

Rethinking assessment practices in schools. A research-training pathway to foster assessment as learning

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Abstract

The current socio-cultural context calls for a rethinking of teaching and assessment practices to turn assessment into a continuous and pervasive process that takes into account not only the final outcome but also the processes and reflections that led the student to achieve that result, with a view to continuous improvement. The major shift from the past is achieved with the adoption of the ‘assessment as learning’ paradigm, in which the student becomes an active player in the assessment and meta-reflection processes. Assessment is no longer perceived as a mere bureaucratic fulfillment of the teacher, but as a shared tool between students and teachers to build the learning path together, co-define goals, and make explicit expectations and critical issues. The design of authentic, open-ended, challenging tasks and the co-design and sharing of assessment rubrics, useful not only to ensure objectivity but also to guide the student in carrying out the task and implementing self-assessment, gains centrality. This paper describes a research-training pathway on assessment, conducted in 2022 and aimed at primary and secondary school teachers in the Marche Region, in Italy. The experience allowed teachers to approach the assessment as learning processes and to practice them in their own classrooms. The analysis of the data, collected through quantitative and qualitative tools and related to lower secondary school teachers, shows an increased focus on student activation in assessment dynamics and an increased awareness of the relevance of self-assessment processes. We also gained valuable feedback useful in guiding future research perspectives to improve the proposal’s sustainability.

Key words: assessment as learning; authentic tasks; rubrics; secondary school

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° The paper is the result of a common reflection and planning. In detail: Francesca Gratani is the author of the paragraphs 4, 5, 6; Lorenza Maria Capolla is the author of the paragraphs 1, 2, 3. Conclusions (par. 7) were co-written by the authors. Lorella Giannandrea and Pier Giuseppe Rossi supervised the drafting of the paper and the development of the research-training pathway.

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1. Introduction

The current socio-cultural context has forced a change from the past. Assessment was configured as an objective measurement practice that mostly ignored the individual characteristics of those involved in the process in order to pursue the attainment of measurements in which the number represented an indisputable truth (Rossi, 2009). If this perspective is analyzed, it becomes evident how power was unbalanced in favor of the teacher (William, 2011). In the last ten/fifteen years the literature has invested extensively around the topic of assessment and we have realized that no training course can and should elude evaluative processes. However, certain elements should be included for the assessment processes to be genuinely effective and positively impact the learning process. Contemporary assessment must, in fact, pay as much attention to knowledge and abilities as to skills and must take the form of a continuous and pervasive process that takes into account not only the final result, but also the operations that led the student to achieve that personal result, the reflections made and the processes implemented, with a view to continuous improvement (Giannandrea, 2023).

After briefly reviewing the changes that have affected assessment processes over the past 50 years and describing the salient features of authentic tasks and rubrics as tools to support formative assessment, this paper will describe a research-training experience on assessment conducted in 2022 and aimed at primary and secondary school teachers in the Marche Region, in Italy. The experience allowed teachers to approach assessment-as-learning practices and experiment with them in their classrooms, contributing to the emergence of valuable feedback helpful in directing future research perspectives. Specifically, we examine data on lower secondary school teachers, obtained through questionnaires and materials produced during the course, to answer the following research question: will the course have an impact on the teachers' assessment practices and help them increase students' participation in the assessment process?

2. Assessment of, for and as learning

The first evidence of the change that assessment processes are going through has been formalized in the shift from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for*

learning. The assessment of learning (Gagné, 1965) is the classic position that aims to “measure” how much distance there is between the level of learning the student achieves and the level of learning desired in the teacher’s setting of goals. This measurement is done through indicators that record the level of learning achieved at the end of the learning path, but it fails to appreciate the uniqueness of different students’ paths. Since the new millennium, research began to move toward a more pervasive idea of assessment, one that gave more importance to the role of the student at all stages (selection of goals, how the pathway is carried out, and how the achievement of expected results is ascertained) and that empowers the student (Black *et al.*, 2003): assessment for learning. This formative assessment practice is presented as a continuum that runs parallel to the learning process by implementing in-progress assessments, recursive feedback, and exchanges between teachers and students that support the personalization of assessment practices.

