

Exam as the Evaluation of Learning Objectives; Alternatives forms of Assessments Techniques in the Study of Economics

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Abstract

The paper discusses two issues that related to the process of assessment: first is that assessment tends to fall far from its purpose and second there is a trade off between the core learning objectives and the targeting of the transferable skill since Widyatama University also targeting soft skill on the learning process. As a review this paper provides alternative assessment techniques and their relative key strength and weakness to complete the assessment that support the targeted skills.

Keywords: assessment, summative, formative, skill, transferrable skill

INTRODUCTION

Teaching and assessment in the college classroom are interconnected, as one affects the other. The term "assessment" is broad, often vaguely defined, and open to modification with adjectives (e.g., performance assessment). The issue that comes up in the process of assessment is that the examination tends to fall far from the purpose of assessment itself.

A generic review of the purpose of assessment and the issue arise

Based on the purpose of assessment we can divide assessment as summative and formative. The purpose of summative assessment is to judge the quality and characteristics of the student and summarize these in a clear and widely acceptable format. We can say that the principal mechanism for summative assessment is the end-of-module test. For organizations, summative assessment is assumed to help employers by providing 'costless' information on the productive potential of job applicants. Students care most about the results of summative assessment, as these impacts on their employability and prospective earnings on their future jobs. If we can conclude then the role and purpose of summative assessment are as follows:

Purposes of summative assessment are:

- To pass or fail a student.
- To grade or rank a student.
- To allow progress to further study.
- To assure suitability for work.
- To predict success in future study and work.
- To signal employability and selection for employment.

On the other hand formative assessment is linked with students' learning processes, helping to guide them in their studies, motivating them, providing feedback on areas of learning requiring further work, and generally promoting the desired learning outcome.

Purposes of Formative assessment are:

- To provide feedback to students.
- To motivate students.

- To diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.
- To help students to develop self-awareness.

Most of the assessment is both summative and formative, but it is argued that the summative function increasingly predominates in a way that adversely affects student learning. We can observe this from the type of questions that are asked to the students either in the midterm exam and or the final exam. Midterm exam should be related more to the purpose of formative meanwhile final exam should be more summative. On the practice we hardly can see the purpose of formative in the midterm exam and also summative in the final. It seems that either midterm or final exam is based only to the purpose of formative which is to test the knowledge of the economics and at the end it is purposed to pass or fail student and grading them.

The Core learning Objectives and the Transferrable Skill

A core objective of Higher Education is the development of analytical or 'thinking' skills. It is expected that graduates should be able to deal with complex problems in a logical manner, and be able to communicate and present solutions in a variety of ways. However, there is increasing and disturbing evidence that students do not engage in the deep learning process that promotes these kinds of skill, engaging in surface learning and regurgitation of memorized material in a disorderly way (Entwistle, 1981; Gibbs, 1992; Boud, 1992).

On the other hand Brown et al. (1994) observed that *there is increasing acceptance that it [assessment] is at least in part to do with preparation for later life and work beyond academia. This recognition has brought with it a gathering momentum for a shift in emphasis from the acquisition of knowledge to the acquisition of skills, from product to process, from grading to competence.*

Then the issue arise about assessment is that there is a trade off between the core learning objectives which is the comprehension of the knowledge of economics (analytical & thinking skill) and the targeting of the transferable skill such as the ability to communicate, negotiate, make effective use of information technology, etc.

This issue of the widening the range of skills is also targeted by the Widayatama University when university also acquire the students to have soft skill and then the institution are developing the soft skill based teaching learning method (SBTLM) The Institution realizes the need to develop the learning method that integrates the cognitive aspect (hard skill) with the affective aspect (soft skill).

Wikipedia define Soft skills is a sociological term for a person's "EQ" (Emotional Intelligence Quotient), which refers to the cluster of personality traits, social graces, communication, language, personal habits, friendliness, and optimism that mark us. Soft skills complement hard skills (part of a person's IQ), which are the technical requirements of a job.

A person's soft skill EQ can be an important part in the success of an organization. Organizations, particularly those dealing with customers face-to-face, are generally

more successful if they train their staff to use these skills. For this reason, soft skills are increasingly sought out by employers in addition to standard qualifications.

It has been suggested that in a number of professions soft skills are more important over the long term than technical skills. The legal profession is one example where the ability to deal with people effectively and politely can determine the professional success of a lawyer more than his or her mere technical skills.

In the presence of trade off between the core learning objectives and the soft skill that the university acquired then the answer for the problem is that lecturers and, more importantly, departments and institutions are clear about their priorities (and that these are communicated to current and prospective students). Departments and institutions should take a lead role in evaluating and designing assessment practice.

