Assessment and Evaluation in Mega Universities

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ABSTRACT
The study examines assessment and evaluation procedures in mega universities. Within the scope of the study, the literature focusing on mega universities offering open and distance education and their assessment and evaluation systems were examined first. Later, the results of the questionnaire administered in the study-specific mega universities to support the findings obtained from the literature were presented. The results of the study showed that assessment tools used by mega universities to determine the achievement levels of learners considerably vary and the most frequently applied assessment tool was found to be multiple-choice tests. Finally, the study also revealed that the number of the learners and raters was the main determinant factor affecting the choice of assessment tools used in these institutions.

KEY WORDS: Mega University, assessment and evaluation, assessment tools

INTRODUCTION
Assessment and evaluation procedures of an educational institution determine the effectiveness of its educational programs, learning environments and the methods applied to achieve its predetermined goals. Moreover, they provide valuable feedback for learners' performances and progress. It is clear that "open and distance education" differs from traditional educational environments since it provides education benefiting from the integration of various communication technologies between and/or among learners and instructors into the learning and teaching processes when they are in different physical environments. Such differences are also naturally reflected in assessment practices (Puspitasari 2010:60).

The fact that learners and instructors are in different physical environments in open and distance education requires the integration of assessment practices based on self-study and self-learning principles into course contents. Such activities, which are prepared according to self-directed learning principles, are evaluated within the framework of monitoring/training-oriented assessment practices. The study by Gagné, Deschênes, Bourdages, Bilodeau and Dallaire (2002:25) reveals that distance and open education learners give importance to such activities since they enable them to evaluate themselves in terms of course content because these activities have the potential to bring advantages regarding self-assessment and guide learners while preparing for their exams.

Another method applied while assessing learners is the assessment aiming summative evaluation, which includes final /exit exams administered at the end of learning activities (Aisha, 2007: 41-42; Jones, 2002:1). Unlike face-to-face learning environments, it is not possible to assess learners based on their participation in lessons, oral exams and the quality of the questions they ask in a classroom environment in open and distance education. Therefore, written assignments and tests have a determining role in assessing their achievement (Puspitasari, 2010:60; Lindler, 1998:25). Mc Isaac and Gunawardena (1996:403) also argue that there is a limited number of options in assessing the performances of learners in open and distance education systems.

This study aims to identify which assessment tools are used in mega universities offering open and distance education in the world, how frequently they are used and the factors affecting why particular tools are preferred to others.

MEGA UNIVERSITIES: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS
Daniel (1998:29) defines mega-university as "a distance education institution offering educational services for over 100.000 active learners enrolled in courses at different levels of higher education". Distance education is the primary activity of these universities. It is clear that definition of a mega university involves three main

criteria: namely "distance education", "higher education" and "size" (Daniel, 1998:29). The basic information about the universities meeting these criteria such as the numbers of learners and academic staff as well as the country they are located in is presented in the table below. This information was obtained from various resources as well as the questionnaire used in this study.

Table 1. Mega Universities

Institution	Established in	Country	The number of active learners	The Number of Academic Staff	
				Full Time	Part-Time
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	1985	India	3.500.000	420	36.000
Open University of China (OUC)	1999	China	3.590.000	-	
nadolu Universitesi	1982	Turkey	1.361.000	1.800	
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)	1974	Pakistan	1.121.038	1.899	
Payame Noor University (PNU)	1988	Iran	1.101.182		
Universitas Terbuka (UT)	1984	Indonesia	607.712	766	15.484
Bangladesh Open University (BOU)	1992	Bangladesh	600.000		
Open University (OUUK)	1969	England	253.075	1.200	8.000
Korea National Open University (KNOU)	1982	South Korea	210.978	308	3.356
Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED)	1972	Spain	205.000	1.450	6.900
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)	1978	Thailand	172.984	379	-

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU): It was established in 1987 and offered educational services in its first year to 4528 students in 2 programs. Indira Gandhi National Open University is also known as "The People's University" and considered the primary institution contributing considerably to Indian higher education through open and distance education. IGNOU currently provides services for more than 4 million students in 490 programs at certificate, undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels in 37 countries, 67 regional centers, 3.000 learner support centers, 67 centers abroad, and with 420 headquarter staff and 36.000 academic supervisors.

IGNOU has a significant role in the country's education system as a national distance education quality assurance institution because it successfully produces high quality distance education materials used by a great majority of learners and instructors. It is also a national resource center for open and distance education in the country as an internationally recognized institution (Panda and Mishra, 2007:328; Panda, 2005:206).

