



## Studying in China: Analysis of the Implementation of Formative Assessment in Learning and its Contribution to Islamic Religious Education

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### Abstract

**Keywords:**

Formative assessment;  
Implementation;  
effectiveness;  
Challenge;  
Islamic religious education.

The education system in China is heavily influenced by Confucianism, which has led to an exam-oriented education system and a teacher-centered approach to learning. This environment is less conducive to the implementation of formative assessment, which emphasizes evaluating the learning process. However, this does not mean that process-based assessments are not applied in China. On the contrary, formative assessments are still used despite challenges from a system that prioritizes exam results. This article discusses the implementation, effectiveness, challenges of formative assessment in China, and contributions for Islamic Religious Education. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the help of Prisma 2020. The results show that formative assessment in China is implemented through various methods such as student journals, portfolios, teacher-student interactions, formative tasks, self-assessment, peer assessment, classroom observation, and feedback. Formative assessment has proven effective in improving students' academic performance. However, its implementation faces challenges at the macro level (national education policy), meso level (school management), and micro level (classroom practices). Several formative assessment practices in China that can be adapted for assessment in Islamic education include feedback, portfolios, formative tasks, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

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### Abstrak:

**Kata Kunci:**

Penilaian Formatif;  
Implementasi;  
Tantangan; Pendidikan  
Agama Islam

*Sistem pendidikan di Tiongkok sangat dipengaruhi oleh budaya Konfusianisme, yang melahirkan sistem pendidikan berorientasi pada ujian dan pendekatan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada guru. Kondisi ini memang kurang mendukung penerapan asesmen formatif, yang menekankan evaluasi terhadap proses pembelajaran. Namun, hal ini tidak berarti bahwa asesmen berbasis proses tersebut tidak*

diterapkan di Tiongkok. Sebaliknya, asesmen formatif tetap digunakan meskipun ada tantangan dari sistem yang lebih mengutamakan hasil ujian. Artikel ini membahas implementasi, efektivitas, tantangan asesmen formatif di Tiongkok, dan kontribusinya terhadap pendidikan agama Islam. Metode yang digunakan adalah tinjauan literatur sistematis (*Systematic Literature Review/SLR*) dengan bantuan Prisma 2020. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa asesmen formatif di Tiongkok diterapkan melalui berbagai metode, seperti jurnal siswa, portofolio, interaksi guru-siswa, tugas formatif, penilaian diri, penilaian sebaya, observasi kelas, dan umpan balik. Asesmen formatif terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan kinerja akademik siswa. Namun, penerapannya menghadapi tantangan di tingkat makro (kebijakan pendidikan nasional), meso (manajemen sekolah), dan mikro (praktik pembelajaran di kelas). Beberapa praktik asesmen formatif di Tiongkok yang dapat diadaptasi dalam penilaian pendidikan Islam meliputi umpan balik, portofolio, tugas formatif, penilaian diri, dan penilaian sebaya.

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## 1. Introduction

Formative assessment is the assessment and monitoring of students' progress during the learning process.<sup>1,2,3</sup> The primary goal of formative assessment is to provide feedback to improve students' understanding and skills.<sup>4,5</sup> Formative assessment emphasizes the interactive relationship between teachers and students.<sup>6</sup> Various formative assessment strategies such as oral or written feedback and peer assessment require good interaction between teachers and students<sup>7</sup>. Without a good relationship between teachers and students, the implementation of formative assessment is likely to face constraints or even failure.<sup>8,9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Yuhong Jiang, Jia Li, and Qiang Wang, "An Ecological Approach to Understanding University English Teachers' Professional Agency in Implementing Formative Assessment," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13, no. September (2022): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.916980>.

<sup>2</sup> Weiwei He and Qionghui Mei, "Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors," *Proceedings - 2020 International Symposium on Advances in Informatics, Electronics and Education, ISAIEE 2020*, 2020, 50–53, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ISAIEE51769.2020.00019>.

<sup>3</sup> Qiuxian Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective," *Frontiers of Education in China* 12, no. 1 (2017): 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.3868/s110-006-017-0005-9>.

<sup>4</sup> (Jian & Shaoqiaan, 2014)

<sup>5</sup> Xinying Yin and Gayle A. Buck, "There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research," *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 10, no. 3 (2015): 719–52, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-014-9572-5>.

<sup>6</sup> Enmou Huang, Lianjiang Jiang, and Manzhen Yang, "The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective," *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-021-10047-y>.

<sup>7</sup> Tianjiao Ma et al., "Reflection on the Teaching of Student-Centred Formative Assessment in Medical Curricula: An Investigation from the Perspective of Medical Students," *BMC Medical Education* 23, no. 1 (2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-023-04110-w>.

<sup>8</sup> Zi Yan, Ronnel B. King, and Joseph Y. Haw, "Formative Assessment, Growth Mindset, and Achievement: Examining Their Relations in the East and the West," *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice* 28, no. 5–6 (2021): 676–702, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2021.1988510>.

