



ADA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

**CAPSTONE PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING AND
LEARNING**

Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment in IB Private Schools in
Azerbaijan

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Baku, 2025

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

We have read the plagiarism policy of ADA University and certify that, to the best of our knowledge, the content of this paper entitled “Teachers’ Perceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment in IB Private Schools in Azerbaijan”, is all our own work and does not contain any unacknowledged work.

Hereby, we declare that this Capstone Project, our original investigation and achievement submitted for the master’s degree at ADA University, has not been submitted for any degree or examination.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to take this opportunity to deeply thank our supervisor, Dr. Rena Alasgarova, the Deputy Academic Principal for Secondary School at Baku-Oxford School and Adjunct Instructor at ADA University, for her continuous support, time, patience, guidance, and motivation during our research. Her constructive feedback utterly enhanced the quality of the research paper. We are also sincerely thankful to our course instructor, Dr. Vafa Yunusova, Assistant Professor in Education Management at ADA University, and Dr. Ulviyya Mikayilova, the Dean of the School of Education at ADA University, for their time, kind help, support, cooperation, and immense knowledge throughout our research pursuit.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores IB Middle Year Programme (MYP) and IB Diploma Programme (DP) teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment in two distinct IB private schools in Baku, Azerbaijan. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, revealing that formative assessment is highly valued to track the students' progress, promote student engagement, provide constructive feedback, and support differentiation. However, the challenges, such as time constraints, lack of necessary resources, inconsistent student engagement, and insufficient professional development opportunities for teachers, were pinpointed. The findings highlight the requirement for more support in terms of teaching and structured training sessions to maximize the effectiveness of formative assessment practices. This study contributes valuable insights into the vital role of formative assessment within IB educational settings in Azerbaijan and offers recommendations for further research to enhance teaching and learning by means of strengthened assessment techniques.

Keywords: formative assessment, private school, International Baccalaureate (IB), IB school, formative assessment tools, feedback, student engagement, differentiated instruction

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a technique that aims at the evaluation of students' progress through identifying their strengths and areas for improvement and provides the enhancement of the students' academic success. Effective techniques of assessment, especially formative assessment, have an irreplaceable role in the enhancement of student achievement by developing their engagement and autonomous learning (van der Steen et al., 2023).

According to the Conception of Evaluation in the General Education System of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Decisions of the Cabinet of Ministers, 2009), in our country, three main types of assessment that the classes involve are diagnostic, summative, and formative. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2018) defines formative assessment as a process that oversees student learning activities while guiding them toward National Curriculum program standards through the identification and removal of critical barriers. From this aspect, formative assessment is differentiated from the other two types which are focused on the comparison of the students' knowledge levels. Thus, it is different from the action of the summative assessment as generally it is carried out in the "learning environment", which focuses on the high-level learning, as opposed to the summative assessment conducted in the "exam environment" as a preparation for some external exams (Hamp-Lyons, 2006, as cited in Xiao, 2017, p. 297).

Formative assessment has gained greater worldwide interest as a primary idea in improving students' learning achievement outcomes today more than previously (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Education research has shown that formative assessment yields growth in academic results when they are used appropriately (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, in most educational settings in our country, assessment over-emphasizes summative assessment methods that are mainly conducted in the form of tests, which prevent the effective development

of students' critical and creative thinking, as well as verbal and writing skills (Javadov & Hashimova, 2023). Therefore, there is insufficient research on the way formative assessment is conducted in schools and teachers' perceptions of such an assessment in Azerbaijan (Gasimova, 2021).

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the IB Middle Year Programme (MYP) and IB Diploma Programme (DP) teachers' perceptions of formative assessment and their interpretations regarding its role in students' achievement. Secondly, the study investigated IB MYP and IBDP school teachers' experiences regarding the use of formative assessment in their teaching.

This research investigated the broader implications of formative assessment practices on teaching and learning dynamics in IB schools in Azerbaijan. This study analyzed teachers' interview responses to figure out to what extent formative assessments inform instructional decisions, student engagement, and overall students' learning outcomes. The findings of the study will help to get more insights into the development of a structured framework for integrating formative assessment practices in IB schools of Azerbaijan. In addition to that, it might help with the professional growth of teachers, as well as the academic success of students.

1.3 Significance of the Problem

Although formative assessment has been perceived as one of the most effective schemes in improving students' academic performance, its usage as a common teaching practice has not been promoted enough (Clark, 2011). In the IB programme, formative assessment practices are considered essential for various purposes, such as students' self-reflection and self-evaluation of their progress, scaffolding, understanding the criteria, differentiating and refining the teaching process (Robinson School, 2021). Still, not enough research has been done about the perceptions

of teachers related to these practices. Consequently, it is a typical issue that teachers are not able to offer adequate feedback to help students improve their learning (Ozan & Kınca, 2018).

Hence, the study is relevant in developing a framework for the application of formative assessment practices in IB schools. It is important to fill the gap in aligning teaching methodologies with international standards and to equip students with 21st-century skills. An analysis of existing formative assessment practices in IB schools can generate useful information on how teachers understand and use formative assessment to foster student achievement. This research focuses on the specific experiences and challenges of IB MYP and IBDP teachers in the role of formative assessment in the classroom through exploring them in two private IB schools in Azerbaijan.

Although the findings from these two schools cannot be generalized to all IB schools, they can provide a rich description of how formative assessments in the IB form context are understood and applied in private IB schools in Azerbaijan. This research focuses on determining what type of formative assessment techniques are used by teachers, like self-assessment, peer assessment, questioning, and exit tickets, and how they correlate to IB curriculum goals.

Moreover, the study focuses on the difficulties that teachers face when using formative assessment effectively. Some possible challenges of these may be time constraints, limited resources, and the requirement for more professional development in assessment strategies. By understanding these barriers, the research includes specific recommendations that may support teachers in these schools, which can lead to improvements in teaching practices. In addition to this, this research also explored how formative assessment practices impact student achievement. The objective of this study is to find out how formative assessments facilitate students' engagement with content and their own progress in the MYP and IBDP frameworks, through the teacher's experiences.

Specifically, it suggests actions that are taken by the professional development programs aimed at teachers in such schools to enable them to better implement formative assessments. It suggests the implementation of some practical improvements to the curriculum towards better curriculum integration with the formative assessment strategies that are in line with the IB philosophy of inquiry-based and student-centered learning. It better informs the policies and practices that occur at the school level by providing more clarity regarding the level of support and resources teachers need so that they are more effective in using formative assessments.

Finally, this study contributed to the increasing understanding of formative assessment in private IB schools in Azerbaijan, and it provided precise insights that are proven to be beneficial for the teachers who work in these schools or other schools facing similar challenges. Understanding teachers' perceptions and difficulties led to the development of best interventions as well as fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvements within the classrooms, leading to broader educational transformations in Azerbaijan.

1.3 Research Questions

This study was structured around the following research questions:

1. How do IB MYP and IBDP teachers perceive the role of formative assessment in students' achievement?
2. What are the experiences of IB MYP and IBDP school teachers regarding the use of formative assessment?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme

The goal of IB programme is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and thoughtful young people who help to establish a “better and more peaceful world through intercultural

understanding and respect” (IBO, 2019, p.1). Established in 1968, the IBDP was created for students aged 16-19 years old, while the MYP was established in 1994 for students aged 12-16 (Dickson et al., 2018). IB education promotes lifelong learning both independently and by collaborating with others and aims to train a community of learners being involved with global challenges through “inquiry, action, and reflection” (IBO, 2012, p.4). According to Maryono & Emilia (2022), one of the reasons why the number of IB schools is increasing is that the interest in international educational programme, which equips students with the foundations and crucial skills for a globalized world, has also grown.

