



The inclusive assessment conundrum

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EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL OF ESWATINI

Overview of Presentation

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Introduction

- The movement towards inclusive assessment in schools gained significant momentum in the 1990s.
- Initially, the inclusive assessment movement was driven by the need to accommodate specific student groups, such as those groups, such as those with disabilities, which later evolved into a broader understanding of good educational practice.
- The movement now emphasizes equitable methods and practices that allow all students their full potential, ensuring they are not disadvantaged by inherent barriers within the assessment system.
- Examination bodies worldwide strive to design assessment policies that attempt to address the broader perspective of inclusive assessment.



Purpose of the Paper

- Explore the conceptual basis of inclusive assessment.
- Discuss the inherent contradictions within its nature by explaining the inclusive assessment idea.
- Present what some examining bodies do to make assessment inclusive using ECESWA case.

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Context of Inclusive Assessment Conundrum

“ECESWA assesses all candidates according to the same marking criteria, so their grades and certificates have the same validity and are a true reflection of each candidate’s attainment.”

Context of Inclusive Assessment Conundrum

- According to the Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary a conundrum refers to a complex and seemingly irresolvable problem.
- Traditional assessment prioritizes uniformity and comparability, whilst inclusive assessment, conversely emphasizes adaptability.
- Traditional assessment emphasizes equality which treats all students the same way, which is viewed as leading to unequal outcomes
- Inclusive assessment advocates for differentiated treatment (Equity), which may be viewed to be preferential.
- Inclusivity aims to ensure fairness, whereas modifications to assessments may be viewed as compromising their validity from a psychometric perspective.
- Inclusive assessment should provide multiple means of representation, expression and engagement (Rose and Meyer, 2000). These principles may be viewed compromising standards and fairness in standardized testing



Literature

- Inclusive assessment is now understood as a way to design assessment accessible to all students, considering their needs, diverse backgrounds and learning styles (Taylor and Francis, 2022).
- Inclusive assessment is broadly defined as assessment practices that acknowledge and accommodate the diverse learning needs of all students ensuring equity and access (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).
- Inclusive pedagogy is the basis for responsive teaching and assessment, yet it is difficult to apply such ideals in a standardized context (Brookhart, 2021).
- Inclusive assessments are theoretically possible, yet they often falter in practice due to structural limitations (Gipps and Stobart, 2009). Moreover, assessment policies frequently limit the extent to which accommodations can be made, reinforcing the tension between inclusion and standardization.
- The conceptual tension underscores the idea that inclusive assessment cannot simply be implemented by adding accommodations; it requires a fundamental re-thinking of the purposes and practices of assessment itself (Klenowski, 2009).

The Inclusive Assessment Conundrum

- The crux of the conundrum lies in assessment itself. What is the purpose of assessment, especially national examinations?
- Examinations are designed to discriminate, thereby aiding selection and accountability. The functions for examinations inherently clashes with inclusive practices, which emphasise personalisation and flexibility
- Traditional assessment prioritise uniformity and comparability by its nature yet, inclusive assessment, conversely, emphasises adaptability which can compromise validity and reliability of assessments.
- Assessments treat all students the same, while inclusive assessment advocates for differentiated treatment (equity) which may be perceived preferential.



The Case of ECESWA

- The Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) is accredited by Cambridge University Press and Assessment.
- The ECESWA Handbook outlines the regulations for conducting ECESWA examinations.
- ECESWA, like other examining boards/councils, has measures and regulations guiding the accommodations of all candidates, regardless of ability, language, background, or disability status.
- The first stage that ensures Inclusion is at the development of the assessments ensuring that candidates are not excluded because of;
 - bias
 - sensitivity
 - language
 - content
 - errors



The Case of ECESWA

- The second stage ensures access based on individual candidate requirements (s).

Access Arrangements Provided by ECESWA

Group 1:Non delegated access arrangement		Group 2: modified papers
Exemption	Extra time up to 25%(not permitted in syllabuses where time is the focus of the exam)	Braille
Extra time over 25%	Colour naming	Coloured Paper
Practical Assistant		18-point bold printed on A4
Reader	Extra time up to 25%	18-point bold enlarged to A3
Sign Language Interpreter	Live speakers	18 point enlarged to A3

The Case of ECESWA

Access Arrangements Provided by ECESWA

Group 1: Non delegated access arrangements		Group 2: Modified Papers
Scribe	Prompter	
Voice-Activated software	Reading aloud (by candidate)	Tactile diagrams
Word processor	Supervised rest breaks	Transcript of Listening
Coursework extensions	Transcript of candidate's work	
Alternative Accommodation	Visual Aids	
	Separate Invigilation	

Conclusion

- Examining boards have made substantial progress in addressing issues of inclusion in assessment.
- Inclusion and assessment are two different ideals that result in tension that is often inadequately addressed through superficial accommodations rather than systematic reforms.
- Inclusive assessment should not be considered as a straightforward phenomenon: it is complex and multifaceted conundrum.
- It is a conundrum because the two ideals were conceptualised based on different purposes.



Ngiyabonga
Thank you

