Educational accountability and assessment

This chapter examines the differences and similarities of accountability and assessment in education and their applications in in-person and online educational settings. After exploring this chapter, you should be able to:

- ✓ Explain the difference between assessment, accountability, and learning outcomes,
- ✓ Give examples for nine principles of educational assessment in an online setting,
- ✓ Compare the role and use of assessment in face-to-face, online synchronous, and online asynchronous learning.

The chapter includes the following sections:

1. *Defining accountability and assessment of learning outcomes*
2. *The role of the educator: why is it essential to raise accountability for learning?*
3. *How to develop educational accountability and assessment*
4. *Assessment in face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous education*
5. *Challenges: What if the learners don't care about your content?*
6. *Questions for reflection*
7. *References and resources*

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1. Defining accountability and assessment of learning outcomes

The terms accountability and assessment accounts are often used interchangeably for different processes in education. Let's start with the basic definitions:

Assessment is a set of initiatives one takes to monitor the results of one's actions and learning process. It is an integral part of learning and the first step in a learning cycle before feedback, reflection, and change.

Accountability is a set of initiatives taken by others to monitor and reward (or penalise) one's initiatives and actions.

Learning outcomes encompass all the results, from cognitive to affective. Cognitive outcomes traditionally include specific knowledge, skills, and competencies and answer the question: What have the learners learned that they didn't know before? On the other hand, effective outcomes focus on experiences that support learner development: How has new knowledge developed one's potential, enhanced one's value, and impacted one's relationships?

2. The role of the educator: why is it essential to raise accountability for learning?

Putting accountability for learning only on the educator leaves out a vital piece of the performance puzzle—the learners themselves.

Educators usually have more substantial incentives to raise their performance if there is no value for learners to achieve the learning outcomes. **It is essential to monitor and increase learners' motivation and hold them accountable for their learning**.

Furthermore, in the new age of hybrid learning with little face-to-face instruction and feedback to guide learning, it is vital to cultivate a culture of learner accountability in online education. If learners don't feel responsible for putting the time and effort into the online learning process, it won't reach its potential.

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### 3. How to develop educational accountability and assessment?

1. **Communicate clear and high expectations**: Communicating expectations is very important because it sets the criteria and motivates learners towards learning outcomes and goals. Setting ground rules at the beginning of the learning process can be a powerful moment as well. Also, expecting more from learners impacts their own self-image, and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Software like actiTIME and ClickUp offer a way to set and track goals online.

2. **Use methods and activities that foster self-awareness and reflection**: Learners must become conscious of their own role in the learning process. Self-awareness and reflection can be developed using one of the many activities available online. They can help with the self-assessment process, develop motivation, and take responsibility for their learning. Also, learners can provide self-assessment quickly and easily using emojis that indicate how well they understood the lesson.

3. **Use active learning techniques**: Learning is not a spectator sport. Engaging learners with questions, discussions, peer-to-peer learning, and non-formal methods is necessary for their learning process. Exploring and using various features of learning platforms like Moodle, or tools like Zoom can be a great place to start.

4. **Offer diverse learning content**: While planning out a lesson or a course, it is essential to include a wide range of activities that will offer a way for learners to excel with various talents: theory, practical activities, and activities that assist learners in real-world activities, places for discussion and connection with others, etc. Also, learning content should change depending on the most effective way to teach various subjects. Learning platforms such as EdApp or Google Clasroom can help make varied content that will offer a myriad of ways for self-assessment.

5. **Give Feedback**: Effective and prompt feedback heightens learners' motivation and helps them develop their self-assessment methods. It is helpful to have varied and frequent feedback and have ungraded practice activities with clear criteria that help learners develop their own criteria while keeping in mind that feedback is not testing. Using online tools that provide instant feedback and comparison, such as Kahoot and Google Forms, can be a fun and easy way to engage learners.

6. **Model the learning process**: Educators should be open about their own experiences and self-assessment methods. Also, they should ask for feedback from learners and show how they use it for assessment and development.

7. **Assist before giving correction**: Poorer performing learners or those whose self-assessment is poor should receive help and guidance towards improvement.

Nine Principles of Good Practice for Educational Assessment *(AAHSE Assessment Forum, 1992)*