According to IBO (2019) in the IB programme, the assessment is ongoing and varied and utilizes a wide range of strategies and tools to evaluate students' learning, the data from which informs teaching and learning. These assessments are valid and reliable and provide tasks that activate higher-order thinking instead of simple factual recall. This assists in sustaining the IB programme for “high standards and challenging programmes” (IBO, 2019, p.5).

2.2 Formative Assessment and Students' Achievement

The role of formative assessment is a process of gathering evidence of student learning and is the leading process in planning and improving teaching and learning for teachers and policymakers (Amirova, 2019). This assessment is also called “Assessment for Learning” (Ferdinal & Isramirawati, 2021, p. 127) and involves continuous practices that occur throughout the learning process directly impacting student learning. By utilizing data from formative assessment tools, educators can effectively assist students in acquiring new knowledge and skills (Amirova, 2019). The assessment can be either written or oral and aims at analyzing students' progress (Javadov & Hashimova, 2023). According to Dandekar (2015), the goal of formative assessment is to monitor the educational process, which is helpful for both teachers and students in terms of progress of teaching for teachers, and learning for students.

The speed of teaching and learning can be doubled by applying formative assessment methods (Volante & Becket, 2011). Javadov & Hashimova (2023) supported this idea by showing that the data collected from students were continuously interpreted during the planning of subsequent stages of teaching. In addition, data from assessments can be analyzed and provide teachers with timely information on the effectiveness of the teaching strategies as well as instructional decisions (Ussher & Earl, 2010). By utilizing formative assessment teachers can regulate the teaching process, which helps the students to comprehend the learning content better (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2018).

Cauley & McMillian (2010) explained that the process of formative assessment is a process of absorbing information or learning about student performance at various levels. The effective use of this information will promote “increased student motivation and engagement” as well as increased student achievement (p. 2). Lastly, formative assessment provides students with immediate feedback, helping them to realize what should be improved and reflect on their learning. Consequently, students become more engaged, which is considered a crucial point for achieving better learning outcomes. (Santos & Serpa, 2020). When students get various formative assessment strategies that provide insights about their current knowledge along with feedback, they learn better and achieve more (Kausar et al., 2023).

2.3 Formative Assessment Types

By implementing a wide range of formative assessment techniques teachers can contribute to students' learning and deeper understanding. These techniques are used to address the students' needs and gaps in their knowledge.

One of the formative assessment types is self-assessment which is important for students' awareness of the gaps in their learning process which allow them to move on towards their

learning aims (Basuki, 2019). This form of formative assessment provides students with metacognitive skills to set reasonable learning goals, assess their learning while in process, and finally, evaluate their performances (Halim et al., 2021). Further, self-assessment is designed to help students evaluate their work on the basis of stated expectations which may be expressed in the form of goals or criteria, and improve the work (Anrade & Valtcheva, 2009).

Another important type of formative assessment which is called peer assessment, is applied in a manner in which one student learns from another (Patchan & Schunn, 2015). Such an assessment shifts the overall process from a one-way transmission between teacher and student to a multiple and mutual interaction and communication amongst the learners that produces higher outcomes (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2020; Moore & Teather, 2013).

According to Ferdinal & Isramirawati (2020), one of the important types of formative assessment is questioning that helps to clear teaching material obstacles and goal objectives to make students engage in the learning process. Furthermore, it was shown by Moss & Brookhart (2009, as cited in Ozan & Kincal, 2018) that asking questions can occupy one third of teachers' teaching time. Ozan & Kincal (2018) concluded that questions were still needed to gain information about students' learning and understanding in formative assessment.

Exit ticket is a formative assessment technique, in which the teacher poses a question of varying difficulty to students at the end of the lesson; and they have to answer by writing down their responses. This allows teachers to evaluate the students' comprehension of a specific topic, and how efficient the lesson on the topic was. This helps the students to self-reflect on their own comprehension of the provided topic and demonstrates to the teacher how well the content was assimilated (Dixson & Worrell, 2016).

2.4 The Benefits of Formative Assessment and Feedback

The continuous comments provided by teachers about the performance, or behavior of students in learning is referred as feedback in formative assessment. This is a type of information exchange that has a significant effect on the quality of learning (Gasimova, 2021). The formative feedback gives teachers the opportunity to learn the needs of their students, investigate the reasons why the students did not achieve, and ensure their progress in learning (Heydarova, 2019). The teacher should be able to design an instructional plan that helps to scaffold students' new skills and content to get them to wherever they need to be (Tomanek, 2008).

In case if students get feedback based on only a final grade (such as for a unit of instruction, midterms, finals, and external assessments), students' expectations for future success are declining, as they do not have a chance to observe how they improve. (Ellis, 1994). For that reason, formative assessment can be utilized which is regarded as an efficient way to eliminate the achievement gap. For example, by using formative assessment teachers can ensure that every student is making progress, reaching for their potential, no matter what background or level of previous accomplishments they have (Stiggins et al., 2004). Teachers can, however, adjust their teaching, such as reteaching, modifying their teaching methods, as well as using several practical strategies toward the success of this process as long as teachers are aware of the progress levels of their students (Asare, 2020). However, Veugen et al. (2021) conducted surveys with 96 teachers and more than 1000 students to see how they viewed the formative assessment cycle. On the other side, a second factor that contributes to student engagement in the classroom is formative assessment. The regular feedback that allows them to reflect on what they have learned makes students feel more inspired in their learning activities, and more interested to participate in any learning activity (Tomanek et al., 2008).

2.5 Teachers' Perceptions of Formative Assessment

Redondo, et al. (2017; as cited by Asare, 2020) mentioned the significance of collecting data regarding the teachers' perceptions of formative assessment in a way that can help comprehend and value teachers' assessment practices. Besides, as stated by Opre (2015), the teachers' perceptions and beliefs on the assessment are some of the key factors that influence the teachers' decisions about teaching practices and activities as a part of the teaching and learning. Although teachers and students expressed dissatisfaction with the limited use of this assessment for teaching adjustments, it was discovered that the teachers perceived the most common activities of the formative assessment aimed at setting clear expectations to elicit the levels of students, followed by the analysis and interpretation of their results through communication with them.

Akbarova's research (2013) on teachers' insights about formative assessment in schools in Baku has revealed that they consider this type of assessment more important than summative or diagnostic types as it enables students to demonstrate their abilities freely and confidently in the learning environment. In addition, they mentioned that every teacher has their individual style of tracking student achievement and applying formative assessment strategies.

Monterio et al. (2021) discussed that the formative assessment practices teachers conduct are not always compatible with their perceptions and there is a complex relationship between these two aspects which may be affected by "individual and contextual factors that interrelate with each assessment situation" (p.4). The research conducted by Remesal (2011) explored teachers' perceptions from two angles, pedagogical and societal. From a pedagogical angle, the teachers mentioned the essential role of continuous assessment and facilitating students in taking control of their learning. However, from a societal angle, not all teachers perceive this assessment positively; some of them perceive these practices as a waste of time and overconfidence of students due to the lack of fear of getting low grades.

Moreover, the investigation by Vandeyar & Killen (2007) demonstrated some challenges teachers experience such as their struggles in engaging students with cultural or linguistic differences, or problems that arise from teachers' unwillingness to accommodate their assessment practices in an outcome-based form. The researchers interpreted the main reason behind all these issues as teachers' misconceptions and neglect of formative assessment practices.

2.6 Literature Gap

The certain studies (Al-Wassia et al., 2015; Arrafii & Sumarni, 2018) found out that undertaking the practices of formative assessment implies facing some challenges, such as very low level of knowledge about appropriate use of its methods by the teachers (Quyen & Khairani, 2017; Rahman et al., 2021). The same issues are true for the teachers in Azerbaijan when it comes to understanding of formative assessment. Although contemporary methodologies of assessment stress the importance of feedback, the teachers in Azerbaijan perceive doing so to be not essential, yet it has been observed that their feedback practices are not as deep as required (Azerbaijan Republic Education Institution, 2023).

