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## Abstract

### Keywords:

student-centered assessment, co-participation, vocational counseling, self-regulated learning, differentiated assessment, secondary education

This paper examines a student-centered assessment model implemented within the “School of Personal Fulfillment” pilot program, carried out in Romanian upper secondary education. The program integrates co-participation, vocational counseling, and educational self-regulation as core principles for designing assessment practices that respond to students’ individual learning profiles and career interests. The study adopts a longitudinal case-study approach over two academic years, combining psychopedagogical investigation, differentiated assessment methods, coordinated planning of assessment activities, and beneficiary satisfaction questionnaires administered to students, parents, and teachers. Initial assessment and the use of the Holland interest inventory supported early vocational orientation and informed the design of individualized learning pathways. Findings indicate that involving students in the selection of assessment methods enhances autonomy, engagement, and responsibility for learning, while reducing assessment-related stress and improving overall well-being. Coordinated assessment planning across disciplines contributed to transparency and prevented student overload. The coexistence of initial, formative, and summative assessment throughout the school year enabled continuous feedback and adaptive instructional practices. The results suggest that student-centered assessment, when systematically integrated into curriculum design and supported through institutional collaboration, represents a viable and sustainable approach for promoting academic development, learner well-being, and career readiness in upper secondary education.

## 1. Introduction

Knowing students' personalities and their level of knowledge/skills is the foundation for organizing any curriculum. Didactic assessment, along with teaching and learning, is an intrinsic component of the teaching process, providing both teachers and the primary and secondary beneficiaries of education (students and parents) with predictions and answers regarding the effectiveness of the educational act. Psycho-pedagogical investigation can be considered an opportunity to get to know students' personalities, which is fundamental for inclusive schooling and students' career guidance. Assessment is a complex process that involves verification, measurement, interpretation, and argumentation (Stan, 2001). For teachers, this is the moment when they determine the effectiveness of the teaching process by correlating official curriculum benchmarks with the training needs and individual potential of each student.

Initial testing of knowledge is important both for subsequent teaching design and for the self-reflection of education beneficiaries on their involvement in learning and self-regulation of their school and career paths. The assessment of academic results is carried

out throughout the entire teaching process, with the aim of achieving functional interaction between assessment and teaching/learning processes. Dynamic assessment looks at academic results at various points during the teaching process.

## 2. Theoretical foundation

### 2.1. Student-centered assessment

Student-centered assessment is a pedagogical approach that shifts the focus from traditional, classification-oriented assessment to reflective assessment that supports the learning process. This paradigm aims to develop students' metacognitive and self-regulatory skills by adapting assessment criteria or tools to individual needs and potential. Activities such as self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolios, or guided reflections contribute to a better understanding of progress and personal responsibility (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989).

Contemporary pedagogy increasingly promotes the concept of student agency, interpreted as the student's ability to actively participate in establishing the criteria, methods of implementation, and



interpretation of assessment. This involvement encourages reflection and self-regulation and becomes a learning process in itself (Nieminen et al. 2025). Student-centered assessment also contributes to the development of transversal skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, and its implementation requires institutional changes and teacher training for this purpose.

The educational technologies available to teachers offer new opportunities for implementing formative assessment through adaptive digital feedback and personalized learning, transforming assessment into a catalyst for authentic learning and personal development.

### 2.2. *Co-participation in the educational process*

Co-participation is based on the principle of democratic education, promoting the involvement of students as partners in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the educational process. This approach has its roots in socioconstructivist theory, according to which learning is a social process, mediated by interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1978). In an educational context, this involves students in setting learning objectives, choosing teaching methods, and making decisions about forms of assessment.

Studies by Deci and Ryan (2000) show that active student participation in the educational process supports their need for autonomy and relatedness, leading to high intrinsic motivation. Recent research indicates that the active involvement of students in educational decisions leads to positive effects on engagement and self-efficacy (Rust et al., 2003).

