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Online and traditional assessments: What is the difference?
with a real-world context, group work, and knowledge construction through collaboration and problem-based learning. An important component of this design is the assessment system, the topic of this article.

There are many different ways of implementing general assessment theory in specific learning environments. There is no single correct way. This article briefly describes several important assessment principles that can lead to valid, reliable, and fair assessments in a traditional learning environment. Next, these principles are applied to online postsecondary environments, such as e-learning environments created by Blackboard.com and WebCT. Proctored testing, identity security, academic honesty, and use of online discussions for assessment purposes are examined.

2. General assessment theory

Education and assessments are concerned with people who are largely unpredictable. Accordingly, there is a great potential for uncertainty in this field. As Dressel (1976, p. 2) eloquently pointed out, "A grade is an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has achieved an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion of an indefinite material." Such a description suggests that assessments can be unreliable, unfair, and controversial. Nonetheless, there are essential principles of general assessment theory with which most educational practitioners would probably agree. These principles are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Assessment, rather than being something added, is an integral, ongoing aspect of teaching and learning. It is the process of gathering, describing, or quantifying information about learner performance. This usually means awarding grades and involves a type of assessment that educational practitioners refer to as summative. Summative assessments are also called high-stakes assessments when used for promotion, placement, certification, and accountability. Assessments can also be formative when their aim is to improve teaching and learning, not to provide evidence for grading students.

Anderson et al. (1975) provide a classical description of assessment. According to their view, "Assessment, as opposed to simple one-dimensional measurement, is frequently described as multitrait-multimethod; that is, it focuses upon a number of variables judged to be important and utilizes a number of techniques to assay them... Its techniques may also be multisource... and/or multijudge" (p. 27). According to this description, sound assessment strategy is not limited to a single measurement, such as a traditional selected-response test, but consists of a system of multiple measurements that include diverse assessment tasks.

Selected response is the traditional assessment task that requires learners to choose a single answer from a given set of response items, usually multiple choice, true–false, and/or matching. Traditional tests usually require that all learners in a class be tested through the same standardized procedure at the same controlled location. Such assessments are neither authentic nor performance-oriented, but they are reliable, i.e., measurements are generally consistent with each other. Selected-response assessment tasks do best at assessing low levels of learning. Accordingly, they are not well suited to learning and simple recall as part of a broader concept of assessment that includes observing student performance and behavior.

Traditional testing is one of the oldest and most widespread forms of assessment. Assessments need to be modified to fit diverse, bring to the learning environment.

Unlike traditional tests, performance assessments are product that demonstrates knowledge, skill, and understanding (Dewey, 1992). Such tests support the current wave of educational reform that emphasizes the linkage between standards, curriculum, and student learning. They help instructors pay heed to what they have taught and tested outcomes.

Taylor (1994) associates the assessment of learning with a measurement model in which the principles of traditional assessment are redefined. He argues that the principle that standards are set in terms of the knowledge that the student knows.

As we move away from traditional assessment, we need to consider active learning and authentic assessment. In constructivist learning, the focus is on relationships, inquiry, and interaction. Performance assessments in these environments (Gess-Newsome & Linn, 1997) can be more open-ended and experimental.

In contrast to most traditional assessments, which assess correct or wrong answers. Rather, they assess understanding. Thus, one needs to evaluate progress and performance. Additionally, performance assessments can easily differ on how the same performance assessment is used to assess reliability of performance assessment.

To summarize, instructors need to develop appropriate assessment tasks. Authentic assessments are those that are designed to reflect the context in which students will apply their knowledge and skills. Authentic assessments are a valuable tool for assessing learning in a constructivist environment. In summary, validity of assessment is met. A variety of assessments are needed to provide a comprehensive view of what students know and can do. The assessment is the keystone to success.
The key to effective feedback is clear, timely, and relevant information about student achievement. When students know where they stand and can do this, they are more likely to improve. The key to effective feedback is clear, timely, and relevant information about student achievement. When students know where they stand and can do this, they are more likely to improve.