In the last 15 to 20 years, formative assessment has moved one step further: evaluative processes and formative processes have overlapped, and the concepts of objectivity and assessment as a comparison between the result and the desired outcome have been replaced by the attempt to assess the process, to share learning paths, to co-evaluate them, and to appreciate co-determination (Rossi *et al.*, 2021). The main deviation from the past achieved with adopting the paradigm of assessment *as* learning (Earl, 2013; Carless, 2015) concerns the centrality of the student, who is not merely the main character of the assessment processes but becomes an active part of them. Assessment begins to be no longer perceived only as a bureaucratic fulfillment of the teacher or a mere support to the student’s educational journey. Assessment as learning takes the form of a shared need, a tool available to students and teachers to build the learning path together, co-define objectives, and make explicit expectations and critical issues. A vital aspect of this approach concerns the development of evaluative competence on the part of students, who must be involved in process monitoring and feedback practice and be trained to meta-reflect on knowledge, skills, and competencies.

3. Authentic tasks and rubrics

It is clear from the description of the assessment-as-learning approach that many traditional teaching practices need to be improved to experiment with this modality of assessment. Approaching this new assessment involves not only a change in one’s own assessment practices but requires a transformation of one’s teaching practices in general so that these can facilitate this approach. While authentically formative and participatory assessment cannot occur by

reiterating frontal lecture practices and closed-ended final tests, it can instead be fostered by teaching through authentic tasks, which may have different extensions, purposes, and levels of intentionality (Altet, 2003). The design of meaningful and authentic tasks should have feedback as the pivotal process and as the conjunction between teaching and assessment practice (Carless, 2019; Ibarra-Sáiz *et al.*, 2020).

The authentic task is configured as the site of mediation, a third space (Gutierrez, 2008), between teacher and learner in which the characteristics of the learner and the context are enhanced. When we define the authentic task as a place of mediation, we mean to take up Pentucci's (2020) definition whereby it can replace the teacher as the mediating object, to reassure or not to reassure, mobilize, prevent, enhance, and devalue. The authentic task has three essential characteristics; it should be challenging, open-ended, and meaningful (Rossi and Pentucci, 2021; Rossi *et al.*, 2021). Challenging refers to a task that puts the student in a position to be activated, to practice what he knows and can do to solve a problem that concerns him and is, therefore, meaningful to him. Concerning openness, the teacher above all comes into play since he has to define the delivery of the authentic task, which should be sufficiently structured, but at the same time open to different and multiple solutions without limiting or directing the student with too much interference. After structuring the delivery sufficiently to clarify what is required of the students and the constraints that will have to guide the performance of these tasks, the teacher's task changes and becomes one of providing appropriate scaffolding and feedback. The teacher practically transforms himself into a tutor (Cecchinato and Papa, 2016; Rivoltella, 2018) by supporting students in an increasingly less intrusive manner to foster their autonomy, which, however, cannot be requested and demanded a priori but must be co-constructed by increasingly adopting the authentic task as the mediator of his own teaching.

Returning to the central element of this article, assessment, it is worth noting that, at the end of each authentic task, it is appropriate to provide a space for reflection, metacognition, and self-assessment. This space can help students become progressively more aware of their choices by supporting self-regulation. An authentic task can be assessed with different tools, systematic observations, cognitive autobiographies, logbooks, student dossiers, portfolios, e-portfolios, and rubrics.

The rubrics are precisely configured as one of the most suitable tools to support the assessment of skills, supporting both teacher and student, the former in maintaining objectivity and the latter in directing their attention in carrying out the task and exercising self-assessment. The rubrics consist of a vertical column in which indicators, that is, what one wants to assess, are entered and a horizontal row in which levels are entered. Each level is described in detail and

can be accompanied by some examples (anchors) to help its detection in the situation. The rubric tool is most effective when it is co-constructed with students, who can thus enter as active protagonists in the assessment processes by reifying its formative value. Participating in the selection of indicators, the definition of levels, and the identification of appropriate anchors means bringing students closer to the assessment processes, which in the past they suffered passively, thus fostering the development of self-evaluative competence and working more and more from the perspective of autonomy and responsibility.

