UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI FIRENZE

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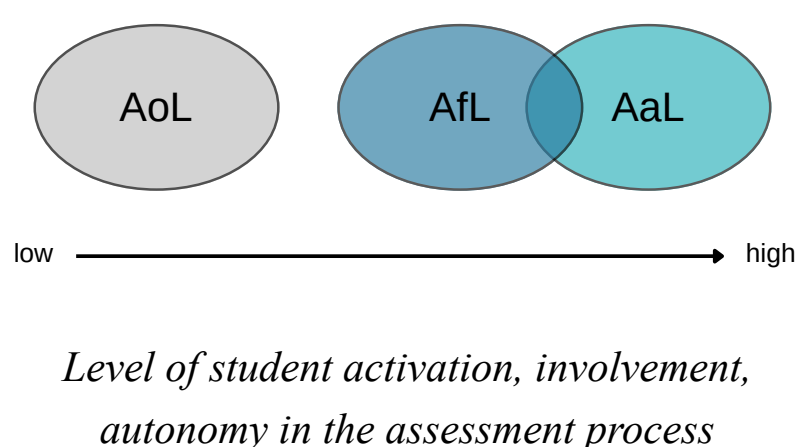DIPARTIMENTO DI FORMAZIONE, LINGUE, INTERCULTURA, LETTERATURE E PSICOLOGIA

Inside classroom assessment: teachers' insights on formative assessment approaches

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INTRODUCTION

Level of student activation, involvement, autonomy in the assessment process

Teachers' assessment practices have a significative impact on student learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie, 2009). Understanding teachers' approaches to assessment and their perceived obstacles in implementing student-centered assessment strategies can provide insight into teacher training and professional development needs (Brown, 2004) to enhance teaching effectiveness.

It is useful to distinguish between approaches that influence students' learning skills to varying degrees: *Assessment of Learning* (AoL), *Assessment for Learning* (AfL), and *Assessment as Learning* (AaL). These three approaches can be placed on a continuum where the level of student activation, involvement, autonomy, and responsibility in the assessment process varies from a minimum (AoL) to a maximum (AaL). At the other end of this continuum, the focus is on developing students' ability to self-regulate their learning and enhance their evaluative judgement (Boud, 2000; Earl, 2016), which are fundamental for shaping them into lifelong learners.

AIMS

① To investigate the assessment *conceptions* and *strategies* most widely agreed upon and used by teachers.

② To determine whether conceptions of AfL and AaL are aligned with corresponding practices.

③ To understand the *obstacles* teachers encounter in implementing student-centered assessment strategies and the *advantages* they perceive instead.

METHODS

Research approach

Mixed methods with a convergent design, "questionnaire variant" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Target population and procedures

‣ Primary and secondary school teachers.

‣ An email invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all primary and secondary schools in Italy (convenience sampling). The survey was conducted online using Google Form, starting on 14 May 2022 and ending on 31 December 2022.

Instruments

Quantitative/qualitative questionnaire

‣ **Quantitative part**: *Teachers' Assessment Conceptions Scale* (6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree); *Teachers' Assessment Strategies Scale* (6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = never to 6 = every time). The construction and validation of the scales are integral to the research project.

‣ **Qualitative part:** open-ended questions regarding the obstacles and advantages of implementing student-centered assessment practices.

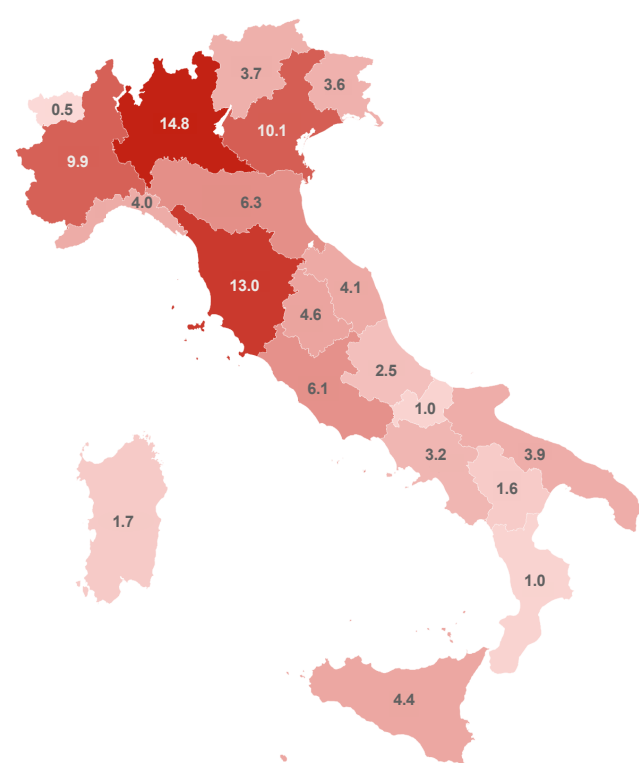### SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

