

Technology enhanced assessment

Introduction and background

Assessment is playing an increasingly important role in education. Whether it is the ubiquitous monitoring of students' achievement as they progress through school; the obsession with examination results or the use of aggregated data to judge the quality of a school or the education system as a whole, assessment is increasingly the driver of school, teacher and student priorities. Yet, in a world transformed by the advent of the internet, mobile phones, downloads and apps, the impact of such novel tools on this diet of assessment activity seems so far to have been remarkably small.

The apparent anomaly of a world transformed by the availability of digital tools for almost every purpose, in contrast to the continuing domination of traditional approaches to assessment, prompted a team of researchers based at the Graduate School of Education to explore the causes and significance of this situation further. They conducted a literature review to establish the current range of purposes for which digital assessment tools have been developed and to identify what might be the factors inhibiting the further spread of the use of such tools. Starting from the premise that there is a pressing need for assessment tools capable of documenting students' progress in relation to the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes necessary to equip them for a changing and increasingly digital world, the researchers' aim was to identify both the opportunities and the risks associated with the greater use of digital technologies in assessment.

Conclusions and implications

- The research identified a number of opportunities associated with the use of digital assessment, namely:
 - new forms of representing learning;
 - an increased capacity for learner choice in the way in which they are assessed;
 - greater potential for collaboration between students in assessment;
 - more scope for capturing complexity on student performance;
 - the potential for better and more rapid feedback; and
 - the possibility to develop more informative ways of recording summative assessment.
- The above advantages of using digital tools for assessment must be balanced against the numerous risks and challenges which are inhibiting change. There is, firstly the ethical issue of possible social exclusion associated with unequal access to technology. There is also the increasing risk associated with the rise in collection and storage of large quantities of personal data which digital assessment entails.
- Given both the risks and the opportunities associated with possible advances in the use of technology enhanced assessment (TEA), the researchers who carried out this study believe there is an urgent need for more debate in educational and policy circles concerning the potential of technology to improve assessment whilst giving due consideration to the social and political challenges. In

addition to the research review, they have therefore published a series of pamphlets on these themes with the aim of prompting the widespread debate about the merits and potential of TEA which they feel is urgently needed:

- Paper 1: Transforming education through technology enhanced assessment
- Paper 2: Integrating the formative and summative through technology enhanced assessment
- Paper 3: Exploiting the collaborative potential of technology enhanced assessment in Higher Education
- Paper 4: Learning analytics and technology enhanced assessment
- Paper 5: Ethical issues in technology enhanced assessment
- Paper 6: National Standards and technology enhanced assessment

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