4. The research-training courses

The paper analyzes three training courses on modes and procedures of formative assessment which included a parallel research pathway (Magnoler, 2012). The courses were organized by the School Office of the Marche Region and held online by the University of Macerata between January and April 2022. They were a continuation of the research and experimentation work started during the previous edition, scheduled for s.y. 2019/20 and described in Rossi *et al.* (2021) and Gratani (2021).

Each course lasted 30 hours, divided into 18 hours of direct training through four webinars (12 hours) and three online workshop meetings (6 hours) and 12 hours of indirect training reserved for dissemination activities to be carried out at schools (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1 - Summary of the training course

Training	Activity	Mode	Platform	Duration	Description
Direct	Webinar	Plenary	Zoom	3 h	<i>Documenting the evolution of the competence: from processes to rubrics, from assessment of evidence to summative assessment</i>
				3 h	<i>Current legislation and tools for registering learning outcomes</i>
	Workshop	Groups and subgroups	Microsoft Teams	2 h	Summary of the proposal and group work
				2 h	End of group work, restitution and start of individual experimentation

				2 h	Restitution and group work on dissemination
	Webinar	Plenary	Zoom	3 h	<i>Experimentation report and focus on synthesis assessment</i>
				3 h	<i>Overall assessment of the course and reflection. Dissemination</i>
Indirect	Dissemination	Individual	/	12 h	Dissemination activities to be carried out at schools

The webinars were aimed at referring teachers (tenured teachers selected by the Headmaster and registered on the Italian ministerial platform for teacher training and updating “S.O.F.I.A.”) and adhering teachers (teachers participating on a voluntary basis for professional updating), while workshops and dissemination activity were reserved to referring teachers only.

The four webinars were held on the Zoom platform and covered the following topics, in continuity with the previous course edition: (1) documenting the evolution of the competence: from processes to rubrics, from evidence assessment to summative assessment; (2) current legislation and tools for registering learning outcomes; (3) analysis of models and experimentations from school practices; and (4) assessment and school practices.

The three workshop meetings were held on the Microsoft Teams platform, dividing the referring teachers from each school grade into macro-groups related to the subject area, which in turn were divided into micro-groups of about 20 participants. The workshops were purposely scheduled midway through the course in order to capture the key concepts that emerged, start group work and classroom experimentation, and obtain initial feedback from practice. Specifically, the first meeting summarized the proposal outlined by the trainers, presenting three models of rubrics related to written production, oral production, and math problems and launching the first delivery for group work. The latter asked the trainers to: design an authentic task from one of the proposed rubrics, adapt the chosen rubric according to the task, and identify possible anchors (group sheet 1).

The second meeting was then dedicated to concluding the group work and providing feedback. Afterward, we invited the teachers to test the chosen rubric in the classroom, supporting them with a worksheet (individual sheet 2).

The results of the experimentation and the reflections reported by the teachers were then discussed in the last workshop and became the starting point for the plenary restitution in the final webinars, as well as for the development

of the proposal itself. Finally, the third workshop included further group work aimed at gathering teachers' ideas and perspectives on dissemination, starting with some guiding questions (group sheet 3).

5. Methodology

5.1 Tools for the courses' assessment

For the assessment of the pathways, we designed an initial questionnaire and two final questionnaires administered through Google Forms.

The initial questionnaire was aimed at promoting better alignment of the training pathways by collecting some personal data of the participants and the following information related to their assessment practices:

- attendance of the previous edition of the course (close-ended answer);
- use of the register for recording students' outcomes (close-ended answer with "Other" option);
- logic used for moving from assessment of individual tests to end-of-quarter/quarter assessment (close-ended answer);
- Institute-wide sharing of assessment methods (close-ended answer);
- skills assessment modes (close-ended answer);
- testing of proposals related to the previous edition of the course and any results in terms of effectiveness and sustainability (open-ended answer).

At the end of the course, we instead administered an anonymous satisfaction questionnaire to detect satisfaction with the courses (organization, content covered, tools and input provided, strengths and weaknesses) and a final nominal questionnaire designed to investigate the following aspects:

- acquisition of any new knowledge and skills put in place or intended to be applied in one's teaching actions (close-ended answer);
- if yes, practices and ideas to be implemented among those proposed (open-ended response);
- proposals considered interesting, but not sustainable for one's teaching (open-ended answer);
- proposals considered valid and applicable, but still hardly feasible for the majority of colleagues (open-ended answer);
- willingness to take part in a future research-action course organized by the University of Macerata to guide teachers in experimenting with the proposals introduced and reflect together on practices (close-ended response).

