

## Enhancing the Adoption of Innovative Teaching Practices – The Role of Student Performance Evaluation

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### *Abstract*

The issue of improving the provided educational project spurs the research interest of scholars of education internationally. The search for innovative teaching practices that will enhance the educational process and respond better to the modern educational needs of the student population is intensifying. The evaluation of the student, as a process inseparable from daily teaching practice, is another piece that needs to be modernized to function properly pedagogical and contributes to improving teaching and support the adoption of innovative teaching practices. Research findings show that the way that students today are evaluated is not in line with the adoption of innovative teaching practices, does not serve educational purposes and as a final step of controlling the effectiveness of teaching practices, is not used in a way to maintain, modify, correct or to take supportive measures in order to improve the teaching process and make educational work more efficient. The use of a combination of assessment methods and descriptive assessment as a means of capturing the assessment results in the adoption of innovative teaching practices, is consistent with the prospect of modernizing the educational process. With this problematic, a survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire, which constituted the research tool, in active primary education teachers in the province of Arta, in order to investigate the way in which student assessment is carried out and whether it is used to obtain supportive or remedial instruction and pedagogical measures by teachers. The main findings of the research, which corroborate those of the corresponding studies, are the use of traditional assessment techniques, the limited provision of feedback to students and the limited degree of adaptation of teaching practices based on assessment of student performance. There is a need to modernize student assessment tools, as the use of outdated assessment practices is inconsistent with the adoption of innovative teaching practices and acts as an obstacle to upgrading the quality of educational work.

**Keywords:** evaluation of student performance, evaluation methods, descriptive evaluation, innovative teaching practices, quality of educational work.

### 1. Introduction

The assessment process is the last stage of any organized and systematic activity. Specifically in education, assessment plays an important role and in general aims to monitor the functioning and efficiency of the education system and its improvement, and in particular to monitor students' progress and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of teaching practices (Kassotakis, 1989: 22; Doliopoulou & Gourgiotou, 2008: 15). Current research on

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assessment shows that the design of assessment tasks affects students' learning in a variety of ways. In particular, it sends messages about what it considers to be important knowledge, impacts on students' approach to learning, and gives students feedback on their level of learning. More importantly it sends a strong message to students about what counts as knowledge in a particular learning environment. However, during their undergraduate studies, students are likely to encounter different types of assessment designed by different teachers, each of whom may have a different assessment orientation.

Specifically, assessment of school performance is a critical issue that captures the interest of all stakeholders, directly or indirectly involved in the educational process, and highlights the importance of research in pedagogical science, as it is one of the key factors associated with controlling its effectiveness and the quality of the educational work provided (Athanasίου, 2003; Dimitropoulos, 2003; Kassotakis, 2010; Kapsalis, 2008; Konstantinou, 2007; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Doliopoulou & Gourgiotou, 2008; Rekalidou, 2011; Slavin, 2007). A conceptual delineation of "performance" adopted for the purposes of the present work defines it as "*a continuous and systematic process that avoids classifying and dividing students into weak, average and good and focuses on the diagnosis of teaching needs and students' problems in encouraging, aiding and abetting them*" (Chaniotakis, 2010: 274). Evaluation based on the rationale of control and the mere verification of the degree to which the learning objectives are achieved does not contribute to students' learning progress; on the contrary, it can be detrimental. Rigorously checking students' cognitive level and classifying them according to their performance is considered outdated as a practice. To make such a shift in the perception and application of student performance assessment, it is necessary to make structural changes to the way in which student assessment is perceived as meaningful, rational and practical.

Nowadays as part of an extensive scientific debate taking place at the international level, the emphasis in the evaluation of students performance shifting from restrict performance measurement to promote learning for all students, especially those classified as weak. Assessment of student performance should support the student's knowledge acquisition process, identify weaknesses and deficiencies in order for the learner to become self-aware, correct their mistakes and improve their weaknesses and lead them to progress. This orientation to assessment is consistent with a view that has been gaining ground in recent years, the concept of assessment as learning, where the outcome of learning is seen as complex and is defined in terms of quality of understanding or degree of expertise (Sadler, 1989). Assessment is considered to be an integral part of teaching and learning, and the focus is on student involvement and authentic, meaningful assessment, leading to the development of a variety of assessment forms (Falchikov, 2005). This view is consistent with a competence-based curriculum which emphasizes competence and capability rather than recollection of factual knowledge (Carraccio et al., 2002).

