

Learning Assessment Practices in Contemporary Education: A Study in Three Secondary Education Institutions of San Juan Bautista, Misiones, Paraguay

Vicenta Martínez Fariña¹

¹ *Corresponding author. University: UNIBE (Universidad Iberoamericana), City: San Juan Bautista -Mnes, Email: martinezvicenta82@gmail.com , <https://orcid.org/62-70-62-70>

HOW TO CITE:

Vicenta Martínez Fariña (2026).
Learning Assessment Practices in
Contemporary Education: A Study
in Three Secondary Education
Institutions of San Juan Bautista,
Misiones, Paraguay
International Journal of Special
Education, 41(22s),62-70

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the
terms and conditions
of the Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY)
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

ABSTRACT

Assessment of learning was a central element of the educational process, aimed not only at verifying knowledge but also at developing skills and meaningful learning. However, in Paraguayan secondary education, traditional practices were evident, which hindered the development of formative and authentic approaches. The objective of this study was to analyze the learning assessment procedures that secondary school teachers have been developing in the three public educational institutions of the city of San Juan Bautista, department of Misiones, during 2025. A mixed-methods design was used, with a descriptive level and a cross-sectional design using concurrent triangulation. One hundred teachers and 250 students were included by census, and 15 teachers served as key informants for semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis of portfolios. The results indicated strong support for integrating diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment, with 87% of respondents in favor of the formative use of assessment; however, traditional summative assessment instruments still carried significant weight. Through qualitative analysis, pedagogical, institutional, and technological limitations were identified, including administrative pressures, a general lack of training in assessment as a specific subject, and connectivity restrictions. Through triangulation of sources, a hybrid evaluative culture was identified, situated between traditional and contemporary models. The study concluded that institutional, technological, and organizational conditions, in addition to pedagogical knowledge, influenced the actual transformation of assessment practices.

Keywords: learning assessment, formative assessment, secondary education, teaching practices, Paraguay.

Introduction

Assessment of learning in modern education is no longer a single event, but an integral part of the learning process. In addition to measuring students' achievement of curricular objectives, assessment is conceived as a formative and participatory instrument that facilitates meaningful learning, based on a competency-based approach (Zabala & Arnau, 2014). This renewed conception was a response to the

challenges of a constantly evolving educational environment and to the demands for assessment to be more equitable, participatory, and contextualized. In Paraguay, curricular frameworks began to incorporate assessment principles centered on diversity and on the student (Ministry of Education and Sciences [MEC], 2020). However, standardized tests, memorization of content, and relatively scarce attention to individual differences were typical characteristics of traditional practices in many

secondary schools, particularly in the interior of the country, such as the city of San Juan Bautista, Misiones.

Institutional, pedagogical, and technological contexts have revealed a gap between innovative theoretical approaches and actual practices, as well as a lack of teacher training in authentic assessment, resistance to changing assessment methods, and administrative overload (Barba-Martín et al., 2020). Internationally, Black and Wiliam (1998, 2018) demonstrated that formative assessment is a powerful tool for improving student learning, especially when it involves providing effective feedback and involving students in the learning process. Similarly, Perrenoud (2004) and Anijovich (2019) proposed that assessment should be based on competencies and oriented toward the construction of competencies, reflection, and self-regulation, while Tobón (2020) noted that assessing a competency requires evidence of performance in authentic contexts. Despite theoretical advances, traditional assessment practices centered on memorization have persisted in Latin America, as indicated by Martínez Rizo (2013). López Pastor (2017) emphasizes the need for formative and shared assessment to involve students in the learning process. The emergence of tools based on generative AI has also brought new challenges to the education system, as it has become more difficult to distinguish between original productions and content created by artificial intelligence, which underscores the need to design authentic, contextualized, and process-based assessments (Zapata Ros, 2024).

In this context, it was not clear to what extent the assessment practices used in the city of San Juan Bautista reflected the learning assessment approach in force at that time, which made it necessary to analyze the assessment process in its context. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to analyze the learning assessment practices of secondary school teachers in three educational institutions in the city of San Juan Bautista, Misiones, in 2025, from the methodological standpoint, that of teachers and students, the obstacles encountered, the measures adopted for

improvement, and the relationships established with institutional documents.

