
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Alternative Assessment in the English Department in Higher Education: Status and BA Students' Perceptions

Fahd ELMEZRAAI¹✉ and Naima TRIMASSE²

¹*Ibnou Zohr university, Agadir, Morocco*

²*Ibnou Zohr university, Agadir, Morocco*

Corresponding Author: Fahd ELMEZRAAI, **E-mail:** fahd.elmezraai@edu.uiz.ac.ma

| ABSTRACT

Assessing students' learning is a fundamental part of higher education (HE). It determines whether the goals of education are being met or not and it provides insights to teachers and learners about the most effective ways to improve and proceed. Research confirms that tests and examinations are the most employed tools of assessment in HE. Yet, these traditional assessment methods (TAM) have detrimental effects on instruction and students (Abera et al., 2017). Recent developments in societies have called for new alternatives in assessment that can respond to these changes. This paper, hence, aimed to study the status of alternative assessment (AA) in the new reform of Moroccan higher education (MHE) namely within the program of Bachelor of Arts (BA) by analyzing the BA accreditation document. Also, the study sought to find out AA methods and techniques BA professors use, and students' perceptions of those methods. The findings suggest that AA are implicitly encouraged in the BA accreditation document, but there is a lack of clarity regarding their weight in students' overall grades, as well as the tools and implementation methods. The study also revealed varied usage of AA methods. Students generally perceive alternative assessments positively.

| KEYWORDS

Assessment, traditional assessment, alternative assessment, assessment reform, attitudes

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1 Introduction

Assessment shapes students' learning and their perceptions of academic progress. Traditional methods, such as standardized tests, have long dominated education and failed to address diverse learning styles or foster higher-order skills. In response, alternative assessment methods (AAM)—such as presentations, projects, and portfolios.... etc.-have emerged to provide a more holistic evaluation of students' learning and address the limitations of traditional approaches.

This study investigates the implementation of AA in undergraduate studies within the English department in Moroccan universities. By analyzing the accreditation document, identifying teachers' current assessment practices and examining students' perceptions, the research seeks to shed light on the practicalities and challenges of adopting these innovative approaches to assessment. The findings aim to inform educators and policymakers on how AA is integrated into official documents, applied in practice and perceived by students.

2 Literature review

2.1 Assessment

Several definitions are used to define the concept of assessment in literature. Despite their difference in expressions, they meet in achieving the same meaning. In its broad sense, Bachman (2004) states that "assessment is a process of collecting information about something that we are interested in according to procedures that are systematic and substantially grounded" (p. 6-7). In

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education, Richards and Schmidth (2013) define it as systematically collecting information and making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course based on various sources of evidence or forms: observation, interview, paper-test...etc.

2.2 Alternative assessment

A plethora of research has been highly preoccupied with AA, but there seems to be no consensus among scholars on its definition. The term 'alternative' signifies replacing the conventional often summative tests that show products of learning and produce no feedback for enhancing student learning (Singh, et.al, 2022). According to Stefonek (1991), AA involves any form of evaluation other than traditional paper and pencil, machine-scored tests, or multiple-choice tests, written assignments, exercises, paper-based quizzes, tests, and examinations. Most researchers share and maintain the idea that AA includes different, non-conventional techniques teachers use to measure what learners can do with the language using their linguistic, communicative, and strategic skills. As a working definition in this paper, we refer to AA as a set of various, new, and different alternatives to traditional or standardized forms of assessment; these new assessments prioritize ongoing feedback, process-oriented evaluation, and the active involvement of students in their learning.

2.3 Characteristics of AA methods

Multiple studies have attempted to describe the main characteristics of AA (Stefonek, 1991; Hancock, 1994; Brown, 1998; Hamayan, 1995; Brown & Hudson, 2018; Palm, 2008; Berry, 2008; Richards, 2015). Most of them agree that AA:

1. emerged as a response to the perceived deficiencies of TAM which do not promote a healthy learning and inclusive atmosphere as students feel pressured and very anxious. Also, TAM only assesses the cognitive level; producing students who are test-smart but very poor in solving problems in real life situations.
2. uses real-world contexts or meaningful tasks that bear a resemblance to real-life, or authentic situations in which learners should learn to excel (Palm, 2008).
3. emphasizes learning and thinking, and other skills such as problem-solving strategies, self-regulatory strategies, and learning strategies which make learners produce rather than reproduce knowledge (Suzieleez Syrene Abdul & Tajularipin Sulaiman, 2006; Stefonek, 1991).
4. accounts for students' different learning styles (Brualdi, 1996).
5. offers ongoing and immediate feedback to learners (Angelo & Cross, 1993).
6. helps teachers modify their instruction. In AA, teachers take on new instructional and assessment roles; they evaluate the effectiveness of their lessons on student understanding and adjust their teaching methods as necessary (Wiggins, 1993).
7. taps into students' higher-level thinking and problem-solving abilities and challenges their application of knowledge into the real world (Birenbaum et al., 2006; Eisner, 1999 as cited in (Libman, 2010).
8. makes students responsible for their own learning (Hargreaves et. al 2002).
9. accounts for students' diversity (race/ethnicity, socio-economic, cultural background, learning style, learning strategies, past learning experience, cognitive capacity, learning orientation, degree of maturity, self-esteem, motivation, social family issues or social engagement preferences) (Berry, 2008).

The focus on practical skills, individualized evaluation, and emphasis on student-centred learning has made AA an interesting area for educational research. Numerous studies have explored how these characteristics are applied into practice, shedding light on their impact across diverse educational contexts.

2.4 Alternative Assessment Studies Worldwide

Several studies explored the implementation, benefits, challenges, students and teachers' perceptions of AA. Some of these studies highlight the significant benefits of AA in enhancing student engagement, critical thinking, and skill development. AA is viewed positively by both students and teachers for promoting deeper learning, self-reflection, and communication skills (Alquraan, 2012; Josifović Elezović, 2011; Siow, 2015). Self- and peer-assessment methods are valued for encouraging reflection and fostering analytical skills (Siow, 2015; Josifović Elezović, 2011). Despite these benefits, all studies recognize obstacles in applying AA, such as inadequate training, limited resources, and overcrowded classrooms, which reduce its overall effectiveness (Sadeghi & Khonbi, 2014; Irawan, 2017). While some studies advocate for a balanced approach that integrates both AA and traditional assessments (Irawan, 2017), others emphasize the role of AA in improving specific skills, such as speaking and listening (Sadeghi & Khonbi, 2014). Overall, these studies highlight the potential of AA to enhance learning, but they also stress the need for adequate training, resources, and institutional support to overcome implementation barriers.

