

Final Assignment: Professional Development Workshop

ETEC 530

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Professional Development for Instructional Designers

This workshop was created for professional development (**#professional development**) purposes. Professional development is defined as the ongoing mastery of a field including its methods and associated bodies of knowledge (Cheong, Wettasinghe, & Murphy, 2006). The International Board of Standards for Training, Performance, and Instruction stresses how important professional development is to instructional design by listing it as a competency. The board states that instructional designers need to be aware of the research and theory relating to their field and that they must update their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Sharif & Cho, 2015).

Ongoing professional development is necessary since instructional design is a field that is constantly evolving (Sharif & Cho, 2015). Shifts in expectations are taking place due to emerging attitudes regarding what constitutes valuable 21st century skills. This has been challenging as instructional designers are expected to teach and assess skillsets that are becoming increasingly diverse (Sharif & Cho, 2015). Instructional designers need to become life long learners if they are to keep up with ever evolving needs (Cheong, Wettasinghe, & Murphy, 2006).

They need to continually build upon their knowledge in order to stay up to date with current ideas regarding theories, trends, and approaches (Cheong, Wettasinghe, & Murphy, 2006). They must develop an understanding of different learning theories in order to understand how learning takes place. This knowledge informs instructional designers' practice as it helps them make more effective design decisions that lead to better learning outcomes (Cheong, Wettasinghe, & Murphy, 2006).

Part A.

Workshop Content

Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the uses and limitations of traditional assessment models
- Develop an understanding of the uses and benefits of constructivist assessment models

Traditional Assessment Models

Assessment can be grouped into two general categories: summative and formative. Formative assessment occurs throughout the learning process and determines how well learners are progressing towards learning goals. Summative assessment is carried out at the end of the learning process in order to determine whether students have met overall learning goals. Traditional assessments typically fall into the summative category and take the form of exams and multiple choice quizzes.

Additional Assessment Models

There has recently been a shift in the traditional education model that has led to a need for additional assessment approaches. This shift has occurred in response to the emergence of 21st century skills and competencies that learners are now expected to possess in order to be successful in the real world. These skills and competencies include but are not limited to independent thinking (**#independent thinking**), autonomous learning (**#autonomous learning**), and innovation (Tan, 2017).

While traditional forms of assessments like summative exams may be effective for assessing certain types of knowledge (i.e. theoretical knowledge), they are ultimately ineffective for assessing more complex thought processes as well as the 21st century skills mentioned above

(Libman, 2010). Traditional models also do not allow learners to apply their knowledge to real life situations (**#situated learning**), which is necessary for learners to develop knowledge and skills they can use in the real world (Rami, Lorenzi, & Lalor, 2009).

Constructivist Approaches to Assessment

Constructivism is a learning theory that describes how learning takes place and knowledge is acquired. It states that people construct different interpretations of reality based on their own unique interactions with the environment and the people around them (Fosnot, 2013) (**#subjective interpretations**). Knowledge is built upon existing knowledge structures (**#building knowledge**) through a process of exploration, critical thinking, (**#critical thinking**) and reflection (**#reflection**) rather than being passively acquired (Tan, 2017; Harlow, Cummings, & Aberasturi, 2006; 2007). Constructivism states that there are no fixed objective truths about the world that can be transmitted from teachers to learners.

Subjective knowledge. The way traditional assessments like quizzes and exams approach knowledge is quite different from constructivist approaches. Traditional assessment strategies usually treat information as being either correct or incorrect. This means that the learner either proves that they possess knowledge by selecting the correct answer or they choose the wrong answer and prove that they possess a false belief (Pritchard, 2014). The degree of learning that takes place is determined by how many answers learners get correct. However, there are flaws with this approach as learners could easily guess the correct answer (an issue with multiple choice questions). This would constitute a lucky true belief rather than true knowledge (Pritchard, 2014).

