



ASSESSMENT FOR HUMAN POTENTIAL

VALUING GROWTH, PROCESS, AND PURPOSE IN LEARNING

16 APRIL 2026
WEBINAR REPORT



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VALUING GROWTH, PROCESS, AND PURPOSE IN LEARNING

Thursday, 16 APRIL 2026



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INTRODUCTION

The webinar brought together educators and researchers from India, Bhutan, and the United Kingdom for a timely and thought-provoking discussion on the future of assessment. Organised by Pallavan Learning Systems in association with Ritinjali and the Centre for Escalation of Peace, the session invited participants to reconsider one of the most influential forces in education: the way learning is measured.

The central premise of the webinar was both simple and profound. Much of what matters most in the growth of a human being cannot be easily reduced to marks, grades, rankings, or percentiles. While traditional assessments may measure recall, speed, and performance under controlled conditions, they often fail to capture deeper human qualities such as resilience, empathy, integrity, creativity, curiosity, self-awareness, and the capacity to learn continuously.

The discussion did not position itself as an argument against examinations. Instead, it sought to ask a deeper question: what is assessment for? Is it primarily a tool for sorting and selecting, or can it become a process that actively supports learning, reflection, and the realisation of human potential?

Set against the backdrop of rapid technological change and the rise of artificial intelligence, the conversation became even more urgent. If machines can increasingly perform well on standardised tasks, then education systems must reconsider what uniquely human capacities they wish to nurture and how these can be recognised through more meaningful forms of assessment.



ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Moderator:

Archana Mishra

Education Consultant & Research Associate

Pallavan Learning Systems, India



With over 30 years of experience teaching national and international curricula across schools in India and Bhutan, including The British School, Druk Gyalpo Institute, and The Shri Ram School, Archana is a dedicated educator, administrator, and lifelong learner. She has consistently focused on centring student learning experiences and integrating technology into pedagogical practices, thereby creating personalised and evolving learning environments. Known for her innovative approaches, Archana has set the standard in areas such as technology integration within the Science curriculum, experiential learning, and inclusive teaching. Currently serving as a Science consultant and Research associate at Pallavan Learning Systems, she empowers educators to incorporate experiential learning, ensuring that teaching is both relevant and engaging for students.

Panelist:

Aanchal Chomal

Associate Professor, School of Continuing Education

Azim Premji University, India



Aanchal Chomal is an Associate Professor at the School of Continuing Education and University Resource Centre at Azim Premji University, where she also heads the Assessment team. In addition, she leads the Field Research function at Azim Premji Foundation. She has worked extensively in the field of education across India, with particular focus on student assessment, teacher evaluation, and frameworks for

measuring learning in both cognitive and socio-emotional domains.

Over the years, she has conducted content and pedagogic workshops with government school teachers, teacher educators, and education functionaries across several states in India. Her work has included areas such as learning outcomes, test design, formative assessment, and social science education. She has also worked closely with institutions such as the Government of Karnataka, CBSE, NCERT, NCTE, UNESCO, and the Ministry of Education on assessment-related initiatives and policy development.

Aanchal holds a Bachelor's degree in Geography from Presidency College, Kolkata, and a Master's degree in Geography from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Panelist:

Joella Lynch

PhD Researcher, CCAI

Northumbria University, UK



Joella Lynch is a PhD researcher in Citizen-Centred Artificial Intelligence at Northumbria University, UK, exploring how teachers make professional decisions about whether, when, and how to use AI in education. Her research focuses on the role of teacher judgement, educational purpose, and meaningful learning in an age of rapidly evolving technologies.

Before beginning her PhD, Joella worked as a secondary school science teacher in the UK and has been involved in a range of educational initiatives including Skills Builder programmes and The Brilliant Club. She has also worked internationally, including teaching at the Druk Gyalpo's Institute in Bhutan, where she developed a strong interest in education systems that prioritise holistic development and human potential.

Through her research and workshops with educators, Joella explores how emerging

technologies such as AI can support learning while still preserving the deeper aims of education—curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, and human flourishing. Her work brings together perspectives from education, human-centred AI, and teacher professional practice.

Panelist:

Tshering Nidup

*Researcher, Programme Lead, Teacher
Druk Gyalpo's Institute, Bhutan*



Tshering works as a researcher with the Druk Gyalpo's institute and also teaches Life Science at The Royal Academy. His areas of interest in education include capturing wholistic growth by widening the lens of assessment and reporting as well as education policies and their impact on learning.