2.5 Perception

According to Nurohman (2018), perception is deeply linked to human psychology. It can be understood as a conscious awareness of one's surroundings through physical sensations, which reflects an individual's ability to perceive. Unumeri (2009) further suggests that perception is shaped by one's thoughts and perspectives. In other words, an individual's mental beliefs shape how they interpret their surroundings. Essentially, a person with a positive mindset tends to perceive things positively, while someone

with negative thoughts is likely to view things negatively. Consequently, perception is not only an act of sensory reception but is also shaped by cognitive and emotional factors that influence how information is understood and responded to.

Students' perceptions play a crucial role in teaching, learning and assessment as educators must consider students' preferences when designing instructional materials, lessons and assessment methods. These perceptions are shaped by a variety of factors, reflecting the individual's ability to learn through sensory experiences. Since each person's perception is influenced by their unique circumstances and skills, it is inherently subjective and can differ from one individual to another.

2.6 Alternative Assessment Studies in Morocco

Research on AA in Moroccan EFL classrooms reveals a consistent gap between teachers' positive perceptions and their actual practices. Babni (2019) and Ghaicha and Omarkaly (2018) found that while teachers acknowledge the value of AA, its implementation faces challenges such as time constraints, large class sizes, and inadequate training. Similarly, Mamad and Vigh (2021) and Kasmi and Anasse (2023) reported that despite favouring AA, teachers predominantly rely on TAM like multiple-choice questions and gap-filling exercises due to practical obstacles. El Ouardi et al. (2024) extended research to Moroccan ESP classrooms in HE, showing that despite positive attitudes toward AA in writing instruction, its application remains limited.

Overall, studies in the Moroccan context suggest that while AA is viewed positively across Moroccan educational levels, its effective implementation requires addressing several obstacles such as teacher training, time, and resources. These findings call for collective efforts to bridge the gap between teachers' perceptions and practices.

3 Research Gap, Objectives, and Questions

3.1 Research gap

In the Moroccan educational context, existing studies have provided valuable insights into the use of AA in secondary and high school education, particularly in EFL classrooms. Yet, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on its implementation in the English department in tertiary education. Reviewed studies- excluding (El ouardi et al, 2024)- primarily explored high school teachers' perceptions and practices, often relying on single-method approaches such as questionnaires or focus groups. Moreover, these studies tend to emphasize teacher-centred perspectives, they overlooked students' experiences and the institutional factors that influence assessment practices. Challenges such as time constraints, insufficient training, and large class sizes are well-documented, but their relevance to HE is yet to be explored. This study addresses these gaps by examining the status of AA in HE namely, in the English department across different universities in Morocco. It incorporates methodological triangulation as it explores the topic from three perspectives: institutional policy (Accreditation document), teachers' practices and students' perspectives. By doing so, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how AA is perceived, implemented, and received within the HE context.

3.2 Research Objectives

This present study has three main objectives. The first one is to examine how AA is integrated in official accreditation documents for the BA program (2023) in the English department. The second one is to explore which AA techniques professors are using in practice. The third objective is to investigate how students perceive and react to these AA techniques within the BA program. The study tries to explore and cover the topic from three angles: The intended policy (expressed in the accreditation document), the actual practice (what alternative assessment techniques professors use), the response from key stakeholders (students' attitudes).

3.3 Research Questions

To reach out the study's objectives, the following research questions have been developed:

1. How is AA integrated in the official accreditation document for the BA program in the English department?
2. How is AA implemented in undergraduate studies?
3. What are BA students' perceptions of AA techniques in undergraduate studies?

4 Research Design & Methodology

4.1 Research Design

Given the nature of the research questions, it has been decided that a mixed-methods research design would be the most appropriate approach to address them. Initially, a qualitative approach will be adopted to answer the first research question by analysing the official accreditation texts of the BA program (2023) in the English department to uncover how AA is integrated. Secondly, to understand which AA techniques professors employ with BA students, an online questionnaire has been formulated. To gain deeper insights into the main reasons for using certain techniques over others, qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions incorporated into the online survey. Finally, students' perceptions were measured both quantitatively (using Likert-scale-based questionnaires) and qualitatively (open-ended questions). This triangulation of three methods—document analysis, online surveys, and semi-structured interviews—will help in comparing the study's findings, leading to well-grounded conclusions.

4.2 Setting and Participants

As stated earlier, this study focuses on AA practices within English departments at Moroccan universities. The choice of this setting is significant as it provides the institutional context for understanding how AA methods are applied. The analysis incorporates a review of the BA accreditation document (2023), which outlines the guidelines and expectations for structuring and implementing assessments. The participants in the study consist of 32 teachers and 132 students belonging to the English departments in various Moroccan universities.

The thirty-two English teachers who participated in the study varied according to their teaching experiences as Table 1 shows.

Table1

Teaching Experience in Higher Education

Teaching Experience	Percentage	Number of Responses
0-5	43.8%	14
6-10	21.9%	7
11-15	9.4%	3
16+ years	25%	8

As far as students are concerned, the total number of participants is 132. Table 2 detailed information about their age distribution, gender and academic level.

Table 1

Students Demographics

Category	Group	Percentage
Gender	Male	23.5%
	Female	76.5%
Age	18-21	90.2%
	22-25	5.0%
	26-30	3.0%
	31 and Above	1.0%
Academic Level	1st Year BA	85%
	2nd Year BA	10%
	3rd Year BA	3%
	4th Year BA	2%
University	Ibn Zohr University	68.2%
	Cadi Ayyad University	30.3%
	Mohamed V University	1%
	Ibn Tofail University	0.5%
	Hassan I University	0.5%
	Hassan II University	0.5%
	Choaib Doukkali University	0.5%
	Mohamed I University	0.5%

4.3 Research Instruments

For data collection, the researchers employed content analysis and questionnaires for both teachers and students. Questionnaires, adapted from Alquraan (2012), Sadeghi and Khonbi (2014), and Mamad (2021), were modified to suit the study's context and align with the target population's needs.

Content analysis was employed as a key methodological approach to examine the document in detail. The process began with a comprehensive reading of the entire document multiple times to gain a holistic understanding of its content. Following this, the analysis was narrowed down to focus specifically on the section dedicated to assessment and evaluation. Within this section, particular attention was given to how AA is addressed, including its conceptualization, and implementation. This structured approach allowed for a systematic exploration of the document, ensuring a thorough and focused analysis of the relevant themes and insights related to AA.

The teachers' survey included a definition of AA and three sections: demographics, AA methods in BA classes, and open-ended questions about additional methods and challenges to implementation. The students' survey followed a similar structure: Section one (demographic information), section (students' perceptions) and section three included qualitative open-ended questions to allow students propose potential improvements to AA methods, share their positive and negative experiences with these methods, and provide additional comments or suggestions.

4.4 Piloting

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, a pilot study was conducted one month prior to distributing the final questionnaire. A convenience sample of 15 students and 3 teachers, who did not participate in the final survey, was used. The piloting ensured that the wording of all questions was correct and that items were clear and easily understood by respondents. Participants were informed that this was a pre-test phase, and their comments would help refine the research instruments. After piloting, minor adjustments were made, including removing repetitive items and clarifying ambiguous wording. For open-ended questions, the total was reduced to three by omitting one that respondents found repetitive.

