

Assessment and verification: A higher education perspective

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ABSTRACT

The term Assessment and Verification is an integral part of the student achievement and considered as a fundamental function of higher education. Assessment and verification confirm and assures the academic integrity and standard which has a vital impact on student behaviour, colleagues' involvements, the university reputation and finally the student's future lives. The research aimed to explore various academic and industry-based literatures to analyse the importance of assessment and verification and to identify areas to ensure reliability in assessment by testing skills and knowledge. The research used experimental research methods (primarily reflection) using literary forms to analyse the theory with the reinforcement of the practice from the university experiences. It also has collected data using semi-structured interview from mutually agreed department colleagues from five different higher educational institutes consists of three universities and two alternative providers based in London, United Kingdom. The result showed that assessment in higher educational institutes have not kept pace with the changes and no longer justify the outcomes we expect from a university education in relation to wide-ranging knowledge, skills, and employability. The research findings enable the educators to help create and implement an inclusive teaching and learning environment to improve the learner's expectation and academic performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current research adopted the approach that has been identified and suggested by Guile and Young [1] in their research of 'learning as a form of social practice' which addressed that learning rely on behaviorists and individualist assumptions and are dependent on transmission pedagogies or are associated with cognitive science accounts of expertise. The idea behind the research was to measure the effectiveness of the inclusive social theory of learning. The researcher tried to explore the literature of pedagogic criteria that creates transformative learning and knowledge production. It has been identified from research that the concept of Total Quality Management, for instance, European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) process, hugely facilitate the changes in the management process, leadership, people management, and provide significant impact on the academic process of assessment and verification. Often it was mentioned and agreed internal verification is the prime component in the academic quality assurance system. Problem Statement: The research mainly addressed to analyse the factors responsible for creating a process to ensure effectiveness in assessment and verification. The research aimed to explore various academic and industry-based literatures to analyse the importance of assessment and verification and to identify areas to ensure

reliability in assessment by testing skills and knowledge, while the research questions is: How to create and implement an inclusive teaching and learning environment to improve the learner's expectation and academic performance?

Materials and methods

Assessment

Assessment in higher education always considered as one of the systematic process of documenting empirical data and knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs that encourage and improve student learning. From literature research adopted from Higher Education Academy (HEA) reveals that, assessment shapes the need of student's learnings and determines how much they need to study to become academically successful. It was also agreed that appropriate assessment design influence determining the quality and amount of learning achieved by students. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) reinforced that the assessment requires reshaping and has introduced the process of reliability which is much more robust and considered the validity of assessment in meeting the task of testing skills and knowledge.

According to researchers [2]-[5], assessment is one part of the teaching and learning process, which aims to measure the extent to which learning objectives have been achieved. Assessment is a process for making decisions using information obtained through measuring learning outcomes using either test or non-test instruments. Assessment can be understood as not merely seeking answers to questions but answering how far a process or an outcome is obtained by a person or a program [5], [6]. Also, one of the main concerns for the adoption of assessment is to ensure that the person who performs the assessment is the correct claimant (authentication) and to demonstrate that the work performed is original (authorship) [7]. Assessment is the collection and processing of information to measure student learning outcomes both in the process and after the learning process is complete [8]. The study from Diana Pereira, *et al.* seeks the experiences of assessment methods used varied in the two countries, partly explained by differences in national education systems. A learner-oriented perspective is prominent in the use of assessment methods, but at the same time, student influence on assessment is perceived as low in both countries [9]. Assessment is essential to determine competence, motivate, and see aspects of learning that students have mastered [10]. Assessment will determine the value of something (goals, activities, decisions, performance, processes, people, objects, and more.) of students after participating in the learning process [11]. The assessment will provide feedback, consider the improvement program, and most importantly, guarantee its graduates' quality and see the program's success, so the assessment process is needed.

The assessment must be carried out in a thorough, comprehensive, and detailed manner to obtain objective results based on strategic role. In general, competence describes the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors integrated into students [12]. Bloom narrowed this down to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development [13]. The assessment must cover the three main components in various details and assess students' potential development in various aspects and fields referring to the existing learning and assessment concepts. Today's professional workforce needs the combination of these three aspects [14]. Therefore, a quality assessment is an assessment that can describe a student's competence even when he has finished his lecture program. In some literature, an assessment model that can meet these demands is an authentic assessment.

