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## Authentic Assessment's Integrity for Online Learning in Higher Education

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**ABSTRACT**

The universal pandemic of COVID-19 has led to the interruption of teaching and learning activities in many countries. Current social isolation policies have led to a general move to online education including assessment. Authentic assessment activities are those that give students chances to practice finding solutions to real-world issues and challenges, so that upon graduation they are able to apply these skills to issues and challenges they will face in their place of work. When students are able to do this successfully, they are judged as work ready. The society is concerned about the integrity of students being assessed online. Thus, there is a great need to find out strategies that institutions can take to ensure the integrity of online authentic assessment practices so that the society can be assured that the competencies of the program have been achieved by each student honestly. The study employs a mixed-method research to gather data from higher education educators and students through questionnaires, surveys and document analysis. A mixed method research design is chosen to answer what are the effective strategies for ensuring authentic assessment for online learning? Two sets of instruments (questionnaires and survey) are used to obtain information on the strategies to ensure integrity of the online authentic assessment. Ten educators from high education and ten students are selected as the respondents through purposive sampling technique. The findings will determine the effective strategies that high education institutions can use to ensure the integrity of the online authentic assessment. The implications of this study will encourage the higher education institutions to use the effective strategies that ensure the integrity of the authentic assessment.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The universal pandemic of COVID-19 has led to the interruption of teaching and learning activities in many countries including Namibia. Current social isolation policies have led to a general move to online education including assessment. Authentic assessment is all about getting the students to solve real-life situations by applying the skills and knowledge they have mastered (Ellis et.al, 2020). It usually includes a task for students to perform and a rubric by which their performance on the task will be evaluated. Authentic assessment activities are those that give students chances to practice finding solutions to real-world issues and challenges, so that upon graduation they are able to apply these skills to issues and challenges they will face in their place of work (Zaim, 2020). The benefits of this study is to ensure integrity of the online authentic assessment. Educators are able to prepare authentic assessments for their students for them to be ready for the real world. This study intended to help the researchers discover critical areas in the scholastic course that other researchers did not discover. Assessments are important in education as it shows the quality of learning and examining what the student knows (Manaka, 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed method research design is chosen to answer what are the effective strategies for ensuring authentic assessment for online learning. Choice of design was influenced by: Inductive approach that emphasizes concern for the richness, texture, and feeling for the raw data collected. The qualitative method helped explain the how & why of this study. A quantitative generated frequency distribution with less in-depth information (Creswell, 2004). All qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated and interpreted by all authors to get a well-rounded picture of students' learning experience and process in the authentic assessment. To gather data from higher education educators and students through questionnaires, surveys and document analysis. Purposive sampling allowed the use of cases that have required information with respect to the subject of the study (Creswell, 2005). 10 higher education educators and 10 students purposely selected received an invitation to participate. The participants are located in Windhoek, Namibia. The following participants' characteristics were considered: Educators: Higher Education Educators who set online assessments and students: were to be senior student teachers at least in second, third or fourth year. The study conducted a google questionnaire for educators. A Monkey survey for the students. Document analysis (Assessment Policy, Policy of Academic Integrity & Policy on eLearning). The research instruments used were developed by the researchers and validated by the experts in educational research for a consensus of how reliable they are. It is intended to give sufficient information as far as achieving a conclusion.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are reported in three sections: (1) thematic analysis from the higher educators' questionnaires; (2) thematic analysis from the document analysis; (3) quantitative findings from the student questionnaire. In particular, results from the higher educators' questionnaires and the student questionnaire analysis explored how students learnt in authentic assessment.

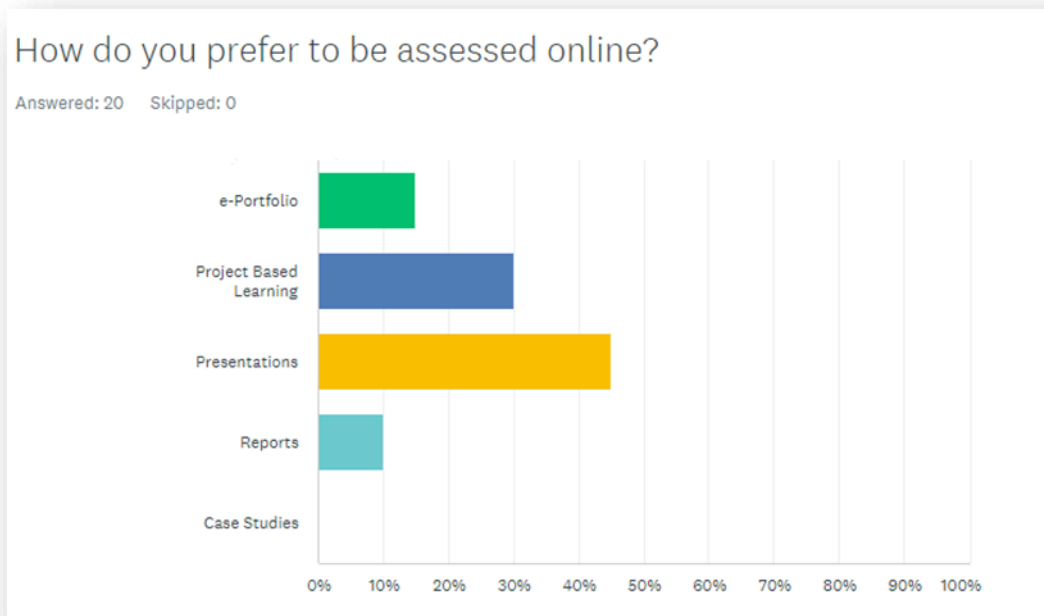


Figure 1: Strategies

Results have shown that students mostly preferred to be assessed through presentation strategy with 45% and e-portfolio being the least with 15% of preferences from students.