5 Findings and Discussion

5.1 The integration of AA in official documents

To address the first research question and explore how AA is integrated into the accreditation documents, content analysis was employed. The sections dedicated to assessment across the entire document were identified. Subsequently, an extensive investigation revealed that the same structure, as illustrated in tables 3 and 4, was consistently adopted. Table 3, for instance, presents the coefficients for the semester exam and continuous assessments. The first section outlines the coefficient for the final exam (1/1), while the second section details the coefficients for continuous assessments, including written tests, oral exams, assignments, practical sessions, and other evaluation methods.

Table3

Excerpt of the Evaluation Section in the BA Accreditation Document 2023

-
- ☐ Examen de fin de semestre coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)
-
- ☐ Contrôles continus : coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)
- Préciser (tests, épreuves orales, devoirs, exposés, rapports de stage ou autre moyen de contrôle) :
- ☐ Test écrit
 - ☐ Epreuve orale
 - ☐ Devoir
 - ☐ Epreuve orale
 - ☐ TP
 - ☐ Activités pratiques
-

Table 4 presents the coefficients for the semester exam and continuous assessments across different subjects. The first section outlines the final exam coefficient (1/3) and the coefficients for continuous assessments (2/3), including written tests, oral exams, assignments, practical sessions, and other evaluation methods. The second section displays the final exam coefficient (3/3) and continuous assessment coefficients (3/3), along with the same methods of assessment. The coefficient for exams and continuous assessment differs from one module to another.

Table 4

Evaluation Structure across four Modules in the BA Accreditation Document 2023

Grammar	Paragraph Writing	Reading Comprehension and Precis	Spoken English
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examen de fin de semestre coefficients de pondération (1/3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examen de fin de semestre coefficients de pondération (3 / 3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examen de fin de semestre coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examen de fin de semestre coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contrôles continus: coefficients de pondération (2 / 3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contrôles continus : coefficients de pondération (3 / 3)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contrôles continus : coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contrôles continus : coefficients de pondération (1 / 1)
Préciser (tests, épreuves orales, devoirs, exposés, rapports de stage ou autre moyen de contrôle) :	Préciser (tests, épreuves orales, devoirs, exposés, rapports de stage ou autre moyen de contrôle) :	Préciser (tests, épreuves orales, devoirs, exposés, rapports de stage ou autre moyen de contrôle) :	Préciser (tests, épreuves orales, devoirs, exposés, rapports de stage ou autre moyen de contrôle) :
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test écrit	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test écrit	<input type="checkbox"/> Test écrit	<input type="checkbox"/> Test écrit
<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale
<input type="checkbox"/> Devoir	<input type="checkbox"/> Devoir	<input type="checkbox"/> Devoir	<input type="checkbox"/> Devoir
<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale
<input type="checkbox"/> TP	<input type="checkbox"/> TP	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale	<input type="checkbox"/> Epreuve orale

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Activités pratiques	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Activités pratiques	<input type="checkbox"/> TP	<input type="checkbox"/> TP
		<input type="checkbox"/> Activités pratiques	<input type="checkbox"/> Activités pratiques

Tables (4,5) clearly show that the main methods of assessment in the accreditation document were:

- a) Summative assessments: "Examen de fin de semestre"). This type of assessment evaluates students' performance at the end of a term or course, generally assessing knowledge gained over the entire period.
- b) Continuous assessments: A variety of continuous assessment methods listed, such as written tests ("Test écrit"), oral exams ("Épreuve orale"), assignments ("Devoir"), practical exams ("TP"), presentations ("Exposés"), and internship reports ("Rapports de stage"). These are formative assessments that assess students' progress over time and provide ongoing and continuous feedback.
- c) AA methods: Some assessments were also classified as AA for example oral exams, presentations, and internship reports. The inclusion of continuous assessment methods (formative) introduces AA practices that emphasizes diverse, formative, and process-oriented evaluation methods that go beyond traditional exams. In the document, the researchers found out:
 - 1) Épreuves orales: these oral exams assess speaking skills and communication in real-time. This, of course, matches with performance-based AA.
 - 2) Devoirs: type of assignments which allow for deeper analysis, creativity, and process evaluation, which is an essential aspect of AA.
 - 3) Exposés: presentations foster critical thinking, collaboration, and application of knowledge in the real world. They assess students' ability to communicate and present information verbally, which goes beyond traditional written exams.
 - 4) Rapports de stage: internship reports integrate reflection and experiential learning, which are essential characteristics of AA.
 - 5) Activités pratiques/TP (travaux pratiques): practical activities focus on hands-on application, skill demonstration, and problem-solving. These assessments are characteristic of alternative evaluation because they focus on the student's ability to apply knowledge in practical scenarios.

The inclusion of practical activities and continuous assessment suggests that the accreditation document acknowledges and incorporates methods beyond traditional exams. This conforms with the concept of AA, which often emphasizes ongoing evaluation and diverse methods. Additionally, the mix of written tests, oral exams, assignments, practical exams, and presentations suggests a various and balanced approach which ensures that the different types of skills (e.g., writing, speaking, practical application) are evaluated. Consequently, the accreditation document indicates a shift from solely traditional exams toward more varied forms of assessment, which supports AA principles. Finally, content analysis also revealed that the assessment methods identified in the accreditation document are very inclusive and flexible, which matches the key features of AA identified earlier in the literature. For instance, oral exams, presentations, and practical tasks help students who may struggle with written exams but excel in verbal or hands-on tasks.

Hence, as an answer to the first research question about the integration of AA in the accreditation document for a BA program in the English department, findings have shown that the accreditation document outlines a variety of assessment methods, including both traditional and alternative forms of evaluation. While traditional assessments like the final exam (summative) are present, the inclusion of continuous assessment methods (formative) introduces AA practices that focus on ongoing feedback, real-world application, and skill demonstration. This reflects a gradual shift away from traditional, high-stakes exams towards more inclusive (catering to diverse learning styles), holistic (allowing for a comprehensive view of student performance, considering not just academic knowledge but also practical skills, critical thinking, and communication abilities), and formative forms of evaluation. These assessments aim to measure a wide range of students' cognitive and practical abilities. As a critical evaluation, it could be pointed out that while the inclusion of oral exams, practical activities, reports and other forms of AA is promising, their effectiveness depends on how they are implemented (e.g., rubrics, feedback, and alignment with learning objectives).

5.2 Alternative assessment techniques in the BA program in undergraduate studies

Table 6 compares eight alternative assessment types—interviews, projects, portfolios, peer assessments, teacher observations, reports, presentations, and conferences—in terms of the frequency of their implementation by teachers (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always).

