

Empowering Learning Through **Formative** **Assessment**

Insights from an Education Survey

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Abstract

Education is at a critical but exciting juncture. Technology and traditional learning methods are combining to positively transform the profession while driving effective student outcomes. However, this transformation is not without its challenges.

Earlier this year, Education Perfect commissioned a survey examining the factors influencing teaching and learning outcomes across schools in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. We wanted to compare the current state and desired future state of education and the influence of technology across four broad themes:

- Formative assessment strategies
- Classroom-based teacher-student relationships
- Personalised and adaptive learning approaches
- Pedagogical best practices

This paper walks through the first theme of the survey, covering educators' approaches to formative assessment, their perceived effectiveness, the challenges encountered, and their attitudes towards technology integration.

The analysis explores the depth of educators' engagement with formative assessment, highlighting commonly used methods, identifying significant barriers, and evaluating the potential of technology to facilitate practice.

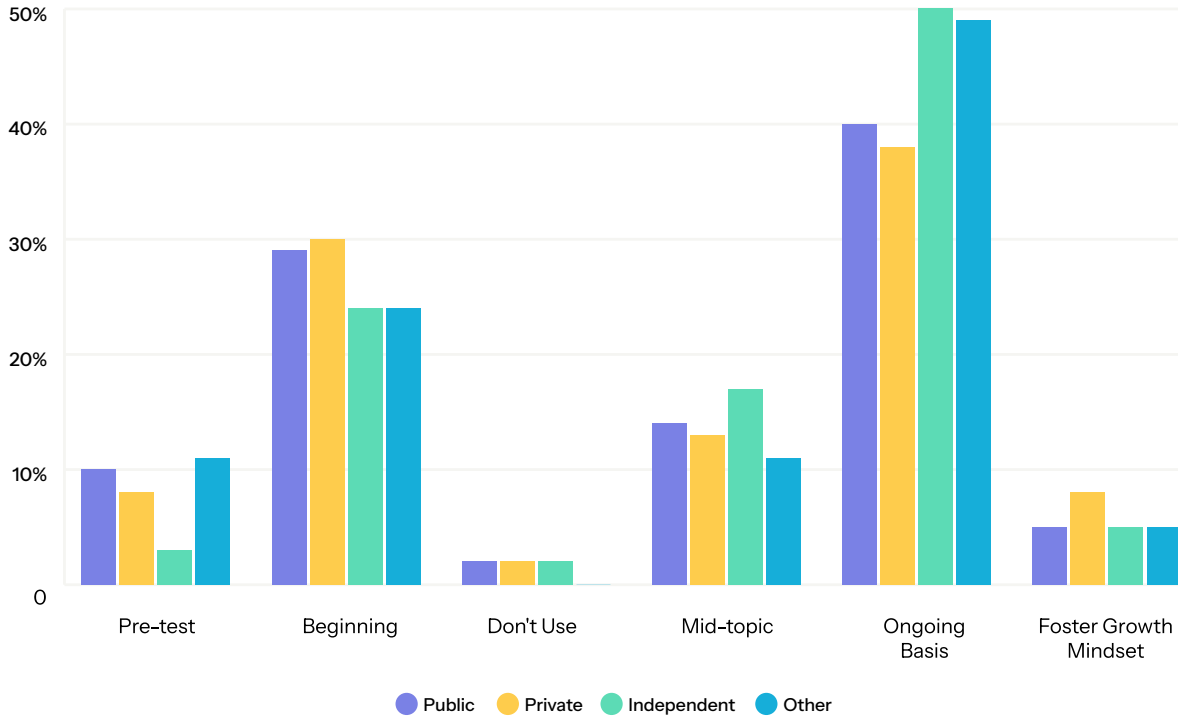
Introduction

Formative assessment (FA) is an instructional practice that generates real-time feedback on student learning, enabling educators to dynamically adjust their teaching strategies to meet students' diverse needs. Widely recognised for its ability to personalise learning experiences and facilitate academic growth, effective formative assessment can significantly improve learning outcomes. Given this potential, it becomes crucial to understand educators' actual practices and perceptions regarding this type of assessment.

The breadth and diversity of our respondent pool provides a rare, nuanced insight into the realities of formative assessment across multiple educational settings. This level of representation ensures that the findings are not confined to a single type of institution or role but instead reflect a holistic view of the broader education landscape. Policymakers, school leadership, and education technology providers should view these results as a valuable reflection of current practice and sentiment. In doing so, they can align initiatives, tools, and support strategies more closely with the authentic needs and experiences of educators and learners.

