Assessment and Feedback Strategies: Authentic/Performance Assessment

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Overview

"If the current move is to witness any success in teaching and learning, it is only sensible that lecturers in institutions of higher education are implementing authentic assessment" (Fook and Sidhu, 2010).

Authentic Assessment is a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2008). According to Jan Herrington and Anthony Herrington, "authentic assessment is required to assess the learning that students might actually carry out in the real world, as opposed to the kind of tasks traditionally learned in classrooms" (2006). The realistic context in authentic assessment makes problems more engaging for learners and helps to practice applying practical and higher order cognitive skills. Authentic Assessment usually includes an authentic task and a rubric. Students perform the task while the rubric is used to evaluate their performance.

As opposed to traditional assessment, which lacks variability, authentic assessment allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in different ways. For example, the authentic tasks may include making projects or portfolios, creating artwork or videos or other tangible products. The authentic assessment of these products may include evaluating the work of cooperative learning groups, ideas for assessing problem-based or active learning experiences. This type of assessment, where the aspect of "doing" is emphasized, decreases the level of anxiety (Fook & Sidhu, 2010).

There are number of characteristics of authentic assessment that identify it from other types of assessment. Herrington & Herrington group these characteristics of authentic assessment into four categories (2006):
- **Context** (Authentic Assessment requires fidelity of context to reflect the conditions under which the performance will occur rather than being artificial).
- **Student's role** (in Authentic Assessment students are required to perform the acquired knowledge and invest significant time and effort in collaboration with others).
- **Authentic activity** (it involves complex, ill-structured challenges that require judgement and a full array of tasks, as well as requires assessment to be seamlessly integrated with the activity).
- **Indicators** (Authentic Assessment provides multiple indicators of learning and achieves validity and reliability with appropriate criteria for scoring various products).

Authentic Assessment can be used in a multimedia learning environment, which allows educators to

examine students' performance directly on a task equivalent to real-life roles rather than proxy, computerized test items (Herrington & Herrington, 2006).

Quick Start Guide - Four Steps in Authentic Assessment 101

Jon Mueller from North Central College, Naperville, suggests to think of authentic assessment development in terms of four questions to be asked (2012).

1. What should students know and be able to do? (The list of knowledge and skills becomes your *standard.*)
2. What indicates students have met these standards? (To determine if students have met these standards, you will design or select relevant *authentic tasks.*)
3. What does good performance on this task look like? (To determine if students have performed well in the task, you will identify and look for characteristics of good performance called *criteria.)*
4. How well did the students perform? (To discriminate among student performance across criteria, you will create a *rubric.*)

According to these questions Mueller distinguishes four steps in creating authentic assessment.

1. Identify the Standards: The first step in any kind of assessment is to determine where you want your students to end up. An assessment cannot produce valid inferences unless it measures what it is intended to measure. And it cannot measure what it is intended to measure unless the goals/ standards have been clearly identified. The first step in Authentic Assessment is to determine standards. Standards are usually a one-sentence statement of what students should know and be able to do at a certain point. Standards should be observable, measurable and written in a language understandable for students.

2. Select an Authentic Task: After the standards are identified, the instructor should find a way student can demonstrate that they are fully capable of meeting the standard, that is to create an authentic task. Authentic task is an assignment given to students designed to assess their ability to apply standards driven knowledge and skills to real-world challenges. The task is considered authentic when students are asked to build their own responses rather than selecting from given answers. The second factor for Authentic Assessment is the replication of real world challenges. The well formulated standard should spell out the task students need to complete for demonstrating the mastery of it.

3. Identify the Criteria for the Task: After the authentic task is identified, the instructor should determine what the performance on that task will look like. This means he will determine the

criteria for good performance on the task. The criteria will be used to evaluate how well the students completed the task and, thus, how well they have met the standards.

4. Create the Rubric: The last step in constructing authentic assessment is the constructing of a rubric to measure student performance on the task. A rubric is a scoring scale used to assess student performance along a task-specific set of criteria. The construction of the rubric begins from the set of criteria identified in Step 3. The instructor should not look for everything in every assessment. That is why in Step 3 the instructor should keep the number of criteria manageable. The rubric can be either analytic or holistic depending on whether the instructor wants to judge performance for each criteria separately or altogether.

Note: Descriptive note. Adapted from Mueller, J., (2012). Authentic assessment toolbox: Retrieved from http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm.

Variations

This section outlines how you might begin to think about adopting the aforementioned teaching strategy and the tools you might consider employing.

- D2L Brightspace: Instructors who are teaching online courses may want to implement Authentic Assessment into their online pedagogy. Different tools housed in D2L provide means and space to construct Authentic Assessment into their course, whether it is fully online or hybrid. The ways in which the elements of Authentic Assessment can be translated online may be: the uploading standards and criteria into D2L content area, introducing an authentic task into discussion forum, adding the rubric into the quizzes section of D2L.
- Screen Capture Software: Screen Capture Software can help to create an Authentic Assessment in two ways. The first way is that instructors can use screen capture to present an authentic task, clarify criteria and expectations, and set goals. This can be utilized especially in an online environment. The second way is that students can capture videos, showing their performance in completing the task or just using screen capture as one part of their Authentic Assessment project.
- Multimedia project: IT Solutions supports a number of tools and software that can help students and instructors do multimedia projects having Authentic Assessment in the roots. Working on multimedia projects may have students completing authentic tasks, such as making movies, doing virtual tours, digitizing data, creating timelines and so on. Depending on the objectives and purpose of the project the task may vary, but the authentic nature of tasks will help students apply skills and knowledge in real world situations and be assessed according to relevant performance.
- Games and Simulations: Games and simulations provide an environment where learners

complete close-to-real world tasks and get evaluation for their performance, that is show their competency in a more authentic setting. Games usually provide more scaffolding at the beginning and less and less towards the end. But overall, they contain criteria according to which the participant's performance is evaluated, which, as a component of Authentic Assessment, makes learning more effective. After an instructor has identified his standards he can use a game-developing software at IT Solutions to develop a game for Authentic Assessment for their students.

On the Web

- http://jfmueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whatisit.htm

References

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