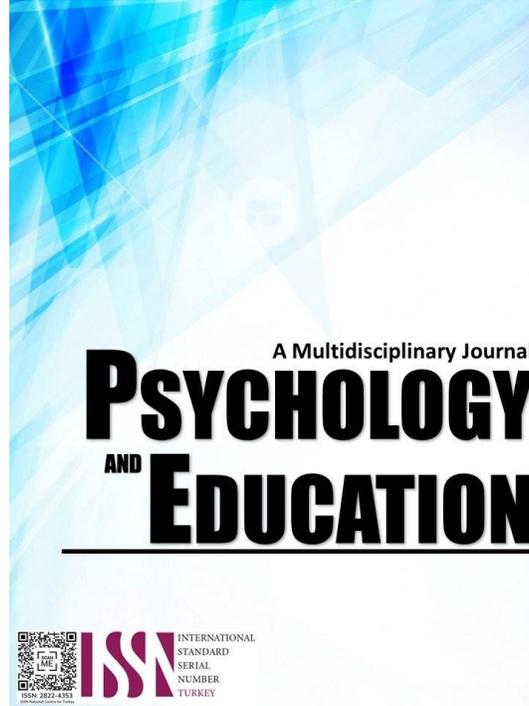


# BEYOND TESTS: INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENTS METHODS FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEARNING



## PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Volume: 29

Issue 5

Pages: 604-608

Document ID: 2024PEMJ2780

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14545996

Manuscript Accepted: 11-29-2024

## Beyond Tests: Innovative Assessments Methods for High School Learning

Nick C. Gador,\* Welvan F. Ogaban

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

In the realm of modern education, the evaluation of student learning transcended traditional testing methods to encompass a diverse array of assessment techniques. This qualitative study delved into the landscape of alternative assessment methods in high school education, aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of their implementation, impact, and challenges. Drawing upon insights from 25 high school teachers at Florentino Galang Sr. National High School, the research explored the utilization of projects, portfolios, presentations, class participation, peer evaluation, practical assessments, written assignments, debates, problem-solving tasks, and interviews/oral exams as assessment tools. Findings revealed a notable shift towards indigenized and contextualized assessment outputs, reflecting students' cultural heritage and traditions. Projects and portfolios emerged as prominent assessment tools, facilitating the demonstration of critical thinking, creativity, and longitudinal progress. Moreover, presentations, class participation, peer evaluation, and practical assessments were valued for promoting active learning, collaboration, and real-world application of knowledge. The study underscored the positive impact of non-test assessments on student learning outcomes, skill development, intrinsic motivation, personalized learning experiences, and long-term retention. However, challenges such as the transition period, training needs, time constraints, consistency in assessment, resource availability, resistance to change, feedback mechanisms, assessment bias, and technology integration were identified. Recommendations were proposed for educators, school administrators, policymakers, students, and parents to enhance assessment practices, promote student engagement, and foster a conducive learning environment in high school education. Overall, this study contributed valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on innovative assessment methods, highlighting their potential to enrich pedagogical practices and support holistic student development in the 21st-century learning landscape.

**Keywords:** *tests, innovative assessment methods, school learning*

### Introduction

In the context of the modern trend of education, assessment methods held a pivotal role in shaping pedagogical strategies, gauging learning goals, and nurturing overall student growth and development. Though traditional testing techniques were recurrently slated for the inability to offer a holistic view of students' abilities, bents, and future potentials, such as standardized tests and exams. This inadequacy has prompted educators, researchers, and representatives to examine deeper into alternative assessment methods that could provide a more nuanced understanding of high school students' various skills and competencies.

One aspect that challenges traditional testing methods was the focus on measuring rote memorization and recall rather than higher-order thinking skills. According to Black and Wiliam (1998), traditional assessments often emphasized factual recall and did not effectively capture students' abilities in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration—all of which were vital skills for success in the 21st-century workforce and society.

