

Online Assessment of Students' Learning



A Guide for Practicing Teachers Involved in e-Learning

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The abrupt shift to online teaching and learning as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced educational institutions at all levels whether it be school, college or a university to have a relook at various approaches for conducting remote learning and assessing students progress. With all educational transactions happening through the blended or the hybrid approach, it would be worthwhile to have a look at how students need to be assessed and their learning outcomes evaluated. It has become imperative for the teachers to adopt new techniques for online assessment so that the way we assess students' knowledge and skills is akin to the way they are being taught especially in the blended learning environment.

What is Assessment?

Assessment is simply the process of gathering information on what students know based on their educational experience. Assessment results are typically used to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the course content meets the learning needs.

Different Types of Assessments:

1. **Formative assessments** occur during the course of the programme and are used to determine how well a student is learning. Such type of assessment is best when they are ongoing, consistent, and provide critical feedback to learners.
2. **Summative assessments** are referred to as the final exams which are conducted at the end of the school year or semester and measure what the student has learned after completing a course. They can validate how well your content supports the course's overall learning goals.
3. **Informal assessments** generally provide the faculty member the ability to gauge their students' comprehension of course material. It does not involve assigning grades. Furthermore, an informal assessment can be used to allow students to practice the material prior to a formal assessment.

Assessing students' is not just about grades but a meaningful and well-constructed assessment, helps students gear up for success and enables them to reflect, interact, and apply their knowledge to answer questions, solve problems, and communicate information.

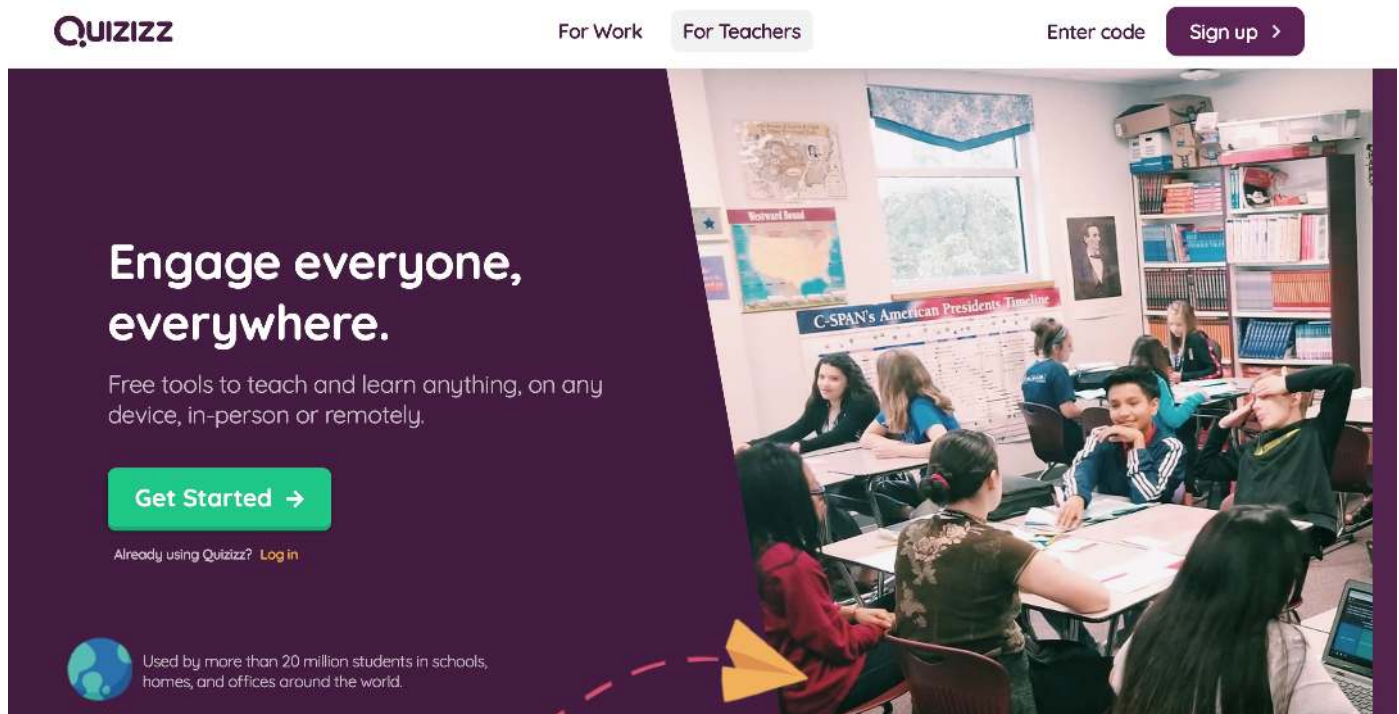
Let us look at some methods for conducting Online Assessments which can be easily used by the teachers:



