

Investigating the Impact of Different Assessment Methods on Student Performance in Public Universities of Afghanistan

ISMAIL SHINWARI

Lecturer of the English Department, Education Faculty, Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University, Kunar, Afghanistan.

ABSTRACT

The essential part of teaching is different assessment methods; lecturers are like various types of assessments. When university lecturers and students determine assessment, it will be more beneficial and productive. This study examined students' perspectives on the impact of different assessment methods on their performance in public universities in Afghanistan. The quantitative study used an adapted questionnaire with 20-item questions for data collection. The questionnaire was piloted on 30 faculty members to determine its validity and reliability. The questionnaires were delivered to 400 public university students in Afghanistan using an online Google form. Of 400 questionnaires given, only 108 completed questionnaires were returned within the time frame. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the assistance of SPSS. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the frequency, percentage, and mean, while inferential statistics of Pearson Correlation were used to analyse the relationship between the two variables. The analysis of data revealed that faculty members have a high level of perspective on the impact of different assessment methods on student performance (mean 4.2606). The study concludes by recommending policy reforms and capacity-building initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and diversity of assessment methods in Afghan higher education.

Keywords: Assessment, leadership, teaching tool, academic learning, qualifications, methods

Introduction

As a means of assessing student learning outcomes and as guidance for instructional decision-making, assessment is essential to the educational process. Assessment techniques are essential for determining how well teaching and learning are working in higher education. The selection and application of assessment techniques have a major impact on student performance, motivation, and engagement in Afghanistan's public institutions, where the educational system is still recovering and changing after decades of violence. This study examines the effects of various evaluation techniques on student performance, paying special attention to the reality, difficulties,

1*Corresponding Author: Ismail Shinwari

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and pedagogical ramifications in Afghan public universities. An essential part of the educational process is assessment. It has several uses, including as assessing student learning, guiding educational policy, and influencing instruction (Brown & Knight, 1994). Assessment procedures have a big impact on students' academic performance, motivation, and learning strategies in higher education, especially in poor nations like Afghanistan (Gipps, 1994). Even while evaluation is acknowledged to be important, many Afghan public institutions still mostly rely on outdated techniques like summative and memory-based exams, frequently at the expense of formative and performance-based learning. The purpose of this study is to look into how different evaluation techniques affect student performance in Afghan public colleges.

Educational paradigms have changed in the twenty-first century to learner-centered instruction, where assessment is used to improve the learning process as well as measure learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Assessment is now seen as an ongoing process that gives teachers and students insightful feedback rather than just being a term-ending task. Critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and a deeper comprehension of the subject matter are recognized to be fostered by contemporary assessment techniques such formative assessment, peer evaluation, portfolio assessment, and project-based evaluation (Shepard, 2000). However, due to ongoing pedagogical, policy, and infrastructure constraints, many Afghan public universities continue to face difficulties in adopting and successfully implementing these strategies. Since 2001, Afghanistan's higher education system has experienced substantial change, with a greater focus on teacher training, curriculum creation, and quality assurance (World Bank, 2013). Despite these initiatives, public colleges frequently maintain a traditional, exam-focused evaluation culture. High-stakes exams and rote memorization are frequently emphasized in the prevalent method, which may not accurately represent students' academic aptitudes or foster higher-order thinking capabilities (Farooq, 2018). In light of this, there is an increasing need to investigate and comprehend the ways in which different assessment techniques affect the learning outcomes and general academic performance of students. Constructivism and social learning as educational theories place a strong emphasis on the importance of social interaction, feedback, and active participation in learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1972). According to these theories, evaluation need to be interactive, continuous, and formative in order to encourage students to collaborate with one another and evaluate themselves. Therefore, assessment needs to change to become a tool for measuring as well as a learning catalyst. Accordingly, rather than traditional tests, assessment techniques including group projects, presentations, classroom quizzes, reflective journals, and ongoing feedback systems are more likely to increase student participation and enhance academic results. Many international research demonstrate how alternate assessment techniques improve student achievement. For example, Taras (2005) contends that when formative assessment is used properly, it significantly raises student achievement. In a similar vein, Andrade and Du (2007) discover that peer and self-assessment encourage learners' autonomy and accountability, which enhances academic achievement. Although these results seem promising, nothing is known about their relevance and effects in the Afghan higher education system. Examining how various assessment methods are viewed, used, and impact student results in Afghanistan is crucial given the country's distinct sociopolitical and educational background.