	Principle	Online setting application
1	The learning assessment begins with educational values.	• Choosing and imparting the importance of digital tools that offer digital safety • Taking care to include learners with difficulties and provide alternative ways to contribute using digital tools such as forums, chat, video, etc.
2	Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated and revealed in performance over time.	• Visual and transparent tracking of progress towards a learning goal through digital apps like Toodledo and ClickUp • Setting tasks for offline, in-world work • Giving effective feedback (recap our chapter on Feedback for tips!)
3	Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.	• A clear and always accessible list of expectations and learning goals in the course/lesson overview
4	Assessment requires attention to outcomes and the experiences that lead to those outcomes.	• Creating a safe environment that fosters communication, feedback, and choice
5	Assessment works best when ongoing, not episodic.	• Multiple chances for assessment that are not always graded through tools like Kahoot or Google Forms • Introduce a reflective practice that will follow your learners through the program, like journaling or making short reflective paragraphs on platforms like Padlet.
6	Assessment fosters broader improvement when representatives from the educational community are involved.	• Offering a myriad of learning materials, including existing platforms like Khan Academy, TedEd, or even Youtube
7	Assessment makes a difference when it illuminates questions people care for.	• Post polls on Mentimeter. You can also post questions for discussion on forums or messaging boards (Boardhost) if they deal with complex queries
8	Assessment is most likely to improve when it is part of a more extensive set of conditions that promote change.	• Present the primary goal of your education program at the beginning, and post it in a visible place in your learning environment or materials • Keep in mind that Maslow comes before Bloom!
9	Through assessment, educators meet their responsibilities to learners and the public.	• Make a way to present the work of your learners to the world. Motivate them to engage with the world through posting their achievements online or making them available to the broader public!

4. Assessment in face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous education

Face-to-face education	Synchronous education	Asynchronous education
Encouraging learners' responsibility and self-assessment can be developed at any stage. You can check the progress by asking simple questions, checking the learner's work, or fostering discussion. You can remind your learners of their progress by overviewing their work and one-on-one sessions.	Your role is more than that of a facilitator of a learning process. Synchronous education is similar to face-to-face education concerning developing learners' self-assessment, with the chance to use assignments for self-driven learning, with feedback and reflection during online work. Group work and tasks that motivate them to take the topic to the offline world are powerful ways to encourage learners to take responsibility. Setting up "office hours" when learners can reach you is also very beneficial, as well as developing a couple of evaluation tools that learners can use for themselves and reflect on your online sessions.	Your role is that of a learning environment designer. This kind of education puts the most emphasis on an individual's drive, and the task of the educator is to set up an environment that drives self-assessment and gives plenty of chances for feedback to the learners. Read the nine principles and their online application and remember that more is not always better! While designing an education program, choose a way of feedback and self-assessment tools that are in line with your learning outcomes and goals. If you are focused on knowledge, include tests, quizzes, and a ranking system learners can use to see their progress towards the learning outcome. If you are focused on skills, use practical assignments with questions for reflection.

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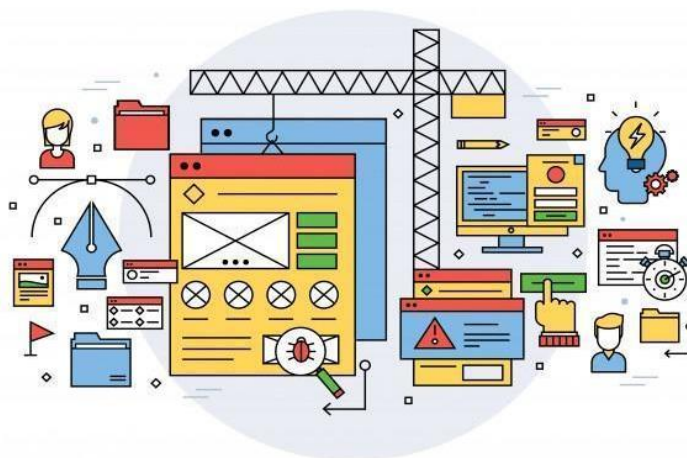
5. CHALLENGES: What if the learners don't care about your content?

The biggest challenge of online education assessment is the participants' silence. There is less incentive for the participants to show up in an online setting, and even then, they can be there without engaging or giving any kind of feedback or self-assessment. The role of the educator becomes more prominent, and it is hard to shift that responsibility back to the learners. **The educator creates the learning environment to lead the learner, but there is no guarantee that the learner will use it.**

It is best to incorporate using self-assessment tools into the education program itself. Introduce the self-assessment system at the beginning of your schedule, and take time to explain it to the learners. Oversee their first assignment, if possible.

Make it hard to skip the self-assessment parts. Put the quiz in the middle of the video. Create a forum and think about interesting questions to engage participation. Make that self-assessment task a peer review assignment. Also, keep it short, and introduce layers. Ask them one multiple answer question, and then ask them to elaborate. Nudge them to discuss their answer on a messaging board for the motivated ones.

Use the learner's ego, make it about them. Let them design their SWOT analysis or learning plan. Map their hero journey towards learning goals with avatars of their own choosing.

Reward your learners! Give them badges, colour their names in fancy colours, give them titles depending on the level of engagement—issue fancy letters of recommendation or diplomas. Be creative!

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6. Questions for reflection

1. *What parts of your learning materials could you design for peer-to-peer, and what for self-assessment?*

2. *Think about the self-assessment criteria you want to use. How would you make sure that your learners understand them?*

3. *Create a self-assesment plan for an asynchronous setting and test it on a colleague. Write down their feedback and revise.*

7. References and resources

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