Teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment within the Italian higher education system

Serafina Pastore*, Monica Pentassuglia**
University of Bari*, University of Verona**

Abstract

Nowadays, higher education systems are being called to reconsider the aims of assessment if we want that students develop skills and competencies for their future personal and professional life. Although assessment holds an essential position in the higher education field, educational research still seems inchoative. Current studies, especially on an international level, are moving towards the revision of traditional modalities of testing, the individuation of alternative forms of assessment, and above all, the analysis of representations and conceptions that teachers and students have about assessment. The present research is oriented towards this last point: the case study, conducted at the School of Education at University of Bari, Italy, analyses teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment. Main results indicate a great level of confusion about assessment both for teachers and students. Several suggestions are discussed for further improvements in the higher education context.

Key words

Teachers' conceptions; students' conceptions; assessment; higher education.

Introduction

Over time, higher education systems have been exposed to deep and radical transformations. Different processes such as, standardisation, diversification, privatisation, and internationalisation have brought deep institutional changes (Brown, Glasner, 2003). Many are the problems that higher education systems have had to deal with: first of all the pervasive attention on teaching-learning quality considered both on an institutional and individual level. This concept brings together the most varied aspects such as curricula design, attention to learning context, students' services support (OECD, 2012), and the recognition of a different kind of assessment of students' learning outcomes (Adam, 2004). More specifically, the competence-based approach has demonstrated how traditional testing modalities are, sometimes, not effective and suitable for assessment of complex objects such as lifelong learning, reflexivity, and problem solving. The higher education systems are being called to reconsider the aims of assessment so that students may develop skills and competencies for their future personal and professional life (Gijbels et al., 2014).

The innovation of Dublin Descriptors (Liu et al., 2012; Biggs, Tang, 2011) has led to a progressive revision of traditional testing modalities. The tension between the assessment of standardised outcomes and the assessment of students' achievement has become more evident. In this vein, feedback and assessment have been recognised as very important elements not only to verify achievement levels, but also to support students' learning.

The need of a more transparent assessment process that should be aligned with learning outcomes if, on the one hand, has requested a rigorous and solid process, on the other one, has highlighted the opportunity of an assessment designed to:

Citation

- Support students' learning (Sambell et al., 2013);
- Further students' self-regulation (Cassidy, 2011);
- Be aware of how assessment is influential on learning and on personal and professional development (Boud, 2006).

The dissemination of outcome-based education (Astin, Antonio, 2012) highlights how important is the review of educational policies, higher education systems organisation, and instructional design. In this perspective, the emphasis on learning outcomes has led to a shift «from educational inputs to outputs in form of direct or indirect evidence of student achievement as a measure of quality university education» (Carless, 2015:7). In the European area, the widespread diffusion of Dublin Descriptors (following the Bologna Process, 1999) has led to an assessment that is more transparent and aligned with learning outcomes (Biggs, Tang, 2011). Hence, the need to define a different assessment model for the teaching-learning process. Therefore, changes are required on how teachers, but also students, think about assessment. This raises a variety of questions: How much does assessment improve students learning? Do teachers provide useful, appropriate, and timely feedback? Do they allow students to recognise and understand elements that can lead to an improvement in their performance?

There is a strong drive internationally in higher education to support a new assessment culture. Remarkable are the efforts to outline a different kind of assessment that should be more sustainable and useful in order to foster students' learning process (Boud, 2006). Current studies are moving towards the revision of traditional testing, the individuation of alternative forms of assessment and the analysis of conceptions that teachers and students have of assessment. This study is oriented towards the last point.

The attempts to introduce assessment and evaluation processes within the Italian higher education system can be found in the early '80s. However, the University Reform Law n. 240/2010 has carried out a deep change in the organization of the Italian higher education system. In line with this change, assessment and evaluation processes have been recognised as crucial aspects in order to monitor and control the higher education system. Since 2004 the Italian higher education system has been interested by radical transformations. Reforms in Italian higher education system have tried to deal with economic, policy, and social innovations. The University Reform Law n. 240/2010 has definitely introduced a new idea of university through different processes of assessment and evaluation that have affected three main areas: teaching-learning quality, scientific research, and administrative management. Courses structure, responsibilities, contents, and organisation of academic courses have been suddenly revised and changed in order to pursue expected learning outcomes. The design courses based on learning outcomes have brought substantial transformations for the alignment of teaching, learning, and assessment. This process has led a new interest for evaluation and assessment. Educational research has been carried out in order to understand assessment practice and within these studies, great attention has been reserved on teachers' and students' beliefs and conceptions.