IGNOU uses credit system, and learners are assessed through continuous assessment practices and final exams. Continuous assessment practices include assignments graded by supervisors and computers as well as course-specific project reports in some courses. Learners are required to hand in their assignments to the regional centers they registered in or upload them to the university's website until the end of March, April, August and October. Learners are required to submit maximum 3 assignments in 2-credit courses. The weight of these assignments in overall assessment grade ranges between 25 % and 30 %. The assignments graded by academic supervisors are sent back to learners with detailed feedback. In some programs, certain assessment tools are used such as assignments, projects and seminars for monitoring-oriented assessment purposes, whose percentages in overall assessment range between 25 % and 30 % and even increases up to 50 % in some cases. Another practice adopted to determine achievement levels of learners is end-of-course exams administered twice in a year; namely in June and December. The weight of these exams in overall assessment grade ranges between 70% and 75 % (Manjulika and Reddy, 2000:225).

IGNOU administers computer-based final exams (On-Demand Exam) in 17 regional centers, 25 different programs and 135 courses once a week on demand. It is technically possible for IGNOU headquarter staff to monitor these exams through close-circuit camera systems. Learners can apply Regional Center Director for final exams and pay for the exam fee by credit card or cash in the bank office located near the center.

Open University of China (OUC): Previously known as Chinese Central Radio and Television University, the institution was renamed in 2009 as "Open University of China" (Belawati and Baggaley, 2010:7). The university offers two or three-year courses in 26 undergraduate and 69 associate degree programs for learners ranging from farmers to military personnel and the credits of the courses are determined on annual basis. Being a member of Asia Open Universities, Open University of China collaborates with 128 universities in the country as well as in other 38 countries. Academic year consists of two semesters, each of which lasts 18 weeks and each one credit corresponds to an 18-hour-course. When students complete all the required credits, they carry out a field study and graduate with a total of 144 credits. In order to graduate from Regional Radio Television Universities, it is necessary to take 60% of the total credits specified by the institution. Regional Radio and Television Universities administer mid-term exams, however, final exams are organized and administered by the Center in 2000 exam centers. The learners graduating from two or three-year programs are favored by Chinese government for employment purposes. In the pilot program called "Open Entrance Learners, the credits learners obtained after 8 year period become valid. When they take a sufficient amount of credits, they carry out a practicum in the related field and later graduate depending on their overall achievement. These graduates are also evaluated by the Chinese government for employment. Since each learner has an individualized learning field in OUC, it is possible to apply personalized / individualized assessment as well (Chaudhary and Dey, 2013:211).

Anadolu University (AU): The history of Anadolu University dates back to the establishment of Eskişehir Economics and Commercial Sciences Academy in 1958. Entitled the official authority to provide distance education system in the country by Higher Education Law enacted in 1981, Anadolu University offers open and distance education services in Open Education Faculty and Economics and Business Administration Faculties, which design their educational practices according to the principles of Open Education System. Central Open Education System uses semester credit system and provides open and distance education services in 107 programs; which includes 54 programs at certificate level, 36 at associate degree level and 17 programs at undergraduate level.

The system was restructured in 2012-2013 academic year under the framework of Bologna Process and now offers educational services to approximately 1.3 million students in 81 provinces in the country and in 113 liaison offices, including the offices in Lefkoşa in Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Cologne in Germany, and the head office located in Eskişehir.

The main assessment tool used in assessing the achievement of learners is multiple-choice exams, which are held as one mid-term and one final exam as well as three course exam. The exams for e-certificate programs are administered online. In addition to multiple-choice exams, other assessment tools such as assignments, oral exams, and classical written exams are used in some programs. The university quickly integrates the new developments in information and communication technologies into its practices and adopts the new opportunities provided by new technologies as much as possible. Accordingly, e-portfolio has been effectively used in some programs as an assessment tool since 2008 (Özgür and Kaya, 2011:297).

As of 2011-2012 academic year, the university adopted criterion-referenced assessment system although it had used absolute assessment system since its establishment. Exams are graded out of 100 and only multiple-choice tests are administered in mid-terms and final exams. The weight of these tests in overall assessment grade are 30% and 70% respectively. In the courses where assignments are used as an assessment tool, final grade is calculated by taking 30 % of the mid-term score, 20% of the assignment and 50 % of final exam score. In Distance English Language Teaching Program, 40 % of the mid-term scores obtained from the courses taught in English and 60% of the final exam score are used to calculate the final grade. In applied courses, final grade is calculated by taking 50 % of the grades given by mentors and supervisors separately. In laboratory practices, those who obtain higher than 60 points are given S (satisfactory) grade and lower than 60 U (unsatisfactory) grade. The weight of the score obtained from applied courses in overall grade is 20%. In internship applications, learners are evaluated as "successful" or "unsuccessful" in the courses depending on their performances.

In Anadolu University Central Open Education and Distance Education Programs, "final grade" lower bound system is applied for each course, which is 30 except for laboratory course applications and the courses given in

English in Distance English Language Teaching B.A Program. The learners with lower grades than this lower bound gets FF. Different tables are used depending on the number of students (higher or lower than 30) taking the course and for the courses offered in English in Distance English Language Teaching B.A Program. However, since the number of learners is higher than 30 in most of the courses, the table valid for this situation (the number of students being higher than 30) is used.