Finally, in addition to the data from the questionnaires, we examined the materials produced by the teachers during the workshop: group sheet 1 (authentic task-rubric-anchor), individual sheet 2 (classroom experimentation and reflections), group sheet 3 (perspectives on dissemination). Sheet 1 reported a delivery to be carried out in sub-groups following some indicated steps: 1) analyze the three proposed model rubrics; 2) define an authentic task that can refer to one of the rubrics and describe it; 3) adapt the model rubric to the task (if necessary); 4) identify anchors for each level (at least for one dimension of the chosen rubric). Sheet 2 was then designed as a tool to support the individual teacher in reporting the reflections that emerged during classroom experimentation of the designed rubrics and authentic tasks. In particular, it asked to specify: classroom context; authentic task; rubric used and adapted; rubric strengths; rubric weaknesses; suggestions for improvement. Finally, Sheet 3 aimed to gather teachers' perspectives on future dissemination to be carried out at their own institutions. Each sub-group, taking into account the methodological model of experimentation proposed during the workshop, could then discuss to make explicit proposals and expectations, starting from the following guiding questions: what methods do you think you will use for dissemination? What problems do you think you will face? What questions do you think your colleagues will ask you?

The collection and exchange of information and materials between trainers and participants were facilitated by creating different spaces to share the courses' structure and materials with other teachers or interested parties in the area. Indeed, for each pathway, we set up a public web page (see Fig. 1) containing a brief presentation of the course, the webinar schedule, the names of the trainers, and all the materials provided and produced ongoing (slides and recordings of the webinars, model rubrics, project work carried out in the previous edition, videos on the electronic register). Instead, the workshop sessions were supported by creating Google Drive folders divided by school grade and containing a folder for each sub-group (see Fig. 2). Based on grade level, all teachers thus had access to materials and products from all sub-groups. This opportunity further fostered the sharing of practices between different disciplinary areas and provided teachers with valuable support materials for the subsequent dissemination phase in their own institutions.



Fig. 1 - Example of a course presentation web page

Il mio Drive > ... > LABORATORIO > Cartelle Condivise con i Docenti

Nome ↓	Proprietario	Ultima modifica
Gruppo di recupero	io	22 mag 2022 io
G5 - ambito linguistico-artistico	io	29 apr 2022 io
G4 - ambito scientifico-tecnologico	io	29 apr 2022 io
G3 - ambito umanistico-letterario	io	29 apr 2022 io
G2 - ambito umanistico-letterario	io	29 apr 2022 io
G1 - ambito umanistico-letterario	io	29 apr 2022 io

Il mio Drive > ... > Cartelle Condivise con i Docenti > G2 - ambito umanistico-letterario

Nome ↓	Proprietario	Ultima modifica	Dimensioni file
Materiali di lavoro	io	17 feb 2022 io	-
Consegne dei docenti	io	17 feb 2022 io	-

Nome ↓	Proprietario	Ultima modifica	Dimensioni file
Consegne Individuali - 25.03.22	io	17 mar 2022	–
SCHEDA Disseminazione - Gruppo 2D.docx	io	18 mar 2022	10 kB
SCHEDA Disseminazione - Gruppo 2C.docx	io	18 mar 2022	10 kB
SCHEDA Disseminazione - Gruppo 2B.docx	io	18 mar 2022	10 kB
SCHEDA Disseminazione - Gruppo 2A.docx	io	18 mar 2022	10 kB
SCHEDA 1 - Gruppo 2D.docx	io	25 mar 2022	57 kB
SCHEDA 1 - Gruppo 2C.docx	io	4 mar 2022	22 kB
SCHEDA 1 - Gruppo 2B.docx	io	25 mar 2022	23 kB
SCHEDA 1 - Gruppo 2A.docx	io	19 mar 2022	22 kB

