

# Evaluating learning: revisiting basics and struggling with issues



Tara Fenwick  
Faculty of Education,  
University of Alberta

Purpose of continuing professional education



*Capabilities*  
integrated with  
*Wise Judgment*  
through  
*Performance*

in

*“swamps of  
everyday practice”*

# Capability is . . . .

“having justified *confidence* in one’s ability to take *appropriate and effective action* to formulate and solve problems in familiar and unfamiliar changing settings.”

(Cairns, 2000)

# Ask yourself . . .

**WHY do you want to assess others' learning?**

**What are two characteristics of effective assessment?**

**What two questions or issues do you have now about assessment?**



# Why evaluate learning?

## *SUMMATIVE*

- Compare actual learner performance to instructional goals
- Determine learners' competence, performance, and capability
- Help learners make decisions about their next actions
- Determine learners' satisfaction
- Provide information for other stakeholders

# Why evaluate learning?

## *FORMATIVE*

- Determine learners' prior knowledge
  - Monitor learners' ongoing progress
  - Create learning opportunities
  - Evaluate and improve instructional method
- 
- Develop learners' capability for self-assessment and self-monitoring



# Authentic Assessment

- ✓ Valid and reliable
- ✓ Ongoing
- ✓ Instructive
- ✓ Multi-modal
- ✓ Communicative
- ✓ Comprehensive
- ✓ . . . yet feasible

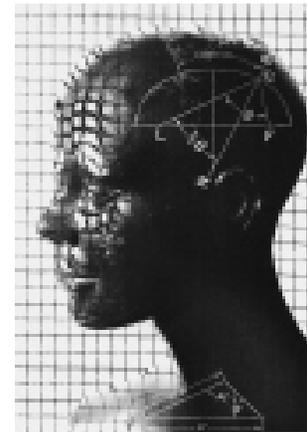


Authentic assessment is .....

# Valid and Reliable

- Measures what it is supposed to measure
- Measures consistently
- Recognizes own limitations

Allows for knowledge demonstration beyond its own pre-determined limits



Authentic assessment is .....

# Ongoing

- Occurs frequently - aims for surprise
- Embedded throughout instruction process
- Engages learner in different ways:
  - recalling new information
  - ☆ making personal sense of it
  - ☆ connecting with prior knowledge
  - ☆ solving problems
  - ☆ critically questioning the knowledge
  - ☆ extending the knowledge
  - ☆ integrating knowledge into everyday embodied practice

Authentic assessment is .....

# Instructive

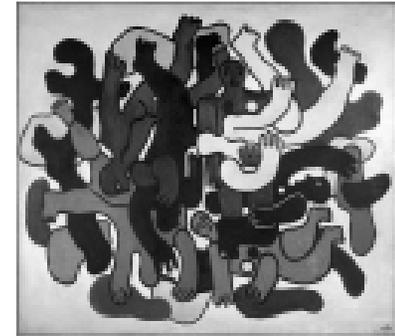
- Contributes to learning -- helps learner stretch
- Recognizes how assessment shapes what is learned
- Aims to cultivate learner's ability to self-assess



Authentic assessment is .....

# Multi-modal

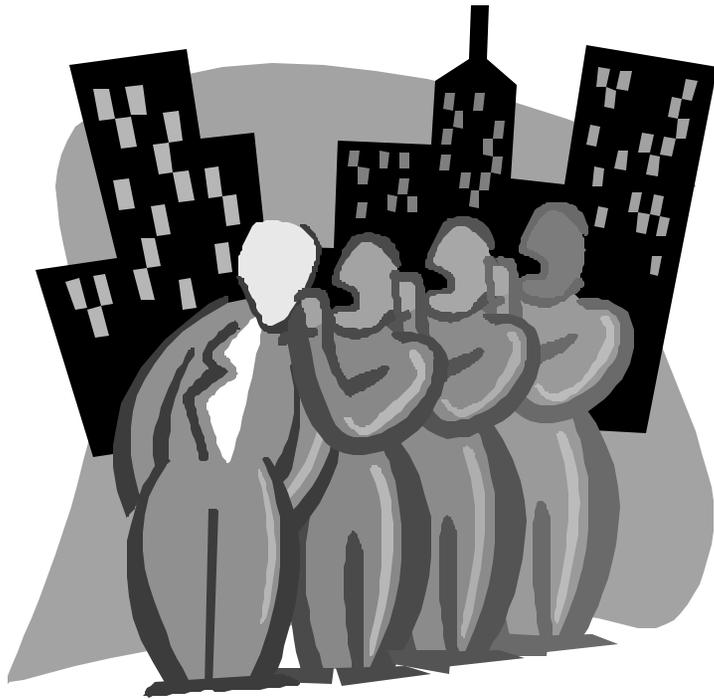
Humans and knowledge are too complex to be judged with one instrument!