Nonetheless, in Akbarova's research (2013), one of the interviewees mentioned the existence of gaps in the application of formative assessment practices and the necessity to implement some changes to this system. Interestingly, Gasimova (2021) mentioned that limited studies that examined the practices of formative assessment and feedback in Azerbaijani IB schools. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature about formative assessment perceptions by collecting and analyzing the data regarding the views of teachers in IB schools.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this section, the description of the research methodology intended to be used in this qualitative study is presented. This section consists of 11 sub-sections and includes the discussion of the research paradigm, research questions, research site, sample, and participants. In addition, research tools, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical considerations, and study limitations are described further in this chapter.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The concept of research design, as stated by Creswell (2014), is a specific set of actions undertaken during the research process that use data collection and analysis methods, as well as used as the report of the research. In this study, a qualitative approach was used by the researcher to study formative assessment practices' influence on student outcomes in Azerbaijan private IB institutions by studying both IB MYP and IBDP educators' assessment methods and measuring their professional encounters and assessing their judgment on how formative assessment improves student academic performance.

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) describe qualitative research as research on how people make sense of their experiences, construct the world around them and find meaning in their experiences. Qualitative research assisted us in engaging with the data that might lead to an in-depth understanding of the relationship between formative assessment and students' achievement in learning and the experiences of teachers related to formative assessment.

3.2 Research Site

According to the official website in Azerbaijan, there are five IB MYP and IBDP schools. The study focuses on two of them due to consideration of time constraints, feasibility, and ease of access. The reason for selecting private schools with IB curriculum is that these institutions generally adopt formative assessment practices in their progressive structured learning centers

(IBO, 2022). Moreover, IB schools belong to the international and diverse community, and the teachers of the schools have a range of experiences with formative assessment, leading to a wide scope of practice of the relationship between formative assessment and its effect on students' achievement (IBO, 2022).

3.3 Research Sample

The Capstone team applied one of the non-probability sampling types, the purposeful sampling, which is the most suitable method for selecting participants for our qualitative study. According to Patton (1990), the “logic and power of the purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling” (p. 169). We interacted with the school principals to present our research goals and highlight its importance during the recruitment process of teacher participants. The team of the teachers were selected through inclusion criteria before the principals finalize the participant selection.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria

The participant selection criteria establish a requirement for teachers who have taught for three years or more in either MYP or IBDP of the IB programme. The educators need to adopt multiple formative assessment methods in their unit plans to establish objective selection criteria per the inclusion requirements. The selected participants need to demonstrate a willingness for reflection while representing multiple subject areas through documented evidence of their professional development involvement and reflective teaching behavior. Those who had an active role in the study must show willingness to participate, along with providing agreement for interview involvement, while being available for research requirements. Once the teachers are chosen, they were contacted individually and given a detailed explanation of the study's aim,

following that, their informed consent (see Appendix A) was obtained. Subsequently, the teachers, who give their consent to participate, were interviewed. In total, from six to eight teachers are expected to be interviewed: three to four from School A and three to four from School B.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, interviews are used mainly to collect data in education. Qualitative data collection method of interview involved asking participants open ended and broad questions and then recording their responses (Brinkmann, 2018).

Researchers access qualitative interviews to obtain in-depth knowledge of how participants experience and think about and behave. The central purpose of interviews aims to discover how people experience things according to Kvale (2007) and Seidman (2013).

For the primary data collection method, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with from six to eight private secondary school teachers from both schools (see Appendix B). The goal of these interviews is to understand their perceptions of formative assessment and address the research questions.

We employed semi-structured interviews, which, according to Brinkmann (2012), allow the researcher to maintain control over the conversation while still providing flexibility. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data with predesigned questions in the interview protocols to record the data throughout our research. Besides, the team members were using interview protocols with pre-designed questions. The data recording protocols mentioned by Creswell (2012) helped to ask probing questions to elicit more detailed information.

3.6 Interview Protocol

According to Kvale (1996), an interview protocol is considered to be a guide and framework on which the interview is constructed to make sure that each participant's answers are revealed. It includes thoroughly designed open-ended questions (Chenail, 2011), which "tend to start with words like who, what, where, when, why, and how... and suggest the respondent respond in a more expansive manner" (p. 256). In addition, Merriam & Grenier (2019) defined predetermined questions as questions that are formulated in advance in order to guide the data collection process.

The interview protocol was developed to reflect the research questions and ensure that participants feel comfortable sharing their insights. The research questionnaire in combination with existing literature has led to question development which seeks qualitative data about formative assessment practices and their effects in private IB schools in Azerbaijan.

The protocol permitted thorough insights with the help of probing questions, following semi-structured interview format as in the semi-structured interview, an interviewer usually has a framework of themes, and good interviews generally consist of a balance between primary questions, follow-ups, and probes (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This format provided consistency through interviews while adjusting spontaneous follow-up questions based on interviewees' answers. Additionally, the interview protocol included practical considerations as guidelines for getting informed consent, providing ethical practices, and establishing rapport with participants. The approximate duration per interview was set as 30-45 minutes to retain focus while reducing participant fatigue.

3.7 Piloting Phase

To address potential challenges and to refine the interview protocol, a pilot study was carried out with two IB teachers who satisfy the inclusion criteria; however, it was not included

in the final sample. The procedures for participant selection and ethical considerations remained for the piloting phase as well.

It is crucial to conduct a piloting phase to define whether the interview has limitations or problems to make some alterations to the study (Kvale, 2007). Likewise, Harding (2013) mentioned that implementing a pilot interview can be useful as it allows researchers to define potential obstacles and instantly solve them prior to real interview.

The piloting phase aimed at assessing relevance, clarity, and effectiveness of the questions in gaining insightful data. It helped to assess the interviewers' ability to manage the flow of conversation and the piloting phase aimed to assess the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the questions in eliciting meaningful data. It also made it possible to evaluate the interviewers' ability to manage the flow of conversation and adapt to interviewees' answers. Besides, the feedback from the pilot participants emphasized areas where the questions may require rewording to enhance clarity and where extra prompts might be essential to obtain detailed insights (Saldaña, 2013). Practical difficulties regarding interview space comfort and quietness were revealed during the pilot testing phase. Multiple iterations of the interview protocol development process resulted in enhanced confirmability that maintains exact representation of the participants' detailed insights.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data analysis started with the transcription of the recorded data and was followed by coding. According to Saldaña (2013), coding is the process of assigning a shorthand label to specific elements of the data and grouping similarly coded data into categories or families as

they share some characteristics. Data were manually codified after it was gathered, ensuring that it were ready for analysis.

We started the coding process early, right from the beginning of data collection, to manage the data we gathered. Additionally, to analyze the collected data, we developed themes and broad categories of ideas based on the information gathered. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) describe categories as conceptual components that cover a wide variety of elements within each category. The categories that emerged were then organized into themes to represent the collected data through interconnected levels of ideas, employing thematic analysis. In the end, all the findings were summarized manually from the data analysis in a narrative discussion.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

All participants who were involved in our study had to be treated with respect, and trust regardless of their race, sex, age, religion, or other important factors. The individuals involved in the study had to be allowed to communicate without fear, intervention, or hindrance, and they had to be encouraged to use the language they feel most comfortable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 1998). To assure the adaptability and rigor of the research, a formal yet relaxed relationship had to be maintained with the research participants during the whole data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 1998).