Moreover, these survey results contribute meaningfully to an emerging narrative we are seeing across the education sector globally: a growing demand for more flexible, meaningful, and technologically supported assessment practices. While our findings resonate with broader trends highlighted in other research, they also stand apart in the depth and practical detail provided by respondents actively engaged in day-to-day teaching and leadership. By amplifying these voices, we aim to offer a richer and more grounded perspective, helping to bridge the gap between policy intention, technological innovation, and classroom reality.

When and Why Educators Use Formative Assessment




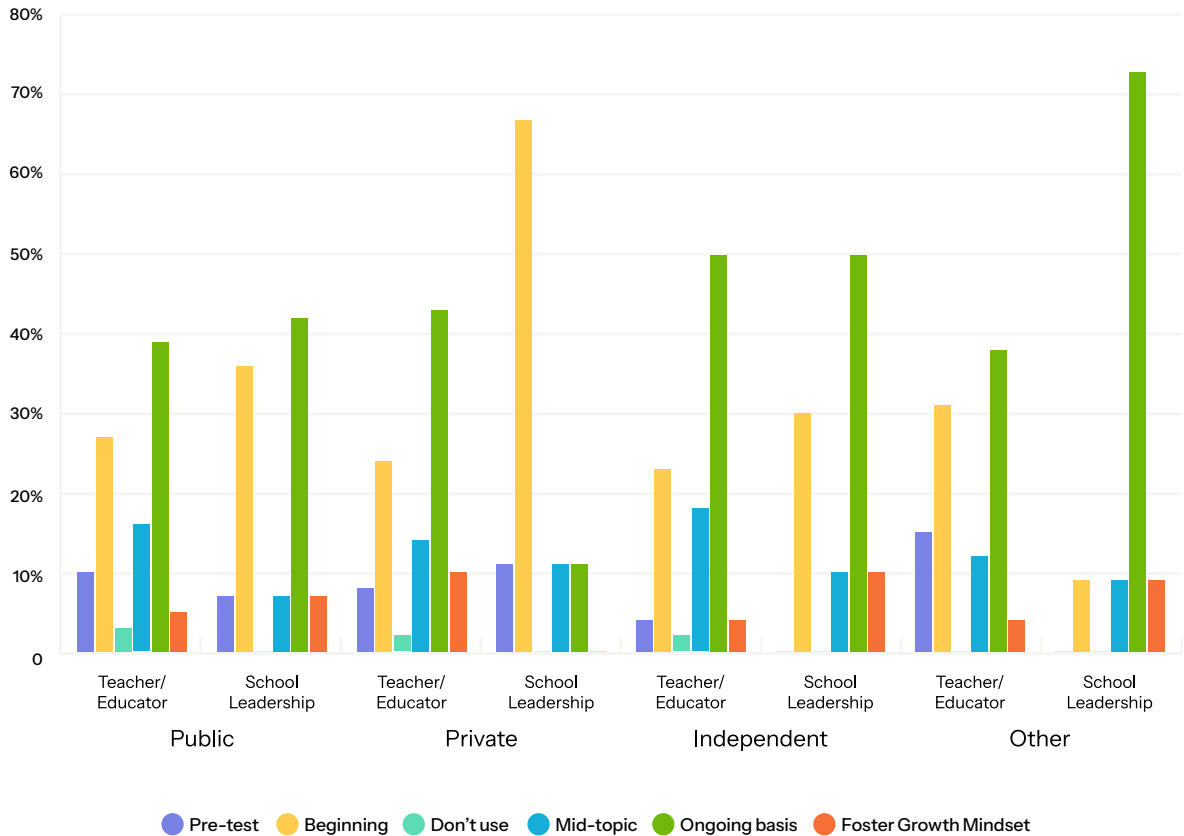
Survey Question 1: When do you most often use formative assessment?

We looked at how educators employ formative assessment at various instructional stages, each serving distinct pedagogical purposes. Regardless of the school type (public, private etc), the clear majority of educators are all using some form of FA.