Additionally, traditional tests might not align well with the principles of authentic assessment, which emphasized real-world tasks and meaningful application of knowledge. Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) argued that authentic assessments, such as performance tasks, portfolios, and project-based assessments, offer richer insights into students' abilities to apply knowledge in authentic contexts, demonstrate skills, and showcase the unique talents and strengths. Performance assessments, for example, allowed students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge through tasks such as presentations, simulations, and experiments, providing a more authentic measure of their capabilities (Wiggins, 1998). Portfolios, on the other hand, offered a comprehensive collection of students' work over time, showcasing their progress, reflections, and achievements across various domains (Barrett, 2000).

Moreover, traditional testing methods could create a high-stakes environment that might induce stress and anxiety in students, potentially impacting their performance and mental well-being (Putwain & Symes, 2018). Alternative assessment approaches that emphasized continuous feedback, formative assessments, and self-assessment strategies could contribute to a more supportive and growth-oriented learning environment (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In response to these challenges, the researcher wanted to explore the variety of innovative assessment methods used in Florentino Galang Sr. National High School.

### Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the innovative assessment methods for high school learning. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do teachers evaluate students in high school apart from tests, and what benefits do they see in using these methods?
2. Do projects, portfolios, and other non-test assessments improve how students learn in high school, and how do students feel

about these methods?

3. What challenges do teachers face when using new grading methods in high school, and how can schools support teachers in using these methods effectively?

## Literature Review

### *Traditional Testing Methods*

Traditional testing methods, such as standardized tests and exams, have long been the cornerstone of assessing student learning in high school settings. While these methods offer efficiency and ease of administration, they often focus on assessing rote memorization and recall rather than higher-order thinking skills (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

### *Alternative assessment approaches*

Performance assessments involve tasks such as presentations, simulations, and experiments, providing a more authentic measure of students' capabilities beyond memorization (Wiggins, 1998). Portfolios compile students' work over time, showcasing their progress, reflections, and achievements across various domains, promoting deeper learning and self-assessment (Barrett, 2000).

## Methodology

### Participants

The respondents for this research included 25 high school teachers from diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds from Florentino Galang Sr. National High School. Inclusion criteria for teachers encompassed those who have experienced using alternative assessment methods in their classrooms.

### Instrument

Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were a pivotal part of this research methodology, engaging directly with high school teachers to gather qualitative insights. These interviews were designed to explore various dimensions crucial to understanding alternative assessment methods within high school education. Firstly, they delved into teachers' direct experiences with implementing alternative assessment methods and offered firsthand accounts of the practicalities, successes, and challenges encountered in the classroom. Additionally, the interviews specifically addressed the challenges faced by teachers when adopting new grading methods and striving to assess student performance holistically. This aspect aimed to uncover obstacles such as time constraints, aligning assessments with curriculum standards, and balancing qualitative assessments with traditional quantitative measures. Moreover, teachers' suggestions and insights regarding the improvement of support structures and resources for the effective implementation of alternative assessments were sought. By capturing these nuanced perspectives through qualitative engagements, this research aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practical implications and necessary support systems surrounding alternative assessment methodologies in high school settings.

### Procedure

Surveys were distributed electronically to teachers and students, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Interviews and focus group sessions were scheduled with participating teachers, recorded with consent, and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Data collection was also involved in gathering relevant documents, such as school assessment policies and guidelines for supplementary analysis.

### Ethical Considerations

Research ethics must be followed to the letter. Fundamentally, this supported principles vital to cooperative work, like trust, responsibility, mutual respect, and fairness, and helped define the real goals of the study, which included knowledge, truth, and mistake avoidance.

This study adhered to and respected the Belmont Report's research ethics guidelines in order to assure ethical research (2010). A person's autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence, justice, informed consent, integrity, confidentiality and data protection, and conflict of interest are all respected under these principles.

