementing these, estimating the time it takes to develop or create FA strategies and then utilize, develop assessment criteria, and then figuring out students' reluctance towards peer and self-assessment because of cultural perceptions or a lack of understanding. These are just a few of the main challenges and show the importance of educators not only receiving training on FA practices but also of supporting a classroom culture that embraces continuous feedback and collaborative learning (Husam AlMofti, 2020).

Study discloses that teachers continue to encounter challenges in performing formative assessment during the course of teaching. The major reasons for these are two: first, time and second, no feedback from students, who are too shy and scared to make mistakes in answering. Hence, it is indispensable for the teachers to do easy formative assessments and apply suitable educational media. Teachers should try to be the closest companions of the students and to make the classroom a nice place for learning. This is a skill that all teachers should grasp (Satmawati, 2025a).

Incorporating formative assessment into education programs will require a move toward learner-centered practices that integrate ongoing feedback and reflection/action to benefit student engagement and learning. Challenges with implementing formative assessment include lack of development for faculty, large class sizes, and a greater emphasis on summative assessment, which highlight the importance of professional development and institutional support that is both discipline specific and focused on formative assessment (Carney et al., n.d.). Studies around formative assessment suggest that it increases the quality of teaching and student learning through immediate feedback and self-knowledge. When teachers participate in professional development, their attitudes towards, and self-efficacy with, formative assessment improves; however, barriers to effective formative assessment exist, such as time and working with large classes, limited training, unclear guidelines. (Akpınar et al., 2025). Formative assessment is crucial in classrooms under the to support student learning, yet teachers face significant challenges in its implementation. Key barriers include limited instructional time and low student engagement due to fear and embarrassment during assessment activities (Satmawati, 2025b). These perspectives highlight the immediate need for more valuable in-service education to enable teachers to use better formative assessment practices in the classroom (Jain, 2024).

Factors such as large class sizes, time constraints, an overloaded curriculum, student diversity, outcomeoriented educational programs, and lack of technological infrastructure hinder the effective use of formative assessment. While some of the challenges are organizational, teachers can overcome these barriers through individual efforts such as conducting research, utilizing educational technologies, attending in-service training, and continuously updating their knowledge. Given the various challenges and contextual differences in implementing formative assessment, along with the necessity for practice-oriented teacher training, school-based professional development programs on formative assessment are strongly recommended (Özer Özkan & OZKAN, 2025).

Embedding formative assessment into classroom practice establishes a process of continuous learning, where students grow in autonomy and intrinsic motivation, and are able to reach a deeper understanding and continuous growth as learners. By empowering teachers through quality professional development in formative assessment, we are not only helping teachers improve instructional practice, but we can increase student engagement and achievement(Cisse et al., 2021). Without proper development, educators may not possess the knowledge and skills necessary to create and implement effective formative assessments. To address these issues, systemic changes, such as restructuring policies, investing in teacher training, and infrastructure improvements, must take place (Shaikh et al., 2024)

A strong school assessment culture, involving a mutual commitment to values and a supportive environment, positively impacts teachers' assessment choices and thinking about their vision of ideal formative assessment programs. Research points to the importance of school leadership to create this culture in order to increase efficacy of professional learning (Levy-Feldman & Fresko, 2025).

Formative assessment is becoming increasingly recognized as a vital vehicle for improving learning worldwide, including in Bangladesh. Formative assessment allows for ongoing feedback to educators about student strengths and weaknesses to tailor instruction. Research shows that taking up formative assessment practices in Bangladeshi schools leads to greater student learning engagement and success. However, barriers such as large class size, lack of teacher training, and limited infrastructure complicate the effective use of formative assessment. If the barriers to formative assessment are addressed through educational policy changes and teacher development, it is likely that formative assessment will be significantly improved in Bangladesh. Formative assessment is being recognized worldwide as an important means to monitor student learning and improve the quality of teaching, as it is more educationally meaningful than traditional summative assessment. In Bangladesh, formative assessment has been reinstated in the National Curriculum Framework 2021 for primary education, although it is often not used consistently, because of issues such as a lack of training and resources, and the bigger societal expectation to use exam-based assessments. Research supports the need for a holistic approach to teacher development, in addition to strategies that are contextualized to Bangladeshi conditions, but also policy-level support to achieve meaningful and sustainable change in practice (Shafiq & Uddin, n.d.).

