




Exploring the impact of peer-to-peer assessment on student performance and social interaction: Insights from teachers and students in primary education

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effects of peer-to-peer assessment in primary education by investigating the experiences and perspectives of in-service teachers and their students. The research involved twelve in-service teachers who shared their opinions and challenges regarding the implementation of peer-to-peer assessment. A descriptive methodology was employed to study fourth-grade students and teachers across primary schools in Kosovo, using focus groups and questionnaires to gather data. The findings indicate that teachers perceive peer-to-peer assessment positively believing it enhances student performance. Correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship ($r=0.823$) between the frequency of this assessment and improved student outcomes. Students also reported benefits such as better social relationships and increased collaboration. The study concludes that peer-to-peer assessment in primary education can lead to improved academic results and social interactions. Teachers recommend informing parents about the assessment's purpose and methods and providing professional training for both parents and students to ensure constructive feedback. Effective communication with parents and adequate preparation for feedback are essential to overcome potential challenges and maximizing the benefits of this assessment approach.

Contribution/Originality: This study is original in its holistic approach examining not just academic performance but also emotional and social development through peer assessment. It specifically addresses implementation challenges in primary education providing unique insights that inform effective practices and strategies for teachers and policymakers.

1. INTRODUCTION

This study is distinctive in its focus on peer-to-peer assessment within the context of Kosovo's primary education system integrating the perspectives of both teachers and students. Unlike prior research, it examines the practical challenges faced by teachers and underscores the importance of parental involvement and training to optimize the feedback process.

Education is crucial for shaping a child's future encompassing not only academic achievement but also emotional, social, and physical development. The effectiveness of assessment practices is vital for this comprehensive growth as they impact various aspects of a student's development. The selection of suitable assessment methods is essential as it directly influences student learning outcomes and overall development.

Peer assessment has received significant attention where students evaluate each other's work, provide constructive feedback, and use that feedback to improve their performance. This approach fosters a collaborative

learning environment, motivating students to engage with their peers' work while simultaneously enhancing their own learning experiences.

The objective of this research is to explore the role and impact of peer assessment on the academic performance of primary school students. This study aims to examine how peer assessment influences learning processes and outcomes in primary education. Additionally, it seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of peer assessment and identify the challenges faced during its implementation across various schools.

1.1. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

- Main Research Question: What role does peer assessment play in the performance of primary school students?
 1. To what extent is peer assessment used by primary school teachers during the teaching process?
 2. How do primary school students engage with peer assessment during their learning activities?
 3. What challenges do teachers and students have when implementing peer assessment in the classroom?
 4. How do primary education teachers perceive the role of peer assessment in student learning?
 5. What is the effectiveness of peer assessment in enhancing the learning process?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment in Education: A critical examination of peer assessment plays a pivotal role in education, shaping how effectively students learn and develop. It involves evaluating students' understanding, providing constructive feedback and adapting instructional strategies to meet diverse learning needs (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Peer evaluation has become well-known among methods of assessment for its ability to foster student autonomy and involvement by motivating students to examine and provide feedback on one another's work (Falchikov, 2005).

2.1. The Role of Peer Assessment in Enhancing Learning Outcomes

Peer assessment stands out among assessment techniques due to its unique capacity to engage students actively in the learning process. This method involves students assessing their peers' work and providing feedback, a practice that has been shown to significantly enhance learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Students develop critical thinking skills, improve their ability to give and receive constructive criticism, and refine both their academic and social skills through participation in peer assessment (Falchikov, 2005).

2.2. Critical Evaluation of Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is widely acknowledged for its capacity to enhance student learning by promoting engagement, self-regulation, and autonomy (Cushing, Abbott, Lothian, Hall, & Westwood, 2011). It also aids in developing student learning and encourages ownership of the assessment process (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011).

Topping (1998) originally defined peer assessment as evaluating peers' work including written assignments, presentations, and portfolios. Recent interpretations emphasize that effective peer assessment involves not only evaluative comments but also comprehensive feedback (Chin, 2016) and interactive discussions contributing to deeper learning (Li & Gao, 2016).

Numerous studies have highlighted the advantages of peer assessment. For instance, Hu (2005) found that students appreciated the opportunity to learn from their peers' work, often gaining new insights and perspectives. Engaging students in the assessment process enhances their sense of empowerment and equips them with valuable skills for professional development and lifelong learning (Planas Lladó et al., 2013). Similarly, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) noted that peer feedback fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills through constructive dialogue.