Meanwhile, in China, the relationship between teachers and students shows a hierarchical relationship where students almost unquestionably obey their teachers.<sup>10</sup> This is due to the influence of Confucian culture, which is deeply rooted in almost all aspects of life, including education.<sup>11</sup> Confucian values such as respect or obedience to authority, discipline, strong hierarchical systems, and collectivism greatly influence the education system in China, including influencing student behavior.<sup>12</sup> The majority of students in China tend to comply with and respect teachers as authorities. They will obey the teacher's instructions without questioning or challenging them.<sup>13</sup>

The influence of Confucian culture in the implementation of formative assessment in China can be seen in the relationship between teachers and students. Chinese students tend to accept teacher actions or treatments, such as feedback, as actions that must be accepted without reflecting on themselves based on that feedback.<sup>14</sup> This happens because the feedback is given by an authority figure (teacher) that should not be challenged<sup>15</sup>. In the context of Confucian culture, students are forced to be obedient to the authority of the teacher, resulting in passive students.<sup>16,17</sup>

The passivity of students in the learning process in China is partly due to a teacher-centered approach.<sup>18</sup> In fact, there are findings that the implementation of formative assessment strategies such as peer assessment will damage the reputation and authority of the teacher.<sup>19</sup> As a result, many teachers are reluctant to implement formative assessment.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the cultural factor of obedience to teachers that is influenced by Confucian culture, the implementation of formative assessment in China is also hindered by an examination-oriented education system.<sup>21</sup> This system has influenced students' motivation to participate in formative assessment-based

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<sup>9</sup> Qiuxian Chen and Huihui Li, "Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective," *The Educational Review, USA* 5, no. 9 (2021): 355–66, <https://doi.org/10.26855/er.2021.09.005>.

<sup>10</sup> Desmond Mene Lee Hang and Beverley Bell, "Written Formative Assessment and Silence in the Classroom," *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 10, no. 3 (2015): 763–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-014-9600-5>.

<sup>11</sup> Adam Poole, "'Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China," *Cogent Education* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1156242>.

<sup>12</sup> Qiuxian Chen, Jiajin Zhang, and Liang Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners," *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 33, no. 4 (2021): 649–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-021-09369-5>.

<sup>13</sup> Qiang Guo and Yueting Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021): 221–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2020.1798737>.

<sup>14</sup> Poole, "'Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>15</sup> Shujie Liu, Xianxuan Xu, and James H. Stronge, "Chinese Middle School Teachers' Preferences Regarding Performance Evaluation Measures," *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* 28, no. 2 (2016): 161–77, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-016-9237-x>.

<sup>16</sup> Poole, "'Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>17</sup> Liu, Xu, and Stronge, "Chinese Middle School Teachers' Preferences Regarding Performance Evaluation Measures."

<sup>18</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>19</sup> Guo and Xu.

<sup>20</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

<sup>21</sup> Rita Berry, "Assessment Reform in Education," in *Assessment Reform in Education*, 2011, 49–61, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-0729-0>.

learning. Many students do not enjoy the formative assessment process because they are still haunted by exams.<sup>22</sup> Chinese students are burdened by exams such as Gaokao and Zhongkao, which serve as gateways for students to continue their education to the next level.<sup>23</sup>

The challenges in implementing formative assessment in China are to be expected, considering that China has been applying a summative assessment system for over 2000 years.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the implementation of formative assessment creates tensions in the education field, such as the teacher-centered vs. student-centered learning approach, authoritarian classroom atmosphere vs. democratic classroom, individual learning vs. group learning, and formative assessment vs. summative assessment.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the challenges that do not support the implementation of formative assessment in China, many teachers in China are still committed to implementing formative assessment in their classrooms. This is evident from numerous published studies on the implementation of formative assessment in China<sup>26, 27, 28</sup>. Zhang found that formative assessment implementation in Chinese schools is carried out in both networked and non-networked forms. Formative assessment creates more opportunities for students to practice, build self-confidence, boost learning motivation, and achieve learning goals effectively<sup>29</sup>. Zhu et al. demonstrated that the implementation of formative assessment improves students' scores on summative exams compared to students who do not undergo formative assessment.<sup>30</sup>

Alongside studies that show the effectiveness of formative assessment implementation, there are also studies that reveal the ineffectiveness of formative assessment implementation in China. Chen et al. showed that formative assessment in China is less effective due to the influence of Confucian culture, which gives rise to a summative assessment system that emphasizes final exams. Confucian culture is not congruent with formative assessment implementation.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, the implementation of formative assessment in Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia faces several serious challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of teachers' understanding of the concept and

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<sup>22</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>23</sup> Juan Zeng and Liyan Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12, no. December (2021): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.774159>.

<sup>24</sup> Qiuxian Chen et al., "Interpretations of Formative Assessment in the Teaching of English at Two Chinese Universities: A Sociocultural Perspective," *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 38, no. 7 (2013): 831–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2012.726963>.

<sup>25</sup> Bo Qin et al., "Bane or Boon? An Autoethnographic Narrative of the English-Medium Instruction Contradictions in a Chinese University," *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 32, no. 2 (2023): 251–62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-022-00648-3>.

<sup>26</sup> Luning Zhang, "Formative Assessment in English for Specific Purposes," *Proceedings - 2016 8th International Conference on Measuring Technology and Mechatronics Automation, ICMTMA 2016*, 2016, 315–18, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICMTMA.2016.83>.

<sup>27</sup> Tianxin Zhu et al., "Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course," *Medical Science Monitor* 27 (2020): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.12659/MSM.929068>.

<sup>28</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

<sup>29</sup> Zhang, "Formative Assessment in English for Specific Purposes."

<sup>30</sup> Zhu et al., "Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course."