### THEME 1: STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

1. ePortfolio
2. Presentations
3. Case Studies
4. Reports
5. Project Based Learning

Authentic assessments in higher education have been reported in the literature. They increase students' satisfaction and positively promote behaviors essential for the field (James & Casidy, 2018). If the task involves group work, it can build team effort and confidence (Hensel & Stanley, 2014). Since an important aspect of authentic assessment is stressing appropriate task complexity, problem-solving skills are also enhanced through authentic assessment task design (Kinay & Bağçeci, 2016).

## THEME 2: ENSURE INTEGRITY FOR ONLINE ASSESSMENTS

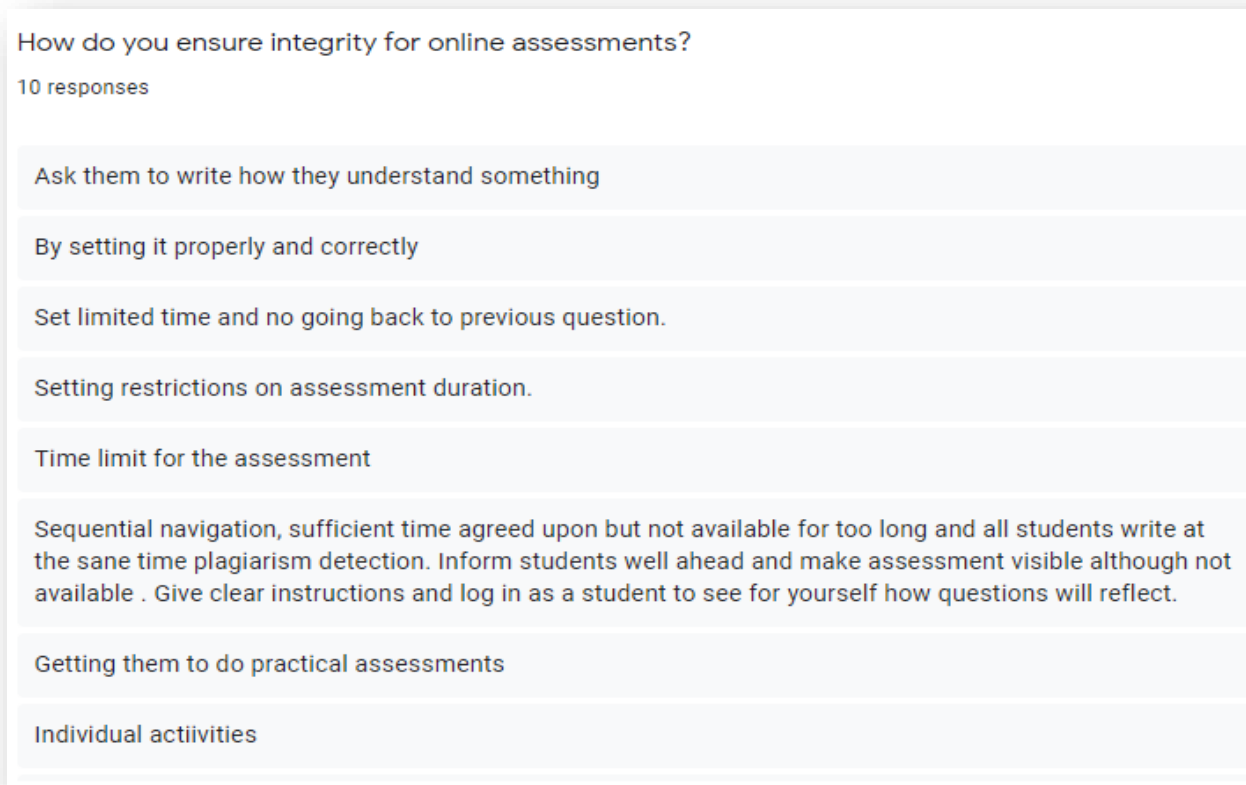


Figure 2: Integrity for online assessments

## THEME 3: CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN CREATING AND DEPLOYING ASSESSMENTS ONLINE

The main challenges identified in remote assessment were academic dishonesty, infrastructure, coverage of learning outcomes, cheating, fraud and plagiarism are mostly conducted by the students when they are assigned to do the assessment and project online.

The study showed that to minimize academic dishonesty, preparing different questions for each student was found to be the best approach. Online presentation was also found to be a good option to control academic integrity violations. Combining various assessment methods, for instance report submission with online presentation, helps to minimize academic dishonesty since the examiner would have a chance to confirm whether the submitted work is the work of the student. The findings of this study will be helpful to improve the settings of authentic assessments. To encourage integrity among students and for educators to avoid recycling assessments tasks and become more creative.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, authentic assessment is all about getting the students to solve real-life situations by applying the skills and knowledge they have mastered, however in relation to the study findings several strategies as highlighted, it is concluded that authentic assessment in higher education needs to be strengthened or encouraged by using number of strategies to ensure integrity and overcome the challenges that were brought forward in the study. It asked on the findings of this research study, educators are recommended to make use of effective strategies for authentic assessment and familiarize themselves with the University of Namibia Assessment Policy. Furthermore, an important arena of authenticity is the degree of complexity embedded in the assessment task. The task should be complex enough where students are required to solve problems as if they are facing a real-life issue (Sambell & Campell, 2017).

Students should maintain their integrity and have a strong sense of self moral conviction whenever tempted to cheat and familiarize themselves with Policy on Academic Integrity.

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