While pre-test use was very low, we see a jump in using FA at the outset of topics, enabling educators to ascertain students’ prior knowledge and adapt subsequent instruction accordingly. The most prevalent practice is the continuous use of formative assessment throughout teaching units. This helps identify and address learning gaps and provides timely interventions tailored to individual student needs. These results didn’t change when breakout results for educators versus leaders as shown in the table on the next page.

“I have used EP assessments for pre- and post-assessment in class to differentiate students’ progress. The tool to generate reports highlights the growth of each student, along with whole-class progress and allows me to target specific areas for revision work for each student”

 Kew High School – Melbourne, VIC



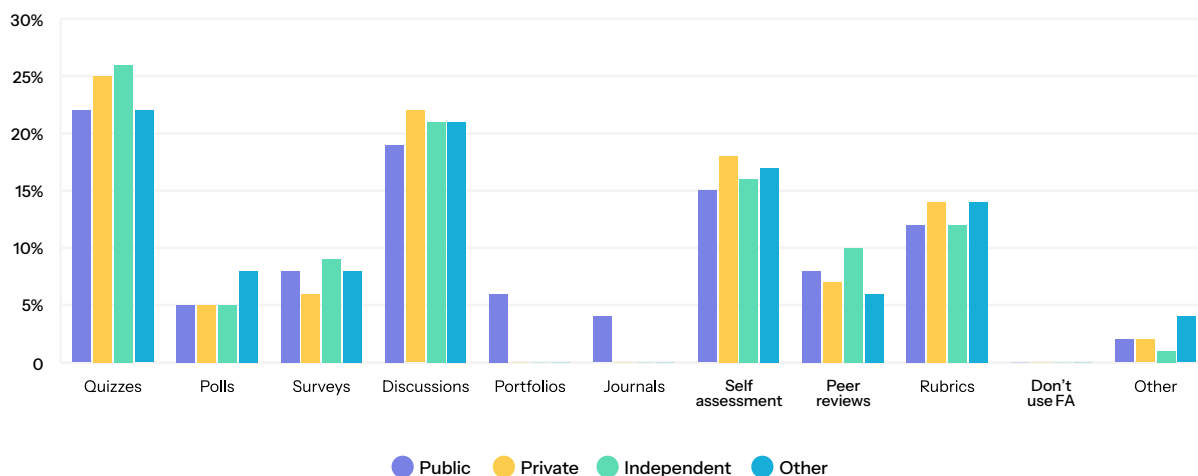
“Education Perfect Assessments have provided us with quick and easy formative assessment data to better work with those students who have not yet learned content, and to further extend those students who have.”

Gold Creek Senior School – Nicholls, ACT

“Great for regular formative assessments to catch struggling learners early and provide support. EP saves me a lot of time on marking with the self-marking assessments”

Whangaparāoa College – Auckland, NZ

Current Practices in Formative Assessment



Survey Question 2: Which of the following types of formative assessment are you currently using?

The survey highlights a wide range of formative assessment methods that educators utilise. Traditional methods such as quizzes and discussions are highly favoured, possibly due to their straightforward nature, ease of implementation, and ability to provide immediate feedback. Self-assessments also feature prominently, reflecting a strong educator preference for encouraging student reflection and self-regulation.

Conversely, more labour-intensive methods, such as journals and portfolios, are significantly underutilised despite their potential for deeper reflective learning and comprehensive student evaluations.

When examined alongside Question 5, this indicates that challenges related to time, resources, or training affect the outcome. The relatively infrequent use of peer assessments suggests that educators may lack confidence or encounter logistical barriers in facilitating effective peer-review processes.

Education Perfect's Quiz feature empowers teachers to create formative assessments with remarkable ease and flexibility. Educators can quickly generate a quiz based on any combination of learning materials, tailoring the content to specific topics, skill levels, or curriculum needs. Whether pulling questions from existing lessons or designing custom material, the platform simplifies the delivery of targeted, relevant quizzes that align with classroom instruction. This flexibility supports a more responsive teaching approach, enabling teachers to assess student understanding at the point of need.

The immediate feedback loop built into Education Perfect's quizzes also transforms assessment into a powerful learning tool. Students receive instant, actionable feedback on their performance, helping them clearly see their strengths and identify areas requiring further focus. At the same time, teachers gain a real-time view of student progress, highlighting both individual and class-wide gaps. Importantly, Education Perfect doesn't just stop at highlighting these gaps — it also generates automated, individualised next steps for each learner. By recommending targeted learning pathways based on quiz results, EP ensures that formative assessment becomes a springboard for continuous, personalised growth.

