

Chapter 12

EvalCOMIX®: A Web-Based Programme to Support Collaboration in Assessment

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ABSTRACT

The increasing use of technological tools to support the process of participation in assessment is explained, firstly, by the current tendencies in assessment and learning in Higher Education which encourage the active participation of students as a means to improve their learning; secondly, by the universal presence of technology that makes it impossible to conceive of any educational process that does not contemplate its use and that is leading to ever more courses that are either virtual or require minimal attendance; and, finally, an environment in which there are ever greater numbers of students per class. This chapter presents the results of using the web-based EvalCOMIX® programme in the context of a number of Higher Education training courses. Data has been collected through questionnaires and interviews applied to students, lecturers and academic coordinators. The results illustrate the ease of implementation of EvalCOMIX®, its usefulness in creating and sharing assessment instruments and the opportunity it provides to facilitate student participation in assessment.

INTRODUCTION

For many years developments in assessment have focused on ways of integrating assessment and learning by encouraging, among other strategies, the involvement of students in the assessment process. Although there have been some successful innovations, the ongoing challenge is to facilitate the development of models that integrate assessment and learning using technological tools that enable a truly active, collaborative, relevant and systematic participation in the assessment process.

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Existing Learner Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle or Blackboard enable certain assessment activities to be delivered in an easy and simple way, but they suffer from two serious deficiencies. Firstly, these platforms do not allow for complex assessment tools to be designed or implemented in ways that enable students' activities or assignments to be assessed in an effective, user-friendly way. Although objective tests with multiple-choice responses or simple rubrics can be created, the platforms do not offer the option of designing the full range of assessment tools, from checklists to complex rubrics. Secondly, these systems are based on a teacher-centred approach to assessment, offering very limited possibilities for involving students in the assessment process through modes of assessment such as self-assessment, peer assessment or co- assessment.

The EvalCOMIX® web-based programme, first devised in 2000, was developed as a direct response to the limitations of existing LMS. It has subsequently proved to be a valuable tool for facilitating new concepts such as assessment for learning and empowerment and it has demonstrated its usefulness in enabling the collaborative participation of students in the assessment process. Furthermore, it enables assessment to be undertaken using a wide variety of complex assessment instruments. Its ease of use and intuitive nature makes it possible to use it in many different educational contexts and with large numbers of students.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section defines the theoretical framework that supports the need and the opportunity to take advantage of technological tools that enable the new concepts of assessment to be employed in the classroom. By this we mean developments that have shifted the focus from simple assessment of learning to the concept of assessment as learning and empowerment, demonstrating the benefits of moving from collaboration in assessment to systematizing student involvement in all aspects of the assessment process and participatory assessment in all its forms. The section concludes with an explanation of the importance of facilitating the implementation of these practices using technology that enhances users' digital literacy.

The main objective of the second section of this chapter is to present and describe experiences following the implementation of the EvalCOMIX® web-based programme. The structure and uses of the tool are explained followed by an analysis and evaluation of its implementation within a university environment and its subsequent evaluation by teachers, students and relevant academics as part of two competitive research projects carried out in an international context.

The chapter concludes with a series of reflections on the results of the research that show the contributions made by the EvalCOMIX® web programme to implementing assessment as learning and empowerment within the classroom. It also proposes future actions and developments that will help to deliver true lifelong learning to students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents the theoretical framework used to validate the study and its results in order to contextualise the importance of the experience and process. It focuses on three key areas:

- Assessment as learning and empowerment.
- Collaborative assessment or co-assessment as means of participative assessment.
- The need to incorporate technological tools in the assessment process to encourage student participation.

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