Final grades for courses except laboratory course applications and the courses given in English in Distance English Language Teaching B.A Program are calculated as follows when the number of learners taking the course is higher than 30:

a. The scores of learners with a final grade over 30 are converted to normalized z values by using a "z" table prepared for normal distribution. While calculating normalized z values, the achievement percentage of the group in which learner's score is listed is calculated. Z value corresponding to this percentage are calculated by using z table.
b. The normal distribution obtained is divided into 10 parts since there are 10 passing scores according to z values.
c. The letter grade equivalent for each part is assigned according to normalized z values.

Table 2. Anadolu University Open Education System: Normalized "z values" and
"Letter Grade Equivalences - When the Number of Learners Taking a Course is 30 or above

z lower bound	z upper bound	Letter Grade	Coefficient
+2,0000	+∞	AA	4,00
+1,5000	+1,9999	AB	3,70
+1,0000	+1,4999	BA	3,30
+0,5000	+0,9999	BB	3,00
+0,0000	+0,4999	BC	2,70
-0,5000	−0,0001	CB	2,30
-0,9999	−0,5001	CC	2,00
-1,5000	−1,0000	CD	1,70
-2,0000	−1,5001	DC	1,30
-∞	−2,0001	DD	1,00

Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU): Established in 1974 and having 3.577.883 active learners in 2011-2012 academic year, Allama Iqbal University provides open and distance education services in 36 regional centers, 108 liaison bureaus, 1.628 study centers, 1.223 exam centers and 62.882 part-time supervisors (AIOU IN BRIEF, 2012:12). The achievement of learners are determined through assignments and three-hour final exams. It uses credit system and learners take 2 full-credit courses and submit 4 assignments for each full-credit course. These assignments are graded by part-time working supervisors and sent back to learners with detailed feedback. The scores they obtain from these assignments are officially confirmed by supervisors in the last week of each semester. In order to pass a course, learners have to obtain a higher score than the predetermined passing grade when 70% of the score taken from the final exam and 30% of the scores obtained from assignments are calculated. If learners gets a score less than 40, they cannot take the final exam, and if the score obtained from the final exam is lower than 40, learners fail this course (The interview with AIOU test unit head 10.04.2013). Testing Unit administers 2 final exams at the end of the semesters in March or April and August or September. Exams are administered in 300 exams centers across the country and 9 centers located in the Middle East (Haque and Batool, 2000:188). The assessment system used in the university can be summarized as shown in the diagram below.
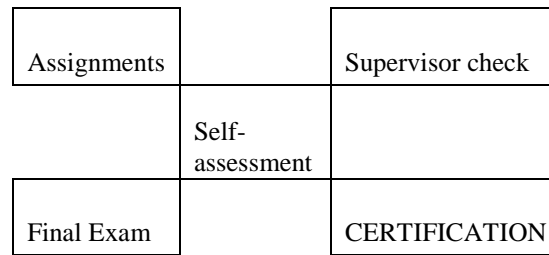
Figure 1. AIOU Learner Assessment System

The scores obtained from assignments and final exams are converted to letter grade according to the table below.

Table 3. AIOU Letter Grade System

Letter Grade	Score-range
A+	80-100
A	70-79
B	55-69
C	40-54
D	Lower than 40

Payame Noor University (PNU): Established in 1988 aiming to "provide higher education through distance learning for everybody, everywhere and every time", Payame Noor University offers educational services to nearly 1.000.000 learners with 3.500 academic staff in 32 regional (provincial) centers, 500 study centers and campuses. The university uses credit system and learners graduate from undergraduate programs by completing 71-72 credits and from graduate programs 132-144 credits. Learners take their exams at the end of each semester in regional centers. The tests used in the exams are prepared by the academic staff of the university and other universities located in other cities of the country. The score learners obtain from these exams and from midterms are calculated as the exit score for each learner. Learners have to get at least 10 out of 20 in each course in order to pass. The assignments, which are also midterm scores, have 25% weight in overall passing score.

Universitas Terbuka (UT): Established in 1984 to provide distance higher education to Indonesian citizens and foreigners, Terbuka University uses semester credit system and offers higher education services to nearly 607.000 learners in certificate, diploma, undergraduate and graduate programs in 4 faculties. The exam system of the university consists of three components; assignments, final exams and comprehensive written exams. While assignments and final exams generally include objective tests (short answer, multiple-choice, true-false, matching etc.), written exams consists of open-ended questions requiring long answers. Assignments are graded in regional offices, objective final tests are computer graded and the exams requiring long answers are graded manually by "Exam Center" of the university. The weight of assignments in overall assessment grade is 20 % and final exam 80%. A "comprehensive exam" involving questions about all the basic courses in the program are rated as: 4 "very good", 3 "good", 2 "medium", "not good" and 0 "poor".

Bangladesh Open University (BOU): Founded in 1992, the university is the only educational institution offering distance education in the country. The university provides educational service for nearly 380.000 in 6 faculties, 12 regional centers, 80 coordination centers, 1106 study centers, and 23 formal and 19 mass education programs. Credit system is used and the components of the exam system are assignments and final exams. Assignments are graded according to 6-scale rubric (A+, A, B,C, D and E). The prerequisite to take the final exams is to get a score higher than a predetermined grade when the mean of the scores obtained from assignments. The weight of continuous assessment practices (assignments) in overall grade is 30% and final exams 70% (Parhar, 2000:252).

