

## Chapter 10

# Rethinking Formative Assessment in Times of COVID-19: A Critical Analysis of University Assessment in Eswatini

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### Abstract

This chapter deals with broad issues of assessment and education. It highlights the importance of linking assessment with individual and societal outcomes. Examples from assessment as it was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic at the University of Eswatini (Department of Academic Communication Skills; Institute of Distance Education; Faculty of Education: BEd Primary and BEd Secondary – French major) are used to make a case for shifting the focus from summative assessment to formative assessment and the logic behind the shift and its significance. A major discussion point is that of the disruptive nature of the pandemic in education, which has brought about an unforeseen and more rapid move towards blended and online teaching, learning and assessment. The argument put forth concerns the compatibility of online learning and assessment with independent, self-directed and autonomous learning, and whether students can benefit from the sudden change in content delivery (from face-to-face to virtual) and learning facilitation mode. The chapter makes the point that in order to benefit from the given circumstances and use assessment for learning, rapid and fundamental changes in the delivery and practice of teaching are also essential. It concludes with some suggestions regarding the use of the advantageous aspects of e-learning and assessment.

**Keywords:** assessment, higher education, Eswatini, independent learning, online pedagogy, assessment

## **1 Introduction**

The role of higher education is still a philosophical debate; however, it seems safe to assume that it can help students create knowledge that can lead to development in general and socio-economic development in particular (Chankseliani, Qoraboyev & Gimranova 2021; Gül *et al.* 2010). Education should engage with and respond to the requests of society and the diversifying needs of different social contexts (Fitzgerald *et al.* 2012; McCowan 2016). To reach this understanding and address the needs of the individuals and the society, the development of the cognitive capacity and critical thinking ability of the university students is essential (Indrašienė *et al.* 2021; Rogaten *et al.* 2019). It is only then that they can produce knowledge that applies to today's issues and prepares for the future. Since December 2019, Covid-19 has brought about unprecedented challenges to almost all aspects of individual and social life. Since the beginning of the pandemic, educational institutions, too, have been affected. To begin with, institutions have required of stakeholders to shift from face-to-face classes to virtual classrooms and digital learning (Marinoni, Land & Jensen 2020; Mseleku 2020; Muftahu 2020). This transition had to happen rapidly so that the curriculum could be delivered without much delay. Many higher education institutions around the world have tried their best to address the immediate challenges to keep the ball rolling. This immediate action was necessary and as Neuwirth, Jovic and Mukherji (2020:4) put it,

Providing a quality education during a crisis such as this pandemic can be seen as a tool for building resilience by providing a sense of normalcy and purpose to both students and faculty in sensitive and meaningful ways.

More than a year has passed since all of these changes occurred and now is the time to enhance the quality of education in the new circumstances. It seems that after the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no return to our previous 'normal' (Ewing 2021). Educational institutions need to think beyond the classroom and consider the needs of society as well. At this stage, more than ever, education needs to rethink and re-imagine curricular design and delivery as well as

assessment mode and content. This new design is supposed to prepare the students to thrive in a future about which we know very little. Will we have a new appreciation for face-to-face classes, will we opt for digitalised and remote learning, or will we find a middle ground? Who will make these choices? Will it matter at all which mode of delivery we choose? Will it impact our students' employability? Will the job market demand new competencies? Will the world have a more global perspective on some key issues? Will there be a wider gap between the rich and the poor? And how can educational institutions address the challenges, if at all?

The University of Eswatini, too, experienced these phases of rapid change and adapting to the new situations in both teaching and assessing. In this paper, after reviewing some concepts relevant to our discussion, we present our experiences and observations on assessment at the University of Eswatini. We will also share the challenges that we have faced and our proposed solutions to them, with the hope that the insights we have collected during this time will direct us for future actions.

## **2 Assessment and Education**

When discussing education, assessment of student learning deserves special attention. Assessment is not a standalone subject. It is not only a part of instruction, but also a part of learning (Baleni 2015; Podung 2021). Assessment methods are linked to the whole educational system, particularly the way we teach and what we need to promote. Assessment is a medium for both making decisions and supporting learning and, therefore, we cannot change assessment without modifying our pedagogical approaches. At the same time exams have washback effects. The washback effect of assessment, also known as 'the hidden curriculum', highlights the importance of exams in education, as it determines how students infer what is important in a course (Kearns 2012:198). This point – being examination-oriented and not quality-oriented – shows the importance of summative assessment in the eyes of the learners and even teachers. Knowing what is expected from them in the exams will help learners to pass successfully, and in many cases the more successful the learners are, the more effective the teacher will be considered to be (Goe, Bell & Little 2008).