Following the national reform, assessment practice in the Italian higher education system has become more complex, serves different purposes, and involves various stakeholders because it tries to combine two main instances:

1. The implementation, for the first time, of a national quality assurance system;
2. The requests for a teaching-learning process designed in order to promote learning outcomes aligned with the Dublin Descriptors. The implant of learning outcomes has a deep impact on teaching, learning, and assessment and arouses a matter debate and contrasting views.

Assessment practice is substantially different from what it was few decades ago. In order to understand these changes we have tried to analyse how the Italian teachers and students think about assessment and have adapted (or not) to new institutional policy and culture of assessment.

Teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education
Assessment is a many-faceted concept. In common parlance assessment as applied in education describes the measurement of what individuals know and do. Assessment can be defined as a 'general term enhancing all methods customarily used to appraise performance of an individual or a group. It may refer to a broad appraisal including many sources of evidence and many aspects of a pupil's knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes; or to a particular occasion or instrument. An assessment instrument may be any method or procedure, formal or informal, for producing information about pupils: e.g., [sic] a written test paper, an interview schedule, a measurement task using equipment, a class quiz' (Gipps et al., 1995:10-11).

The new interest in assessment within the higher education field arises from the recognition of the role that assessment may play both in learning and development of professional competence (Lew et al., 2010). It is also the Assessment *for* Learning perspective that has brought a new emphasis on the assessment. The Assessment *for* Learning perspective asserts that for a really responsive assessment teachers need to articulate a practical, theoretical, and sound approach helping their students achieving more and become better learners (Sambell et al., 2013).

Assessment *for* Learning can be defined as an assessment environment that is rich both in formal and informal feedback, provides opportunities to try out and practise knowledge, skills, and understandings, uses authentic or relevant assessment tasks, foster students' autonomy and independence, balances between formative and summative assessment (McDowell et al., 2011). As D. Wiliam stated, an assessment functions formatively «to the extent that evidence about students' achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, students or their peers to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better» (Wiliam 2011:43). Formative assessment is a process of monitoring student knowledge and understanding during instruction in order to give useful feedback and make timely changes in instruction to ensure students' growth.

Assessment appears to be closely related both to teaching and learning. If assessment has such impact, it should deserve greater attention from teachers and students themselves. The aim of making students responsible self-regulated learners implies the active involvement of students in the assessment process so that they understand what is required for them, such as the criteria and standards to be applied and how to get good results (Rust et al., 2005).

There are several questions that, at this point, are raised: How does assessment improve students' learning? Do teachers provide helpful, adequate, and timely feedback? Do teachers allow their students to recognise and understand which elements can lead to an improvement in their performance? (Brookhart, Bronowicz, 2003; Elwood, Klendowski, 2002).

Assessment is important for learning because it conveys what is really important to learn, has a powerful effect on what and how to learn, and reinforces students' learning strategies: this idea has led to a review of kinds of common assessment formats in higher education (Walvoord, 2004).

Teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment: a rationale
Current studies, especially at international level, are moving towards the revision of the traditional ways of testing, identification of alternative forms of assessment, and, above all, the analysis of

conceptions and representations that teachers and students have of assessment (Brown, Hirschfeld, 2008; 2007; Brown, 2006; Struyven et al., 2005). This study is related to the latter aspect.

With the term 'conception' we mean all that a teacher or a student understands, feels, and thinks about the rationale of complex systems like education process. Conceptions, as cognitive structures, include beliefs, meanings, concepts, preferences, but there are also other elements to be considered, such as personal, social, educational, and contextual background: all these aspects can affect teaching and learning practice. Conceptions work as a framework by through individuals see, analyse, and realise an action within a specific learning context. Beliefs, perceptions, and conceptions become a lens to read the situation and interpret a teaching-learning practice. In this perspective, several studies have tried to analyse the teaching-learning process through the conceptions of main actors involved (teachers and students). We can recall studies on learning conceptions (Entwistle, 1997; Marton, Saljö, 1976), on teaching (Trigwell, Prosser, 1997; Kember, 1997; Gow, Kember, 1993; Pratt, 1992; Samuelowicz, Bain, 1992), on curriculum (Cheung, 2000), on self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Guskey, Passaro, 1994; Bandura, 1977), on personal epistemology (Schraw et al., 2002; Wood, Kardash, 2002), and on assessment (Brown, 2004; Stamp, 1987).