<sup>31</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

implementation of formative assessment, including its principles, objectives, methods, and the appropriate use of instruments.<sup>32</sup> This is largely due to the limited training teachers receive regarding effective formative assessment techniques.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the limited time available for Islamic Religious Education subjects presents a significant obstacle to the implementation of formative assessment, as teachers are more focused on completing the material.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, many teachers tend to choose summative assessment because it is perceived as simpler and more systematic compared to formative assessment, which requires more skills and time.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, non-test assessments in formative evaluation often contain subjective elements, while the lack of clear standards makes these assessments prone to a lack of objectivity and bias, ultimately reducing the effectiveness and fairness of the evaluation process.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the above discussion, despite the challenges posed by Confucian culture, many schools and teachers in China still implement formative assessment. Therefore, this article presents a discussion on the implementation, effectiveness, and challenges in implementing formative assessment in China, as well as the contribution of formative assessment in China to Islamic religious education.

## 2. Methods

This research utilizes a qualitative research method, specifically a systematic literature review (SLR). This method is used to gather and analyze data from various literature sources relevant to the research topic. Data retrieval for this study was conducted using the ERIC and Springer databases.

To obtain articles relevant to the theme, keyword searches were conducted using "formative assessment," "formative evaluation," and "assessment for learning." To ensure specificity, a time frame of the past ten years (2013 to 2023) was set for the search. Furthermore, the search was narrowed down to include only studies conducted in China.

The search across the two databases (ERIC and Springer) initially yielded 1,772 articles. However, after identification, it was found that 956 articles were published before 2013, and 17 articles were duplicates, leaving 709 articles. Subsequently, a filtering process was carried out, resulting in 128 non-journal articles and 581 journal articles. Among the 581 journal articles, 462 were not conducted in China, and 65 were not relevant to the topic. This left 54 journal articles that were deemed suitable based on the theme and the criteria set for this article. However, 23

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<sup>32</sup> Yova Atika et al., "Formative Test Analysis Of Islamic Religious Education Learning Evaluation Practices (Study At SMP Negeri 1 Muara Kemumu)," *Indonesian Journal of Pedagogy and Teacher Education* 1, no. 2 (2023): 38–42, <https://doi.org/10.58723/ijopate.v1i2.113>.

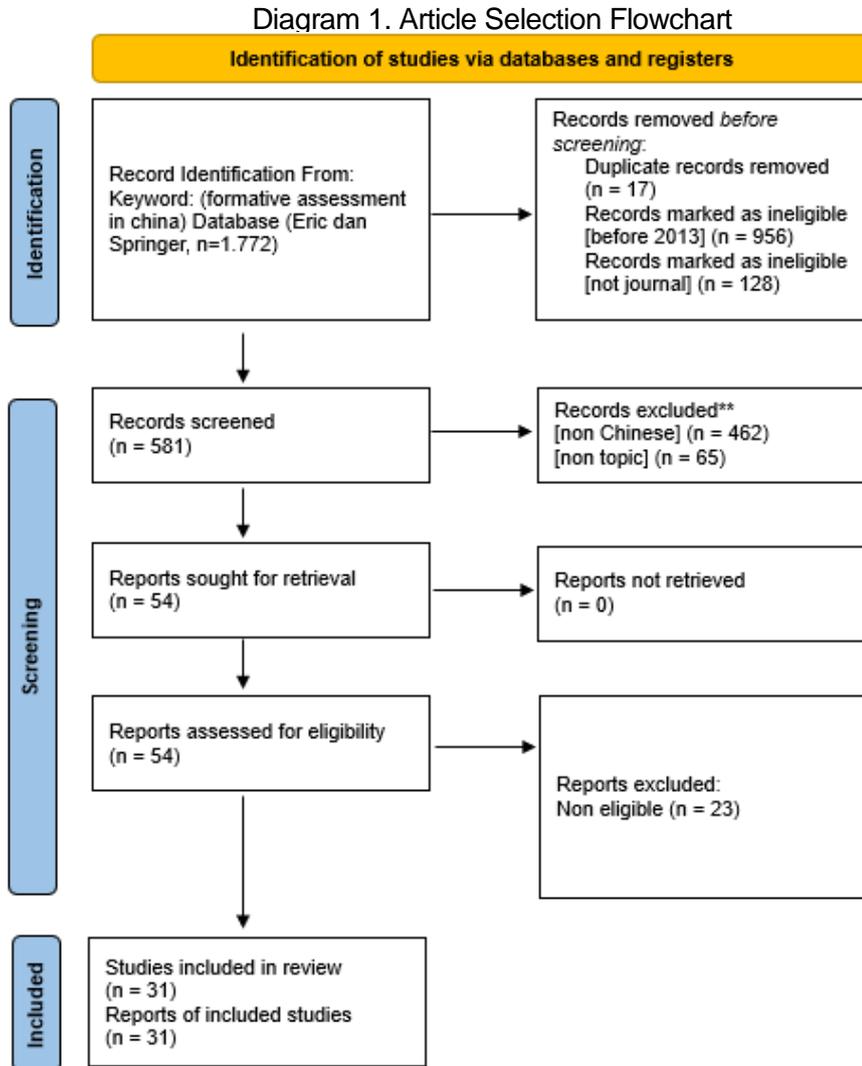
<sup>33</sup> Muslim et al., "Implementation of Participatory Training Model to Develop Teachers' Ability to Design Formative Assessment Instruments in Science Learning," *Jurnal IPA & Pembelajaran IPA* 7, no. 1 (2023): 97–107, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jipi.v7i1.29657>.

