Volume 4, Issue 1, June 2025

Formative Assessment in MBA Education: A Case Study from Nepal

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Article Type: Research Article

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Received: 09 January 2025; Revised: 04 March 2025; Accepted: 17 April 2025

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Abstract

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the integration and impact of formative assessments in MBA programs across Nepal. Using stratified purposive sampling, 211 faculty members from 28 institutions under six universities participated. Quantitative findings reveal that while formative assessments are incorporated into curricula, their implementation varies widely. Faculty generally hold neutral views on their effectiveness, with more experienced educators being more positive. These assessments are associated with improved competencies in decision-making, critical thinking, and leadership. Qualitative findings highlight innovative practices like reflective journals, case studies, and collaborative projects that support student learning. However, challenges such as limited institutional support, insufficient digital infrastructure, and a lack of faculty training hinder optimal implementation. The study emphasizes the transformative potential of formative assessments and recommends policy reforms, professional development, and enhanced technology. Its integration of theory and practice offers a model for similar contexts globally.

Keywords: Accreditation, competency, formative assessment, leadership, MBA

DOI: https://doi.org/10.32674/4e2q4427

Introduction

In an era of rapid globalization and intensifying competition, the imperative to cultivate future leaders equipped with the knowledge, skills, and competencies to navigate complex business challenges has never been more critical. This emphasizes the pivotal role of MBA educators, administrators, and policymakers in shaping the trajectory of Master of Business Administration (MBA) education (Kamler et al., 2013). Business schools worldwide face mounting pressure to produce graduates who not only achieve academic excellence but also exhibit strong critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and ethical decision-making capabilities that are increasingly sought after in today's dynamic business landscape (Laditi et al., 2023). Failure to meet these evolving demands risks undermining MBA programs' relevance, competitiveness, and long-term viability.

Despite the proven benefits of formative assessments in promoting competency development, their integration into Nepalese MBA programs remains limited. The prevailing reliance on summative assessments, deeply entrenched in Nepal's exam-centric educational culture, has hindered the adoption of more dynamic, feedback-oriented assessment models. Historically, Nepalese business schools have emphasized rote-based learning and high-stakes exams, reinforcing a rigid and outdated assessment framework (Acharya, 2022; Sapkota, 2022). Institutional and policy-level constraints exacerbate the problem: the absence of explicit guidelines and accreditation frameworks leaves assessment reforms largely unaddressed.

Notably, no Nepalese business school has received accreditation from international bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) or the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), raising concerns about the alignment of Nepalese MBA programs with global standards (Hussein et al., 2023). The lack of accreditation may limit the global employability of Nepalese MBA graduates, as employers often favor candidates from accredited programs that ensure competency-based learning and standardized skill assessments (Kafaji, 2020). This lack of inquiry into how accreditation shortfalls affect assessment practices constitutes a significant research gap that this study addresses.

Unlike disciplines such as engineering or medicine, which rely on structured technical assessments and standardized licensing procedures, MBA programs emphasize applied decision-making, leadership, and real-world problem-solving (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021). In this context, formative assessments play a crucial role in MBA education by fostering continuous skill refinement through case analyses, simulations, and interactive discussions, aligning with the inherently practical nature of business learning. Formative assessment is operationally defined as "any assessment activity designed to generate feedback for both students and instructors to inform learning improvements before summative evaluation," (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2011). This includes low-stakes activities such as case analyses, reflective journals, peer feedback, and collaborative projects, but excludes final examinations or high-stakes tests.

Unlike traditional subjects where knowledge acquisition can be objectively measured, business competencies such as strategic thinking, negotiation, and leadership develop progressively and require iterative assessment and feedback. Without formative assessments, MBA graduates may lack the adaptive decision-making abilities essential in uncertain and rapidly shifting business environments.

Globally, MBA education is increasingly adopting Competency-Based Education (CBE), a pedagogical approach that prioritizes learning outcomes, skill acquisition, and real-world application over traditional grading systems (Danilovich et al., 2021). Leading international business schools, including Harvard Business School and INSEAD, have integrated formative assessments within their CBE frameworks to enhance student engagement and competency development. These models emphasize frequent, low-stakes assessments to enable students to monitor their progress and refine their skills before facing summative evaluations (Hall et al., 2020).

Accreditation bodies like AACSB and EQUIS regard formative assessment as central to CBE, requiring member institutions to implement feedback loops, performance-based evaluations, and skill-driven assessments (Szulewski et al., 2023). In contrast, Nepalese MBA programs largely adhere to lecture-based instruction with limited opportunities for applied learning, creating a widening gap between Nepalese graduates and their global counterparts. Despite evidence of CBE's effectiveness in Western contexts, empirical studies exploring its applicability in developing nations like Nepal remain limited. This marks a key gap in the literature that this study intends to address (Nel et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of formative assessments is grounded in constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1950) and self-regulated learning theory (Zimmerman, 1989). Both frameworks emphasize active student engagement, continuous feedback loops, and iterative learning, key elements in developing critical thinking and decision-making skills among MBA students (Brookhart, 2011; Brookhart et al., 2009). However, in Nepal, where education has historically been exam-centric, integrating formative assessments necessitates a fundamental shift in pedagogical practices and targeted faculty training.

Although international studies affirm the benefits of formative assessment in business education, Nepalese contexts remain underexplored. Existing research provides limited insight into the challenges of adapting Western assessment strategies to Nepal's unique cultural, institutional, and resource-constrained environment. There is also a lack of research on faculty readiness, institutional variability, and the tangible impact of formative assessments on leadership and managerial competencies in MBA students. This study aims to fill these gaps using a mixed-methods approach to offer practical insights into curriculum reform and pedagogical improvements in Nepalese higher education.