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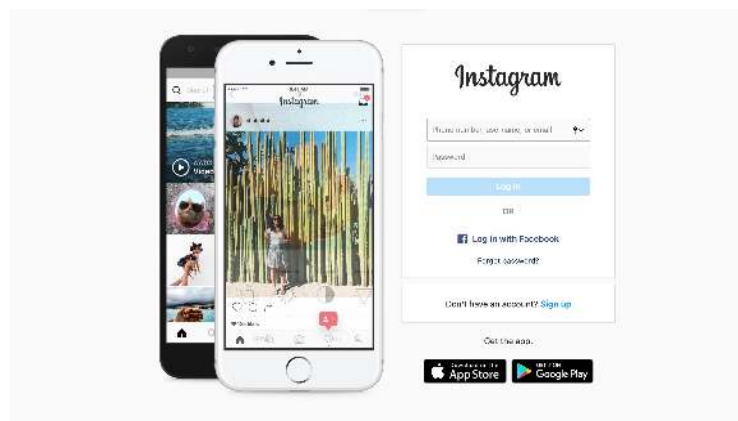
1. Online Quizzes

Quizzes are a traditional assessment tool and when paired with technology, they are an excellent way to engage student learning. Quiz questions can take a number of forms, such as multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blanks, etc. One benefit of quizzes is that they are short and easy to assess. Another is that question order and options can be randomized, so each student's quiz is unique. Online quizzes are ideal for measuring learning results across a wide audience. Since each student takes the same test, you can compare and contrast results across different classes, schools, or communities. A non-graded online quiz can be given prior to the start of a lesson to gain a baseline measurement of a student's existing knowledge

The image shows the Quizizz website banner. On the left, a purple background contains the text "Engage everyone, everywhere." followed by "Free tools to teach and learn anything, on any device, in-person or remotely." Below this is a green "Get Started →" button and a link "Already using Quizizz? Log in". At the bottom left, a globe icon is next to the text "Used by more than 20 million students in schools, homes, and offices around the world." On the right, a photograph shows a classroom of students sitting at desks, some using laptops. The Quizizz logo is in the top left, and navigation links "For Work", "For Teachers", "Enter code", and a "Sign up >" button are in the top right.

1. 2. Explanatory Student's Videos

Students can be really creative when it comes to recording and editing videos. You can capitalize on those skills and ask them to create short explanatory videos to present a concept learned in class. They can use animations, interviews or hand drawing to create their videos. The students can share these videos on various platforms using the Learning Management System or a Content Management System such as Google Classroom etc. Once shared, these videos can be accessed by their classmates and teachers who can provide feedback. You can also use social media video sharing apps like Flipgrid and Instagram for this purpose, however, it needs to be ascertained that the teachers have more control over data protection and safety of students.



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1. 3. Online Interviews

Teachers can incorporate a video conference system within their online teaching to give learning a more personal touch. During brief online interviews, students can demonstrate their proficiency in language, music, art, and other courses, for example, where mastery of specific skills is an important requirement. Sometimes it may be beneficial to conduct group interviews for team projects. These interviews could be conducted using popular applications such as Zoom or Google Meet. Interviews can also include a mentoring component enabling students to get immediate feedback from instructors and help them feel more responsible about their studies.



