The assessment of practice: a complementary perspective

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Outline

1. Theory, practice and assessment
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3. The components of an assessment
4. The conventional or orthodox position
5. Enactivism: a personal interpretation
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7. So what? With a focus on the role of the assessor
How many of you saw the sun *rise* today?
Well actually none of you did.

The sun is static, it is the earth that rotates.
Some times we just take things for granted.

"In times like these you appreciate the important things in life. Like taking for granted the important things in life."
Rather like the idea that there is a gap between theory and practice

The belief that there is a gap between theory and practice is axiomatic.

It is a belief held by many occupational groups.

This is the orthodox or conventional position.
Metaphor and learning: knowledge is construed as tangible

- My mind is **full** of new thoughts.
- The lecturer can really get ideas **across**.
- **What** did you get **out** of that class?
- Building an argument.
- A **grasp** of the subject.
- **Raw** data.
- **Chewing** over ideas.
- That idea just **washed** over me.
- The concept is very **fluid** at present.
Metaphor and learning: the pervasive notion of the computational mind

- Inputs, storage, connections, capacity, process, outputs etc.
For which learning is seen as a series of stored mental representations
Metaphor and learning
The mind is far, far more flexible than a computer.
Metaphor and learning

The human brain should be thought of as organic not mechanical
Metaphor and learning.
The container and conduit as metaphors for teaching and learning
The orthodox position

- There is a gap between two entities, one of which is theory and the other is practice
Theory, practice and assessment: the orthodox position

- Demonstration should not be taken as confirmation of agreement between thought and action.
Theory, practice and assessment: the orthodox position

- Explanations cannot be regarded as evidence of the ability to perform.
The components of an assessment

- The student
- The context
- The learning
- The assessor
The components of an assessment

The student

The assessor

The learning

The context

Plus ?

Plus ?
The context for the assessment
The student and the assessment
The learning that eventuates from being assessed

The Simplest Experiential Learning Cycle

DO IT.

Now What?
What will I do differently next time?

What?
What happened? What were the results?

So What?
What do these results imply? How did I influence the outcome?

compiled by Andrea Corney
www.edbatista.com/2007/10/experiential.html
The assessor and the assessment
Enactivism: a personal interpretation
Enactivism: a personal interpretation

Learning should not be understood in terms of a sequence of actions, but in terms of an ongoing structural dance—a complex choreography—of events which, even in retrospect, cannot be fully disentangled and understood, let alone reproduced.

Enactivism: a personal interpretation

"Ninety percent of life is just being there" - Woody Allen
Enactivism: a personal interpretation

Rather than a person being 'in' an environment, the activities of person and environment are viewed as parts of a mutual-constructed whole.
Enactivism: a personal interpretation

Put simply, the inside/outside relationship between person and environment is replaced by a part/whole relationship" (Bredo, 1994, p28).

Learning is inherently 'situated' because every new activation is part of an ongoing perception-action coordination...this is not merely a claim that context is important, but what constitutes the context, how you categorize the world arises together with processes that are coordinating physical activity“.

Theory, practice and assessment: the enactivist position

- The various components that comprise an assessment of practice are inseparable and in the conduct of an assessment each component influences the other.
Theory, practice and assessment: the enactivist position

- A key implication is that the assessor is also an integral part of the assessment.
- Any notion of objectivity on the part of the assessor in the conduct or evaluation of a practical assessment is questioned.
“So the listener, the questioner, [the assessor] decides what an explanation will be” (Maturana, 1987, p. 67).
The lessons for vocational education

- Or so what...?
So what? 1.

- Do not become unduly concerned by failed efforts at objectivity in respect of assessment.
So what? 2.

- Regard assessment as partnership with the student.
The student should not only be a partner in the assessment process but they should be a highly active partner.
And to facilitate deeper learning, for at least one practicum experience let the student be freed from the requirements of assessment.
If students *are* to be assessed they should be equally as able to have a role in determining that which will be assessed, the frequency by which they will be assessed, and the means by which they should be assessed.
Assessors should openly accept that the components of assessment are interwoven and therefore inseparable.
The assessment of the practical components of professional education should openly acknowledge the wholeness of a person’s performance.
In the context of professional education overtly reductionist approaches to assessment, perhaps exemplified by the standards based approach found in many forms of vocational education, should be firmly rejected.
For professional education, reductionist approaches to the assessment of practical performance should be replaced by methods that openly acknowledge the wholeness that comprises skilled and competent performance.