According to Black and William, learning assessment is one of the most effective ways to improve student performance (1998 in the Assessment Reform Group, 2001: 100). Evaluation for learning is based on a number of principles (Broadfoot, Daugherty, Gardner, Harlen, James & Stobart, 2002; Assessment Reform Group, 2001: 101):

- (1) It is part of an effective planning of teaching and learning;
- (2) It focuses on how students learn;
- (3) It constitutes an integral part of the teaching process;
- (4) It constitutes an important professional skill;
- (5) It brings about an emotional impact;
- (6) It affects the student's performance;
- (7) It promotes commitment to learning goals and assessment criteria;

- (8) It helps students learn how to improve;
- (9) It encourages self-evaluation;
- (10) It recognizes all achievements.

In other words, assessment for learning is considered as in any case aimed at promoting students' learning. Any evaluation activity that provides feedback to teachers and students to improve their efficiency contributes to the promotion of learning. Thus, it is understood that the dynamic benefits of assessment undoubtedly lead to improved learning and therefore it is necessary to provide support to teacher-evaluators in carrying out and utilizing student performance evaluation as an integral part of teaching and learning, in ways that are solely aimed at improving students' performance, their overall personality development and their learning status (Brown, 2004-5: 81; Assessment Reform Group, 2001: 2).

### 1.1 *The role of feedback in the evaluation process*

One of the most important functions of student assessment is feedback. Feedback, according to researchers, has a significant impact on student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2008) and provides useful information on the effectiveness of teaching practices (Sadler, 1989).

According to Ramaprasad (1983), "*feedback is information about the gap between the actual plane and the reference plane of a system parameter, which are used to modify the gap in some way*" (1983: 4). That is to say, feedback is a set of information that "attributes or describes the distance between the student's level of learning at the present time and the level of learning where it is intended to reach" (Rekalidou, 2011: 123). This position is shared by Shute (2008: 154), which states that "*feedback is information provided to the student intended to modify his or her thinking or behavior in order to improve learning*". It even uses the term "feedback form" to indicate the close relationship of feedback with the formative evaluation.

Without feedback there can be no redesign of the educational practice, as reflection makes decisions to change and adapt the teaching practices applied (Rekalidou, 2011: 82). In particular, formative assessment, according to Bloom, aims to provide feedback in order to identify any errors or omissions at each stage of the teaching-learning process and to correct them in a timely manner to achieve the desired teaching and learning objectives (1969: 48). Effective feedback aims to increase students "*knowledge, nurture their skills and abilities*" (Shute, 2008) while nurturing motivation, reinforcing the will, maximizing interest in learning and students' self-awareness and self-perception skills (Heritage, 2007). At the same time, it informs the teacher of the strengths and weaknesses in the planning and organization of the syllabus and the choice of teaching methods, the degree of success of the predetermined learning objectives, provides information on the course and results of a teaching activity to highlight the need to adjust or adjust it in order to increase its chances of improvement and effectiveness (Kapsalis & Chaniotakis, 2015: 29; Athanasiou, 2003: 17; Shadler, 1989). Dimitropoulos, excluding importance of feedback, notes (1991: 17): "The functioning of the evaluation would not exist if the feedback function did not follow, which aims to provide information to facilitate or regulate the functioning of the corrective mechanisms, that is to say measures to ensure right course".

The assumption underpinning formative assessment is that it has a positive impact on student learning, a view which is supported by research findings. For instance, Black and William (1998) conclude that formative assessment which gives students supportive feedback does indeed improve their learning. More recently, Carrillo-de-la-Peña et al. (2009) showed that students who took part in formative assessment achieved higher marks in the final assessment than students who did not participate. The study involved students from different branches of the health sciences

and the formative assessments were mid-term tests. Interestingly, it seemed that taking part in the formative assessment was more important than being successful, which supports the importance of the role of feedback in formative assessment (Carrillo-de-la-Peña et al., 2009). Hattie and Jaeger (1998) argue for a model where assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, and where feedback has a key role in enhancing students' achievements.

