BOOK REVIEW:

Assessment Strategies for Online Learning: Engagement and Authenticity

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Book Review: Conrad, D. and Opreno, J. (2018). *Assessment Strategies for Online Learning: Engagement and Authenticity.* Athabasca: Athabasca University Press.

Defining the evaluation taking as an epicentre the reflection that the students do is to go to the heart of the educational question. The key concept in which the authors insist, Dianne Conrad and Jason Opreno, is a way of understanding education that goes beyond critical thinking and metacognition, placing the student at the centre of the learning cycle and respecting and empowering their individuality. And, this is how online assessment strategies defend: from the contemporaneity and latest trends in online learning, training the student throughout the whole learning process and fostering the commitment to individual and collaborative learning.

The evaluation seen from the process-oriented review, diagnosis and training for the improvement of learning, namely *assessment*, is the central axis of the 9 chapters that comprise the book. The first chapters are dedicated to strengthening the educational ideals of assessment framed in adult education and online learning. From chapter 4, they move to the authenticity of assessment from the commitment of teachers and students and deepen in instruments and strategies that facilitate the deep learning and authentic assessment. Finally, the latest trends in training modalities are emerging as new possibilities to make authentic online assessment according to the educational perception of the authors. Dewey, Habermas, Schön, Garrison ... are just some authors that appear at the beginning of the book and whose main ideas will be present throughout the reading.

In the first block of the book, the authors emphasize the reflective role of the students and the teaching role as an affordance to empower them. Qualification and assessment are widespread in the training courses and is often the "heaviest" part for a teacher but the authors insist on using the assessment to communicate, motivate and confirm, participating in the educational relationship between teachers and students. It closes the third chapter outlining the need to align philosophies with both instruction and design providing opportunities for it. This idea remains in chapter 4 dedicated to describe the assessment in online courses from the authentic assessment. By definition, the authentic assessment is centred on the student, on the assessment of real practices and on the application of competences, conception of the assessment that is linked to the learning process of the authors. That is why they focus on detailing some design considerations in online courses and proposals for assessment tools (learning outcomes and rubrics). The reflection they make about learning outcomes focuses on the criticism of Dron (2007) and defends the instrument as there should be an alignment between the prior knowledge, learning activities, materials, curriculum, transfer credits agreements and other (Deller, Brumwell & MacFarlane, 2015) made

from constructive and collaborative learning (Garrison and Archer, 2000). This instrument is not only explained to assess students, but also to rethink the learning cycle and the responsibility of the teacher in the students' process. This cycle can be extended in terms of Biggs (1987) with the model 3P Presage-Process-Product (the authors do not mention it). The inclusion of the rubrics as an instrument of authentic assessment is justified as an aid to students to self-regulate and self-direction. One way to cope with the most criticized characteristics of the rubrics is to elaborate them together with the students in order to resurface the reflection of the learning process. We will see later how the authors elevate the collaborative participation of the students as a more formative assessment strategy.

The second block of the book focuses on instruments and methodologies to carry out the assessment during the learning process. Emphasizes, again, the commitment to authentic assessment in online courses. The best example of authentic assessment in online contexts is the e-portfolio. The e-portfolio involves the students to narrate their own learning process, identifying previous knowledge, showing evidence of learning and including the reflection of the learning. It is precisely this that allows the teacher to perform assessment. The monitoring of the portfolio allows a greater feedback to the student and is configured and evidencing the learning process in a dynamic way. Other recommended implementations are: learning journals, projects and group works, all of them under implementation design parameters to be relevant assessment instruments as well as favouring collaborative work and the review of learning resources.

The last chapters describe the assessment in the latest trends as: MOOC, Flipped Learning and Blended learning courses, introduced in the "The Age of Open" chapter, emphasizing the original ideals of the internet: collaboration and participation. Chapter 7 dedicates a part to the sense of community and participation in virtual courses. Several studies claim that courses that provide interactions between students and teachers facilitate an identity and sense of community that at the same time leads to high participation and vice versa (Conrad, 2005, 2002, Barberà, Zhang, Galván and Fernández-Navarro, 2018). They differentiate an online course community of the Community of Inquiry which has three fundamental "presence": teaching, social and cognitive, elements of formal online courses in which students feel more secure and trusted due to the fact of being "closed" (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). They tell the anecdote and, surely many of us subscribe, that many students express their level of comfort as they have positive or negative experiences in the classroom, coming from comments from other students, answers from teachers, perceptions of tones ... that they produce more or less participation and involvement with the classroom. The three well conjugated "presence" can stimulate critical thinking, reflection, identification of key points, sharing, collaboration and suggestions as part of formative assessment with a natural way.

When the modality of learning is flipped classroom or blended-learning, we have more opportunities to know and maintain the authentic assessment. The authors present several activities, according to their educational philosophy, to be carried out both in these modalities and in the online courses that turn out to be evidence of learning and lead to student engagement with their learning cycle.

They also defend self-assessment as authentic evidence of learning as long as there is a guide to criteria, collaborative activities and strengthening the development of competences. But, the most interesting part of this chapter is the series of criticisms of self-assessment in reference to one's own difficulties in identifying who we are and how we advance by citing Snyder, Goffman, Bandura, Turkle, Wenger and even Lewis Carroll.

There are several keywords that define the principles of the authors for the assessment strategies, which are also interrelated: reflection, deep learning, constructivism, affordances, participation, engagement. It is a current manuscript from the educational foundation that aims to place the new from the beginnings.

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