Conceptions (as a whole of meanings related to psychological objects or social phenomena) and personal conceptions of assessment have a deep influence on teaching, learning, and also on curriculum and teaching-learning efficacy.

Conceptions of teaching, learning, and assessment can make a strong effect on how teachers teach and on what students learn. Conceptions are connected to assessment practice and to the selection of better strategies. Educational research and studies are trying to understand if teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment can be analysed in the life context of the classroom. This represents a very challenging research object because conceptions of assessment are so complex, hierarchical, multidimensional, and interrelated (Brown, Hirschfeld, 2007; 2006; Brown, 2006; 2004).

Starting from that framework the present study aimed to explore teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment in the Italian higher education system.

Analysing teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment provides an opportunity to understand how assessment works in higher education system and how the main actors of the teaching-learning process perceive social, political, and institutional innovations.

Specifically, the following aspects have been investigated:

- What conceptions Italian teachers and students have of assessment?
- Within the Assessment *for* Learning perspective, are they able to distinguish between summative and formative assessment?
- Are they familiar with alternative modalities and forms of assessment (e.g. self and peer-assessment)?
- How do they perceive assessment as regards teaching and learning in the Italian higher education system (University Reform Law n. 240/2010)?

We acknowledge that such a small case study cannot be generalised to the whole Italian system. However, we believe it can be useful because it can offer some insight into assessment in the higher education field.

Method, population, and instruments

This study, realised during 2015, is qualitative in nature. In order to assure a number of methodological possibilities within the interpretative paradigm, a phenomenological methodology was used to explore in-depth teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment. This methodology has been helpful to understand individual and contextual points of view.

A range of participants has been included in order to assure a multiple representation of cases. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality and voluntarily consented to participate.

Semi-structured interviews both for teachers and students were used. Each interview was audio-recorded and fully transcribed. We went through the interviews and a code was given to each relevant fragment. ATLASti software was used for structuring, saving and copying the raw material. Descriptive codes were compared and contrasted with each participant. The interviews have been coded following these two steps:

- Analysis of each interview to identify emerging issues;
- Comparison between interviews in order to find possible common themes. Specifically comparison has been made respect to different variables, for teachers and students (e.g. teachers' age of service; teaching subject matter, students' degree course).

Results are based on interviews of 15 teachers (selected from 40 teaching staff) and 64 students (selected from a population of 255 participants of a previous study). These criteria have been used to select teachers: academic role (full professor, associate professor or researcher); sex; subject matter.

The teachers' interview, composed by 15 questions, was divided into four sections:

1. *Respondents' biographical sketch*. This section concerned socio-demographic variables and it was aimed to collect information about teachers' education path and their academic careers (sex, age, year of experience, teaching experience);
2. *Assessment conceptions*. Questions in this section gathered information about teachers' conceptions of assessment;
3. *Assessment and teaching practice*. This third section was about the relationship between teaching practice and assessment. How is the relationship between teaching and assessment? How do they articulate assessment during the exam and during the lessons? What forms of assessment do they use? What do they think to assess and what do they exactly assess? How do teachers perceive themselves compared to the feedback given to their students?;
4. *Formative assessment*. This last section was aimed to analyse teachers' conceptions of formative assessment.

For students' interviews, instead, 64 students selected from 255 participants were identified. Only 57 were considered valid for analysis. The students' interview partly follows the teachers' interview structure. It consists of 12 questions divided in three main sections:

1. *Assessment experience during the university career*: This section concerned socio-demographic variables and it was also aimed to highlight positive and negative assessment experiences lived by students at university;
2. *Assessment and learning process*: the second section gathered information about assessment and learning conceptions within the academic context (feedback and assessment criteria were explored here);

3. *Formative assessment*: this last section was aimed to analyse students' conceptions of formative assessment.

