

Making assessment prospective, rather than retrospective.

Designing assessment *tasks that teach* academic practices, meta-learning skills and management theory.

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Introduction

Assessing learning has never been a simple task, and in the 21st century is harder than ever before. A key difficulty arises from increasing understanding that knowledge acquired to address the first step in a sequence of capability development is unlikely to be sufficient for learners to be able to enact the combination of skills and awareness indicating mastery of a body of knowledge. Rolloff's (2010) constructivist approach to evidence-based teaching in medical education, and Miller's (1990), four stage sequence for guiding learning and assessment provide the basis for this workshop. Their work demonstrates how progress from novice to expert capability begins with i) 'knowing about', moves to ii) 'knowing how' iii) progresses to 'being able to', before being competently able to iv) 'take action' [in real time].

Incorporating such a sequence into management education programs can be more complex than in medical contexts, not least because of the greater diversity of potential roles for management graduates. However it can be done quite elegantly, once some key concepts are understood. As Bacon and Stewart (2017 p189) made clear in a recent article, management educators need to "step away from the K-12 approach to assessment and follow the practices of the discipline of medicine which has similar challenges to evidence-based decision making". Doing so means (among other steps) consciously applying aspects of McGregor's Theory X Theory Y

concepts to our own assumptions about students. As will be familiar to participants, Theory X managers assume that workers need to be closely controlled and are not to be trusted, while Theory Y managers assume that workers can be self-directed, creative and are to be trusted. Of course this is highly contextualised in real work terms, and for educators the issue of contingency (Morse & Lorsch, 1970) is an essential step in considering the implicit thinking informing their approach to designing assessment tasks.

Working within this overall framework, the workshop introduces a set of ‘prospective’ assessment tasks designed to shift learning processes from the limitations of conventional knowledge acquisition, towards expanding awareness of personal responsibility for learning. The processes help students build an individualised understanding of their own ‘novice to expert’ trajectory and assist in developing themselves as self-directed learners progressing through the novice stages of learning, towards becoming managers who are fluent lifelong learners.

Session overview

Two specific assessment tasks used in an undergraduate Management degree will be used to demonstrate how the processes incorporate Miller’s Framework for clinical assessment (1990 pS63). Participants will be provided with resources and invited to discuss the theoretical underpinnings of these assessment methods, explore the potential for applying them in specific contexts, and explore how to apply the concepts and methods in their own work. The theoretical concepts are applicable to all levels of tertiary study, however, the complexity of specific tasks will, perforce, need to be adapted to suit specific educational requirements.

The two example assessment tasks are a) a personalised ‘Book of Readings’ developed in two parts: using collaborative construction of a body of knowledge, that is applied individually to creation of a personally relevant learning resource; and b) a ‘derive’ used in a leadership program to

allow enactment of leaderships behaviours in a real time (abbreviated) activity (Debord, 1956; Knabb, 2016)

The goals in designing the tasks included -

- Beginning with a focus on group contributions - as all learning is to some extent, socially constructed (Vygotsky, 1980)
- Requiring students to create individual assessment products that can be of personal and continuing value (David Boud, 1996; D Boud, 2007)
- Helping students align present learning activities with nascent career goals (Loffredo, 2017; Rolloff, 2010)
- Connecting knowledge across subjects in a timely manner (Komerath, Smith, & Bodo)
- Giving students the means, and challenging them, to take control of their own learning processes (Peddiwell, 2004)

Theoretical framework

Educational theorists whose ideas contributed to the development of this approach to assessing management knowledge and skills include David Boud (David Boud, 1996; D Boud, 2007; D Boud & Brew, 2017) Stephen Brookfield (1995) Jack Mezirow (see for example Fleming, 2018) Miles Horton and Paolo Freire (Horton & Freire, 1990) among others. While much of their research concerns the processes of learning, the overall theme of such work directs attention to the processes whereby learners are able to become independent and shape their own future learning strategies. The workshop session will briefly indicate how these - and other - researchers have contributed to the present state where there is so much questioning fo conventional assessment tasks.

Learning Outcomes

Participation in the workshop will provide opportunities to review current educational assessment including the means of stating learning objectives in specific contexts and identifying desired outcomes in their own teaching contexts. It is anticipated that learning outcomes will include

- Interest in applying to personal teaching goals, the theoretical underpinnings informing the exercises demonstrated (rather than the specific activities illustrated);
- Increased interest in educational theory literature in a search for both the means and rationale for aligning learning and assessment tasks with career and workplace requirements
- Curiosity-driven attention to playing with assessment tasks in new and innovative ways that go beyond those demonstrated here

Logistics

90 minutes is most suitable to work through the full potential of the workshop material (an abbreviated 60 minute session is also possible with the focus of attention being decided by participants on the day)

Group size

Any number - this is a discussion and exploration session where many simultaneous conversations may be undertaken

Materials

Some literature will be provided no other materials are required

Session flow

Step 1 - Establishing audience profile and key interests - conducted via a short interactive activity

Step 2 - With this knowledge in hand the workshop will introduce the sample assessment tasks, to demonstrate how they emerged, and are being used

Step 3 - review of relevant literature to position the tasks within the broader framework of education and management theory

Step 4 - participants with similar interests will be guided through a process of identifying, and beginning to develop, unique assessment tasks that suit their shared needs

Step 5 - groups will summarise their outcomes, noting key personal learning points that have emerged as a result of the process, and report on progress

Step 6 - a final review of the process, which has, in many respects, modelled the underlying conceptual thinking forming the model assessment tasks.

Our operational goal, during the design process, was to create a process through which 'knowledge' to be assessed, could be recognised by students as related as much to goals beyond the end of this study course, as well as to their daily activity in the course. We wanted to enable them to actively and consciously design their knowledge their own way, instead of simply reciting back to us, what had been encountered during the course. Results from the first iteration of these assessment tasks indicate improved student awareness of the links between assessment tasks and long term learning. We received a wide range of creative and deeply thoughtful reflections on personal experiences and clear-sighted expression of their possible impact on understandings of past/present/future actions. These were exciting, and often challenging to read, and sometimes affected our perceptions of the writers. Student feedback on the course overall was positive and receiving feedback from students who appreciated the tasks also helps us further improve the format from the point of view of a user.

Participants in this workshop will be introduced to the context and background of the course for which the tasks are now used. We will introduce and discuss relevant educational theories informing the design and implementation of the assessment processes focusing on the format and

rationale for each task, and explore options for locating similar tasks in other subjects. As this is proposed as a workshop we intend to work with participants to design unique applications for their courses, drawing on the theoretical and practical concepts we have applied to our work. Extracts from student responses to the tasks will be introduced to illustrate how the ‘prospective nature of the tasks causes students to ‘look ahead’ into the future applications of what they are learning.

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