Table 6

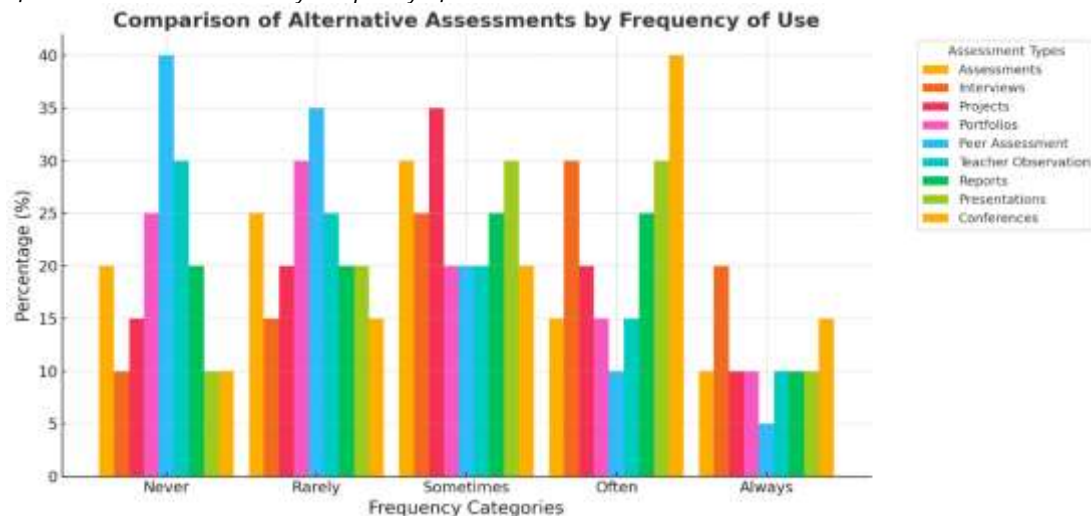
The Frequency of Use of Assessment Methods

Assessment Type	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Main Observation
Interviews	21.9%	31.3%	37.5%	6.3%	3.1%	Interviews are moderately used.
Projects	9.4%	25%	34.4%	25%	6.3%	Projects show balanced use.
Portfolios	37.5%	18.8%	18.8%	21.9%	3.1%	Portfolios are underutilized, with the largest group never engaging in them.
Peer Assessment	15.6%	25%	34.4%	15.6%	9.4%	Peer assessment has moderate usage.
Teacher Observation	18.8%	25%	18.8%	25%	12.5%	Teacher observation is equally split between rare and frequent use.
Reports	28.1%	28.1%	34.4%	6.3%	3.1%	Reports show a balance of use.
Presentations	0%	3.1%	25%	46.9%	25%	Presentations are highly utilized.
Conferences	37.5%	40.6%	12.5%	6.3%	3.1%	Conferences are rarely used.

The findings prove that presentations stand out as the most frequently employed assessment method with almost half of the respondents (46.9%) using them in the classrooms. No respondents indicated "Never" and only (3.1%) selected "Rarely.". This could be attributed to their effectiveness in evaluating communication skills, critical thinking, and organizational skills. Projects were classified second with balance between (sometimes,34.4%) and (often, (25%) categories. This shows that projects are widely used since they help teachers assess practical application, problem-solving, and creativity. On the contrary, portfolios and conferences are the least utilized. Nearly (37.5%) of the teachers never used portfolios and conferences in their classrooms. This finding highlights potential barriers such as large class size, a lack of professional training, institutional support, or awareness of the benefits AAM may offer in fostering deeper student engagement and reflective learning. The findings also show that reports are moderately used, with significant percentages sometimes (34.4%) and often (25%), showing that they are a widely adopted assessment method. This widespread adoption of reports as an assessment method may reflect their role in fostering critical thinking and analytical skills among students. Peer assessments and teacher observations exhibit partial implementation, with peer assessments being most common in the "Sometimes" category (34.4%), while teacher observations are distributed between "Rarely" and "Often". As for peer assessments, this percentage 'Sometimes' (34.4%) might indicate that teachers recognize their value in promoting collaborative learning and critical feedback. The distribution of teacher observations between 'Rarely' and 'Often' reflects variability in their use, teachers' teaching styles, classroom sizes, and their feasibility in the classroom. Overall, Figure 1 reflects varying degrees of adoption and integration of AA across educational contexts. For a visual representation, the bar chart was created to show the distribution of responses for each assessment method and highlight the most and least frequently employed methods.

Figure 1

Comparison of Alternative assessments by Frequency of use



All in all, the bar chart demonstrates a clear hierarchy in the implementation of AA as follows:

1. Presentations have the most frequent usage in the "often" and "always" categories, suggesting high integration into assessments.
2. Conferences show a strong presence in the "never" and "rarely" categories, indicating minimal adoption.
3. Reports and projects are noticed in the "sometimes" and "often" categories.
4. Teacher observations show a more varied usage, particularly in the "rarely" and "often" categories, reflecting less frequent but consistent use.
5. Portfolios and peer assessments show a more irregular usage pattern, with most responses in the "never" or "rarely" categories.
6. Interviews are moderately used. With the largest group of respondents (37.5%) reported using interviews. Yet, they are not consistently integrated across all contexts.

5.2.1 Other alternative assessment methods

To further explore other AA methods that teachers employ, respondents were asked some open-ended questions. The respondents' responses were categorized according to themes (Table7). Based on their usefulness and purpose, several AA techniques were divided into major topics namely technology-enhanced methods, collaborative and group work assessments, reflective and formative assessments, active participation assessments, field-based and experiential assessments, and creative and media-driven assessments.

Table 7

Other Alternative Assessment Methods Used by Professors.

Theme	Assessment Methods	What they focus on
Technology-based- Methods	Online quizzes, Online exams, Online presentations, Recorded talks, Recorded presentations, Video presentations, Online interviews, E-projects	They integrate digital tools for flexible assessments.
Collaborative and Group Work	Group projects, Collaborative essays, Group research, Text reviews, Clubs and competitions, Collective work.	They foster teamwork, communication, and teach students problem-solving strategies.
Reflective and Formative	Reflective journals, Formative tests, Review tasks in warmups, Continuing feedback.	They focus on self-reflection, ongoing development, and understanding of learning progress over time.
Active Participation	Discussions, Debates, Question & Answer, Classroom participation, In-class discussions, public speaking.	They engage students in dynamic interactions that demonstrate understanding, critical thinking, and verbal communication skills.
Field-Based and Experiential	Field work, Extracurricular activities (Activités para-universitaire), Study days.	They focus on practical, real-world application of knowledge and skills in authentic settings.
Creative and Media-Driven	Video projects, Video summaries, Article reviews, Book reviews, Roleplays.	They encourage creative expression and synthesis of knowledge through multimedia and innovative outputs.
Holistic and Non-Traditional	Gamification assessment, Invisible assessment, Attendance and interaction (effort-based), Tasks given in platforms, Participation in class activities (bonus rewards)	They expand beyond traditional academic assessments to include elements like effort, participation, and gamified tasks.
Traditional Methods	Reports, Tests, MCQs, Checking understanding tasks, Review tasks	Grounded in conventional forms of assessment that focus on knowledge demonstration and recall.