Fig. 2 - Example of a lab repository

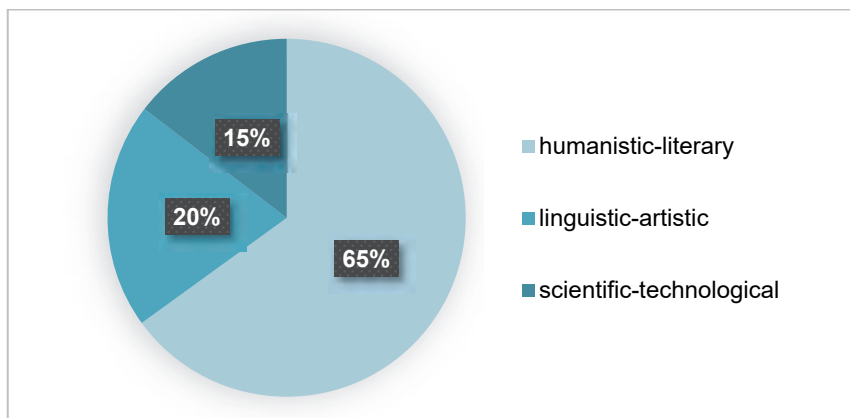
This continuous interaction between trainers and participants differentiated these courses from purely theoretical, transmissive courses.

5.2 Sample

A total of 196 primary, 116 lower secondary, and 65 upper secondary school teachers from the Marche Region took part in the training courses.

This paper focuses on the analysis of data from the sample of lower secondary school teachers involved in the pathway.

Graph 1 shows the distribution of the sample according to the three identified macro-subject areas, highlighting a prevalence of the humanistic-literary area (65%), followed by the linguistic-artistic area (20%), which in turn is slightly higher than the scientific-technological area (15%).



Graph 1 - Distribution of the sample according to the macro-subject areas

6. Results

As anticipated, the data analysis discussed below refers to the sample of lower secondary school teachers. Specifically, par. 6.1 presents three examples of authentic tasks developed by some groups during the workshop and the main difficulties encountered. Then, par. 6.2 reports teachers' considerations on the rubrics tested and par. 6.3 illustrates data from the initial and final questionnaires.

6.1 Designing authentic tasks

As specified in par. 4, the first workshop involved a group work aimed at analyzing the proposed rubrics and designing an authentic task as 'micro' as possible. Indeed, the intent was to encourage teachers to move away from the traditional 'macro' view, that sees authentic tasks as tasks carried out over a long period or through annual projects, and to invite them to adopt a 'micro' view, that considers tasks dropped into daily teaching and achievable in a narrow time frame (one or a few lessons). Such a change of view, consistent with the assessment-as-learning approach, thus implies a rethinking and transformation, albeit in small steps, of planning and teaching on the part of teachers.

Below, we report a brief summary of three authentic tasks developed by teachers for each macro-subject area.

1. Booktalk/Booktrailer.

Subject area: humanistic-literary

Target audience: third grade

Task's delivery: "You have 20 minutes to persuade your classmates to read a book that you enjoyed and that particularly engaged you, highlighting strengths relative to narrated events, characters, significant phrases, and suggestions. You can choose the most effective way to get more likes."

2. Anti-COVID Science Lab

Subject area: scientific-technological

Target audience: third grade

Task's delivery: "Each group should make a scale representation of the science lab, including the teachers' desk, students' desks, and furniture (if any) that complies with anti-COVID regulations. The desks should be arranged so that there is a distance of at least one meter between students. The distance between the teacher and the nearest students should be at least two meters. The furniture should also indicate hygienic devices (disinfectant dispenser, mask bin, masks...). Consider that the lab will also have to accommodate larger classes. Each group will have to arrange to obtain the necessary materials (measuring tools, calculator, drawing tools, paper, cardboard, etc...)."

3. Theater podcast

Subject area: linguistic-artistic

Target audience: third grade

Task's delivery: "1) Organization of learners into groups and designation of group leaders (1 hour); 2) Historical research on the theater in their city with research, analysis and selection of material considered suitable; each group must therefore produce a short presentation text to be included in the podcast (2 days); 3) Selection and/or realization of short jingles to be included in the podcast (1 day); 4) Presentation of the product produced to the Institute and local institutions (1 hour)."