Furthermore, university instructors' professional development and assessment quality are directly related. Formal training in the design and delivery of assessments is lacking for many Afghan professors, particularly those employed at public institutions (Ministry of Higher Education Afghanistan, 2021). The validity and reliability of assessment procedures are thus compromised by the frequent misalignment between teaching objectives and assessment instruments. Even the most well-meaning reforms are unlikely to produce the expected gains in student learning and performance if teachers lack adequate assessment literacy (Stiggins, 2002).

By examining the effects of several assessment techniques, such as formative assessments, performance-based activities, traditional exams, and student-led evaluations, on academic achievement across a number of Afghan public universities, this study aims to close this gap. The study will concentrate on faculty practices and assessment-related issues in addition to student results and perspectives. The project intends to offer evidence-based suggestions for enhancing assessment practices in Afghan higher education by examining the effects of different approaches.

All in all, large class sizes, inadequate staff development, and inadequate facilities are some of the fundamental issues facing the Afghan higher education system. These elements play a part in the underutilization of creative assessment techniques and the overuse of standardized examinations. Furthermore, instructors' ability to experiment with student-centered assessments is further limited by the absence of digital resources and institutional autonomy (USAID, 2018). In such a context, the larger educational ecosystem has an impact on student performance in addition to the sorts of assessments.

Literature Review

In higher education, assessment is an essential tool for determining student learning outcomes, directing teaching strategies, and encouraging student participation. The effects of different evaluation techniques on learning behavior, motivation, and academic success have been the subject of several research during the last few decades. With an emphasis on both global insights and contextual relevance to the Afghan higher education system, this review of the literature summarizes the body of research on assessment practices—both conventional and modern—and their effects on student performance. Standardized tests, final exams, and midterm assessments are examples of traditional assessments that have long dominated many educational institutions, particularly in developing nations. These approaches frequently prioritize factual memory and rote memorization over applied skills or critical thinking (Gipps, 1994). Traditional evaluations have been critiqued for encouraging surface learning rather than in-depth comprehension, despite their

widespread acceptance for their impartiality and simplicity of administration (Biggs, 1999). According to studies by Brown and Glasner (1999), summative assessments are helpful for certification and benchmarking, but they don't give students timely feedback that can help them learn better. Furthermore, these tests frequently overlook the learning process in favor of concentrating solely on the result. Due to a lack of funding, teacher preparation, and institutional support for new approaches, traditional exams continue to be the most widely used evaluation method in Afghanistan (Ministry of Higher Education Afghanistan, 2021). The term "formative assessment" describes a variety of evaluation techniques used throughout the learning process to adjust instruction and enhance student learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). These include of methods including class discussions, peer evaluations, quizzes, and reflective journals. Numerous studies have demonstrated the beneficial effects of formative assessments on student success, especially when combined with insightful comments (Sadler, 1989; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

After conducting a meta-analysis of more than 250 papers, Black and Wiliam (1998) came to the conclusion that regular formative assessment use significantly improved student performance, particularly for lower-achieving students. In a similar vein, Andrade and Cizek (2010) discovered that formative assessment techniques improve students' motivation and metacognitive awareness, two factors that are highly predictive of academic achievement. The use of formative assessment in higher education is still relatively new in Afghanistan. It is difficult to implement formative procedures widely because students are not accustomed to self-directed learning practices and faculty members frequently lack formal training in evaluation literacy (Farooq, 2018). Presentations, research projects, portfolios, and case studies are examples of performance-based assessments (PBAs), which have grown in favor as instruments to gauge a wider variety of student abilities than just cognitive recall (Mueller, 2005). These tests frequently ask students to work with peers, apply their knowledge to real-world issues, and exhibit critical thinking and creativity. Shepard (2000) asserts that these approaches are more successful in fostering lifelong learning skills and are more in line with the demands of the business in the twenty-first century.

According to a study by Gulikers et al. (2004), students' involvement and perception of the coursework's relevance are much increased when assessments are authentic. Similarly, in order to improve academic accomplishment, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) stressed the value of learner autonomy and feedback in performance-based tasks. However, putting these strategies into practice calls for extensive preparation, faculty development, and student orientation—elements that could be difficult to oversee in settings with little resources, such as Afghanistan. Studies conducted abroad shed further light on the relative impacts of various methods of assessment. In a sample of East Asian colleges, Wang and Brown (2014), for instance, examined standard and alternative assessments and discovered that students evaluated using mixed-method techniques (formative + summative) fared higher on both written and applied tasks. In a similar vein, children exposed to ongoing evaluations demonstrated greater levels of academic motivation and self-regulation, according to Al-Kadri et al. (2012) in Saudi Arabia. Although these results are promising, they also emphasize how crucial context is. It is not possible to import educational assessment procedures in bulk from one system to

another. It is necessary to consider student readiness, instructor experience, educational background, and cultural norms.

