

Unit 4: Assessment and documentation of learning processes

Assessment and Evaluation

Confusion reigns over these two terms, and their usage wanders, depending on context. In this book we will use the following distinction:

Assessment is the process of objectively understanding the state or condition of a thing, by observation and measurement. Assessment of teaching means taking a measure of its effectiveness.

Assessment is the systematic process of documenting and using empirical data on the knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs.

By taking the assessment, teachers try to improve student learning.

“Formative” assessment is measurement for the purpose of improving it. “Summative” assessment is what we normally call “evaluation.”

Evaluation is the process of observing and measuring a thing for the purpose of judging it and of determining its “value,” either by comparison to similar things, or to a standard.

Evaluation of teaching means passing judgment on it as part of an administrative process.

Evaluation focuses on grades and may reflect classroom components other than course content and mastery level. Evaluation is a final review on your instruction to gauge the quality. It’s product-oriented. This means that the main question is: “What’s been learned?”

Finally, evaluation is judgmental.

Ideally, a fair and comprehensive plan to evaluate training would incorporate many data points drawn from a broad array of teaching dimensions. Such a plan would include not only student surveys, but also self-assessments, documentation of instructional planning and design, evidence of scholarly activity to improve teaching, and most importantly, evidence of student learning outcomes.

But that is not all. A comprehensive evaluation of training would necessarily include various types of peer assessment, more commonly referred to as “peer observation.”

Types of Assessment

We can consider three main types of Learning Assessment:

- **Diagnostic Assessment**
- **Formative Assessment**
- **Summative Assessment**

Diagnostic Assessment is a form of pre-assessment that allows a trainer to determine a student's individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to training. Its main benefits include: guides efficient and meaningful lessons and curriculum planning, provides information to individualize instruction, and creates a baseline for assessing future learning.

Formative Assessment is an ongoing assessment that helps to understand learners' progress and their level of understanding during training. In contrast to assessment OF learning, formative assessment is known as assessment FOR learning because this information can help adjusting training during the unit to help learners.

Its main benefits are: facilitates modifying instruction based on the learning of the students, learners can receive feedback about their learning in order to identify strengths and weaknesses, learners are challenged to self-evaluate what and how they've learned and their level of understanding.

Summative Assessment is used to evaluate learning as well as serve as comparisons for standards. It measures a student's achievement at the end of a learning process. The goal of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard. Information from summative assessments can be used formatively by learners or trainers to guide their efforts and activities in subsequent courses.

Research in education has focused on these three types of assessment:

1. **Assessment *for* learning;**
2. **Assessment *as* learning;**
3. **Assessment *of* learning.**

These three types of assessment might be described as follows:

1. **Assessment *for* learning** is designed to give trainers information to modify and differentiate training and learning activities. It acknowledges that individual students learn in idiosyncratic ways, but it also recognizes that there are predictable patterns and pathways that many students follow. It requires careful

design on the part of trainers so that they use the resulting information not only to determine what students know, but also to gain insights into how, when, and whether students apply what they know. Trainers can also use this information to streamline and target instruction and resources, and to provide feedback to students to help them advance their learning.

2. **Assessment *as* learning** is a process of developing and supporting metacognition for students. Assessment as learning focuses on the role of the student as the critical connector between assessment and learning. When students are active, engaged, and critical assessors, they make sense of information, relate it to prior knowledge, and use it for new learning. This is the regulatory process in metacognition. It occurs when students monitor their own learning and use the feedback from this monitoring to make adjustments, adaptations, and even major changes in what they understand. It requires that trainers help students develop, practise, and become comfortable with reflection, and with a critical analysis of their own learning.
3. **Assessment *of* learning** is summative in nature and is used to confirm what students know and can do, to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes, and, occasionally, to show how they are placed in relation to others. Trainers concentrate on ensuring that they have used assessment to provide accurate and sound statements of students' proficiency, so that the recipients of the information can use the information to make reasonable and defensible decisions.

This document focuses on assessment for learning as the tool that enables trainers to systematically develop the knowledge of their students that they need to provide personalized, precise instruction and assessment. It incorporates strategies to engage students and support assessment as learning as an integral part of the process.