Using a mixed-methods approach, this study aims to examine the integration of formative assessments in Nepalese MBA programs, evaluate faculty perceptions of their effectiveness, and assess their impact on the development of critical business competencies, including decision-making, critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership. The following research questions guide the inquiry:

- To what extent are formative assessments integrated into Nepalese MBA curricula?
- How do faculty perceive the effectiveness of these assessments?
- How does the implementation of formative assessment vary across institutions and courses?
- What is the relationship between formative assessment usage and the development of critical competencies for business leadership?

Thus, this study addresses this critical gap by comprehensively analyzing how formative assessments shape learning experiences, academic performance, and institutional policies across Nepalese universities. The findings will offer valuable insights for students, faculty, and educational institutions, equipping them with strategic approaches to improve teaching and learning outcomes, as well as advocating for a structured transition toward formative assessments in Nepalese business schools.

Literature Review

This subsection explores the theoretical underpinnings of formative assessments, global and regional trends in formative assessment practices, highlighting how different educational systems implement and adapt these strategies within MBA programs.

Theoretical Foundations of Formative Assessment

Integrating formative assessments into MBA education is grounded in well-established learning theories that emphasize active engagement, continuous feedback, and self-directed improvement. Two primary theoretical perspectives underpin the effectiveness of formative assessments: Constructivist Learning Theory and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) Theory. These frameworks provide a structured foundation for understanding how formative assessments enhance student engagement, competency development, and learning outcomes within Nepalese MBA programs.

Constructivist Learning Theory: Constructivist Learning Theory, introduced by Piaget (1950) and later expanded by Vygotsky (1978), asserts that learners actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it. This theory suggests that students learn most effectively through meaningful, interactive, and reflective learning activities (Brookhart et al., 2009). Formative assessments align with this perspective by fostering iterative learning processes in which students receive feedback, reflect on their understanding, and refine their knowledge accordingly (Black & Wiliam, 2010).

In MBA education, constructivist principles manifest through case-based learning, business simulations, and problem-solving exercises, which require students to engage with real-world business scenarios. Unlike summative assessments, which evaluate learning outcomes at a fixed point in time, formative assessments offer continuous opportunities for knowledge construction, self-reflection, and adaptive learning (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021).

SLR Theory: SRL theory (Zimmerman, 1989) highlights students' ability to set goals, monitor progress, and regulate learning strategies. SRL comprises three phases: forethought, performance, and self-reflection (Brookhart et al., 2009). Formative assessments align with SRL by encouraging goal-setting, metacognition, and strategic learning behaviors. Tools such as self-assessments, peer feedback, and reflective journals enhance critical skills like decision-making and leadership (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021; Lakhal & Sévigny, 2015). Despite their relevance, Nepalese MBA programs often lack the infrastructure and faculty support to fully operationalize SRL-based assessments (Sapkota, 2022).

In MBA education, formative assessments help develop critical thinking and decision-making by providing real-time feedback (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021). Tools like self-assessments and peer feedback align with SRL, enabling students to refine strategies and improve self-efficacy.

Global and Regional Trends in Formative Assessment Practices

Across the globe, MBA programs are increasingly embracing formative assessment practices. Institutions in Western countries, such as Harvard Business School and INSEAD, have successfully integrated techniques like case analyses, simulations, and peer assessments to cultivate practical skills and foster a collaborative learning environment (Datar et al., 2011; Tiwari et al., 2014).These methods enhance academic performance and prepare students for complex, real-world business challenges by emphasizing continuous learning and competency development. Empirical studies (Ochuot & Modiba, 2018; Bradford et al., 2017) also suggest that students in well-resourced MBA programs benefit from formative assessments through higher engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and improved skill acquisition.

However, while global trends are promising, they also highlight the need for context-specific adaptations. In regions such as Africa and the Middle East, for instance, formative assessment models have been tailored to local institutional contexts to overcome unique challenges (Ochuot & Modiba, 2018). There is limited research on the applicability of these approaches in Nepal, where institutional constraints, faculty perspectives, and student learning habits may affect their implementation (Acharya, 2022). Additionally, the role of cultural and academic traditions in shaping student perceptions of formative assessments remains underexplored. This raises an important question of whether globally endorsed formative assessment models can be effectively adapted to Nepal's unique institutional and cultural settings, an issue that remains underexamined in the literature (Kafle & Neupane, 2025).

The adoption of formative assessments in South Asia reveals considerable variability, with countries such as India and Bangladesh progressing toward competency-based evaluation strategies. Studies highlight challenges in implementing formative assessment in Asian classrooms, including inadequate teacher knowledge and time constraints (Quyen & Khairani, 2016). Online formative assessment practices during COVID-19 revealed active student engagement, but areas for improvement in feedback and information utilization (Mahapatra, 2021). Assessment practices in South Asian countries are influenced by socioeconomic factors, with exams often serving as elimination tools due to limited opportunities (Nawani & Goswami, 2020). Comparative studies of formative assessment

in outcome-based education, such as in Kerala's Master's in Computer Application (MCA) curriculum, demonstrate the diversity of assessment styles across developing countries (Mathew & Sambanthan, 2018). These findings emphasize the need for professional development programs to enhance formative assessment implementation and address region-specific challenges in South Asian educational contexts.