- Aims to capture different expressions of learning
- Draws on multiple methods
- Engages learner through multiple modes
  - recalling, reflecting, solving, building, practicing
- Helps ensure redundancy and triangulation

Authentic assessment is .....

# Communicative



- Criteria are clear and transparent
- Feedback is timely
- All results and rationale are clearly communicated
- Learner is involved: forming criteria, identifying indicators, responding to external assessment, providing self-assessment

Authentic assessment is .....

# Comprehensive

- Provides information about learner's  
knowing *that*  
knowing *how*  
knowing *in action*



- Incorporates multiple perspectives:
  - self, peer, expert



# Authentic assessment is Comprehensive .....yet Feasible

- Incorporates different purposes:
  - summative, formative
  - information for learner, for peers, for instructional design
  - develops learner's self-assessment

*..... within constraints of  
available resources (time,  
people, knowledge), contexts,  
and community norms*



**But . . .**

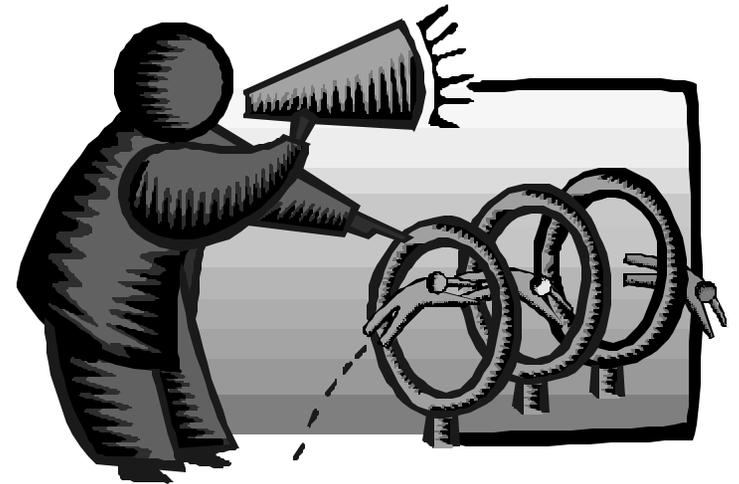
***what are your criteria?***

# Ways to sample learners' knowledge & skill

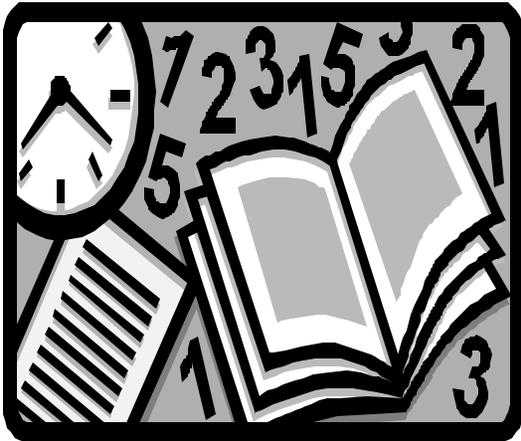
- Performance observation
- Growth plan, portfolio
- Interview
- Learner teaching others
- Peer ratings, narratives
- Artifacts of everyday work
- Other stakeholder reports
- Written test
- Problem analysis, solution
- Personal checklists
- Written reflection
- Presentation to peers (debate, panel, etc)
- Prepared product (solution, design, teaching tool, video, display, etc)

# Traps of assessment

- Measuring what's easiest to measure  
(What gets measured gets learned)
- Reductionism
- Underestimating the message embedded in the evaluation



# Assess at different times



- **BEFORE:** prior knowledge
- **DURING:** learner's responses, comprehension, application
- **IMMEDIATELY AFTER:** learner's recall of knowledge, problem-solving using it
- **LONG TERM AFTER:** incorporation into everyday practice

*Habit is habit, and not to be flung out  
of the window, but coaxed  
downstairs one step at a time.*

Mark Twain

# Assess different levels

*Learning anti-racist perspectives*



**Level 1:** Awareness, appreciation?

**Level 2:** Beginning vocabulary?

Trying out strategies/concepts?

