OPPORTUNITIES OF INTEGRATING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Hamis Juma, Dr G. S. Patel

PhD Scholar
University School of Psychology, Education & Philosophy
Gujarat University
380009 Ahmedabad - Gujarat, India
Email: Hamisj10@gmail.com
Mobile: +918128738762
ORCID: 0000-0003-0946-463X

Assistant Professor, A.G. Teachers College
380009Ahmedabad - Gujarat, India
Mobile: +918238038696
Email: drganpatspatel@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3321-1010

Abstract

Alternative assessment is becoming increasingly popular in higher education as a means of improving learning outcomes for students. Compared to traditional assessment methods, alternative assessments offer more opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This article reviews the current state of alternative assessment practices in higher education and highlights the opportunities and implications for implementing these practices. One of the main advantages of alternative assessment is that it allows for a more personalized approach to learning, as students can showcase their understanding of a topic in ways that are more reflective of their strengths and abilities. For example, rather than relying solely on traditional exams or papers, alternative assessments can include student-created projects, portfolios, or oral presentations. Additionally, alternative assessments can be used to assess not just knowledge, but also skills and attitudes, which are important components of a well-rounded education. However, there are also challenges to implementing alternative assessments in higher education. These challenges include issues related to teacher training and support, as well as concerns about academic integrity and the alignment of alternative assessment practices with traditional testing culture. As such, it is important for institutions to prioritize the integration of alternative assessment practices into their learning programs, and to provide the necessary policy and infrastructure support to ensure its success.

Keywords: Alternative assessment, higher education, feedback, assessment policy.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional education has been challenged by the vast growing technologies in the 21st century. Re-evaluation of how students are assessed has become one of the critical debates of recent scholars in educational pedagogy. Assessment is an integral part of learning (Earl, 2003) and assessment practices play a role in revolutionizing how students learn, and the relevance of the skills learned in the real world in achieving the educational aim of various countries (Libman, 2010).

Rousseau (2018) discussed the limitations of traditional assessment methods and the benefits of alternative assessment. Alternative assessment, also known as authentic assessment, offers greater accessibility, personalized learning choices, and valuable insight into student progress. It emphasizes the application of knowledge and skills and allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning outcomes by evaluating students based on their proficiency in real-world tasks. Alternative assessment is a more nuanced and holistic approach to measuring student learning outcomes compared to traditional methods.

Alternative assessment develops from traditional assessment by being more learner-centric (Sulaiman et al., 2019), focusing on students and their learning environment (Oberg et al., 2010) and authenticity of learning, choice, and spontaneity (Janisch et al., 2007). This paper reviews the alternative assessment as used in higher education and points out studies done to evaluate the implication of alternative assessment in higher education.

LITERATURE

Bialik et al., (2016) explained educational Assessment as a crucial component in the effort to enhance education by evaluating how effectively students are learning. This process offers valuable information to students, teachers, parents, policymakers, and the public regarding the quality of educational services. The primary objective of the assessment is to derive conclusions about acquired skills, the methods employed in skill acquisition, and the possibilities for future skill development. To achieve this goal, it is essential to establish a well-organized assessment system that systematically collects relevant evidence to support various conclusions about human competencies.

Further, Bialik et al., (2016) described educational assessment serves multiple purposes, including individual/group diagnosis, performance/practice improvement, accountability, program evaluation, and research. It is used to track individual and group learning achievements, provide feedback to improve learning outcomes, evaluate system accountability and guide policy decisions, gather data to improve education and training programs, and support research on how learners acquire knowledge and skills. Overall, educational assessment is a crucial tool in enhancing education by providing information to students, teachers, policymakers, and the public on the effectiveness of educational services and the potential for future skill development.

Moreover, assessment is used in education to help teachers with instructional planning, learner progress, and educational leaders on educational quality and planning. With the core aim of helping a learner to improve their learning (ARG, 2020). The assessment provides a focus on what students can do after learning and how to progress towards a learning goal, however, the most visible form (traditional assessment) is not exhibiting the characteristics of authentic assessment by giving priority to summative exams. These summative exams are used to inform or way of selecting students to move on to another level of learning into further education (JISC, 2010; OECD/CERI, 2008) and students who cannot perform remain at the same level or take alternative education routes.