As a review this paper will discuss the alternative assessment techniques and their relative key strength and weakness :

| Method of assessment | Meaning & Skill areas developed | Key strength | Weakness |
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| Group assessment | Develops interpersonal skill and also oral skill and research skills (if combined with a project | potential savings in marking | Hard to supervise individual contributions and award grades that fairly represent individual effort |
| Self assessment | Self-assessment obliges students more actively and formally to evaluate themselves and may develop self-awareness and better understanding of learning outcomes. | Encourages student ownership of their personal learning, motivates and encourages active participation in learning, makes assessment a shared activity, promotes a genuine interaction of ideas. | It takes time to initiate the process and design a good-quality assessment form. It also takes time to educate the students to complete it well, and to give feedback after they have completed and submitted their assessment form. |
| Peer assessment | By overseeing and evaluating other students' work, the process of peer assessment develops heightened awareness of what is expected of students in their learning. | 'Students have an opportunity to observe their peers throughout the learning process and often have a more detailed knowledge of the work of others than do their teachers.' | There is a danger that self- and peer assessment degenerates into a superficial process, since much depends upon whether students understand the purpose and their willingness to participate. |
| Unseen examination | This is the 'traditional' approach. It tests the individual knowledge base but questions are often relatively predictable. | They develop strategic capacity in respect of the topics studied and the questions answered, and selectivity in the material presented. | it is difficult to distinguish between surface learning and deep learning. |

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| Testing skills instead of knowledge | It can be useful to test students on questions relating to material with which they have no familiarity. This often involves creating hypothetical knowledge scenarios. | It can test true student ability and avoids problems of rote- and surface-learning. | The assessor is testing the learning process developed in the course rather than the knowledge provided. |
| Coursework essay | A relatively traditional approach that allows students to explore a topic in greater depth. | It possible to test the depth of learning. | it might be open to plagiarism and can be time consuming and may detract from other areas of the module. |
| Oral examination | With an oral exam, it is possible to ascertain students' knowledge and skills. It obliges a much deeper and extensive learning experience, and develops oral and presentational skills. | There are also benefits in terms of development of interpersonal skills and interview technique. | can be a risky approach, since validation by external review may be complex and there is likely to be some student resistance. |
| Projects | These may develop a wide range of expertise, including research, IT and organizational skills. | The transferable skill is developed in this method | Marking can be difficult, so one should consider oral presentation. May be unpopular and where the project is an option, take-up may be low |
| Presentation | These test and develop important oral communication and IT skills. | Develop oral communication | can prove to be dull and unpopular with students who do not want to listen to their peers, but want instead to be taught by the tutor. |
| Multiple choice | These are useful for self-assessment and easy to mark. | easy to construct (ease of construction) and ease of scoring | Difficulties lie in designing questions and testing the depth of analytical understanding |
| Portfolio | This contains great potential for developing and demonstrating transferable skills as an ongoing process throughout the degree program. | Portfolios can be useful for students with work experience to claim credit for tasks done at the workplace and to tailor work tasks in a way that promotes learning and development. | Portfolios do not lend themselves easily to being graded and portfolios can involve tedious paperwork |

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| Computer-aided | Computers are usually used with multiple-choice questions. Creating questions is time consuming, but marking is very fast and accurate. | promote the development of transferable skills | The challenge is that it difficult to test the depth of learning. |
| Literature Review | Allowing students to explore a particular topic in considerable depth. | It can develop a wide range of useful study and research skills. | Although it promotes transferable skill but this technic more suitable for later level of degree program |

The challenge

The problem arise is that what best assessment technique to test the achievement in economics. To answer the questions then instructor should familiar with the five steps in the process of preparing assessment: (1) defining the problem; (2) specifying the alternatives; (3) stating the criteria to evaluate the alternatives; (4) evaluating the alternatives; and, (5) making a decision.

Conclusion

Deciding assessment technique could be a difficult task for instructor. What instructor should do is that firstly they have to be clear about the learning objectives, secondly evaluate which learning objectives matter more than others and tailor assessment procedures to meet these goals. Third, diversify assessment procedures so that they can use assessment criteria to direct student learning into specific tasks. For example, it may be stated that the 40% of the mark will go on written presentation; 20% of the mark will be allocated to tutorial contribution. In allocating marks, consideration will be given to the quality of the literature review and range and quality of referencing and to obtain a pass grade student must demonstrate use of econometric software. The last but not least is that best practice in assessment is co-ordinated at a departmental level. It means that departments should have an assessment strategy.

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