By comparing the operational indications provided by the teachers, it is possible to infer different timelines and modes of performance. In addition to the distinction between individual tasks (example 1) and group tasks (examples 2 and 3), we note that from the first to the third example, there is a shift from a micro to a more 'meso' perspective. In fact, the second and especially the third task require a more extended time development and involve more processes and activities. In general, teachers have succeeded in proposing truly challenging situations, but they have found it difficult to move away from the perspective of macro-projects developed over a long period to rethink the proposed activities on a daily basis in order to make them more authentic and skill-generative. Furthermore, they faced the challenge of engaging with teachers from other institutions and, in some cases, other subjects (e.g., art teachers with

English teachers or technology teachers with math teachers) and negotiating to design a common authentic task.

6.2 *Experimenting with rubrics*

Analysis of the answers to the Sheet 2 revealed valuable feedback regarding strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement of the rubrics.

As for strengths, these can be summarized in the following categories:

- involvement and orientation of pupils in the assessment and self-assessment process. “The present course and the discussion with colleagues during the workshop hours led me to reflect that the pupils’ self-assessment is crucial: so far, I have shared with them the rubrics I used, but only to explain the grades I used to assign, from now on I will involve pupils more in the assessment process, and depending on the assigned task I will change the anchors.”; “Opportunity for pupil involvement in the (self-)assessment process: the precise definition of levels through the anchors gives pupils the possibility to use the rubric to guide their work.”
- objectivity, fairness, and transparency;
- greater awareness on the part of students and teachers. “The possibility of sharing assessment criteria with pupils and colleagues makes us teachers more aware of the criteria used and pupils more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses; an aspect made even more evident by the practice of self-assessment.”
- shift from “tacit” to “explicit”. “Assessment appears more objective and is very much guided. Assessment criteria are more easily shared with pupils as they are clearly spelled out. The shift from tacit to explicit through the written word makes assessment more objective and less prey to teacher expectations, projections, or emotionality.”
- expendability of the rubric to assess other tasks and monitor student progress. “It makes it possible to make meaningful judgments about the student’s actual learning process and to ‘monitor’ his or her progress.”

In contrast, teachers identify the following as major weaknesses:

- difficulty in reading and understanding a new type of assessment. “Turning rubric assessments into numerical grades is not easy; students are used to receiving grades, and it is not easy to get them used to reading and understanding rubrics.”
- difficulty in quantifying errors for anchors (e.g., for descriptors of oral production). “Defining anchors comprehensively a priori, particularly with regard to procedures. In addition, the assessment of artifacts must take into account a creativity-related component that cannot always be clearly classified within a given level.”

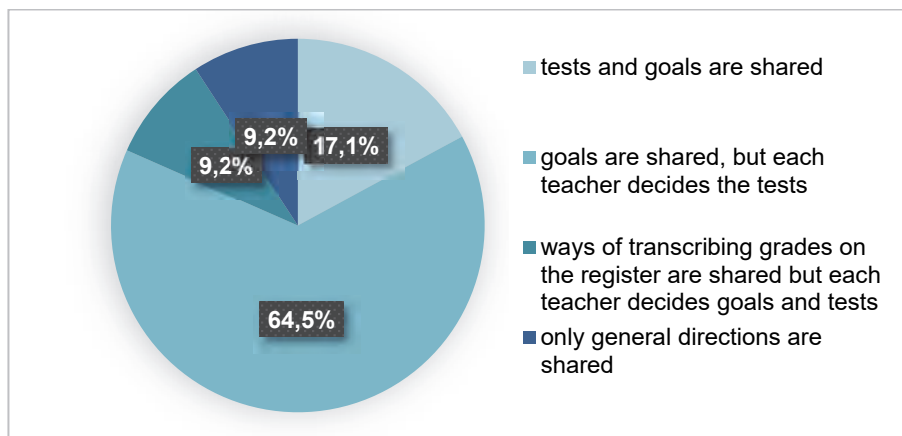
- difficulty in assessing autonomy of work, specifically in written production;
- shift from levels to numerical grades;
- greater effort on the part of teachers. “It requires more effort on the part of the teacher to assess, but it allows for clearer and more objective assessment.”; “The time spent on finding clear, effective, and unambiguous terms in writing rubrics.”