To summarize, institutions should measure student progress frequently using diverse approaches to instruction. In contrast to more traditional assessments, such as essays, and performance assessments that rely on hand-written descriptions, the current emphasis is on assessing students' ability to learn independently and to work collaboratively. The emphasis on these types of assessments is increasing, and performance assessments are considered essential for measuring student achievement accurately.
Any one type of assessment task, whether it is a traditional multiple-choice test or a performance assessment, is only one part of a balanced approach to assessment.

3. Online assessments

The general assessment principles described above do not change in an online environment. What does change is the manner in which these principles are implemented. Assessments become even more important in online environments without the face-to-face interactions and observations that best enable instructors to assess student progress toward achieving the standards. Consequently, creativity in design and approach to assessment and measurement strategies can assist both the instructor and the learner in the distance education setting.

3.1. Proctored testing

Courses offered at a distance often demand that instructors alter the manner in which they assess student performance (Dirks, 1997). Student assessments in such environments become particularly challenging in courses where direct observation of the student by the instructor is the best situation. In each case, online instructors must devote additional preparation time to resolving issues related to assessment. Options include postponement of immediate assessment in favor of (1) a delayed telephone conversation, online chat, or e-mail; (2) proctored testing at decentralized locations; and (3) proctored testing at centralized on-campus residencies. Proctored testing is particularly relevant when testing is for high-stakes, summative purposes.

Proctored testing at decentralized locations is the mission of the Consortium of College Testing Centers (CCTC), a free referral service provided by the National College Testing Association. The consortium’s Web site is at (http://testing.byu.edu/consortium/). CCTC is a group of college and university testing centers throughout the United States that has formed to support distance learning. Its purpose is to make test administration services available to students at locations away from their own campuses. These services are provided in traditional paper-pencil formats, as well as online using Web-based servers at some sites.

3.2. Identity security and academic honesty

Proctored testing also enhances identity security and academic honesty, two related issues that frequently arise when discussing distance education. Instructors need to know that the individuals receiving course credit are, indeed, the individuals who do the work and that the work they do is their own.

Academic honesty requires responsible use of the work of others. It is compromised by plagiarism. With the advent of the Internet, accessing and plagiarizing the work of others has become easy and convenient. Searching the Internet, finding the desired information, and copying and pasting the information into one’s own document can be done quickly and effortlessly. Additionally, Web-based sites make plagiarism in papers (Clayton, 1997).

A review of the literature, however, shows that Howard (1995) provides a definition of cheating, nonattribution, and plagiarism as the act of submitting someone else’s work as if it were one’s own paper but including the work of others whether that work is publicly available on the Internet or source . . . and patchwriting, as well as loaning papers but then have been borrowed.

Plagiarism in American society is not a new concept; plagiarism is a sin (Warc, 1999). Although there is reason to believe that plagiarism is on the rise (Carnevale, 1999).

Higher education researchers find that the factors that increase the likelihood of plagiarism include leniency of instructors, a small number of assignments, lack of individual attention, lack of instructor confidence, positive professional image.
A major challenge in the assessment of performance is to provide a fair and accurate measure of student achievement. The criteria for grading are established by the instructor, and the grading system is designed to reflect the specific objectives and goals of the course.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in the assessment of student learning. This interest is driven by the need to improve the quality of education and to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their future careers. One of the key challenges in assessment is to ensure that the process is fair and unbiased, and that it accurately reflects student performance.

Assessment instruments are designed to measure various aspects of student learning, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These instruments may take a variety of forms, such as tests, quizzes, and projects. The effectiveness of these instruments depends on their ability to accurately measure student performance and to provide meaningful feedback to both students and educators.

In conclusion, the assessment of performance is a critical component of the educational process. It is essential to ensure that the assessment process is fair, unbiased, and effective in order to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

ADDITIONALLY, Research shows that multiple-choice tests are not always effective in assessing complex cognitive skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Instead, educators are increasingly using rubrics and other forms of performance assessment to evaluate student learning.