Table 1. Sample structure for teachers and students.

Teachers' sample	Total interviews: 47	Students' sample	Total interviews: 64
Academic role	Researchers 7 Associate professors 3 Full professors 5	Students' degree courses level	Bachelor degree 39 Master degree 25
Teachers' subject matters	Education 3 Psychology 3 Literature 3 History and sociology 4 Philosophy 2	Students' degree courses subject matters	Pedagogy 26 Communication 18 Psychology 20
Age (mean)	47 years	Age (mean)	25 years
Sex	Researchers (3 male + 4 female) Associate professors (3 female) Full professors (2 male + 3 female)	Sex	Bachelor degree (1 male + 38 female) Master degree (25 female)
Age of service (mean)	21 years		

Results

The data set for this study is very large and so what is presented here is only a selection of main inquiry categories. Although collected information is sensitive, we can try to make some inferences about teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment in the Italian university context. In the following, we first describe teachers and students participants. Then, we compare and contrast their answers. In the last section, we discuss the implications and the fundamental questions affecting this research field.

There are no substantial differences in teachers' conceptions of assessment. No differences have been highlighted between teachers in the use of feedback. Gender, age, subject matter, and professional experience do not affect answers. Even thought participants were prompted to reflect on their answers, the data demonstrate their simplistic conceptions of assessment (Brown, 2006; 2004; Samuelowicz, Bain, 1992).

Also for students, data are very uniform and with no meaningful differences. Students, in fact, are almost exclusively female students (compared to only one male student). The average age is 25 years. No differences have been found comparing students' answers with respect degree courses. A clarification herein is needed: firstly, we thought to distinguish between bachelor and master students, but no significant differences emerged (Matos et al., 2009; Brown, Hirschfeld, 2008; 2007; Struyven et al, 2005). Rarely, students enrolled in a master degree make a comparison with their experience during their bachelor degree.

In general, data obtained are not particularly encouraging. Teachers are not able to provide a definition of assessment that goes beyond the mere dimension of measure of learning achieved by their students. Teachers neither define self-assessment.

«Assessment for me is fundamentally verify students' level of achievement. If they are able to resolve the task ok…otherwise is not my problem » [int. 5].
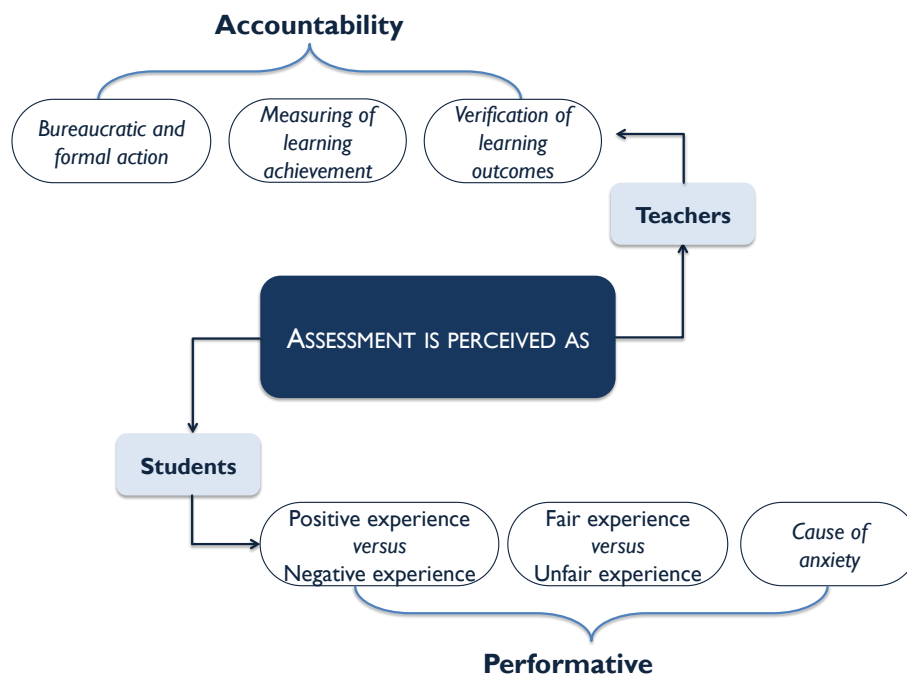

Figure 1. Teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment.