Findings from Table 7 reveal a variety of assessment techniques that reflect a shift from traditional assessment to AA methods and a change towards more dynamic, student-centred assessments. Teachers are trying to ensure that assessments are relevant, inclusive, and compatible with contemporary educational goals.

The use of recorded presentations, online tests, and video projects reflect the integration of digital tools in education. These methods consider diverse learning styles and enhance student engagement by providing interactive and multimedia-rich experiences. This is very consistent with Brualdi (1996) and Angelo and Cross (1993) who stressed out that AA should account for students' different learning styles and offer ongoing and immediate feedback to learners. However, teachers and students need effective guidance on how to implement them. This has been reflected in several studies which consider inadequate training as of the main challenges that hinder proper implementation of AA (Babni,2019; Ghaicha & Omarkaly,2018). Group projects and collective work emphasize the importance of teamwork skills that students need in academic and professional contexts. This finding indicates that collaborative learning helps students construct knowledge and prepare them for real-world situations. This

conforms to what Palm (2008) pointed out earlier. According to him, using real-world contexts or meaningful tasks that resemble authentic situations is essential for students to develop skills that will help them succeed in real-life scenarios. In both the present study and Palm's work, the emphasis is on engaging students in collaborative, context-driven learning experiences that encourage deeper understanding and prepare them for challenges outside the classroom..

Methods such as reflective journals and regular feedback are categorized under reflective and formative assessments. They focus on ongoing learning and self-improvement. They encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, encouraging critical thinking and self-awareness. This resonates with findings in several studies (Hargreaves et al. 2002; Birenbaum et al., 2006; Cummings et al., 2008). Hargreaves et al. (2002) and Birenbaum et al. (2006) highlight the role of formative assessments in promoting active engagement and reflection, which are key for enhancing students' metacognitive skills. Similarly, Cummings et al. (2008) argue that reflective practices are instrumental in fostering a deeper understanding of content and promoting self-directed learning. However, formative assessments require consistent effort and guidance to maximize their effectiveness. Discussions, public speaking, and classroom engagement emphasize active student participation. They promote higher-order thinking and communication skills. Still, the effectiveness of these methods depends on creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Experiential learning methods, such as fieldwork and extracurricular activities, offer students the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge in real-world contexts. This practical approach bridges the gap between theory and practice, between what students learn and what they need to apply. However, logistical challenges such as time and resources could limit the implementation of such assessments. Book reviews and video summaries emphasize creativity, encouraging students to express their understanding in unique and innovative ways. These assignments foster creativity and allow students to engage with content more deeply. However, these types of assessments may require additional resources and time, and not all students may feel equally confident in using media tools effectively. Gamification and invisible assessments focus on engagement and learning progress; they promote intrinsic motivation. However, they require careful design and clear objectives to assess the desired skills or knowledge. Traditional techniques like reports and multiple-choice questions are still widely used despite their limitations. This proves that they are still valuable in evaluating knowledge acquisition and understanding. They are easy to administer and easy to analyze. Again, this aligns with similar findings by Mamad and Vigh (2021) and Kasmi and Anasse (2023) who reported that despite favouring AA, teachers predominantly rely on traditional assessment (TA) methods like multiple-choice questions and gap-filling exercises. However, over-reliance on these methods may limit opportunities for assessing critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. The classification of these assessment methods highlights the importance of balancing traditional and contemporary techniques. The integration of both can provide a more holistic approach to evaluation which accounts for different learning preferences and prepares students for diverse challenges.

As a response to the second research question, the results pointed out that AA methods are used at varying frequencies. Among them, presentations are the most used ones. This aligns with Babni (2019), who found out that performance assessment was teachers' preferred method and contradicts with Kasmi and Anasse (2023) who pointed out that presentations are the least used ones by teachers. Projects are also widely employed, as they allow teachers to evaluate practical application, problem-solving, and creativity. This finding is consistent with Ghaicha and Omarkaly (2018), who reported that projects were categorized into "Sometimes" and "Often" categories, highlighting their prevalence in the classroom. Similarly, Mamad and Vigh (2021) noted that projects were moderately implemented by respondents. Conferences, per-assessment and portfolios are the least utilized ones despite the presence of extensive literature on their effectiveness in promoting self-reflection, autonomous learning, and professional development (Josifović Elezović, 2011; Siow, 2015). The same finding was confirmed by Ghaicha & Omarkaly, (2018); Mamad & Vigh, (2021); Kasmi & Anasse, (2023) who found out that self-assessment, portfolio and peer assessment and conferences were rarely used. Other AA techniques were employed by teachers. These were classified according to themes: technology-enhanced methods, collaborative and group work assessments, reflective and formative assessments, active participation assessments, field-based and experiential assessments, and creative and media-driven assessments.

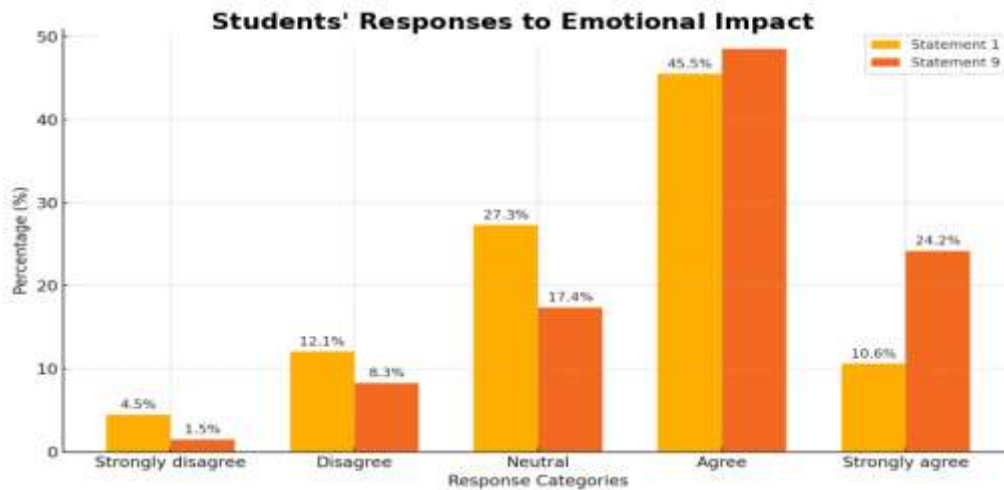
To sum up, it is strongly believed that a more consistent and thoughtful implementation of some underutilized alternative assessment methods could enhance the learning and assessment experience for students. Additionally, tailored professional development for educators may be needed to enhance the adoption of these assessments, given their benefits for students.