The Benefits of Assessment for Learning

Studies have shown that the use of assessment *for* learning contributes significantly to improving student achievement, and that improvement is greatest among lower-achieving students.

Assessment for learning is the process of gathering evidence about a student's learning from a variety of sources, using a variety of approaches, or "assessment tools", and interpreting that evidence to enable both the trainer and the learner to determine:

- where the learner is in his or her learning;
- where the learner needs to go; and
- how best to get there.

Trainers can adjust instructional strategies, resources, and environments effectively to help all students learn only if they have accurate and reliable information about what their students know and are able to do at any given time, and about how they learn best. Ongoing assessment for learning provides that critical information; it provides the foundation for differentiated instruction.

Components of Assessment for Learning

Assessment for learning includes diagnostic assessment and formative assessment:

Diagnostic assessment can include both classroom (educational) assessments and professional assessments (i.e., speech and language, medical, and psychological assessments providing information and/or diagnosis of specific conditions that affect learning). Diagnostic assessments are conducted before instruction begins and provide trainers with information about students' readiness to learn, and about their interests and attitudes. This information establishes the starting point for new learning, and helps trainers and students set appropriate learning goals. It enables trainers to plan instruction and assessments that are differentiated and personalized to meet students' learning strengths, needs, interests, and learning preferences.

Diagnostic assessment helps identify what the student brings to his or her learning, in general or with respect to a specific subject. Information can be gathered from various sources – from the student, the student's previous trainers, and the student's companies, etc. The information gathered provides a baseline that informs further assessment, the results of which can be used in developing a student profile and/or a class profile.

Examples of diagnostic assessment tools are: reviews of recent reports, consultation with previous trainers, companies, classroom observation (e.g. anecdotal notes), classroom assessment (pre-test, assessment of prior knowledge, etc.), commonly used

assessments as well as assessments of achievement of alternative learning expectations (e.g. those relating to daily living, social skills, etc.), professional assessment, reviews of any existing transition plans, etc.

Formative assessment is conducted frequently and in an ongoing manner during learning and is intended to give trainers and students precise and timely information so that instruction can be adjusted in response to individual students' strengths and needs, and students can adjust their learning strategies or set different goals. This use of assessment differs from assessment of learning in that the information gathered is used for the specific purpose of helping students improve while they are still gaining knowledge and practising skills. When assessment is viewed as integral to learning, students are engaged as collaborative partners in the learning process.

Formative assessment is used to provide benchmarks to confirm the suitability of instructional strategies and specific interventions for individual students as well as groups of students. A gap analysis can be performed on the basis of these benchmarks to guide reflection on past practice and aid in making sound decisions about future instruction.

Examples of formative assessment tools are: classroom assessments of various types, using various modes and media that best suit students' strengths and needs, learning styles and preferences, interests, readiness to learn; provision of descriptive feedback to students; use of assessment results to guide further training; assessment results to guide ongoing assessment and monitoring students learning; etc.

The reliability of assessment for learning depends on:

- the identification, clarification, and sharing of learning goals in student-friendly language;
- the student's understanding of the success criteria of these goals in specific terms – what successful attainment of the learning goals looks like;
- descriptive feedback that helps students consolidate new learning by providing information about what is being done well, what needs improvement, and how to take steps towards improvement; and
- self-assessment that motivates students to work more carefully and recognize their own learning needs, so that they can become effective advocates for how they learn best.

Assessment for learning involves collaboration among trainers, companies and students, and enables students to experience the successes that come with timely intervention and with instructional approaches and resources that are suited to the ways they learn best. Both factors help build students' confidence and provide them with the incentive and encouragement they need to become interested in and focused on their own learning.

Planning Assessment and Instruction

Knowing Your Students

Education is moving away from a model based on the transmission of information in one direction – from trainer to student – and towards a reciprocal model that ensures students are listened to, valued, respected for who they are, and recognized as partners in their education. Greater student involvement in their own learning and learning choices leads to greater student engagement and improved achievement. Involving students as partners in the learning and teaching process calls for educators to:

- see the student as a whole person;
- know about various dimensions of every student's learning process, and not just about the student's performance;
- support every student in playing a more active role in his or her learning;
- take students' strengths, needs, interests, and views into account in planning learning opportunities.