Voluntary informed consent was also given to each participant before the data collection process. The aim, objectives, and ethical issues of the study, such as confidentiality and anonymity in the consent letter, had to be explained to participants before proceeding with the data collection process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Flick, 1998).

3.10 Trustworthiness

Credibility: By utilizing data collection techniques and sources, various data can be collected from diverse angles, enhancing the credibility of the interpretations and reducing the

effect of potential biases from a single data source or method (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this research, having interviews with teachers of different subjects in two IB schools enhances the richness of data, which increases the validity of the findings. Furthermore, to enhance credibility, piloting was first conducted, then all interviews were recorded and transcribed to make sure that the data were reliable and could be re-examined for verification.

Transferability: Giving a thorough description of the research methods, context, and participants enables readers to assess which study aligns with their own context, helping them evaluate the applicability and relevance of the findings. Furthermore, underlining the participant selection and sampling procedures criteria helps define whether the results could be relevant or transferable to comparable populations or environments beyond the study's scope (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The study provides transferable results through specified choices of participating instructors.

Dependability: Transparency and reliable assessment of findings depend on complete documentation of research stages which enables readers to understand decision logic and repeat method execution. Having a clear record of decisions made in the study further increases transparency and assures traceability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this study, dependability is provided with the transparent documentation of every stage of the research process such as the semi-structured approach to conducting interviews, particular steps taken in data analysis, etc.

Confirmability: Getting feedback from experts helps verify interpretations and decreases personal biases by incorporating various points of view. This process increases objectivity and assures the findings' credibility and accuracy (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Confirmability is ensured in this study as it incorporates feedback received by experts.

Triangulation: When themes are generated based on merging several perspectives or sources of data from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the research study (Creswell, 2018).

Member checking: To define the accuracy of the findings in this qualitative research, the final report or the polished product such as the themes can be presented to the participants, providing an opportunity for them to comment on the findings, thereby facilitating member checking to ensure reliability and credibility (Creswell, 2018).

3.11 Study Limitations

If we knew beforehand what limitations might be in the study, it made our study more legitimate, and the researchers would believe that our research was reliable (Creswell, 2003). However, this study had some limitations as well. One limitation was that findings of this study might not be generalizable, as they were based on the perceived understanding of formative assessment practices rather than statistical quantitative data.

Another important limitation was the study's scope as it is conducted only in one city-Baku, in two private IB schools, with a small sample of teachers. The limited number of participants meant that the findings might not completely present the variety of perspectives and experiences across all IB schools in Azerbaijan. The limited number of participants is due to the restricted time frame within which the research had to be conducted.

Finally, although the scope of this research was limited to two private IB schools, the findings could contribute to the broader understanding of formative assessment practices in similar educational contexts. The insights gathered offered valuable information for educators and administrators looking to enhance formative assessment strategies in their schools.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The main purpose of the Capstone Project was to investigate how teachers in IB private schools in Baku perceive and utilize the formative assessment in their teaching practices. The following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. How do IB MYP and IBDP teachers perceive the role of formative assessment in students' achievement?
2. What are the experiences of IB MYP and IBDP school teachers regarding the use of formative assessment?

The following table demonstrates the research participants' quotes and their thematic interpretations:

Figure 1

Participants' Quotes and their Thematic Interpretations

Participant's Quote	Open Code	Interpretation
<i>"I try to give constructive feedback for my formative assessments... I say that you did not understand the demands of the question, and did not organize your paragraph well... ."</i>	Feedback Practices	The teacher provides specific, actionable, and timely constructive feedback to guide student progress and development.

<p><i>“When I provide feedback, I always refer to the rubric. For example, ... we break it down into specific categories, like strengths, suggestions for improvement, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and organization.”</i></p>	<p>Transparency through Rubrics and Feedback Ladders</p>	<p>The use of rubrics and feedback ladders promotes clarity and consistency in terms of the student feedback.</p>
<p><i>“Students who came with 20-30 percent at the beginning of the year can succeed 70 even more after regular feedback.”</i></p>	<p>Student Engagement and Response</p>	<p>Consistent feedback leads to measurable advancements in terms of the student performance.</p>
<p><i>“Formative assessments are something we constantly use because otherwise, you can't be sure if your students understand the content.”</i></p>	<p>Continuous Tracking of Student Progress</p>	<p>Formative assessment is utilized to monitor real-time content understanding.</p>
<p><i>“I began tagging questions according to learning outcomes... so I could analyze results by category</i></p>	<p>Continuous Tracking of Student Progress</p>	<p>Tagging helps identify specific areas related to the student difficulty for targeted intervention.</p>

<p><i>and see where students struggled most.”</i></p>		
<p><i>“We co-create formative tasks together with the teachers, especially in our grade-level team.”</i></p>	<p>Collaborative and Independent Design</p>	<p>Cooperation between teachers ensures the alignment and shared responsibility in terms of designing assessment tasks.</p>
<p><i>“We don’t use the words, like ‘these are your weaknesses’; instead, we say, ‘these are your areas for improvement’. In this case, they don’t feel weak or underestimated.”</i></p>	<p>Motivation through Feedback</p>	<p>The positive language used in the feedback maintains students’ self-confidence and intrinsic motivation.</p>
<p><i>“They can focus more on learning and on understanding the topic rather than worrying about the result.”</i></p>	<p>Fostering Metacognition and Reflection</p>	<p>Formative assessments encourage the ability to think about their own thinking (i.e., metacognition) by letting students engage with the content during the learning process on a deeper and more reflective level.</p>

<p><i>“In order to prepare students for external assessments, which are not assessed by the teacher, but by IB examiners, we have to split up the programme into smaller chunks.”</i></p>	<p>Improving Summative Assessment Outcomes</p>	<p>Formative assessments allow teachers to expose misconceptions and knowledge gaps before giving summative assessments.</p>
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This qualitative research investigated the IB private school teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment. According to the collected data, the teachers demonstrated that formative assessment was considered to be an essential component of their teaching practices, and they acknowledged it as a foundation to track the students' progress and development over time, identifying learning gaps and timely teaching decisions. Generally, the interviewed teachers conducted an array of formative assessment tasks per unit, including quizzes, presentations, and exit tickets, which were all aligned with the specific learning outcomes.

Impact of Formative Assessment on Student Achievement

The instructional staff found that formative assessment produced positive as well as negative results on student educational outcomes. Positive learning results were recorded from well-constructed assessments that stimulated deep understanding along with skill development. The assessments made students think critically while letting them engage meaningfully with the content. The implementation of poorly designed tests, particularly those that require rote memorization, proves detrimental to students who end up losing their creative and problem-solving potential while also preventing the advancement of advanced thinking skills. The design

quality of formative assessment directly determines its effectiveness in promoting academic achievement. Calculated assessments enhance student learning when they push students to apply knowledge instead of demanding mere memorized responses.

Based on the gathered data, the research participants emphasized that formative assessment boosts students' motivation through constructive feedback, promotes a learner-centered learning environment, and enables continuous progress tracking. For example, the teachers from both School A and B explained that formative assessments build student confidence and ownership in terms of learning as students succeed and become more invested in their progress through the differentiated tasks and positive reinforcement.

On the other hand, it was revealed that constructive feedback emerged as a main motivating tool for both teachers and students. The interviewed teachers shared that they relied on the immediate verbal feedback to clarify the misunderstandings and frequently followed up with the written comments for positive reinforcement. To illustrate, an array of teachers from School A mentioned that personalized strategies, such as video feedback and small group reteaching sessions, were successfully employed during the learning process, thus providing the students with the opportunity to revise and resubmit their work several times. Additionally, whilst teachers acknowledged the importance of reflection, the metacognitive practices were not systematically integrated into lessons, and students were occasionally inspired to reflect before working on summative assessments. In other words, all the interviewed teachers expressed their interest in strengthening that aspect, recognizing that reflection enhances self-regulated learning.