In the last two decades, changes have happened in educational assessment derived from the need of the job market to get graduates with new skills to solve real-world challenges (Libman, 2010). With the changes, the traditional assessment used in education could no longer be fit to produce graduates with relevant skills (Rousseau, 2018) as the traditional assessment is mainly done as summative exams (Earl, 2003). Also, the learning and advances in pedagogical ways and how learning programmes are providing opportunities for learners to monitor their learning and enhanced deeper effectively. all this has been made possible using technology and the needs of the job market (JISC, 2010)

Alternative assessment is what replaces traditional assessment, alternative assessment gives the teacher the best choices in using assessment techniques. a teacher might use performance, portfolio call mom cooperative learning, evaluation, as well as simulations (Libman, 2010). The alternative assessment offers the teacher the ability to assess high order thinking skills where students can demonstrate what they have learned. The alternative assessment focuses on the individual students and checks if the students performed the given task accordingly with a time limit and can be able to demonstrate their ability on a certain performance in different situations and different scenarios, which cannot be assessed using traditional assessments (Dikli, 2003).

Alternative assessment most beyond memorization and basic skill development, alternative assessment embeds motivation for the learner to take initiative in their learning while creating new knowledge (Libman, 2010). In using alternative assessment Bialik et al., (2016) proposed to stop the focus summative exams and start integrating the classroom assignments, individual and group projects, student works and portfolios of students' works, rubrics and self-report surveys. Janisch et al., (2007) added the use of teacher anecdotal/observation records, tape recordings of student oral read and reading logs as tools to be used in the alternative assessment.

In traditional assessment, the learner is assessed with comparison to another learner To see whether they understand the basic skills and have the basic knowledge on the subject. However, alternative assessments go beyond and explore how individual student can or cannot do from the knowledge gained, it does not end with what they know and what they do not know. The alternative assessment provides room for the application and proficiency while using the knowledge, also the application of problem-solving skills in solving real-world problems (Rousseau, 2018). Also, Janisch et al., (2007) described alternative assessment to set itself apart by providing immediate and ongoing feedback to teachers, students, and parents about student performance. This contrasts with traditional test scores, which may be delayed in reporting and offer a single snapshot of performance that can be difficult to interpret. With alternative assessments, stakeholders receive more useful and actionable information, making it a more beneficial tool for tracking progress and promoting student success.

Alternative assessment shifted the perspective of assessment from being more summative to formative, where the student is formatively assessed, the development is recorded and the evaluation is done on how the student can achieve the next level of learning (Earl, 2003). During the learning and teaching teachers collect a wide range of data that can modify how learners are achieving the next stage of learning, all the collected data can be used to modify assessment tasks that can give learners the ability to move to the next level and this is what

alternative assessment offers; the flexibility of assessing students using different mechanisms to get the useful information for learning and teaching.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a documentary survey; the literature was searched from open online sources. the search was limited to articles explaining assessment, both traditional and alternative assessments.

The abstract was scanned first to see the relevant methodology used and the setting of the study. Studies that were based on higher education were used to do the analysis. The analysis was based on the themes and issues that were common in the journals reviewed and reflected the situation in higher education.

DISCUSSION

Traditional assessment and how is used in education cannot provide what we need in this era, the education has changed so is the need of the community. We need to re-evaluate our learning, teaching and assessment process. higher education needs to provide learners with an education that can stand the change and reflect the needs but that time (Libman, 2010). Hence quality teaching and assessment become vital in higher education (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). The nature of knowledge has changed, creating a demand to change the assessment this implicates quality teaching as well, quality teaching is inseparable from good assessment.

According to Ajjawi et al., (2020) and Baylor University (2023) traditional assessment methods can be tedious and time-consuming for both professors and students. Additionally, Ajjawi et al. (2020) argued that these methods often only measure narrow learning outcomes that do not fully reflect the complexity and diversity of student knowledge. Furthermore, traditional assessment methods tend to prioritize grades over the process or the product of learning, resulting in disposable products that are not revisited by students or teachers.

