More than adaptation: why we carried out faculty development on assessment in the middle of a pandemic

Ikuo Shimizu[1], Junichiro Mori[1], Hiroyuki Kanno[1]

Corresponding author: Dr Ikuo Shimizu ishimizu@shinshu-u.ac.jp

Institution: 1. Shinshu University

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Like other countries around the globe, our undergraduate curriculum has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the beginning of the academic year in April, our school discontinued face-to-face courses. Before the transition to online learning, we analyzed our educational environment in this situation: while using the current learning management system (LMS) as the platform for communication, content delivery and assessment proved to be a strength; we recognized that many faculty members had relied heavily on a single end-of-term summative testing for raising student performances. This practice may have come from a traditional view of examination among pedagogues in East Asia (Kwok, 2004). However, we recognized the policy as weakness for two reasons: Practically speaking, a single end-of-term test is vulnerable in case of network trouble or future progression of the outbreak (Dennick, Wilkinson and Purcell, 2009); and additionally, educational evidence has shown that purely summative assessments do not steer learning but instead, only affect test-taking attitude (Schuwirth and Ash, 2013). While we were already aware of this weakness in our curriculum before the outbreak, we realized that it became amplified during online learning, because it was difficult for many learners to establish self-directed learning without any handholding in online learning (Masters and Ellaway, 2008; Ranasinghe, 2019). Therefore, we decided that we needed to encourage faculty members to revise their assessment strategies rather than developing makeshift adaptations for the situation.

Just before starting the semester, we had a faculty development lecture about the online learning environment and advised the instructors on assessment strategies. In the lecture, we pointed out the potential concern of a single end-of-term test, as written above. We also noted the importance of feedback to promote students’ learning in the online learning environment based on several pieces of educational evidence (Masters and Ellaway, 2008). Then, as a practical solution for these challenges, we asked faculty members to implement a variety of assessment opportunities such as quizzes or short essays during or after lectures in addition to a single end-of-term summative test. We provided concise videos about how to construct these assessments on the LMS. The lecture videos achieved 209
views (as of the end of April) among 119 faculty members in our school, and formative assessment activities during or after each lecture were newly applied in more than 70% of the lectures in the spring semester.

The experience provided several lessons. First of all, modifications to teaching practices have been easily accepted in the midst of the catastrophe. Generally speaking, any attempt to reform educational practices faces opposition. According to the Awareness-Desire-Knowledge-Ability-Reinforcement (ADKAR) model to explain organizational change (Hiatt, 2006), awareness of the need and desire for change are the first and second steps, while uncertain risk due to any change tends to be regarded more significantly than the benefit from the change (Kahneman and Tversky, 2018). However, in response to the COVID reality, possible benefits from a change surpass the fear of uncertainty. In other words, crisis brings awareness and desire for a change and thus is a good opportunity for reform.

Interestingly, we also succeeded in providing an opportunity of reflection for educators regarding their assessment strategies according to the feedback comments after the faculty development lecture. For instance, one professor recognized that assessing students only through his end-of-term test provided him with minimal information of students’ achievements. In this pandemic situation, there are limited ways to train the faculty. If, however, in addition to having them adapt to teaching in the online learning, we also keep desired reforms in mind, we will bring effective changes that will endure even after the pandemic passes.

**Keywords:** assessment; COVID-19 adaptation; culture; faculty development; learning management system; online learning

**Notes On Contributors**

Ikuo Shimizu, MD, MHPE, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at Safety Management Office and a teaching staff for Center for Medical Education and Clinical Training at Shinshu University School of Medicine, Japan. ORCiD: [https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6731-7104](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6731-7104)

Junichiro Mori, MD, PhD, is a Lecturer for Center for Medical Education and Clinical Training at Shinshu University School of Medicine, Japan.

Hiroyuki Kanno, MD, PhD, is a Professor for Department of Pathology at Shinshu University School of Medicine, Japan.

**Bibliography/References**


**Declarations**

The author has declared that there are no conflicts of interest.

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