5.3 Students' perceptions of alternative assessments

The survey's items (1-9) cover different aspects of AA. For the sake of simplifying analysis and presentation, it was decided to group them into three main themes: Emotional impact (items 1 and 9); perceived accuracy and effectiveness (items 2 and 3); engagement and self-learning (items 5,6,7, 8).

5.3.1 Emotional Impact:

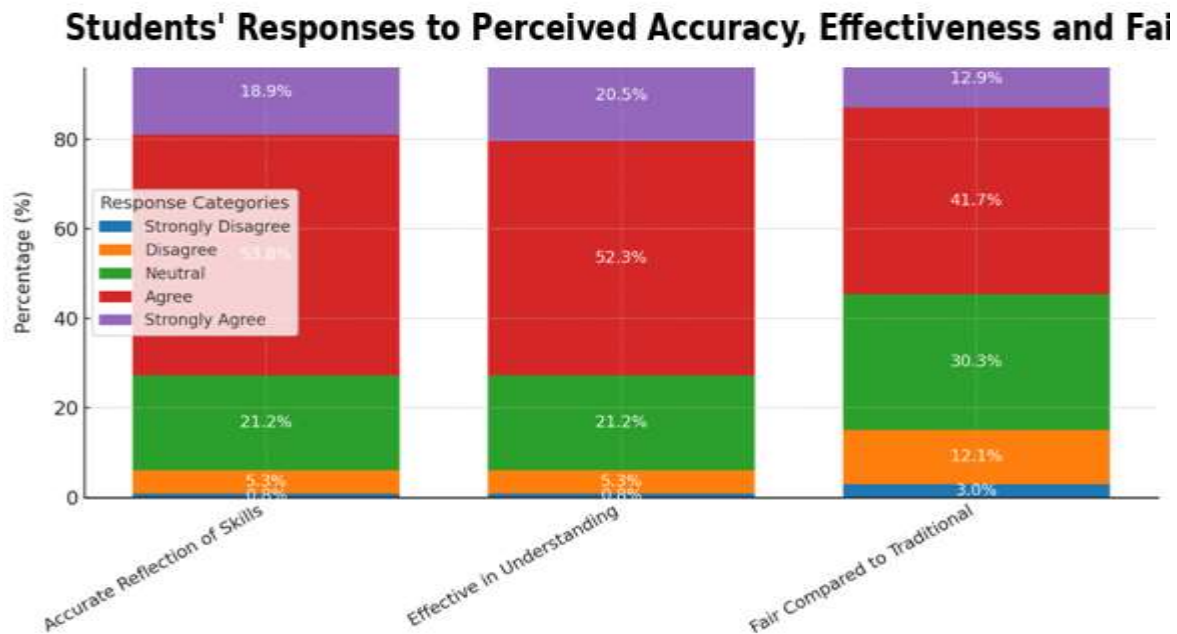
The bar chart (figure 2) compares the participants' responses to statements 1 and 9. Each bar represents one statement, with response categories. As a response to statement 1, it was found that the majority agrees or strongly agrees (56.1%) that AAM reduce students' stress while a very small minority disagrees or strongly disagrees (16.6%) with that. Responses to statement 9 reflect the same positive perception. Participants showed strong support, with 72.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing and only 9.8% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Figure 2*Students' Responses to Emotional Impact*

Based on the highlighted data it could be concluded that AA is generally viewed positively by students, particularly in reducing anxiety and increasing motivation. However, the neutral responses in both statements suggest that not all students find AA methods beneficial, which may indicate individual differences in preferences or experiences.

5.3.2 Perceived accuracy and effectiveness:

Items 2,3,4 were intended to measure the perceived accuracy and effectiveness of AA methods. As the bar chart (figure 3) demonstrates, respondents' responses yielded almost the same result, especially for items 2 and 3. To illustrate, the majority (53.8%) agreed and strongly agreed 18.9% with the statement that "Alternative assessments give a more accurate reflection of my skills." A smaller percentage (21.2%) remained neutral and only (6.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, most respondents (52.3%) agreed and (20.5%) strongly agreed that "Alternative assessment methods are effective in evaluating my understanding of the subject matter." The neutral responses were (21.2%), and only a small minority (6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. However, the neutral responses were higher (30.3%). The neutrality might indicate uncertainty or mixed opinions on this aspect. Additionally, the rate of agreement was a bit low compared to the previous items (41.7%) agree and (12.9%) strongly agree.

Figure3*Students' Responses to Perceived Accuracy, Effectiveness and Fairness*

In conclusion, participants expressed agreement across all three statements, suggesting a positive perception of AA. Nevertheless, the percentage of strong agreement was higher for the first two statements (accuracy and effectiveness) compared to fairness.

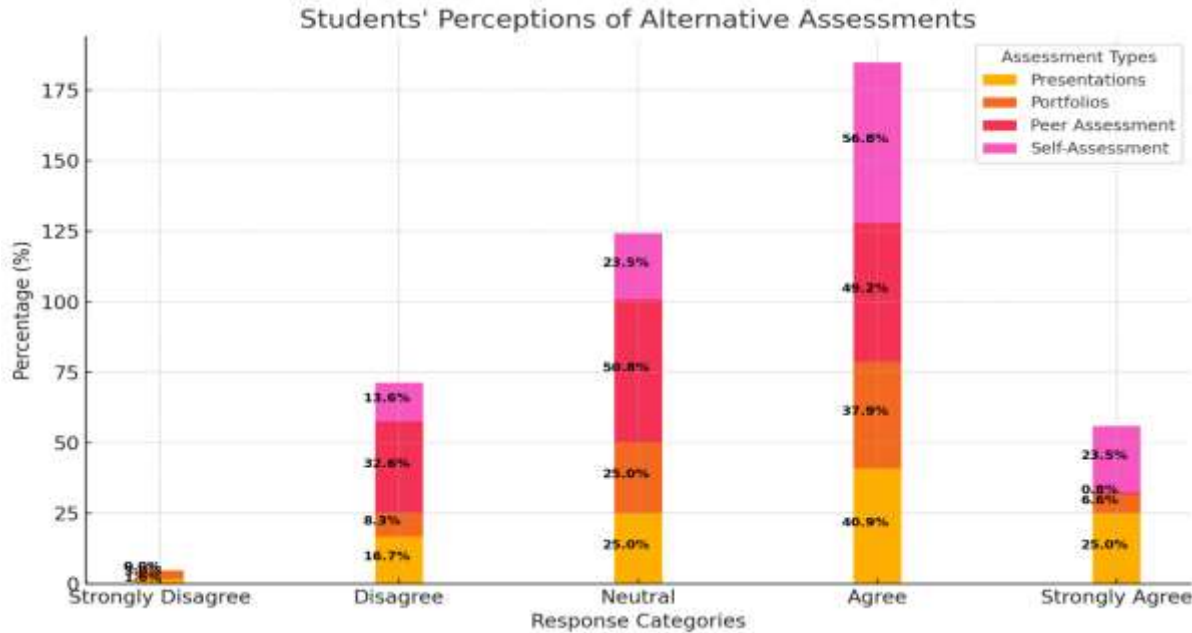
This suggests that the fairness of AA needs to be further explored to understand it in depth. Put differently, participants perceive AA as accurate and effective in evaluating skills and understanding and not fair compared to TAM.

