



Assessment in Higher Education in Times of Pandemic: Obstacles and Opportunities for Change

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Context: assessing learning in times of pandemic

- Negative impacts of COVID-19 in Higher Education: learning losses, isolation, lack of student interaction, increase in inequality (UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank)
- Impacts on assessment: formative assessment, self- and peer-assessment, feedback, etc. (Liberman et al., 2020; Luna-Bazaldua et al., 2021)

Aims: explore online assessment practices and understand teachers educators' thinking and decision making



Theoretical framework

- Assessment *for* learning (Shulman, 1987; Wiliam, 2011)
- Assessment as reflection on students' learning (Shulman, 1987)
- Assessment *as* learning (Earl, 2003)
 - to empower students' self-reflection and self-regulated learning
 - to support deeper learning by differentiated feedback
- At a distance: less interaction, less informal... (Liberman et al., 2020; Luna-Bazaldua et al., 2021)

Methodology

- Sample: 29 professors and teachers' educators
- Data:
 - Narratives, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires
 - Follow-up and open questionnaire about assessment
- Analysis: content analysis with emerging categories focused on participants' thinking and decision making
 1. General challenges related to teaching, assessment, student learning
 2. Assessment for and of learning (practices and perceptions)
 3. Changes in practices and perceptions
 4. General reflections on assessment
- Some limitations: exploratory, authors are respondents, mainly teachers' educators
- General observation: important differences between the OECD and non-OECD countries

Results (1/3)

Assessment for learning. Focus on feedback, students' involvement, self-directed learning, motivation:

- *Formative assessment is part of teaching:* but at a distance, need for more clarity and adaptation (e.g. internships)
- *Difficulty to adapt to learning needs:* no insight into the needs, few students' reactions, need to maintain high standards
- *Difficulty to deliver right feedback:* difficult to interact with the students but more feedback sometimes more explicit and clear
- *Diverse strategies to engage students and enhance their autonomy:* support students and trust them



Results (2/3)

Assessment of learning

- *Difficult to maintain the standards, validity and reliability:* changes in conducting exams at a distance (and assessment strategies) to maintain an alignment
- *Equity is a concern:* students aren't in the same conditions

Results (3/3)

Changes in assessment

- *Goals and contents changed:* the consequence is that assessment strategies changed (e.g: ‘no assessment’, attendance, micro-teaching in place of internship, etc.)
- *The pandemic forced to be creative:* e.g. problem solving, online assignments, group assignment, students’ choice, etc.
- *Difficulty to assess practical skills:* e.g. micro-teaching, oral assessment, demonstration, etc.
- *Teachers’ perceptions changed about assessment:* e.g. exams can be changed, milestones in learning process, grades are less important than feedback, how students receive feedback, uncertainty has increased, etc.



Discussion

Some keywords:

- Uncertainty
- Support from colleagues
- Adaptation of practices and tools
- Formative assessment as interaction
- Care for students
- Engagement of students
- Pressure on teachers

Conclusion and perspectives

- Differences between respondents due to differences of context
- Similarities between respondents as indication of the development of educational quality:
 - concerned about students' learning and about maintaining a high standard and quality in the study programmes
 - supportive relationships between colleagues in making decisions about assessment and feedback to students
 - discovered new ways of assessing and intended to continue
 - maintain a good teaching relationship with their students see more than before the importance of combining teaching and varied assessment practices to support learning
- Perspective: how these elements will endure in institutions and in educators' practices?



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