Assessment for learning (formative assessment) and continuous assessment are the buzzwords of modern assessment. With the emergence of

Covid-19 and the shift towards online assessment, new and diverse techniques for assessing learning are also on the rise. More than ever, many of these focus on formative assessment. Formative assessment can promote effective learning (Jennifer 2013), and through it, teaching can be modified. This type of assessment is built on some strategies that all put the learner in the centre (Black & William 2009). For the assessment to serve its purpose, which is helping students to learn and become independent learners (Chahine & Belkasim 2021), the criteria for success have to be clarified. Educators are required to assist students to understand the criteria and help them find ways to reach their goals (Black & William 2009). Teachers are supposed to modify their teaching and the curriculum based on the findings emerging from the tests (formative assessments). Besides helping students to stay on the right track in their learning, formative assessment can enhance self-directed learning (Leenknecht *et al.* 2021; Lubbe & Mentz 2021), which implies that the learners are responsible for deciding on their learning objectives and planning the learning strategies to achieve these (Serdyukova & Serdyukov 2013). Eventually this strategy paves the way for learner autonomy. To assist the students to reach this stage, formative assessment can provide continuous feedback on the assignments and tests that the students take during the term or school year (Hattie & Timperley 2007). Feedback, which is timely and clear to the students while also in line with the learning goals, assists the learners (Gedye 2010; Baleni 2015). It can be given by teachers, computers and peers. When learning goals are clear, students are trained, and rubrics are provided, students themselves can also actively take part in diagnosing the areas they need to improve. This delegation can lead to trust and constructive dialogues between teachers and students to assist the latter in determining what and how to learn. Formative assessment can continuously illustrate how close the learners are to the outcomes and what steps they need to take to achieve them fully. Therefore, implementing strategies and reaching established goals require the shared involvement of educators and students (Stull *et al.* 2011).

It should be noted that formative and summative assessments are not at the opposite ends of a spectrum. Despite summative assessment being used mainly for ‘certification and evaluation of student achievement’ (Rawlusyk 2018:2), the two types of assessments can overlap. Summative assessment is usually administered at the end of the term, and for the same reason, may not necessarily be used to take learning forward the way formative assessment does. However, if the students can still receive feedback on their performance

in the coursework or final exam, both assessments for and of learning have been fulfilled (Carless, Joughin & Liu 2006). The same applies to formative assessment. Even though formative assessment is usually continuous and students have opportunities to learn and improve their work, being rewarded for their efforts can also be an additional incentive. In formative assessment, self- and peer assessments are helpful, and feedback provided by the teacher or peers can play a vital role, as it may lead to self-directed learning. At the same time, the end-of-term or end-of-year exam can keep the students engaged.

### **3 Formative Assessment and Quizzes**

In formative assessment, as Townsend and Mulvey (2016) suggest, the focus is on learning rather than on studying for a test. For that to happen, students should be able to track their progress and learn from their mistakes. They need to receive feedback that is timely and clear, and to have opportunities to engage with the feedback (Chahine & Belkasim 2021; Lubbe & Mentz 2021). Quizzes can facilitate this process. They are quick to design and mark and, therefore, give students multiple opportunities to improve and reflect on their learning more frequently. Students can have more interactions with their educators to improve before having a summative assessment that might decide their future. Simultaneously, educators can use formative assessments in the form of quizzes to reflect on their teaching and revise their plans. Since quizzes can be taken more frequently, teachers can identify the topics that require more attention and build on the areas on which the majority of the students need more support and practice.

As will be discussed in the next section, with the help of technology, designing and administering quizzes becomes more feasible, and providing timely feedback is also achievable. Built-in feedback strategies such as those offered by Moodle and computer-adaptive testing can make preparing online quizzes for formative assessment more accessible and more valuable for both teachers and learners.