Research indicates that performance assessment is more effective than traditional testing methods in promoting deeper learning and higher-order thinking skills. Performance assessment allows students to demonstrate their understanding of complex concepts and to apply this knowledge in practical situations.

Moreover, performance assessment provides teachers with valuable information about student progress and learning needs. This information can be used to adjust instruction and provide targeted support to students who are struggling.

In summary, the assessment of performance is a complex and multifaceted process that requires careful design and implementation. Educators must be mindful of the limitations of traditional testing methods and seek to incorporate a variety of approaches to assess student learning effectively.
In online courses, students take tests at different times under different conditions with different available resources. Test security and academic honesty for assessments in this environment is about the same as it is for a take-home exam in the traditional classroom. These factors render the scores from such assessments insufficiently reliable for most high-stakes decisions.

Online instructors should ensure that safeguards are built into the distance education course design to hold students to the same standards of academic honesty as students in traditional courses. Several approaches can be used either individually or in combination to reduce plagiarism. One approach is to include defining plagiarism as part of the course materials and providing a policy statement with consequences.

Proctored testing with identity checks is a good low-technology means of promoting both identity security and academic honesty. Technical solutions are available that can promote, but not guarantee, online identity security. These solutions include Internet-based testing software that is password-protected and high-technology solutions such as identifications through thermographs, voice and retinal scans, hand geometry, or fingerprints (Jain, Bolle, & Pankanti, 1999). However, high-technology solutions are generally not feasible at present for schools because of high costs and the state of technology.

Careful design of summative assessment tasks is another approach to reducing plagiarism. If a traditional selected-response assessment task is used, employing a large pool of items to produce unique tests for each student can reduce plagiarism. Timed tests that decrease the opportunity to cheat also helps. Additionally, moving away from general essay-type assessment tasks to authentic performance assessments, such as projects and case studies that are unique and relevant to the individual learner, can help. However, all these approaches are aimed at making it more difficult to cheat. Arguably, the best approach is to identify the issue of plagiarism openly with the aim of affecting learner attitudes and values.

One such model to achieve this goal is the cognitive moral development model. Kohlberg (1976, p. 20) advocates an approach “in which the teacher Socratically elicits conflicting student views on a moral issue or dilemma.” According to this model, the teacher first identifies the student’s present level of moral development. Then the teacher poses a dilemma to the students and in so doing provides an atmosphere that encourages the discussion of conflicting moral views. The goal is to raise the student’s level of moral reasoning to the next higher level.

3.3. Online discussions

The Internet is a tool that can create and support an interactive and cooperative learning environment valued by constructivists. Its ability to promote text-based communication for the purpose of discourse can support the construction of knowledge, as learners formulate their ideas into words and build on these ideas through responses from others. The opportunity for reflective interaction can be encouraged and supported, which is a feature not often demanded in traditional classroom settings where discussion is often spontaneous and lacks the reflection that is a characteristic of asynchronous online interactions (Harasim, 1989).

Instructors can and should encourage discourse in order to facilitate learning. However, there are increasing attempts to use collaborative discourse in order to facilitate learning. Good interactions in online courses can actively prevent students from actively modifying their own work (Pollock, 1993). Thus, interaction can be facilitated by constructivists.

Some discursive styles of communication are designed to encourage others from responding in the same style. Blum (1986) theorized two paths of communication: (1) the separate, or independent path and (2) the relational, connected path. Smith (1989) noted that women are not more likely to be located in the connected path if the female students place emphasis on interpersonal connectedness in an environment where others do not participate.

Such gender differences in communication patterns may lead to differences in conclusions that the learner should take related to gender. Blum’s (1986) finding indicated that confrontational, autonomous male messages tended to have a heavy, authoritative, and competitive tone.

