

## *Abstracts*

**Torulf Palm, Catarina Andersson, Björn Palmberg, Mikael Winberg, *Mechanisms underlying effects of formative assessment on student achievement: A proposed framework to ignite future research***

Research has shown that formative assessment can have large positive effects on student achievement, but the effects vary substantially and are not always positive. In addition, the underlying mechanisms responsible for the learning effects are not well understood. We present a framework developed to support research efforts to identify these mechanisms. The framework includes formative assessment processes as well as students' learning processes, defines and exemplifies the term mechanisms in relevant contexts, indicates possible mechanisms, and identifies aspects that require further research to characterise and explain the mechanisms through which formative assessment affects student achievement. Finally, we exemplify how the framework may be used to design studies capable of providing the robust evidence required for drawing conclusions about the mechanisms.

*Keywords:* Formative assessment, Assessment for learning, Framework, Mechanisms, Mathematics.

**Valeria Damiani, Fjolla Kaçaniku, Blerim Saqipi, Gabriella Agrusti, *Enhancing teachers' professionalism in Kosovo. The course syllabus policy review from faculty and students' perspectives***

The QATEK project is aimed at developing a quality oriented system of initial teacher education to increase teachers' professionalism in Kosovo. This study aims to present and delve into one of the main outputs of the project, namely the course syllabus review process, carried out at partner uni-

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versities in Kosovo based on the policy document developed in the project. Three focus groups were carried out with faculty members and university students in October 2023. The findings of the study illuminate the transformative impact of elevating professionalism through the course syllabus revision process within teacher education. The study underscores the importance of adopting a lifelong learning perspective for teachers' professional development, positioning the syllabus revision process as a continuous and adaptive journey.

*Keywords:* Initial teacher education, Kosovo, Syllabus review, quality assurance, theory and practice.

**Maurizio Gentile, Elisa Truffelli, Chiara Bertolini, Alessandra Rosa, *Between research and action: a thematic analysis of teachers' professional development***

The study shows the results of a thematic analysis carried out on 13 teacher professional development projects coordinated by university research groups. Before the analysis, researchers identified 11 categories derived from the study of the teacher professional development literature. Two blind analysts conducted the analysis, which was validated by the inter-rater reliability. The main findings show the following evidence: a) the projects approach teachers' professional development through different research methods, with a prevalence of qualitative methods; b) projects are frequently oriented to teacher education purposes rather than to measure variables or overcome educational problems; c) professional development is mainly interpreted as a subjective change of beliefs, attitudes and teaching practices. Further improvements in data collection, sources and methods, as well as analysis strategies, may or may not confirm, to some or a lesser extent, the current results.

*Keywords:* Professional development, Thematic analysis, Research methods, Teachers, University research groups.

**Andrea Ciani, Alessandra Rosa, *The misunderstood assessment: an exploratory investigation into the new criterion-based approach to periodic and final assessment in primary schools***

The article presents an observational-correlational research aimed at exploring perceptions and opinions on the new assessment system introduced by OM 172/2020 and the related Guidelines of a non-probabilistic sample of teachers in service at primary school in four Comprehensive Institutes

in Emilia-Romagna, who subsequently followed a training course on the Guidelines requested by the schools themselves. Data were collected in September-October 2023 through an online questionnaire administered to the teachers before the training began. The results reveal, three years after the implementation of the legislation, the persistence of resistance, application difficulties and interpretative bias, prompting reflection on the conditions that can foster the profound change of perspective required by the new descriptive assessment in the culture and professional practice of primary school teachers.

*Keywords:* primary school, descriptive assessment, periodic and final assessment, ongoing assessment, criterion-referenced approach.

**Francesca Fioretti, *Leadership and democratic school governance. A study in Italy and Portugal***

In democratic school governance, characterized by participative decision-making, the Principal occupies a central role in fostering the creation of an organizational system that can implement school community collaboration and student learning outcomes. With reference to the current national legislation, the present study carried out in Italy and Portugal offers a contribution to research on the role of the participation of the school community in school governance. The analysis conducted on a total of eight semi-structured interviews with one Italian Vice Principal, three Italian Principals and four Portuguese Principals of lower secondary schools is reported. The results show operational strategies implemented at the initiative of schools that can promote collaborative and democratic school governance through the active involvement of the school community in the decision-making process.

*Keywords:* leadership, governance, decision-making, participation, collaboration.

**Teresa Savoia, *Social inequalities in the American school system. An interpretation through the work of Henry Giroux***

The contribution aims to reflect on the literacy skills and inequalities that characterize the American school system, through a diachronic perspective. To this end, the data that emerge from the comparison between some statistical surveys and from national and international studies that have been conducted over the last fifty years are reported. Through this analysis, it clearly emerges how racial inequalities, already evident in the past, are persistent almost unchanged over time.

After presenting the descriptive data, an interpretation is proposed through the analysis of Henry Giroux' critical theory. The point of view of the American pedagogist, to whom the author proposed an interview, is therefore presented, and a harsh criticism of the American school system emerges, highlighting the problematic issues. After examining the historical and economic causes of the education crisis, the possibility of a growth of critical consciousness through education and the development of a language of "informed hope" are identified.

*Keywords:* literacy skills, social inequalities, school dropout, critical function of education, educated hope.