Internal verification

The term internal verification used to ensure the quality assessment within the academic process for an externally assessed qualification which is a similar process with a slight difference in the higher education institutes [15]-[17]. In a higher education institutes, educators often use the term moderation (a concept of ensuring consistency and accuracy in the assessment/portfolio marking for the written assessment submitted by the students). Once the portfolio has been assessed by the module tutors, it then passed to the international verifiers and or moderators who then provides the final checks on the portfolio including the feedback provided on the portfolio. The internal verification process creates and establish link and maintains the quality of assessment and it also plays a key role in the quality improvement process [18], [19]. The internal verification process/moderation activity ensures that the learners receive a fair, equal access to assessment which is free from any kind of discrimination and provide developmental support [20]-[22]. The internal verification/moderation process also ensures that the standard of assessment remains consistent across time and with respect to assessors/first markers. The process also helps to keep national standard of the assessment. Verification is a form of supervision through examining administrative learning documents with applicable guidelines and criteria. Some of the purposes for verification are: 1) Improve the quality of learning in higher education; 2) Ensuring the completeness, correctness, and validity of learning documents; 3) Ensure that the learning planning process is by the expected output later; 4) Ensure that the learning device procurement process is by the provisions; 5) Ensure that the learning implementation process is by the

schedule, the stages of the process in the curriculum; 6) Ensure that activity reports are by the work stages of the pursuing team; and 7) Ensure that the output of graduates is by the learning objectives in the curriculum.

In general, the purpose of verification is to prevent material misstatements, whether done intentionally or unintentionally. In this case, the verifier is tasked with checking whether the lecturer's learning administration as the person in charge of the activity meets the learning objectives [23]-[25].

Verification output

Recommendations to take corrective actions for errors found in the implementation of verification before activities are carried out. The most crucial process is the output audit. Audit or inspection in a broad sense means evaluating an organization, system, process, or product [26]. A competent, objective carries out the audit, and the impartial party is called the auditor. Its purpose is to verify that the audit subject has been completed or run by approved and accepted standards, regulations, and practices [27]. General audit objectives can be classified as follows:

- a. Completeness: To ensure that all learning activities have been recorded or are included in the journal
- b. Accuracy: To ensure that the learning process is carried out as planned
- c. The existence: To ensure that all recorded things have existence or occurrence on a specific date, be it the date or time
- d. Valuation: To ensure that the generally accepted learning assessment principles are applied correctly
- e. Classification (Classification): To ensure that the learning processes included in the journal are classified appropriately
- f. Split Boundaries (Cut-Off): To ensure that transactions near the balance sheet date are recorded in the correct period. Transactions that are likely to be misstated are recorded near the end of an accounting period [28], [29]

The role and stages of assessment

Assessment should be designed in such a way so that the assessment becomes meaningful to the people involved in it because the assessment has a vital role in learning. The assessment generally has a mission to improve standards, not just measuring students. Efforts to raise learning and achievement standards must start from changing assessment strategies [30], [31]. The use of assessment in learning is significantly more effective for lecturers in improving learning quality [32], [33]. For the assessment to function correctly, it is essential to put standards, which will become the basis for lecturers and lecturer practitioners in carrying out assessment activities [34], [35]. Several parties are directly related to the implementation of this activity, namely:

Lecturer role

The role of lecturers is huge in applying assessment standards. Lecturers need to understand the standards that have been set and be able to apply them in assessing students. Information on assessment results can also be used by lecturers more effectively through feedback [36], [37]. Feedback is a means for lecturers and students to determine how far their learning progress has been made. Table 1 displays the five things about the lecturer's role in the assessment.

Table 1. Lecturer role and purpose in assessment

Role	Purpose
Lecturer as monitoring	Provide feedback and assistance to each student
Lecturer as a guide	Gather information for group diagnostic of students through the work that has been done.
Lecturers as accountants	Improve and maintain records of student achievement and progress
Lecturer as a reporter	Reporting to parents, students, and lecture units about student achievement and progress
Lecturer as program director	Making decisions and revising teaching practices

Table 1 illustrates that lecturer play a vital role in the assessment. Therefore, lecturers should emphasize providing positive feedback and motivating students with their roles: lecturers as monitoring, driving directions, accountants, reporters, and program directors. The feedback given is by the learning objectives that have been set.

The role of students

Students' participation in the assessment process is essential if the standards can be realized for all students. Brown emphasized the strategic element of being constantly aware of strengths and weaknesses by saying that "people do their best when they have a deep understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and access to developing strategies for learning" [38]. There are several advantages to involving students in the

self-assessment process [39]: 1) Develop students' ability to plan and think thoroughly about their results and skills; 2) Create student awareness of the importance of assessing their work; 3) Developing students' ability to evaluate each other's self-assessments as long as constructive criticism; 4) Develop student abilities in managing resources and time more effectively; 5) By involving students in the assessment, it is hoped that they will discover their strengths and weaknesses and be more motivated to improve their learning outcomes.