<sup>34</sup> Sri Susmiyati et al., "Challenges of Affective Assessment of Islamic Religious Education Learning in Merdeka Curriculum," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education (AJIE)*, n.d.

<sup>35</sup> Muslim et al., "Implementation of Participatory Training Model to Develop Teachers' Ability to Design Formative Assessment Instruments in Science Learning."

<sup>36</sup> Atika et al., "Formative Test Analysis Of Islamic Religious Education Learning Evaluation Practices (Study At SMP Negeri 1 Muara Kemumu)."

journals were deemed ineligible, leaving 31 articles that were used as references. The selection process is illustrated in the Prisma 2020 diagram below.



Thirty-one articles were used for analysis in this article, consisting of 15 Scopus-indexed articles, with 13 classified as Q1 and 2 as Q2. The remaining 16 articles were from non-Scopus international journals. The classification of the journals used is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Article Indexing

No	Article	Amount
1	Scopus Q1	13
2	Scopus Q2	2
3	Non Scopus	16

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Application of Formative Assessment in China

The Ministry of Education in China has defined formative assessment as an assessment that involves self-assessment, peer assessment, teacher assessment, and school administrator assessment to observe, evaluate, and monitor the learning process with the aim of improving its effectiveness.<sup>37</sup> Formative assessment has been implemented in China for a long time, as early as 2001, when it was officially incorporated into the English curriculum.<sup>38</sup> Based on research findings, formative assessment is applied at all levels of education, from primary education to higher education. The Chinese government is committed to continuously supporting the implementation of formative assessment by reducing assessment systems that are exam-oriented, such as summative assessment.<sup>39</sup>

The formative assessment in China adopts assessment systems applied in the United States.<sup>40</sup> During the process of adopting the formative assessment system, some studies have found that some teachers have not fully adapted the formative assessment system to the objective conditions in China.<sup>41</sup> They directly apply concepts that have been considered successful in Western countries without adjusting them to the conditions in China. However, there are also studies that mention teachers who adapt formative assessment to the Chinese education system.<sup>42</sup>

Several research findings indicate that the implementation of formative assessment has been adjusted to the objective conditions in China, including adjustments to local and cultural contexts,<sup>43,44</sup> incorporating formative assessment into the learning culture in Shanghai, China,<sup>45</sup> adapting formative assessment to the education culture that is exam-oriented,<sup>46</sup> and adjusting formative assessment to technological developments.<sup>47</sup>

The integration of formative and summative assessment can be seen in the Chinese learning assessment, as evidenced by Xiaoying Wang's research in 2017. This study found that there is a percentage distribution of learning assessment that accommodates both formative and summative assessment. The distribution includes: three assignments (each 20%), final exam (20%), self-assessment (10%), peer assessment (5%), and student attendance and interaction (5%).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>38</sup> Jian and Shaoqian, "Formative Assessment in L2 Classroom in China: The Current Situation, Predicament and Future."

<sup>39</sup> Gavin T.L. Brown and Lingbiao Gao, "Chinese Teachers' Conceptions of Assessment for and of Learning: Six Competing and Complementary Purposes," *Cogent Education* 2, no. 1 (2015): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2014.993836>.

<sup>40</sup> Chen et al., "Interpretations of Formative Assessment in the Teaching of English at Two Chinese Universities: A Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>41</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>42</sup> Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>43</sup> Chen.

<sup>44</sup> Jingping Chen, "Formative Assessment as a Vehicle for Changing Classroom Practice in a Specific Cultural Context," *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 10, no. 3 (2015): 753–62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-014-9599-7>.

<sup>45</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>46</sup> Zeng and Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior."

<sup>47</sup> Huang, Jiang, and Yang, "The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective."

<sup>48</sup> Xiaoying Wang, "A Chinese EFL Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices," *Language Assessment Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2017): 312–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2017.1393819>.

Another evidence of the integration of formative and summative assessment in China is a study conducted by Qiuxian Chen et al. The study, which was carried out in two universities, including a key urban-based university and a non-key region-based university, showed that student assessment is derived from process assessment (60%) and final exams (40%). Process assessment includes assessing student participation in class (20%), assignments or quizzes (20%), and student attendance (20%).<sup>49</sup>

From the above percentages, it can be observed that there is a blending of formative and summative assessment concepts. This indicates that China's exam-oriented culture has a significant influence on new assessment cultures such as formative assessment. This condition reflects the negotiation and adaptation of formative assessment mediated by China's social, historical, cultural, and contextual factors.<sup>50</sup>

Here are some research titles that demonstrate the study on the importance of adapting formative assessment to the evolving conditions in China.

Table 2. Articles on the Implementation of Formative Assessment in China

Title	Information
An ecological approach to understanding university English teachers' professional agency in implementing formative assessment	Discusses formative assessment in ecological studies
A Chinese EFL Teacher's Classroom Assessment Practices	Discusses adaptation of formative assessment in relation to summative assessment
Interpretations of formative assessment in the teaching of English at two Chinese universities: a sociocultural perspective	Discusses formative assessment from a socio-cultural perspective in china
Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior	Discusses Application of Formative assessment in the context of exam-oriented education in China
Online Formative Assessment Using Automated Essay Scoring Technology In China and U.S.-- Two Case Studies	Discusses formative assessment adaptation to technological developments in China and America

The application of formative assessment in China is implemented in two forms: manual and automated, utilizing electronic devices such as computers.<sup>51,52</sup> Manual formative assessment refers to assessment conducted by teachers and students

<sup>49</sup> Chen et al., "Interpretations of Formative Assessment in the Teaching of English at Two Chinese Universities: A Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>50</sup> Chen et al.