Unlike Western economies, where formative assessments are embedded in business education to enhance student engagement and skill development, Nepalese business schools rely on high-stakes summative examinations as the primary mode of assessment. The absence of accreditation frameworks, structured competency evaluations, and institutional support mechanisms limits the adoption of formative assessment strategies (Acharya, 2022). In contrast, AACSB and EQUIS-accredited Western business schools mandate continuous feedback mechanisms, skill-based assessments, and iterative learning processes, ensuring students develop practical competencies alongside theoretical knowledge. Nepal's lack of similar accreditation requirements reduces external pressure on institutions to modernize their assessment practices.

CBE, Accreditation, and Institutional Readiness

CBE has been instrumental in driving the global adoption of formative assessments. Unlike conventional grading systems that assess student performance at predetermined intervals, CBE frameworks emphasize continuous skill development, personalized learning trajectories, and iterative feedback (Lakhal & Sévigny, 2015).

Accreditation bodies such as AACSB and EQUIS require business schools to integrate formative assessments that align with competency development objectives (AACSB, 2023; EQUIS, 2023). These accreditation standards mandate structured feedback mechanisms, competency-driven evaluations, and skill-oriented learning models, reinforcing formative assessment as a fundamental element of business education.

While accreditation provides a benchmark for quality assurance, many Nepalese MBA programs have yet to attain AACSB or EQUIS accreditation, raising concerns about whether their assessment practices align with global competency standards (Sapkota, 2022). In the absence of external accreditation mandates, it becomes crucial to identify internal mechanisms or policies that can drive the adoption of formative assessments in Nepalese business schools. However, little research has explored what internal institutional drivers, beyond accreditation mandates, might incentivize Nepalese business schools to adopt formative assessments, representing an overlooked gap in current scholarship (Carney et al., 2022).

Literature consistently notes significant variability in integrating formative assessments across educational institutions and disciplines. Institutional culture, resource availability, and historical or policy constraints contribute to significant variability in formative assessment practices in Nepal (Ochuot & Modiba, 2018). This variability suggests that the extent and manner of formative assessment integration likely differ across institutions and disciplines in Nepal. Recognizing these variations is essential for understanding the broader landscape of MBA education in Nepal and identifying areas where targeted interventions may be most needed.

Implementation Challenges and the Need for Pedagogical Reform

Despite growing recognition of competency-based learning, business schools face several barriers to transitioning from summative to formative assessments. Teachers often misunderstand the concept of formative assessment, mistakenly perceiving it as a grading tool rather than a learning aid (Almahal et al., 2023). Lack of resources and time allocation within curricula further hinders implementation (Almahal et al., 2023; Berisha et al., 2024). Cultural context plays a significant role, particularly in shifting learning responsibility from teachers to students and implementing peer and self-assessment practices (Berisha et al., 2024). Many academic institutions struggle to implement these assessments effectively, often due to rigid traditional methods that prioritize summative results over developmental feedback (Lopez et al., 2023).

Similar trends in South Asia, including Nepal, are observed where higher education systems strongly rely on summative assessments. Studies indicate a pressing need for a balanced approach to evaluation that integrates formative practices, fostering a more engaging learning environment (Neupane, 2019; Saud et al., 2024). In Nepal, precisely, the call for reform is echoed in higher education discourse, highlighting the necessity for course redesign and the incorporation of formative assessment tools like project work and peer reviews in educational settings (Acharya, 2022; Sapkota, 2022).

Faculty readiness is critical for the successful implementation of formative assessments. Studies indicate that many educators are not formally trained in designing and applying formative assessment techniques, resulting in inconsistent usage and, at times, resistance to change (Cragg, 2021; Kozbial, 2023). In the Nepalese context, heavy teaching loads and insufficient professional development opportunities exacerbate these challenges, leading to a wide variation in the adoption of formative methods.

Empirical research suggests that experienced faculty members are more likely to appreciate the benefits of formative assessments, such as enhanced student engagement and improved learning outcomes, than their less skilled counterparts (Brookhart et al., 2009). This variation emphasizes the need for targeted training programs and peer mentoring to support the adoption of formative assessments.

A central tenet of CBE is that formative assessments can significantly enhance the development of skills vital for effective business leadership. Numerous studies have documented the positive impact of formative assessment on competencies such as critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork, and leadership (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021; Tiwari et al., 2014). For MBA programs, where practical application and real-world problem-solving are paramount, these assessments improve academic outcomes and prepare graduates for leadership roles in dynamic business environments.

Hypotheses

Based on an extensive review of the literature and contextual analysis, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1: *Formative assessments are significantly integrated into MBA courses across various universities and colleges in Nepal.*

H2: *Faculty members perceive formative assessments as effective in enhancing student learning outcomes and professional preparedness.*

H3: *The integration of formative assessments varies significantly across different institutions and courses.*

H4: *Formative assessments positively impact the development of critical competencies required for effective business leadership.*

Research Methods

This section outlines the overall research procedure employed in examining the structural relationship developed in the research model.

Research Design and Philosophy

This study employs a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration and impact of formative assessments in Nepalese MBA education. Grounded in a pragmatic research philosophy (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), the study acknowledges that both objective measures (quantitative data) and subjective experiences (qualitative data) are essential for capturing the complexities of educational practices. The study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, where quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed concurrently and then integrated during the interpretation stage to enhance the breadth and depth of findings (Adhikari & Timsina, 2024).

A stratified purposive sampling strategy was employed to select faculty members from 28 institutions affiliated with six universities in Nepal. A total of 211 MBA faculty members were invited to participate, based on their current teaching roles in MBA programs across these institutions. All 211 faculty members completed the survey, achieving a 100% response rate due to personalized invitations and follow-up communications via phone calls and emails. Data was collected between March and May 2024.