To be effective, co-participation requires a paradigm shift in the teacher-student relationship, based on mutual trust, dialogue, and accountability. Practices such as teaching contracts, regular consultations, collaborative projects, and two-way feedback transform the classroom into a shared learning space, with lasting effects on students' personal and professional development.

### 2.3. *Vocational counseling*

Vocational counseling is a process of supporting individuals in exploring, choosing, and planning their educational or professional path, based on their interests, abilities, values, and opportunities. Classic theoretical models, such as Holland's theory of vocational types (1997), Super's theory of career development (1990), and Krumboltz's social learning model (1996), provide relevant insights into the factors that influence career decisions.

In the context of rapid changes in the labor market and increasing demands for adaptability, vocational counseling becomes a continuous and integrated part of the daily educational process. Recent literature highlights the importance of developing career adaptability skills and a flexible vocational identity, in line with uncertainties and multiple transitions (Hooley et al., 2024; OECD, 2025)

The integration of vocational counseling into the curriculum, the use of interactive technologies, and collaboration between school counselors, teachers, and the socio-economic environment increase the effectiveness of these interventions. Vocational counseling can provide specific guidance with the aim of making informed and conscious decisions about academic or professional futures.

### 2.4. *Educational self-regulation*

Educational self-regulation is the student's ability to deliberately coordinate their learning processes through monitoring and reflection. According to the model proposed by Zimmerman (2000), self-regulation involves three major stages: anticipation, performance, and self-reflection, with the aim of leading to autonomy in learning and adaptation to the specifics of modern education.

Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory emphasizes the role of self-perceived competence in mobilizing effort and maintaining persistence in academic tasks. Pintrich (2004) highlights the importance of the interaction between motivation, strategy, and context in effective self-regulation.

Research in the field of digital pedagogy highlights the fact that self-regulation is a real predictor of success in online and hybrid learning environments, with interventions based on the development of metacognition and the quality of feedback having proven positive effects on self-regulation skills (Sáez-Delgado et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2025). In high school education, where autonomy and personal initiative are already established, self-regulation consistently influences student performance and adaptability.

### 2.5. *The "School of personal fulfillment" pilot program: a student-centered assessment model based on co-participation, vocational counseling, and educational self-regulation*

The pilot program "School of personal fulfillment," carried out in Romania at the "Decebal" National College in Deva, Hunedoara county, Romania, through O.M. 4872/30.08.2022, highlights the importance of initial assessment and psycho-

pedagogical investigation in designing individual learning paths for students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The Pilot Program is an innovation and a collaboration between CJRAE Hunedoara and the "Decebal" National College in Deva and was proposed for implementation through curriculum counseling activities.

This program proposes organizing Module I according to a transdisciplinary curriculum design, in which educational assessment and psycho-pedagogical investigation, using the Holland interests questionnaire, represent an alternative to the traditional approach to activities in the Romanian education system. The structure of the school year in Romania is divided into five school modules, each module ending with a school holiday. Within this project, teaching assessment and psycho-pedagogical investigation constitute a moment of self-reflection for students and reflection for parents and teachers regarding the planning of learning and teaching with the aim of facilitating preparation for future careers.

Psycho-pedagogical investigation and counseling was carried out by the psycho-pedagogical assistance office at the Hunedoara psychological assistance center. Teachers, parents, and students learned about vocational profiles by specifying occupational interests. Concurrently with the psycho-pedagogical investigation, all classroom teachers carried out initial assessment activities, correlating the knowledge test with systematic observation of behavior, projects, worksheets, oral tests, reports, and other investigation methods.

The activity was intended both to diagnose the specific knowledge acquired in previous years and to identify non-specific prerequisites for learning new material, as well as to learn about and become familiar with different assessment methods and tools. The students reflected together with each teacher on the most appropriate assessment methods for determining the level of academic achievement, and once they had made their choice, these were implemented.