<sup>51</sup> Chen and Li, "Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective."

<sup>52</sup> Zhang, "Formative Assessment in English for Specific Purposes."

without the use of offline or online applications.<sup>53</sup> Teachers employ various formative assessment strategies, while automated formative assessment involves the use of technology-based tools such as Automated Essay Scoring (AES) applications, which provide quick and automated evaluation of student writing, and Writing Assessment using Writing Roadmap 2.0 (WRM 2.0), which offers detailed and in-depth feedback on students' writing abilities.<sup>54</sup>

The framework for implementing formative assessment in China includes several steps: 1) Teachers clarify and explain learning goals and success criteria to students; 2) Teachers design effective discussions, questions, and learning tasks; 3) Teachers provide feedback that encourages student progress; 4) Activating all students as sources of learning; and 5) Activating or raising student awareness as owners of their own learning.<sup>55,56,57</sup>

In implementing formative assessment, Chinese teachers employ various methods, such as student journals and portfolios,<sup>58,59</sup> teacher-student questioning,<sup>60</sup> formative assignments,<sup>61,62,63</sup> self and peer assessment,<sup>64</sup> formative and summative exams for formative assessment purposes, and classroom observations.<sup>65</sup>

Portfolios or student diaries are comprehensive reports containing learning profiles or activities carried out during the learning process.<sup>66</sup> Some common entries in student portfolios include assignments, project tasks, presentations, reflections, and learning experience notes. There are two types of portfolios used in China: physical portfolios and electronic portfolios.<sup>67</sup> Although portfolios contain important records of students' learning process, it has been found that only a small number of teachers use portfolios in implementing formative assessment.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ma et al., "Reflection on the Teaching of Student-Centred Formative Assessment in Medical Curricula: An Investigation from the Perspective of Medical Students."

<sup>54</sup> Changhua Sun Rich and Yihong Wang, "Online Formative Assessment Using Automated Essay Scoring Technology in China and U.S.-Two Case Studies," *ICETC 2010 - 2010 2nd International Conference on Education Technology and Computer* 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICETC.2010.5529485>.

<sup>55</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>56</sup> Yan, King, and Haw, "Formative Assessment, Growth Mindset, and Achievement: Examining Their Relations in the East and the West."

<sup>57</sup> Min Zou, Delin Kong, and Icy Lee, "Teacher Engagement with Online Formative Assessment in EFL Writing During COVID-19 Pandemic: The Case of China," *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 30, no. 6 (2021): 487–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-021-00593-7>.

<sup>58</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>59</sup> Huang, Jiang, and Yang, "The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective."

<sup>60</sup> Zhu et al., "Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course."

<sup>61</sup> Yin and Buck, "There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research."

<sup>62</sup> Huang, Jiang, and Yang, "The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective."

<sup>63</sup> Berry, "Assess. Reform Educ."

<sup>64</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>65</sup> He and Mei, "Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors."

<sup>66</sup> Huang, Jiang, and Yang, "The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective."

<sup>67</sup> Carne Grimalt-Álvaro and Mireia Usart, *Sentiment Analysis for Formative Assessment in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review*, *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* (Springer US, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-023-09370-5>.

<sup>68</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report

Teacher-student questioning usually occurs in the final minutes of a lesson. Teachers and students engage in several questions to assess students' understanding levels.<sup>69,70</sup> Teachers explore students' knowledge through questions related to the subject matter.<sup>71</sup> In addition to subject-related questions, teachers and students are also involved in discussions about students' learning development, with teachers providing motivation for further improvement.<sup>72</sup>

Formative assignments or tests are given by teachers to assess students' understanding and progress in the subject. The purpose of these activities is to achieve students' academic performance.<sup>73</sup> Forms of formative assignments include writing tasks,<sup>74</sup> translation and short tests,<sup>75</sup> presentation tasks and project-based assignments.<sup>76,77</sup> Formative assignments are ultimately used to assess students' attitudes and performance throughout the learning process,<sup>78</sup>

Self-assessment is a formative assessment strategy where students analyze, evaluate, and reflect on their own learning outcomes and progress.<sup>79</sup> This assessment is usually conducted at the end of a learning session, where students assess their own writing assigned by the teacher.<sup>80</sup> Self-assessment provides students with an opportunity to monitor their own learning process,<sup>81</sup> and demonstrates their confidence in engaging in their own learning assessment.<sup>82</sup> Self-assessment is often used to complement peer assessment and vice versa.<sup>83,84</sup>

Peer assessment, on the other hand, is an assessment conducted by students themselves. This assessment can be carried out using peer assessment instruments developed by teachers or experts.<sup>85</sup> Peer assessment practices are more prevalent in Chinese classrooms compared to self-assessment.<sup>86</sup> Peer assessment helps

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from China.”

<sup>69</sup> Zhu et al., “Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course.”

<sup>70</sup> Qinhu Zheng, Li Chen, and Daniel Burgos, *The Development of MOOCs in China. Lecture Notes in Educational Technology (Lecture Notes in Educational Technology)*, Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd., 2018.