Materials And Methods

The study was carried out in three public secondary education institutions in the city of San Juan Bautista, department of Misiones (Paraguay), Educational Region No. 1 _Misiones, during the 2025 school year. The level of the research was descriptive, and the methodology was mixed, with collection, analysis, and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, following the pragmatic paradigm (Creswell, 2014). The design was cross-sectional, using a concurrent triangulation strategy (DITRIAC), which made it possible to integrate information from different sources and techniques simultaneously (Flick, 2015). The population consisted of teachers and students at the secondary level of the three selected institutions. In the quantitative phase, census sampling was used, which included 100 teachers from the first, second, and third years, and 250 students from the first, second, and third years. For the qualitative phase, non-probabilistic key-informant sampling was used, which included 15 teachers with experience in planning and implementing learning assessment, who took part in semi-structured interviews and had their teaching portfolios analyzed.

Table 1. Study population by educational institution

Educational institution	Teachers	Students
Institution No. 1	30	120
Institution No. 2	35	80
Institution No. 3	35	50
Total	100	250

Source: prepared by the author based on institutional data.

A structured survey was administered to teachers and students. A questionnaire with five-level Likert-type items was used to collect data from teachers, and the key-informant teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured technique.

The data analysis techniques used were the structured survey, the semi-structured interview, and the documentary analysis of the teaching portfolio. Three experts evaluated the content validity of the instruments, and an Aiken's V index of 1.00 was obtained for all items (Aiken, 1985). A pilot test was carried out with 100 students and 100 teachers who were not part of the study population, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.942, considered excellent reliability (George & Mallery, 2023). Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS Statistics, while qualitative analysis was carried out deductively and inductively, categorizing and subcategorizing the data from the interviews and portfolios using ATLAS.ti software version 25, which allows for the construction of categories, subcategories, and semantic networks. Finally, the triangulation of quantitative, qualitative, and documentary data supported the internal validity of the study. The research was conducted in accordance with the principles established in the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), which ensures that participants and the information collected are treated with respect and confidentiality, and that informed consent is obtained.

Results

The teacher sample ($n = 100$) was made up mostly of female teachers (72.0%), with the majority in the 41-to-50-year-old range (66.0%). A high proportion had postgraduate academic training (42.0% with a master's degree and 20.0% with a doctorate). A significant training gap was observed, since only 41.0% of teachers reported specific training in educational assessment relevant to interpreting the results. The student sample ($n = 250$) was concentrated in the 15-to-16-year-old age range (80.8%), with the majority being first-year secondary students (56.8%).

Table 2. Sociodemographic characteristics of the teacher and student samples (supplementary)

Sample	Characteristic	%
Teachers ($n = 100$)	Women	72.0
Teachers ($n = 100$)	Between 41 and 50 years old	66.0
Teachers ($n = 100$)	Postgraduate degree - Master's	42.0
Teachers ($n = 100$)	Postgraduate degree - Doctorate	20.0
Teachers ($n = 100$)	Specific training in educational assessment	41.0
Students ($n = 250$)	Between 15 and 16 years old	80.8
Students ($n = 250$)	Enrolled in first year of secondary school	56.8

Source: prepared by the author based on data reported in the Results section (survey administered to teachers and students).

Methodologies and types of assessment implemented

When asked about the types of assessment used, 84.0% indicated using diagnostic assessments at the start of thematic units, 87.0% indicated using formative assessments during instruction, and 86.0% indicated using summative assessments at the end of content units. Likewise, 86.0% of teachers reported using various types of assessment throughout the school year, and 80.0% indicated giving greater weight to formative than to summative assessment.

Table 3. Types of assessment applied by teachers ($n = 100$)

Indicator	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree or neutral (%)
Diagnostic assessment at the beginning	84.0	6.0	10.0
Formative assessment during the process	47.0	40.0	13.0
Summative assessment at the end	52.0	34.0	14.0
Combination of assessment types	55.0	31.0	14.0
Priority given to formative assessment	43.0	37.0	20.0

Source: prepared by the author based on the survey administered to teachers.