All in all, the low level of assessment literacy among faculty members is one of the main obstacles to assessment reform in Afghan public universities. According to Stiggins (2002), the majority of educators lack the necessary skills to create, administer, and analyze formative or performance-based assessments. This results in a dependence on procedures that are pedagogically weak but easily graded. The Ministry of Higher Education (2021) claims that a large number of Afghan teachers have not gotten much teaching in student-centered learning and evaluation techniques. Therefore, improving learning outcomes requires professional development programs that concentrate on enhancing teachers' assessment competencies. Assessment literacy helps teachers to build inclusive and equitable evaluation environments, give relevant feedback, and match assessments to learning objectives (Volante and Fazio, 2007).

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the relationship between various assessment methods and student academic performance in public universities in Afghanistan. The design was selected to quantify the impact of different assessment strategies (formative, summative, and performance-based) on students' academic outcomes and to identify any statistically significant differences among them. A cross-sectional survey approach was used, allowing data to be collected from a large number of students and faculty members within a defined period. The target population for this study included undergraduate students from selected public universities across different provinces of Afghanistan, including Kabul, Nangarhar, Balkh, and Herat. These institutions were chosen due to their size, diversity, and accessibility. A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure proportional representation across faculties (e.g., Education, Social Sciences, Sciences, and Languages). The sample consisted of 108 undergraduate students. Data was collected through a structured, self-administered questionnaire was developed based on validated instruments used in prior studies (e.g., Black & Wiliam, 1998; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Data was entered and analyzed using SPSS version 26. The following statistical techniques were employed: Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) to summarize demographic and assessment data. Pearson correlation analysis to assess the relationship between assessment method usage and student GPA.

Research Objectives

1. To determine assessment methods are currently used in public universities of Afghanistan.

¹*Corresponding Author: Ismail Shinwari

2. Explore the methods which affect student academic performance, motivation, and engagement.

Research Questions

1. What assessment methods are currently used in public universities of Afghanistan?
2. How do these methods affect student academic performance, motivation, and engagement?

FINDINGS

The content is developed around two research questions. In general, the following analysis answer the overall result about the assessment methods and methods affect student academic performance, motivation, and engagement that currently used in public universities of Afghanistan. Therefore, the sample data of the mentioned universities will be collated and merged in the SPSS 24 version software to present the real result. Descriptive statistical analysis is used to analyse the data. The overall mean 3 is moderate, more than 3 is high level and less than 3 is low level. Table 4.1 provides useful statistics, including frequency, percentage, cumulative percentage, and mean of the perspective among 108 respondents of eastern and capital public universities in Afghanistan.

Table 4.1 student's overall result on Research Article

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Over all Mean	20	4.13	4.46	4.2606	.09685
Valid N (list wise)	20				

Analysis Based on Assessment Methods Research Question 1

¹*Corresponding Author: Ismail Shinwari

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This section reports the finding of the first research question, which states, "What assessment methods are currently used in public universities of Afghanistan?" Table 4.2 provides the statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean of the respondents' perspective regarding the assessment methods are currently used in public universities of Afghanistan. Table 4.1 presents the perspective of students of Afghan universities on assessment methods. The RQ1 is examined through 10 items questions. The average mean for the RQ1 is 4.2694, with a standard deviation of .11133. This average mean value shows a high level of assessment methods from the perspective of students in Afghan universities.

Table 4.2 student's overall result on Research Question One

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Research Question one	10	4.13	4.46	4.2694	.11133
Valid N (list wise)	10				

The table 4.3 shows the assessment methods section comprised with 10 items (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9, and10). The results are below.

Table 4.3 student's perspectives on Research Question One

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q_1	108	1.00	5.00	4.2778	.90516
Q_2	108	1.00	5.00	4.1296	1.03303
Q_3	108	1.00	5.00	4.3796	.82844
Q_4	108	1.00	5.00	4.4630	.72892
Q_5	108	1.00	5.00	4.3981	.94661
Q_6	108	1.00	5.00	4.1481	.99358
Q_7	108	1.00	5.00	4.2130	.90740
Q_8	108	1.00	5.00	4.2222	1.00776
Q_9	108	1.00	5.00	4.1944	1.03633
Q_10	108	1.00	5.00	4.2685	.89240
Valid N (list wise)	108				