Half of the teachers admit that they have never heard about Assessment *for* Learning: they do not know what it is and, as a result, they do not use it in their teaching practice. Teachers do not perceive the need of professional development on this topic. It is unlikely that teachers will be available to try out new assessment approaches in the context of their classrooms and ask for more conceptual support rather than technical help. While international research, framing the Assessment *for* Learning perspective, highlights how assessment (and feedback) can be strategically important in terms of students' learning improvement, these results show how assessment is perceived as not useful for personal and professional development. Assessment is conceptualised (and practised) only in term of formality.

Data relating to the third section of the interview reveal a composite scenario. The *ex ante* assessment is frequently performed in a non-formal way. Sometimes teachers use mid-term examinations, but these assessment forms are not designed and implemented as formative assessment moments. The most frequent assessment modality is, for almost all cases, the oral examination. Despite previous responses teachers affirm, in the last section interview, that they consider assessment as an important and useful aspect to improve students' learning.

> 'Of course! Formative assessment is better because allows you to monitor student learning but in practice as teachers we have no much time, so at the end, we use summative assessment. However, this is what the university system asks us'
>
> *(int. 9).*

However, when we asked to explicit the differences between formative and summative assessment with respect to teaching practice, 13 out of 15 respondents admit to not being able to reply. These findings confirm that formative assessment does not represent a practice yet sufficiently widespread and deeply rooted in the university context analysed.

The students' interviews were administered immediately at the end of their examinations. This means that in some answers an emotional element appears to be influential:

> 'Forget it, it was one of the worst exams in my life. The professor is very cold; it does not give a smile to put your mind at ease: he is very stern. One of his assistants is gentler but still unfair (too unfair!). Philosophy is still a difficult subject, if they do not help us to appreciate it, for me everything becomes more difficult'

(int. 33).

With regard to the 'experience of the assessment in university' section, a composite picture emerges. Students have very polarized perceptions. Their judgment is sometimes positive, sometimes really negative: «students' expectations, preferences, perceptions, and evaluations of the characteristics of assessments (e.g., fairness, authenticity, and formats) affect both positively and negatively the approaches students take to university learning» (Matos et al., 2009).

Students' experience of assessment can be identified as a tragedy and, in some cases, as a catastrophe:

> 'What a catastrophic experience!! I have been guessed that this master course would be more challenging and interesting; instead I have studied more during my bachelor degree than now. In this course teachers ask us so much because they say that we are at a higher level and that when we have an exam we must always bet to he highest grade. Unlike my bachelor course here get good grades is more important than any other thing. Hearing these things I have started to feel myself inhibited, tired, and anxious. During my bachelor degree my average marks was twenty-seven out of 30. Now I am collecting very low marks...what a difference!'
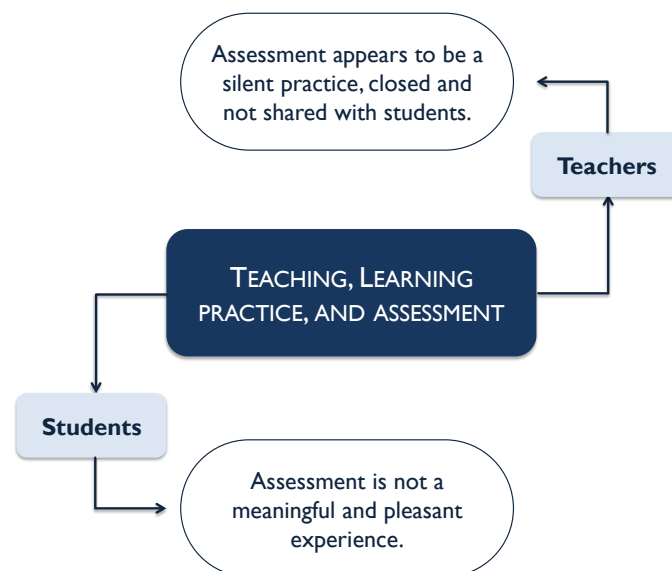
(int. 21).

Figure 2. Teaching, learning, and assessment conceptions.