Perceived Effectiveness of Different Assessment Types

| FA Type | Overall | Public | Private | Independent | Other |
|------------------|---------|--------|---------|-------------|-------|
| Quizzes | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Discussions | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Self-Assessments | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Surveys | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Polls | 5 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| Rubrics | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Portfolios | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| Peer Reviews | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| Journals | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 |

Survey Question 3: Can you rank each of the following types of formative assessment in terms of their effectiveness at informing personalised learning progression? (1 is perceived as the most effective, 9 is the least effective)

Note: The purple cells denote differences compared to the overall ranking of effectiveness

These results show a remarkable consistency and alignment in the perceived effectiveness of different types of formative assessment between different school types, with only a minor swapping of places in a couple of areas, such as Peer Reviews and Journals, as seen in the table above.

Highest ranked

- Quizzes and discussions – these methods allow rich, detailed feedback, indicating educators value depth and specificity.
- Self-assessments – this highlights appreciation for student-centred learning strategies.

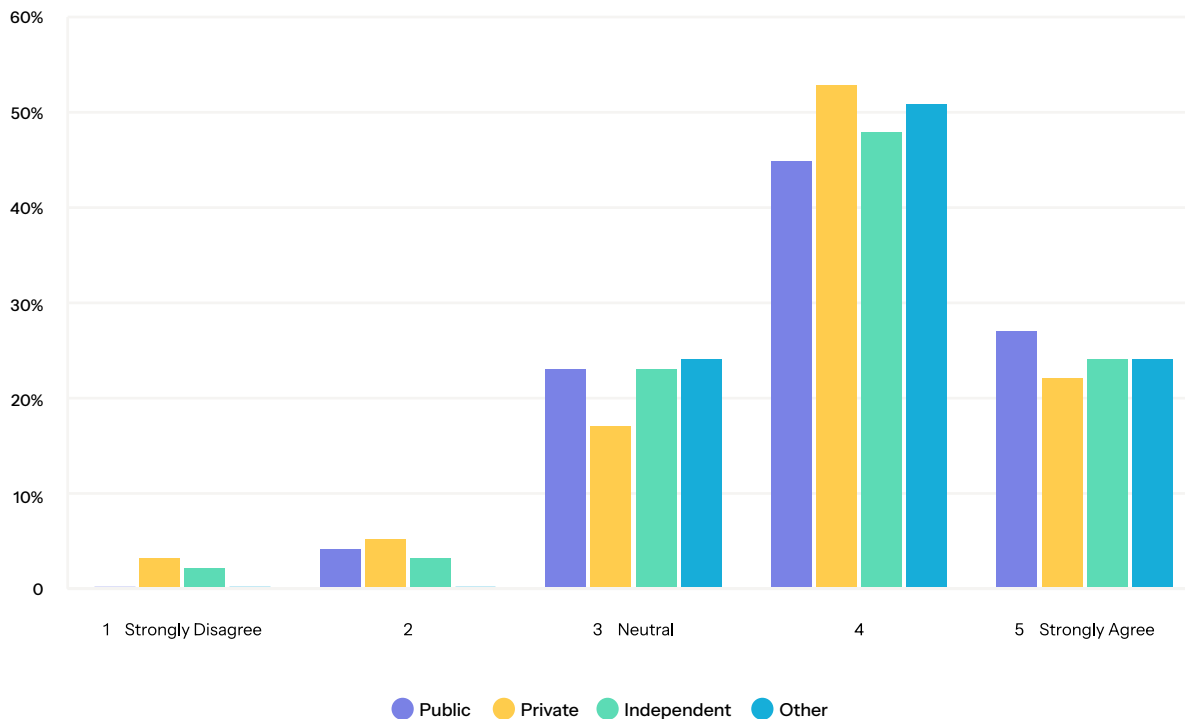
Lowest ranked

- Portfolios, Peer Reviews and Journals – this might reflect their limited capacity for detailed, actionable feedback compared to more qualitative methods

Interestingly, if we take the data from Question 2 in order from most used to least used and compare that to the perceived effectiveness of each type, we see Polls and Surveys rated as more effective than rubrics and peer reviews, but used significantly less. This is likely due to the lack of easy “out-of-the-box” ways to conduct them and quickly and usefully collate the data to turn it into action.

