

Exploring the Assessment Terrain in Higher Education: Possibilities and Threats: A Concept Paper

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ABSTRACT The process of teaching and learning involves the assessment of students in order to monitor the extent to which the intended outcomes and objectives are achieved. Assessment ascertains the extent to which educational learning outcomes are achieved and how students master the concepts taught. In this paper the researchers interrogate the issue of assessment. The researchers begin by exploring literature on assessment as it relates to higher education. Key concepts and principles of assessment are discussed and a distinction between assessment of learning and assessment for learning is clarified. This is followed by a contextual discussion on the national assessment policy frameworks in the South African higher education system including how these influence decisions on assessment practices in the universities. The researchers conclude that academics and educational developers should embrace a broad understanding of the issues of curriculum development and implementation and policies governing assessment so that various approaches and strategies in assessment for the good of educational programmes and student attainment. The researchers further conclude by conceptualising an ideal role for the educational or curriculum developer in promoting principled assessment practices within the university.