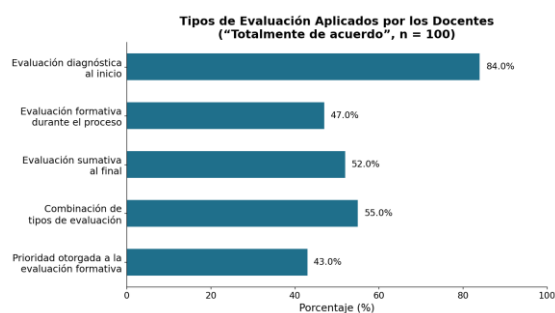


Figure 1. Types of assessment applied by teachers, "Strongly agree" responses (n = 100).

Source: prepared by the author based on data reported in Table 3 (supplementary visualization).

Regarding assessment strategies, 93.0% indicated implementing a variety of strategies (presentations, projects, portfolios, written tests); 90.0% reported using self-assessment and peer-assessment activities; 92.0% indicated selecting strategies according to the characteristics of the

group; and 86.0% indicated including digital technologies as part of the assessment process. Of these students, 91.2% agreed that the teacher carried out diagnostic activities at the start of topics; 90.8% agreed that the teacher used graded tests or assignments to improve teaching in class; and 90.4% agreed that the teacher used graded tests or assignments at the end of topics.

Table 4. Assessment strategies reported by teachers (n = 100, supplementary)

Strategy	%
Variety of strategies (presentations, projects, portfolios, written tests)	93.0
Self-assessment and peer-assessment activities	90.0
Selection of strategies according to group characteristics	92.0
Use of digital technologies	86.0

Source: prepared by the author based on the survey administered to teachers.

Table 5. Students' perceptions of teachers' assessment practices (n = 250, supplementary)

Perception	%
Recognized diagnostic activities at the start of topics	91.2
Recognized assessments aimed at improving teaching during classes	90.8
Recognized graded tests or assignments at the end of topics	90.4

Source: prepared by the author based on the survey administered to students.

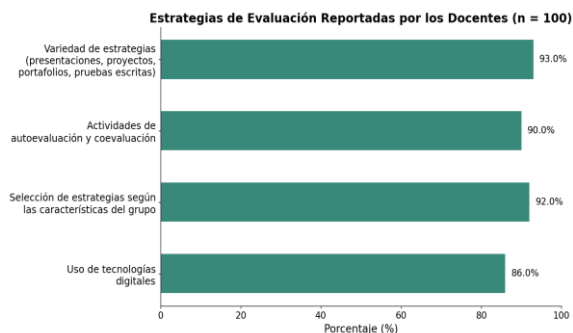


Figure 2. Assessment strategies reported by teachers (n = 100).

Source: prepared by the author based on data reported in Table 4 (supplementary visualization).

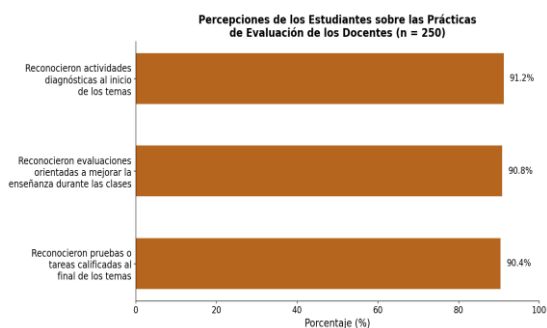


Figure 3. Students' perceptions of teachers' assessment practices (n = 250).

Source: prepared by the author based on data reported in Table 5 (supplementary visualization).

Perceptions of feedback and identified barriers

The qualitative analysis of the interviews with the 15 key-informant teachers was carried out through deductive and inductive coding in ATLAS.ti version 25, which made it possible to identify three main categories of pedagogical, institutional, and technological factors, as well as categories of pedagogical, organizational, and innovation strategies. The pedagogical barriers were pedagogical knowledge and competencies in assessment-related tasks (the first), limitations in the diversity of strategies and methods (the second), and lack of time for planning and feedback (the third), the latter correlated with the need for professional development. Regarding institutional barriers, participants mentioned administrative workload, internal regulations, lack of coordination among teachers, and the bureaucratic way teaching work is carried out. Regarding technological barriers, lack of connectivity was identified as a structural barrier to digital assessment due to unequal access to equipment and connectivity, teachers' digital competencies, and limited technical support at the institutional level.

