

## Chapter 13

# Authentic Assessment as a Tool to Enhance Student Learning in a Higher Education Institution: Implication for Student Competency

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### ABSTRACT

*Authentic assessment plays a great role in enhancing students' learning and makes them competent in their study area. Studies indicate that assessment is authentic when the tasks have real-life value and students perform real-world tasks. Therefore, this chapter shows how lecturers practice authentic assessment to enhance students' learning in a higher education institution. To achieve this, the authors used a phenomenological qualitative research design. An interview was used to collect data. The result indicated that lecturers are highly dependent upon traditional assessment methods, which have no significant contribution to the competency of students. The practice of authentic assessment methods as a tool to enhance students' learning is limited. Therefore, the authors can conclude that enhancing students' learning using authentic assessment in their study areas is untenable if the lecturers continue to utilize their current assessment practices.*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-2314-8.ch013

## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in the development and advancement of a nation. Villarroel, Boud, Bloxham, Bruna, & Bruna (2019) in their study concluded, higher education must assess critical competences needed for solving realistic and contextualized problems using high-order skills in order that students become good professionals and citizens. Recently, there has been growing interest in improving the quality of education by considering assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process (Sewagegn, 2016). Effective education becomes possible when learners are properly assessed via various appropriate assessment techniques. According to Oakleaf (2009), assessment is the process of understanding and improving students' learning. Assessments which are implemented at different levels of education have their own forms, strategies and techniques. In higher education institutions and other educational levels, making students' skillful, creative, competent and problem solvers are the major objectives and this is achieved through the use of appropriate assessment methods. From the different forms of assessment, authentic assessment has its contribution in this regard.

Authentic assessments enhance students' skills that advance their employability (Sotiriadou, Logan, Daly & Guest, 2019). However, traditional forms of assessment such as paper and pencil examinations (multiple-choice, true-false, matching, and others item formats) which test students on rote learning are not suitable to foster deep surface learning (Le Thi Viet & Bouilheres, 2017). Villarroel, Boud, Bloxham, Bruna and Bruna (2019) added that, tests and examinations are widely used internationally but, they tend to measure lower order thinking skills. If the students are assessed properly, their competency becomes enhanced and needed by the work environment. Therefore, from the different assessment methods, authentic assessment is the one which relates the students learning with real world environment and this assessment determines the level of mastery of students on a defined skill (Winarso, 2018). Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview regarding the contribution of authentic assessment in enhancing the competency of students' learning at higher education institutions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Education is a valuable instrument in the eradication of poverty in developing countries like Ethiopia. The main goal of the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy, which was articulated by the Ministry of Education in 1994, was producing creative, proficient, and competent graduates (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education, MoE, 2002). To attain this goal, the instructional strategies necessitate the use of appropriate pedagogical methods to realize the demands of the students. In particular, properly assessing students using appropriate assessment methods concerning the learning outcomes being measured is one means for the achievement of this goal. Literature notes that assessment is a crucial component in the learning process and consequently, it has the power to drive student learning (Kearney, 2013). One of the most recommended assessment methods to benefit students and enhance their learning is authentic assessment (Fox, Hughes, & Murphy, 2017; Frey, Schmitt, & Allen, 2012). O'Farrell (n.d.) also indicates that enhancing students' learning is the most important principle of assessment. Mueller (2005, p. 2) defines authentic assessment as "a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills". Such assessment practices have the potential to change the way higher education institutions (HEIs) function (Kearney, 2013). The focus of higher institutions is determining students' capabilities and

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