

Assessment and Evaluation for Gender Equity in ODL Provision in a Time of Generative AI



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Webinar with Botswana Open University

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Good afternoon/morning. This is the first in a new series of webinars planned with Dr Hamaluba.

I will start by talking about assessment and ODL, then assessment which is gender responsive, then assessment in light of generative AI. Then I'll bring everything together in a discussion on the connection between assessment and evaluation.

This quotation from an ODL veteran should ring true for everybody.

We often add things to the curriculum but rarely take things out. Consequently, many teachers focus only on the topics/problems they think will appear in the final examination.

In similar vein, ODL students, who often have other time commitments, will tend to focus on the content which is directly linked to assessment for marks and may ignore or only skim through other content unless it is intrinsically interesting to them.

Assessment therefore plays a key role in making the link between the intended learning outcomes and the content provided.

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It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure we provide feedback in ways that help learners to improve their learning ...

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In curriculum planning, I always identify what assessment evidence I will need to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved before I think about what content and resources I will need. In-course informal activities should speak to the formal assignments which should scaffold towards the summative assessment.

This is one of my favourite examples of an assessment strategy. It emphasises both authenticity and a well-scaffolded process.

When developing assessments that are gender-responsive, be mindful that any images, scenarios or examples should reflect diversity. We want girls and other minorities to know they also can be scientists and therefore should be interested in STEM subjects in their open schooling studies, etc.

We can even take the opportunity actively to question gender stereotypes by providing alternative examples such as a female construction worker and a male nurse.

We must also be careful that the examples we use do not reinforce patriarchal approaches. The left-hand photograph might suggest that only men make important decisions. The middle photo might suggest that only white males have knowledge they can teach others. I like the third photograph: although we see mostly men in this rural meeting, it is significant that a woman is playing a leading and central role.

Consider building discussion forums around recent newspaper events such as the ones provided here.

The first one showcases a female stem cell researcher who recently became an astronaut and visited the International Space Station. Ironic but encouraging that just a few years ago she would not even have been allowed to drive a car in Saudi Arabia.

The second story showcases a young woman who became an activist whilst still a teenager and has represented her people in many international gatherings – neither sex nor age are barriers to making a positive difference in the world.

The third example emphasises the return on investment in education of women – it could be the basis of a comprehension or summary exercise.

So now lets us consider the new challenges related to assessment and generative AI technology.

The first example assessment is a pretty standard exam task. It could be answered effectively by ChatGPT, Bing Chat or Bard in a few seconds.

The second example is a bit trickier in two ways. First it uses artefacts and second it uses the same facts to create an alternative narrative. Since we can now scan PDFs into Generative AI platforms, it would take a bit more time, but we'd possibly still get a reasonable response.

How could we manage the third example? Yes, we could use text to speech and still get help from Generative AI with the essay writing, but a human has to do something first ... and to decide

whether the essay is a true reflection of the interview in terms of the messages conveyed e.g. the emotions elicited.

So, we have some options ... and you will note that in the last citation we have returned to the central issue of whether the assessment is authentic.

If we decide to use generative AI, there are many ways in which it could help us. The paper by Nocilic et al. (2023) provides some very useful examples.

AI can help us to answer frequently asked questions. COL recently piloted in Samoa an automated Moodle support system. We imported Moodle guidelines into an AI instance and then the system was able to answer most routinely asked questions automatically – which both teachers and learners found useful and accurate.

So let us move to our final topic – the link between assessment and evaluation. I would argue ...

And then if we link all these issues together ...

Let's ask Bing Chat ...

Note that quick response, and the fact that sources are indicated.

Let's try again with a pressing question for most teachers ...

Note that direct quotations are clearly identifiable from generated text ... and again we have access to the original source materials which we can check for credibility and reliability.

The folks at Open AI recently shared some guidelines for teachers on using AI and you'll be able to access the link when Dr Hamaluba shares the slides.

It's also worth keeping an eye on emerging guidelines from UNESCO for students and teachers on working with AI.

If you are interested to explore further, please send me a proposal.

Here are active links to all the resources I shared in this presentation.

Thank you for listening. Back to Dr Hamaluba for comments and questions.