An emphasis on knowing your students as the starting point for effective planning of assessment and instruction is consistent with this approach. The following steps are part of the process of getting to know all the students in the class:

- gathering information about the students;
- engaging students and companies during the course of information gathering;
- processing and synthesizing information in order to develop an understanding of each student's strengths, learning style(s), preferences, needs, interests, and readiness to learn;
- selecting and/or developing, and implementing, appropriate and productive combinations of assessment and instructional strategies, activities, groupings, and resources to address the diverse needs of the students.

Two highly effective tools that can assist trainers in getting to know their students and in planning effective instruction and assessment are the *class profile* and the *individual student profile*.

The **class profile** is an information-gathering tool, a reference tool, and a tracking tool, all in one. It helps trainers plan effective assessment and instruction for all the students in the class, monitor student progress, and provide timely interventions when needed.

The class profile provides a snapshot of the strengths and needs, interests, and readiness of the students in the class. It is a resource for planning that conveys a great deal of critical information at a glance, serving as an inventory of accumulated data. It

is a living document, in that it is both a reference tool for planning assessment and instruction at the beginning of the year, semester, or term, and a tracking tool for monitoring progress, recording changes, adjusting instructional strategies, planning subsequent instruction or interventions, and sharing information with other educators and organisations.

The class profile can be developed at the beginning of the training, as trainers embark on the process of assessment for learning. It serves as a tool for recording and summarizing information gathered through diagnostic assessment prior to instruction and through formative assessment during instruction. A class profile can be updated as the training process progresses. It enables trainers to identify patterns among their students in terms of:

- their learning styles and preferences (often referred to as a “learning profile”);
- their current place in the learning, or “readiness to learn”, with respect to the expectations of the particular subject and grade or course, as well as their learning strengths and areas in need of improvement;
- their interests and talents;
- their socio-affective characteristics;
- the challenges involved in meeting their learning needs, and the supports that are required to address those needs.

The class profile assists in:

- sorting, categorizing, and summarizing classroom data;
- detecting patterns of similarities and differences among the students that will help guide the planning of assessment and instruction;
- engaging in evidence-based trainer inquiry centered on student learning;
- using data to design differentiated instruction;
- forming flexible groupings;
- monitoring student progress by noting results of ongoing assessments;
- making adjustments in response to assessment results to better focus instruction;
- sharing information among fellow trainers and company.

The profile provides an at-a-glance summary of the strengths and needs of all the students in the class and can serve as a quick reference for daily planning.

The **student profile** gives detailed, in-depth information about the learning strengths and needs of the individual student. It supplements the class profile as a tool for planning precise and personalized assessment and instruction for students who need extra attention and support in particular areas of learning.

The individual student profile provides detailed information about the student to guide the selection of assessment tools, instructional strategies, and, where appropriate,

individualized supports that are best suited to that student's learning style, preferences, strengths, needs, interests, and readiness. A student profile provides the detail trainers need in order to devise assessment and instruction that take into account the student's particular needs while capitalizing on his or her particular strengths.

One of the key pieces of information detailed in the individual student profile is the student's current instructional level in the area (or areas) that present challenges for the student. Essentially, the student profile facilitates the "gap analysis" that needs to be performed in order to determine where the student's abilities are relative to the stage of development in particular areas of learning. On the basis of this analysis, instruction can be provided that directly targets the critical skills that the student needs to develop.

Developing an individual student profile provides trainers with the opportunity to:

- consider how to use and build on the student's strengths;
- consider ways of motivating the student and supporting his or her learning in a particular subject by drawing on strengths that the student has demonstrated in other subjects, prior knowledge in various subjects, learning style or preference, and interests outside training;
- develop specifically targeted assessment and instruction for the student;
- consider how the student would benefit from particular groupings of students for different kinds of activities;
- foresee the need for, and plan for the use of, particular supports and accommodations, appropriate media and technologies, and particular forms and modes of instructional and assessment activities, tools, and resources.