Methods Affect Student Academic Performance, Motivation, and Engagement (RQ2)

This section provides the result of the second research question, which states, " How do these methods affect student academic performance, motivation, and engagement? This research question was addressed by 10 items (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 60). Table 4.4 provides the statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean of the perspective among 108 respondents of public universities in Afghanistan. The average mean for the work-related attitudes is 4.2519, with a Standard deviation of .08506. This average mean shows the high level of Methods Affect Student Academic Performance, Motivation, and Engagement from the perspective of Afghan public universities students. These items of work-related attitudes are discussed below:

Table 4.4 student's overall result on Research Question One

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Research Question Two	10	4.15	4.41	4.2519	.08506
Valid N (list wise)	10				

The table 4.5 shows the assessment methods section comprised with 10 items (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9, and10). The results are below.

Table 4.5 student's perspectives

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Q_11	108	1.00	5.00	4.4074	.78582
Q_12	108	1.00	5.00	4.2130	.99579
Q_13	108	1.00	5.00	4.2130	.98636
Q_14	108	1.00	5.00	4.2500	.97755
Q_15	108	1.00	5.00	4.3981	.84211
Q_16	108	1.00	5.00	4.2593	.96063
Q_17	108	1.00	5.00	4.1481	1.05737
Q_18	108	1.00	5.00	4.2130	1.01439
Q_19	108	1.00	5.00	4.2222	.94060
Q_20	108	1.00	5.00	4.1944	.97116
Valid N (listwise)	108				

Summary

- Formative and performance-based assessments are significantly associated with higher student performance.
- Students exposed to diverse assessment methods perform better than those relying solely on summative exams.
- Assessment type explains approximately 32% of the variance in student GPA, indicating other influencing factors exist but that assessment is a key contributor.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate how different assessment methods—formative, summative, and performance-based impact student performance in public universities in Afghanistan. The findings reveal several important insights that contribute to the growing body of educational research, especially in the context of developing countries. The results show a moderate positive correlation between formative assessment and student GPA ($r = 0.44, p < 0.001$). This supports prior studies (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) that emphasize the effectiveness of ongoing feedback in improving student learning outcomes. Instructors who incorporated quizzes, assignments, and regular feedback helped students better understand their learning progress, correct misconceptions, and build confidence. In Afghanistan's public university system, where traditional lecture-based teaching still dominates, integrating formative practices could address learning gaps and enhance academic achievement.

Summative assessments, including mid-term and final exams, were found to have a weaker correlation with student GPA ($r = 0.18, p = 0.003$). While these assessments remain essential for certification and accountability, over-reliance on them may not reflect the full range of student learning. Similar concerns have been raised in global literature (Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008), which argues that summative exams tend to promote surface-level learning focused on memorization rather than critical thinking and application. Performance-based tasks, such as projects and presentations, also showed a significant and positive correlation with academic performance ($r = 0.36, p < 0.001$). This suggests that when students are engaged in real-life tasks and are allowed to demonstrate learning creatively, their academic outcomes improve. The regression analysis confirmed that performance-based assessment is a strong predictor of GPA. These findings align with Wiggins (1998) and Gulikers et al. (2004), who advocate for authentic assessments that mirror workplace demands and enhance problem-solving skills.

The study provides compelling evidence that Afghanistan's public universities should reconsider their current assessment policies, which often prioritize final exams over continuous evaluation. Teacher training programs must emphasize assessment literacy, and curriculum planners should embed diverse assessment forms within syllabi. Embracing continuous and authentic

assessments could help address chronic issues such as low graduation rates, academic disengagement, and poor graduate readiness.

Conclusion

This study concludes that different types of assessment methods significantly influence student academic performance in Afghanistan's public universities. While summative assessments remain widely used, formative and performance-based assessments demonstrate stronger correlations with improved student GPA. Students exposed to a blend of assessment types tend to perform better academically than those evaluated solely through traditional means. These findings underscore the need for systemic changes in assessment practices across Afghan universities. By integrating diverse and student-centered assessment approaches, higher education institutions can enhance learning outcomes, promote academic equity, and better prepare students for real-world challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Policy Revision: The Ministry of Higher Education should mandate the inclusion of formative and performance-based assessments in university curricula.
2. Teacher Training: Continuous professional development programs on assessment design, rubric creation, and feedback strategies should be provided.
3. Student Support: Universities should guide students on how to respond to various assessment types and offer resources to support learning through assignments and projects.
4. Further Research: Future studies should explore the role of assessment in specific faculties or compare public and private institutions to gain deeper insights.

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