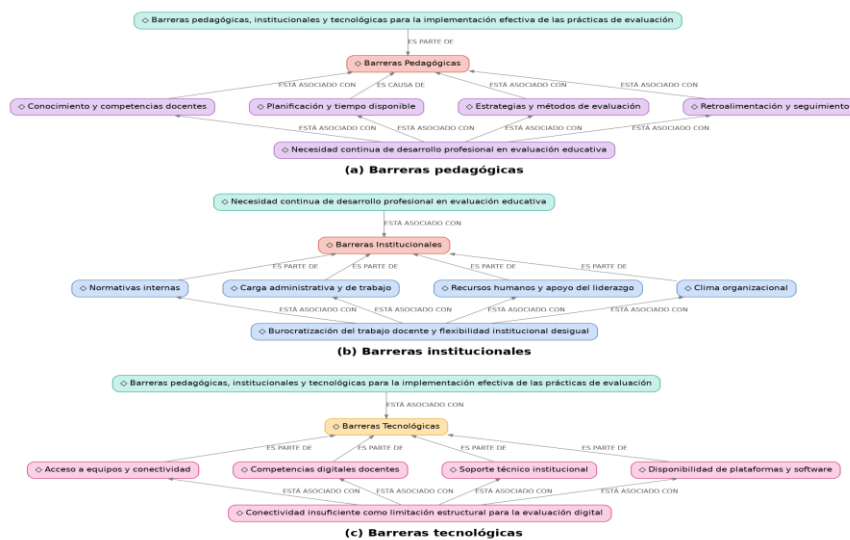


Figure 4. Semantic networks of the identified barrier categories: (a) pedagogical barriers; (b) institutional barriers; (c) technological barriers.

Source: prepared by the author based on teacher interviews using ATLAS.ti software, version 25.

The barriers identified in the qualitative analysis were also accompanied by an articulated set of pedagogical, organizational, and innovation strategies used by teachers. Notable pedagogical strategies included the design and planning of assessment tasks, the diversification of assessment methods and instruments, the integration of assessment into the teaching-learning process, and feedback and follow-up, all linked to the development of adaptive, student-centered assessment. At the organizational level,

teacher coordination, time and workload management, the use of organizational resources, and support from school leadership and academic supervision were identified. Finally, in the area of innovation and continuous improvement, the use of educational technologies, professional development in assessment, willingness to adapt to group characteristics, and methodological innovation were reported.