### **4 Assessment and Covid-19**

Covid-19 has drastically changed the practice of teaching, learning and assessment (Mahaye 2020). Teachers and more than 1.2 billion students (Jena 2020) around the globe had to prepare for transformation in a very short time and had

to discover how to teach, learn and behave within virtual contexts. This was the emergency response (Williamson, Eynon & Potter 2020) to a situation that required the changes to be implemented rapidly and be acceptable and available to stakeholders. Both students and teachers needed to be helped to feel safe in the online learning environments and had to have access to the required resources (Khan *et al.* 2021). To begin with, it has been moving education towards online classes and digital learning. Even the hesitant or technologically challenged stakeholders have had no other option than to go online. Before the pandemic, in many contexts, traditional exams were favoured over more modern trends in testing (Baird *et al.* 2017; Brown 2019; Deneen *et al.* 2019). During the pandemic, however, most institutions were left with no choice but to move towards non-traditional views and practices of assessment.

Technology is now an inseparable part of education and assessment (Deeley 2018; Elmahdi, Al-Hattami & Fawzi 2018). Khan *et al.* (2021:35) believe that ‘the success of online teaching is dependent on the teacher’s willingness plus the ability to integrate technology into their teaching and assessment, and feedback practices’. Therefore, the first step had to be to support teachers and help them to use technology better in preparing for and teaching in their classes. At the same time, students also needed assistance in preparing for this new model of learning and assessment (Muftahu 2020). For the online learning environments to be successful, some principles had to be identified. Some of these key principles, according to Korkmaz and Torman (2020), are connectivity, student-centredness, sharing knowledge, exploration, authenticity, using digital platforms and forming online communities. If teaching is in line with these principles, then the assessment should also consider them. These principles illustrate the need to assist students, so they learn to take responsibility for their learning. Formative assessment can help. Online environments can facilitate formative assessment, as they can lead to authentic, engaging, collaborative, meaningful, reflective and motivating experiences (Baleni 2015; Gikandi, Morrow & Davis 2011). Also, online quizzes can be taken more frequently, marked more quickly and help with providing feedback. Formative assessment is one of the ways that can allow students to identify their weaknesses and reflect on those areas in which they need to improve, without necessarily having to rely on others for encouragement and motivation.

Anderson’s study (2009) on online quizzes for finance students in New Zealand is an example of their success as a tool for formative assessment and provides many possibilities. The author concludes that, by using quizzes,

‘[s]tudents gain significant learning benefits, and teachers and education providers gain benefits in terms of time and financial resources’ (Anderson 2009:36). Ogange *et al.* (2018) also support using quizzes and have another perspective. They studied a group of undergraduate students’ perceptions of online formative assessment. Their study suggests that this type of assessment lessens the anxiety of the students while helping them prepare for their summative assessment and enhances the students’ confidence. Townsend and Mulvey’s (2016) study also confirms that using online quizzes designed on Moodle had a positive impact on the learning of Japanese nursing students and the feedback that the students provided at the end of the term about the use of online quizzes was positive.

Although multiple-choice questions have some shortcomings, they still remain one of the most popular types of questions in quizzes. They are easy to mark, ‘cover a wide range of topics and students can receive feedback in a shorter period’ (Rawlusyk 2018:11). If designed appropriately, they can encourage some level of higher-order thinking. Combined with other types of questions and tasks, they can function as effective testing tools that can promote learning.

However, despite the many advantages that online assessment offers, the lack of direct supervision is considered the downside by many educators. The concern is that students’ opportunities for academic dishonesty and cheating increase (Mahabeer & Pirtheepa 2019). This is a fair argument; however, by modifying the education system, it may be overcome. Moving towards learner autonomy and making students responsible for their learning (Deneen *et al.* 2019) may be the solution, which again suggests that modifying assessment without modifying the whole education system is next to impossible.

During the past years, some short-term and hands-on solutions have been offered and shared by different practitioners and theorists to help to deal better with these issues. To minimise the chances of, or the desire for cheating, some suggestions are:

- Creating authentic assignments (Gikandi *et al.* 2011).
- Designing relevant policies
- Having dialogues with the students about the value of education
- Using software such as Turnitin
- Making sure that teachers are also respectful of academic integrity and acknowledge the sources that they use.

Another concern raised by practitioners regarding online assessment relates to decision-making, which is not necessarily visible or relevant during formative assessment (Cizek, Andrade & Bennett 2019). The main role of summative assessment is making decisions about the students, while informal formative assessment is not supposed to do that. Nevertheless, the solution might be to take advantage of both formal and informal formative assessments and rate of the students' progress. For formative assessment to be used as a decision-making tool, new policies are needed. In addition, assuming that testing is moving towards authenticity and will have real implications for the individual or the society can contribute to using formative assessment for making decisions about the students (Yorke 2003).