The most common aspect between students is the consistency with teachers' grades. It is like if students sum the whole experience of assessment in terms of an extreme performativity. Students appear to be obsessed by collection of marks and grades, and do not give priority to their learning needs.

Overall, students experience is positive if it includes an assessment that corresponds to good grades (a dimension of performativity, again). Critical issues that students have found during examinations are related both to 'objective dimensions' (such as, the use of an appropriate and rigorous language), and 'subjective dimension' (such as, the use of different assessment methods, be able to attend all the lessons, the use of learning strategies).

Discussion
The picture that comes out for assessment and learning process is rather bleak. No one teacher has provided guidance on the criteria that would be used for the assessment. At the same time students do not believe that the explanation and the sharing of assessment criteria used by the teachers may be helpful for their learning. Very few are cases in which the teacher focuses on the use of feedback about students' learning. No forms or moments of formative assessment were planned and implemented during the lessons. Like the teachers, students' perceive mid-term assessment as functional only to the final exam. Here it is evident the risk that teachers' feedback serves only social and managerial functions. Despite scientific literature remarks, the interviewed teachers and students seem to not interact in the feedback process that is perceived in terms of simple and linear communication (Wiliam, 2011; Hattie, Timperley, 2007).
While literature has remarked the importance of feedback in formative assessment because it:

- Helps to explain what a good performance means
- Facilitates reflection and self-assessment in learning
- Provides quality information about learning
- Encourages dialogue with teacher and peers
- Provides chances to close the gap between expected performance and current one
- Allows teachers to gather information which could support teaching practice

Our respondents seem not to consider feedback as a key element in the assessment process. Even students have a very poor and arid conception of assessment (in the last interview section), they are convinced that it can support their learning. Moreover, methods and strategies of peer and self-assessment are not known (or recognised). After more than ten years of policy and institutional changes in the Italian higher education system it can be revealed a paradox: teachers and students have a steadfast commitment to accountability and grading. This commitment persists despite ample research, theory and educational practice on Assessment *for* Learning. The corrosive consequences of testing and grading are evident in this study: teachers and students have a simplistic and instrumental conceptions of assessment and this aspect does not fit to a higher education system that has been designed and implemented to support students' lifelong learning. As Coates (2015) points out, despite the importance of assessment outcomes in providing essential information about what people have gained through their engagement with higher education, assessment practices have remained largely unchanged.

Limitations
A first limit to the study could be found in its attempt, partially deliberative, to conjugate the literature on teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment (Brown 2004; Shepard 2000b; Stiggins, Conklin 1992) to the topic of assessment within the Italian higher education. This study has been realised on a local and micro-level.

Although the context of this study is the Italian system, we thought that it highlights critical issues of assessment in higher education such as the lack of training of academic staff in assessment (Coates, 2015).

Secondly, the results of this study could have been related to the 'sensitive' nature of the topic. Nonetheless, the presence of very few studies and inquiries, especially in the Italian higher education field on this topic, induced us to consider this study as a preliminary step.

Concluding remarks

Moving on from these results, some important conclusions both for theory and practice could be drawn. First of all, a latent confusion exists about assessment. Teachers and students manifested conceptions partially influenced by a traditional view of assessment, intended as an instrument, as a vehicle and not as a set of practices interconnected with actions realized during the teaching-learning process.

Secondly, relations between assessment, teaching, and learning are ambiguous. If, on the one hand, teachers look at traditional assessment forms with scepticism; on the other hand, they consider the new assessment perspective not really valid and useful to control and verify students' learning achievements. In this study, teachers seem to not consider assessment as a strategic element in their teaching practice. Assessment is not supportive for student learning. This aspect confirms once again, how assessment is identified with the final moment of a teaching-learning process. The innovation of *learning outcomes* is not functional if it is not included in an instructional design that really puts in dialogue not only teaching and learning processes, but also the assessment ones (Carless, 2015). On the other hand, students do not appear to view assessment as an opportunity to improve their learning, nor as a test bed of their responsibility. They do not consider assessment as a pleasant moment, nor do they believe it to be an insignificant or negative part of their education (Brown, Hirschfeld, 2008). They seem, rather, to have acquired an instrumental view of assessment, and tend, therefore, to live in a passive and, at the same time, performative way. Teachers do not use alternative forms of assessment (Assessment *for* Learning) and do not consider assessment as a chance to review and improve their teaching practice. Assessment is conceived as a measurement of students' learning achievement. While scientific literature (Sambell et al., 2013; Evans, 2013) asserts how assessment and formative assessment can help students take control of their own learning (becoming self-regulated learners), our respondents seem to have developed an instrumental vision of assessment. Their conceptions tend to be extremely polarised. Teachers and students have an idea of formative assessment, but they are not able to represent it and define it in a practical and concrete way.