### *1.2 Research findings – How assessment process is carried out today*

Despite the stated theoretical pedagogical goal that should govern it, assessment today is still carried out in the same way by teachers, as years ago, assessment of student performance still retains the same anachronistic features and is clearly a process separated from teaching (Konstantinou, 2007; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Rekalidou, 2011; Rellos, 2003). Recent research findings show that the assessment methods in Primary Education, and in primary school in particular, is conducted using traditional methods and the results of the assessment are imprinted through numerical scores (Mavromatis, Zouganeli, Friedas & Louka, 2008: 25-247; Manolakos, 2012: 101, 104; Mavrommati, 196: 261; Grosdos, 2015: 50; Chaniotakis, 2010: 275). One factor that hampers the effective achievement of the purpose of the evaluation is the lack of teacher training regarding the new theoretical proposals and the progress of educational research on the issue of assessment of student performance in order to consolidate the value of the evaluation and its contribution to learning. Consequently, assessment follows anachronistic practices, inconsistent with new innovative pedagogical practices that promote learning and focus on students' particular needs, as if it belongs to another age. Therefore, students develop anxiety and fear as they undergo a process that controls them, without helping them, or providing them with feedback and prospects for improvement. Effective implementation of innovative teaching practices is thus affected, as at the end of the process the student again follows traditional assessment methods that are not compatible with the promotion of learning.

## **2. Method**

As stated above, the way the assessment is carried out affects student learning and how they perceive it and are trying to reach. The feedback provided catalytic effect on effective teaching and learning. Also, we saw that the perceptions of teachers significantly influence the practical application evaluative processes in the classroom (Brown, Harris, O'Quinn, & Lane, 2011; Gamlem, 2015). Therefore, it is advisable to investigate teachers perceptions regarding feedback its purpose, frequency, effectiveness, the way its provided and this issue concerns this study.

From a brief literature review, it has been noted that research on the issue is limited. The purpose of the present study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the purpose of evaluation and its feedback function and to explore the use of these results for teachers to take remedial-corrective teaching and pedagogical measures to improve the provided education.

The present research belongs to the category of quantitative (descriptive / sampling) research. The study population was primary school teachers who work in the Arta Public Primary Schools in Epirus region in Greece and teach in the last two of the six grades of Primary School and the research sample was 72 teachers. The research conducted in the spring during the 2018-2019 academic year.

The structured questionnaire was selected as a research tool, as it is a very useful tool for reviewing the collection of quantitative and qualitative data in a very short time and targeting a large number of subjects (Cohen et al., 2008). For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire was designed and written, which included closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into three parts and included a total of 24 questions that could be answered with either a single answer or multiple-choice questions with a possible answer rating,

where the Likert scale was used. More specifically, the first included a letter informing the teachers of the purpose of the research and the necessity to participate in it, the second included demographic questions (5 questions on regarding gender, years of service in education, basic studies, additional studies and training) and the third included closed-ended questions in which participants were asked to answer according to their degree of agreement or disagreement through a five-point Likert scale (19 questions overall). The level of statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Statistical analysis of the survey data was performed using SPSS statistical software version 22.0.

### 3. Results

In order to investigate teachers' views on the feedback function of assessment and to determine whether they are taking corrective reinforcement measures to improve their teaching through it, as said above, specific questions were asked to teachers. The research questions with the greatest research interest are presented below:

Question 1: The purpose of student assessment is to determine the degree to which the teaching and pedagogical objectives have been achieved at the beginning of the teaching process.

To the first question about the purpose of the assessment process, a large part of the sample replied that the purpose of assessment is to determine the degree to which the teaching and pedagogical objectives that have been set at the beginning of the teaching process have been achieved. Specifically, 58.3% of the sample stated "agree" and 16.7% "strongly disagree" (cumulative 75%).