5.3.3 Engagement and self-learning

The bar chart (Figure 4) provides a visual summary of students' perceptions across all four assessment types: presentations, portfolios, peer assessment, and self-assessment. Each category ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") is combined to show the distribution of responses for each question.

Figure 4

Students' responses to Engagement and self-Learning



The findings revealed students' perceptions of AAM in relation to engagement and self-learning. A significant number of students agree that presentations allow them to demonstrate their understanding more effectively than traditional exams, with 40.9% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing. This suggests a preference for more dynamic forms of assessment that emphasize active participation and practical application. In contrast, portfolios yielded mixed feedback, with the majority being neutral (50.8%) and 37.9% expressing agreement. This high level of agreeing indicates some value in portfolio even if the latter is not generally perceived as a fair method by all students.

Peer assessment revealed divided opinions. While 49.2% of the students agree that peer assessment aids in understanding the course material, 32.6% disagrees. This could suggest that while some students appreciate peer feedback as a valuable learning tool, others may find it less beneficial. On the other hand, self-assessment received notable positive feedback. 56.8% of the students agree and 23.5% strongly agree that self-assessment encourages reflection. This underlines the importance of self-directed learning and the role of self-assessment in fostering personal growth and deeper understanding.

All in all, these findings point out the theme of engagement and self-learning. They emphasize the need for diverse and student-centred assessment methods that support active learning and reflection in educational settings.

5.3.4 Students' experiences with alternative assessment methods

To explore students' experiences with AA, respondents were asked two open-ended questions to describe their positive and negative experiences in detail. The qualitative responses were analysed thematically, uncovering several recurring themes. Students' responses were categorized into various themes. For the sake of brevity, the following tables (8, 9) were created to highlight these themes, describe them and give examples from students' responses.

Table 8*Themes related to Positive Experiences*

Theme	Description	Examples from students' Responses
1) Skill Development	Improved abilities in communication, creativity, collaboration, and self-confidence.	- Overcame stage fright during presentations.- Learned teamwork through group projects.- Gained confidence in speaking publicly.
1) Engagement and Enjoyment	Found the assessments more interesting and enjoyable compared to traditional methods.	- "It was fun to create videos and tell stories."- "I felt relaxed and less stressed with these tasks."
2) Real-World Application	Opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical, meaningful ways.	- "Creating a business plan helped me see how theory works in real life."- "The volcano project was exciting and educational."
3) Constructive Feedback	Benefited from peer and teacher feedback, leading to improved understanding and performance.	- "The feedback from classmates helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses."- "Discussion sessions clarified my doubts."
4) Challenges and Diversity	Noted gaps in exposure or inconsistent implementation but recognized the value of alternative assessments overall.	- "I wish we had more of these activities earlier."- "Sometimes the instructions were unclear, but the tasks were valuable."

Table 9*Themes related to Negative Experiences*

Themes for negative experiences	Subthemes	Examples from Students responses
1. Group Work Challenges (Collaboration Issues)	Unequal workload distribution. Conflicts or lack of responsibility among group members. Frustration due to lack of fairness in grading.	"Some people in the group did not do their part, so I ended up doing most of the work." "The workload distribution was uneven, and some team members did not contribute equally."
2. Stress and Anxiety	Nervousness during presentations or oral assessments. Performance anxiety leads to mistakes or forgetting material.	"I was nervous too much without any reason, so that I forgot everything in just one second." "I died from stress and anxiety and forgot half of the presentation."
3. Lack of Clear Guidelines and Criteria	Confusion about what is expected from students. Inconsistent or subjective peer feedback.	"The teacher didn't give clear instructions, and we were confused about what to include in the project." "The criteria were not clearly defined, which led to inconsistent feedback."
4. Technical or Logistical Challenges	Issues like internet connectivity or difficulty attending sessions.	"WiFi problems when you would like to have a meeting or to study." "Working students cannot attend sessions and cannot benefit from the guidance and support of their teachers."

5. Trust Issues with Peer Assessment	Lack of trust in peers or issues with biased assessments.	<i>"I don't rely on anyone, or it's a problem of trust." "Biased group assessment."</i>
6. Perceived Unfairness in Assessment	Feeling that the assessment method was unfair or did not accurately reflect skills and effort.	<i>"It was frustrating because I had to do most of the work by myself." "The assessment was unfair because it excluded the acquired skills and knowledge."</i>
7. General Negative Sentiment Toward Alternative Assessment	Dislike or dissatisfaction with alternative assessments in general.	<i>"I think it is a waste of time instead of getting more info about the lessons from the professor."</i>

As a response to the third research question, the findings of this study reveal diverse perceptions of AA methods among students. Firstly, the positive reception of AA by students, particularly its role in reducing anxiety and enhancing motivation, is consistent with the findings of Alquraan (2012) and Sadeghi and Khonbi (2014), who observed similar benefits in reducing test-related stress and promoting a supportive learning environment. This suggests that AA methods can foster a more engaging assessment experience, addressing common criticism of traditional exams. Regarding fairness, although students in this study considered AA methods more effective for evaluating skills and understanding, they were less likely to perceive these AA methods as fair when compared to traditional assessments. The same finding was reported by by Kasmi and Anasse (2023), who reported that despite positive attitudes toward AA, challenges such as subjective grading and variability in implementation could contribute to perceptions of unfairness.

In terms of specific techniques, presentations were seen as an effective way for students to demonstrate their understanding, which matches Babni's (2019) findings that role-plays, and oral presentations are highly favored by teachers as methods to engage students. This preference highlights the importance of interactive and performance-based assessments in revealing student abilities beyond traditional written exams. Similarly, Ghaicha and Omarkaly (2018) emphasized the effectiveness of oral presentations and other performance assessments in Moroccan EFL classrooms, noting that these methods provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding in more dynamic and practical ways, further supporting the value of interactive assessment techniques.

Portfolios generated mixed responses from students. While 37.9% of students recognized their value, a larger proportion (50.8%) remained neutral, indicating uncertainty towards their effectiveness. This might indicate that portfolios may need to be better integrated into the curriculum and more clearly explained to students to help them understand their benefits and purpose. Similar issues regarding the practical application of AA techniques were identified in Mamad and Vigh (2021), who observed a noticeable gap between teachers' perceptions of AA and their actual implementation. The inconsistent views on the fairness of portfolios highlight the need for clearer guidelines and more preparation to ensure their effective use.

