

Chapter 11

Assessment of Learning in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses that the goal of assessment, as a part of teaching, in higher education should be to prepare the learner for performing in real life as a professional. The learner should become a self-regulator and a self-evaluator. The instructor (faculty, supervisor, or mentor) at the university must understand that assessment is a process of coaching and assisting, not just approving students' achievement. Technology acquired by the universities in the form of learning management systems (LMS) can be used to provide feedback and assistance to a large number of students. The role of feedback is discussed as an essential component of assessment that would help students to reflect and learn. Rubrics must be used as a tool to provide feedback to students instead of just grading assignments.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Assessment is considered part of an effective teaching process (Halinen, Ruohoniemi, Katajavuori, & Virtanen, 2014). Assessment in higher education shares the qualities of good assessment at all levels of education with the addition that the teaching and assessment processes in higher education must focus on preparation of college students for the workplace as an educated individual with various levels of expertise. The adult learner, who is the focus of this book, refers to a wide variety of learners. A college student is considered to be an adult learner even if the person entered college right after high school. Adult learners are also individuals who enroll in college classes not as traditional, recently graduated high school students, but as non-traditional adult students who, after graduating from high school, entered the workforce, or joined the military, or became stay-at-home parents. These non-traditional students, therefore, enter undergraduate college classes with different perspectives and levels of experience than traditional college students. However, these non-traditional undergraduate students attend the same classes as traditional students, are instructed the same manner as traditional students, and are assessed in the same way as traditional students. The term adult learner also refers to graduate students up to the post-doctoral level who have a wide variety of educational backgrounds, academic preparedness, and life and career experiences. Given this variety of adult learners, the assessment of all college students must be diverse and focused on preparing adult learners for successful work performance in the areas of their chosen profession and expertise.

According to Lincoln and Kearnly (2015), attention was drawn to assessment because of the important role that credentials play in today's society. Individuals' credentials must be true indicators that they are prepared for the ever-changing ways of executing the same jobs differently in light of the technological advances that have taken place in our modern day.

At universities, goals are set for the courses taught and the programs offered that meet designated standards and criteria of achievement. The difference in the role that learning and assessment plays in higher education is that together, these prepare the individual for performance in real life. Graduates of higher education should become capable of applying what they learn to solving problems, but more importantly, to becoming self-sufficient in setting goals for themselves, following standards of quality in their jobs, and evaluating their own performance. The pressure of studying to meet course expectations is not comparable to the more intense pressure of meeting quality control in the workplace, especially considering that there are no instructors to set standards, present new knowledge, assist in solving problems, and most importantly, to provide feedback along the way. The assessment process in higher education, therefore, is not only a process that results in a credential or

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