Chapter 11

Engaging Assessment Tools for the Twenty-First Century Students

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ABSTRACT

As we move towards twenty-first century learning, which focuses in learner-centric education, an effective assessment mechanism is warranted for a better student engagement. Hence, this chapter describes various approaches of assessment tools that employs electronic devices for the learners’ assessments such as worksheets, assignments, tutorial, essays, quizzes, etc. The main approaches that have been explored are online quizzes, mobile apps, and e-marking. These web-based assessment tools are easy to use and work well with Taylor’s University’s learning management platform (TIMES). These tools are effective for the lecturers to annotate, comment, and collaborate on learners’ assessment submissions through interactive features such as audio, video, and URL link. They also serve as a platform for lecturers to engage with the learners throughout the learning processes and monitor their progress. This approach results in learner-centric education where learning is personalised and flexible and meaningful learning takes place.

INTRODUCTION

21st Century Learning

The ever-changing mechanism in the world of education has brought us to “21st century learning”, which is the most extensive term applied in today’s education. This term is generally referring to the necessary skills or core competencies such as critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making and digital literacy to be acquired by the learners for them to survive, or more importantly to thrive in today’s world. The principle of the 21st century skills is emphasized on what the learners can do with the knowledge, instead of what knowledge they have. Thus, it is crucial for educationists to know how the 21st century
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classroom looks like and how to conduct the learning with the new generation of learners who are made up of “non-traditional learners”.

The priorities of this modern classroom are focused on the learner centered, active learning engagement, adaptive and inviting learning, collaborative learning and technology-based learning (Saxena, 2013), all of which are steering towards the learners take up their own responsibility for learning. This type of learning generates an independent, active and self-regulated process (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000), leading to the construction of knowledge for the learners through individual experiences (Sun, Williams & Liu, 2003). Likewise, paradigm shift in curriculum leads the change of the role of educationists from the presenter of information into facilitator in a learner-centered classroom. Educationists are required to understand learner’s perspective and support on their competencies to accomplish desired learning outcomes. Learning goals are achieved by active collaboration between the educationist and learners who together determine what learning means and how it can be enhanced within each individual learner by drawing on the learner’s own unique talents, capacities, and experiences (McCombs, 1997).

Educationists who are embracing 21st century learning will provide the opportunities of hands-on experience, creativity expression, reflection of experience, justification of decision, and collaboration with peers to the learners. These opportunities always involve the use of case-based or problem-solving approach with transparent and effective assessment through the integration of technology. The implementation of technology into learning is obligatory for 21st century learning due to new generation of learners are massively familiar with emerging technologies, such as tablets, smart phones, mobile apps, blogs, instant messaging and social networking sites. This development shows that technology has reflected positive influences in many sectors, including education. This disruptive innovation is practical because the education needs to be synchronized with the personnel demand of the current job market.

Implementation of Technology in Education

There is abundance of technologies related to education programs available, which enables teaching methods to tag along (Simelane & Dimpe, 2011). The efficiency of embedded technology in teaching is widely known, either in university, classrooms or scientific laboratories as e-learning (Amer, 2004; Dawson, Forster, & Reid, 2006) and especially effective in developing thinking skills through problem solving approach (Markauskaite, 2007). However, the main challenge for the integration of technology in learning is “How to transform the learning processes into a more meaningful lesson for the learners by the implementation of technology?”. This question is raised because technology itself does not actually improve the efficiency of learning processes.

The learning mechanism will be induced only if the implementation of technology is aligned with the educationists’ teaching and learning philosophy, including promote active learning, collaboration, interaction and educational experience (Mandernach & Taylor, 2011). For example, the use of microphone and iPad to deliver a lecture should not be claimed as “e-learning” because the use of these electronic devices did not give support to the learning processes. Thus, the focus on the integration of technology in education should be teaching and learning related, rather than on the sophistication of technology. Furthermore, ideal technology implemented in 21st century education system should be accessible, simplified and reliable. Some of the examples are mobile/tablet Apps, open educational resources and social networking sites. These are powerful tools to improve learning effectiveness by transforming teaching and learning into scalable and cost-effective approach to give positive impacts on the quality of education.
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