Table 1. The purpose of student assessment is to evaluate the degree of achievement of learning objectives

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Neutral	17	23.6	23.6	25
	Agree	42	58.3	58.3	83.3
	Strongly Agree	12	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

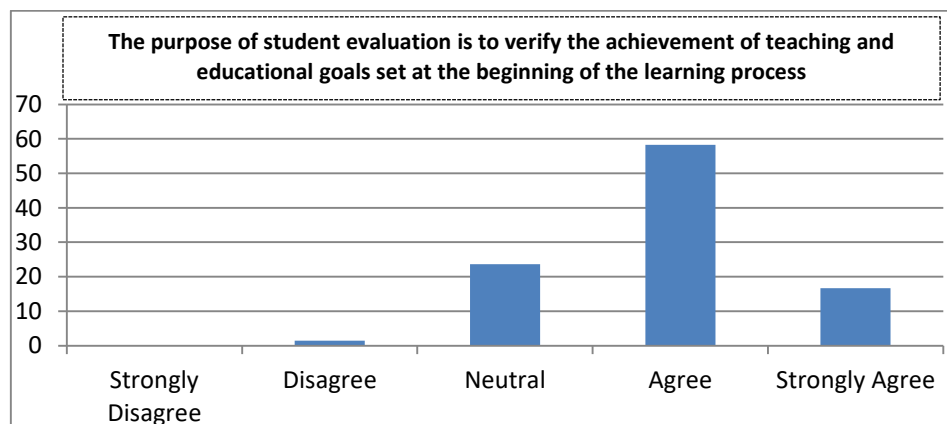


Figure 1. The purpose of student assessment is to evaluate the degree of achievement of learning objectives

Question 2: The purpose of student assessment is to determine the level of students' knowledge, abilities and competences or possible students' deficiencies and weaknesses.

From the answers given to the second question, it appears that more than half “agree” (51.4%) and “strongly agree” (26.4%) that student assessment is targeted at a very high level to identify the extent to which the teaching and pedagogical goals have been achieved. There was no response to support the assertion that the students' assessment does not have this purpose as mentioned in the previous question.

Table 2. The purpose of student assessment is to ascertain their level of knowledge, competences and skills

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	2	2.8	2.8	2.8
	Neutral	19	26.4	26.4	29.2
	Agree	37	51.4	51.4	80.6
	Strongly Agree	14	19.4	19.4	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

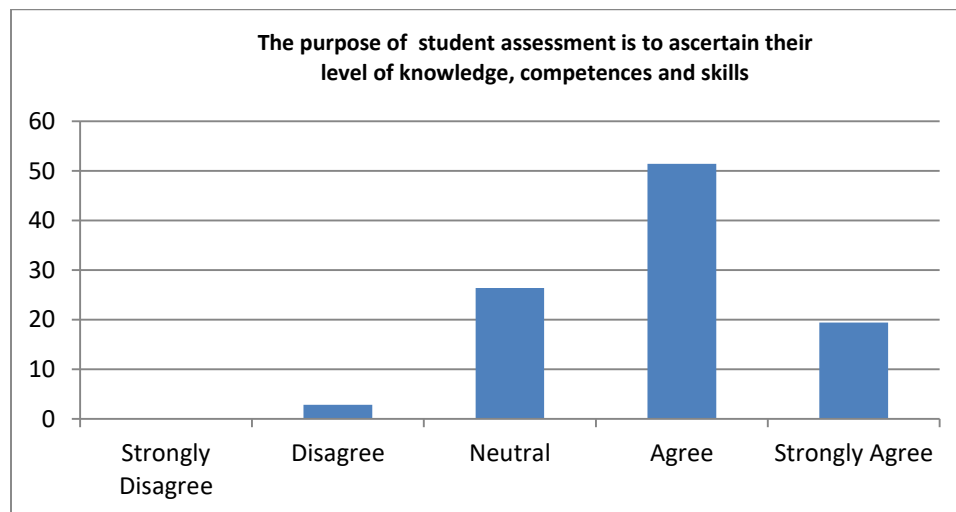


Figure 2. The purpose of student assessment is to ascertain their level of knowledge, competences and skills

Question 3: The purpose of student assessment is to continually improve teaching and enhance student learning.

Regarding the third question, the teachers in the sample responded that they “agree” (23.6%) and “strongly agree” (37.5%) that the purpose of student assessment is to continually improve teaching and enhance students' learning from. A small portion of the sample stated that “strongly disagree” (5.6%) or “disagree” (12.5%) with the view that the assessment was not aimed in enhancing student learning (cumulative 18.1%).