The total population of MBA faculty in Nepal, or even within the selected institutions, is unknown due to the absence of centralized national faculty records. Therefore, while the sample represents all invited faculty from the 28 participating institutions who met the eligibility criteria, it may not reflect the entire population of MBA faculty nationally or across all business schools.

The sampling strategy ensured representation across geographic regions (urban vs. rural), institutional types (public and private), and accreditation statuses. The inclusion criteria required participants to be faculty members actively involved in teaching MBA courses. Before full-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted with 10 faculty members to refine

the survey instrument for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness (Fisher et al., 2011). The same 211 respondents also provided qualitative data through open-ended survey responses, facilitating alignment between the quantitative and qualitative components.

The study was conducted according to the ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their right to withdraw, and the measures taken to ensure data confidentiality. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before administering the survey.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Quantitative Data: Data were collected through a structured online survey consisting of 24 items organized into seven thematic sections: demographics, awareness and understanding of formative assessments, implementation practices, perceived effectiveness, challenges, institutional support, and alignment with international standards.

The demographic section included items on age, gender, academic qualification, teaching experience, institutional affiliation, and faculty status. Awareness and understanding were measured through a familiarity scale and a checklist of learning sources. Implementation practices were assessed by frequency of use and types of formative assessments employed. Perceived effectiveness was measured using eight competency items (e.g., critical thinking, decision-making, teamwork) and one overall effectiveness item, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Challenges were assessed through a multiple-response checklist of standard barriers. Concurrently, institutional support was measured through a satisfaction rating, and alignment was evaluated via self-reported familiarity and the extent of alignment with international standards.

Survey items were adapted from validated instruments in prior literature (Gikandi, 2011; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Ugwuanyi et al., 2021) and refined through expert review and pilot testing with 10 faculty members. The quantitative data were analyzed using Python to perform descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, chi-square tests, ANOVA, t-tests, and regression analyses

Qualitative Data: Qualitative data were collected through four open-ended questions embedded in the survey, completed by all 211 faculty respondents. These responses explored faculty perspectives on aligning formative assessments with local needs, examples of effective practices, challenges faced, and the use of digital tools in assessment.

The qualitative responses were compiled into a text document and analyzed using thematic analysis in R, following Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step process. Coding consistency was ensured through collaborative discussions between the two independent coders, which allowed them to resolve differences and reach a consensus on the final themes.

Data Integration and Triangulation

Descriptive statistics summarized faculty demographics and the frequency of formative assessment usage. Inferential statistical techniques included chi-square tests and ANOVA to test hypotheses related to institutional variability (H1 and H3), as well as a one-sample t-test and regression analysis to evaluate faculty perceptions of effectiveness and the relationship between formative assessments and key competencies (H2 and H4). Reliability analysis confirmed high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.889) for the eight-item formative assessment effectiveness scale.

Qualitatively, the analysis involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, developing themes, reviewing and refining themes, and finalizing definitions. Coding consistency was ensured through collaborative discussions between the two coders to resolve any differences and reach a consensus on the final themes.

Data triangulation was achieved by systematically integrating quantitative findings with qualitative insights. This integration involved comparing statistical results with qualitative themes to identify points of convergence and divergence. For example, quantitative results showing institutional differences in the integration of formative assessment were complemented by qualitative narratives that explained institutional culture and resource disparities. A joint narrative summary was developed to align quantitative and qualitative findings for each research question, enhancing the credibility and depth of interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Results and Analysis

The following section presents a detailed analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected from MBA faculty members across Nepal. It is structured to offer descriptive statistics, reliability testing, hypothesis testing, and thematic insights, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of formative assessment.

Quantitative Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondent: The demographic profile of the 211 faculty respondents reveals a diverse and experienced cohort, describing the characteristics of MBA educators in Nepal (see Table 1). Respondents were, on average, 45.94 years old (SD = 9.87), with an age range of 28 to 64 years, indicating a balanced mix of early-career and seasoned educators. Their average teaching experience was 9.92 years (SD = 6.04), reflecting substantial professional expertise in business education.

The sample comprised 60.66% male and 39.34% female faculty members, indicating a moderate gender imbalance within the surveyed population. Regarding academic qualifications, most respondents held a Master's degree (66.82%), followed by MPhil (17.06%) and PhD (16.11%) holders. Notably, 83.89% were part-time faculty members, with only 16.11% employed full-time, a composition that may influence availability for training and participation in formative

assessment initiatives. Among the 28 institutions represented, Kathmandu University School of Management (KUSOM) and Tribhuvan University School of Management (TUSOM) were the top contributors.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 211)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Category	Number	Percentage
Age	45.94	9.87	28	64			
Teaching Experience	9.92	6.04	1	28			
Gender					Male	128	60.66%
					Female	83	39.34%
Qualification					Masters	141	66.82%
					MPhil	36	17.06%
					PhD	34	16.11%
Faculty Type					Full-time	34	16.11%
					Part-time	177	83.89%
Institution					KUSOM	17	8.06%
					TUSOM	15	7.11%

Note. Field Survey (2024)

Familiarity and Uses of Formative Assessments: Table 2 summarizes faculty familiarity with and usage of formative assessments, providing descriptive insights relevant to H1. The majority of faculty (59%) reported being unfamiliar with formative assessment practices, while only 10% were very familiar and 31% somewhat familiar. Usage patterns also showed limited adoption: only 13% reported using formative assessments very often, 21% often, 34% sometimes, and 19% used them rarely, with 12% never using them. These findings highlight a substantial familiarity gap and inconsistent implementation across Nepalese MBA programs.

