Assessment in open and social forms of learning

STEEPNESS Project
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Workshop description

This workshop addresses learning assessment in Open Education and is specifically designed for Higher Education teachers and techno-pedagogical advisors.
We base our understanding of assessment on four main processes which are defined using a learning theory as a reference (Allal, 2007). The four main processes are: "goal setting, monitoring progress towards the goal, interpretation of feedback derived from monitoring, and adjustment of goal-directed actions and/or of the definition of the goal itself" (Allal, 2020, p. 332). As learning theories, we use the work of Perkins (1993) and the framing of situated and distributed learning into i) higher-order knowledge and content-level knowledge on one hand and ii) *person-solo* and *person-plus* on the other hand. We combine it with holistic philosophies, *Ubuntu* (Ngubane & Makua, 2021) and *Buen Vivir* (Bermúdez-Restrepo & Vaca-López, 2026). This pedagogical framing promotes formative assessment and is anchored in negotiated and interactionist evaluation (Cardinet, 1990).

What will participants engage with during the workshop?

Ideally before the workshop, participants are invited to map both content knowledge and higher order knowledge for their domain using tools of their choice like the TPACK (Mishra, 2019), ITCK (Timmermans & Meyer, 2017) and/or other similar cognitive artefacts. This mapping work can also be completed for a small portion of the domain during the workshop. For example, for the domain of teaching research methods in education, focus specifically on recognized threshold concepts (Class, 2023).
Participants will be invited to design a learning activity guided by templates. Three different templates, corresponding to three different learning activities, are available: using an existing OER, skill belts and assessing subject-matter in hackathon.
Participants will then define the 4 processes to assess learning for this specific activity with the backdrop of situated and distributed learning theory combined to *Ubuntu* and *Buen Vivir*. Again, templates will be provided to scaffold the design of assessment.
Finally, we will share experiences in a large group discussion to enhance the models and templates and draft some "take away" messages.

Theoretical foundations

How to understand the diversity of assessment?

To extend the former functional definition of assessment and specify its purpose, Joughin (2009, 16, cited by Nelson & and Dawson, 2014, p. 195) states: "To assess is to make judgements about students' work, inferring from this what they have the capacity to do in the assessed domain, and thus what they know, value, or are capable of doing".
Furthermore, assessment is very diverse. To conceptualise its diversity, scholars captured its complexity in identifying three main epistemological orientations (Mottier Lopez et al., 2017):

1. External and objectivist evaluation - a product-oriented model from the natural sciences seeking to highlight causes:
- Evaluators position themselves outside the situation and play no direct role within it (e.g. OECD, accreditation agency).
- Evaluators rely on explicit, standardized criteria that are independent of the actors.
- They collect and process data to produce comparable measurements, rankings, and observe quantified developments.
- Purpose: to certify, control, standardize, and ensure accountability based on measurable evidence.

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2. Internal and subjective evaluation – a process and product-oriented model from the human sciences seeking to understand the social and cultural dimensions of the human being:
- Evaluators are direct stakeholders of the situation and rely on individual or institutional actors' point of view, taking into account their objectives.
- Evaluators collect actors' representations / conceptions and analyze them scientifically to reflect the divergent interests represented (e.g. students, teachers, institutions, employers).
- Purpose: to understand, support, and improve practice through meaning making and reflexivity.

3. Negotiated and interactionist evaluation – a process and product-oriented model from comprehensive sciences (within the social sciences) seeking to ensure the legitimacy of assessment through participation and negotiation:
- Evaluators take into account multiple viewpoints and the negotiations that lead to a shared social understanding.
- They rely on multiple frames of reference and assessment strategies to analyze them scientifically.
- Purpose: to co-construct assessment and support collective decision-making through a common understanding that enables collective regulation and shared governance.

How to understand social forms of learning to design aligned assessment practices?

