


Chapter 9

Authentic Assessment for Lifelong Learning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reimagines assessment as a catalyst for lifelong learning in private higher education institutions. Critiquing exam-centric models rooted in compliance and benchmarking, it advocates authentic, reflective, and learner-led assessment practices aligned with real-world applications. Drawing on constructivist and capability-based theories, the chapter presents five pillars of authentic assessment: situational relevance, learner agency, reflective integration, iterative feedback, and ethical impact. Case studies from Malaysia, India, and Singapore illustrate how problem-based learning, portfolios, simulations, and community projects can strengthen engagement and graduate readiness. The chapter also addresses institutional barriers and provides practical design tools, arguing that authentic assessment is essential for cultivating adaptable, reflective, and future-ready learners.

1. INTRODUCTION: WHY ASSESSMENT NEEDS REIMAGINING IN PEIS

Rethinking Assessment in a Changing Educational Landscape

Across Asia, private higher education institutions (PEIs) have proliferated to address evolving economic and societal needs, yet many retain traditional assessment models emphasising standardisation, compliance, high-stakes examinations, and memorisation, practices rooted in earlier mass-education eras that are ill-suited

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to diverse contemporary student profiles. Emerging scholarship underscores the need for assessment evolution to foster curiosity, autonomy, collaboration, and deep disciplinary understanding (Harvey, 2024; Kezar & Holcombe, 2023). As AI tools transform information access and processing, recall-based examinations reveal stark limitations, positioning intentional assessment redesign as a vital mechanism for nurturing adaptive, reflective learners. Therefore, reimagining assessment in Asian private higher education constitutes a profound strategic imperative, enabling institutions to align pedagogical practice with their missions and equip diverse graduates for resilient, innovative futures in an AI-augmented world.

The “Assessment Gap” in Private Higher Education

Across higher education, a widening gap exists between assessment practices, often privileging technical accuracy and summative tasks, and the competencies graduates need: communication, ethical reasoning, resilience, and creative problem-solving. Students increasingly favour formats emphasising feedback, dialogue, and self-regulation (Winstone & Boud, 2025). In PEIs, structural constraints, part-time faculty reliance, externally imposed curricula, and rigorous audits further entrench conformity over experimentation, limiting assessment's developmental potential. As a result, closing this gap demands bold reform in PEIs, transforming assessment into a dynamic driver of critical engagement and adaptive capability, essential for preparing diverse graduates to excel in volatile, complex professional landscapes.

Assessment as a Driver of Lifelong Learning

Authentic assessment offers a robust alternative to exam-centric models, grounded in constructivist and socio-cultural theories that emphasise knowledge integration and application in meaningful contexts. It fosters self-awareness, problem-solving, and reflective judgement, core to lifelong learning, while formats enabling growth demonstration, informed choices, and real-world engagement enhance capability and well-being (OECD, 2025). In private higher education, where students often juggle work, financial pressures, and multilingual demands, authentic assessment validates prior knowledge, builds confidence, and transforms evaluation into a formative process linking personal purpose with academic pursuits. Hence, authentic assessment reorients private higher education from performative evaluation to transformative development, empowering diverse learners with the reflective agency and resilience needed for sustained personal and professional growth in a complex lifeworld.

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