Table 3. The purpose of student assessment is to continually improve the education provided

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	5.6	5.6	5.6
	Disagree	9	12.5	12.5	18.1
	Neutral	15	20.8	20.8	38.9
	Agree	17	23.6	23.6	62.5
	Strongly Agree	27	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

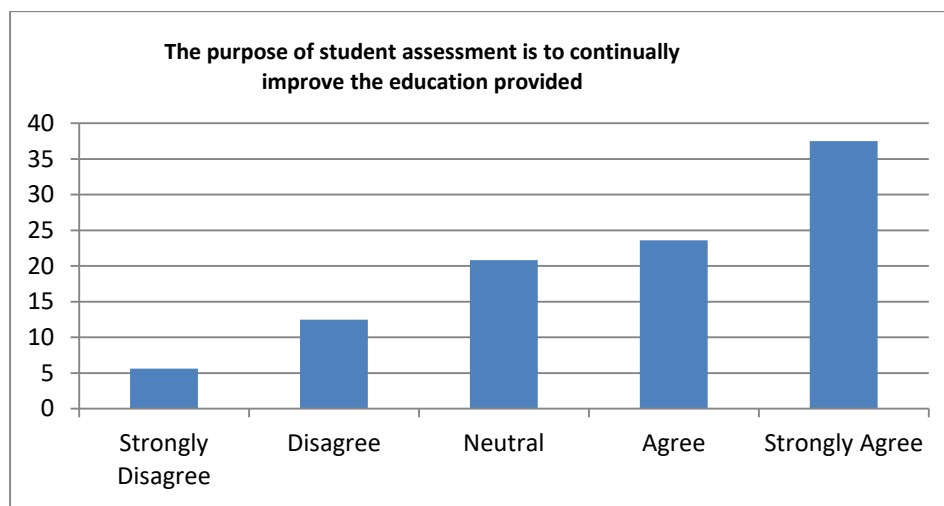


Figure 3. The purpose of student assessment is to continually improve the education provided

## Question 4: Feedback enhances students' motivation for learning

Asked about the relationship between feedback and learning motivation, sample teachers noted that feedback reinforces “agree” (25.0%) and “strongly agree” (40.3%) students' motivations for learning (cumulative 65.3%), while none of them responded that feedback was not related to learning motivation.

Table 4. Feedback enhances students' motivation to learn

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0
	Disagree	8	11.1	11.1	11.1
	Neutral	18	25.0	25.0	36.1
	Agree	29	40.3	40.3	76.4
	Strongly Agree	17	23.6	23.6	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

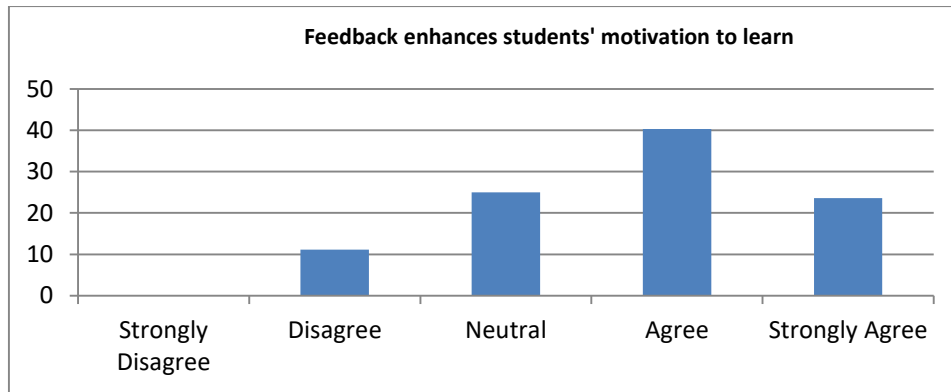


Figure 4. Feedback enhances students' motivation to learn

Question 5: Through feedback, teachers evaluate and adjust their teaching methods.

The responses of the teachers who participated in the survey regarding the degree, to which their teaching methods are adjusted through the feedback they receive from the learning outcomes, were range from “Neutral” (29.2%) and “Disagree” (23.6%). The majority of the sample (52.8% cumulative) said that it was more or less attempting to adjust its teaching practices through the stimuli and information it received from feedback during the evaluation process.