Finally, despite the advantages of using technology and online assessment, many educators around the world have their concerns and reservations. Lack of facilities and infrastructure, lack of knowledge and skills on how to hold assessment online, fear of the unknown, and lack of efficient policies to support the less conventional models of testing and assessment are among the issues raised (Seifert 2020). These are important issues which should be considered (early) so as not to increase inequality (Sosibo 2020) and blur the value of high-quality education.

## **5 Examples from the University of Eswatini (UNESWA)**

According to the website of the University of Eswatini ([www.uneswa.sz](http://www.uneswa.sz), accessed in August 2021), 7 645 students are enrolled at the university and studying across 48 undergraduate and 25 postgraduate programmes. Online learning and teaching platforms have been encouraged for a long time, and Moodle is the learning management system of choice. Some lecturers and departments, such as the Institute of Distance Education (IDE), have a long history of using the platform. Since March 2020, like most higher education institutions around the world, blended and online learning have been seen as the only available option for the University of Eswatini. However, despite the move to online, a final face-to-face exam (summative) was administered at the end of the previous university term as part of the students' overall assessment. Below we briefly look at the practices in the Department of Academic Communication Skills, in the Institute of Distance Education and in the Faculty of Education (Teacher Training – French major).

### **5.1 Academic Communication Skills**

The Academic Communication Skills (ACS) module is offered to all first-year students, regardless of their chosen field of education. The objective is to enhance the students' academic English language proficiency and communication skills. Academic writing, including essay and summary writing, and practising reading comprehension are among the topics covered during this year-long module.

In March 2020, management obliged lecturers to move to online teaching. Lecturers had to act fast and move the materials to the online platform (Moodle) and prepare themselves to begin online teaching. Many students were hesitant to attend online classes, and some lacked the resources to join them. To accommodate all the students, it was decided that activities, exercises and materials would be put on Moodle and, throughout the term, students would have to take six online quizzes. This was to be done as part of formative assessment to ensure that the students were following the lessons. The quizzes had both open- and closed-ended questions, with some requiring of the students to write a summary or a paragraph. The closed-ended questions were automatically marked by Moodle, but the responses to the open-ended questions and the essays had to be marked by hand and by the lecturers. Since the aim was to assist students in their learning, giving constructive and timely feedback was essential. The students received marks for their quizzes, and later it was decided that these marks would be part of the final assessment.

### **5.2 Challenges and Solutions**

The ACS students were in their first year of university, and they had had almost no opportunity to experience university life before the pandemic hit Eswatini. Many were far from being autonomous learners, as their previous experiences mostly did not move them in that direction. Also, their experience at the university was so limited and so different, and the changes in and out of the university were so sudden that even getting through the term was seen as a challenge. Like many other universities, the priority was trying to help students prepare for online learning and teaching, and eventually assessment (Ewing 2021; Muftahu 2020). At the same time, without helping them to take control of their learning and moving towards some independence, passing the course seemed impossible. This independence meant that the students had to be helped to be motivated to take responsibility for their own learning; however, the

learning environment was structured by the teacher (Holmes 2018:26.). In this case, motivation to self-regulate was imposed by the circumstances; therefore, even if some students were not motivated enough, they had no other option. As Serdeyukova and Serdyukov (2013:230) also state, the nature of online learning ‘promotes self-directed learning’. Uneswa students, too, were held accountable for their learning by the circumstances. In the ACS module, quizzes were supposed to help keep students motivated. To support their learning, the lecturers needed to give feedback on the quizzes; nevertheless, the number of students each lecturer had and thus the amount of feedback that had to be provided in a limited time posed a major problem. To solve the problem, using the capacities offered by Moodle was the first option to some general instant feedback.