This pattern suggests that while formative assessments are present within curricula, many educators lack both deep familiarity and consistent application. This descriptive evidence aligns with the hypothesis that usage is widespread but unevenly integrated across institutions.

Table 2

Familiarity and Uses of Formative Assessments

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Familiarity Level	Very Familiar	21	10
	Somewhat Familiar	65	31
	Not Familiar	125	59
Usage Level	Very Often	28	13
	Often	44	21
	Sometimes	72	34
	Rarely	41	19
	Never	26	12

Note. Field Survey (2024)

Reliability Analysis: Table 3 presents the reliability analysis for the eight-item formative assessment effectiveness scale, directly supporting the measurement validity related to H2. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.889, indicating high internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951). According to widely accepted benchmarks (e.g., $\alpha \geq 0.80$ considered good), this value suggests that the items reliably capture a single underlying construct of perceived formative assessment effectiveness. The high reliability reinforces confidence in the quantitative findings regarding faculty perceptions of formative assessment outcomes.

Table 3

Reliability Analysis of the Formative Assessment Effectiveness Scale

Measure	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Effectiveness of Formative Assessments	0.889	8

Note. Researcher's Calculation (2024)

Hypothesis Testing: Table 4 presents the hypothesis testing results for H1, H2, and H3. Chi-square and ANOVA tests showed no significant institutional differences in formative assessment usage ($\chi^2 = 107.35$, $p = 0.50$; $F = 1.13$, $p = 0.306$), supporting H1 and indicating uniform implementation across MBA institutions.

A one-sample t-test found faculty perceptions of effectiveness to be statistically neutral ($t = -1.51$, $p = 0.132$), failing to support or reject H2 fully. However, ANOVA by teaching experience ($F = 2.736$, $p = 0.045$) revealed that more experienced faculty viewed formative assessments as more effective, offering partial support for H2.

Lastly, ANOVA results ($F = 1.13$, $p = 0.036$) confirmed significant variation in integration across institutions and courses, supporting H3 and highlighting inconsistent implementation across Nepalese MBA programs.

Table 4

Summary of Chi-Square, ANOVA, and t-test Results

Hypothesis	Test Type	Statistics/ Value	*p-value*	Conclusion
H1	Chi-Square (Usage Across Institutions)	107.35	0.50	No significant institutional differences in overall usage
H1	ANOVA (Usage Across Institutions)	1.13	0.306	No significant difference in overall formative assessment usage across institutions
H2	One-sample t-test (Overall Effectiveness)	-1.51	0.132	Faculty perceptions of effectiveness are neutral.
H2	ANOVA (Effectiveness by Experience)	2.736	0.045	More experienced faculty perceive formative assessments as more effective.
H3	ANOVA (Integration Variability)	1.13	0.036	Significant variation exists in how formative assessments are integrated across institutions.

Note. Researcher's Calculation (2024)

Correlation Analysis: Table 5 presents Pearson correlation coefficients between formative assessment usage and key competencies, addressing H4. Significant positive correlations were found with decision-making ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.05$), critical thinking ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$), problem-solving ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$), and communication ($r = 0.40$, $p < 0.05$). Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the correlations for decision-making and critical thinking can be interpreted as moderate to significant effects, while problem-solving and communication reflect moderate associations. These findings support H4, confirming that increased use of formative assessments is positively associated with enhanced critical competencies essential for business leadership.

Table 5

Pearson Correlations Between Formative Assessment Usage and Key Competencies

Competency	Correlation (r)	p-value
Critical Thinking	0.52	0.018
Problem-Solving	0.45	0.028
Decision-Making	0.57	0.012
Communication	0.4	0.039

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .05$

Regression Analysis: Table 6 presents the regression analysis assessing the predictive relationship between formative assessment usage and key competencies, directly addressing H4. All competencies showed statistically significant positive associations with formative assessment use.

The strongest predictive relationship was observed for decision-making ($\beta = 0.38$, $R^2 = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$), where formative assessment usage explained 33% of the variance in decision-making competency, a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Similarly, teamwork ($\beta = 0.36$, $R^2 = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$) and entrepreneurial mindset ($\beta = 0.35$, $R^2 = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$) demonstrated large effect sizes.

Critical thinking ($\beta = 0.32$, $R^2 = 0.27$, $p = 0.013$) and problem-solving ($\beta = 0.27$, $R^2 = 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) showed moderate to significant effects, while communication ($\beta = 0.24$, $R^2 = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) indicated a moderate effect. These findings reinforce the positive impact of formative assessment on competency development, with the most decisive influence observed for decision-making and teamwork.

Table 6
Regression Analysis Predicting Competencies from Formative Assessment Usage

Predicted Competency	B (Unstandardized Coefficient)	SE (Standard Error)	*t-value*	*p-value*	R^2
Critical Thinking	0.32	0.07	4.57	0.013	0.27
Problem-Solving	0.27	0.08	3.75	0.022	0.21
Decision-Making	0.38	0.06	6	0.009	0.33
Communication	0.24	0.09	2.67	0.041	0.18
Teamwork	0.36	0.07	5.14	0.011	0.31
Entrepreneurial Mindset	0.35	0.06	5.83	0.01	0.3

Note. All Coefficients are Significant at $p < .05$.