Open University (OUUK): Established in 1996 and inspiring most of open universities as a model, British Open University offers services for more than 250.000 learners with 1200 full-time instructors, 3500 support and technical staff and 7000 supervisors. The university uses continuous assessment practices in the form of written assignments throughout the academic year in most of its undergraduate and graduate programs, and exits exams are administered at the end of the year for each course. In some graduate courses, learners are required to carry out project studies. Continuous assessment practices involves two types of assignments; those graded by computers and those graded by instructors. In general, learners submit 7 assignments assessing their

metacognitive competencies for each course (Gibbs, 2010:164). The number of assignments graded by supervisors vary according to the courses and often include questions requiring short or long answers. As for the assignments graded by computers, learners are provided detailed feedback about their performances. The results are normally announced within a week. The exams administered at the end of semesters are invigilated and generally last 3 hours (Rumble and Harry 1982:181). The weight of continuous assessment practices and final exams for each course is determined by "Exam and Assessment Committee". Learners are evaluated for each unit in continuous assessment practices. The assessment system adopted by the university can be shown as follows:
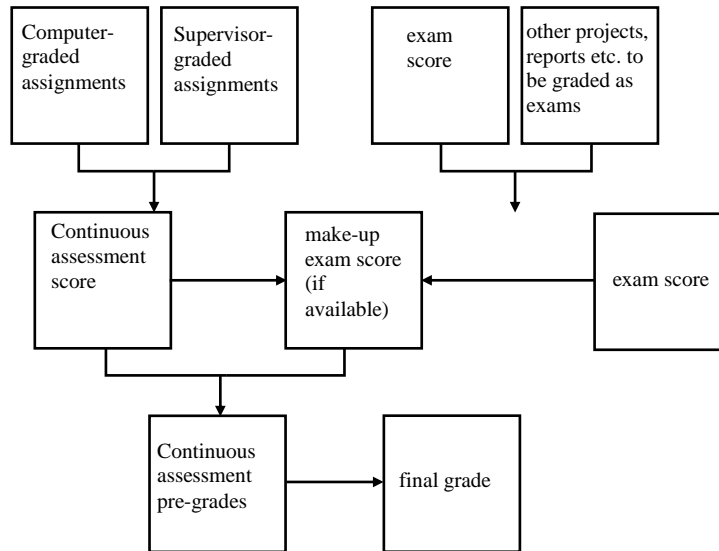

Figure 2. OUUK Learner Assessment System

The scores of learners, whose academic achievement is determined through assignments and a final exam, are converted to letter grade according to the table below.

Table 4. OUUK Letter Grade System

Letter grade	Score ranges	Performance standard
A	85-100	Passes 1
B	70-84	Passes 2
C	55-69	Passes 3
D	40-54	Passes 4
E	30-39	Poor
F	15-29	Poor
G	0-14	Very poor

Korean National Open University (KNOU): Founded in 1972, KNOU is the first distance education university of Korea. It offers educational services for 173.758 learners in 17 departments in 1 faculty and 22 departments in 4 schools with 308 full-time and 3356 part-time instructors. The university uses various technologies such as satellite TV, video conferencing and the Internet. As for assessment purposes, the components of the midterms administered in the university include group work, presentation of assignments etc. The final exams involve questions requiring long answers.

Assessment and Evaluation System at Korean National Open University is displayed in Figure 3.
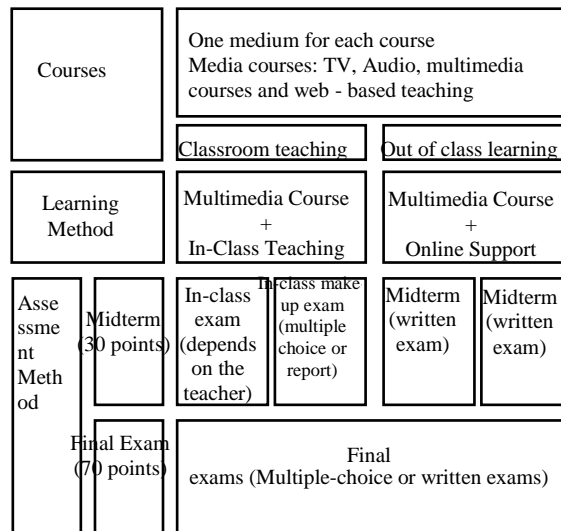
Figure 3. KNOU Learner Assessment System

Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED): Established in 1972, the university provides distance education services for more than 205.000 learners in 9 faculties, 2 technical schools with more than 1400 academic staff. The tests enabling the authorities to monitor learners' individual developments are the important components of its assessment and evaluation system. Called "Distance Evaluation Tests", these tests can be designed as objective tests as well as written exams requiring long answers, interactive activities, case studies and discussions, which are determined by the academic staff of the university. "Distance Evaluation Tests" are also used as a component to determine academic achievement of learners in addition to invigilated exam. For instance, the reports prepared by supervisors about learners depending on the scores they get from these tests are used to finalize learners' overall academic achievement grade. Academic staff may ask learners to submit extra assignment or take an exam to pass a course in some cases.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU): The university, which was established in 1978, offers educational services for 172.984 learners in 94 programs at certificate, associate, undergraduate and graduate levels. Learners take final exams that are administered on a weekend (two days) at the end of each semester. These exams are administered across the country in regional study centers, and learners have to take the exam on the day and in the exam hall specified for them beforehand by the test center. Exam documents are brought to the centers by the university staff themselves, and the academic staff of the local schools and universities invigilate in these exams. The learners at graduate level are assessed by assessment tools such as assignments, end-of-course exams, dissertation and presentations about vocational experiences. As for undergraduate level learners, written exams has a weight of 80 % in theoretical courses, and course-specific assessment techniques are used in applied courses. According to calculations made after the exams, if learners at undergraduate level gets 76 and above out of 100, they obtain "honor" degree, they get "satisfactory/successful" degree between 60-75 and those getting lower than 60 obtain "unsatisfactory/unsuccessful" degree. Only the learners obtaining "honor" and "satisfactory" degree pass the course (Prudtikal, 2000:78). The following rating system is used for graduate level students.

Table 5 STOU Letter Grade System

Letter Grade	Point per credit	Remarks
A	4.0	Perfect
B+	3.5	Very Good
B	3	Good
C+	2.5	Over the average
C	2	Mediocre
D	1	Poor
F	0	Fails

METHOD
The research uses mixed research method, in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected. In this method, there are two types of data analysis: statistical and thematic (Plano Clark and Cresswell, 2010:297). In the studies using mixed research method, both qualitative and quantitative data are collected to compensate the weakness of one data set with the strength of the other (Johnson and Christensen, 2008: 48; Plano Clark and Creswell, 2010: 299).

DATA COLLECTION
Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the purposes of the study. The quantitative data was collected through Assessment Tools / Techniques used to Assess Student Learning Outcomes in Mega Universities Questionnaire. For the data collection purposes, 11 mega universities in the world offering distance education were sent the link of this online questionnaire as well as an official letter stating this request. While determining the mega universities to be included in the study, the information available in related resources (Jung, 2005: 81; Moore ve Kearsley, 2012: 34) were used. The questionnaire was finalized after it was presented to three experts working as directors of distance education institutions for feedback during an international conference focusing on distance education.

The Mega universities which were sent online survey link and an official letter are presented in Table 6

Table 6 The Mega universities which were sent the link of the online survey

Institution	Country	The contact person
Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)	India	Rector-president
Open University of China (OUC)	China	Rector-president
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)	Pakistan	Rector-president
Payame Noor University (PNU)	Iran	Rector-president
Universitas Terbuka (UT)	Indonesia	Rector-president
Bangladesh Open University (BOU)	Bangladesh	Director of Student Affairs Unit
Open University (OUUK)	England	Vice-rector
University of South Africa (UNISA)	South Africa	Rector-president
Korea National Open University (KNOU)	South Korea	Rector-president
Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED)	Spanish	Vice-rector
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)	Thailand	Rector-president

The survey was replied by the contact people of the following six universities: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Universitas Terbuka (UT), Open University (OU), Korea National Open University (KNOU), Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED) and Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU).

The qualitative data of the study were obtained from Allama Iqbal Open University, which was visited by the authors to obtain more detailed data about the assessment and evaluation procedures of the university as specified by the research problem. The interview conducted with the Head of Exam Services revealed valuable information about the assessment tools used in the programs. Field notes were taken during the field visit and some documents were collected such as leaflets, program catalogues, exam regulations, assignment samples and assignment confirmation and evaluation forms. The detailed observations were made while visiting Punjab Regional Center of the university. Two exam halls were visited during a real exam administration.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study uses check list and frequency tables to analyze quantitative data collected through Assessment Tools and Techniques used in Assessing Learners in Mega Universities Questionnaire

The qualitative data of the study were obtained from Allama Iqbal Open University, which was visited to obtain more detailed data about assessment and evaluation procedures. The field notes taken during the field visit, leaflets obtained, program catalogues, exam regulations, assignment samples and assignment confirmation and evaluation forms were analyzed as documents qualitatively.