Connected learners have an appreciation (or the appreciation) and their different and alternative views (Blum, 1986). The connected style is such that the addressee’s face is in the process. The connected style is tolerant of the separate style and is often used by those with the separate style. The connected style, mostly female, is the norm for all learners while promoting participation. The use of a connected style in online discussions is a way to promote equity in online discussions.

This discussion rubric for online courses during the course of several timely online discussions that focus on messages in which the discussion may be respectful alternative viewpoints and useful information (Sharan & Sharan, 1992). This is useful in understanding, while the students construct meaning, both the instructor and the participants provide feedback.
Providing feedback...

...
promotes immediate feedback, promotes participation, and allows others to engage in the learning experience each week of the course.

Online instructors monitor discussions and provide summaries and to ensure that students are not leaving the instructor in a vacuum (Hiemstra, 1998). However, providing too much guidance or the instructor will inhibit student discussion, thus making the discussion too soon. Rather than giving the student, the instructor should seek intervention in ongoing discussion and conversation thread. Commentary promoting others a reasonable offering of support and assistance.

Some instructors who have been faced with small enrollments, have found it beneficial to participate too much in online discussions, as the center of numerous past practices. Alternatively, some online instructors have found where discussion boards have been useful in collaborative work and can be similar to the traditional classroom. Throughout, it encourages substantive interaction of peers, but refrains from external intervention in conversations, is far more effective. Taking advantage of the varied perspectives, and by content.

Culture also affects discussion. People communicate with each other, and people are not always willing to take for granted. But all cultures are not equal, unless the cultures are not equal, unless the cultural differences. The American and Japanese cultures are often general specific (O'Toole, 1998). It is not that all information offered is true, and for example, from the Japanese culture, speakers or writers provide the reader to the point. Unlike this communication, effective communication should be aimed, with a culturally diverse online environment, the adherence to the dominant culture.

4. Conclusion

According to the findings, it is important for the student to respond to the student's online discussion rubric. This is because it provides immediate feedback, promotes participation, and allows others to engage in the learning experience each week of the course.
4. Conclusion

According to the principles of Total Quality Management, quality in manufacturing is the result of regular inspections of assessments along the production line. By following these principles, we can ensure that the final product meets the quality standards set by our customers.

In conclusion, effective communication is essential in any manufacturing environment. By implementing these principles, we can improve the overall quality of our products and increase customer satisfaction.

References:
adjustments. Quality is not achieved by end-of-line inspections, by then it is too late. Similarly, assessments in education are used throughout the learning process, followed by needed adjustments, in order to achieve quality in education.

The assessment principles that guide student assessments in a traditional learning environment remain unchanged in an online learning environment. What does change is how these principles are implemented.

The characteristics of distance education pose certain challenges to the process of student assessment. The usefulness of many of the assessment approaches available for the traditional classroom is limited for distance education because of the lack of control of assessment conditions, the unique set of available resources, and the isolation of the distance learner.

Traditional selected-response testing and computer-assisted testing may be used for low-stakes assessments of low-level cognitive skills. Performance assessment tasks may be used for low-stakes assessments of high-level cognitive skills. For most high-stakes summative assessments, distance learners should be assessed at some proctored location under a controlled assessment setting.

It is vital that instructors have a clear rationale for assessing students via certain products and performances and for the ways they interpret students’ performances. Instructors must be vigilant at every step of the way for potential bias, looking at a student’s behavior and background as well as test performance to justify interpretations of scores and how they are used. Messick (1992) calls this concept the “interplay between evidence and consequences.”

Online discussions should be used summatively and formatively. However, there is a danger that online instructors may assess discussions unfairly if they are not familiar with discourse styles and patterns. Instructors must be extremely cautious in interpreting inadequate performances of students who are still developing proficiency in English or whose cultures do not match that of the school. A low performance cannot be assumed to mean that the student has not learned or is incapable of learning what is being assessed. Creating a positive online environment can benefit all learners while promoting equity in course discussions by eliminating barriers to participation.

References