| Most Used | Effectiveness | Least Used | Effectiveness |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Quizzes | High | Peer Review | Low |
| Discussions | High | Surveys | Medium |
| Self-Assessments | High | Polls | Medium |
| Rubrics | Medium | Portfolios | Low |
| | | Journals | Low |

Educator Confidence in Using Formative Assessment Data



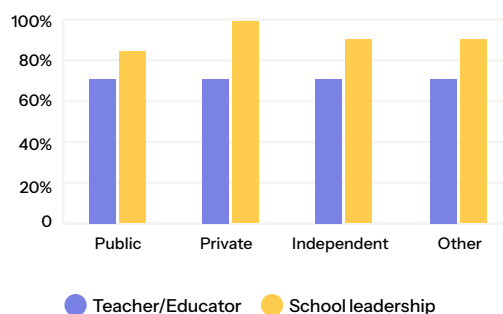
Survey Question 4: Please rate the following statement. "I can easily use the data I receive from formative assessment tasks to plan my teaching"

Overall, confidence among educators in leveraging formative assessment data to guide instruction is high at 73.2% either agreeing or strongly agreeing that they can easily use data to plan their teaching with no significant difference between the types of schools in these numbers.

However, just over a quarter (26.8%) express uncertainty (neutral) or difficulty (disagree/strongly disagree), which is a noteworthy proportion. This mixed confidence underscores the complex nature of translating formative assessment insights into instructional adjustments, possibly due to a lack of training in data analysis or the absence of supportive tools.

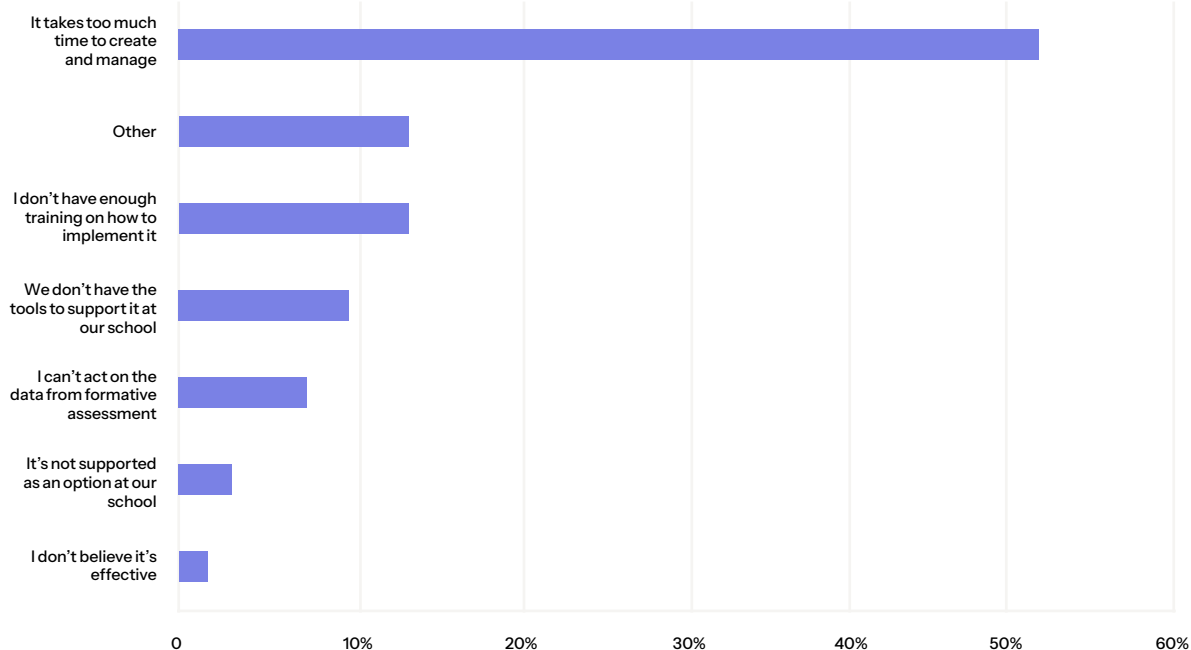
Mixed confidence levels indicate a significant opportunity for professional development focusing on data literacy and interpretive skills, complemented by tools to facilitate the practical use of formative assessment data.