Qualitative Analysis

Building on the methodology, an inductive thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended responses of all 211 faculty respondents regarding formative assessment practices in Nepalese MBA education (see Figure 1). The qualitative findings complement and contextualize the quantitative results by revealing five key themes:

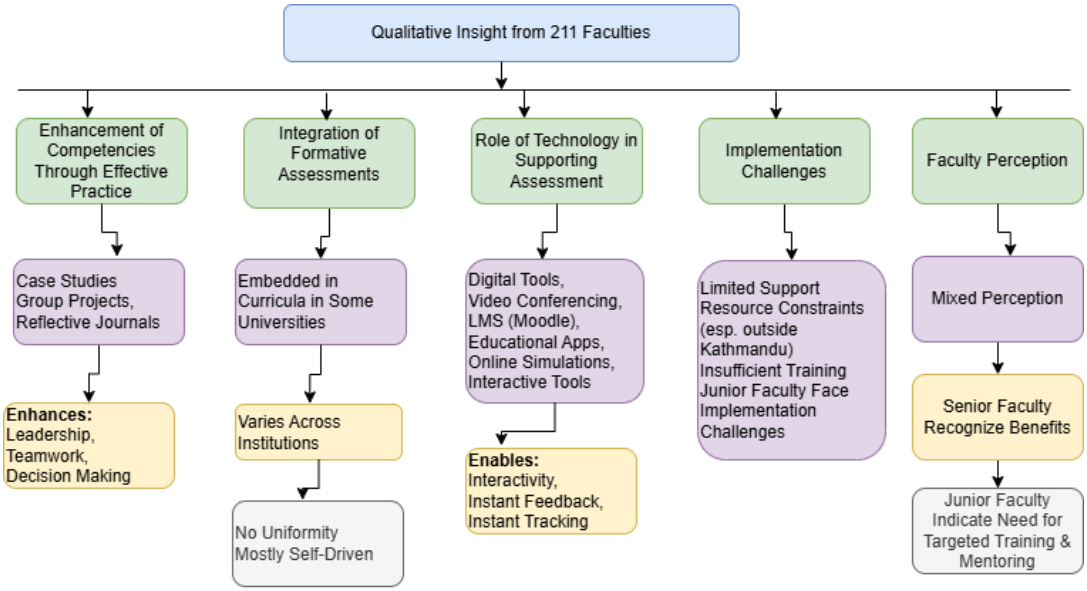
Integration of Formative Assessments: Faculty members indicated that formative assessments are a common element in MBA courses, although the degree of integration varies across institutions. For example,

> *"In our MBA program, formative assessments are mostly used in marketing and HR courses, but not in finance or accounting."*

> *"My institution encourages formative assessments, but not everyone applies them consistently."*

This variation highlights that formative assessments are present but implemented differently depending on institutional priorities and local market demands.

Figure 1
Qualitative Insights on Formative Assessment Practices in Nepalese MBA Programs



Enhancement of Competencies through Effective Practices: Many respondents described using innovative assessment techniques, such as reflective journals, real-world case studies adapted to local business conditions, and collaborative projects, to facilitate the development of critical competencies. For example:

> *"Case studies based on Nepalese companies helped my students improve decision-making skills."*

> *"Group projects have been the most effective way to build teamwork and leadership in my class."*

Educators have noted that courses incorporating such methods foster more decisive leadership, teamwork, and analytical skills among students, suggesting that well-designed formative assessments can significantly enhance both practical and cognitive abilities.

Role of Technology in Supporting Assessments: Digital tools are seen as vital in enhancing the delivery of formative assessments. Faculty reported utilizing platforms such as video conferencing, learning management systems (e.g., Moodle), educational apps, and online quiz tools to create interactive sessions and provide immediate feedback. For example:

> *"We use Moodle and Google Forms to run quizzes and peer assessments, which makes feedback faster and more manageable."*

> *"During COVID-19, video conferencing tools allowed me to continue interactive assessments online."*

These technologies not only improve the accessibility of formative assessments across diverse settings but also help bridge the gap between urban and rural educational environments.

Implementation Challenges and Institutional Needs: Despite the benefits, several challenges affect the full implementation of formative assessments. Many educators expressed concerns over limited institutional support, inadequate resources, particularly in rural settings, and insufficient professional development opportunities. For example:

> *"Time constraints are the biggest issue; it is hard to do formative assessments with large class sizes."*

> *"There is a lack of institutional support and training to help us implement these assessments effectively."*

Such challenges contribute to a mixed perception of the effectiveness of formative assessments, particularly among less experienced faculty, who find implementing these approaches more challenging than their senior counterparts.

Faculty Perception and Experience: The analysis revealed a clear divergence in perceptions based on teaching experience. Senior faculty are generally more appreciative of formative assessments, often recognizing their long-term value.

> As one experienced faculty member shared, *"Using reflective journals allows students to connect personally with course material, and it's helped me track learning better over time."*

In contrast, newer educators tend to struggle with the practical aspects of implementation.

> One junior faculty participant noted, *"Formative assessments include local case studies, but it's still confusing how to align them well with course objectives.*

This finding suggests that targeted training and mentoring could help bridge the gap and enhance the overall effectiveness of formative assessment practices.

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of formative assessment practices in Nepalese MBA education, reinforcing the hypotheses through converging evidence.

Quantitative analyses (see Table 4) indicated that formative assessments are widely implemented across institutions, with no significant differences in overall usage ($\chi^2 = 107.35$, $p = 0.50$; $\chi^2 = 1.13$, $p = 0.306$). Qualitative insights confirmed this variability, as faculty reported:

> *"In some institutions, formative assessments are encouraged; in others, traditional exams still dominate."*

This alignment suggests that while formative assessments are present in curricula, their implementation is inconsistent across institutional contexts.