The role of the lecturer unit

The lecturer unit (campus) is the center of learning activities. Assessment and learning are two closely related things; therefore, institutions should create a conducive atmosphere (culture) so that the assessment can run according to their respective functions and goals. Winter and Broad foot reported that schools (used as an academic institution) are places where students are directed to improve their learning quality [40], [41] by saying: "promoting children's learning is the main goal of schools." Assessment is at the heart of the process. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that schools play a role in forming quality students so that students are expected to create a conducive atmosphere that will support existing learning and assessments to run well.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research used experimental research methods (primarily reflection) using literary forms to analyse the theory with the reinforcement of the practice from the university experiences. It also has collected data using semi-structured interview from mutually agreed department colleagues from five different higher educational institutes consists of three universities and two alternative providers based in London, United Kingdom. Data collected using qualitative research methods where, the participants were asked to share their views on how to improve the assessment and verification and mostly, what they view about the importance of assessment and verification in higher education. Also, they were asked what strategies institutions should follow to improve assessment and verification. The interviews were based on only four open-ended questions and followed a semi-structured in terms of questions and guidance. The questions were designed to focus mainly on the assessment and verification.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data collected from the interview and the literature review revealed that, application and implementation of the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach facilitate the changes in the academic leadership, people management, policy and strategy and also ensures the significant impact on the assessment and verification [42], [43]. It was established from the respondent's responses that, majority participants agreed and argued that internal verification being the prime component in the quality assurance process and thus requires greater attention. It was also agreed from all the participants that verification success and quality is predetermined by the verifier's knowledge and performance evidence. The respondents mentioned that both the assessor and Internal Quality Assurer (IQA) should have the following attributes: 1) They should have a qualified status; 2) Fact and product-based knowledge; 3) Understand the theory and principles of assessment and verification; 4) Have ability to apply the knowledge in competent performance; 4) Have the ability to address the differing contexts and range of requirements.

The research reveals that to ensure quality management the institution requires to design fairly clear and openly accessible regulations and policies on the implementation of assessment of learning and teaching processes. The similar concept was addressed on a study by OECD [44] highlighted several common policy challenges both in student assessment and teacher evaluation across various countries. Among many of those challenges the study found that it is really difficult to measure the balance of external assessment and teacher-based assessment in the higher education and question the accountability functions of teacher evaluation. However, the report depicted that ensuring varied and differing assessment policies and practices influence students' motivation, learning, perceptions of self-efficacy and help build a strong relationship [45].

The study also suggests that a fundamental requirement of higher education is to facilitate high-quality feedback exchanges. However, the contribution to the feedback exchange largely depending on the development of self- and co-regulation mechanisms and how best to promote student self-judgment skills [46]. The study found explicit claims across the various module analysed for the study that teaching and assessment approaches were mainly challenged the commonly used relationship status between the students and teachers and found evidence of power reflection by the learners. Some of the respondents agreed with the concept of [47] emphasis on unfamiliar experience – or 'the strange' – as an aspect of authentic learning. The respondents also suggested that they have used diverse pedagogical approaches including revised Bloom's

taxonomy [48] which encourage applying a student-centred pedagogical approach [49], [50] for the assessments.

In order to attain integration between the external and internal forces, it was suggested to create a harmony on the assessment schemes by considering re-evaluation of assessment design and evaluation criteria [51]. It was indicated from the responses that, an approach to redesign the assessment criteria will ensure the external quality and will motivate relevant changes. However, the operational differences and gap between the external requirement for operation and the existing operational mode will still be an area for improvement [52]. The research study also suggests that, the standard of the assessment (Assessment and Internal Verification) still largely vary and differ from institution to institution. And thus, the study suggests reducing the gap between the assessment and to ensure the quality assessment in practice the institution might consider adapting, standards-based evaluation (the evaluation criteria are objective and ideal standards defined externally) and mission-based quality assessment (the evaluation criteria are designed based on the self-defined purposes of the evaluated institutions) [53].

4. CONCLUSION

This article assesses the various theories and reinforced the practical experiences together to identify an appropriate approach to the assessment and verification which can ensure mindfulness by revealing the weakness and strengths within the existing academic system. The researcher identified that educators need to ensure community of practice that extends beyond the boundaries of a particular academic institutions. It is not easy to build a pyramid without breaking the chain and thus requires a radical approach to decentralise and create a market-based model. Simultaneously, to build a quality criterion with continuous professional development requires simulation of practical learning by the educators.

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