He has also provided leadership in numerous programmes in teacher professional development related to the Bhutan Baccalaureate.



WEBINAR SESSION



The session opened with a powerful reflection. Participants were invited to think of someone they deeply admired, such as a mentor, parent, or quiet hero in their community, and then ask themselves what that person had scored in a board examination or standardised test. The immediate realisation was that most people neither knew nor cared. This opening framed the central tension of the webinar: there is often a large gap between what assessment systems measure and what truly makes a person admirable or impactful.

Assessment as a Window into the Learner

One of the earliest themes explored was the extraordinary power of assessment when it is used thoughtfully. A moving classroom example was shared in which a child, when asked what eyes are used for, responded not with the expected textbook answer but by saying that eyes are used to cry. What could have been dismissed as an incorrect answer instead became a profound insight into the learner's emotional world, lived experience, and individuality.

“Assessment is the only tool that gives you a peek into the child’s thinking.”— Aanchal Chomal

This example highlighted that assessment is not merely about right or wrong responses. At its best, it offers educators a glimpse into how a learner thinks, feels, interprets the world, and makes meaning. A good question, followed by genuine dialogue, can reveal far more than a score ever could.

What Is the Purpose of Education in the Age of AI?

The discussion then turned to the rise of artificial intelligence. If AI can now generate essays, answer examination questions, solve mathematical problems, and perform strongly on many standardised assessments, what exactly are human learners being certified for?

This led to a deeper interrogation of the purpose of education itself. If information is increasingly accessible at the touch of a button, then education cannot remain centred only on knowledge acquisition. Greater importance must be placed on what learners do with knowledge: how they apply it, question it, connect it, create with it, and use it ethically.

“We’ve taken this view that assessment is the end point, as opposed to assessment actually being part of the journey.”— Joella Lynch

The panel emphasised that the future of education must focus more intentionally on critical thinking, creativity, judgment, adaptability, collaboration, emotional intelligence,

and the ability to keep learning throughout life. These capacities cannot be developed through narrow test preparation alone.

Learning Is a Journey, Not an Endpoint

Another important theme was the tendency to treat assessment as the final destination rather than part of the learning journey. Traditional systems often reward only the finished product: the correct answer, the final score, or the polished performance. Yet meaningful learning is rarely linear. It includes confusion, experimentation, setbacks, revision, perseverance, and gradual growth.

The webinar stressed the importance of creating environments where learners feel confident to fail, make mistakes, and learn from them. When assessment recognises effort, process, reflection, and improvement, it becomes a tool for development rather than fear.

Learner Agency and the Bhutan Baccalaureate Approach

A significant part of the discussion focused on how assessment can be redesigned when the learner is placed at the centre. The Bhutan Baccalaureate was presented as an example of an approach that seeks to widen the lens of assessment beyond one-off examinations and narrow academic performance.

“The learner who is being assessed must remain at the centre of the assessment process.” — Tshering Nidup

Rather than relying only on a final external test, the model creates multiple opportunities for learners to demonstrate growth over time. Assessment is gathered through different forms of evidence, including classroom observation, ongoing tasks, projects,

performances, reflections, and conversations about learning. This allows progress to be seen across a broader range of capacities rather than through a single score on a single day.

An important feature of this approach is that the learner is not treated merely as the object of assessment. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own progress, identify strengths, recognise areas for improvement, and participate in discussions about their development. In this way, self-assessment and teacher feedback work together rather than standing in opposition to one another.

The discussion also suggested that assessment becomes richer when it draws on multiple perspectives. Instead of depending solely on external judgment, evidence can come from teacher observations, learner reflections, peer interactions, and authentic demonstrations of learning in real contexts. This creates a more complete and humane picture of achievement and growth.

At the heart of the Bhutan Baccalaureate approach is the belief that the individual being assessed must remain at the centre of the process. The aim is not simply to rank learners, but to help them become self-aware, capable, and responsible individuals who can continue learning throughout life.

Trust and the Culture of Assessment

A recurring idea throughout the session was that assessment cannot be separated from culture. Where there is mistrust between learners, teachers, institutions, and systems, assessment often becomes heavily standardised and externally controlled. In such

“There is a general sense of mistrust between various stakeholders.” — Tshering Nidup

contexts, there is limited confidence in teacher judgment, limited belief in learner honesty, and little room for individual pathways.