Peer assessment presented divided opinions, with nearly half (49.2%) agreeing that it aids in understanding course material, while 32.6% disagreed. These contrasting views are in accordance with Ghaicha and Omarkaly's (2018) findings that the collaborative nature of AA can be both a strength and a limitation, depending on how it is structured and facilitated. The differences in students' feedback suggest that the effectiveness of peer assessment may depend on how carefully it is implemented and the level of trust established among peers.

Self-assessment received notable positive feedback in this study, with 56.8% of students agreeing and 23.5% strongly agreeing that it encourages reflection. This finding is consistent with Alquraan (2012), who observed that self-assessment encourages students to engage in reflective practices, thereby promoting greater self-awareness and a deeper understanding of their own learning. Like the positive views expressed in this study, Sadeghi & Khonbi (2014) also found that self-assessment not only motivates students but helps them to critically evaluate their own progress. Students' positive responses in this study suggest that self-assessment can play a significant role in fostering reflective thinking and enhancing overall learning experiences.

In summary, these findings brought to the fore the benefits and challenges of AA techniques. Although they are generally positive and consistent with global trends, it is important to address concerns related to fairness, consistency, and implementation to fully achieve their potential in MHE.

6 Implications

The implications drawn from this study are organized according to the research questions addressed. Each set of implications reflects key findings and their probable impact on educational practices and policy.

To achieve the benefits of the shift from TA to AA methods outlined in the accreditation documents, educators should receive ongoing support and professional development to implement these diverse assessment approaches effectively. Teachers should be well trained to apply these different approaches in a consistent and balanced manner and to guarantee that the challenges of

fairness and reliability are well addressed. In this regard, institutions should invest in the resources that support the practical implementation of AA techniques, such as rubrics and any materials needed for oral exams and presentations, to ensure transparency and equity. Additionally, the findings emphasize that integration of AA practices into accreditation documents can enhance educational equity, enlarge the scope of assessment, and improve student learning outcomes. Therefore, more personalized and individualized approaches to evaluation are required to account for students' diverse learning needs.

On the one hand, the frequent use of presentations indicates their high status in students' evaluation. This highlights the importance of their role within curricula to maximize students' engagement and skill development. For this reason, institutions may need to consider giving priority to presentations as a core component of assessments by equipping teachers with the necessary training and resources to effectively employ them and by giving presentations more importance in the overall grade. On the other hand, the minimal use of conferences, portfolios and peer assessments showed a significant gap in the application of certain AA methods. Consequently, greater emphasis should be placed on integrating these methods into the curriculum thanks to the learning benefits they offer to students. Furthermore, the use of reports, projects, and teacher observations has proven their important role in assessment. Yet, their effectiveness needs clearer guidelines on how to incorporate them. Hence, there is a strong need for developing standardized rubrics and clear guidelines to ensure the application of these assessment methods across different courses and disciplines. Finally, the inconsistent application of interviews calls institutions for a strategic approach to integrate them to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in different ways. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of AAM in accounting for the diversity of learning styles, inclusivity, and effectiveness of students' evaluations. First, the positive perception of presentations as an effective means of demonstrating understanding pushes teachers to increase their integration into assessment practices as presentations allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and verbal communication skills, which are vital for many academic and professional fields. To ensure their effectiveness, educators should provide clear rubrics and offer support to students throughout the process. By doing so, presentations can become a consistent and valuable assessment tool across various courses. Secondly, to avoid the problem of fairness which the study highlighted, educators should work within departments to establish transparent grading rubrics and provide clear guidelines for different AA methods. Students should understand the expectations for each assessment type to reduce the negative perceptions of unfairness and to improve their trust in AA methods. Portfolios received mixed feedback. Yet, they remain a promising assessment tool. To increase their effectiveness, educators should offer clearer explanations of how portfolios are used to assess learning and provide structured feedback on students' progress. It is strongly believed that providing guidance on how students can reflect on their work in portfolios will help enhance their learning experience. Thirdly, the divided opinions on peer assessment calls teachers for careful planning. Peer assessment is a great learning tool for developing students' critical thinking and collaborative skills if it is well planned. Teachers should structure peer assessments to be constructive and supportive and train students to give meaningful feedback.

Self-assessment was positively received by students, particularly in encouraging reflection on their learning. Educators should consider integrating self-assessment practices regularly and provide students with prompts that guide their reflection. By incorporating self-assessment, students can develop autonomy in learning and enhance their academic growth. Finally, institutions should provide support for educators in implementing AA methods by offering resources, training, and clear guidelines. This will help ensure that AA techniques are applied effectively and fairly, promoting an equitable and comprehensive assessment environment that caters to diverse student needs.

7 Conclusion

This study examined the status of AA in the new reform of MHE, specifically within the BA program, by analysing the BA accreditation document (2023). Additionally, it explored the AA methods and techniques used by BA professors and students' perceptions of these assessment approaches. The findings highlight that the BA accreditation document acknowledges and incorporates methods beyond traditional exams. While AA is increasingly recognized by teachers, its implementation remains varied. Students have diverse perceptions of AA methods. Some perceive AA positively by appreciating its role in reducing anxiety, enhancing motivation, fostering engagement, creativity, critical thinking and deeper learning. Others, however, have a more negative perception due to challenges such as subjective grading and, inconsistencies in implementation and unfairness.

The findings of the current study contribute to the ongoing discourse on assessment reform in HE in Morocco. They emphasize the need for well-structured, transparent, and inclusive assessment strategies. The study suggests that integrating varied AA methods can enhance students' learning experiences by promoting their critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application of knowledge. However, successful implementation of AA requires institutional support, adequate training for instructors, small size classes and clear guidelines to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

Despite the study's contributions, it has certain limitations, particularly regarding sample representation, as most participants were from Ibn Zohr University and Cadi Ayyad University. Also, the targeted sample of respondents of this study (132 students and 32 teachers) is relatively small to fully represent the entire population of English department students and professors in Morocco. It is strongly believed that more students and professors in other faculties need to be involved to fully get a wholistic picture of their perceptions towards AA. Secondly, another limitation has to do with variables. Some variables were not accounted for in this study. For instance, the learning style of students, their motivation, and their personality might influence their perceptions as well. Future

research could further examine the long-term impact of AA on student motivation and academic performance across various disciplines and institutions.

Overall, this study highlighted the importance of AA in MHE. By embracing innovative and student-centered evaluation methods, universities can foster a more engaging and effective learning environment, aligning with the objectives of the ongoing higher education reform.

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ORCID iD

First Author: 0009-0005-6598-1174

Second Author: 0000-0002-6338-2347

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