FINDINGS

The findings about the mega universities that replied the questionnaire are classified under the following titles: Institutional Information, Assessment Tools and Techniques used in Mega Universities, the Factors Affecting the Choice of Assessment Tools and Techniques in Mega Universities

INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

Table 7 Institutional Information about Mega Universities

INSTITUTION	MODE OF EDUCATION		THE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS		THE NUMBER OF PROGRAMS					Total
	Distance	Both face to face and distance	Full time	Part time	Certificate	Associate	Undergraduate	Graduate	Post Graduate	
Open University (OUUK)	X		-	8.000	50	66	66	49	1	232
Korean National Open University (KNOU)		X	147	1.472	0	0	22	17	0	39
Universitas Terbuka (UT)	X		766	15.484	6	3	19	4	0	32
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)		X	379	-	22	0	36	26	10	94
National University for Distance Education (UNED)	X		1.450	6.900	0	21	27	45	39	132
Anadolu Üniversitesi (AU)		X	2.200	-	42	46	12	4	0	104
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)		X	-	62.882	7	7	32	56	16	118
Total					127	143	214	201	66	

The data displayed in Table 7 show that 3 of the participant universities offer only distance education and 4 both distance and face-to-face education.

In these universities, the number of part-time instructors is higher than full-time ones. AIOU strikingly stands out with the number of its part-time employed instructors. Also called "supervisors", these instructors are

responsible for grading the assignments, giving feedback about them and being the moderators of workshop practices carried out at the end of the terms which enable learner-learner and learner-instructor interaction. The number of part-time instructors employed nationwide in AIOU during 2012-2013 academic year is 62.882 (AIOU IN BRIEF, 2012).

The column displaying the data regarding the number of the programs in Table 7 shows that the university with the highest number of programs is OUUK with 232 programs. This university is followed by UNED with 132 programs, AIOU with 118, AU 104, STOU 94, KNOU 39 and UT 32. OUUK and AIOU both give diplomas and degrees ranging from certificate level to PhD level. According to Table 7, KNO, UT and AU do not have distance PhD programs, and KNOU and UNED do not offer certificate programs, and KNOU and STOU do not have associate degree programs.

The information about assessment in mega universities are presented in Table 8.

Table 8 The Information About Assessment in Mega Universities

INSTITUTION	GENERAL ASSESSMENT (%)		ONLINE ASSESSMENT			ASSESSMENT METHOD	
	Continuous	End of Course	High	Middle	Low	Norm-referenced	Criterion referenced
Open University (OUUK)	50	50			X	X	X
Korean National Open University (KNOU)	30	70			X	X	X
Universitas Terbuka (UT)	50	50		X		X	
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)	10	90			X	X	
National University for Distance Education (UNED)	20	80	X			X	X
Anadolu Üniversitesi (AU)	10	90			X		X
Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU)	30	70				X	

When the data in Table 8 are examined, it is seen that continuous and end-of-course assessment have equal weights in OUUK and UT, and end-of-course assessment has higher weight in other universities, especially in AU and STOU with 90 %.

In 4 of mega universities (OUUK, KNOU, STOU and AU), online assessment is reported to be applied at a "low" level, in UT "medium" and in UNED "high" level.

While three universities (UT, STOU and AIOU) reported that they use only norm-referenced system, other 3 universities (OUUK, KNOU and UNED) use both norm-referenced and criterion referenced assessment. AU uses only criterion referenced assessment system.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN MEGA UNIVERSITIES
The contact people of study-specific institutions were asked to specify the assessment tools listed in the questionnaire and rate the degree of their use ranging from 1 to 10. The replies of the contact people are presented in Table 9. The empty columns in the table imply that they are not used by these institutions, "1" means the lowest degree of use and "10" the most frequent use.

Table 9 The Degree of Use of Assessment Tools and Techniques in Mega Universities to Assess Students

	Assesment Tools/Methods	Mega Universities									
		AIOU	AU	KNOU	STOU	OUUK	UNED	UT	Min	Max	Nr.of Institution
1	Multiple Choice Tests		10	7	10	1	7	9	1	10	6
2	Oral Examination (Face-to-Face)	3	1	1		1	1	1	1	3	6
3	Open-Ended Questions	9		6	2	10		2	2	10	5
4	Final Exam/Exit Exam	4			3	5	4	10	3	10	5
5	Assignments	3	2		10	10		10	2	10	5

#	Assessment Tool										
6	Internship	3	2	2	1	1		1	1	3	5
7	True-False Tests				1	1	1		1	2	4
8	Short Answer and Completion Questions	3			2	10		1	1	10	4
9	Research Paper/Thesis	4			2	10		2	2	10	4
10	Online Discussion	1			6	1		10	1	10	4
11	Perfomance Assessment	1			3	1		1	1	3	4
12	Rubrics	1			2	10		2	1	10	4
13	Drama	2			2	1		2	1	2	4
14	Project	2			3	5		1	1	5	4
15	Case Study	1			2	2		5	1	5	4
16	Matching	1			1	1			1	1	3
17	Interview (Face-to-Face)				1	1		1	1	1	3
18	Discussion Questions				6	9		10	6	10	3
19	Online Examination		1		2			7	1	7	3
20	Portfolio	1			1	1			1	1	3
21	Group Work Assessment				5	1		1	1	5	3
22	Self-Assessment				10	10		9	9	10	3
23	E-Portfolio		2			1			1	2	2
24	Surveys				2	1			1	2	2
25	Pre-Testing/Post-Testing	1			10				1	10	2
26	Nationally Recognized Assessment Tools				1	1			1	1	2
27	Focus Group Interviews	1			1				1	1	2
28	Consept Maps				1	1			1	1	2
29	Diagnostic Tree				1	1			1	1	2
30	Online Interview				1	1			1	1	2
31	Online Oral Exam				1	1			1	1	2
32	Product Development							1	1	1	1
33	Reflective Letter					10			10	10	1
34	Structured Grid					1			1	1	1
35	Peer Assessment				1				1	1	1