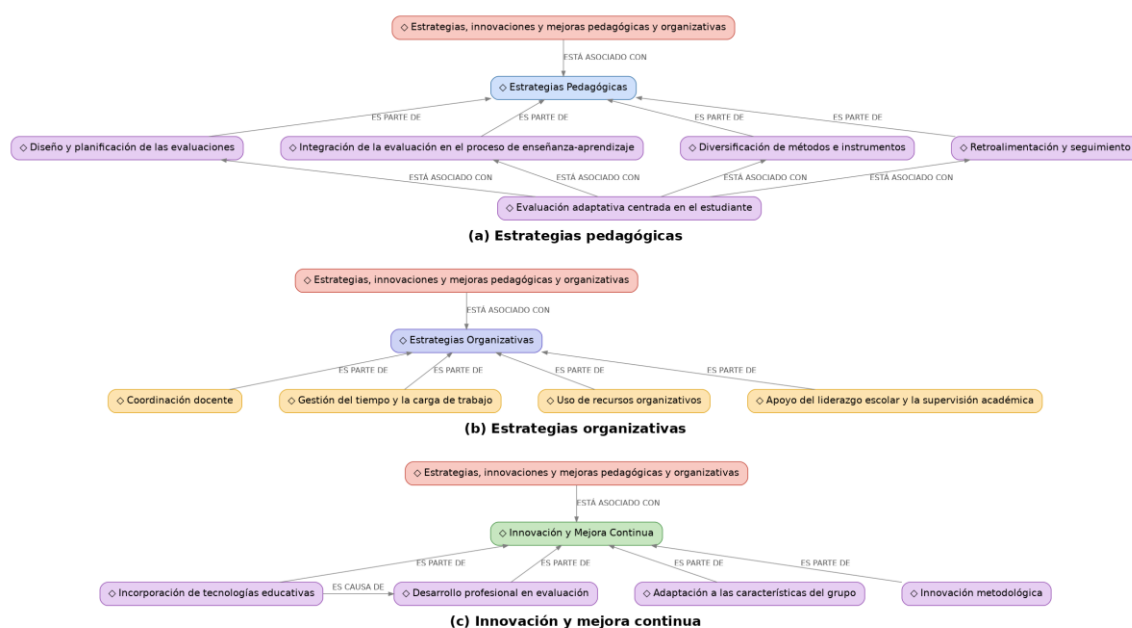


Figure 5. Semantic networks of the identified strategy and improvement categories: (a) pedagogical strategies; (b) organizational strategies; (c) innovation and continuous improvement.

Source: prepared by the author based on teacher interviews using ATLAS.ti software, version 25.

The institutional documents of the three institutions included statements on the principles of comprehensive, formative, competency-based assessment, but the teaching portfolios revealed a limited correspondence between institutional documents and the actual documents contained in the portfolios, most of which included a large number of grading sheets and written tests, and few contained systematized evidence of documented feedback.

Triangulation of sources

The quantitative, qualitative, and documentary data were integrated, and a high degree of correspondence was observed between teachers' perceptions, students' perceptions, and the

documentation analyzed. Overall, the findings indicated a positive evolution in the integration of active methods, the use of technologies, and the adaptation of assessment to the institutional environment. However, traditional summative assessment instruments persisted, and some limitations related to teacher training, technological resources, and institutional support remained.

Discussion

The reported findings confirm the hypothesis that the learning assessment practices implemented in the three institutions examined were in transition between traditional and contemporary practices, generating a hybrid

learning assessment culture. The theoretical approach proposed by Black and Wiliam (1998, 2018), according to which assessment contributes to learning when it allows evidence to be gathered, progress to be interpreted, and teaching to be adjusted, is qualified by the results of the present study, which show that the appropriation of the formative approach depended on certain institutional and contextual factors that were not always systematically recorded, interpreted, and related to the design of the teaching-learning process. Regarding the use of authentic, competency-based assessment, relevant progress was found in the use of rubrics, projects, and practical activities, as proposed by Wiggins (1998) and Tobón (2020), although a certain appropriation of the grading-oriented approach predominant in written tests persists. The results indicate that the simplicity of contemporary instruments does not guarantee a profound change in the assessment process, since this is determined by the pedagogical purpose of the instrument and not by the instrument itself.

Regarding feedback, the results were similar to those of Wisniewski et al. (2020) and Carless and Boud (2018) in recognizing its place in the assessment process. However, weaknesses were observed in its systematicity and documentation. Feedback was frequently verbal and not necessarily linked to specific improvement actions, which indicates the need to develop students' assessment literacy, not only by increasing the frequency of feedback but also by improving its understanding and use. The obstacles identified for formative assessment — administrative overload, lack of teacher coordination, and lack of technical support — coincided with the findings of Schildkamp et al. (2020), who note that formative assessment requires organizational conditions to collect, interpret, and use learning evidence. Likewise, technological limitations related to connectivity and device management coincided with the perspective of Ainscow and Messiou (2018) on inclusive assessment; that is, that no assessment in which access to technology is not equally available can be considered fully inclusive.

This is relevant in non-coastal contexts, such as San Juan Bautista, in the interior of the country. This dissociation between the institutional document and classroom practices was similar to that reported by Arregui Eaton and Chaparro Caso-López (2020) in secondary schools in Mexico, where formal assessment-process regulations did not necessarily lead to the use of differentiated practices. This finding reinforces the idea that the transformation of assessment is not only a matter of curricular changes, but also of processes that must develop over time, including pedagogical support and the organizational conditions that make the effective use of assessment in the classroom possible. Among the limitations of the study are its cross-sectional design, which made it impossible to evaluate changes in assessment practices over time; and its focus on only three public institutions in a particular locality, which made it difficult to generalize the results to other educational contexts in the country. Likewise, the data collected from the perspectives of teachers and students may have been influenced by respondents' social desirability. It is recommended that future research continue studying the influence of new technologies on assessment practice, examine the degree of support for the assessment literacy of teachers and students, and carry out longitudinal studies and research on institutional assessment culture.