## Results and Discussion

This section presented the results yielded by the thematic analysis of the study *Beyond Tests: Innovative Assessment Methods for High School Learning*.

### Methods used by the teachers

In this study, a comprehensive examination of evaluation methods in high school beyond traditional tests was conducted. The methods explored include projects, portfolios, presentations, class participation, peer evaluation, practical assessments, written assignments, debates, problem-solving tasks, and interviews/oral exams.

## **Indigenized and contextualized outputs**

Based on the results, teachers used indigenous and contextualized outputs based on the students cultural and traditional heritage.

## **Projects and Portfolios**

Results indicated that projects and portfolios were widely used assessment methods by high school teachers. Projects allowed students to showcase their research, critical thinking, creativity, and presentation skills, while portfolios were provided a holistic view of students' progress and growth over time.

## **Presentations and Class Participation**

Teachers reported using presentations and class participation as assessment tools to evaluate students' oral communication, organization of ideas, collaboration skills, and overall engagement in classroom activities. These methods were noted for promoting active learning and communication skills among students.

## **Peer Evaluation and Practical Assessments**

Findings revealed that peer evaluation and practical assessments are integrated into classroom assessment practices. Peer evaluation fosters collaboration, self-regulation, and diverse perspectives, while practical assessments assess students' hands-on skills and real-world application of knowledge.

## **Written Assignments and Debates**

Teachers emphasized the importance of written assignments and debates in assessing students' writing skills, critical analysis, argumentation, and ability to defend viewpoints. These methods encouraged higher-order thinking and academic discourse among students.

## **Problem-Solving Tasks and Interviews/Oral Exams**

Lastly, problem-solving tasks and interviews/oral exams were identified as effective assessment strategies to evaluate students' problem-solving abilities, depth of understanding, and verbal communication skills. These methods aligned with real-world scenarios and promoted critical thinking skills.

## **Non-Test Assessments' Impact on High School Learning and Student Perceptions**

### **Improved learning Outcomes**

Projects, portfolios, and non-test assessments promote active learning, critical thinking, and practical application of knowledge, leading to deeper understanding and improved academic performance among students.

### **Skill Development**

These methods fostered the development of essential skills such as research skills, time management, organization, collaboration, communication, and creativity, which were valuable for academic success and future career readiness.

### **Real-world Relevance**

Engaging in authentic tasks and projects, students understand the practical relevance of their learning, making connections between classroom content and real-life situations, thus enhancing their motivation and interest in learning.

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

Many students found non-test assessments more engaging and meaningful than traditional tests, leading to increased intrinsic motivation to learn and excel in their studies.

### **Personalized Learning**

These methods allowed for personalized learning experiences where students could explore topics of interest, showcase their strengths, and pursue learning pathways aligned with their individual learning styles and preferences.

### **Long-term Retention**

Engaging in hands-on projects and creating portfolios required students to apply and revisit learned concepts over time, contributing to better retention of knowledge and skills compared to rote memorization for tests.

### **Positive Learning Environment**

Collaboration projects, group discussions, and peer evaluations foster a positive learning environment where students feel supported, valued, and encouraged to take ownership of their learning journeys.

## **Enhanced Self-Evaluation**

Through self-assessment tasks embedded in projects and portfolios, students developed self-awareness, reflective thinking skills, and the ability to assess their own strengths and areas for improvement, promoting lifelong learning habits.

## **Preparation for Higher Education**

Engaging in project-based and portfolio assessments simulated academic tasks encountered in colleges and universities, preparing students for higher education expectations and demands.

## **Diverse Perspectives**

Collaborative projects and group activities encouraged students to consider diverse perspectives, work effectively in teams, and appreciate the value of teamwork and collective problem-solving, skills essential for success in various professional settings.

## **Challenges faced by the teachers**

### **Transition Period**

Teachers faced challenges during the initial transition to new grading methods, including adjusting curriculum alignment, developing assessment rubrics, and familiarizing themselves with new grading criteria.