Table 5. Through feedback teachers evaluate and adjust their teaching methods

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	7	9.7	9.7	9.7
	Disagree	17	23.6	23.6	33.3
	Neutral	21	29.2	29.2	62.5
	Agree	15	20.8	20.8	83.3
	Strongly Agree	12	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total		72	72	100.0	

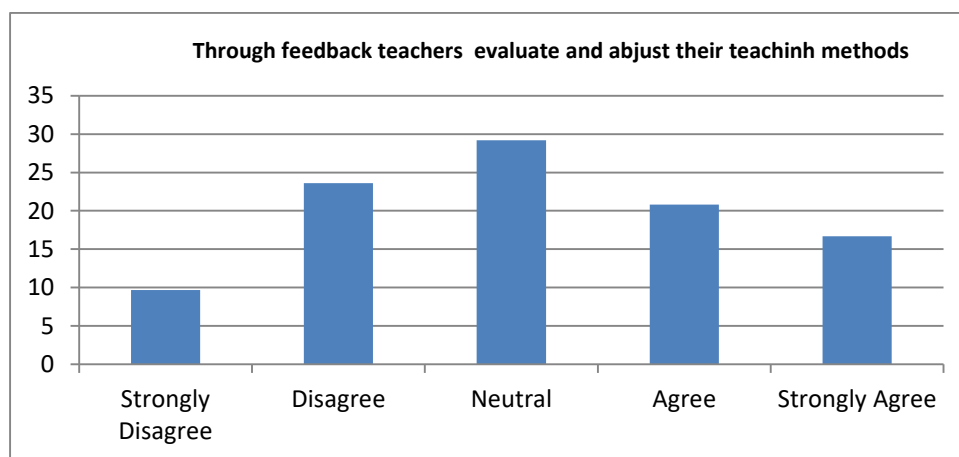


Figure 5. Through feedback teachers evaluate and adjust their teaching methods

Question 6: Through feedback, teachers evaluate the quality of their teaching.



Responding to a question over the degree that the quality of teaching provided is indirectly assessed through the level of students' learning outcomes, teachers stated that they "disagree" (25.0%) or remain "neutral" (29.2%) over this view. Almost half of the teachers in the sample (54.2% cumulatively) stated that they receive partial feedback on the quality of their teaching.

Table 6. Through feedback, teachers assess the quality of their teaching

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	16	22.2	22.2	22.2
	Disagree	18	25.0	25.0	47.2
	Neutral	21	29.2	29.2	76.4
	Agree	10	13.9	13.9	90.3
	Strongly Agree	7	9.7	9.7	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

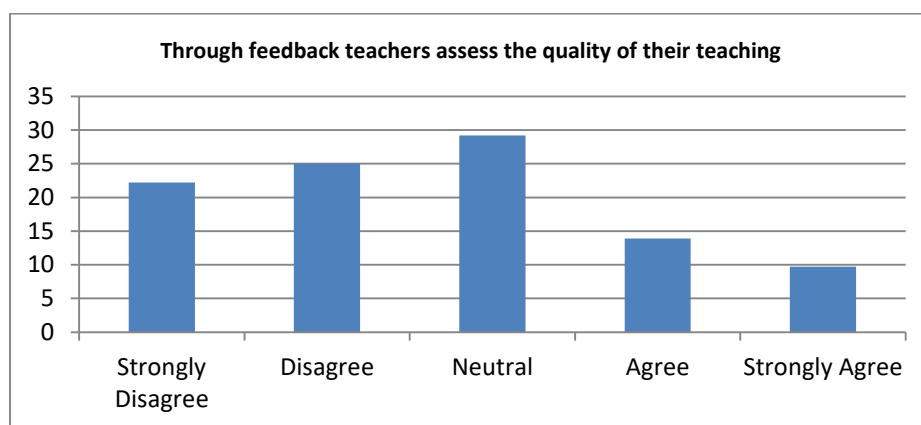


Figure 6. Through feedback, teachers assess the quality of their teaching

Question 7: Adaptation of teaching methods improves student performance and learning outcomes.

In a question over the extent to which learning outcomes are improved in relation with curriculum adaptation, teachers "agree" and "strongly agree" that students have made progress and improved their school performance since the curriculum adaptation.

