Potentials and challenges of digital assessment: University teachers' perceptions

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Background

- Digitalization in Higher Education – Changed Academic Assessment Practices (Hodges & Fowler, 2020).
- AI systems and applications are changing the conditions for university teachers' assessment practices and choices of examination formats (Rudolph, Tan & Tan, 2023; Sperling et al., 2024).
  Preliminary results from an ongoing research study.
- Data collection – 2023-2025.
- Project purpose – to investigate how the choice of digital examinations is motivated, constructed, and perceived by university teachers in higher education.
- Two studies
  - representations of digital examination
  - **university teachers' expressed experiences of digital examinations**

University teachers' expressed experiences about digital examination

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Aim: to contribute to knowledge about university teachers' experiences of opportunities and challenges in conducting assessment practices in the new media age.

Two research questions are addressed:

- RQ1: What knowledge requirements are emphasized within the ILOs and how are they aligned with the design of examinations?
- **RQ2: How do the university teachers perceive the assessment designs and what potentials and challenges are emphasized by university teachers in the development of assessment in practice?**

Theoretical approaches

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- The aim is framed by theories of epistemic cultures and cultures of recognition (Knorr Cetina, 2007; Kress & Selander, 2012), which are used to explore the understanding of specific knowledge domains for assessment within courses and faculties.

- Analysis: Symbolic human behaviour
  Knowledge systems
  Ruptures

Context of study and data material

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- *Semi-structured interviews with eight different university teachers*
- *Three different faculties and three different professional programmes in higher education in Sweden.*
- Faculties of law, medicine and social sciences at two universities located in Sweden
- Law program, Study and Career Counseling program, Biomedical laboratory science program.
- 2 courses in each program (one at the beginning and one at the end)
- Six categories of digital examination
- Inductive thematic analysis of opportunities and obstacles/challenges; deductive analysis of epistemic cultures; and the assessment culture at each faculty.

Three cultures of assessment practices

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Law

- A large variety of examination forms
- Assessment with points and percentages
- Forms inherited from previous semesters
- Negative to changes
- Grading scale with four levels
- Checking of basic knowledge
- ’Correcting'
- Lack of support at university and institutional level in terms of time and skills development

Medicine

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- A large variety of examination forms and practical tests
- Assessment with a point system
- A positive attitude towards digital systems
- Positive attitude to changes
- Pass/fail grading scale
- Checking basic knowledge
- ”Correcting"
- Difficult with qualitative assessments
- Difficult to formulate MCQs
- Technical issues with digital systems
- Lack of legal certainty in homework assignments

Social Science

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- Home exams dominate
- Assesment designs are inherited from previous semesters
- Qualitative assessments grading scale with seven levels
- In-depth learning is assessed
- Academic writing is assessed
- Authentic learning involves reflective practices
- Maintaining quality

Potentials

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- At **university level**, Inspera (AMS) is provided (M)
- **Department level**: common question banks (L+ M).
- **Course level**: variation of question types and examination forms (S) autocorrection of language (S); shared assessment for increased legal certainty (S).
- **Teacher/student level:**
- - AI construction of questions and corrections (L)
- - AI linguistic assistance for students (S)
- - Computer writing (S)
- - Facilitates feedback (S)
- - Facilitates formative working methods and deepens learning (S)

Challenges

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- **University level**:
  - Lack of support during implementation (L);
  - Scoring in the system (M);
  - Lack of exam places, rules, GDPR and grading scale (S).

- **Department level**:
  - Lack of skills development (L);
  - Streamlining due to lack of time and an increased number of students (L);
  -Simplification of what is assessed (L).

- **Course level:**
  - Difficult to formulate MCQs at the right level (M).
  - Maintaining qualities, e.g. academic writing and in-depth learning (S).

Challenges

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- **Teacher/student level:**

  - More MCQ exams and fewer assessment discussions due to a fear of change/development (L).

  - Uncertainty when assessing qualitative questions due to the use of instrumental assessment (checking off) rather than pedagogical tools (L).

  - It is difficult for foreign students to understand short MCQs and the differences between the answer options (M).

  - AI obstacles homework (M, S).

  - Poorer academic writing (S).

  - It is difficult to become a reflective practitioner (S).

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Thank you!