While analyzing the collected data, it was disclosed that by allowing students to select how they demonstrated the content understanding, like through essays, posters, or presentations, they were empowered to take control of their progress. Hence, this flexibility accommodates diverse learning needs and enhances student engagement. Alternatively, the interviewed teachers

from both School A and School B pointed out that poorly created assessments, such as those given without adequate preparation, can underestimate students' confidence and lead to disengagement and anxiety. To illustrate, a teacher from School A shared that giving students leadership roles in class activities, such as presenting content or simply answering their peers' questions, fostered active participation and accountability, as peer influence plays an essential role in encouraging slower-paced students and boosting intrinsic motivation.

Nonetheless, it was identified that formative assessment established an inviting atmosphere within the classroom, allowing students to engage without a sense of anxiety regarding grading. The tools, such as verbal praise, positive stickers, and oral feedback, created a positive feedback loop, reinforcing students' efforts and making them more vigilant about their progress. For example, a teacher from School A and another teacher from School B mentioned that formative assessments are "more about learning", thus offering students a vast and safe space to evaluate their topic understanding. Interestingly, both teachers from School A and School B mentioned that they deliberately avoided "negative phrases" (e.g., "weaknesses") and used correct ones, like "areas for improvement". As a result, this relevant language helps students feel capable and in charge of their learning process.

Identifying Learning Gaps and Targeted Intervention

Formative assessment is key to identifying learning gaps, its presence helps in instructional improvements throughout the educational process. Interviews with teachers revealed that the essays, quizzes, and presentations are the formative tools that inform them regarding the presence of both knowledge deficit and skill-based weaknesses at early stages. For example, teachers mentioned specific student problems as omitting dates while writing history, or failing to create a clear thesis statement. This means that if educators notice such issues in the

early stages, they can make immediate and appropriate responses to these issues to prevent the negative effect on the summative performance of the students.

During the data analysis process, it was explored that formative assessment plays a crucial role in identifying the learning gaps in students' content knowledge. By categorizing the assessment results based on the learning outcomes, the interviewed teachers were able to identify the topics and areas where students encountered potential difficulties. For example, all the interviewed teachers suggested that formative assessment tasks effectively detected specific areas for improvement to ensure that learning gaps were addressed earlier, preventing students from falling behind in their progress.

Equally important, the collected data also revealed that formative assessment created early intervention opportunities, particularly when assessments were designed thoughtfully. For example, teachers from School B explained that both knowledge-based and subjective formative assessments were successfully used to identify the learning gaps of students; however, detecting gaps in subjective assessments showed more of a challenge, frequently requiring follow-up questions to delve deeper into students' content understanding and provide appropriate support. The interviews from School A and School B exposed that the participants thought of some problems, like lack of time allocation and absence of a structured reflection protocol, to assess formatively that are still necessary to offer ongoing support.

Differentiation based on Formative Results

Differentiation emerged as a prominent strategy utilized by teachers to respond to diverse student needs by means of ongoing formative assessment. The teachers, mainly from School A, claimed that offering students a choice to demonstrate their learning - whether through presentations, posters, or written papers - provided flexibility and accessible and meaningful assessment tasks for a great number of students. Interestingly, teachers from School A and

School B shared that designing formative assessment tasks with three levels of difficulty, including low, medium, and high, ensured that students were appropriately challenged and the assessment tasks were perceived as achievable and worthwhile. Furthermore, differentiation was also evident in feedback and post-assessment activities. Based on the formative results, students were grouped by their areas to improve and assigned targeted follow-up tasks. Therefore, that personalized approach to teaching and assessment contributed to more effective learning outcomes.

The teacher demonstrates an enthusiastic commitment to inclusive practices by means of their differentiation-focused formative assessment methods. The system customizes tasks based on student ability to deliver content matches their skill level. Advanced students receive supplemental activities such as quiz creation or essay refinement whereas students needing additional help receive breakable tasks for their learning curriculum. Each student from every proficiency level can work through material at their own pace to access needed assistance for success. The implementation of scaffolding methods for cumulative assessment preparation makes students feel both ready and assured about their upcoming evaluations.

Moreover, the students express inclusivity when their teacher provides assessment options between writing essays and creating slideshows, posters or other creative tasks. This adaptability encourages learner agency by recognizing a range of learning styles and strengths. The teacher creates an environment where every student receives necessary support by adjusting both feedback and formative tasks specifically for their needs.

Targeted Instruction Through Ongoing Feedback

One of the main advantages of formative assessment is that it can spot individual weaknesses. A variety of formative methods were reported to be used by teachers in order to detect problems in areas such as writing structure, critical thinking and conceptual

understanding. Feedback is usually timely and accurate, often delivered by peers' interaction or with collaborative group work with the feedback used to tailor teaching efforts to the specific needs of students. One characteristic of formative feedback that facilitates the immediacy of feedback is real time monitoring that makes it easier for the teachers to intervene when there are misunderstandings. In this case, they may simplify tasks, adopt differentiated instruction or provide additional sources in order to prevent what is a minor misunderstanding from developing into a minor learning barrier.

Constructive and timely feedback recurred throughout the interviews as a theme. They emphasized that teachers should provide feedback, if given, immediately, in such a way that is actionable and given in a sensitive manner. Feedback works best when it allows the dignity of the student and their understanding. This can be facilitated with individual conferences, private feedback sessions or by real time correcting in class. Specific task feedback, along with clear targets for improvement, tends to elicit more positive responses from students. Personalized feedback in some cases even encouraged students to look for more challenging work following the progress of their peers.

Feedback Techniques and Student Response

The fundamental aspect of formative assessment includes feedback which teachers implemented through checklists and rubrics in combination with verbal discussions. Students favored verbal feedback because they found its immediate quality combined with personal touch to be very effective. Students yet struggled to concentrate on written feedback because some students opted to overlook or misunderstand the marks. Video feedback showed promise yet remained impractical because of available time resources. Students reacted to comments with different levels of interest yet usage of feedback for work improvement showed positive response. Different student reactions indicate that educators must deliver personalized feedback

which addresses individual requirements and facilitates better understanding and response to feedback.

During instruction the interviewee emphasizes delivering fast verbal assessment particularly for formative evaluations. This evaluation approach lets students modify their work in real-time therefore gaining instant feedback about their results. The instructor delivers purposeful criticism which begins with positive feedback on students' achievements before offering step-by-step development suggestions. The approach uses non-deteriorating language to describe strengths because the goal is to maintain students' dedication to their learning activities. Teaching feedback in real-time forms one of the core aspects within standard educational practices. Such feedback enables students to resolve immediate questions about learning and supplement their knowledge to maintain persistent monitoring of their educational development.

The teaching approach provides students with precise and beneficial assistance to develop their learning skills while maintaining their academic focus. The instructor stated that verbal feedback proves more effective than written feedback for addressing learners' current learning requirements. The teacher provides explanations orally throughout classroom sessions as students often need similar explanations at the same time. The instructor leads students through follow-up discussions and additional clarifications about the feedback information they receive orally. The teacher detected that students occasionally fail to make use of commonly provided written feedback materials such as comments, checklists, and rubrics. The basic approach of oral feedback loses its edge because written feedback does not provide the same level of effectiveness which reveals its weakness. The classroom relies heavily on oral feedback at the same time written reports offer regular updates to parents and administrators about student progress.