According to Table 9, the following data were obtained from the institutions: 6 out of 7 institutions that replied the questionnaire reported that they use multiple-choice and oral exams; 5 institutions open-ended questions, final/exit exams, assignments and internship; 4 institutions true-false tests, short answer and sentence completion questions, research article / dissertation, online discussions, performance assessment, rubrics, drama, project and case studies; 3 institutions matching questions, interviews, discussion questions, online exams, portfolios, group work assessment and self-assessment; 2 institutions e-portfolios, surveys, pre-tests/post-tests, nationally recognized standard assessment tools, focus group interviews, concept maps, diagnostic trees, online interviews and online oral exams; 1 institution product development, reflective letters, structured grids and peer assessment. Although oral exam is used in 6 out of 7 institutions, its frequency of use is quite low. Only tool which was not included in the table because it was not specified by any institutions is "drama".

When the table is examined in terms of the variety of assessment tools, it is seen that two institutions (OUUK and STOU) use the highest number of tools specified in the list. The contact people of these institutions reported that they use 30 out of the tools in the list. These two institutions are followed by UT with 20 assessment tools and AIOU with 17. While AU uses 6 assessment tools, the institutions using the least number of tools are KNOU and UNED.

When the degree of use is considered, 12 out of 35 assessment tools and techniques listed in the questionnaire (multiple-choice test, open-ended questions, final/exit exam, assignment, short answer and sentence completion questions, research article/dissertation, online discussion, rubrics, discussion question, self-assessment, pretest – posttest and reflective letter) are more frequently used in some institutions. Assignment and self-assessment are rated as 10 point in two institutions (OUUK and STOU)

Extra information about AIOU was obtained during the field visit and from STOU through correspondences. Accordingly, the assessment tools used in STOU depends on undergraduate and graduate programs. To illustrate with, while multiple-choice tests, open-ended questions and self-assessment are generally used in undergraduate

programs, oral exams, final/exit exam, research article/dissertation and project are preferred for graduate programs.

In AIOU, assignments are given for midterms and open-ended questions requiring long answers for final exams. Leaners are required to answer 5 out of 8 open-ended questions in final exams.

Although the assessment tools and techniques vary according to the programs, assignments play a great role in raising awareness about the curriculum by encouraging learners to use study materials, engaging them into continuous assessment procedures and providing them with valuable feedback given by instructors.

Learners are required to submit 4 assignments for a full-credit (6 credits) course and 2 assignments for a half-credit (3 credits), and these assignments have a weight of 30% of the final grade. If learners get a score lower than 40, they cannot take final exams. Similarly, learners fail the course if they get a lower score than 40 in the final exam.

Assignments include open-ended questions just like in final exams to assess learners with different cognitive levels. Learners are asked to answer the questions in 1200 words the least. The information about assignments such as the content and deadline etc are published on university's official website. Learners have two options to submit their assignments; to upload them to the official websites of the institution or to hand them in to the staff working in regional centers.

AIOU uses other assessment tools and techniques in addition to assignments. Among these alternatives at undergraduate level are open-ended questions, short answer and sentence completion questions and at graduate level final/exit exam, oral exam, online discussion via video conferencing; product development and internship in Business Administration Program; and portfolio in vocational courses. In addition, certain tools and techniques are used in Master's degree and PhD programs, which are based on research, such as pre-test / post-test, focus group interview, research article / dissertation, case study and project.

Table 10 displays the percentages of assessment tools and techniques in overall assessment and their frequency of use in AIOU Computer Sciences Undergraduate Program. Continuous assessment involves assignments, mid-term, presentation or lab study, and final exam can be administered both in written and oral format.

Table 10. The Learner Assessment System in AIOU Computer Sciences Undergraduate Program

ASSESSMENT TYPE AND TOOL		COURSE PRESENTATION							
		Face-to-face		Distance		Online		Project	
		Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	Nr.	%
Continuous assessment	Assignment	2	10	2	30	2	10	-	-
	Mid-terms or Lab studies	1	20	-	-	1	20	-	-
	Presentation	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	30
Final Exam	Written Exam	1	70	1	70	1	70	-	-
	Oral Exam	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	70
Total Percentage		100		100		100		100	

One of the tools used in assessing learners is presentation. In some programs, learners are required to make presentations. To illustrate, learners enrolled in Business Administration program are required to submit two assignments, make one online presentation and take the final exam. The score taken from the presentation consists of 10 % of the final grade, total weight of assignments and presentations 30 % and the final exam 70 %. It is also required to obtain at least 50 points out of 100 from assignments and presentation and 70 % attendance is obligatory.

