

Alternative Assessments

EDS 113 Principles and Methods of Assessment

Overview

Current issues about the need for education to be more meaningful necessarily call upon an equal re-consideration of assessment as curricular content and pedagogy. The challenge to make education relevant and globally competitive also demands that assessments also support the effort towards these goals. Traditional assessments in the form of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and other objective types of tests have become increasingly viewed as limited, inadequate, or outright inappropriate.

In this module, we shall address the need for new alternatives and explore assessments that will more strongly align with the higher levels of quality, relevance, and competitiveness that education must deliver.

Objectives

After studying the materials and doing the activities in this module, you should be able to:

- compare and contrast various aspects of traditional and alternative assessments*
- discuss how the underlying assumptions about the nature of the learner, the nature of learning and the types of meaningful learning influence assessment*
- identify some of the challenges behind the implementation of alternative assessments in schools and explore plausible approaches to hurdle the difficulties*

Alternative Assessments

EDS 113 Principles and Methods of Assessment

A. What is authentic assessment?

Study Questions

- *What characterizes assessment that is “authentic”? How would you define authentic assessment (in your own words)?*
- *Identify the similarities and differences between authentic and traditional assessments.*
- *What are the criticisms about and limitations of traditional assessments? What do authentic assessments offer that conventional assessments don't?*

Resources/ References for this section:

Mueller. What is authentic assessment? In *Authentic Assessment Toolbox*. Available at <http://jfmuller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm>

Mueller. Why Use Authentic Assessment? In *Authentic Assessment Toolbox*. Available at <http://jfmuller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whydoit.htm>

Developing Performance Assessment Tasks. <http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/~elc/developingtasks.html>

The Case for Authentic Assessment. <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=2&n=2>

Archbald, D. & Newmann, F. (1992). The Nature of Authentic Academic Achievement. In *Toward a New Science of Educational Testing and Assessment*, edited by H. Berlak, F.M. Newmann, E. Adams, D.A. Archbald, T. Burgess, J. Raven, and T.A. Romberg, pp. 71–84. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press. Available at <http://www.unc.edu/courses/2006fall/educ/645/001/Nature%20of%20Authentic%20Academic%20Achievement.pdf>

Hamayan, E.V. (1995). Approaches to alternative assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 15, 212-226. Available at https://resources.oncourse.iu.edu/access/content/user/fpawan/L540%20%20CBI/Hamayan_95_alt-assess.pdf

[We must]
pay more
attention to
what we mean by
*evidence of
knowing.*

--Grant Wiggins

Dikli, S. (2003). Assessment at a distance: Traditional vs. Alternative Assessments. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 2(3) Article 2
<http://www.tojet.net/articles/v2i3/232.pdf>

B. Teaching to the Test

Study Questions

- *What are some criticisms about “Teaching to the Test”? Is “Teaching to the Test” incredibly wrong, or is it worthy of some merit?*
- *How do authentic assessments resolve the issues against Teaching to the Test?*

Resources/ References for this section:

Popham, W.J. (2001). Teaching to the Test? *Helping All Students Achieve* 58(6), 16-20. Available at <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar01/vol58/num06/Teaching-to-the-Test%C2%A2.aspx>

Clements, J. Common Core: Veteran Educator Urges Teachers To 'Teach To The Test'. Available at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/common-core-veteran-educator-urges-teachers-to-teach-to-the-test-100938/#KA3Z7K0mHls0opBU.99>

Johnson, B. (2011). A Different Perspective: Teaching to the Test. In *Education Trends*. Available at <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/teaching-to-the-test-benefits-ben-johnson>

Brodie, L. (2010). Teaching to the Test: Who Isn't These Days? In *Love in a Time of Homeschooling*. Available at <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/love-in-time-homeschooling/201005/teaching-the-test-who-isnt-these-days>

Editorial: The trouble with teaching to the test. Chicago Sun-Times. Available at <http://www.suntimes.com/opinions/21763012-474/editorial-the-trouble-with-teaching-to-the-test.html>

C. Philosophical Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions

Study Questions

- *What “new assumptions” about the nature of the learner, the nature of learning and the types of meaningful learning have emerged in education literature?*
How do these new assumptions influence the way/s we should assess?
Whys should a shift in our views about the learner, learning and knowledge affect assessment tasks?
How do the roles of teachers and students’ under a constructivist assessment paradigm differ from those under traditional assessment practices?
- *Compare alternative assessments and traditional assessments. Specifically, what transitions are notable between traditional and alternative assessment tasks?*
- *Describe how alternative assessments align with the broader vision towards more meaningful, relevant, and globally competitive education.*
- *What challenges/ obstacles face the introduction of new assessment methods into the educational system? How do you propose to hurdle these challenges?*

Primary resource for this section:

Anderson, R.S. (1998). Why Talk About Different Ways to Grade? The Shift from Traditional Assessment to Alternative Assessment. In *New Directions For Teaching And Learning*, 74, 5-16.

In aid of reflective learning

Why bother about assessment to be authentic? Won't this be merely an unnecessary complication to what could be a "simple" task of assessing learning performance?

Are teachers doing service to students when they "teach to the test"?

What are your personal beliefs and assumptions about learning, teaching and knowing; how do they influence your personal views about assessment?

Other Resources to quench your cognitive thirst

Productive Assessment and Performance. Available at

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/fs1/assessment.asp>

Herman, Aschbacher, & Winters. (1992). *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment*, pp 1-22. VA: ASCD.

<http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/guidebooks/APractical.pdf>

Coil, C. & Merritt, D. (2001). Top Quality Alternative Assessments. In *Solving the Assessment Puzzle: Piece by Piece, Pieces of Learning*. Available at [https://tpri.wikispaces.com/file/view/09-](https://tpri.wikispaces.com/file/view/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf/167574297/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf)

[05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-](https://tpri.wikispaces.com/file/view/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf/167574297/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf)

[2.pdf/167574297/09-](https://tpri.wikispaces.com/file/view/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf/167574297/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf)

[05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf](https://tpri.wikispaces.com/file/view/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf/167574297/09-05%2606%20Top%20Quality%20Alternative%20Assessment%201-2.pdf)

Baker, E.L. (2010). What Probably Works in Alternative Assessment,. CRESST Report772. LA: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing.

Wikstrom, N. (2007). *Section 2.3, Traditional Versus Alternative Assessment*. In Alternative Assessment in Primary Years of Baccalaureate Education.

Funderstanding-Authentic Assessment