Then we studied the tests of the students carefully and noted the most common mistakes. Next, a series of very short videos (<5 minutes) – to ensure that all students could view them – addressing the problems and possible solutions were made. In one of the videos, students were introduced to the concept of reflection and self-assessment. They received the link to a checklist that they could fill in in their own time to make sure they had learned the concepts within their lessons. If they had any concerns, they could get in touch with the educators and seek additional help. In the final video they were invited to fill in a survey and a self-assessment quiz (on Quizziz) was given. The survey allowed the students to reflect upon what they had learned and what they thought they still needed to learn and the educator also had access to it. The reason for choosing a platform outside Moodle for the additional quiz was to assure the students that the quiz was only for self-assessment. Also, Quizziz offered music and avatars, and made the test less formal. After that another problem emerged. Many students did not even open the videos to watch them. To solve the problem, and also to prepare the students for their final exam, we had one face-face session. In this class, we briefed the students about the videos and the reason behind making them, and encouraged the students to watch them.

Another challenge, like at most other institutions, was the students copying one another’s work and, to put it bluntly, their cheating. We had no other way but to trust and hope that through their cheating they would also learn. The result of the final face-to-face exam was also promising. Of the 535 students of the Faculty of Agriculture who sat the final ACS exam, only 13 did not receive the pass mark.

### ***5.3 Institute of Distance Education (IDE)***

In the Institute of Distance Education, assessment is done in a similar way in all study programmes and all course modules, except those dealing with field attachment. All IDE students complete at least two assignments and one test (preferably in a face-to-face setting) per course per semester. The marks for these formative assessments constitute the students' continuous assessment (CA) marks, which count for 40, 50 or 60 percent (depending on the course) of their final mark. The examination mark (exams are organised at the end of each semester) counts for the remainder (total = 100%). Lecturers are free to give additional tests and assignments if they deem this necessary.

Leeway is allowed to the lecturers when it comes to designing assignments and tests (less freedom is allowed when it comes to examination papers; these still follow a quite rigid structure). For example, reflections or reflective practices, multiple-source formative assessments, portfolios, digital or micro-badges, short learner reports in the form of short essays or short answers to specific questions, study cases and groupwork, including literature reviews and specifically defined problem-based questions, among others were used.

### ***5.4 Faculty of Education: Specifics for the BEd Primary and BEd Secondary French Classes***

In the Faculty of Education, assessment is also a combination of continuous assessment (formative by nature) and an end-of-semester examination (summative assessment). French is usually taught face-to-face, but the onset of the pandemic made that impossible. So, in the 2019–2020 academic year, we went from face-to-face to blended and then to fully online teaching, learning and assessing. In 2020–2021, we started fully online and then moved to blended learning. The academic year is still ongoing; thus, we do not know how this situation will evolve.

Assessment practices also underwent some changes: in previous years, the oral component of the tests, assignments and exams were more important. During the design phase, that component was integrated, but practical challenges (access to the internet, data costs, etc.) soon showed that keeping it in the implementation phase might not be feasible. For the immediate future, the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp might be encouraged, as the data costs associated with these are less costly than those linked to video-conferencing tools such as Zoom (proprietary) or BigBlueButton (open source).

### **5.5 Challenges to Online Assessment as Experienced by Educational Stakeholders at the Institute of Distance Education and the Faculty of Education (BE<sub>D</sub> Primary and BE<sub>D</sub> Secondary – French major)**

Plagiarism and cheating are definitely problematic areas when it comes to online assessment (Mahabeer & Pirtheepal 2019); focusing on independent, autonomous and self-directed learning (SDL) could possibly help alleviate the consequences of these ‘social’ ills. In line with Peytcheva-Forsyth (2018), we notice that new technology is constantly emerging and has the capacity to facilitate academic dishonesty and to assist students to (e-)cheat during formative and summative assessment.

At a practical level too, both lecturers and students noted various challenges. These were highlighted during executive and board meetings, but also in notes sent to deans and directors. The challenges ranged from access to the online assessments (technical challenges such as power or internet outages and lack of continuous technical support, but also technological ones such as the incorrect use of parameters within Moodle by the lecturers, such that the online test could not be written at the time it was scheduled) to lack of devices or adequate devices (not all students have a mobile phone or a laptop, and some of those who own such devices might not have the latest smartphone versions). Feedback was also noted as an important challenge, even before the onset of the pandemic: lecturers complain that they are overworked, students complain that they seldom get timely feedback on their formative assessment activities. As noted above, e-marking can be easier in some cases (short-answer or multiple-choice quizzes, for example) but remains more difficult in others (e.g. essay writing). One of the benefits of e-assessment is, according to Howe (2020) for example, the ability for feedback to be delivered promptly to the student. Howe (*idem*), citing Gilbert, Whitelock and Gale (2011), further links e-assessment’s immediate and direct feedback to enhanced measurement and achievement of learner outcomes. In our case, for some types of assignments, we need to learn of ways to speed up the process of feedback giving.