Observing classrooms, teachers demonstrate efficacious formative assessment techniques through reconnecting to previous learning as a measure of understanding, using engaging questioning techniques to engross students, and providing meaningful, timely feedback. These feedback techniques contribute to student

engagement, while also allowing teachers to see what students are missing so they can change instruction as needed. Likewise, personal feedback, motivational techniques, verbal praise, and creative forms of recognition, improve students' confidence and intrinsic motivation, leading to more impactful forms of learning when students are engaged (Musa & Islam, 2020).

Although formative assessment is considered an important aspect to improve student learning around the world, it is not yet fully utilized in the primary education system in Bangladesh. Even though research found for example, that classroom assessments are primarily teacher-centered, where student involvement and interaction may be limited. Teachers could typically call on only a few students most likely the high achieving students or seated at the front of the classroom while most of the students were excluded from actually being assessed in a meaningful way. Doing this excludes many students' potential for formative assessments to inform and modify their teaching practices. Many studies have indicated the obstacles to formative assessment practices in Bangladesh.

For example, in primary Bangla classes, assignments are given more in order to occupy students than in order to evaluate their knowledge and learning in Bangla. Teachers described large classes and time constraints as inhibitors to the practice of formative assessment (Biswas et al., 2018). Likewise, Ali (2011) found in his study on secondary English language teaching that speaking and listening were not practiced often enough by students and primarily reading and writing were practiced. In the study, a few teachers provided personalized feedback in one-on-one conferences, but this was not common. A good assessment system is one of the preconditions for quality education. Formative assessment is comparatively an emerging idea to assess the students throughout the academic year with the intention to identify and overcome the weaknesses of the students and enhance their learning outcome. Nonetheless, there are some challenges like - teachers' biasness, shortage of teachers, large class, poor infrastructure, insufficient power supply, and heavy workload of the teachers (Mohamad Hanefar et al., 2022).

Formative assessment has significant potential to improve student learning and engagement but to realize effective formative assessment in Bangladesh, some systemic challenges need to be addressed. Enhancing teacher training, infrastructure, and support through policy is essential to maximize its benefits for primary education.

4. Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study adopted a **qualitative research approach** to investigate the perceptions and practices of formative assessment among primary Social Science teachers in Dhaka City. Data were gathered in natural settings, analyzed inductively, and interpreted within the socio-educational context of primary education in Bangladesh.

Data Sources

Both **primary** and **secondary data** were utilized in this study:

- **Secondary data** were gathered from relevant literature, research articles, reports, and policy documents to contextualize formative assessment within the broader educational discourse in Bangladesh.
- **Primary data** were collected directly from the field through engagement with subject teachers and head teachers from selected schools.

Selection of Schools and Participants

A total of **five primary schools** (three government and two non-government) located in Dhaka City were selected using **convenience sampling**, based on accessibility and willingness to participate.

From these schools:

- Ten Social Science teachers (two from each school) teaching grades IV and/or V were purposively selected for their direct experience and subject expertise.
- **Five head teachers** (one from each school) were also included to enrich the data and enhance validity by providing administrative perspectives on assessment practices.

Data Collection Techniques

The study employed two main qualitative data collection methods:

• In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers and 5 head teachers. These interviews focused on participants' understanding, implementation, and challenges regarding formative assessment. Interviews were scheduled with prior consent, audio-recorded, and later transcribed for analysis.

• Classroom Observations: A total of 10 classroom sessions were observed across the selected schools. Observations were guided by a checklist focusing on how formative assessment strategies were applied, the challenges faced during implementation, and teachers' real-time responses and interactions.

Data Collection Tools

To ensure consistency and reliability in data collection, the following tools were developed and utilized:

- **Semi-structured Interview Guides:** Separate guides were designed for teachers and head teachers. These included open-ended questions aimed at eliciting detailed narratives about formative assessment practices, knowledge, and barriers.
- Classroom Observation Checklist: A structured observation tool was used to systematically record formative assessment techniques, student engagement, teacher responses, and contextual constraints within classroom settings.

These tools ensured a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of formative assessment from both reflective and practical viewpoints.

5. Data Analysis

Data collected from interviews and observations were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. This allowed thematic analysis to reveal themes and patterns in order to identify formative assessment practices and their influence on language development.