When we look at the Agree/Strongly Agree data split between educators and leadership, though, a much higher proportion of leaders across the board (approx 17% overall) express confidence than educators.



This gap reinforces the importance of providing educators the tools and training needed to take advantage of the data in their planning to meet the expectations of leadership.

Barriers to Effective Formative Assessment



Survey Question 5: What are the challenges you face when it comes to formative assessment?

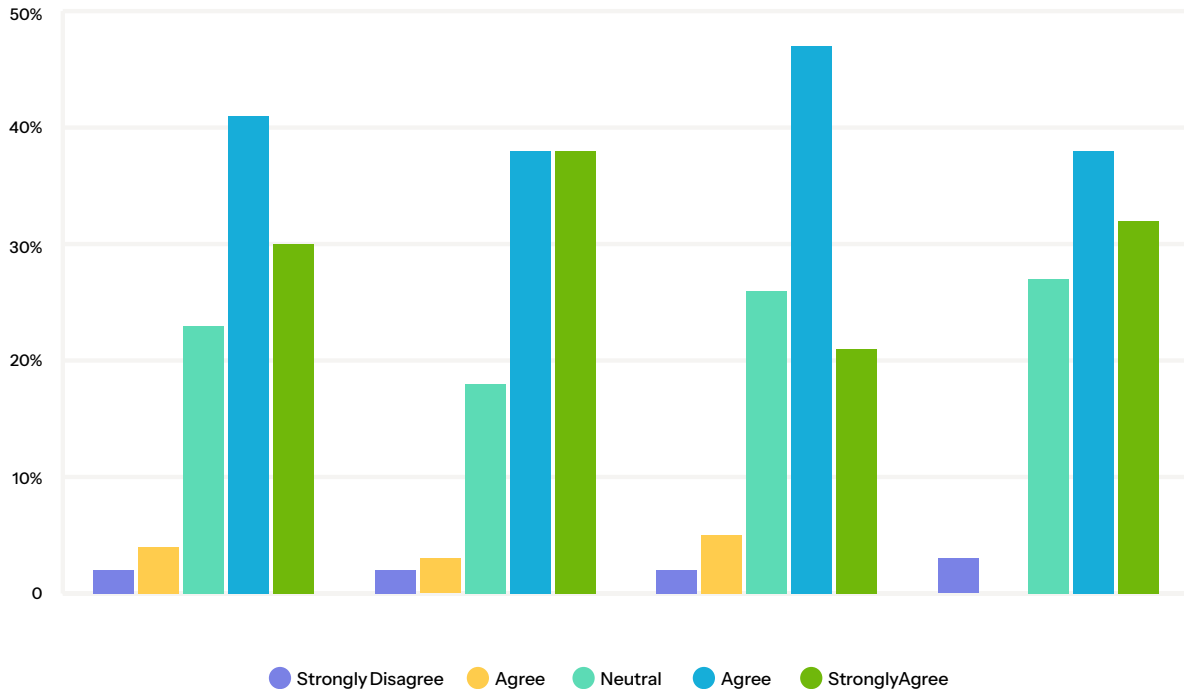
The survey identifies multiple practical barriers educators face in implementing formative assessment effectively. The predominant challenge reported is time constraints, with many educators struggling to integrate formative assessments regularly into their teaching schedules. Insufficient training and a lack of suitable tools also feature prominently as significant obstacles. This was a common alignment across school types.

Institutional support, although less frequently cited, remains crucial as its absence undermines educators' capability and willingness to incorporate formative assessment consistently into their practice. Minimal concerns about the effectiveness of formative assessment itself highlight educators' acceptance of its educational value, emphasising external rather than intrinsic barriers.

Addressing practical challenges such as time management, training opportunities, and access to appropriate assessment tools is vital for improving formative assessment implementation. While leadership can help address some of these practical challenges, technology solutions like Education Perfect also have a significant part to play in solving these issues.

Curriculum alignment and actionable insights are critical for assessment, ensuring that educators not only have access to the right tools but can also implement them efficiently, supported by training and insights that are clear and actionable.

The Role of Technology in Supporting Formative Assessment



Survey Question 6: Please rate the following statement. "I feel that technology-enabled tools and resources could better help me implement formative assessment practices in my teaching."

The survey responses reveal a positive educator sentiment toward technology's potential to enhance formative assessment practice, recognising the promise that technology holds in simplifying the assessment process, streamlining data collection and analysis, and enabling more targeted instructional interventions.