The question asking about three most frequently used assessment tools in the institutions was also included in the questionnaire sent to mega universities. The replies given to this item are presented in Table 11 below.

Table 11. The Most Frequently used 3 Assessment Tools in Mega Universities

The Most Frequently used 3 Assessment Tools	The Number of Institutions
Multiple Choice Tests	4
Assignments	3
Final / Exit Exam	3
Projects	2
True-False Tests	1
Internship	1
Report	1
Open-ended questions	1
Case Study	1
Presentation (Workshop)	1

Table 11 clearly shows that multiple choice test is the most commonly used assessment tool, which is followed by assignments and final/exit exams, true-false tests, internship, report, open-ended question, case study and presentation (workshop). Here, workshop refers to compulsory presentations to be made by learners for their peers and instructors at regional centers of AIOU at the end of terms under the supervision of moderators. The interviews conducted with the contact people in institutions revealed that workshop practice increases the interaction of learners with the system and help them develop commitment to the institution.

THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHOICE OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES IN MEGA UNIVERSITIES

The contact people in mega universities were asked about the factors affecting their choice of assessment tools and techniques. The replies given for this question are presented in Table 12 below.

Table 12. The Factors Affecting the Choice of Assessment Tools and Techniques in Mega Universities

The Factors Affecting the Choice of Assessment Tools and Techniques	The Number of Institutions
The number of learners	5
The number of teachers/raters	4
Time	4
Technological Infrastructure	4
Cost	4
Pedagogical Issues	4
Organizational Structure	2

When Table 12 is examined, it is seen that 5 out of 7 contact people reported that the most important factor affecting the choice of assessment tools and techniques is the number of learners. In addition, 4 contact people replied "the number of instructors/raters, time, technological infrastructure, cost and pedagogical issues as the other determining factors. Finally, two universities stated that organizational structure affects the choice of assessment tools.

The finding suggesting that the number of learners as a determining role while choosing assessment tools are well supported with the data presented in the table above. High number of learners in universities requires the use of multiple choice tests for assessment purposes. However, it is interesting that AIOU, which has the highest number of learners among the participant universities, do not administer any multiple choice test. This university prefers assignments and open-ended questions in the exams and the replies are graded by raters / supervisors. Although a rubric is used in assessment, some learners complain about the subjectivity of this type of grading. This information was obtained from the dissertations written at the university and the interviews conducted. The interviews conducted with the contact people in AIOU revealed that they are planning to integrate objective tests into the system as well.

CONCLUSION
Assessment tools used to evaluate students in mega universities vary to a great extent. The widest range of variety is in OUUK and STOU. These two universities use 30 out of 37 assessment tools included in the survey. These two institutions are followed by UT with 20 assessment tools and AIOU with 17 tools. The mega universities using the least number of assessment tools are AU with 6 tools and KNOU and UNED with 4 tools.

The most frequently used assessment tools and techniques in mega universities are multiple choice tests, assignments and final/exit exams. In addition, the most important factor affecting the choice of these tools is "the number of learners". The institutions where multiple-choice tests are preferred the most often are AU, STOU and UT and the least used institution is OUUK. Assignments and self-assessment are used the most often in STOU and OUUK. It is interesting that although AIOU is among the mega universities with the highest number of learners, multiple-choice tests are not used in this institution. AIOU administers a final / exit exam which consists of assignments and open-ended questions. Learners are asked to express their opinions and point of views in a detailed way by answering 5 open-ended questions out of 8. Graded as mid-terms, assignments guide learners to the content of course materials so that they are informed about the curriculum even at the beginning of the semesters. The assignments submitted to supervisors until the predetermined deadlines are graded, and detailed feedback is provided regarding the content of the assignments. This practice is believed to promote learners' commitment to the system as well as to the institution. Another similar and useful practice in this sense is the compulsory presentations made by learners in collaboration with their peers in regional centers and graded by their supervisors.

The number of part-time employed teaching staff in mega universities is quite high, which enables the institutions to integrate certain assessment tools such as assignment, project or portfolio etc. into the system. This staff contributes to the system by grading the assignments and giving feedback to learners when necessary.

Another important finding of the study is that continuous assessment, which aims to assess learners during learning process in certain intervals, is weighted as equally as end-of-course assessment tools in the assessment process in mega universities. In other words, process-oriented assessment is preferred in these universities. By doing this, learners are given more feedback to give them opportunity for permanent learning and institutional commitment.

Another finding of the study is the low number of cases when online assessment practices are applied in mega universities. This result clearly indicates that online technologies are not used in assessment systems yet. The reason lying behind this situation might be the disadvantages of online environments in terms of data security.

As for the assessment methods adopted, some mega universities are found to be using only absolute assessment while others prefer both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced evaluation. Unlike other universities, Anadolu University uses only criterion-referenced evaluation method.

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