### **Training and Professional Development**

Lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities on new grading methods could hinder teachers' ability to effectively implement and assess student performance using these methods.

### **Time Constraints**

Designing and implementing new grading methods, especially those involving projects, portfolios, and performance assessments, required more time for planning, assessment, and providing meaningful feedback to students.

### **Consistency in Assessment**

Ensuring consistent and fair assessment practices across different classrooms and teachers was challenging, particularly with subjective assessment methods such as project evaluations and qualitative feedback.

### **Resource Availability**

Limited access to resources such as technology tools, materials for projects, and training materials on assessment strategies could impede teachers' ability to use new grading methods effectively.

### **Resistance to Change**

Some teachers faced resistance or reluctance to adopt new grading methods due to comfort with traditional grading practices, concerns about workload, or skepticism about the effectiveness of innovative assessment approaches.

### **Feedback and Communication**

Establishing clear communication channels and feedback mechanisms between teachers, students, parents, and school administrators regarding new grading methods was essential for transparency, understanding expectations, and addressing concerns or challenges effectively.

### **Assessment Bias**

Ensuring that new grading methods were free from biases related to student demographics, learning styles, or teacher subjectivity is crucial for fair and equitable assessment practices.

### **Technology Integration**

Incorporating technology tools and platforms for digital assessments, feedback delivery, and data analysis required training and support to ensure smooth integration and effective use by teachers.

### **Evaluation and Reflection**

Schools supported teachers by providing opportunities for ongoing evaluation, reflection, and collaboration on assessment practices. This included peer reviews, sharing best practices, and accessing research-based strategies to enhance the effectiveness of new grading methods.

## **Conclusions**

Building upon the findings of this study, several overarching conclusions could be drawn regarding the impact of non-test assessment



methods in high school education. Firstly, non-test assessments played a significant role in enhancing skill development crucial for academic success and future career readiness. These methods, including projects, portfolios, and practical assessments, contributed to the development of essential skills such as research, time management, organization, collaboration, communication, and creativity among students. Secondly, engagement in authentic tasks and projects not only enhanced students' understanding of practical relevance but also fostered intrinsic motivation to excel in their studies. This intrinsic was drawn stems from the meaningfulness and authenticity of the assessment tasks, encouraging students to actively participate and invest in their learning experiences. Lastly, non-test assessment methods contributed to creating a positive learning environment conducive to self-evaluation and reflective thinking. Collaborative projects and self-assessment tasks embedded in assessments promote ownership of learning journeys, nurture collaborative skills, and develop critical thinking skills as students reflect on their progress and areas for improvement. Overall, these conclusions highlighted the multifaceted benefits of non-test assessment methods in fostering holistic skill development, intrinsic motivation, and a positive learning atmosphere in high school settings.

## References

- An, H., & Carr, M. (2017). Using learning analytics to understand student learning experiences in interactive eBooks. *Computers & Education*, 114, 138-149.
- An, H., & Carr, M. (2017). Using learning analytics to understand student learning experiences in interactive eBooks. *Computers & Education*, 114, 138-149.
- Barrett, H. C. (2000). Create your own online electronic portfolio. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 27(7), 14-18.
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7-74.
- Darling-Hammond, L., et al. (2019). Pathways to new accountability through the Every Student Succeeds Act. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.
- Putwain, D. W., & Symes, W. (2018). Stress and anxiety. In T. J. Owens, S. E. Waring, & R. B. Andriessen (Eds.), *Psychology for the Classroom: E-Learning* (pp. 172-188). Routledge.
- Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. Jossey-Bass.

## Affiliations and Corresponding Information

### **Nick C. Gador**

Pres. Osmeña Elementary School  
Department of Education – Philippines

### **Welvan F. Ogaban**

Florentino Galang Sr. National High School  
Department of Education – Philippines