Zhao (2014) also reported that collaborative peer review can enhance writing quality and overall student performance reinforcing the academic benefits of this practice.

2.3. Challenges in Implementing Peer Assessment

Despite its benefits, peer assessment has several challenges that need to be addressed for effective implementation. A primary concern is the reliability of peer feedback as students may lack the necessary experience or objectivity to provide constructive critiques (Nancy Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Teachers often find it difficult to incorporate peer assessment into their teaching methods, frequently due to concerns about the validity of feedback generated by students (Double, McGrane, & Hopfenbeck, 2020). Moreover, peer assessment's potential has been acknowledged but its use in primary school and efficacy in many subject areas have not been fully investigated (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

2.4. Gaps in the Literature

Current literature offers valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of peer assessment but highlights the following several significant gaps:

1. Extent of Implementation: Research on the prevalence of peer assessment across diverse educational settings and how its application varies in different contexts is limited (Adachi, Tai, & Dawson, 2018).
2. Teacher and Student Experiences: More in-depth investigations are needed to understand the specific challenges faced by both teachers and students when implementing peer assessment (Carless et al., 2011).
3. Effectiveness Across Subjects: Additional research is required to evaluate the impact of peer assessment across various subjects and its influence on student performance and learning outcomes (Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, & Struyven, 2010).

Teachers' attitudes towards peer assessment are critical for its successful integration. While teachers acknowledge the benefits such as improved self-regulation, writing skills, and engagement challenges persist, particularly concerning the reliability of feedback and students' ability to provide constructive critiques (Li & Gao, 2016). The perceptions of teachers significantly influence how peer assessment is implemented in classrooms and its effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes.

Empirical studies demonstrate that students also gain multiple benefits from peer assessment. For instance, Swedish students reported valuing the opportunity to learn from their peers' work, finding it easier to understand and critique the work of classmates with similar skill levels (Carlsson Hauff & Nilsson, 2022). Additionally, students felt more at ease discussing feedback with peers rather than teachers leading to more meaningful and comprehensive dialogues about their work (Baker, 2009). They were more motivated to assist each other in mastering the subject matter (Alzaid, 2017).

This study aims to fill these existing gaps by examining the role of peer assessment in primary education focusing on its implementation, challenges, and effectiveness. This research seeks to enhance the understanding of how peer assessment can be effectively integrated to improve student learning and educational practices by providing insights into these areas.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative data to investigate the role of peer assessment in student performance. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with teachers while quantitative data was obtained from student questionnaires. This design provides a comprehensive understanding of the impact of peer assessment from both teacher and student perspectives.

3.2. Research Population

The research population includes all students and teachers in elementary schools within the Kaçanik municipality in Kosovo. A systematic sampling method was employed to select fourth-grade students and teachers from every third elementary school as listed by the Directorate of Education in Kaçanik. Table 1 outlines the schools included in the sample for this study detailing the names of the four selected schools, the number of teachers and students at each, and their respective locations. Emin Duraku, an urban school has the highest number of participants with 7 teachers and 143 students. The other three schools Nazmi Osmani, Ali Asllani, and Qamil Ilazi are situated in rural areas and have fewer participants. Nazmi Osmani has 2 teachers and 30 students, Ali Asllani has 1 teacher and 19 students, and Qamil Ilazi includes 2 teachers and 42 students.

Table 1. The school names, number of teachers, number of students, and their respective locations.

School names	Number of teachers	Number of students	Location
Emin Duraku	7	143	Urban
Nazmi Osmani	2	30	Rural
Ali Asllani	1	19	Rural
Qamil Ilazi	2	42	Rural

3.3. Instruments

Data collection used two primary instruments: a semi-structured interview guide for teachers and a questionnaire for students.