Faculty perceptions of effectiveness were neutral overall ($t = -1.51$, $p = 0.132$); however, ANOVA by faculty experience ($F = 2.736$, $p < 0.05$) revealed that senior faculty perceive formative assessments more favorably. Qualitative data corroborated this pattern, with participants noting:

> *"Senior professors are more supportive of formative assessments, but junior faculty often lack confidence or resources to implement them."*

These findings highlight experience as an important factor shaping perceptions and implementation capacity.

Table 5 showed strong positive correlations between formative assessment use and key competencies, including decision-making ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.05$) and critical thinking ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$). Regression analyses (Table 6) confirmed that formative assessments significantly predict competency development, particularly for decision-making ($\beta = 0.38$, $R^2 = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) and teamwork ($\beta = 0.36$, $R^2 = 0.31$, $p < 0.05$). Faculty qualitative reflections supported these quantitative associations, as one respondent shared:

> *"Case studies and collaborative projects have been instrumental in building leadership and teamwork skills among students."*

Thus, the triangulated findings indicate that formative assessments are integrated across MBA programs and contribute positively to competency development, particularly in decision-making and teamwork. Faculty experience influences perceptions and implementation. The integrated evidence strengthens the study's conclusions and informs practical recommendations to improve formative assessment practices in Nepalese MBA education.

Discussions

This study investigated the integration and effectiveness of formative assessments in Nepalese MBA education, focusing on how these practices influence faculty perceptions, vary across institutions, and impact the development of critical competencies for business leadership. The discussion explicitly connects these findings to the study's theoretical frameworks, including constructivist learning theory and self-regulated learning theory, to contextualize the results within broader pedagogical perspectives (Zimmerman, 1989; Brookhart et al., 2009). The findings provide both quantitative evidence and qualitative insights, which, when triangulated, offer a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in adopting formative assessments in a traditionally exam-centric educational system.

The quantitative analysis confirmed that formative assessments are incorporated to some extent in Nepalese MBA programs, but the overall level of integration is inconsistent, reflecting institutional and cultural barriers identified in developing regions (Ugwuanyi et al., 2021). This finding aligns with global trends where higher education institutions are increasingly shifting from summative to formative evaluation methods to enhance student engagement, motivation, and real-world skill development (Salas-Bustos, 2025). However, it diverges from successful implementations reported in Western business schools, where formative assessment is embedded systematically through structured feedback cycles and digital tools (Zhang et al., 2023).

Linking these results to constructivist learning theory suggests that partial or superficial adoption of formative assessment may limit the intended benefits of scaffolding and iterative feedback, core mechanisms for deep, experiential learning (Kazragytė & Kudinovienė, 2019). The regression and correlation analyses indicate that formative assessments have a positive influence on competencies such as decision-making, teamwork, and critical thinking, findings consistent with earlier research by Calma and Cotronei-Baird (2021) and reinforced by newer studies across both developed and developing contexts (Salas-Bustos, 2025; Ugwuanyi et al., 2021).

Institutional Variability and Qualitative Nuances

Although statistical tests did not reveal significant differences in the overall use of formative assessments across institutions, the qualitative data uncovered meaningful variability in implementation practices. Faculty narratives indicated differentiated adoption across disciplines and courses, with some institutions using formative assessments primarily in applied subjects, while others limited them to informal feedback in theoretical classes. This uneven implementation emphasizes the importance of contextualizing quantitative data with qualitative insights. This pattern supports research showing that institutional culture plays a pivotal role in mediating pedagogical reform and shaping how assessment is practiced (Fuller & Skidmore, 2014). It also aligns with constructivist theory, which emphasizes how the learning environment, including institutional norms and support, conditions the feedback loop critical to formative learning (Brookhart et al., 2009).

Faculty Perceptions and Experience

The findings regarding faculty perceptions reveal that more experienced faculty members view formative assessments more favorably than their less experienced counterparts. This relationship highlights the role of faculty experience in adopting innovative practices. It suggests alignment with self-regulated learning theory, where experienced educators are more likely to model and encourage metacognitive behaviors among students (Zimmerman, 1989). Qualitative responses further support this trend, with several seasoned educators noting that structured training and professional development could bridge the gap between traditional and innovative assessment methods. These insights point to the importance of faculty mentorship and professional learning communities, interventions validated by research on institutional assessment cultures (Ugwuanyi et al., 2021).

Technology Barriers and Digital Accessibility

A recurring theme in the qualitative analysis was the challenge of digital accessibility, particularly in rural areas. Faculty described technological limitations not only as barriers to assessment delivery but also as constraints on equitable participation in formative feedback cycles, a core principle of constructivist pedagogy (Brookhart et al., 2009). Although many institutions have adopted digital tools like Learning Management Systems (LMS) and AI-supported grading platforms, inadequate infrastructure and digital literacy remain significant challenges. This finding is echoed by studies showing that digital inequality undermines both student engagement and assessment reliability (Anastasopoulou et al., 2024; Vishnu et al., 2024). Addressing the digital divide is therefore essential for the equitable implementation of formative assessment across Nepalese institutions.

Conclusion and Implications

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, grounded in constructivist and self-regulated learning theories, to investigate the role and impact of formative assessment practices in Nepalese MBA programs. The findings indicate that although formative assessments are integrated across institutions, their implementation is inconsistent and mediated by institutional culture, technological capacity, and resource availability. Quantitative analysis revealed no significant institutional differences in the extent of usage; however, faculty perceptions of formative assessment were broadly neutral. Notably, more experienced educators expressed significantly more favorable views, suggesting that pedagogical maturity enhances appreciation of formative assessment's value.

