

## Chapter 16

# Staff Reflections on Using E-Assessment Feedback in the Digital Age

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Assessment and feedback represent two of the key elements that affect students' learning. Using e-assessment with productive and instant e-feedback reduces the gap between current and preferred performance of the new generation of digital students. Action research methodology was used to investigate staff perception of using e-assessment feedback in the teaching and learning process. To achieve this aim, a survey was administered to 48 full-time academics to collect data about their perceptions of using e-assessment and/or e-feedback to assess their students' performance. And then seven semi-structured interviews were conducted with the staff. Findings from staff survey and interviews show that the teaching staff is generally in agreement with the use of and benefits of e-assessment and/or e-feedback in teaching business and management modules. Using technology, therefore, can provide an avenue for innovative assessment and prompt feedback methods that meet the needs of the digital students in the digital age in an efficient and effective manner.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the last decade, a significant debate has arisen about the characteristics of the current generation of students due to their intensive use of technology and social media including, blogs, forums, photo and video sharing, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc., (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2008), and the best way of engaging digital natives in higher education institutes (e.g., Bullen et al., 2011; Holtzblatt & Tschakert, 2011; Dabbagh, 2007; Jones et al., 2010). E-Learning has seen vast growth in the last decade, which is expected to continue in the future (Potter & Johnston, 2006). Indeed, educationalists cannot ignore

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that using Information Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in higher education (T&L in HE) is a key factor to meet the expectations of digital natives (Bayne & Ross, 2007; Holtzblatt & Tschakert, 2011; Kirkwood & Price, 2005; Jebeile & Abeysekera, 2010). The wide use of ICT to improve assessment and feedback is one of the fastest growth areas in HE (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Bullen et al., 2011; Dabbagh, 2007). Race (2005), stated that teachers are finding that e-feedback will speed up the process of providing prompt and constructive feedback, and generating appropriate evidence for the quality of feedback. Lecturers can e-Assessment and/or e-Feedback to provide timely information on the students' performance, to diagnose the weaknesses and strengths of their learners, to support students to improve their learning as well as provide lecturers with feedback about the effectiveness of their T&L approaches (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Maneeekhao et al., 2006).

According to Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) (2010, p. 5) "Assessment lies at the heart of the learning experience: how learners are assessed shapes their understanding of the curriculum and determines their ability to progress." Actually, the different academic departments at the Management School at a British University are still using the traditional paper-based assessments and late handwritten feedback on these types of assessments. With the possibility that using e-Assessment-Feedback may shape learners' expectations and engagements in the T&L process (Aisbitt & Sangster, 2005; JISC, 2010; Maneeekhao et al., 2006; Parshall et al., 2000), the accounting, economics and finance groups recently decided to use ICT in teaching their modules using e-Assessment-Feedback. For example, as seen in Figure 1, at a macro level, universities and students, the university asked teaching Staff for diverse assessments and more electronic and prompt feedback. Further, students asked their lecturers for more timely, comprehensive and typed feedback. While at a micro level, these academic departments, professional bodies such as Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) start to adopt the computer-based test at various levels. Furthermore, such e-Assessment and e-Feedback are not well-developed and widely used methods at universities. Finally, at a meso level, the accounting, economics and finance groups, for example, believe that using e-Assessment-Feedback may lead to more students' engagement and help to introduce new online accounting, economics and finance modules. Responding to the above calls, some academic staff decided to use technology in assessing undergraduate Management School's students. In the light of this, the aim of this research is to assess the Management School staff's perceptions of the use of e-Assessment-Feedback they received on their T&L process and assessing the performance of their learners.

To achieve this aim, this action research (AR) describes a case study where e-Assessment-Feedback was used in some modules at the Management School at a British University. To this end, this chapter will be organized into five main sections including an introduction. Section 2 reviews the literature on assessment and feedback and theorising assessment-feedback and then considers the e-Assessment-Feedback and its impacts in T&L future digital natives. Then section 3 outlines the AR methodology and its rationale. The findings from both online survey and semi-structured interviews are reported in section 4. Section 5 concludes the chapter showing the main implications for students, educators, educational technologist, and practitioners, interested in using technology in T&L in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century HE.

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