**Level 3:** Analyzing single texts  
using the concepts?

**Level 4:** Comparing different anti-  
racist perspectives?

***What may be most important is  
not the judgment you make . . . .***

***but the question that you ask***

# Bloom's Taxonomy

1: recalling (*knowledge*)

1. Describe, label, define, locate, list

2: connecting (*comprehension*)

2. Explain, give examples, summarize

3: projecting into practice  
(*application*)

3. Predict, relate, show, solve

4: analysing

4. Differentiate, classify, find issues,  
show causes, critique

5: problem-solving, extending,  
(*synthesis*)

5. Solve, design, extend, integrate

6: critically questioning  
(*evaluation*)

6. Compare, prioritize, draw  
conclusions, recommend and justify

# Questions that engage

## ***RECALLING***

Which of the following is not a goal of harm reduction strategies?

- a. Prevent transmission of HIV INFECTION.
- b. Reduce social isolation.
- c. Create a drug-free society.
- d. Save lives.
- e. Improve health and well-being of drug users.

## ***CONNECTING***

In providing harm reduction strategies, what are three goals you would like to achieve?

What are your feelings or toward Jane, a continuing user who comes for help?

Is there a needle exchange program in your community? Would you refer a patient to it?

# Questions that engage

## ***PROJECTING INTO PRACTICE***

- *What would you say to a student who claimed that race isn't an issue in his school because everyone is treated equally?*
- *What would you do if a student turned her poster assignment into a celebration of White Power movements?*

## ***ANALYZING***

- How would an “anti-racism” education program differ from “multiculturalism”?
- Why is *Dangerous Minds* considered a racist and classist film?



# Questions that engage

## ***PROBLEM-SOLVING***

What harm reduction strategies would be appropriate for Paul?

- a.\*\*\*\*\*
- b.\*\*\*\*\*
- c.\*\*\*\*\*



## ***EXTENDING***

What three actions could you take now to improve your provision of harm reduction strategies?

# Questions that engage

## ***CRITICALLY QUESTIONING***

What racism currently  
lurks in your courses?  
(exclusive texts, perspectives,  
assignments, unsafe dialogue  
spaces)



## ***ASSESSING INTEGRATION INTO PRACTICE***

- Three anti-racist strategies I tried in this course . . .
- One anti-racist text I used with students . . .
- One issue I didn't expect . . .

# Questions that engage

***PROJECTING INTO  
PRACTICE***

***ASSESSING  
INTEGRATION in  
PRACTICE***



# Examining our issues

- What is the *BEST* practice you have seen with respect to this issue?
- What is the *WORST* practice you have seen?
- Generate some *RECOMMENDATIONS*

Ask yourself . . .

***What understandings were reinforced for you today?***



***What one new idea will you remember?***

***What one new practice might you look into?***



***What do we live for, if not to make  
the world less difficult for each  
other? -- George Elliott***



- *And now here is my secret, a very simple secret; it is only with the heart that one sees rightly.*

*What is essential is invisible to the eye.*

**--Antoine de Saint-Exupery**



Assessment in Distance Education . . .

# Individual print modules

- Questions embedded throughout text
  - multiple choice, open-ended, answer guide
- Activity choices with submitted product
  - produce a practice guide (protocol summary)
  - produce a test for a peer
  - create behavioral indicators for personal action plan
  - list other performance indicators to track over time

# Assessment in Distance Education . . .

## Online (group) instruction

- Post case responses and analyses to group
- Assess peer's analyses
- Formulate a problem or case for the group
- Develop with group specific indicators of best practice for the new knowledge
- Post video clip of own practice for peer (or other) to assess
- Share progress with group at 3- or 6-month intervals - through narrative or artifacts

Assessment in Distance Education . . .

# Computer-based instruction

- Manipulate images on screen
- Arrange protocol steps in appropriate sequence
- Respond to video clip of patient or patient-pharmacist interaction
  - Multiple-choice case analysis questions
  - Written analysis (scoring guide provided, or web-board of collected responses)
  
- etc