<sup>71</sup> Poole, “‘Complex Teaching Realities’ and ‘Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions’: Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China.”

<sup>72</sup> Lee Hang and Bell, “Written Formative Assessment and Silence in the Classroom.”

<sup>73</sup> Yifan Dong and Siros Izadpanah, “The Effect of Corrective Feedback from Female Teachers on Formative Assessments: Educational Resilience, Educational Belongingness, and Academic Procrastination in an English Language Course,” *Current Psychology*, no. 0123456789 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03825-1>.

<sup>74</sup> Rich and Wang, “Online Formative Assessment Using Automated Essay Scoring Technology in China and U.S.-Two Case Studies.”

<sup>75</sup> Chen, “Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective.”

<sup>76</sup> Ying Zhan, “Motivated or Informed? Chinese Undergraduates’ Beliefs about the Functions of Continuous Assessment in Their College English Course,” *Higher Education Research and Development* 39, no. 5 (2020): 1055–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1699029>.

<sup>77</sup> Huang, Jiang, and Yang, “The Affordances of a Technology-Aided Formative Assessment Platform for the Assessment and Teaching of English as a Foreign Language: An Ecological Perspective.”

<sup>78</sup> Berry, “Assess. Reform Educ.”

<sup>79</sup> He and Mei, “Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors.”

<sup>80</sup> Peter Yongqi Gu and Guoxing Yu, “Researching Classroom-Based Assessment for Formative Purposes,” *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics* 43, no. 2 (2020): 150–68, <https://doi.org/10.1515/CJAL-2020-0010>.

<sup>81</sup> Zeng and Huang, “Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.”

<sup>82</sup> He and Mei, “Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors.”

<sup>83</sup> Gu and Yu, “Researching Classroom-Based Assessment for Formative Purposes.”

<sup>84</sup> Zeng and Huang, “Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.”

<sup>85</sup> He and Mei, “Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors.”

<sup>86</sup> Guo and Xu, “Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report

alleviate the burden on teachers.<sup>87</sup> and requires active student involvement to provide effective internal feedback and external psychological processes to achieve better learning performance.<sup>88</sup>

Separate implementation of self-assessment and peer assessment can lead to issues such as unfair peer evaluations. Therefore, there are studies suggesting that self-assessment and peer assessment should be conducted simultaneously to balance unfair peer evaluations with fair self-assessment.<sup>89</sup> Self-assessment and peer assessment can also help divide student responsibilities more specifically and facilitate group members in performing group tasks fairly.<sup>90</sup>

Classroom observation is part of the formative assessment implementation that can be used to monitor students' learning experiences.<sup>91</sup> Observations commonly conducted in English language classrooms in China include monitoring students' use of the second language (English) in class, observing students' practices in responding to and using learning materials, and observing student interactions.<sup>92</sup> Students' active participation in class activities, such as engaging in discussions, can also be observed by teachers.<sup>93</sup>

All the aforementioned formative assessment methods are used to provide feedback to students. Feedback is a determining factor in improving students' academic performance. Interestingly, many schools in China require teachers to provide feedback in the form of grades to students.<sup>94</sup> Despite the significant impact of feedback on student development, research reports indicate that 40% of teachers do not provide feedback to individual students and fail to provide feedback based on students' learning needs.<sup>95</sup>

### 3.2. Effectiveness of Formative Assessment Implementation in China

Based on research findings, it has been shown that the implementation of formative assessment in China is generally more effective than the implementation of summative assessment.<sup>96</sup> The verified heterogeneity test also indicates that formative assessment is largely effective in the field of English language education in China, with an average effect size of  $d = 0.46$ . The variable that shows a relationship with the effectiveness of formative assessment is the sample size variable, which indicates a value of 0.73. This means that the smaller the sample size (number of students in a class), the more effective the implementation of formative assessment.<sup>97</sup>

Based on further analysis on the subject variable, a weak correlation (0.11) with the effectiveness of formative assessment is found, which can be generalized

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from China.”

<sup>87</sup> Zeng and Huang, “Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.”

<sup>88</sup> Yan, King, and Haw, “Formative Assessment, Growth Mindset, and Achievement: Examining Their Relations in the East and the West.”

<sup>89</sup> Zhiqiang Ma, Xuejing Yan, and Qiyun Wang, “Assessing Individual Contribution in Collaborative Learning through Self- and Peer-Assessment in the Context of China,” *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 57, no. 3 (2020): 352–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2018.1555049>.

<sup>90</sup> Ma, Yan, and Wang.

<sup>91</sup> Yin and Buck, “There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research.”

<sup>92</sup> He and Mei, “Research into Formative Assessment in English Writing for English Majors.”

<sup>93</sup> Gu and Yu, “Researching Classroom-Based Assessment for Formative Purposes.”

<sup>94</sup> Guo and Xu, “Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China.”

<sup>95</sup> Guo and Xu.

<sup>96</sup> Zhu et al., “Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course.”