## **6 Suggestions for Improved Assessment Practices at Institutions of Higher Learning**

Based on our review of existing literature as well as our experience and obser-

vations, we suggest the following. Our recommendations take into account practical and theoretical, but also ideological aspects of assessment. Using the capacities offered by modern technology can facilitate formative and continuous assessment and are particularly valuable in classes with larger numbers of students.

In education, the need to update pedagogy constantly to match new circumstances cannot be downplayed. The Covid-19 pandemic has had overwhelming consequences, which brought about drastic changes in the way content had to be delivered (emergency remote teaching, blended and online teaching). Assessment too had to follow suit. In order to consider and evaluate the pandemic years, both academic performance expectations and the psychological effects of the pandemic have to be considered. Neuwrith *et al.* (2020: 13) propose the following expression, ‘balancing rigour and passion’ as the way in which educational stakeholders should tackle today’s assessment issues.

Perhaps the time (and opportunity) have come to give more credit to formative assessment that can be done online using software and platforms such as Quizziz, Kahoot, Socrative, Padlet, Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle and Edmodo, to name but a few. In line with the often-cited 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, including independence and autonomy, firstly there has to be meaningful interaction with the students regarding their learning, but secondly also regarding the assessment of their learning. These stakeholder interactions can only be productive and fruitful if and when teachers, students and policymakers are aware of assessment for learning and are trained to implement such online. The implementation phase can only be attained if teachers, examiners and assessors are comfortable with using technology in their teaching and assessing. E-assessment will be beneficial to students if they are aware of online teaching and assessments techniques, methods and etiquette (Neuwrith *et al.* 2020), if they have the appropriate devices and are able to access the e-resources adequately.

We have discussed different challenges above, mainly related to technology and delivery, but further research should be undertaken in the field of the design of assessment ‘content’. This last point probably deserves more attention and credit. Worthy test and assignment content are motivating, engaging and beneficial to society. It can be hoped that if the content of an assignment or test is creatively planned, is meaningful, and the students find it useful and unique, then they will be willing to engage. It may also pave the way for autonomy, or at the very least lead to independent learning. Through

using technology incorporating voice, pictures, music, games, interactions in the tests are possible. Sharing knowledge, student-centredness and authenticity are some of the main principles of online learning and they should all be considered when designing assignments and tests. Effective e-assessment needs to take them all into consideration.

All in all, using the capacities offered by modern technology can facilitate formative and continuous assessment and are particularly valuable in classes with larger numbers of students. Taking the measures mentioned into account may help make taking a test a memorable and positive experience.

## **7 Conclusion**

After reviewing some key concepts regarding assessment in higher education institutions with a particular focus on formative assessment, this paper reported some of the experiences and challenges that students and lecturers at the University of Eswatini had during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Academic Communication Skills Module accommodated first-year students. To prepare students and keep them motivated, formative e-assessment was favoured. In the BEd Primary and BEd Secondary French courses, the focus was also on formative e-assessment, including assignments and tests. However, end-of-semester or end-of-year examinations are still compulsory, and they had to be postponed several times because of the sanitary measures which prohibited face-to-face encounters for many months in 2020 and again in 2021.

Education is supposed to prepare students to help create a better world, and to assist students in preparing for this future, good assessment can be valuable. As Gikandi *et al.* (2011:2334) put it, 'Assessment is the heart of formal higher education'. For good assessment, the learning objectives should be clearly defined and in line with the individual and societal demands and needs. The challenges of the future are unknown, and the circumstances imposed by Covid-19 have proven to be more thought-provoking than ever anticipated. Accordingly, the key message is to help prepare the students to cope with the challenges and design activities and tests that would contribute to their engagement, cognitive development and eventually lead to their autonomy. As educators we need to look after our students and ourselves physically and mentally and we need to learn to be a part of an educational culture that promotes life-long learning and critical thinking for our students and ourselves. To be able to do all of this, sharing experiences and acting fast

may be our only options.

One particular issue that the COVID 19 pandemic has shown is the need for increased international and global perspectives to analyse the various impacts of COVID 19 in the short, medium and long term. (Marinoni *et al.* 2020:6)

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