The assessed/tested curriculum consisted of: initial assessment of knowledge/initial self-assessment and the creation of alternative sets/packages of assessment methods/tools, offered to the primary beneficiaries of education, to be included in the student's personal education plan and applied in modules II-V. Module I ensured the transition from the holiday period to school-type activities, without recording grades in the register.

### *2.5.1. The student as co-participant in the design of the assessment activity*

Specialists in docimology point out the importance of student co-participation in the assessment process: "a purely objective, impersonal, and absolutely neutral assessment, i.e., an assessment without a subject, is not only impossible, but also less meaningful, less relevant, and ultimately less objective than an assessment that engages the subjectivity, values, attitudes, including or especially the personal vision of the assessor and/or the assessed (Voiculescu, 2001).

The set of assessment methods must include a variety of methods that ensure objectivity in assessment and relevance to the specific nature of the school subject, and the methods chosen by each student will be recorded in their Personal education plan. The assessment methods are proposed by each teacher and involve a combination of traditional and complementary methods. Alongside assessment, self-assessment is a constant feature of the docimological process. Each student can choose one of at least two assessment sets/packages, after being advised by teachers throughout the module on the particularities of grading and the requirements involved. (see Table I)

Through this stage, the teacher answers one of the key questions of the assessment process: How do we assess? and adds a new question to the practice of school assessment: How will students and parents be involved in the assessment process?

### *2.5.2. The need to plan assessment activities*

Planning assessment activities for each class supports teachers by facilitating teacher-teacher and teacher-student communication and provides the answer to the question "When do we assess?" Simultaneously with the design of the instructional plan (lessons, learning units, etc.), the corresponding assessment activity will also be designed. (Cucoş, 2008) In order to avoid overburdening students with multiple tests on the same day and to facilitate communication and transparency in the assessment process within the same class, a drive document can be created, accessible to all teachers, in which, based on the calendar planning and learning unit design, teachers will set the date for the teaching assessment, after it has been previously discussed with the students in the class. The Excel document in Figure 3 is an example of this. This document can be created and managed by the school counselor and is also a way of understanding and managing the emotions and stress

specific to assessment at the level of the respective class.

With a simple click, each colleague can notify their colleagues, in each class's drive, of the date chosen for assessment during the module. The assessment periods for a class can be identified and the date or period for assessment can be set, depending on the needs of the students and the planning of other colleagues. This does not exclude communicating with students regarding the date on which the assessment activity will take place. The curriculum taught must be analyzed and correlated with the assessment methods chosen by each student

### 2.5.3. Differentiated teaching assessment

Conducting teaching activities within the pilot program involved prioritizing the school curriculum by emphasizing its relevance to life and career and implementing the curriculum design by utilizing Holland's theory of occupational interests (Muste & Mariş, 2024). The assessment activity was carried out by applying the set of methods chosen by the students at the beginning of the school year to all school subjects.

## 3. Research methodology

The research methods used in this study are a longitudinal case study, covering two school years out of the four pilot years; the self-observation method provides original, new professional information collected by the researcher, and the method of studying the official curriculum documents within the pilot program complements and completes them. The beneficiary satisfaction questionnaire provides data on direct and indirect beneficiaries, as well as on the opinion of teachers regarding the relevance of the psycho-pedagogical experiment carried out.

Hypotheses:

- ✓ Using assessment methods chosen with the participation of students and parents will increase well-being in the school.
- ✓ Making the transition from school holidays to school activities will be beneficial for students.
- ✓ Planning assessment activities reduces stress caused by school overload.
- ✓ Psychopedagogical investigation using the Holland interests questionnaire is necessary for differentiated educational planning and career guidance.

