



## FORMATIVE BUT FRUSTRATING: IDENTIFYING THE CONSTRAINTS IN ASSESSMENT PRACTICES AMONG B.ED. STUDENTS

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### RESEARCH ARTICLE



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#### Abstract

Formative assessments play a pivotal role in everyday work in the classroom. It is used in the educational field to know the priority needs that should be addressed. The present paper seeks to shed light on the formidable constraints faced by the B.Ed. students in the incorporation of formative assessment strategies within their educational settings and to propose recommendations for the successful application of these strategies for optimizing their educational attainment and promoting continuous academic growth. A quantitative research design was adopted for the present study. A “formative assessment constraint scale” and a questionnaire were administered for collecting data from the 4<sup>th</sup> semester B.Ed. students of Tezpur University of the academic year 2023-24. Findings indicated that B.Ed. students encountered constraints in time management, a lack of clarity in feedback, understanding the motives behind the different formative assessments and struggles with workload pressure due to consecutive formative assessments. Regarding recommendations, they suggested for institutional support for better integration of formative assessment and suggested about certain best practices for the successful application of formative assessment strategies within the educational settings of the B.Ed. classroom.

**Keywords:** *Formative assessment (FA), B.Ed. students, Constraints, Teaching-learning practices*

#### Introduction

The vital part of the educational process is assessment. The educational process uses a variety of assessment styles, including formative and summative evaluations (Saha et al., 2025). Summative assessment (SA) is the prime obstacle to academic development that has kept teachers reluctant to look after the quality of students' learning. Such traditional assessment usually takes place at the closure of a certain instructional session, where there is hardly any opportunity for the teachers to identify where learners are struggling and facing difficulties and plan the next lessons by focusing specifically. SA refers to the assessment of learning. This is why formative assessment (FA) is the perfect strategy to improve students' progress, which is incomparable in terms of academic development since it is the assessment for learning. Gardner (2012), has given the definition of assessment for learning as “*the process of seeking and interpreting evidence that learners and teachers use to find out where the students are in their learning, where to go, and how crucial to reach there*”. Utilizing assessment for a formative purpose is planned to direct the learning processes of students as well as to enhance their learning outcomes (Ven et al., 2015; Bennett, 2011; Black & Wiliam, 1998). Build on its promising potential for enriching students' learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998), FA has become a “*policy pillar of educational significance*” (Van et al., 2018).

FA is a procedure in which teachers and students deliver feedback during instruction to systematize the teaching-learning process intending to enhance student achievement (McManus, 2008). According to Miller & Lavin (2007), FA can be regarded as a valid and essential segment of amalgamating teaching and assessment. It informs teachers whether the students have acquired the knowledge being taught, as well as they have an indicator on how the teachers must organize their upcoming lessons for the class (Wuest & Fisette, 2012). According to Beverley (2000), FA involves the collaboration of teachers, interpretation, along with the information procedure about the learners' progression, with the aim to evaluate the learning, within the learning process. It refers to a combination of various methods which are applied by the teachers while conducting an in-progress evaluation of learners' apprehension, learning needs, as well as academic progression throughout a lesson, unit, or course. Teachers can locate concepts that the students are struggling to comprehend, the difficulty they are facing to acquire skills, how teachers need to adjust lessons about the learning standards which have not been achieved by them yet, instructional techniques, and academic support. Collecting detailed information about learners to improve instruction and their learning is the general goal of FA. There are 4

major factors of FA (Black et al., 2003; Centre for Educational Research and Innovation [CERI], 2008; Wiliam, 2011; Wiliam & Thompson, 2007): (a) Describing learning objectives along with success criteria; (b) enhancing the quality of inquiry/dialogue; (c) accelerating the quality of marking/ feedback/record keeping; as well as (d) making use of self and peer assessment.

One of the primary elements of FA is questioning (Hodgson & Pyle, 2010). Teachers can spend one-third of their teaching time questioning students (Moss & Brookhart, 2009). At the centre of FA is the concept of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). FA's are the activities that teachers conduct in the classroom to assess their students' learning which can be used as feedback in the following to improve teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 2010). Moreover, Luckett & Sutherland (2000), highlighted that feedback delivered through FA has remarkable benefits when encouraging students, supporting them enhance their learning, reinforcing their work, along with bestowing them with a learning profile.