<sup>97</sup> Chen and Li, “Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective.”

that formative assessment is considered effective when applied to all subjects at all levels of education.<sup>98</sup> Effective formative assessment improves students' academic performance,<sup>99</sup> and students are satisfied with the feedback provided by teachers.<sup>100</sup>

Although the implementation of formative assessment is considered effective, there are also research studies that have found that in countries with Confucian cultural heritage like China, they will encounter difficulties in implementing effective formative assessment.<sup>101</sup> Confucian culture leads to strict central control, including strong teacher control due to teacher-centered learning approaches, which is considered a barrier to the effectiveness of formative assessment.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, the strategies for implementing formative assessment need to be adapted to the socio-cultural context,<sup>103</sup> and tailored to the learning needs of students.<sup>104</sup>

Based on research findings,<sup>105</sup> out of 362 samples of teachers in China, it was found that they have limited and weak implementation of formative assessment strategies. They rarely use formative strategies such as eliciting information, using self-assessment and peer assessment. They only emphasize providing feedback.

Several factors also influence the effectiveness of formative assessment, including: 1) the mindset and beliefs of teachers and students, the better the teachers and students' mindset about formative assessment, the more effective it will be,<sup>106,107</sup> 2) class size, the larger the class size and the more students in the class, the less effective it is,<sup>108</sup> 3) student engagement, the more cooperative students are in participating in the learning process, the more effective it is,<sup>109</sup> and 4) the relationship of trust between teachers and students also determines the level of effectiveness of formative assessment. The more trust there is between teachers and students, the more effective it is.<sup>110</sup>

Formative assessment in China faces challenges at the macro, meso, and micro levels.<sup>111</sup> At the macro level, it includes: First, exam-oriented education. China implements strict national exams as a gateway for students to continue their education.<sup>112,113,114</sup> There are national exams in China that significantly determine the

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<sup>98</sup> Chen and Li.

<sup>99</sup> Zhu et al., "Association between Formative Assessment and Academic Performance for Undergraduate Medical Students in a Chinese Clinical Skills Training Course."

<sup>100</sup> Ma et al., "Reflection on the Teaching of Student-Centred Formative Assessment in Medical Curricula: An Investigation from the Perspective of Medical Students."

<sup>101</sup> Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>102</sup> Poole, "'Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>103</sup> Yin and Buck, "There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research."

<sup>104</sup> Yan, King, and Haw, "Formative Assessment, Growth Mindset, and Achievement: Examining Their Relations in the East and the West."

<sup>105</sup> Guo and Xu, "Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China."

<sup>106</sup> Zeng and Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior."

<sup>107</sup> Yan, King, and Haw, "Formative Assessment, Growth Mindset, and Achievement: Examining Their Relations in the East and the West."

<sup>108</sup> Chen and Li, "Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective."

<sup>109</sup> Zeng and Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior."

<sup>110</sup> Yin and Buck, "There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research."

<sup>111</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

<sup>112</sup> Poole, "'Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>113</sup> Chen and Li, "Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective."

future of students, namely Zhongkao and Gaokao. Zhongkao is a national exam for selecting students for high school, while Gaokao is a national exam for college admission. These two exams are the primary focus for students, parents, and teachers. As a result, they solely concentrate on achieving the final scores<sup>115</sup>. These national exams are influenced by Confucian culture.<sup>116, 117</sup>

Secondly, teacher authority. China, as a country inheriting Confucian culture, also teaches a strict hierarchical system. This system emphasizes obedience to authorities, including students' obedience to teachers. This condition results in a teacher-centered approach where the teacher holds the highest authority in the classroom.<sup>118</sup> This system also makes students passive as they consider the teacher as the sole source of truth.<sup>119</sup> Consequently, student assessment is solely conducted by teachers, and other individuals such as students and peers are not allowed to participate in student assessment.<sup>120</sup>

Thirdly, inadequate financial support from the government.<sup>121</sup> Insufficient financial support leads to the ineffective implementation of programs, including formative assessment, teacher training, the development of formative evaluation tools, and evaluation monitoring.<sup>122</sup>

At the meso-level (institution/school), challenges in formative assessment include: Firstly, large class sizes. In China, the majority of schools have large classes with a high number of students. Having excessively large classes makes the implementation of formative assessment ineffective. In one class, a lecturer has to teach around 120 to 150 students. The lecturer-to-student ratio in China reaches 1:300-480.<sup>123</sup>

Secondly, insufficient support from school leaders. The implementation of formative assessment in China still lacks full support from school leaders.<sup>124</sup> This is because school leaders have a limited understanding of the function and usefulness of the formative assessment system. Some school leaders and staff even hold the belief that formative assessment is not suitable for China, resulting in a lack of support for its implementation.<sup>125</sup>

At the micro-level (classroom), some challenges faced by teachers in implementing formative assessment include: Firstly, resistance from students. Students reject this assessment system because they prioritize final grades. They believe that the assessment of the learning process will not improve their final grades.<sup>126</sup> Students who often resist formative assessment are typically those with a

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<sup>114</sup> Zeng and Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior."

<sup>115</sup> Zeng and Huang.

<sup>116</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>117</sup> Chen and Li, "Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners' Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective."

<sup>118</sup> Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>119</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China."

<sup>120</sup> Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>121</sup> Jian and Shaoqian, "Formative Assessment in L2 Classroom in China: The Current Situation, Predicament and Future."

<sup>122</sup> Chen, "Localized Representation of Formative Assessment in China: A Regional Study from a Sociocultural Perspective."

<sup>123</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

<sup>124</sup> Zeng and Huang, "Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior."

<sup>125</sup> Chen, Zhang, and Li, "Problematising Formative Assessment in an Undeveloped Region of China: Voices from Practitioners."