- **Coding**: Initial codes were generated from the data, focusing on aspects such as assessment techniques, challenges, and perceived benefits.
- **Theme Development**: Codes were put together into larger themes and then analyzed to build implications on formative assessment practices and student outcomes.
- **Triangulation**: To enhance the validity of the findings, data from interviews and observations were compared and contrasted, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

Findings

The study revealed several key insights regarding primary school teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment in Social Science classrooms in Dhaka, supported by data from interviews and classroom observations.

Teachers' Understanding of Formative Assessment

The majority of teachers showed a basic yet thorough comprehension of formative assessment and its objectives. Many interviewees characterized it as a continuous process of assessing students' learning development. "Formative assessment helps me see where students are struggling so I can adjust my teaching and give feedback to help them improve," said one educator, for instance.

"It is not just about giving tests; it is a continuous way to know how well students understand the lessons and to support them accordingly," said another teacher.

These views demonstrate how teachers understand formative assessment as a means of determining students' areas of strength and weakness so that instruction can be adjusted appropriately.

Implementation of Formative Assessment Practices

Although teachers demonstrated awareness of various formative assessment techniques, their actual classroom practices were limited in scope. Both interview responses and classroom observations revealed that **verbal questioning** and **written exercises** were the most frequently employed methods.

One teacher explained, "I regularly use questioning during lessons and assign written tasks, but other activities like group work or quizzes occur less frequently due to time constraints and large class sizes."

Another teacher added, "I do try to use different approaches sometimes, like short quizzes or inviting students to work on the board, but these are not regular practices. The constraints of time and the number of students make it challenging to do more diverse activities consistently."

Overall, more interactive strategies such as board works and collaborative group activities were seldom utilized, primarily hindered by logistical difficulties and tight schedules.

Challenges in Implementing Formative Assessment

Teachers identified several significant challenges that hinder their ability to effectively implement formative assessment. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and restricted class hours were among the most frequently mentioned obstacles. One teacher explained,

"With so many students in one class, it is hard to give individual attention or provide detailed feedback. On top of that, the limited class hours and instructional time force me to rush through the syllabus to prepare students for final exams."

Another teacher added, "Students often miss classes, which disrupts the continuity needed for ongoing assessment. Additionally, the heavy emphasis on high-stakes summative exams means that formative assessment often takes a backseat."

Together, these challenges—large student numbers, limited class hours, insufficient instructional time and a system focused predominantly on summative testing—severely restrict teachers' ability to apply formative assessment methods comprehensively.

Collaborative Approaches and Lesson Planning

The results also point to the potential for practice improvement through teamwork and the incorporation of formative assessment into lesson design. "When we plan lessons with colleagues, we can think about how to include assessments that support student learning continuously," one educator observed.

"Regular meetings with the head teacher and parents help us share information about student progress and find ways to better support their learning," underscored another educator.

In order to increase the dynamic and impact of formative assessment, such cooperation and organized planning are essential.

7. Discussion

This study's findings reveal a complex picture of formative assessment practices among primary school Social Science teachers in Dhaka, highlighting both awareness of its value and significant challenges in its practical implementation. The teachers' modest but clear understanding of formative assessment aligns with existing literature that emphasizes its role as a continuous, feedback-driven process to enhance student learning (Black & Wiliam, 2010; Wqfubwa, 2020). Teachers recognize formative assessment as a crucial tool to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and adapt instruction accordingly, reflecting the principles outlined in global educational research advocating for ongoing, interactive assessment (Menéndez et al., 2019).

Despite this understanding, the gap between perception and practice is evident. Teachers predominantly rely on verbal questioning and written exercises, while more interactive and collaborative formative assessment techniques—such as group work, quizzes, and board activities—are less frequently applied. This restricted use is consistent with findings from Biswas et al. (2018) and Ali (2011), which report a teacher-centered approach with limited student involvement in formative assessment in Bangladeshi classrooms. The practical limitations voiced by teachers in this study, including large class sizes, limited class hours, and heavy workloads, mirror challenges widely documented in the literature (Özer Özkan & Ozkan, 2025; Husam AlMofti, 2020). These factors constrain teachers' capacity to deliver personalized feedback and conduct varied formative assessments, reducing the potential benefits for student engagement and self-regulation (Ozan & Kıncal, 2018).