As a part of the school's assessment documentation standards these reports organize feedback that follows the specific instructions outlined by checklists and rubrics. The teacher reported that although these tools are clear, students sometimes struggle to fully interact with the written feedback. Since written assessments track student development well they may not produce equivalent educational outcomes as verbal feedback does for learners. The instructor demonstrates a strong belief in regular written reports as a crucial method to maintain academic progress communication with students and parents. Preparation of these reports serves as a transparent measure to inform students and their parties of both their achievements and their weaker areas. Reports maintain a straightforward portrayal of student performance which does not include extensive information. The assessment process becomes clearer through written reports and the combination of rubrics and feedback ladders which explain evaluation standards and student assessment understanding. Through the combination of rubrics and feedback ladders the teacher communicates structured understandable feedback to his students. These resources enable accurate assessment feedback that follows the established evaluation criteria while using quantitative measures. The subject instruction provided to students includes deep exploration of argumentation together with grammar education and structure understanding and content mastery.

Despite their helpfulness in student guidance, the teacher observes that maintaining full student engagement remains difficult. The use of feedback ladders and rubrics remains indispensable for helping students to identify work expectations and their development areas. The learning process of revision develops with multiple assignment submissions facilitated by the instructor. Students can revision their work after receiving evaluation from their instructor. The iterative process allows students to use received feedback while learning from mistakes so they can enhance their work quality to achieve higher standards. The instructor taught students

about this practice because it depends on understanding and leads to continuous learning improvement. Additional opportunities for direct feedback reflection are needed by students especially when they submit non-paper assignments but the revision permission enables continuous improvement of student work outcomes. Written assignments specifically need feedback to make the formative assessment process work effectively.

One of many feedback approaches used by the teacher involves peer feedback sessions where students evaluate work using checklists. Students discover different writing styles while learning from one another because of shared peer review interactions. The evaluation provides extensive assessment of vocabulary selection and structure organization along with grammatical elements and arguments. The majority of students welcome feedback since they recognize it as an essential force that can help them advance toward improvement. Students recognize that feedback delivers essential information about their current work state which serves as a foundation for their development. Students consistently work on improving their grades if they have an opportunity to edit because it leads to enhanced learning experiences and self-directed learning development.

Scaffolding based on Assessment Results

Assessment results also are used to guide scaffolding strategy. Often, teachers break down the more complex task into smaller steps and take the students with similar challenges as they do to give them focused instruction. Such a personalized and supportive approach makes it possible for students to practice while they learn, so that they build confidence and competence in the learning journey. Additionally, formative data is of great importance for shaping remediation plans. Additionally, educators often provide backup in additional feedback or extra assignments or additional explanations verbal in nature designed to help the student get on track and achieve his or her academics.

Peer and Self-Assessment

The interviews also included some activities of peer and self-assessment, which were implemented to varying degrees. On the other hand, peer assessment, especially in structured ways such as on feedback ladders, was far more commonly used. Teachers encouraged self-assessment but also believed that students were less likely to be enthusiastic about engaging in reflective tasks. However, a few educators had included strategies that were capable of promoting self-awareness and stimulated students to assume more responsibility for their own learning requirements.

Enhancing Clarity Through Rubrics and Assessment Criteria

The majority of the assessment rubrics were commonly aligned with IB criteria in order to offer clarity and transparency of assessment expectations. Teachers noted, however, that rubrics and feedback do not have the potential to be fully realized unless students are explicitly taught to use rubrics and interpret feedback in meaningful ways. However, when students did engage effectively with rubrics and feedback, the effects were a lot more often increased motivation and more strategic learning behaviors. According to the ongoing practices of formative assessment and feedback, the positive changes of student attitudes started to appear. As time passed on, students became more actively engaged and started developing a stronger growth mindset specifically when 'assessments' were linked to students' interests and aptitude.

Strategies for Promoting Student Engagement

Teachers used some interaction strategies through competitive quizzes, group projects and class discussions in order to increase engagement and sense of ownership. The most effective part of the assessment was to frame it as an opportunity for growth as opposed to judgment. Additionally, the feedback delivery also included some emotional sensitivity which

was another very important consideration. To hopefully protect the students' emotional well-being and gift receptiveness, teachers regularly chose to phrase critiques as areas for improvement, and offer them privately.

Instructors stressed that by establishing a supportive, low-stakes learning environment, formative assessment encourages student motivation and ownership. Students' confidence and engagement were increased by employing techniques like giving them choices for tasks (like writing, presentations, or posters), employing motivational aids (like stickers and praise), and letting them help create the rubric and set goals. Students felt appreciated, empowered to take charge, and more engaged in their own education as a result of these practices.

A growth mindset was greatly aided by timely, constructive criticism that was presented in a positive manner. Written comments were used to reinforce understanding, but teachers preferred verbal feedback because it was immediate and clear, especially when dealing with MYP students. Motivation was maintained by using a "feedback ladder" strategy, which starts with praise before addressing areas for improvement. Continuous improvement was further encouraged by opportunities for revision and resubmission, and feedback was thought to be more significant than grades.

The teachers are driven to create formative assessments because they firmly believe that they improve student learning. They see formative assessments as a way to help students get ready for external exams, like those required by the IB programme, as well as crucial tools for tracking students' progress. The teacher incorporates a variety of formative assessment techniques into their lesson plans because of this sense of accountability. Despite the teacher's stated preference for more imaginative, project-based evaluations, time restraints and the requirement to cover a lot of material frequently force the use of more conventional techniques, such as paper-based tests, particularly with older Diploma Programme (DP) students.

Supports Personalized Learning Approaches

According to the data, formative assessments are a key component of learning personalization. To address particular learning needs, teachers employed customized feedback, sometimes in the form of one-on-one meetings or customized video explanations. While struggling students received additional guidance and differentiated support, high-achieving students were given more difficult assignments.

Teachers were able to identify misconceptions and modify their teaching methods by using formative assessments to guide daily instructional decisions. Through investigation-based assignments and opportunities for reflective learning, this method encouraged deeper engagement and made sure that students got the proper amount of support to succeed.

Lack of Professional Development in Effective Formative Design

The introductory conversation displayed a deficiency in standardized educational sessions about formative assessment methods since this hindered both objectivity and teaching consistency. The school did not provide formal training or school-wide assistance for formative assessment design although unit planning cooperation between colleagues offered unofficial growth possibilities. Professional experience serves as the main source for teachers to develop assessment design abilities instead of formal training programs. Another teacher demonstrated refined knowledge of formative assessment either through extensive practice or because of proper training during a separate interview. Insufficient institutional support exists for shaping professional skills in formative assessment development according to teachers who pursue educational growth by participating in international conferences and online professional networks. Formative assessments remain crucial for IB instruction yet teachers recognized the need for additional training on designing these evaluations and limited available time to implement them. The standardization of assessments becomes easier through grade-level team

collaboration but the school faces challenges in enhancing formative assessment procedures due to insufficient scheduled professional learning opportunities.

The IB Curriculum together with school requirements enforce this procedure. Formative assessments become mandatory through both the IB curriculum and the school policies while also receiving encouragement from instructors. The particular guidelines establish the specific type of formative assessments which should include written assignments, quizzes, and peer evaluations. The external exams which constitute an integral part of the IB programme align with the educational curriculum because they evaluate student readiness. The teacher confirmed that scheduled feedback sessions exist in the teaching plan along with the school policy's backing of formative assessment implementation. Following final exams their school hosts reflection sessions as an additional practice according to the teacher's explanation. They claim that the school requires written reports.

Varied Assessment Formats

The quick formative tools such as exit tickets, quizzes, and reflections provide successful methods to measure immediate understanding and adapt lessons. Project-based work along with presentations facilitates skill development through practical tasks but these initiatives are exposed to possible time limitations and unsteady student involvement. Practical problem-solving and critical thinking develop through occasional applications of case studies along with simulations and investigations. These teaching approaches bring value by enhancing student motivation along with higher-order thinking despite not being regularly implemented because of time constraints.