Alternative assessment in contrast to traditional assessment provides students with tasks that require them to solve real-world situations using the gained knowledge/skills like what could be done in the professional field. The alternative assessment focuses more on the how and not the what (Kaur et al., 2022; Rousseau, 2018). Further, Libman (2010) found out that when using alternative assessment in higher education students can make more connections to the learning and become motivated to learn, which stimulates students' capacity and reach the intended learning goals as students can use higher order of thinking skills into their learning. Also, the alternative assessment provides learners with the ability to use their skills to improve how they are learning (OECD/CERI, 2008). The students' lives are affected and how they are assessed, the decisions are taken on them while they are in school and their results in learning activities. The results should not only be for the pass or fail but create something the student can use after school time (ARG, 2020).

Moreover, Almadhoun et al., (2019) reported that alternative assessment provided teachers and students with the ability to use the feedback obtained in the assessment to achieve the learning targets. Feedback obtained is used in a way students can see where they are and how to reach the desired target. Further, by indicating the required target level the feedback ensures the learners know the pathway to reach their goals. On the same, Janisch et al., (2007) reported an increase in students' interest in learning when feedback provided valued their contribution which can only be found in the alternative assessment.

Additionally, Çal & Yasemin (2010) and OECD/CERI (2008) pointed out that alternative assessment offers a teacher an avenue to assess using multiple methodologies which enable them to tailor the learning to address various learning barriers. The alternative assessment provides a teacher with information to personalize learning to the individual learner, select assessment strategy and provide feedback timely. According to criteria provided by Darling-Hammond et al., (2013), alternative assessments meet all the requirements for high-quality assessments, including evaluation of higher-order cognitive skills, accurate assessment of critical abilities, international benchmarked standards, utilization of items that have educational value and are sensitive to instruction. In addition, they also produce fair, valid, and reliable results.

In supporting the adoption of alternative assessment in higher education in 2020, JISC released a report outlining a five-year plan to advance assessment towards being more authentic, accessible, appropriately automated, continuous, and secure. The plan includes designing assessments that prepare students for their future careers by incorporating technology they will encounter in those fields, with a focus on accessibility for all students. The plan also aims to strike a balance between automated and human marking to provide the greatest benefit to students and use assessment data to explore opportunities for continuous assessment and improve the learning experience. To enhance security, the plan includes the adoption of authoring detection and biometric authentication to identify and remotely monitor test takers. Overall, the plan aims to improve the effectiveness and reliability of assessments and ensure that they meet the needs of students and the demands of the modern world (JISC, 2020).

The way skills are evaluated is undergoing a significant transformation due to technological advancements (Bialik et al., 2016; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2020). Further, based on JISC (2010) the use of technology is improving practitioner-led assessment and feedback in several ways. Firstly, it is enhancing the personal quality of feedback through means such as audio recording. Secondly, technology is enabling learners

to actively participate in the assessment process through methods like online problem-based scenarios and video recordings for self-assessment. Thirdly, technology is helping institutions and practitioners to be more efficient in their management of assessments, which is crucial due to increased numbers and demands for distance learning. By minimizing the routine burden of assessment, technology is allowing practitioners to focus on preparing learners for professional practice.

Technology also minimizes academic dishonesty, Guangul et al. (2020) discovered that preparing unique questions for each student is an effective way to decrease academic dishonesty. Additionally, utilizing an online presentation format can also help control instances of academic integrity violations. By using a combination of assessment methods, such as report submission and online presentation, examiners can confirm whether the submitted work is truly the student's own, thus reducing the incidence of academic dishonesty (Guangul et al., 2020). Furthermore, Technological progress has given rise to innovative practices, including "stealth assessments," that can alleviate the anxiety students often experience during evaluations. This method integrates assessment into the learning process seamlessly, without students even being aware of it, making it a more pervasive and valuable tool for teachers. As a result, it can enhance the learning experience and offer more accurate and insightful information about student progress (Bialik et al., 2016; Jimenez & Boser, 2023).