The Italian higher education system seems to have a lack of knowledge about what formative assessment really is and what it can accomplish. This likely explains our research results. Our respondents seem to be 'lost' in the policy and institutional changes and not really aware of the great transformations realized in the Italian higher education system. This study has attempted to provide how assessment works within the Italian higher education context and it has presented a realistic view of the challenges and barriers associated with assessment, and more specifically with formative assessment. Our conclusions imply that there is a critical need to re-look into assessment practices with regards to aspects such as assessment literacy, alternative assessments, formative assessments, and their contribution to students' learning.

The challenge is now to allow teachers and students to reach out this knowledge and to push forward the use of assessment, and formative assessment, in a more responsive way. Implementing assessment, and more specifically formative assessment, is difficult, also because it consists of a complex set of interrelated practices. It is an area where no easy solutions exist. If assessment can dramatically impact on student learning the challenge is to put research evidence into practice. Understanding of teachers' and students' conceptions of assessment is crucial as understanding

practices and standards: this is a step forward to lead better assessment that should really focus on learning and teaching quality.

References

Adam, S. (2004) Using learning outcomes – a consideration of the nature, role, application and implications for European education of employing earning outcomes at the local, national and international levels. *Report on United Kingdom*. Bologna Seminar, July 2004, Herriot-Watt University.

Astin, A.W. and A.L. Antonio (2012) *Assessment for Excellence: The Philosophy and Practice of Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Lanhman, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bandura, A. (1977) 'Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change', *Psychological Review*, 84 (2): 191-215.

Biggs. J. and Tang, K. (2011) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. Maidenhead, UK: McGraw-Hill and Open University Press.

Boud, D. (2006) 'Sustainable assessment: Rethinking assessment for the learning society', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 22 (2): 151-167.

Brookhart, S.M. and Bronowicz, D.L. (2003) 'I don't like writing. It makes my fingers hurt: Students talk about their classroom assessments', *Assessment in Education*, 10 (2): 221-242.

Brown, G.T.L. (2006) 'Teachers' conceptions of assessment: validation of an abridged instrument', *Psychological Reports*, 99: 166-170.

Brown, G.T.L. (2004) 'Teachers' conceptions of assessment: implications for policy and professional development', *Assessment in Education*, 11 (3): 301-318.

Brown, G.T.L. and Hirschfeld G.H.F. (2008) 'Students' conceptions of assessment: Links to outcomes', *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 15 (1): 3-17.

Brown, G.T.L. and Hirschfeld, G.H.F. (2007)' Students' conceptions of assessment and mathematics achievement: Evidence for the power of self-regulation', *Australian Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 7: 63-74.

Brown, S. and Glasner, A. (2003) *Assessment Matters in Higher Education*. London: SRHE/Open University Press.

Cassidy, S. (2011) 'Self-regulated learning in higher education: identifying key component processes', *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(8): 989-1000.

Carless, D. (2015) *Excellence in University Assessment*. New York: Routledge.

Cheung, D. (2000) 'Measuring teachers' meta-orientations to curriculum: Application of hierarchical confirmatory analysis', *Journal of Experimental Education, 68* (2): 149-165.

Coates, H. (2015) 'Assessment of learning outcomes, in Curaj A., Matei L., Pricopie R., Salmi J, Scott P. (eds.) *The European Higher Education Area: Between Reflection and Future Policies*. Dordrecht: Springer: 399-413.

Elwood, J. and V. Klendowski (2002) Creating of shared practice: The challenges of assessment use in learning and teaching. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education'*, 1 (3): 243-256.

Entwistle, N. (1997) Contrasting perspectives on learning, in Marton F., Hounsell D. and Entwistle N. (eds.) *The Experience of Learning: Implications for Teaching and Studying in Higher Education*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press: 3-22.