4. Online Polls

Polls allow you to capture feedback directly from your students about their learning experience. They can be used to measure anything from learning satisfaction to why a student made a particular choice during a lesson. Online surveys are highly engaging for learners because they allow them to share their opinions, make themselves heard, and are quick to complete. You can also use poll questions when you want to quickly grab and focus your learners' attention on something important or break the ice during an online group interview session.



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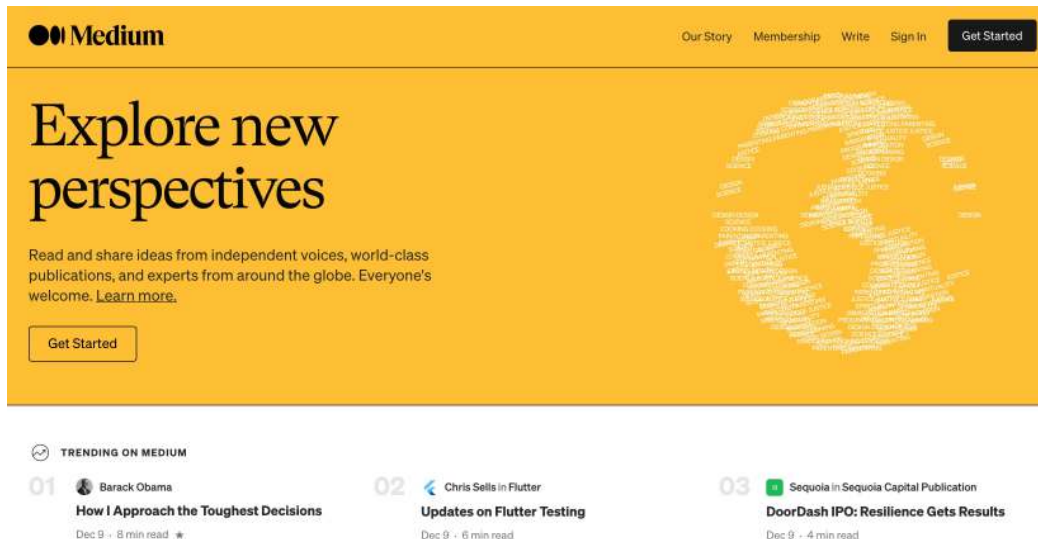
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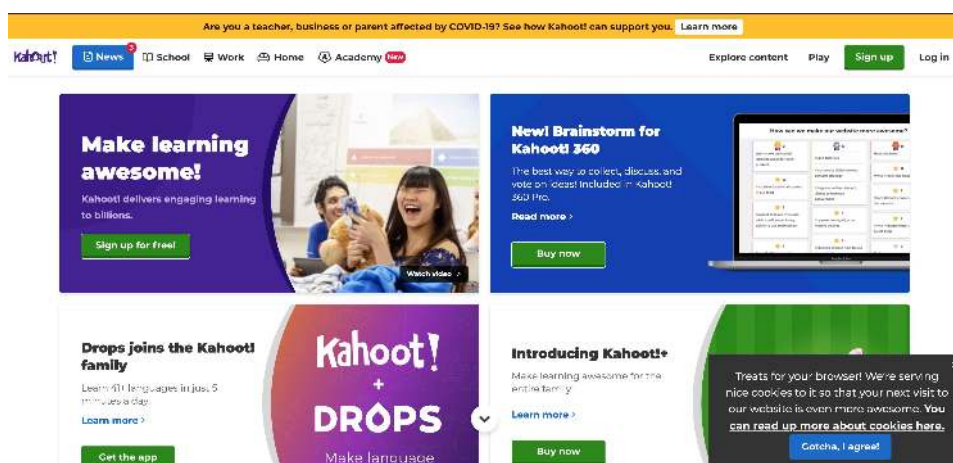
1. 5. Blogs

Writing a journal is a great way to reflect on learning and documenting the process. Blogs can allow students to communicate their ideas in a more creative and informal format. There are several platforms that can be used for free by students and teachers to create specific class blogs. Teachers can use various blog creation platforms and create a publication such as a collection of stories for each classroom. Students can then submit their pieces to the publication and teachers can review them. This way the students will learn not only to write better but also develop self-awareness and reflective thinking. There are many platforms that the teachers can choose that work for blogging like Medium, Wakalet, Blogger, or Wordpress etc.