Individual student profiles can point the way to greater precision and personalization in training and assessment, particularly for students who:

- are not reaching their full learning potential;
- are facing social-emotional, behavioural, or organizational challenges;
- are experiencing challenges with a particular transition or with transitions in general;
- have personal circumstances that are interfering with their learning;
- have become disengaged from training activities;
- may have special training needs.

The planning of assessment and training for students who need additional support is an integrated and often collaborative process. It begins with the trainer, and it is supported as needed by the team(s). When chosen training strategies have been applied for an adequate period of time, their effectiveness is reviewed, in collaboration with members of the training team, who may provide further advice and

recommendations. Ongoing communication between trainers, the organization and the student is critical so that information is shared and efforts coordinated successfully on behalf of the student.

The information gathered for an individual student profile is an important resource for members of teams and any other trainer or professional considering the needs of students who require additional support.

The steps for developing a student profile parallel those for developing a class profile, but call for more intensive research and scrutiny of information sources and more varied and specifically targeted assessments to better understand the nature of the student's strengths and needs

For the individual student profile, it is important to gather and record information similar to that required for the class profile, but also to delve deeper into areas such as:

- current levels of achievement and progress in developing learning skills and work habits;
- readiness to learn, particularly in relation to specific subject areas and/or curriculum expectations (from observations, surveys, pretests, etc.);
- learning strengths, styles, and preferences;
- motivational needs and interests (from interest inventories, questionnaires, classroom discussions, etc.);
- learning needs, and any additional support, accommodations, and/or types of challenges that motivate and enable the student to learn and to demonstrate learning;
- social and emotional strengths and needs (e.g., self-management, getting along with others, social responsibility), including the capacity to adjust to changes;
- available resources and supports that help meet the student's needs;
- other relevant information, such as the kind of activities the student pursues outside work.

Assessment Tools

Observation

Observation is a method of gathering data by watching an individual's behavior in their natural setting.

It entails simple watching and noting a person's behavior, for example after a training course to determine if they are able to perform the intended objectives.

This method allows many aspects to be captured, including the physical environment, the person's own behaviors, and his or her interactions with others.

Among the main benefits of using observation as an assessment tool we find:

- Inexpensive method. It only requires observers' time.
- Easy to complete.
- Gathers information on actual behaviors rather than reported behaviors.
- Allows observer to directly see what people do rather than relying on what people say they do.
- Non-verbal language can provide valuable information.
- Able to collect information as the learning is being applied.
- Does not rely on people's willingness or ability to provide information.

We should also take into consideration its main disadvantages:

- Can be time-consuming. It assesses one person at a time
- Validity and reliability of the data may be affected since people usually perform better when they know they are being observed
- Difficult to assess preferences, opinions, or thought process
- Is open to misinterpretation
- Does not increase understanding of why a person behaves as they do
- Can be considered intrusive
- Susceptible to observer's bias (partiality, prejudice)

Interview

Interviews are a data collection method aimed at gathering both facts and opinions.

They involve asking open-ended questions where the respondent can answer the questions in as much detail as her or she wishes to.

Interviews can provide valuable insight into the behaviors, attitudes, opinions and mindsets.

There are different ways to conduct interviews including face-to-face, by telephone, or online.

The main benefits of using interview as an assessment tool are:

- Flexible.
- Can provide valuable insight into individual perspectives.
- Can ask follow questions to clarification.
- Can research deeper into potential issues.
- Can be recorded to provide information for closer review at a later time (i.e. assess body language).

There are also disadvantages we should consider:

- Can be time-consuming to administer
- Not the most cost effective since you typically only interview one person at a time
- No direct evidence a person can perform specific behaviors

How to prepare an Appraisal Interview

PREPARATION

- Arrange with enough time
- Time and privacy
- Assessment of performance

DEVELOPMENT

- Review of assessment
- Exploration of internal/external factors
- Consensus and determination of objectives

FOLLOW-UP

- Support
- Reviews

Personal aspects in the interview

- Communication
- Listening
- Motivation
- Time Management
- Feedback
- Assertiveness
- Security
- Control of Emotions (EI)
- Objectivity