



## TECHNIQUES TO EVALUATE LEARNING USING TOOLS BASED ON THE CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM FOR BUILDING KNOWLEDGE

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### ABSTRACT

*The idea of constructivist evaluation, although being advocated favorably for over a decade, is still relatively new in its implementation. Educators, parents, and administrators still have difficulties creating truly authentic constructivist learning tasks and an even more difficult time implementing all of the intricacies of evaluation (Windschitl, 1999). Constructivist evaluation requires educators to spend a great deal of time getting to know each student individually in order to determine a learner's thinking processes, strengths, weaknesses, prior knowledge, etc. In doing so, a conflict arises with this observational, sometimes subjective form of assessment when parents or administrators do not agree with the assessment (Scholtz, 2007). There is a certain sense of security that educators, parents, and administrators have come to rely on through summative assessment approaches. The validity and reliability thought to be associated with standardized testing have come to be a safety net for the education system.*

**Keywords:** evaluation, techniques, tools, constructivism.



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### Introduction:

Evaluation is an integral part of the learning process. Evaluation drives the learning goals of a teacher and students, provides students with feedback about their learning, and guides teachers and students to create appropriate learning tasks. Evaluation can take the form of many methods such as assessment for, as, and of learning (also known as formative assessment, self-assessment).

### Evaluation in Constructivism

From a constructivist point of view, the process of learning is emphasized over the end product. Constructivism favours evaluation for and as learning (formative and self-assessment), as opposed to evaluation of learning (summative assessment). While behaviourism and cognitivism focus on measuring specific outcomes objectively, constructivists tend to subjectively assess student work. The journey in attaining knowledge is as important as the actual knowledge itself.

### **Techniques to Evaluate Learning using Tools Based on the Constructivism:**

Evaluation of a constructivist learning experience can be used to determine if a student is able to complete an authentic task, using tools and understandings within a particular content domain to solve a particular problem, by determining if the task is completed or not. As well, evaluation of a constructivist learning experience could be accomplished by reflection and documentation on how a student or group of students came to a particular conclusion. The following list provides some parameters for evaluation in constructivist environments:

Incorporate assessment as part of the teaching experience throughout the learning process as opposed to an exercise at the end of the task.

Critique and discuss products such as portfolios, projects, compositions, and performances which are grounded in **authentic assessment**.

Use work products to complement summative assessment. This can be particularly effective when the critiquing process utilizes different perspectives.

Evaluate processes for learning by using strategies such as debriefings, abstracted replays, dramatizations, interviews, group discussions, knowledge telling, co-investigation, and post mortems of problem-solving activities.

Use informal assessment based on teacher observations such as eye contact, body language, facial expression and work performance to compliment formal assessment.

An **E-portfolio** is a collection of artifacts created by a student or group of students that is usually stored online in an electronic repository. The work that goes into an e-portfolio involves a fairly in-depth process that is developed over time - a period of months or more.

Characteristics of E-portfolio includes:

- i) Steps such as thinking, planning, reflecting and organizing.
- ii) The learner choosing pieces of work from an overall, bigger collection of work.
- iii) The process of being reflective, developmental, and self-directive over a sustained time period.
- iv) The culminating goal of presenting work to be reviewed and assessed by another party.

Like any traditional portfolio, the student is able to showcase his/her "best work". In other words, there is choice involved on the part of the pupils in analyzing what their vision is regarding what they perceive to be their strongest efforts. This is both meaningful and motivational as they are involved in the selection and not just the teacher. Further benefits include the idea that there are many paths to success. While the instructor or mentor provides an overall set of criteria, it is up to the learner to decide how this criteria will be met. The use of **rubrics** helps to guide students but should not be so specific as to force conformity and not

allow for diversity. As mentioned previously, standardized tests show what students cannot do; e-portfolios show what they can. This in itself is inherently motivational. Allowing other classmates to make comments and offer suggestions can lead to a larger collective body of knowledge. Peer evaluation lets the learner step outside his/her normal role and take on the role as pseudo teacher. Lastly, the use of e-portfolios is effective in permitting users to utilize multimedia and developing generic computer skills that may further illustrate what paper and pen struggle to show.

A shift from product-based assessment to process-based assessment has largely been a result of a shift from traditional evaluation practices to constructivist practices (Hayatdavoudi & Ansari, 2011). The end product of a learning experience is no longer the most important aspect of evaluation; rather, modern day constructivist teachers focus on the processes that a student takes to achieve the end goal.

### **Contention Surrounding Constructivist Evaluation**

There is much controversy surrounding constructivist evaluation techniques. Most educators, parents, and administrators will not deny the benefits of using formative and self-reflective assessment, but some have a problem with the idea of significantly reducing the role of summative assessment. One common frustration with constructivist evaluation is the discrepancy between ideas and actual practice. The idea of constructivist evaluation, although being advocated favorably for over a decade, is still relatively new in its implementation. Educators, parents, and administrators still have difficulties creating truly authentic constructivist learning tasks and an even more difficult time implementing all of the intricacies of evaluation (Windschitl, 1999). Constructivist evaluation requires educators to spend a great deal of time getting to know each student individually in order to determine a learner's thinking processes, strengths, weaknesses, prior knowledge, etc. In doing so, a conflict arises with this observational, sometimes subjective form of assessment when parents or administrators do not agree with the assessment (Scholtz, 2007). There is a certain sense of security that educators, parents, and administrators have come to rely on through summative assessment approaches. The validity and reliability thought to be associated with standardized testing have come to be a safety net for the education system.

### **Conclusion:**

Constructivist evaluation takes into account the differences that exist between students. There is no one true reality; rather, there are many views of the world through the eyes of the learners. These views are arrived at through personal experience and [social interactions](#). Similarly then, the way that a teacher makes sense of the world or constructs

knowledge is very different to that of a pupil. Further, the language that an instructor uses and the events experienced to gain this language would be markedly different to that of a student.

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