N = 2476

Primary school: 36.7%
Lower secondary school: 27.8%
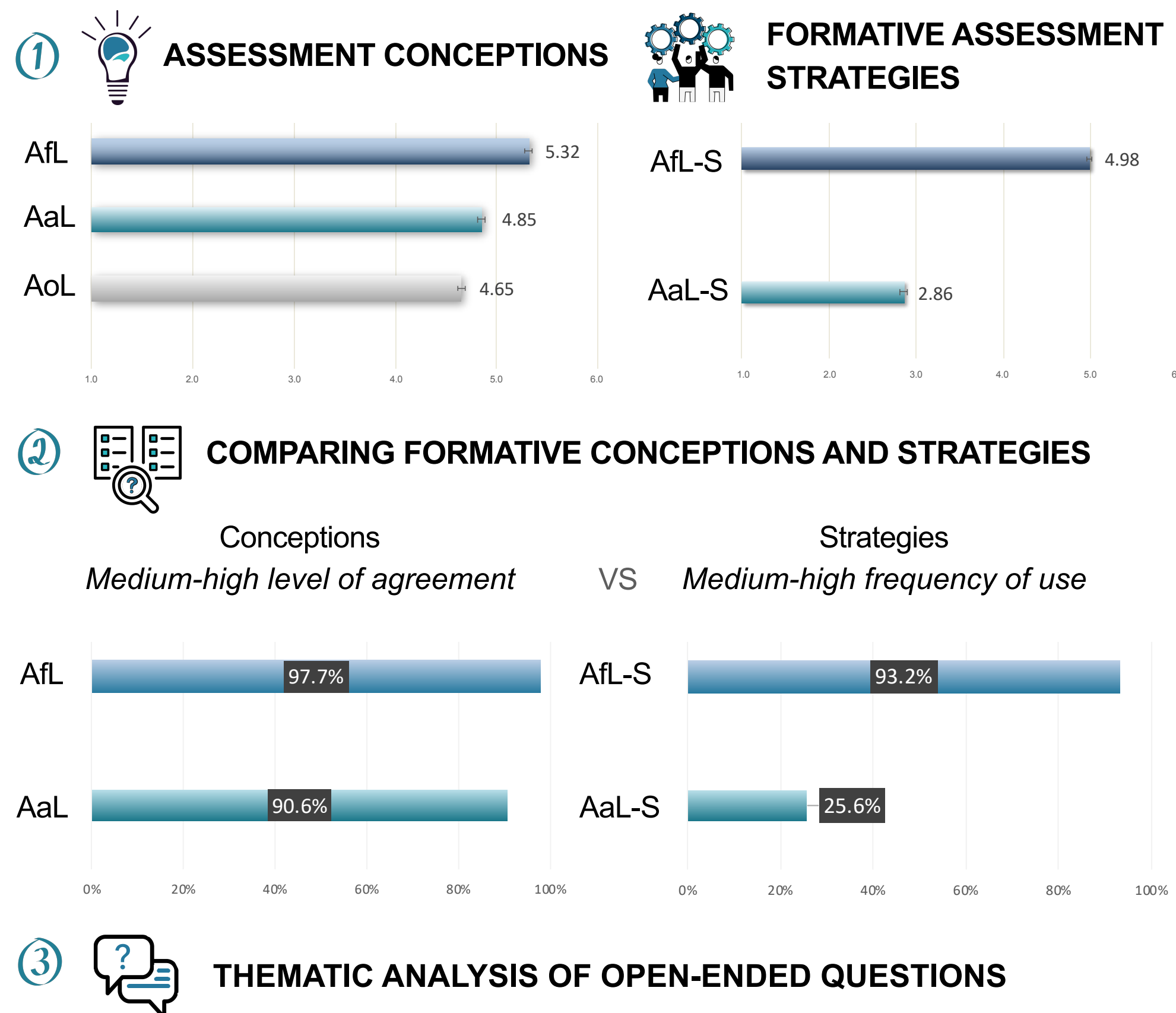Upper secondary school: 35.5%