The webinar argued that meaningful assessment requires trust. Teachers need professional autonomy. Learners need to be seen as capable of honest reflection. Schools need cultures where feedback is constructive rather than punitive. Without these conditions, even well-designed reforms struggle to take root.

Four Purposes of Assessment

A particularly valuable contribution to the discussion was the clarification that assessment serves different purposes, and confusion arises when these purposes are mixed together.

The four broad purposes identified were:

1. Measuring learning – determining the extent of learning that has taken place.
2. Certifying achievement – using results for promotion, graduation, or formal recognition.
3. Evaluating system health – understanding how schools, regions, or nations are performing through large-scale studies.
4. Enabling learning – using classroom assessment to improve teaching and support learner growth.

The strongest argument made was that classroom assessment should primarily serve the fourth purpose. When classrooms imitate high-stakes testing models, opportunities for rich learning are diminished.

The Limits of Uniformity

The webinar challenged the idea that all learners should produce the same answers or demonstrate learning in identical ways. In authentic learning environments, diversity of thought, creativity, and multiple pathways should be expected. Uniform responses may sometimes indicate not success, but a narrowing of learning opportunities.

This was particularly relevant in domains such as language, inquiry, and practical disciplines where originality, interpretation, and varied approaches are signs of healthy learning cultures.

Parents and Public Expectations

The role of parents was also explored in depth. Many families understandably remain anxious about grades, rankings, and examination outcomes because these have historically been linked to opportunity and security. For some, marks are the clearest and most familiar indicator of progress.

The panel suggested that schools must actively bring parents into richer conversations about learning. Through dialogue, transparent communication, portfolios, digital platforms, and clearer explanations of broader goals, parents can begin to understand growth in ways that go beyond marks alone.

“Engaging parents in dialogue about the important skills that matter for their children now is essential.” — Joella Lynch

Systemic Pressures and the Problem of Filters

The conversation also considered the growing tendency of universities and employers to add new layers of entrance tests, interviews, and selection filters because school examination results are seen as insufficient indicators of readiness.

This raises important questions. If every stage requires another filter, what does that reveal about trust in existing systems? And what burden does this place on young people navigating multiple gatekeeping processes? The webinar encouraged participants to think about coherence and alignment across educational pathways.



Q & A AND INTERACTIVE REFLECTIONS

A particularly engaging feature of the webinar was the way the audience became active contributors to the discussion. Questions emerging through the chat, along with reflective prompts posed by the moderator, transformed the session into a dynamic exchange of ideas rather than a one-way panel conversation. The responses added depth, diversity, and lived experience to the themes being explored.

Q1. What if an AI assessment was also different?

A. This question invited participants to think beyond whether AI should be used in assessment and instead consider how it might be used meaningfully. The response highlighted that if AI merely reproduces narrow systems of ranking, speed, and standardised correctness, little will change. However, if it is used to personalise learning, provide timely feedback, identify patterns of growth, and support reflection, it could become a tool for transformation. The deeper issue is not technology itself, but the values that shape its use.

Q2. How do we really create the environment and the mindset needed for such an assessment system to thrive?

A. This was recognised as a deeper systemic challenge. Meaningful assessment cannot flourish in a culture shaped by fear, mistrust, and excessive comparison. It requires trust between teachers and learners, openness to multiple forms of evidence, respect for growth over mere performance, and leadership that values learning over appearances. Each context may look different, but the foundation must always be humane and learner-centred.

One of the first reflective questions placed before the audience was:

“What happens when a learner’s self-assessment and a teacher’s assessment conflict?”

This prompted rich responses. One participant wrote, “We can show the rubric of assessment in advance, with this way self assessment would be more effective.” This highlighted the importance of transparency and shared expectations in helping learners assess themselves meaningfully.

Another participant responded, “Education should provoke exploration in a non threatening environment where self assessment must receive the same respect as that of the teacher and through collective process understanding emerges and learning is embedded.” This brought attention to the need for psychologically safe classrooms where learners can think freely, take risks, and see self-assessment as a valued part of learning.

A further response noted, “Difference in assessment will lead to a fruitful discussion between the teacher and the students which will help to understand the backstory for the learner. This will also help the teacher to plan and help the student learn better.” Here, assessment conflict was reframed as an opportunity to understand the learner more deeply and offer more personalised support.