Finally, the proposals for improvement are mainly related to: greater versatility of the rubrics for different contexts and tests; sharing at the Institute level and among different subject areas; greater frequency in the use of the rubrics so that it becomes a habitual practice; adding an indicator on collaboration when the task involves group work; and supporting the self-assessment process through a specific form.

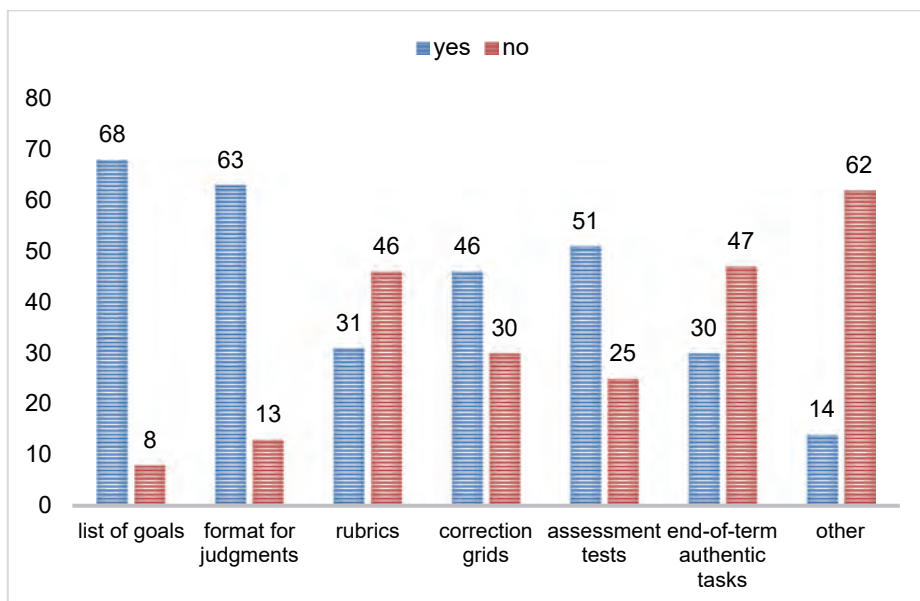
6.3 Questionnaires' data

Valuable information and feedback emerges also from the analysis of the answers to the initial questionnaire and the two final questionnaires.

The initial questionnaire was filled out by 76 lower secondary school teachers, 71.1% of whom had attended the previous edition of the course. With respect to what teachers transcribe in their register, the majority of them (80.3%) is split among the following: only the results of some summative tests (34.2%), outcomes of the majority of activities (31.6%), only a few outcomes that summarize the many notes collected in the personal notebook (14.5%). 75% of teachers also say that they take into account all personal notes recorded in moving from assessing individual tests to assessing them at the end of the long period. Then, 76.3% say they assess skills in the majority of activities, 17.1% use specific tests for their assessment, and 6.6% take them into account only for skills certification. Regarding the sharing of assessment methods at the Institute level, Graph 2 shows the varying degrees of sharing, while Graph 3 illustrates the levels of development of specific assessment materials and tools.



Graph 2 - Sharing of assessment methods at the Institute level



Graph 3 - Specific assessment materials and tools developed at the Institute level

Finally, among the teachers who participated in the previous edition of the course (71%), 17 teachers state that they have started experimenting with the proposal. Specifically, the teachers state that: they have experimented with the authentic tasks and/or rubrics developed during the workshop; they have tried to act more in the ‘micro’ perspective, making daily activities more

“challenging” and aimed at assessing skills; they have designed new rubrics; and they have shared assessment tools and parameters with students and/or colleagues. Some teachers also report positive experiences regarding students’ experimentation with the self-assessment process.