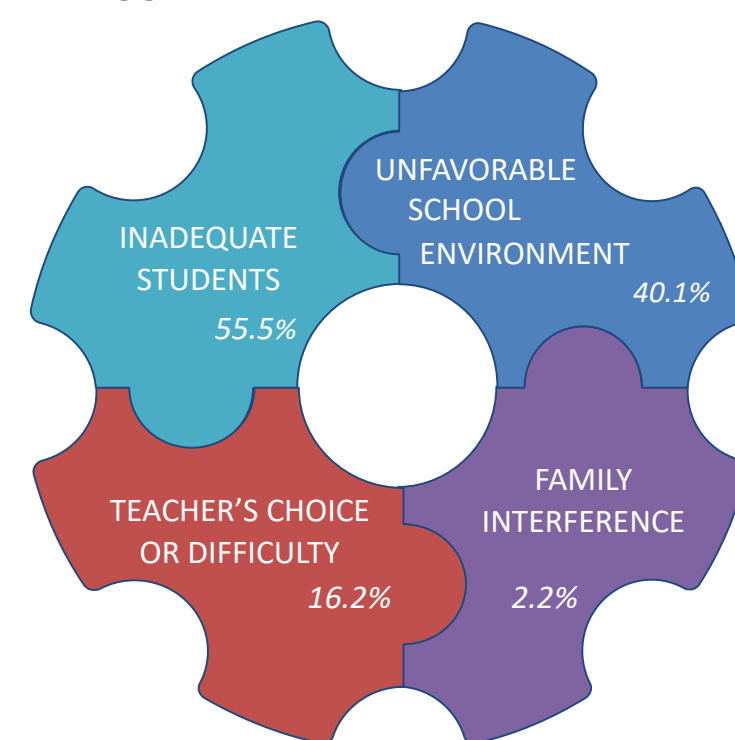M_{age} = 48.0 SD_{age} = 10.0

82.8%   16.3%   N.S. 0.9%

References

Black, P. J., & Wiliam, D. (1998). *Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment.* Phi Delta Kappan, *80*(2), 139–148.

Boud, D. (2000). *Sustainable assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society. Studies in continuing education*, *22*(2), 151–167.

Brown, G. T. L. (2004). *Teachers' conceptions of assessment: Implications for policy and professional development.* Assessment in Education, *11*, 301–318.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research (3rd ed.).* SAGE.

Earl, L. M. (2013). *Assessment as Learning: Using classroom assessment to maximize student learning (2nd ed.).* Corwin.

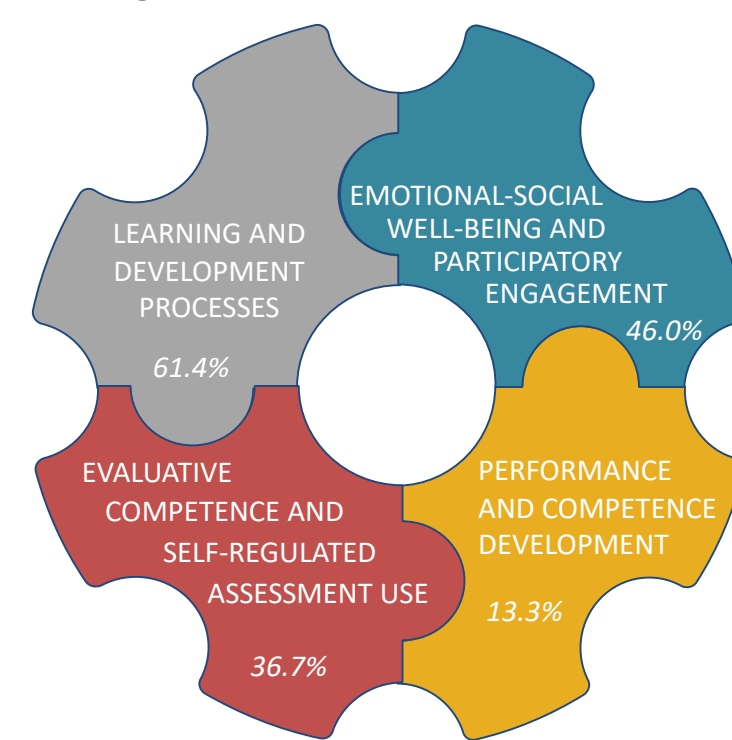Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses on achievement.* Routledge.

RESULTS

① ASSESSMENT CONCEPTIONS

AfL — 5.32
AaL — 4.85
AoL — 4.65

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

AfL-S — 4.98
AaL-S — 2.86

② COMPARING FORMATIVE CONCEPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Conceptions
Medium-high level of agreement

VS

Strategies
Medium-high frequency of use

AfL — 97.7%
AaL — 90.6%

AfL-S — 93.2%
AaL-S — 25.6%

③ THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Obstacles to the implementation of student-centered assessment strategies

N = 1293

INADEQUATE STUDENTS *55.5%*
UNFAVORABLE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT *40.1%*
TEACHER'S CHOICE OR DIFFICULTY *16.2%*
FAMILY INTERFERENCE *2.2%*

Advantages to the implementation of student-centered assessment strategies

N = 847

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES *61.4%*
EMOTIONAL-SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND PARTICIPATORY ENGAGEMENT *46.0%*
EVALUATIVE COMPETENCE AND SELF-REGULATED ASSESSMENT USE *36.7%*
PERFORMANCE AND COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT *13.3%*

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

‣ Teachers support all purposes of assessment, especially the formative ones.

‣ Teachers frequently employ assessment strategies in line with AfL approach, while they rarely use assessment strategies that promote full student engagement and autonomy in the assessment process, as outlined in the AaL approach.

‣ Teachers face two main obstacles in involving students in assessment: students themselves and a lack of a shared assessment culture. Despite these challenges, teachers using student-centered assessment strategies report numerous benefits for their students.

‣ The results highlight the importance of addressing obstacles for wider adoption of student-centered assessment, emphasizing the need for professional training and a shared assessment culture.

Research impact

‣ The impact of the research is primarily linked to the potential to inform teacher training programs. Identifying areas for improving assessment practices, when used to enhance teacher training and professional development, could eventually lead to enhanced assessment practices and, consequently, improved education quality, benefiting students.

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