Conclusion

The learning assessment practices designed by secondary school teachers in the three educational institutions of San Juan Bautista, Misiones, in 2025, were configured as a transitional assessment system, in which traditional practices, oriented mainly toward the summative and certifying function of assessment, coexist with emerging practices, related to the formative, authentic, and competency-based function of assessment. Progress was observed in the diversification of assessment strategies and in the use of digital technologies, but these developments had not yet been consolidated or systematically articulated in daily pedagogical practice, since various pedagogical, institutional, and technological barriers still exist. The process

of consolidating learning-centered assessment would therefore require not only the strengthening of teachers' pedagogical knowledge, but also supportive institutional, organizational, and technological conditions, and coherence between institutional planning and what happens in the classroom regarding assessment practices.

Acknowledgments

To the authorities, teachers, and students of the three educational institutions of the city of San Juan Bautista, Misiones, for their willingness and collaboration in providing the information that

made the development of this study possible. Likewise, to Dr. Olga Sosa, advisor of the doctoral thesis from which this article is derived.

Authorship Contribution

Vicenta Martínez Fariña participated in the conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, resources, software, supervision, validation, visualization, and writing of the original draft, review, and editing of this article.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

References

- Ainscow, M., & Messiou, K. (2018). Engaging with the views of students to promote inclusion in education. *Journal of Educational Change*, 19, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s162-70-62-70>
- Aiken, L. R. (1985). Three coefficients for analyzing the reliability and validity of ratings. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 45(1), 131–142.
- Anijovich, R. (2019). Guidelines for teacher training and classroom work: Formative feedback. Buenos Aires, Argentina: SUMMA.
- Arregui Eaton, I. G., & Chaparro Caso-López, A. A. (2020). Comparative analysis of strategies for evaluating teaching practice used in secondary schools in Baja California. *Innovación Educativa*, 20(82), 67–82.
- World Medical Association. (2013). Declaration of Helsinki. Retrieved from <https://www.wma.net/>
- Barba-Martín, R. A., Bores-García, D., González-Calvo, G., & Hortigüela Alcalá, D. (2020). Formative assessment with student teachers to reduce the theory-practice gap in initial teacher training. *Educación Física y Deporte*, 39(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.efyd.v39n1a02>
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>
- Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2018). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment. London, United Kingdom: Granada Learning.
- Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1315–1325. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Flick, U. (2015). An introduction to qualitative research (5th ed.). Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Morata.
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2023). IBM SPSS Statistics 27 step by step: A simple guide and reference (16th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- López Pastor, V. M. (2017). Formative and shared assessment in education: Success stories across all educational stages. Madrid, Spain: Narcea.
- Martínez Rizo, F. (2013). Educational assessment: Concepts, functions, and types. National Institute for the Evaluation of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.inee.edu.mx/>
- Ministry of Education and Sciences. (2020). Guidelines for learning assessment in the Paraguayan education system. Asunción, Paraguay: MEC.
- Perrenoud, P. (2004). Ten new competencies for teaching. Barcelona, Spain: Graó.

- Schildkamp, K., van der Kleij, F. M., Heitink, M. C., Kippers, W. B., & Veldkamp, B. P. (2020). Formative assessment: A systematic review of critical teacher prerequisites for classroom practice. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 103, Article 101602. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101602>
- Tobón, S. (2020). *Competency-based assessment: Complex thought, curriculum, and didactics*. Bogotá, Colombia: Ecoe Ediciones.
- Wiggins, G. (1998). *Educative assessment: Designing assessments to inform and improve student performance*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wisniewski, B., Zierer, K., & Hattie, J. (2020). The power of feedback revisited: A meta-analysis of educational feedback research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 3087. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03087>
- Zabala, A., & Arnau, L. (2014). *11 key ideas: How to learn and teach competencies*. Barcelona, Spain: Graó.
- Zapata Ros, M. (2024). Authentic assessment and artificial intelligence: New challenges for teachers. *Revista Iberoamericana de Educación a Distancia*, 27(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.5944/ried.27.1.32041>