Assessment is a scaffolded procedure, which is essential for pre-service teacher readiness as well, i.e., for the B.Ed. students. It is a constant process and must have clear intended outcomes. These processes along with the outcomes include B.Ed. students' study patterns, their comprehension of the learning content and lecturers' grading as well as feedback of assessments (Brookhart, 2004). Their assessment requires to be valid as well as reliable. Valid assessment should estimate the level of mastery in respect of the outcomes specified by the course content. Assessment that is valid and reliable gives a genuine and honest sign of pre-service teacher readiness (Reddy et al., 2015). FA is a constant procedure that provides evidence about the B.Ed. students' ability to incorporate course content into informed teaching practice (Sztajn et al., 2012). Its examples comprise of class activities, group work as well as assignments that are incorporated into the classroom practice (Wiliam, 2011). FA briefs SA (Gulikers et al., 2013) as it not only acknowledges strengths but also recognizes the developmental areas in their practice before they conclude a SA outlined to provide evidence of their performance along with identifying whether they have been prepared appropriately to receive the certification (Cornish & Jenkins, 2012).

### **Need of the Study**

The National Education Policy, 2020 gives special emphasis on inculcating regular FA rather than SA for students learning, enabling an individual to survive in the dynamic teaching-learning process. This study, therefore, provides a scope to comprehend the importance of FA's among the B.Ed. students. contributing to the development of a comprehensive framework that promotes a holistic approach to their learning process, promoting critical and analytical thinking among educators and students. In this regard, it becomes very significant and relevant to explore the constraints encountered by the B.Ed. students in the FA practices. Moreover, this study will help the stakeholders to identify the and apply the recommendations for administering effective FA practices in the teaching-learning process.

### **Objectives**

- I. To investigate the constraints encountered by B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies in their education settings
- II. To suggest recommendations for implementing effective FA strategies aimed at optimizing learning outcomes and promoting continuous academic growth among B.Ed. students.

### **Literature Review**

Akoyt (2024), administered a study on Timorese teachers' perceptions and practices of FA in the classrooms and examine their differences. This study concluded that many Timorese teachers had favourable perceptions regarding FA. They knew the significance along with the functions of FA for learning. Yet, the teachers' practices of FA varied from their perceptions, Moreover, majority of teachers hardly apply FA and its different techniques in their classrooms.

Widiastuti, et al., (2024), documented a study on FA in EFL Classroom Practices. The researchers employed qualitative research design for this study. The findings indicated that the English teachers failed to implement proper follow up actions as a result of their inadequate comprehension of FA. The teachers' comprehension therefore impacted their potential in determining the actions.

Berisha, et al., (2023), conducted a study on the effectiveness and challenges of a FA professional development program designed to address the challenges Kosovo teachers face in adequately using FA in their classrooms. In this study mixed-methods approach was utilized with inductive analysis approach. The study found that difficulty of the cultural setting in executing peer as well as self-assessment along with the transfer of learning responsibility from teacher to student. Accordingly, the study examines that teachers faces many challenges in their practices in different cultural context.

Ozan, et al., (2018), documented a study on the effects of FA practices on students' academic achievement, attitudes toward lessons, and self-regulation skills in the fifth-grade social studies class. According to this study, students in the experimental group which completed FA processes, had significantly greater levels of academic success as well as more favourable opinion regarding the class than those in the control group. Moreover, the FA possessed a good impact on the students' self-regulation skills, Furthermore, there was no noticeable difference between the experimental and control groups.

Ferdinal, et al., (2021), conducted a study on the effect of FA on a group of Indonesian students undertaking the class "Introduction to Australian Culture." The study revealed that this kind of assessment is very important to enhance the subjects' academic achievement. Moreover, qualitative and quantitative analysis of the learners' views regarding FA are quite positive.

Nevertheless, little research has been undertaken to understand the challenges faced by the B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies. Hence, the researchers were encouraged to take up the study on identifying the constraints in assessment practices among the B.Ed. students

### Delimitation of the Study

- This study is delimited to the only 4th semester B.Ed. students enrolled in the academic session 2023-24 academic sessions.
- This present study is delimited to only Tezpur Central University.

### Methodology

**Design of the Study:** The researchers employed the quantitative research design for the present study.

**Population & Sample:** The B.Ed. students of Tezpur University were considered as the population. For the present study, the 4<sup>th</sup> semester B.Ed. students (N=50) enrolled in the academic session 2023-24 were selected as the sample by using convenient sampling technique.

