



# Assessment practices and challenges for NWU History students in an open distance learning context

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# Overview

1. Introduction and background, including aim(s)
2. The research methodology and context
3. Findings
4. The interactive whiteboard as a resource used through the Open Distance Learning mode of delivery
5. Conclusion

# 1. Introduction and Background

- By its nature, distance learning separates students from lecturers and demands that interventions be put in place to counter the constraints which this distance poses, particularly to students
- Fair, reliable, competent and properly facilitated formative assessment , whether formal or informal, therefore becomes challenging in an open distance mode

# 1. Introduction and Background

- This presentation focusses on the National Professional Diploma(NPDE) History students of the North-West University (Potchefstroom campus)
- Apart from a summative assessment opportunity at the end of each semester, these students are also assessed through one comprehensive assignment, which covers most aspects of the prescribed work, once in a semester

# 1. Introduction and Background

- Because these students are in far-flung areas of the North-West province, support, guidance and monitoring are to a great extent difficult

## ❖ Aim (s)

The aim of this presentation is to investigate and explore present assessment practices and challenges faced by NWU NPDE History students and how the Unit for open distance learning tries to address these challenges

## 2. The research methodology and context

### ❖ The research methodology

- By means of a structured questionnaire, information was elicited from the participants, who are registered as NWU NPDE History students
- Many of them are also teachers in some schools of the North-West province
- Information was sought about the viability of assessment practices and the challenges these students are facing

## 2. The research methodology and context

### ❖ Research question

- What are the assessment practices and challenges faced by NPDE History students in an open distance learning context?
- As a pilot project data was gathered from Grades 4, 5 and 6 History teachers (n=42), drawn from some districts of the North-West province. They are Dr Kenneth Kaunda and Bojanala

## 2. The research methodology and context

- ✓ Data collection and analysis
  - An open-ended questionnaire was designed to elicit the responses of History teachers (and at the same time also NPDE History students) in an open distance learning context on assessment practices and challenges experienced
  - The data which was collected was then analysed and presented qualitatively



# 3. Findings

## ❖ Assessment practices and challenges

experienced in common are the following :

- 70 % respondents indicate that it's just not enough to do essay-type questions, but that multiple-choice type of questions must also be included

### 3. Findings

- 75% respondents are of the opinion that improvements in assessment can be brought about through organising workshops for teachers
- 65% think that essay-type questions should be mixed source-based questions

### 3. Findings

- 80% prefer formative assessment, whether it is formal or informal
- 55% mentioned group or peer assessment
- 65% indicate that the NWU assessment helps them to develop a deeper understanding of the subject and enables them to identify their challenges better

### 3. Findings

- **70% respondents are not happy about the kind of support and guidance they are receiving, they are of the opinion that more could be done, particularly in terms of communication**
- **Though still largely skeptical about the use of interactive whiteboard as a teaching resource, most of the students (teachers) welcome their use**

## 4. The interactive whiteboard as a resource for curriculum delivery and assessment

- Lessons are presented by the lecturer via an interactive whiteboard in an enclosed studio, while students, who are in various remote or central areas all over South Africa, are in attendance and listen via the IWB to the lesson at a specific study centre

## 4. The interactive whiteboard

- The lecturer, who is in the studio, is provided with a micro-phone and a video camera takes a footage of the lesson which is broadcast live to the study centres
- Such a lesson is recorded!

## 4.The interactive whiteboard

- **There is always a facilitator at each study centre. Students are able to find the recorded lesson on the internet if they were not able to attend to the broadcast**
- **As a way of enhancing the process of assessment, the facilitators normally attend to follow-up questions and queries by the students**

## 4. The interactive whiteboard

- ❖ **The benefits of the IWBs**
- **The IWBs allow for interactive participation by both the students and lecturers, thereby promoting assessment practices**
- **Questions can be asked and a discussion can take place, supervised by the facilitators**
- **Students can also write answers and solutions to problems on the IWB**



## 4.The interactive whiteboard

- The lecturer is able to create an interactive teaching and learning situation
- For the process to be successful, facilitators at the study centres have to coordinate students' participation
- It becomes exciting for students to interact directly and be guided by the lecturers themselves

## 5. Conclusion

- **The interactive whiteboard technology as currently utilised by the North-West University provides History students with opportunities for further exploration of content knowledge, discuss their issues in History classes, engage in more assessment practices, provides for collaboration with fellow students and the responsible lecturer and an exciting avenue to make the subject interesting and lively!**

## 5. Conclusion

- Through IWBs what could be problematic History concepts are rendered clearer
- History teachers who are in remote areas benefit immensely from the use of these IWBs
- The use of IWBs in History teaching and assessment facilitates and directs contact between students and subject specialists!

# THANK YOU!