- **Teacher Interviews:** A focus group of 12 fourth-grade teachers participated in interviews designed to explore their experiences and perceptions of peer assessment. The interview session lasted 1 hour and 25 minutes covering 13 questions related to the research questions and objectives of the study.
- **Student Questionnaires:** A structured questionnaire was administered to 234 fourth-grade students comprising the following five sections:
 - Section I: Demographic Information: Collected general data such as gender, age, and school.
 - Section II: Implementation of Peer Assessment: Examined the practice of peer assessment in classrooms.
 - Section III: Challenges of Peer Assessment: Identified difficulties students faced during peer assessment.
 - Section IV: Importance of Peer Assessment: Gathered students' views on the significance of peer assessment.
 - Section V: Effectiveness of Peer Assessment: Evaluated how effective peer assessment was in the classroom setting.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The research began by focusing on the main research question and sub-questions, ensuring they aligned with the study's objectives. Data were collected through teacher focus group interviews and student questionnaires, allowing teachers to share their perspectives on the role of peer assessment in student performance and its practical implications. Simultaneously, students provided their perspectives on the positive and negative aspects of peer assessment including the relief or challenges they experience during its application in lessons.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data from the teacher interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to extract themes and insights. Quantitative data from the student questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to produce statistical analyses that further informed the study's conclusions.

3.5.1. Reliability Analysis

In the reliability statistic from Cronbach's alpha , we notice that the alpha reliability coefficient shows the value of 0.815% in which case we can conclude that the meter we used to measure the role of peer assessment of students in school performance is very reliable. At the moment, when the value of the alpha coefficient is $0.80 \leq \alpha \leq 1.00$, the meter has a high degree of reliability (Hamel, 2015).

Table 2 presents the reliability statistics of the variables analyzed in the study showing a Cronbach's alpha.

Table 2. The reliability statistics, showing a Cronbach's alpha.

Reliability statistics	
Cronbach's alpha	N of items
0.815	21

3.5.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 3. The correlation statistics between two variables.

Correlations ^a			
		I assess the assignments of the classmate.	The assessment of assignments by my classmate affects the improvement of my school results.
I assess the assignments of the classmate.	Pearson correlation	1	0.823
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.015
The assessment of assignments by my classmate affects the improvement of my school results.	Pearson correlation	0.823	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.015	

Note: a. Listwise N=234.

The correlation analysis or more specifically the bivariate approach was used to determine the relationship between two factors such as the first variable, the usage of peer evaluation in the classroom, and the second variable, the student's academic performance.

According to Table 3, there is a strong, positive and significant relationship in which the correlation coefficient is $r=0.823$ which means that with the increase of one variable, the other variable also increases or with the increase of frequency of the use of peer assessment in the classroom and the school results of the students also increase.

3.6. Interview Data Analysis

This research also aimed to understand the attitudes, beliefs and perspectives of the primary teachers in addition to understanding the implementation by the students, the way of functioning in the classrooms during the learning process, and the challenges and difficulties they encounter. Therefore, the issues that were addressed during the interview were also the challenges that teachers face as well as their perspective regarding peer assessment in the future.

The data that were extracted from the focus group interviews provide a narrative description of knowledge and experiences with peer assessment practices during the learning process.

Table 4 presents the topics and categories associated with peer assessment throughout the learning process.

Table 4. The topics and categories related to peer assessment during the learning process.

Topics	Categories	Description
Peer assessment during the learning process	Comprehension and application	Students often assess each other's assignments in class. Peer evaluation is frequently used in mathematics and other courses; it can occasionally be used to clarify the assessment criteria that serve as the foundation for students' evaluations so that they can evaluate their classmates' assignments.
Difficulties and challenges of peer assessment	Challenges and perspectives	Creating a culture and habit of collaboration. Encouraging competition and the desire to be first. Misunderstandings between students are present.
The importance of peer assessment Benefits from peer assessment Who benefits what?	Its role in student performance.	Development of skills and capabilities. Accuracy and correctness. A sense of belonging and reliability. It facilitates the teachers' jobs and provides more time.
The effect of peer assessment	The impact on the students' performance.	Improved social relations in the classroom. Confidence boost. Improved overall performance.

From the thematic analysis that I have carried out, I can conclude that almost all education teachers apply peer assessment during the teaching process, mostly in the subject of mathematics and the Albanian language and talk about the positive role it has as a technique in the overall performance of their students while the difficulties and issues they experienced were few and solved at the time of their development.