<sup>126</sup> Poole, "Complex Teaching Realities' and 'Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions': Barriers to the

history of poor academic performance.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, many Chinese students are shy. Chinese students tend to be hesitant in expressing themselves in front of teachers and classmates.<sup>128</sup>

To address these challenges, several suggestions have been proposed by researchers to improve the implementation of formative assessment in China, including: 1) Sufficient funding support from the government,<sup>129</sup> 2) Conducting, specialized professional training for teachers focusing on formative assessment,<sup>130,131</sup> 3) creating smaller classes and reducing the teacher-student ratio (Yin & Buck,<sup>132,133</sup> 4) Government policies that prioritize formative assessment over summative assessment,<sup>134</sup> 5) Teachers should provide clearer explanations about the objectives and benefits of formative assessment for students' future.<sup>135</sup>

### 3.3. Contribution of Formative Assessment in China to Islamic Religious Education

Formative assessment in China is still influenced by a culture of summative assessment that emphasizes final grades. As mentioned earlier, the implementation of formative assessment in China has received negative responses from students, teachers, and parents. They perceive that the assessment of the learning process only wastes students' time. However, findings also indicate that students who undergo formative assessment achieve higher scores in summative tests compared to students who do not receive formative assessment. Therefore, the implementation of formative assessment in China is combined with summative assessment.

Adapting formative assessment to the culture of summative assessment in China suggests that student assessment needs to be carried out during and after the learning process. This assessment process aligns well with the assessment of Islamic religious education. Some formative assessment practices in China that can be applied to the assessment of Islamic religious education include feedback, portfolios, formative assignments, self-assessment, and peer assessment.

Feedback provided by teachers can enhance students' understanding of Islamic religious education, encourage the application of Islamic values in their behavior, and increase students' motivation through positive reinforcement. For example, teachers can provide feedback on students' understanding of acts of worship, such as prayer, or on their comprehension of Islamic moral values and how these can be applied in everyday life. Portfolios or daily journals, as implemented in China, could also be utilized in Islamic religious education. In these journals, students could be asked to reflect on their understanding of lessons, such as the teachings on Islamic ethics or the life of the Prophet, and how they implement these teachings in their daily lives.

Formative assignments in Islamic religious education could involve tasks that require students to apply religious teachings in practical social contexts. For

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Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China.”

<sup>127</sup> Yin and Buck, “There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research.”

<sup>128</sup> Lee Hang and Bell, “Written Formative Assessment and Silence in the Classroom.”

<sup>129</sup> Jian and Shaoqian, “Formative Assessment in L2 Classroom in China: The Current Situation, Predicament and Future.”

<sup>130</sup> Guo and Xu, “Formative Assessment Use in University EFL Writing Instruction: A Survey Report from China.”

<sup>131</sup> Poole, “‘Complex Teaching Realities’ and ‘Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions’: Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China.”

<sup>132</sup> Yin and Buck, “There Is Another Choice: An Exploration of Integrating Formative Assessment in a Chinese High School Chemistry Classroom through Collaborative Action Research.”

<sup>133</sup> Chen and Li, “Formative Assessment in China and Its Effects on EFL Learners’ Learning Achievement: A Meta-Analysis from Policy Transfer Perspective.”

<sup>134</sup> Zeng and Huang, “Understanding Formative Assessment Practice in the EFL Exam-Oriented Context: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behavior.”

<sup>135</sup> Poole, “‘Complex Teaching Realities’ and ‘Deep Rooted Cultural Traditions’: Barriers to the Implementation and Internalisation of Formative Assessment in China.”

instance, students could be asked to engage in social service projects that integrate Islamic values, such as helping the needy or promoting awareness of the importance of zakat. The implementation of self-assessment and peer assessment in Islamic religious education could involve assignments where students evaluate their own understanding of religious teachings or provide feedback to their peers on their Quranic recitations or comprehension of Islamic ethics. This type of assessment can foster greater student engagement in the learning process and encourage deeper reflection on their religious understanding and its practical applications in daily life.

#### 4. Conclusion

Formative assessment has been implemented in China for a long time. Officially, in 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education introduced formative assessment into the English language curriculum. Formative assessment is applied at all levels of education, from primary to tertiary education. There are two approaches to implementing formative assessment: manual and automated, with the assistance of computer-based applications. China adopted formative assessment practices from Western countries such as the United States. Many teachers have implemented this assessment without adapting it to China's specific context. However, some research findings also indicate that formative assessment has been adapted to suit China's conditions. The formative assessment methods or strategies applied by Chinese teachers include student daily journals and portfolios, teacher-student questioning, formative assignments, self-assessment and peer assessment, formative and summative tests aimed at formative assessment, classroom observation, and feedback.

The implementation of formative assessment is considered more effective than summative assessment. Formative assessment has been proven effective in improving students' academic performance. Students feel satisfied with the feedback provided by teachers and use it as a means of self-reflection. However, there are also some studies that show formative assessment to be ineffective.

Challenges in implementing formative assessment occur at all levels, including the macro (systemic), meso (institutional), and micro (classroom) levels. Macro-level challenges include: 1) an examination-oriented education system, 2) teacher authority, and 3) inadequate financial support. Meso-level challenges include: 1) large class sizes and 2) lack of support from school leaders. Micro-level challenges include: 1) student resistance to formative assessment and 2) many Chinese students being shy.

Some formative assessment practices in China that can be applied to the assessment of Islamic religious education include feedback, portfolios, formative assignments, and self-assessment and peer assessment.

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