Moreover, systemic issues such as the dominance of high-stakes summative exams were consistently cited as barriers. This finding aligns with Carney et al.'s (n.d.) observation that outcome-oriented educational systems often undermine formative assessment practices. The pressure to cover extensive syllabi within limited instructional time further restricts teachers' ability to embed formative assessment meaningfully into daily lesson plans. As Shaikh et al. (2024) argue, without systemic support and policy reform that prioritize formative assessment, its effective integration remains challenging.

Collaboration and professional development emerged as critical facilitators. Teachers who engage in collaborative lesson planning and regular communication with colleagues and parents report more effective formative assessment practices. This resonates with Schildkamp et al.'s (2020) emphasis on the importance of collaborative environments and professional learning communities to foster assessment literacy and positive attitudes toward formative assessment. Embedding formative assessment into routine lesson planning and encouraging peer support can help overcome some logistical challenges and build a sustainable culture of continuous feedback.

The findings underscore the need for systemic changes in teacher training, infrastructure, and policy support to fully harness formative assessment's potential. As demonstrated by Cisse et al. (2021) and echoed in this study, professional development that enhances teachers' assessment literacy and provides practical strategies for formative assessment is essential. This, combined with addressing class size and time constraints, can empower

teachers to implement more diverse and meaningful assessment practices, ultimately improving student motivation, engagement, and achievement.

While teachers in Dhaka's primary Social Science classrooms understand the value of formative assessment, numerous contextual and systemic barriers limit its effective implementation. Addressing these challenges through targeted teacher training, collaborative school cultures, and policy reforms is vital to bridging the gap between perception and practice, enabling formative assessment to drive deeper, more student-centered learning.

8. Recommendation:

As it is difficult to solve some acute issues like large class size and limited contact hours, etc. overnight, therefore, the study recommends:

- Teachers should select the topics and plan consciously where they may use the active formative assessment techniques such as tests, quiz competitions, sitting work, debates, presentation, dialogue, etc. individually or in addition to verbal questioning and board work. For this, they should be committed to their professionalism.
- The head teachers may arrange in-house training or collaborative practice sessions of these formative assessment techniques from time to time with the support of those teachers who practice these techniques more than other teachers.
- Parents and the broader community play a crucial role in supporting formative assessment practices. Schools should actively involve parents in understanding the purpose and benefits of formative assessment and encourage their participation in their child's learning process. Parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and communication platforms can be utilized to promote awareness and collaboration. Additionally, community stakeholders, such as educational organizations and local authorities, can contribute by organizing workshops, providing resources, and advocating for formative assessment practices.

Recommendation for further study

The study opens avenues for further research in the field of formative assessment in primary schools. Future studies can explore the impact of formative assessment practices on student achievement in the Social Science, investigate effective strategies for addressing the challenges identified in this study, and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development programs in enhancing teachers' formative assessment practices. Comparative studies across different regions and contexts can also provide valuable insights into the implementation of formative assessment at the primary level and inform best practices.

9. Conclusion

This research has spotlighted the complex dynamic between teachers' perceptions and their actual practices of formative assessment in primary Social Science classrooms in Dhaka. Teachers perhaps exhibit a basic understanding of formative assessment and recognize its importance in enhancing students' learning, but there remains a gap in their classroom practices, which often disadvantage their principles. The predominance of traditional techniques such as oral questioning and written exercises bespeaks of certain conflicts of opportunity at the level of the individual and systems-the large class strength, limited instructional time, lack of training in implementing formative assessment, and the cumulative weightage offered to summative examinations.

These findings show that working on formative assessment practices cannot be left solely to the motivation and awareness of teachers. That is to say, structural reforms need to be instituted to help provide teachers with professional development opportunities, foster collegial work-teaching environments, and reorient assessment policies to value formative approaches alongside summative ones. It must integrate formative assessment into lesson planning, allocate resources adequately, and create school-level support mechanisms to practically narrow the gap between perception and practice.

Ultimately, improvement in formative assessment practices can be an excellent promise for transforming teaching and learning processes. By taking care of all contextual factors studied in this study, education stakeholders can empower teachers in many ways to make assessment a living, varied, and student-based dynamic supporting meaningful learning and educational equity in all classrooms in Dhaka and beyond.

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Author Declaration

The authors hereby declare that this manuscript is their original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree with its submission to *Social Sciences and Education Research Review (SSERR)*. There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

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