3.7. Application of Peer Assessment During the Learning Process: Students' Understanding of This Learning Technique

Peer assessment is a natural extension of the transition from a teacher-centered to a student-centered mode of education that emphasizes the active engagement of students in their learning, student responsibility, metacognitive skills and collaborative dialogue on learning (Rotsaert, Panadero, Schellens, & Raes, 2018) to have this effect, it requires the proper application by teachers and students. Teachers and students must know it well, understand it exactly and then apply it in the classroom. Teachers have given the following statements regarding the application and understanding of this technique:

"I practice peer assessment in the classroom almost every day. It mostly happens in math class, since it's easier for students to check their classmate's assignments. The students already know how to assess their classmate's assignment, since they have been doing this since the third grade, however, in cases where they are confused about an assignment, of course, I assist them. When they assess their classmate's assignments, they mark them with the letter W or C, i.e., wrong or correct." (interviewee no. 1).

In class, students often assess each other's assignments and have a lot of fun. I want to emphasize that my class discovered this technique on its own, so they were the initiators of its practice as they always used to tell me; 'Shall we assess the classmate's assignments?' We apply peer assessment more in the subject of mathematics. There are cases when they make marks in each other's books or notebooks but there are also cases when they make a verbal description.' (interviewee no. 5).

'In my class too, peer assessment is applied but the students always seem to need feedback from us. At the moment when their assignment is assessed and mistakes are found, they immediately react and come to ask me,

though the criteria are clear. Sometimes, they need to be assured. Depending on the need, we practice it in all subjects. Whenever they assess each other's assignments, they use the colors green and red. (interviewee no. 6)

"We practice peer assessment 3 times a week but sometimes even more. Students are used to it and want to do it continuously. Often, there is no need at all for me to give them instructions and to repeat to them the criteria and how they will assess the classmate's assignments. In most cases, it happens that the students do not mark whether they have done the assignments correctly or not but express themselves verbally and wait for each other to correct the mistake. We practice peer assessment not only in pairs but also in groups. Mostly in the subject of mathematics. (interviewee no. 10).

4. DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this study was to assess the impact of peer assessment on students' academic performance drawing on the experiences of both teachers and students who have practiced this educational strategy. This study aimed to identify the challenges and difficulties faced by teachers and students during the implementation of peer assessment while also highlighting its positive aspects and areas needing further development.

The literature underscores the significant role of peer assessment in enhancing classroom learning. This study aligns with those findings confirming that peer assessment contributes positively to student performance. Statements from teachers and students who regularly engage in this practice reveal that peer assessment promotes cognitive, social, and emotional development which in turn leads to improve academic results.

For instance, in Great Britain, the importance of peer assessment is widely recognized with emphasis placed on adapting the assessment methods to suit different subjects. Teachers are encouraged to carefully implement these strategies, tailoring them to specific learning activities (Topping, 2021). In Hong Kong, the emphasis has been on training teachers to provide effective feedback enabling them to guide students through the peer assessment process more effectively (Bryant & Carless, 2010). A study conducted in New Zealand highlights the importance of diverse feedback types in peer and self-assessment practices emphasizing the need for strategies that promote comprehensive feedback particularly at the process and self-regulation levels (Harris, Brown, & Harnett, 2015). Effective feedback is critical for student learning and development necessitating ongoing efforts to improve how feedback is delivered and used (Power & Tanner, 2023). Participants in this study reiterated that successful peer assessment relies on students understanding the assessment criteria and their ability to provide and receive feedback constructively. The study found that peer assessment creates a collaborative classroom environment where students engage in meaningful discussions, establish social relationships, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. These interactions not only enhance academic performance but also promote responsibility, self-assessment and reflection further contributing to positive learning outcomes.

Key elements for successful implementation of peer assessment include promoting best practices, fostering a positive classroom culture, establishing clear assessment criteria, familiarizing students with these criteria, informing parents about the peer assessment process and providing adequate training for both teachers and students on delivering feedback.

However, the study also revealed several challenges. Teachers and students reported difficulties managing peer assessment particularly when students reacted negatively to feedback from their peers. Additionally, misunderstandings with parents who sometimes questioned the professionalism of teachers and the appropriateness of delegating assessment responsibilities to students posed further challenges. Teachers suggested that improved communication with parents about the purpose and benefits of peer assessment could help address these concerns.

In a nutshell, this study confirms that peer assessment plays a crucial role in enhancing student performance by fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment despite the challenges faced during its implementation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study illustrates that peer assessment significantly enhances students' academic performance by supporting their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Both teachers and students recognize its role in promoting collaboration, critical thinking and accountability. Although challenges such as student reactions and misunderstandings with parents exist, the positive impact of peer assessment on learning outcomes highlights its value as an effective teaching strategy.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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