The end-of-term questionnaire was completed by 94 teachers, 77 referring and 17 adhering. 84% of teachers believe they have acquired new knowledge and skills that they have implemented or intend to apply in their teaching (“partly”: 16%; “no”: 0%). Specifically, 66% are willing to experiment with assessment rubrics and 44.7% would like to implement more micro authentic task teaching. Also promising is the willingness to share such tools and/or their construction with colleagues and students (10.6%) and to deepen the self-assessment process (18.1%). A minority (4.3%) mentions changing the electronic register. With respect to proposals that are interesting but not sustainable for their own teaching, 12.8% refer to assigning weights to the various types of tests and/or adapting the electronic register, while 7.5% cite the time-consuming definition of the anchors. Finally, 18.1% consider the construction of rubrics and their use as a shared usual practice among the team to be complex, rather than unsustainable. This last aspect also emerges from the next question, which relates to the proposals considered valid by teachers, but still scarcely feasible for most colleagues. In fact, 31.9% report colleagues’ difficulty, skepticism, or reticence with respect to the designing and use of rubrics as a usual assessment practice, especially in the case of too specific or detailed rubrics. Teachers also mention the shift to teaching through authentic tasks, aimed at assessing skills as well as knowledge, as often perceived as distant from colleagues’ daily practice (14.9%). Finally, 60.6% say they would be interested in participating in a future research-action course promoted by the University of Macerata for the following school year and aimed at guiding teachers in their action to test the proposals and reflect together on practices.

Lastly, the satisfaction questionnaire, filled out by 89 teachers, showed the degree of teachers’ satisfaction with organization, content, tools, and input provided during the course, as well as the main strengths and weaknesses of the pathway. The course met the expectations of 82% of participants (“partly”: 18%; “no”: 0%) and, specifically, 89.9% of teachers liked its organization (“partly”: 10.1%; “no”: 0%). Regarding the topics covered, teachers’ opinions are divided between interesting (61.8%) and very interesting (38.2%); no teachers found them uninteresting or not interesting at all. In addition, the course content was consistent with the expectations of the majority of teachers (82%). The remaining minority would have liked to have covered or deepened the following topics: cross-curriculum; Invalsi tests and test construction; Institute self-assessment; record of skills grades on the electronic register. Some teachers also desire to have available and/or create together more rubrics

and micro-task models for dissemination purposes. Finally, 78.8% of the teachers believe they have gained useful tools for dissemination purposes (“partly”: 20.2%; “no”: 1.1%). Analysis of the open-ended answers then reveals an alignment on the part of the participants with respect to the strengths of the course. Almost half of the participants refer to the possibility of sharing, comparing, and exchanging practices both with speakers and mentors from the University and with colleagues from other Institutions, working as a community and drawing enrichment from the comparison of different school realities and operative styles (46.1%). Consistent with this, teachers report the added value of the workshop activities (31.6%) and the insights or practical examples provided during the course (13.5%). Finally, participants appreciate the speakers’ expository clarity and the relevance of the content covered (12.4%). On the other hand, the main critical issues encountered are related to timing and time organization: the need for a more balanced distribution of the total number of hours (short duration of the workshops compared to the excessive duration of the webinars); difficulty in attending meetings due to concomitance with other institutional commitments; need for a more extended time to experiment with the proposal.

7. Conclusions

Analyzing the data collected and reflecting on the feedback from the participants allowed us to draw some considerations and conclusions that, although partial, stand as stimulating avenues for further research.

Among the various outcomes, we consider particularly significant the increased focus on student activation and participation in assessment dynamics, considered two crucial features in the assessment-as-learning approach.

At the end of the course, teachers declared an increased awareness of the relevance of self-assessment processes, showing interest in deepening this practice to become increasingly competent in supporting their students. Feedback from the teachers also revealed, with some relevance, the need to share what was learned in the training courses and what was experienced in daily teaching so that updating assessment practices is not peculiar to the individual virtuous teacher but shared knowledge for everyone. They felt the need for joint work to make such practices and tools habitual and applicable in daily teaching.

Regarding the room for improvement of the research-training course, we have picked up the need to improve the proposal and materials with a focus on sustainability, devoting more extended time to the workshop phase and

proposing versatile rubric templates that could be used for more and different authentic tasks.

Further insights and boosts will derive from the comprehensive and integrated analysis of the data collected and feedback related to the dissemination activity and the action-research pathway organized by the University of Macerata for 2022-23 school year. The latter, accepting teacher feedback, will be geared toward greater sustainability of the rubrics and assessment proposal, including attention to the summary grade and end-of-year assessment, focusing on the processes activated by students in this new assessment-as-learning-oriented approach.

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