

Essay on effective assessment and practices

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Effective assessment and practices

Assessments remain a challenge for faculty and clinicians who are often inadequately trained in education. A variety of tools for student assessment are available. However, the empirical evidence on the inter-rater reliability and validity of most of these tools is very limited (Isaacson & Stacy, 2009). In this paper, two of these tools, rubrics and checklists, will be described, compared, contrasted, and the best tool amongst them identified.

Rubrics

A rubric is a scaled tool placed in a grid and which has levels of performance/achievement and clearly articulated criteria for each level. Rubrics are used to assess performance, procedure, or product. They are explicit schemes for categorizing behaviors or products into classes that vary along a continuum. Rubrics are intended to specify both teaching and learning outcomes to teachers and students. They can be used for both formative and summative assessments. When used for formative assessments, they provide a means for providing feedback to learners and suggestions on areas for improvement. Summative assessments usually involve some form of judgment of student progress. Rubrics are also used to grade students and to assess programs. When used for grading and assessment, points are assigned to the different categories and these categories used for assessment (O'Donnell et al., 2011).

Rubrics are used to guide student self-assessments as well as assessments conducted by other students, faculty, external reviewers, fieldwork supervisors amongst others. Rubrics are usually developed by faculty

members. The following steps are followed during the development of rubrics. The skill or procedure to be assessed is first described. Decisions are then made on the scales of the levels of performance to be used.

The components or evaluative criteria for the procedure or task are then determined. They are aligned vertically at the side of the grid and weighted to express the significance of each item to the task. Finally, quality definitions of each criterion or description of the various dimensions are established. The descriptors are then placed in a grid with each scale level intersecting with a dimension. The descriptions define the behaviors that distinguish the various levels of performance (O'Donnell et al., 2011).

Checklists

Checklists are used to assess discreet clinical skills by direct observation. They are also used to evaluate specific procedures, communication, work practices, and application of knowledge. A checklist contains performance skills translated into specific actions. During assessments, the specific actions are ticked off in already provided boxes (Andre, 2000). Checklists permit two-pronged reporting during the assessment of skills whereby the behaviors measured against a set criterion are labeled as either 'competent' or 'not competent'. Checklists are easy to administer and score. They, however, place too much emphasis on psychomotor skills and thus they only provide a limited perspective of an individual's performance. Checklists like rubrics are developed by faculty (Tolhurst & Bonner, 2000).

Similarities and Differences between Rubrics and Checklists

Rubrics and checklists share some common features. They both identify the performance attributes expected in students work. They, in addition, provide a means of making task requirements clear to both teachers and students. They also have some distinguishing features. Rubrics contain detailed descriptions of every criterion for each level of achievement/performance. Checklists, on the other hand, do not identify any descriptive criteria. They simply highlight the features expected for an assignment or a task (Rowlands, 2006, p. 61).

Recommendations

Between rubrics and checklists, rubrics are the better tools for assessments. This is because they translate informed professional judgments into graded numerical ratings on a scale. They thus reduce the time required for grading. Because they contain detailed descriptions of each level of performance, they greatly ease the process of provision of feedback to students and eliminate the need for assessors to repeatedly write the same comments for many students. They also enable comparisons of the performance of different students to be made. In addition, they reduce the subjectivity inherent in assessments. Rubrics also have the added advantage of providing a means through which students can do self-assessments using the same criteria utilized by faculty. Such assessments engender self-awareness and critical thinking in students and in effect, facilitates their learning (O'Donnell et al., 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, rubrics are scaled tools that define the criteria for performance and establish explicit rules for evaluation. Checklists, on the other hand, do not have clearly established criteria for grading performance. Therefore, their use as assessment tools may lead students to question the rationale for the grade they are awarded. Both of these tools are developed by faculty and they have some striking similarities. Rubrics are, however, better tools for assessments than checklists.

References

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