Qualitative insights further contextualize these findings, emphasizing innovative practices like reflective journals, contextual case studies, and collaborative projects as effective tools for competency development. However, systemic barriers, such as limited institutional support, inadequate digital infrastructure, and insufficient faculty training, constrain their broader adoption. These challenges emphasize the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between policy intent and classroom practice.

Importantly, statistical associations confirmed that formative assessment practices are positively linked with key competencies, particularly decision-making, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication, core outcomes for MBA education (Calma & Cotronei-Baird, 2021). These results were reinforced by qualitative insights, which highlighted that practices such as reflective journals, localized case studies, and collaborative projects meaningfully enhance student learning. Yet, their impact is constrained by limited institutional support, insufficient digital infrastructure, and inadequate faculty training (Ochuot & Modiba, 2018; Sapkota, 2022).

Together, these findings suggest that while formative assessment holds strong potential to transform MBA education in Nepal, its effectiveness depends on systemic support. Institutional reform is essential, particularly in areas of faculty development, policy alignment, and digital access to enable sustained and scalable integration of formative assessment. Embedding such practices within a coherent competency-based education framework can help bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and classroom realities, ultimately improving graduate preparedness in an evolving business environment.

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse by situating constructivist learning theory Click or tap here to enter text. and self-regulated learning theory Click or tap here to enter text. within the under-explored context of Nepalese MBA education. The results affirm constructivist assumptions by showing that formative assessments, particularly those involving real-world cases, reflective tasks, and peer collaborations, support active knowledge construction through contextualized and iterative learning experiences. These findings validate the theory's relevance beyond Western settings, confirming that constructivist principles can promote deep learning when adapted to local institutional realities. Its mixed-methods approach and theoretical-practical synthesis provide a model for similar contexts globally.

The study also supports self-regulated learning theory by demonstrating that formative assessment fosters metacognitive skills such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflective judgment, especially in competencies like decision-making and teamwork (Brookhart et al., 2009). However, this link was more pronounced among experienced faculty, suggesting that effective implementation of SRL-aligned practices is contingent on instructional expertise and pedagogical training. In doing so, the findings highlight a practical gap between theoretical design and real-world execution.

By embedding these theories within an exam-centric, resource-constrained educational environment, the study extends both frameworks. It emphasizes that the success of formative assessment is not solely a function of its pedagogical design but also systemic enablers such as faculty capacity, cultural norms, and infrastructure support (Acharya, 2022; Sapkota, 2022; Yu, 2023). Future theoretical models must therefore evolve to incorporate these contextual variables, ensuring that foundational learning theories remain applicable across diverse global education systems.

Based on the study's findings, several actionable strategies are recommended:

- **Faculty Development:** Institutions should implement targeted professional development and mentoring initiatives to support both early-career and less experienced faculty in effectively applying formative assessment techniques. Structured training, peer mentoring, and experiential workshops are critical for bridging the knowledge-practice gap and fostering sustained adoption of formative methods.

- **Institutional Standardization**: Business schools should establish standardized policies and guidelines for integrating formative assessments across both theoretical and applied MBA courses, ensuring consistency, fairness, and alignment with accreditation expectations. Such institutional standardization can reduce variability in implementation and promote equity in assessment practices across diverse institutional contexts.

- **Enhanced Digital Infrastructure:** Investments in robust digital tools, including Learning Management Systems (e.g., Moodle), educational apps, and online feedback platforms, are essential, particularly for rural or under-resourced institutions where digital accessibility remains limited. Additionally, digital literacy workshops for faculty and students are necessary to ensure effective and equitable use of these technologies, addressing digital divides that hinder formative assessment delivery and feedback cycles.

- **Competency-Specific Interventions:** While formative assessments positively impact several key competencies, additional targeted strategies may be required to improve communication skills. Structured interventions, such as public speaking exercises, debate competitions, and writing-intensive workshops, can complement formative practices to support a comprehensive competency development framework.

These findings suggest several actionable implications to strengthen practice and policy. First, institutional policies must evolve to support a shift from traditional summative evaluations toward dynamic, feedback-driven assessment aligned with international standards. Second, faculty development programs are essential to build the capacity and confidence needed for effective formative assessment implementation, particularly among less experienced educators. Third, addressing digital infrastructure inequities is critical to ensure equitable access to formative assessment tools and participation opportunities. These recommendations align with global best practices and emphasize the systemic nature of assessment reform.

Limitations and Further Research

Despite its robust mixed-methods design, this study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional nature limits insights into the long-term effects of formative assessments on competency development. Future research should adopt longitudinal approaches to assess sustained learning outcomes. Second, the use of self-reported data may introduce bias. Complementary methods, such as classroom observations or student performance data, would strengthen future findings.

Third, while the study included diverse institutions, generalizability remains limited. Contextual factors, such as institutional culture, resource disparities, and policy frameworks, play a significant role in formative assessment implementation and warrant deeper investigation. Future research should focus on: longitudinal tracking of formative assessment outcomes, discipline-specific strategies within MBA education, and the influence of institutional, technological, and cultural contexts on implementation.

Acknowledgment

This work was produced during the master's program at Kathmandu University School of Education. The author would like to thank the School of Education for its support.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest associated with this study.

Funding

The authors declare that no external funding was received for the completion of this work.

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Cite as: Pudasaini, S. (2025). Formative assessment in MBA education: A case study from Nepal. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Innovation in Nepalese Academia, 4*(2), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.32674/4e2q4427