Teacher Reflection and Adaptation of Teaching Strategies

Formative assessment results serve as important information for determining instructional methods even though many educators used unstructured reflection procedures. The analysis of

assessment findings happened spontaneously rather than through structured assessment data analysis procedures as teachers based their decisions on classroom interactions. Teaching decisions for future lessons depend on informal monitoring findings which guide predictions about upcoming challenges followed by appropriate preparations as reported by a teacher. Several educators understood that constructing a systemized reflection process became vital for increasing the quality of their teaching choices. Formative assessment developers must continuously improve their assessment design process so assessments provide relevant data for both students and teachers' instructions

Challenges and Limitations of Formative Assessment

Time Constraints in Planning, Implementation, and Feedback

The main hurdle hindering effective formative assessment courses from achieving success stems from limited available time. Teachers often manage formative assessments alongside their classroom responsibilities without enough opportunity to properly plan their assessments. Students experience this situation most strongly in IB programmes because they have to study extensive material within limited subject periods. Teachers face difficulty dedicating sufficient time to produce structured formative assessments because assessments that demand creativity and full understanding evaluation are time-consuming to create. Class durations of 45 minutes or less prevent students from receiving personalized teaching which they require according to the professor. Each student requires individual attention which becomes hard to provide adequately because large numbers of students exceed fifteen.

Teachers delay giving personalized feedback because of this leading them to perform the task during after-school hours. The workload of instructors increases and the immediate effect of feedback on student growth decreases when language differences exist between instructors and

students. Due to time limitations the teacher faces hurdles providing student-specific feedback which should be both detailed and appropriate for each individual.

Students Not Taking Ungraded Assessments Seriously

Teams of educators have identified student disengagement as a major issue that mostly occurs with ungraded formative assessments. Students rarely show their maximum potential during these tests because they do not influence their final grades despite being unrelated to their final evaluation. Students commonly disregard assessment activities because they lack grades even though teachers consistently try different approaches to make these assessments stimulating. The removal of traditional grading systems triggers a significant drop in student motivation because they lack external performance incentives. According to the teachers, student engagement undermines the purpose of formative assessments which directs learning, finds understanding gaps and adjusts teaching methods.

The effectiveness of formative assessments diminishes when students lose interest so determining their educational development becomes more challenging. Students often diminish the value of teacher criticism thereby complicating the situation. The issue of students placing more value on course grades than on the continuous feedback process frustrates educators across numerous educational settings.

Inconsistent Student Engagement with Feedback and Reflection

The main weakness of formative assessments originates from students' inconsistent commitment to feedback. Students demonstrate different approaches regarding criticism for their work improvement as some use it constructively whereas others fail to show interest in critical feedback. Cognitive feedback does not automatically result in student learning because students

fail to integrate feedback for their future academic growth. This limits the success of formative assessments. According to the most instructors most students fail to regularly consider feedback provided to them even though the teacher offers both written feedback and verbal communication.

The goal of formative assessment exists to support student advancement however certain learners either fail to understand enlightenment from assessments or deliberately dismiss it altogether. The difference in the quantity of reported challenges stems from the lack of standardized reflection procedures. Students show substantial variation in their participation in reflection sessions after important tests although some teachers enforce this requirement. The sterile perception of reflection as a formality by students might diminish its capacity to generate effective feedback according to teachers. The inconsistent student involvement in their learning process represents a major limitation for the effectiveness of formative assessment because active student participation leads to optimal assessment results.

Lack of Resources for Designing High-Quality Formative Assessments

The development of outstanding formative assessments requires sufficient time allocations and creative input together with proper resources. Finding appropriate resources for creating diverse and stimulating student tests proves challenging for most teachers. The teacher struggles to deliver assignments with varied learning accommodations due to insufficient resources at his disposal. Use of desktop computers for testing and online resources is challenging for students who have difficulty typing even though these tools provide instant feedback benefits. Time limits as well as scarce materials place barriers on educators' ability to use resources needed for project-based assessment and presentation tasks. Although teachers want to incorporate creative investigative tasks into lessons they refrain from doing so since they demand extensive time and resources beyond what the classroom can provide. Teachers

compelled to use conventional methods spend additional time while also using unengaging assessment techniques which results in less effective evaluations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The results of this study offer insight into the crucial aspects of formative assessment implementation in IB schools in Azerbaijan by identifying the benefits of the implementation. This section then investigates what these findings can teach us about workload and teacher-student challenges, the engagement of students with feedback, institutional support, and the role of motivation in the role of formative assessment.

Based on this study, the most prominent challenge was the large workload teachers faced when implementing formative assessment. A previous study by Javadov & Hashimova (2023) shows that such a formative assessment can improve learning outcomes, but it leaves teachers experiencing a workload that they cannot bear. On top of that, expectations in IB schools for individualized feedback and learning differentiation are making this issue more complex.

However, teachers understood the importance of formative assessment, which could help them identify students' needs and teach them on their learning journey. The present paradox brings about the need to have a more balanced view of formative assessment, therefore, schools should look into ways to reduce and focus on the number of assessment activities. For example, using digital tools to carry out some of the aspects of feedback could be adopted, using peer feedback systems, or concentrating on high-impact formative assessments, which could decrease teacher workload while still keeping the virtues of continuous assessment. Furthermore, schools should create a more sustainable formative assessment model that allows teachers to plan, reflect, and work as a collaborative group.

A further critical finding of this study is the different levels of student engagement in feedback. Feedback was sometimes acted upon by some students but not others. If students do not act on the feedback, then that is a fundamental issue. This is consistent with Andrade &

Valtcheva's (2009) notion that feedback has to be incorporated with structured reflection tasks for its effectiveness to be maximized. This study suggests that there is not often much benefit in using reflection sessions as an opportunity to give and receive feedback.

There are many reasons why the disengagement occurs. Feedback is seen by some students as an opportunity for them to grow personally rather than as a means for improving their grades. If feedback is merely utilized to correct mistakes and not to aid students to learn actively, they miss out on the opportunity to better comprehend the content. This is in accordance with Deci & Ryan's (2000) Self-Determination Theory, as Defocus theorizes that invoking intrinsic motivation leads to deeper engagement with feedback. If an individual student is more motivated by external rewards, like grades to begin with, then they are less likely to be driven to learn from feedback unless it directly pertains to their grades.

Addressing this problem, it becomes essential to make the environment of the teachers in which there is creation of environments of receiving feedback as a part of continuing learning process rather than final judgment about the performance. Formative assessments are incorporated into routine classroom activities and the students see the feedback as an integral part of their educative experiences. Possible strategies for taking the active role in the feedback process may include self-assessment, peer feedback, creating goal setting activities, etc. In addition, it also allows teachers to give specific instructions on how the feedback should be read and used for better results.

However, findings of the study indicated that the student disengagement with feedback worsened due to the absence of institutional support and resources. Students also failed to prioritize feedback because of competing learning demands or due to a lack of knowledge as to its value. This is a key finding since formative assessment cannot succeed in isolation, as it aids

constructivism. When it comes to committing to adopting formative assessment, teachers need an institutional 'arm', of sorts, in the form of time, resources, and training.

This is consistent with Rahman, et. al. (2021), who believed that formative assessment is collaborative and not only the teacher's work. However, for schools to support teachers and students in engaging in this form of assessment, it is important for them to develop clear policies regarding this assessment, to ensure that students have sufficient time to engage with this feedback, and to give teachers the resources they need to implement these teacher practices effectively. For example, allocating time for formative assessment as structured reflection or as composed peer feedback, are examples of increasing student participation in formative assessment. In addition, integrating formative assessment into the school's overall teaching and learning strategy would enable the school leadership to create a culture where everyone values formative assessment at the school level.