One key element of social forms of learning is to consider

> learning as mutual grappling with uncertainty. Social learning spaces are formed when people who care about making a difference come together to grapple with uncertainty about how to make it happen. They pay attention to the meaning they make together and to what happens when they apply this emerging meaning in their practice (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2020). Meaning arises from identity and activity, not just information (Cambridge et al., 2024, pp. 230–231).

Another key element of social forms of learning, emphasizes stakeholders' social agency:

> Networked learning involves processes of collaborative, co-operative and collective inquiry, knowledge-creation and knowledgeable action, underpinned by trusting relationships, motivated by a sense of shared challenge and enabled by convivial technologies. Networked learning promotes connections: between people, between sites of learning and action, between ideas, resources and solutions, across time, space and media (Networked-Learning-Editorial-Collective, 2021, p. 320)

Both these key elements are related to the competences of the *person-plus* in Perkins' framing. Namely, the capacity to draw on external resources in addition to one's internal resources such as different types of knowledge (declarative, procedural and metacogntive), planning strategies or self-regulation mechanisms. These external resources refer to social interaction modalities, artefacts, diverse information sources and non-human agents in general. The competences of the p*erson-plus* are about combining both internal and external resources in a productive way to support learning. To assess learning of the person-plus, Allal (2007) initiated guidelines with the backdrop of the theory of situated and distributed learning which we rely on.

And finally, how to understand openness and how does it relate to assessment in social learning?

Relying on Leonelli (2023), we frame openness in a continuum between co-creation and social agency on one hand and, on the other hand, on the sharing of an object. The social agency end of the continuum resonates with Fawns (2022) entangled pedagogies framework in its aspirational stage[1]. Purpose, context and values drive the

[1] For the anecdote, it has been co-created as an Open Educational Resource (OER) with more than 18 scholars worldwide, making it even more robust. https://open.ed.ac.uk/an-entangled-pedagogy-views-of-the-relationship-between-technology-and-pedagogy/

pedagogical experience which takes place through collaboration between teachers and students, embracing uncertainty, imperfection, openness and honesty.
With this theoretical background, we developed models, i.e. conceptual representations that make a situation, phenomenon, or process intelligible, serving both scientific and practice purposes (Mottier Lopez & Figari, 2012, p. 14)[2]. These models support teachers and techno-pedagogical advisors in the design of open and/or social learning and more specifically assessment. These models were produced during a two-days face-to-face scientific seminar with 25 experts using speculative methods (Bayne & Ross, 2024) and refined with a narrative literature review (Hinck et al., 2024).
The purpose of the workshop is to "play" with these models and provide feedback as external and international users to further refine them. Models with their templates are core to the workshop. The three models currently developed are the following ones. The first model, *Open Educational Resources (OER) from a consumption perspective*, aims at assessing learners' understanding of a given topic asking them to identify an existing and relevant OER. The second model, *Skill belts*, is inspired by judo and aims at allowing learners to attempt a belt level when they feel ready for it. Belts also confer responsibilities in terms of mutual support among learners. The third model, *Assessment in Hackathon*, aims at assessing subject-matter skills foremost rather than transversal skills. Solving collaboratively a specific challenge related to the subject-matter through brainstorming, designing, prototyping and developing solutions involves different types of knowledge and the *person-plus* competences.

Participant engagement and outcomes

Using templates and models as scaffolds, draft a learning activity and its assessment in small groups. Discuss the different domains or disciplines that are represented in the room, the challenges encountered at a more transversal level and per domain.

Workshop alignment with conference themes

Open and social forms of learning can take place in all three learning contexts mentioned in the theme: *Networked learning in formal, non-formal and informal contexts of learning and development across the lifespan (e.g., early childhood, school, higher education, professional development, community learning, large-scale and small-scale open courses)*.

Workshop process/activities

10mn: theoretical introduction (workshop leaders)
10mn: presenting the models (workshop leaders)
45mn: drafting activities and assessment in small groups (participants); answering questions, providing feedback (workshop leaders)
25mn: discussion and take aways (participants and workshop leaders)

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[2] Own translation.

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