## 4. Results

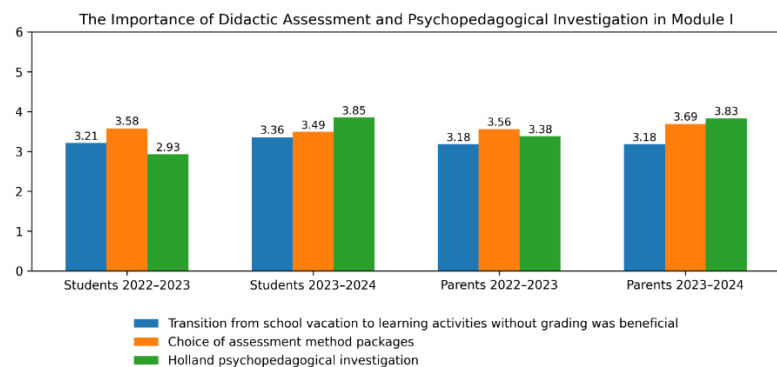
The three forms of assessment: initial, formative, and summative coexisted throughout the school year. Self-assessment methods: controlled self-grading, self-correction or mutual correction, and mutual grading were an important part of the docimological process. The assessment of academic results is carried out throughout the entire teaching process, with the aim of achieving functional interaction between assessment and teaching/learning processes.

Dynamic assessment concerns academic results at various stages of the teaching process.

At the end of Module I, a beneficiary satisfaction questionnaire was administered to the students and parents of students participating in the pilot program. Figure 1 shows the degree of beneficiary satisfaction, specified in the average of the responses for two school years, at the end of Module I, for the proposed hypotheses.

Figure 1

Assessment design and psycho-pedagogical investigation in Module I

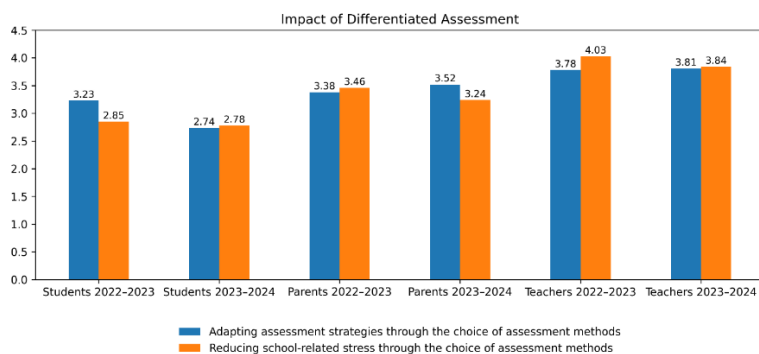


As shown in Figure 1, the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the pilot program appreciate co-participation in the design of the assessment by choosing the assessment methods. Also, the transition from school vacation to school activities, without grading students, created a sense of well-being among students. Parents and students appreciate the early psycho-pedagogical investigation, in 10th grade, for career guidance.

Figure 2 shows the satisfaction of beneficiaries and teachers' appreciation of the impact of differentiated assessment on students' well-being. As can be seen, differentiated assessment through student co-participation reduces school stress. The possibility of choosing a package of assessment methods is appreciated by all those involved in the assessment process.

**Figure 2**

*Impact of differentiated assessment through the choice of assessment methods*



As shown in Table I, N.T. and P.S. are two students who opted for different assessment methods.

**Table 1**

*Examples of packages/sets of assessment/self-assessment methods*

Student	School Subject	Set of Assessment / Self-Assessment Methods
N.T.	Romanian Language and Literature	Oral assessment, written assessment, project, portfolio, self-assessment
	Mathematics	Written assessment, project, self-assessment
	Chemistry	Written test, report, self-assessment
	Geography	Self-assessment, projects, geographical games, worksheets, practical applications, self-assessment
	Physical Education	Progress-based assessment, self-assessment
P.S.	Romanian Language and Literature	Written test, portfolio, literary essays, character analysis, self-assessment
	Mathematics	Written and oral assessment, self-assessment
	Chemistry	Oral assessment, written assessment, projects, self-assessment
	Geography	Written and oral assessment, projects, debates, practical applications, geographical games, self-assessment
	Physical Education	Speed, endurance, strength, coordination, one team sport