Moreover, there is a need to enhance the clarity of the requirements related to formative assessment. Teachers in the study lacked confidence in the standardization of the practice of giving feedback. If we had more consistent and standardized approach to formative assessment, then all students would be receiving the opportunity to benefit from feedback without any regards of class or teacher. Moreover, it could standardize the feedback and bring it in line with more general curricular goals; this kind of standardization could also help to reduce teacher burnout by efficiently navigating what feedback should be provided and how.

In addition, the findings of this study also show that the level of effectiveness of a formative assessment is strongly influenced by its student motivation. Earlier, it was mentioned that a lot of students cared little to nothing about responding to feedback unless it was attached to their grades or their entire academic experience. It is an important issue because feedback is

influenced, and ultimately, acted upon, partly based on the motivation of the student. Formative assessment can be significantly successful if the levels of student motivation vary.

Feedback requires motivational factors to shape how students will perceive and, therefore, utilize the feedback. According to Deci & Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation is imperative in linking meaningful full engagement with feedback. Students who utilize the tool of feedback as a way to become more personally developed and grow are more likely to use it in a manner that facilitates better learning outcomes. But if the extrinsic factors (such as grades) are motivating students, they tend to reject feedback unless it brings immediate consequences on their academic performance.

This emphasizes that assessments should incorporate intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivations (i.e., for grades), as this enables teachers to design such assessments that also cater to intrinsic motivations. This can be achieved by teachers prompting students to set personal learning goals, and, thereafter, self-assessment, and with peers providing constructive feedback. These strategies will aid in student internalization of the feedback process and not only as a means to an end.

This study identified that lack of professional development opportunity for teachers was a big barrier for the effective use of formative assessment. Teachers had understood the importance of formative assessment, but very few had that training and resources they needed to build and use effective formative assessments. The finding of this underscores the importance of continued professional development on formative assessment in literacy and the practical implementation of formative assessment techniques in the classroom.

According to research done by Monteiro et. al. (2021), the results confirm this finding, indicating the relevance of teachers' professional development in linking curricular objectives

with assessments designed to take into account the students' diversity. Therefore, schools need to roll out regular professional development programs to help teachers enhance their assessment literacy, design good formative assessments, and use pull to enhance student outcomes.

This study also highlighted another challenge of the unavailability or insufficiency of available resources (material and time) in order to engage in effective formative assessment. However, teachers wanted to use more creative and differentiated assessment such as project-based tasks or presentations and were unfortunately time constrained as well as lacking in digital tools. The limit in this resonates with Cauley & McMillan's (2010) argument that formative assessment is less effective when the necessary resources to execute it are not afforded to teachers.

To resolve these issues, schools should allow the teachers to have the means to access the tools and resources belonging to the digital assessment platforms, professional development workshops, and planning time. In addition, schools should push teachers to use low-cost or no-cost formative forms of assessment, such as peer feedback, self-assessment, and group discussion, to take a load off teachers while ensuring effective learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore formative assessment from the teachers' perspective and practice in the IB schools in Azerbaijan and to know the advantages and disadvantages of this practice. The research, based on the data collected from semi-structured interviews, has helped bring about the ideas that IB teachers use to understand, apply, and practice formative assessment strategies in their classrooms.

Results showed that though teachers widely feel formative assessment to be a powerful means for improving student learning, there are significant challenges with implementing formative assessment, including working time, time constraint, student motivation, and institutional support. Although teachers were quick to point out the benefits of formative assessment on personalized learning, differentiation, and preventing student misunderstandings, they were also apprehensive about the sustainability of the practice without adequate resources and some training.

One of the key problems found was between the teachers' feedback and the way the students use it. While the feedback tended to be frequent and often detailed, its effectiveness was impeded by students who were either unmotivated, lacked time, or were unable to find sense in the feedback to work on productively. This implies the need for more active student reflection, goal setting, and self-assessment within the systems across various schools.

Moreover, the study recognized the need for institutional support to help with effective formative assessment. They complained about too much professional development, vague school policies, and limited chances to use the various assessment practices with their colleagues. Moreover, embedding a formative culture in the school community requires these support systems, and they are crucial to reducing teacher burnout as well.

Finally, this study suggests that it is in formative assessment's best and worst interest to have a support system that works to the benefit of teachers as well as students. Although formative assessment can be used effectively to improve the educational experience of all learners, this will only happen if formative assessment is coupled with a sufficient amount of time, professional training, institutional commitment, and, importantly, a culture that appropriately values continuous learning over summative outcomes.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this study have some practical implications. School leaders and policy makers should invest in multiple professional development opportunities for how to use formative assessment strategies, provide that professional development time, give the tools, and establish an environment in which creating feedback into practically every day is acceptable. Lastly, by generating self-assessment, setting goals for themselves, the students must be more engaged. Future research with this study may expand to include student perspectives in order to understand student formative assessment experiences. Longitudinal studies can indicate how consistent alterations in formative assessment impact students' attitudes and learning levels as time goes by. This would also aid in comparative studies of formative assessment effectiveness between different school systems, both IB and non-IB, and responsive to the feedback process.

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APPENDIX A

Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment in IB Private Schools in Azerbaijan

Consent Form

Dear Participant,

This is an invitation to participate in the interview, which is a part of the Capstone Project that intends to investigate the teachers' perceptions and practices of formative assessment at IB private schools in Baku, Azerbaijan. Your much valued participation will contribute to understanding of how formative assessment is perceived and implemented in the International Baccalaureate (IB) context. This study, which is entitled "Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Formative Assessment in IB Private Schools in Azerbaijan" is conducted by Aytan Allahverdiyeva, Aygun Alizada, Aynur Gabakbayova, Maryam Ahmadova, and Rovshan Ismayilov, under the supervision of Dr. Rena Alasgarova. Each interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes, depending on how long your responses are. The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers, teaching at IB private schools, perceive formative assessment, its role in teaching and learning, strategies they employ in their classrooms, and main challenges they face in implementing these assessments.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. The interview will be conducted in person or online at your convenience and will be audio-recorded (*with your permission*) to ensure accuracy in data collection process. You can reject or choose to answer only the questions you feel comfortable answering. You will not face any negative consequences if you decide to withdraw the study at any time. The data you provide will be stored with the highest level of confidentiality, and your replies and full name will remain anonymous. What is more, there are no anticipated risks associated with this study.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Rena Alasgarova, the Deputy Academic Principal for Secondary School at Baku-Oxford School and Adjunct Instructor at ADA University, by email at ralasgarova@ada.edu.az . If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant or you are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you can contact (*anonymously if you wish*) by the email of ADA University admissions@ada.edu.az .

Thank you for your participation!

Finally, by signing below, I agree to participate in this study and allow my responses to be recorded for the research purposes.

Signature: _____ *Date:* _____

Full name: _____

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Research Participants

1. How would you define formative assessment?
2. How do you think formative assessment affects students' achievement? If positive/negative, why?
3. Is formative assessment an integral part of your day-to-day planning?
4. Which assessment methods do you apply more frequently in your teaching? Why?
5. Do formative assessment outcomes inform the decisions you make about your teaching strategies? If yes, how?
6. Does formative assessment address diverse students' needs? If yes, how?
7. Does formative assessment identify gaps in knowledge in your students? If yes, how?
8. What feedback techniques do you generally employ in your instruction?
9. How do students respond/react to formative assessment and feedback in the classroom?

10. Have you noticed your students using formative assessment and feedback to reflect on their learning habits?
11. Is it required by your school policy to integrate formative assessment strategies, including different feedback types, into your long-term or short-term planning?
12. Do you collaborate with other teachers or school administration to shape formative assessment methods employed in the classroom?
13. Are there any limitations while implementing formative assessment?
14. What challenges do you face when employing formative assessment in the classroom? If yes, how do you address them?