**Tool:** "Formative Assessment Constraints Scale" was constructed by the researchers to identify the constraints faced by the B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies in their educational contexts. The scale was a 5-point Likert scale which was administered on the B.Ed. students. The scale consisted of 9 statements. For estimating the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha (0.917) was calculated, that indicates excellent reliability of the scale (George & Mallery, 2003). Also, an open-ended questionnaire was prepared by the researchers for administering among the B.Ed. students, regarding their recommendations for implementing effective FA strategies aimed at optimizing learning outcomes and promoting their continuous academic growth.

**Statistical analysis:** For the present study, mean and percentage analysis are employed for analysing the responses of the scale and thematic analysis for analysing the questionnaire.

### Major Findings

**Objective I:** To investigate the constraints encountered by B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies in their education settings

**TABLE 1: Constraints encountered by B.Ed. students regarding time management with the integration of FA's in their education settings**

| S. NO. | STATEMENTS   | RESPONSE MEAN | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS |
|--------|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1      | Balancing multiple FA's along with other academic commitments is challenging for me.   | 4.40          | 88%                       |
| 2      | Meeting deadlines for various FA's often poses a significant time management challenge.  | 4.40          | 88%                       |
| 3      | Adapting to different types of FA (sessional, report writing, presentations, collaborative works) is quite challenging for me. | 4.44          | 88.8%                     |

From the above table, it can be clearly observed that the response mean of the items are approximately 4, which means that the B.Ed. students agreed that they faced the challenge of managing time to adapt and balance the different types of FA's along with other academic commitments.

**TABLE 2: Challenges faced by B.Ed. students related to clarity of feedback with the integration of FA's in their education settings.**

| S. NO. | STATEMENTS  | RESPONSE MEAN | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS |
|--------|---|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1      | Understanding the feedback provided during FA is sometimes challenging and unclear to me. | 4.12          | 82.4%                     |
| 2      | It is challenging to transform the FA feedback into actionable improvements.              | 4.12          | 82.4%                     |

From the above table and fig 4.7, it can be clearly observed that the response mean of the items are approximately 4, which means that the B.Ed. students agreed that FA's lacked feedback clarity due to which it became difficult for them to transform the feedback into actionable improvements.

**TABLE 3 : Challenges faced by B.Ed. students in regard to the understanding of assessments with the integration of FA’s in their education settings**

| S. NO. | STATEMENTS   | RESPONSE MEAN | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS |
|--------|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1      | I find it challenging to comprehend the purpose and objectives of the various FA’s.  | 3.65          | 73%                       |
| 2      | Understanding the specific criteria by which FA’s are evaluated is difficult for me. | 3.89          | 77.8%                     |

From the above table, it can be clearly observed that the response mean of the items are approximately 4, which means that the B.Ed. students agreed that they found it challenging to comprehend the motives behind the different FA’s and the different criterions by which they’re evaluated.

**TABLE 4: Challenges faced by B.Ed. students regarding the workload pressure due to the integration of FA’s in their education settings**

| S. NO. | STATEMENTS   | RESPONSE MEAN | PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS |
|--------|--|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1      | Coping with the workload resulting from frequent FA becomes overwhelming at times.                           | 4.5           | 90%                       |
| 2      | Managing the pressure of continuous assessments in addition to other academic responsibilities is demanding. | 4.16          | 83.2%                     |

From the above table, it can be clearly observed that the response mean of the items are approximately 4, which means that the B.Ed. students agreed that they found it difficult to cope with the workload pressure due to back-to-back FA’s in addition to other academic responsibilities during the semester.

**Objective II:** To suggest recommendations for implementing effective FA strategies aimed at optimizing learning outcomes and promoting continuous academic growth among B.Ed. students.