**Figure 3**

*Planning teaching assessment – activity carried out virtually and in the class teachers' council*

Subject	Assessment Activity Planning – Module III, Class 10								
	09 Jan	10-Jo Jan	11-J1 Jan	12 J1 Jan	13 J1 Jan	13.01 Jan	16.0.Jan	17.01 Jan	10.01.2023
Romanian Language & Literature	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
English Language	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
French Language	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-
History of England	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
History of Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Physics	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Chemistry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biology	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
History	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
Geography	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Psychology	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Music Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X

This has implications for the planning of the entire assessment process, and the assessment must be formative, educational, and objective. The teacher must create a creative instructional design, respecting the typology of the assessment lesson and creating moments/stages of assessment in other variants and types of lessons.

Figure 3 shows an example of assessment planning. As can be seen, assessment activities for two school subjects can be planned for the same day if one of these subjects is practical in nature and does not involve excessive workload. Planning must cover all school subjects in the framework plan and can be carried out for a school module.

## 5. Discussions

The results of this study support the relevance of student-centered assessment as a framework that enhances learner engagement, autonomy, and well-being in upper secondary education. The positive perceptions expressed by students, parents, and teachers indicate that co-participation in assessment design contributes to greater transparency and acceptance of evaluation practices. This finding is consistent with the formative assessment perspective, which emphasizes assessment as a process that supports learning rather than merely classifying performance (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Sadler, 1989).

Allowing students to participate in the selection of assessment methods appears to reduce school-related stress and increase responsibility for learning. From a motivational perspective, this outcome aligns with self-determination theory, according to which autonomy-supportive educational practices foster intrinsic motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The coordinated planning of assessment activities across disciplines further contributed to a predictable learning environment and reduced overload, confirming the importance of deliberate assessment planning highlighted in didactic literature (Cucoş, 2008).

The integration of psychopedagogical investigation and vocational counseling at the beginning of the school year strengthened the alignment between assessment practices and students' vocational interests. The use of Holland's theory of occupational interests provided a meaningful framework for reflection on future educational and career pathways (Holland, 1997), supporting differentiated instructional and assessment decisions.

Moreover, the systematic inclusion of self-assessment within the evaluation process contributed to the development of metacognitive awareness and educational self-regulation. These findings are consistent with models of self-regulated learning that emphasize the role of reflection, feedback, and perceived competence in sustaining academic effort and adaptability (Bandura, 1997; Pintrich, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Based on findings, the discussion confirms that student-centered assessment functions as a formative and developmental process, supporting both academic learning and personal development.

## 6. Conclusions

The research data support the effectiveness of a student-centered assessment model based on co-

participation, vocational counseling, and educational self-regulation. The implementation of initial assessment and psycho-pedagogical investigation in Module I facilitated students' transition from the holiday period to school activities, contributing to increased well-being and reduced assessment-related stress.

The results indicate that involving students in choosing assessment methods strengthens autonomy, responsibility, and commitment to learning. Differentiated assessment, correlated with vocational interests and individual learning profiles, was positively appreciated by students, parents, and teachers. Early vocational counseling, based on the Holland interests questionnaire, supported career guidance and increased the relevance of school learning for future educational and professional paths.

Coordinated planning of classroom assessment activities reduced student overload and increased the transparency of the assessment process, promoting a predictable and balanced educational climate. The coexistence of initial, formative, and summative assessment throughout the school year allowed for continuous feedback and adjustment of the teaching approach according to the actual needs of students.

The pilot program "School of Personal Fulfillment!" demonstrates that student-centered assessment, systematically integrated into curriculum design and supported by institutional collaboration, is a viable and sustainable approach in high school education. The results highlight the importance of pedagogical flexibility, shared responsibility, and reflective practice in supporting students' academic and personal development.

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