There is significant interest in technology that seamlessly integrates into existing teaching practices, minimising disruption while maximising efficiency. This positive disposition toward technology indicates educators' readiness to adopt digital solutions as long as they can overcome barriers such as time constraints and complexity.

Technology integration must be supportive and minimally disruptive to achieve widespread adoption and meaningful improvement in formative assessment practices.

Education Perfect is an intuitive, user-friendly platform that integrates seamlessly into educators' existing routines. Its customisable assessment tools and real-time analytics streamline formative assessment, allowing teachers to focus more on instruction and personalised student engagement, significantly enhancing assessment practices.

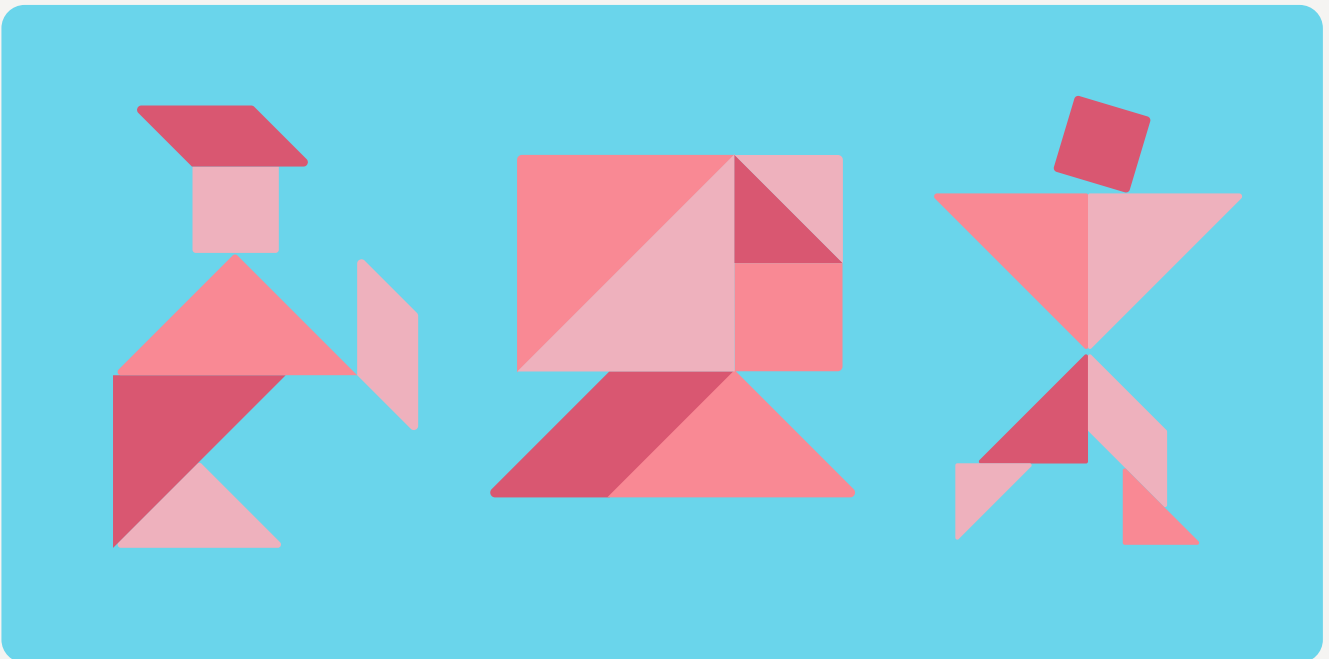
Conclusion & Recommendations

The survey data underscores a robust acknowledgment among educators of formative assessment's educational value alongside notable gaps in its practical implementation. While educators favour methods allowing for richer student feedback and reflective practices, real-world constraints often lead them to choose simpler, more manageable approaches.

Educators' strong interest in technology-enabled solutions suggests that addressing formative assessment barriers through targeted digital tools would substantially enhance teaching effectiveness

and learning outcomes. Recognising these dynamics is crucial for policymakers, school leaders, and edtech developers in strategic planning and resource allocation.

In addition, educators could engage in professional learning communities to share best practices and explore innovative formative assessment methods. By prioritising professional development, schools could equip educators with the skills and resources necessary to implement formative assessment effectively.



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