Constructivism, on the other hand, recognizes the subjective nature of knowledge and the variety of interpretations that can exist (Fosnot, 2013). Instead of focusing on a single interpretation of an objective truth (like traditional assessments typically do) and determining whether learners' answers are correct or incorrect, multiple answers and varied interpretations of knowledge are encouraged and considered (Tan, 2017) (**#subjective interpretations**). This is more suitable for evaluating 21st century skills such as independent thinking (**#independent thinking**) and innovation, which can be expressed in a multitude of ways. This open approach encourages creative and original answers more than traditional approaches do.

Assessment for learning. Assessment is a learning tool that engages with and drives the learning process. It can influence how students learn, what they learn, and how much they learn (Libman, 2010). Unlike traditional approaches that do not use assessments to their full learning potential (simply just assessing learning), constructivist approaches act as assessments for learning (**#assessments for learning**). This means that in addition to measuring learning outcomes, they also foster learner growth. Constructivist approaches further maximize learning by giving learners time to reflect (**#reflection**) on their assessment experiences. This can lead to deeper learning and conceptual change (Yurdabakan, 2011; Libman, 2010).

Active learning. Constructivist approaches to assessment utilize a more student-centred approach than traditional assessments since learners are placed in a more active role in the learning process (they are the assessors, they have developed the assessment criteria, etc.) (**#active learning**). Learners are expected to demonstrate and/or apply their knowledge to different contexts rather than simply recalling information (Libman, 2010). This requires conceptual clarification and logical reasoning (Libman, 2010). It also requires conceptual

flexibility and creative thinking when learners are expected to apply what they've learned to the real world (**#situated learning**). Requiring learners to be responsible for constructing their own knowledge encourages independent and autonomous learning (**#autonomous learning**). This may result in learners feeling more motivated to take control over their own learning, which can lead to better understanding, retention, and use of knowledge (Libman, 2010; So, 2002).

Some examples of constructivist assessments that value multiple interpretations of knowledge (i.e. not just an instructor's) (**#subjective interpretations**), promote learning throughout the assessment process (**#assessments for learning**), and engage learners in active reflection (**#reflection**) and learning are as follows:

- **Self assessment:** Self assessment requires learners to assess their own work according to predefined criteria (or criteria developed by learners). This gives learners the opportunity to reflect (**#reflection**) on their learning and think critically about their strengths and weaknesses. It allows learners to identify and analyze aspects of their learning that only they may be aware of (Yurdabakan, 2011).
- **Peer assessment:** Peer assessment requires learner to assess their peers according to predefined criteria (or criteria developed by learners). This gives learners the opportunity to think critically about each other's work. Learners end up feeling more responsible for completing their work and cooperating in group projects.
- **Portfolio assessment:** Portfolio assessment requires learners to systematically organize a collection of their own work to demonstrate their efforts and achievements (Rami, Lorenzi, & Lalor, 2009). These pieces are evidence of their knowledge construction (**#building knowledge**) and show learning has taken place. Like peer assessments, this process requires

students to reflect (**#reflection**) on their learning and think critically about their strengths and weaknesses.

Part B.

Workshop Plan

Participants

This workshop is intended for instructional designers working in higher education who would like a more comprehensive understanding of traditional and alternative assessment strategies.

Workshop Schedule

The workshop is a 60 minute session. The majority of the session will consist of discussions and activities with the facilitator stepping in to provide feedback and guidance when necessary. In preparation of the workshop, learners will be asked to read Baviskar, Hartle, & Whitney's (2009) article "Essential criteria to characterize constructivist teaching: Derived from a review of the literature and applied to five constructivist-teaching method articles". This will provide learners with a comprehensive and practical understanding of constructivism, which will set the stage for discussions regarding how this theory can be applied to assessment.

The workshop is divided into the following parts:

Time Frame (60 minutes total)	Parts
15 minutes	1. Review of traditional assessment strategies
20 minutes	2. Introduction to constructivist assessment strategies
15 minutes	3. Application of constructivist assessment strategies
10 minutes	4. Final Reflection

1. Review of traditional assessment strategies. The workshop will begin with questions that elicit learners' prior knowledge on the topic of assessments: What traditional types of assessments do you use in your online courses? Are they formative or summative? Why do you think these approaches are effective or ineffective?