The conversation then moved to the larger purpose of education. One participant observed, “It is essential for students to understand the true purpose of education. At present, most students are primarily focused on just passing their grades. If they recognize the purpose of education and embrace becoming lifelong learners, self-assessment would be far more effective than relying on external evaluations from teachers or peers because no one knows you better than you know yourself.” This reflected the webinar’s emphasis on moving from grade-seeking behaviour towards lifelong learning, ownership, and self-awareness.

Another participant reflected on self-correction and internal motivation, writing, “If we assess ourselves, we will be able to identify and rectify our mistakes easily and quickly.

However, if someone else assesses us, their observations may feel less natural to us, and we might attempt to disregard them; it is only if they insist forcefully that we will bring about a change in ourselves.” This suggested that self-assessment can lead to quicker and more meaningful behavioural change because motivation comes from within.

The importance of ownership was reinforced by another participant who wrote, “Self assessment encourages learners to own their learning and feel intrinsically motivated leading to further learning and transforming.” This concise observation captured the webinar’s focus on agency, motivation, and transformation as central goals of assessment.

The audience also highlighted the importance of context and relationships in learning. One participant noted, “An important element for good assessments is how the learning environment respects difference. For this it includes the whole space of the learner, the home, the classroom, the social relationships.” This expanded the conversation beyond formal schooling and reminded participants that learning is shaped by the learner’s wider environment and lived experience.

Towards the close of the webinar, participants were again invited to suggest one practice, one shift, or one conversation that educators could begin that very week to make assessment more human, more personalised, and more contextualised. Students in the audience were also encouraged to share what they would ask educators to do differently for learners like themselves. This closing interaction reinforced the collaborative spirit of the webinar and demonstrated that meaningful conversations about assessment grow richer when learners, teachers, and communities are all part of them.



CONCLUSION

The webinar concluded as a rich and highly interactive exchange that moved far beyond a conventional panel discussion. Throughout the session, questions were not only addressed to the panellists, but also posed directly to the audience, inviting participants to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences of assessment. These prompts generated thoughtful responses in the chat, creating a dynamic dialogue between speakers and attendees. Participants shared ideas on self-assessment, the use of rubrics, the importance of safe learning environments, and the need to shift attention from grades to genuine learning and growth.

This strong level of engagement reflected the relevance of the theme across educators, parents, students, and policy thinkers. The discussion made it clear that assessment is not merely a technical process, but a deeply human one that shapes identity, motivation, and opportunity. By the end of the session, there was a shared sense that reimagining assessment is both necessary and possible when learners, teachers, and communities are all part of the conversation. The webinar closed with appreciation for the audience's reflections and recognition that the dialogue on assessment for human potential must continue.



LEARNINGS FROM THE WEBINAR

One of the strongest learnings from the webinar was that assessment must be reclaimed as a process that supports growth rather than merely judges performance. When assessment is reduced to marks, grades, and rankings, it risks overlooking many of the qualities that matter most in life, including resilience, empathy, curiosity, integrity, creativity, and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to society. The discussion made clear that these human qualities are not secondary to education, but central to its purpose.

Another important takeaway was that the age of artificial intelligence requires a serious rethinking of what schools value. If machines can increasingly perform tasks that traditional assessments reward, then education must focus more intentionally on what remains distinctly human: critical thinking, ethical judgment, adaptability, collaboration, imagination, and lifelong learning. Assessment systems must therefore evolve to recognise deeper forms of understanding and application rather than simple reproduction of knowledge.

The webinar also reinforced that meaningful learning is rarely linear. Real growth includes uncertainty, mistakes, revision, reflection, and gradual improvement. For this reason, learners need environments in which they feel safe to fail, question, experiment, and try again. Assessment becomes powerful when it recognises progress and process, not only final outcomes.

A further learning was the importance of learner agency. Students should not experience assessment as something done to them. They need opportunities to reflect on their own progress, identify areas for growth, understand criteria for quality work, and take responsibility for their development. Self-assessment, when supported well, can nurture confidence, ownership, and intrinsic motivation.



The discussion also highlighted that no reform in assessment can succeed without trust. Teachers need to be trusted as professionals, learners need to be treated as honest participants in their own growth, and parents need to be engaged as partners in broader conversations about success and wellbeing. Where fear and mistrust dominate, assessment becomes restrictive. Where trust and dialogue are present, it can become transformative.

Ultimately, the webinar affirmed that improving assessment is not simply about introducing new tools or formats. It is about returning to the deeper purpose of education itself: helping young people become thoughtful, capable, compassionate, and resilient human beings who are able to flourish in an ever-changing world.





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