Table 7. Adaptation of teaching methods improves student performance and learning outcomes

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Disagree	6	8.3	8.3	9.7
	Neutral	17	23.6	23.6	33.3
	Agree	26	36.1	36.1	69.4
	Strongly Agree	22	30.6	30.6	100.0
Total		72	100.0		

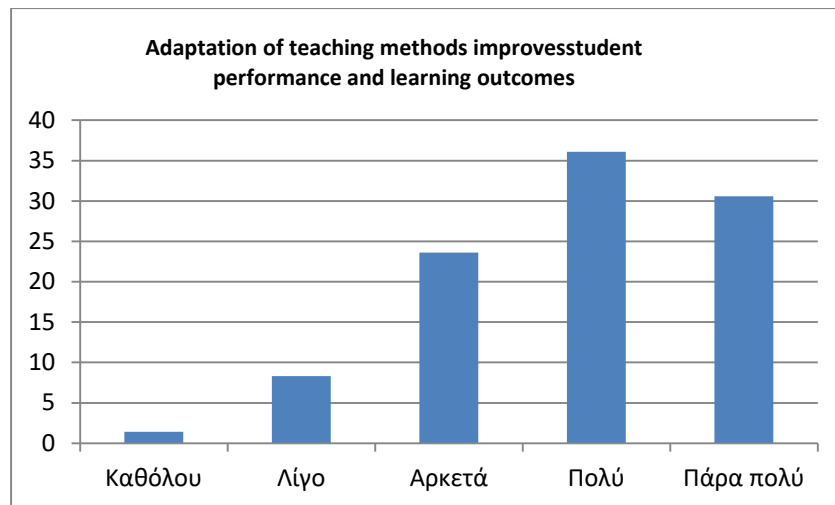


Figure 7. Adaptation of teaching methods improves student performance and learning outcomes

#### 4. Discussion

Common findings in the majority of similar researches is that teachers consider that student assessment mainly aims to promote learning, providing feedback to students, to enhance their self-esteem, to evaluate the quality of teaching, and take measures for improvement in order to contribute to enhance student learning, improve learning outcomes and accountability of schools. This finding is also confirmed by the present study, where the sample “agreed” (23.6%) and “strongly agreed” (37.5%) that the purpose of student assessment is to continually improve the education provided and with the point that feedback enhances students’ motivation to learn (“agreed” 23.6% and “strongly agreed” 37.5% respectively).

As has been made clear from previous theoretical documentation, feedback, which is the last step in systematically applying the evaluation process, is its ultimate and ultimate goal (Black & William, 1998; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Shute, 2008; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Rakalidou, 2011). However, despite its important role, few researches have been identified on its purpose and function. One of the studies indirectly mentioned in feedback was conducted by Mavrommatis (1995), who found out that many teachers provided feedback to students in order to improve their performance. The majority of teachers stated that through the assessment process they control the degree of achievement of learning objectives, they plan, adopt and implement the necessary corrective measures to improve them and even motivate students to improve their learning status (Mavrommatis, 1995: 262). Similar findings in the Irving research, Harris & Peterson (2011), where teachers recognized as key purpose of feedback to improve student learning, compliance of students, encourage students for further work and updating of students and parents over their school progress (Irving, Harris & Peterson, 2011: 17). Teachers who participated in this survey reported that providing feedback to students encouraging them to engage in learning (2011). The same finding emerged from the present study in which teachers have responded that they “agree” (23.6%) and “strongly agree” (37.5%) with the view that the purpose of student assessment is to continually improve teaching and enhance student learning.

In Mavromati, Zouganeli, Frida and Luke’s (2008), study, teachers in the sample stated that they use the results of the assessment process to formulate and tailor the teaching to 91% to have a discussion with their students on 79% and to inform parents 81% (2008: 262). Similar are the findings in Manolako’s (2012) survey, where 42% of the teachers who participate stated that they utilize the evaluation results to shape accordingly their teaching, 54% to hold

substantive discussions with their students, while 64% to rank students in grades for the quarter and 6% to inform parents about the progress of their children (Manolakos, 2012: 106). On the contrary, teachers in the preset study do not state to a large extent how they adapt their teaching methods to the degree of their students' success ("neutral" 29.2% and "disagree" 23.6%).