6. Games and Interactive Competitions

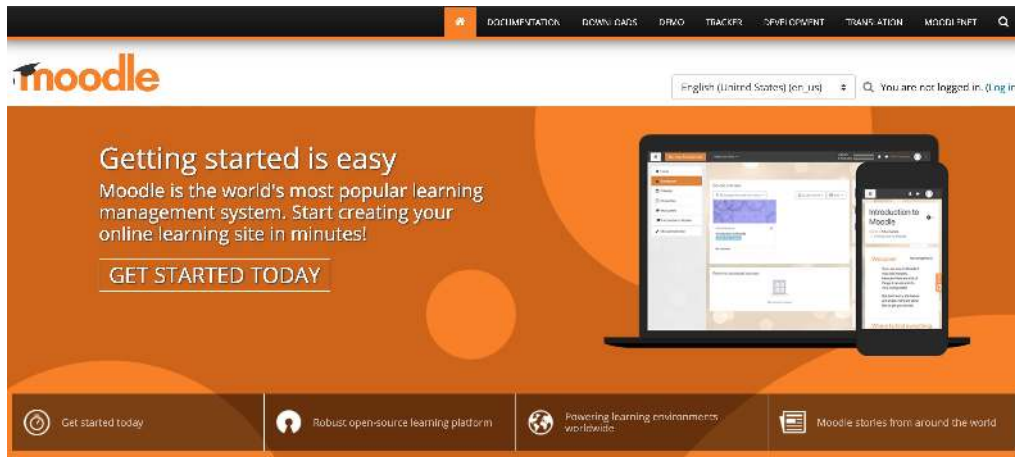
Hosting interactive quizzes during your online sessions are a great way to evaluate student knowledge and engagement. The most famous interactive quiz platform is Kahoot, a free student-response that uses all sorts of gamification techniques to engage students' participation and enhance learning. With Kahoot, you can both host live quizzes as well as self-paced challenges for out-of-class review. Kahoot games can be played in single mode or in team mode and offers plenty of fun features to stimulate students to play and learn. Another great platform for live learning games is Factile. With Factile you can either host jeopardy games, regular multiple choice quizzes, memory games, and create study flashcards to improve students' learning proficiency. As Kahoot, Factile can be played in teams or individually. You can also use many other free online tools to create games for assessing online learning.



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1. 7. Online Discussions and Socratic Seminars

Online discussions and Socratic seminars are excellent ways to assess students' understanding, reflection, and application of concepts. Asking specific, open-ended questions can lead to mindful discussions and to the creation of knowledge. Students can share and respond to each other's ideas with text, images, and videos. These can unfold asynchronously (over time) through open public forums like Quora or Reddit — functionalities also available in Moodle and Canvas. Alternatively, the discussion can happen synchronously by using videoconferencing tools like Zoom and other knowledge management and communication systems like Slack. What is important about these methods is to clarify from the beginning what are your expectations on student's participation and how their participation translates into grades.



Concluding Thoughts

It is important for teachers to understand that online assessment is a part and parcel of the new e-learning framework that has been expanding rapidly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The teachers are free to use any online tool as per their convenience and based on the learning outcomes that they wish to assess in students. The tools given in this article are only for helping the teachers to start on their journey of online assessment and are in no way prescriptive. There are hundreds of other tools and strategies available for the teachers to incorporate online assessment in their teaching-learning strategy. The author is hopeful that the teachers shall find the tools helpful and they feel encouraged in embarking on the journey of making online assessment a reality for their students.

References

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