Evans, C. (2013) 'Making sense of assessment feedback in higher education. *Review of Educational Research'*, 83(1): 70-120.

Gijbels, D., Donche, V., Richardson, J.T.E. and Vermunt, J.D. (2014) *Learning Patterns in Higher Education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gipps, C., Brown, M., McCallum, B. and McAlister, S. (1995) *Intuition or Evidence? Teachers and National Assessment of Seven-year-olds*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Gow, L. and Kember, D. (1993) 'Conceptions of teaching and their relationship to student learning', *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 63*: 20-33.

Guskey, T.R. and Passaro, P.D. (1994) 'Teacher efficacy: A study of construct dimensions. *American Educational Research Journal*', 31 (3): 627-643.

Hattie, J. and Timperley, H. (2009) 'The power of feedback', *Review of Educational Research*, 77 (1): 81-112.

Kember, D. (1997) 'A reconceptualization of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching', *Learning and Instruction*, 7: 255-275.

Lew, M., Alwis, W. and Schmidt, H. (2010) 'Accuracy of students' self-assessment and their beliefs about its utility', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35 (2): 135-156.

Liu, O.L., Bridgeman, B. and Adler, R. (2012) 'Learning outcomes assessment in higher education: Motivation matters', *Educational Researcher*, 41: 352-362.

Marton, F. and Säljö, R. (1976) 'On qualitative differences in learning: I. Outcome and process', *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 46 (1): 4-11.

Matos, D.A.S., Cirino, S.D. and Brown, G.T.L. (2009) Assessment practices in higher education in Brazil from the students' point of view, in McInerney, D.M., Brown G.T.L. and Liem, G.A.D. (eds.) *Student Perspectives on Assessment: What Students Can Tell Us about Assessment for Learning*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing: 235-253.

McDowell, L., Wakelin, D., Montgomery, C. and King, S. (2011) 'Does assessment for learning make a difference? The development of a questionnaire to explore the student response', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 36 (7): 749-765.

OECD (2012) *Education at Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing.

Pratt, D.D. (1992) 'Conceptions of teaching', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42 (4): 203-220.

Rust, C., O'Donovan, B. and Price, M. (2005) 'A social constructivist assessment process model: How the research literature shows us this could be best practice', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30 (3): 231-240.

Sambell, K., McDowell, L. and Montgomery, C. (2013) *Assessment for Learning in Higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Samuelowicz, K. and Bain, J.D. (1992) 'Conceptions of teaching held by teachers', *Higher Education*, 24: 93-112.

Schraw, G., Bendixen, L.D. and Dunkle, M.E. (2002) Development and validation of the epistemic belief inventory (EBI), in Hofer, B.K. and Pintrich, P.R. (eds.) *Personal Epistemology: The Psychology of Beliefs about Knowledge and Knowing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum: 261-276.

Shepard, L. (2000) The role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning. *CSE Technical Report*, *517*. CRESST/ University of Colorado at Boulder.

Stamp, D. (1987) *Evaluation of the Formation and Stability of Student Teacher Aattitudes to Measurement and Evaluation Practices*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Macquarie University, Sydney, Aus.

Stiggins, R.J. and Conklin N.F. (1992) *In Teachers' Hands: Investigating the Practices of Classroom Assessment*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Struyven, K., Dochy, F. and Janssens, S. (2005) 'Students' perceptions about evaluation and assessment in higher education: A review', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 30 (4): 325-341.

Trigwell, K. and Prosser, M. (1997) 'Towards an understanding of individual acts of teaching and learning', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 16: 241-252.

Tschannen-Moran, M., Woolfolk Hoy, A. and Hoy, W.K. (1998) 'Teacher efficacy: Its meaning and measure', *Review of Educational Research*, 68: 202-248.

Walvoord, B.E. (2004) *Assessment Clear and Simple*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Wiliam, D. (2011) What is assessment for learning?. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37: 3-14.

Wood, P. and Kardash, C. (2002) Critical elements in the design and analysis of studies of epistemology, in Hofer, B.K. and Pintrich, P.R. (eds.) *Personal epistemology: The psychology of beliefs about knowledge*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum: 231-261.