**TABLE 5: Recommendations for implementing effective FA strategies**

| Themes   | Comments of the B.Ed. students  |
|--|---|
| <b>Institutional support for better integration of formative assessment.</b>   | <i>Institutions should provide comprehensive training and effective resources to educators. This includes workshops, materials, and a supportive environment to help teachers implement formative assessment strategies effectively.<br/>Institutions should establish collaborative platforms where educators can share experiences, best practices, and innovative ideas related to formative assessment. This fosters a culture of collaboration and ongoing learning among educators.<br/>Conducting regular research and evaluations to assess the influence of formative assessment strategies on student learning outcomes is essential. Institutions should use these findings to continuously improve and refine institutional support for formative assessment practices.</i>   |
| <b>Resources or tools can be helpful in facilitating implementation of effective formative assessment strategies in the educational setting.</b> | <i>Implementing digital assessment platforms can provide quick feedback to students, aiding in their understanding of strengths and areas needing improvement. These platforms also offer opportunities for educators to track progress effectively.<br/>There are various resources or tools which helps in facilitating the application of effective formative assessment practices in the educational setting e.g., Google forms and Artificial intelligence to collection of resources material only for the generalized ideas.<br/>Educators can make use of tools that help them to develop clear and comprehensive assessment rubrics to evaluate student performance and provide consistent feedback. Additionally, educators can make use of data analytics and reporting software’s to analyse students’ performance data, identify the learning trends, and make informed decisions to enhance the formative assessment practices.</i> |
| <b>Best practices for effective implementation of formative assessment strategies in</b>   | <i>Clear learning objectives need to be provided to guide assessments. Varied assessment tools (quizzes, peer review, discussions). Timely and constructive feedback should be given to guide the students’ progress.<br/>Periodic Tests can be effective. Encouraging active student participation and engagement through interactive activities and discussions can foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills during formative assessments can contribute to a more effective and dynamic learning environment.</i>   |

**educational settings.**

*Introducing a variety of formative assessment methods to cater to different learning styles and providing a more comprehensive understanding of student progress might help. Ensuring feedback that are provided in time and are beneficial to students, for highlighting areas of improvement and offering guidance on how to enhance their learning for overall development of students.*

From the above table, by considering all the responses, it can be noted that the B.Ed. students recommended for institutional support for better integration of FA, mentioned about few tools that can be helpful and recommended about certain best practices for implementing effective FA strategies in the educational settings of the B.Ed. classroom.

### Discussions

The **first section** deals with identifying the challenges faced by B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies in their educational settings. Students agreed that they faced challenges of managing time to adapt and balance the different types of FA's along with other academic commitments. In support to these finding, AlMofti (2020), reported regarding the time limit of the classes and not having enough time to incorporate FA in the learning process. Furthermore, the B.Ed. students reported that FA's lacked feedback clarity due to which it became difficult for them to transform the feedback into actionable improvements, for which Yolanda & Rojab (2024), also stated that one of the main features of FA depends on feedback quality as it ensures students learning. The B.Ed. students found it challenging to comprehend the aims and objectives of the different FA's and the different criterions by which they're evaluated. In line with this, Yolanda & Rojab (2024), pointed out that the students' role in classroom assessment is quite essential, as they have to be familiar with the motive as well as format of assessment, particularly when it comes to shifting to a new assessment model. Also, the B.Ed. students found it difficult to cope with the workload pressure due to back-to-back FA's in addition to other academic responsibilities during the semester.

The second section deals with proposing recommendations for implementing effective FA strategies to optimize learning outcomes and promote continuous academic growth among B.Ed. students. The students recommended for institutional support for better integration of FA. They mentioned about few tools that can be helpful and recommended certain best practices for the functional application of FA strategies in the educational settings of B.Ed. classroom. Andriamiseza, et al., (2021), stated that to look into the extend of students in higher education and assist the sort of activities, better tech for FA tools are emerging, that can generate data and serve as a cornerstone for boosting the approaches they provide.

### Implications of the Study

- The environment of educational institute can be improved in regard to the constraints of FA practices.
- This study will also help the stakeholders to create a realistic and appropriate environment for conducting FA practices.
- Teacher educators must integrate training to equip student-teachers with the knowledge of FA needed to foster students' academic development.

### Conclusion

Assessment has great significance and importance in any education system. FA is the perfect strategy to improve students' progress, which is incomparable in terms of academic development, and has been important in raising the overall levels of student achievement (Ahmad et al., 2024). Although FA appears to be a valuable approach in supporting students' performance, at present not enough is known about the constraints the students are facing. Therefore, the results of present study indicated certain constraints faced by the B.Ed. students with the integration of FA strategies in their educational realm. To overcome the challenges, they also recommended suggestions for the application of effective FA strategies to optimize their learning outcomes and promote continuous academic growth in their classroom. It is expected that the present study will help the higher education institutions, administrators and teacher educators to appreciate the importance of FA's and promote effective teaching-learning practices among the students.

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