Baylor University (2023) asserted that when implementing alternative assessment practices, several obstacles may arise. These include concerns regarding academic integrity in the context of online or collaborative assessments, as well as a lack of alignment between alternative assessment practices and traditional testing culture. Additionally, there may be variations in teachers' understanding of alternative assessment and how they implement it in their teaching. Another obstacle is the lack of training and support available to teachers and students for the effective use of alternative assessment methods.

On the same, Janisch et al., (2007) discussed the challenges in implementing alternative assessments can originate from both external and internal factors. External challenges may include a lack of support from administrators or parents and an emphasis on test scores. Internal challenges may stem from the classroom itself and include issues such as student motivation, unconventional classroom structures, limited resources, and language barriers. Some students may struggle with transitioning to alternative assessment methods due to a lack of self-initiative and self-reliance, which are necessary for personal reflection and portfolio construction. Also, according to an interview conducted by Yao (2015), one instructor believed that take-home assignments were not suitable for assessment as they made it difficult to determine if students completed the work themselves. The instructor argued that such assignments were better suited for practising skills rather than assessing knowledge. However, another interviewee partially disagreed, stating that homework assignments provided an opportunity for students to apply their learning and for instructors to assess their ability to do so. Other teachers in the group shared this opinion.

The results of the study conducted by Kaur et al., (2022) indicate that teachers use a variety of assessment methods in their instruction, including traditional assessment tools and alternative methods such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and portfolio assessment. However, the preference for traditional summative assessments, such as multiple-choice tests and open-ended tests, remains. The study suggests that teachers need the training to familiarize themselves with current assessment practices that can better reflect the multiple intelligences of learners and provide a more accurate evaluation of their knowledge, skills, and cognitive abilities. In another study by Ferretti et al., (2021) it was found that teachers faced difficulties identifying valid assessment methods for distance learning during the lockdown, leading to a misconception about formative assessment and a need for more awareness of the potential of digital technologies to individualize teaching methods. These studies suggest the need for ongoing training and support for teachers in assessment practices that can better serve their students' diverse learning needs.

CONCLUSION

The innovative assessment provides educators with data that they use in making decisions and empowering how policies are, and the data needs to reflect the reality of how students are performing in the world of work (Kenney et al., 2016) as such we need assessment that matches the workplace reality and our current assessment can never do it. As has been discussed by ARG (2020) how crucial the assessment is to cover learning in a rapidly changing world and for students to understand learning and be lifelong learners. The same is also stressed by JISC, (2010) to ensure innovative assessment is done and integrate technology and make assessment equity and increase access.

Alternative assessment is hindered by policies in education systems which ensures that alternative assessment is widely adopted in higher education. OECD/CERI (2008) proposed alternative assessment to focus on teaching and aligning teaching and assessment, gather that transform individuals, increase innovation and research and invest in training of teachers in alternative assessment. With investment in alternative assessment, learners will be supported to become lifelong learners and can-do self-assessment who are conversant with technology and using the skills in a real-world environment.

To ensure that learners are adapted to 21st-century work and achieve success, Bialik et al., (2016) asserted that is necessary to establish robust connections between various elements of the education system. These

elements include an alternative assessment system that aligns with learning objectives and standards, a curriculum that is consistent with teaching and training practices, professional development opportunities for teachers, trainers, and leaders, a safe and supportive learning environment both in and outside of school or workplace, and the appropriate application of learning tools and technologies. These interconnected components are critical in transforming the education system and promoting the success of learners and workers.

REFERENCES

[1] Ajjawi, R., Tai, J., Huu Nghia, T. le, Boud, D., Johnson, L., & Patrick, C. J. (2020). Aligning assessment with the needs of work-integrated learning: the challenges of authentic assessment in a complex context. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *45*(2), 304–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2019.1639613

[2] Almadhoun, M. A. A., Bakar, N. A., & Abdullah, A. H. (2019). The Issue of Alternative Assessment on Students ' Achievement from the Viewpoints of Teachers ' at Elementary Schools in Gaza. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, *8*(2), 414–418.

[3] ARG. (2020). The role of teachers in the assessment of learning. *Assessment Systems for the Future*.