It should be noted that the empirical data presented reasonably show differences. However, these data do help to reflect the current educational reality in assessing student performance. Mainly research findings confirm the theoretical justification presenting that the effective functioning of the feedback is directly related to the assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the provided educational work and taking appropriate corrective action to improve. However, teachers appear to be reluctant to use the assessment process for adaptation and their own teaching practice, which is widely prominent in the present research, although they theoretically accept and acknowledge the importance and purpose of feedback.

## 5. Conclusions

In the present study through the brief research, the results highlight the theoretical training of teachers on the pedagogical function of the evaluation and the role of feedback in the learning process, but also reveal the inability of teachers to access traditional teaching and assessment methods (Mavrommati, 1996; Segers & Tillema, 2011; Irving, Harris & Peterson, 2011). However, the educator, while embodying an important role in the effective implementation of evaluation, does not only need to know the evaluation strategies but possess the ability to use them as a feedback tool (Rekalidou, 2011: 44).

In consequence, undermining the educational function of the evaluation and assessment fails to provide valuable information material both students and teachers will use to be able to correct any mistakes and weaknesses. Thus, evaluation acquires control function and is limited to the classification and ranking of students by creating intense competition in the classroom and giving assessment a non-learning character. The pedagogical function of assessment which focuses on the student and especially on the student as an individual and on learning is undermined.

To summarize, teachers consider that student assessment serves primarily pedagogical purposes to enhance and support teaching and learning processes. They perceive feedback as part of the assessment process and believe it performs important functions in effective teaching and learning. They recognize its significant effects on motivation for learning and effective teaching. However, they themselves do not exploit the stimuli given to them through the feedback function of assessment to adjust their teaching practices, evaluate their teaching quality, and take reinforcing or remedial measures to improve learning outcomes. Therefore, through their evaluation of student performance they do not value their own teaching efforts, moreover, that student performance is "not the student's sole concern" (Athanasίου, 2003: 42), as it is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic ones, such as the teacher's teaching method or the amount of syllabus (Athanasίου, 2003: 42-43). It is worth noting that from his part student from the way the assessment carried out forms a mental idea which leaves a mental imprint on their way of perception of knowledge and learning and how they can foster learning. It is clear that the assessment and formulation of assessment judgments should concern all those involved in the learning process (students, teachers, parents, community etc.).

It is necessary to establish training programs which will provide theoretical and practical training to prospective and practicing teachers on the use and application of alternative techniques for the evaluation of student performance, but generally the student's assessment.

The combination of alternative and traditional techniques of student performance evaluation contributes to maintaining the educational climate of the classroom. Students

collaborate in a spirit of solidarity and are supported and supported by each other in order to gain knowledge and learn more effectively.

Like any research, so is the present one, it is subject to certain limitations and limitations, such as sample size, time to research, limitation of question questions (Bell, 1997: 106), inability to sample from semi-rural or rural areas, etc. Taking into account the research findings and the resulting conclusions, it is suggested to investigate the issue further, using different research approaches or research tools in order to be able to compare results. It is suggested to establish a permanent and systematic training program for teachers that will provide the necessary theoretical and empirical knowledge regarding the techniques, instruments, functions and purposes of assessment and inform at the same time for the findings and trends of modern educational research. The most frequent use of formative assessment, which provides feedback and the ability to make corrections at every stage of the teaching and learning process (Bloom, 1969; Black & William, 1998). The formative assessment contributes to the student's perception of the vacuum between the desired goal and its current status. Feedback creatively contributes to the coordination of the student's efforts to achieve the learning goals and contributes to the development of the student's self-perception and ability to learn autonomously (Rellos, 2003). At the same time, the teacher himself, by the results of his students' performance, has the opportunity to reflect and improve his teaching and to manage pedagogically and didactically the individual needs of his students (Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2017; Doliopoulou & Gourgiotou, 2008). In addition, the combination of arithmetic and descriptive assessment minimizes or eliminates the pressure for high performance enhances students' self-perception as descriptive assessment analyzes each student's individual learning path and identifies opportunities, weaknesses and deficiencies to overcome in order to improvement of his/her learning situation with the appropriate pedagogical and didactic guidance (Konstantinou, 2017: 281-283).

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