



Alternative and Online Assessment in the Context of Outcome Based Education: A Practical Guide

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 February 2023

Received in revised form 20 June 2023

Accepted 26 June 2023

Available online 14 July 2023

Keywords:

Alternative assessment; online assessment; higher education; outcome-based education

ABSTRACT

Alternative assessment measures the learner's ability and proficiency in performing complex tasks that are related to the intended learning outcomes and relies on direct measures of target skills in a specific knowledge or skill-domain. Meanwhile, online assessment is an assessment conducted in an online environment on a fully automated platform. Both types of assessments are getting a substantial attention worldwide due to their many advantages. However, several factors must be taken into consideration in implementing the alternative and online assessment in an outcome-based education (OBE) system. Thus, this paper provides a practical guide to alternative and online assessment in the context of OBE - including the constructive alignment, student learning time and development of assessment rubrics. Other considerations are also discussed, namely the validity and reliability of the alternative and online assessment, and deterring plagiarism and cheating.

1. Introduction

Assessment is as an integral part of the teaching and learning process that captures a learner's progress through active participation of the learner himself; whether the goals of learning are being met or not. The traditional or conventional practice for evaluating outcomes is an assessment of learning [1]. However, new perspective proposes that assessment should not only include assessment of learning, but also to include both assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

Hence, a holistic assessment can be viewed from three different perspectives: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning. Assessment of learning is potentially summative and its purpose is to ascertain what the learners know in relation to curriculum outcomes. It is for instructors to make infallible and reasonable decisions [2]. Meanwhile, assessment for

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<https://doi.org/10.37934/araset.31.2.173183>

learning regards learners as unique individuals who learn in idiosyncratic ways. This kind of assessment provides feedback to learners and offers a helping hand to instructors to benefit from the information available to streamline instruction. Assessment for learning offers a number of opportunities for learners to develop their own skills by making evaluations about their own performances. Finally, assessment as learning is a way of intensifying learners' metacognition. It has an eye on the role of each learner as an active connector between assessment and learning. The learners are critical assessors as they make sense of information provided and consume it for learning new concepts. It is not possible unless the learners make adjustments from what they have monitored. This process is accompanied by a critical and reflective analysis of their own learning.

As a reciprocal process of teaching and learning, assessment deals with what is taught and what is learned throughout the academic years [3,20]. Assessment should be meticulously designed to measure both knowledge and skills in order to enhance the learner's learning. As proposed by Nasab [4], a high quality and well-designed assessment should "engage learners with their own learning, setting aside the obvious advantages of its being a tool of measurement" as well as provide meaningful learning experience to the learners. Assessment, hence, should be seen as a central to the learning experience that determines how much time should be allocated on what is considered important—for both learners and instructors. Assessment should prepare learners to deal with ambiguous real-life problems that requires higher-order thinking abilities.

According to Tangdhanakanond [5], assessment reform has shifted its attention from the mere use of traditional tests to more authentic methods of testing which are holistically performed by the active participation of the learners, their peers and their instructors. This shift is "an attempt to distance from the rigid and static tests and to approach more towards real-life tasks implemented in complex real-life situations". Subsequently, the assessment must be aligned with the Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) through multiple strategies that best for learner's learning. To put it in a nutshell, no single strategy of assessment is sufficient to measure specific knowledge and skills—as each has its own advantages and disadvantages. However, the fundamental principle of any kind of assessment is fairness. The reliability and validity are more likely to be guaranteed if the assessment strategy is fair and well-designed.

2. Methodology

2.1 Continuous and Final Assessments

Continuous assessment is a regular assessment of the learning performance related to a course module that is separate from examinations and often accompanied by regular feedback throughout the semester [2,4,5]. It is a form of formative assessments when tasks or activities are integrated with the class practice as the part of instructional process and followed by the constructive feedback. Hence, it is a well-designed plan to adjust the ongoing learning process that serves as a core to improve learners' achievement. Continuous assessment can be viewed as "a diagnostic approach which aims at providing meaningful feedback to facilitate learners' learning and improve teachers' teaching" [6]. Meaningful feedback informs learners' current level of performance and the way forward to progress. Relatively, it offers immediate evidence in order to accelerate learner's learning to achieve better outcomes. Example of the continuous assessment are, and not limited to: portfolio, fieldwork report, drama-script and performance, poster presentation and project pitching, quiz, mid-term examination, and test.

Final assessment is carried out at the end of the semester in order to grade learner's performance. Feedback, in most cases, is optional for this kind of assessment. "Assessment of learning is potentially summative" when learners are asked to ascertain what they know in relation