Learners will discuss their answers as a group and create a list of traditional approaches (quizzes, exams, essays, etc.) as well as their accompanying pros and cons (posted on a white board or projector). The facilitator will add any approaches, pros, and cons that may be missed. Generating this list will prompt learners to begin thinking critically (**#critical thinking**) of traditional assessment strategies so that they can begin making comparisons to alternate strategies in the next part of the workshop.

2. Introduction to constructivist assessments strategies. Learners will be presented with different scenarios in which the following formative and constructivist approaches to assessment are used: self assessment, peer assessment, and portfolio assessment. Based on Baviskar et. al's (2009) definition of constructivism, they will be asked to underline aspects of these scenarios that demonstrate a constructivist approach. They will then discuss these ideas as a group and the facilitator will fill in any knowledge gaps regarding constructivism as necessary.

Learners will then be told that the results of the next activity will be used for a peer assessment later in the workshop (this awareness should lead to greater group cooperation). Learners will be split into three groups and asked to analyze these constructivist approaches to assessments by comparing them to traditional approaches. They will be asked to determine how these approaches differ regarding what they are assessing and what type of learning they are encouraging. Observations will be written down in a Word document.

3. Application of constructivist assessment strategies. The next activity is a peer assessment (**#assessments for learning**). Each group will send their observations to the other two groups. Individual learners will then be asked to assess their peers' ideas using the following criteria: 1) clarity, 2) comprehensiveness, 3) novel insights, and 4) relevance to the workshop topic. Each learner will be provided with a URL for a website in which they can post their feedback using either Padlet (text) or Flipgrid (audio).

4. Final reflection. Learners will be asked to reflect on the peer assessment activity and discuss what they have learned. They will be asked the following questions: What are the benefits and limitations of this approach? The facilitator will add to the list if learners are struggling. Learners will then be asked how they could see themselves using self and peer assessment as well as portfolio assessment in their own courses (**#situated learning**).

The facilitator will wrap up the workshop by stating that traditional assessments still have their place in education, but constructivist approaches can help fill in the gaps by assessing multiple intelligences and encouraging learning to take place.

Assessment of Workshop

This workshop is designed to be reflective of the overall constructivist principles that are being taught. It recognizes multiple interpretations of knowledge (**#subjective interpretations**) by utilizing discussion. It is structured according to Baviskar et al.'s (2009) four criteria for constructivist teaching by first eliciting prior knowledge (part 1.) and creating cognitive dissonance (part 2.) and then allowing learners to apply their new knowledge with feedback (part 3.) and reflect on their learning (part 4.) (**#active learning**) (**#building knowledge**). This

reflection (**#reflection**) is encouraged throughout the learning process with discussion prompts. A limited number of activities also ensures learners have enough time for proper reflection.

Learner control (**#active learning**) (**#autonomous learning**) (**#independent thinking**) and knowledge construction (**#building knowledge**) is emphasized as the majority of the workshop is spent with learners leading the session via discussions and other activities. Getting learners to engage in new assessment approaches allows them to confront and challenge beliefs they have regarding assessment. Discussing their perspectives and experimenting with new approaches allows them to construct new knowledge and approaches (Fosnot, 2013) (**#building knowledge**). Having opportunities to engage in alternate assessment strategies ensures experiential learning takes place, which is key to enhancing understanding and competence when using these strategies (Rami, Lorenzi, & Lalor, 2009).

This workshop fosters professional development (**#professional development**) by assembling a professional learning community and allowing learners to share perspectives and explore new ideas collaboratively (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Learners are educated on a learning theory (constructivism) that has relevance to their work and are also made aware of emerging assessment strategies. This process ensures that learners are more up to date on recent theories, trends, and approaches, which is imperative to professional development in their field (Cheong, Wettasinghe, & Murphy, 2006).

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