[4] Baylor University. (2023). *Alternative Assessments | Academy for Teaching and Learning | Baylor University*. https://www.baylor.edu/atl/index.php?id=984874

[5] Bialik, M., Martin, J., Mayo, M., & Trilling, B. (2016). *Evolving Assessments for a 21st Century Education The Ellen Koshland Family Fund*.

[6] Çal, H., & Yasemin, K. (2010). The application of traditional and alternative assessment and evaluation tools by teachers in social studies. *Procedia Social and Behaviour Science*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.656

[7] Darling-Hammond, L., Herman, J., Pellegrino, J., Abedi, J., Aber, J. L., Baker, E., Bennett, R., Gordon, E., Haertel, E., Hakuta, K., Ho, A., Linn, R. L., Pearson, P. D., Popham, J., Resnick, L., Schoenfeld, A. H., Shavelson, R., Shepard, L. A., Shulman, L., & Steele, C. M. (2013). *Criteria for High-Quality Assessment LEARNING SCIENCES*.

[8] Dikli, S. (2003). *Assessment at a distance : Traditional vs . Alternative Assessments*. *2*(3), 13–19.

[9] Earl, L. (2003). Assessment of Learning, for Learning, and as Learning. In *Assessment as Learning: Using Classroom Assessment to Maximise Student Learning*. Thousand Oaks.

[10] Ferretti, F., Richard, G., Santi, P., Zozzo, A. Del, Garzetti, M., & Bolondi, G. (2021). *education sciences Assessment Practices and Beliefs : Teachers ' Perspectives on Assessment during Long Distance Learning*.

[11] Guangul, F. M., Suhail, A. H., Khalit, M. I., & Khidhir, B. A. (2020). *Challenges of remote assessment in higher education in the context of COVID-19 : a case study of Middle East College*. 519–535.

[12] Henard, F., & Leprince-Ringuet, S. (2008). *The Path to Quality Teaching in Higher Education*. *June*, 1–50.

[13] Janisch, C., Liu, X., & Akrofi, A. (2007). Implementing Alternative Assessment : Opportunities and Obstacles. *The Education Forum*, *71*, 221–230.

[14] Jimenez, L., & Boser, U. (2023). *Future of Testing in Education: Artificial Intelligence - Center for American Progress*. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/future-testing-education-artificial-intelligence/

[15] JISC. (2010). *Effective Assessment in a Digital Age*. University of Bristol.

[16] JISC. (2020). *The future of assessment: five principles, five targets for 2025*.

[17] Kaur, C., Singh, S., Muhammad, M. M., Noordin, N., Mostafa, N. A., & Darm, R. (2022). Exploring ESL t eachers ' alternative assessment strategies and practices in the classroom. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, *18*(1), 411–426. https://doi.org/10.52462/jlls.191

[18] Kenney, R., Bloome, L., & Maeda, Y. (2016). Unpacking Teachers' Perspectives on The Purpose of Assessment: Beyond Summative and Formative. In M. B. Wood, E. E. Turner, M. Civil, & J. A. Eli (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 38th annual meeting of the North American Chapter of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education* (pp. 1228–1235).

[19] Libman, Z. (2010). Studies in Educational Evaluation Alternative assessment in higher education : An experience in descriptive statistics. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *36*, 62–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2010.01.002

[20] Oberg, H., Zenios, M., & Parchoma, G. (2010). *Teachers ' views on assessment in higher education Teachers ' Views on Assessment in Higher Education*. *April*.

https://www.gapinterdisciplinarities.org/

[21] OECD/CERI. (2008). Assessment for Learning Formative Assessment. *Learning in the 21st Century: Research, Innovation and Policy*.

[22] Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2020). *Assessment: A 21st Century Skills Implementation Guide*. www.21stcenturyskills.org.

[23] Rousseau, P. (2018). Best Practices: Alternative Assessments. *Learning & Teaching Office*.

[24] Sulaiman, T., Syrene, S., Rahim, A., Hakim, M. N., & Omar, R. (2019). Teachers ' Perspectives o f Assessment and Alternative Assessment in the Classroom. *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (IJITEE)*, *8*(7), 426–431.

[25] Yao, Y. (2015). Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Assessment : A focus group interview. *SRATE Journal*, *24*(2), 51–58.