

## **Link to Learning and Teaching Theories**

### **Assessing for Understanding: Ramsden (2003)**

In his book 'Learning and Teaching in Higher Education', Paul Ramsden asks us to consider the complexity of approaches to assessment by understanding assessment in a relativistic sense, as a series of relations between the person whose work is being assessed, the quality of the outcomes he or she is demonstrating in comparison with others and our own understanding of what students know. He suggests that students need to be allowed to display how much they understand and that this may be through non conventional or traditional ways.

### **Constructive Alignment: John Biggs (1999)**

Teaching is effective when it supports those activities appropriate to achieving the curriculum objectives thereby encouraging students to adopt a deep approach to learning. To work properly all elements of teaching and learning activities, curriculum objectives and the assessment tasks must be aligned to each other. The critical components include: the curriculum, the teaching methods, the assessment approaches and the methods of reporting, the climate created for interactions with students and the institutional culture. See Biggs. J. (1999) Assessment frameworks need to assess particular competencies whilst encouraging students to display information using a spectrum of methods, this will allow the development of a multistructural profile of assessment.

### **Experiential Learning: David Kolb (1984)**

Kolb created his model of cognitive processing; how the process of learning happens in the brain, comprised of four elements: concrete experience, observation, reflection and formation of abstract concepts and presented them in the experiential learning cycle in 1975 and later developed it in 1984 into the use of concrete, 'here and now' experience to test ideas. The use of feedback to change practices and theories are key aspects of the developmental nature of his approach. See Kolb, (1984) and Jarvis. P, (1987)

### **Social constructivist assessment process cycle: Chris Rust (2005)**

The social-constructivist view of learning argues that knowledge is shaped and evolves through increasing participation within different communities of practice. The social constructivist process model of assessment argues that students should be actively engaged with every stage of the assessment process, in order that they understand the requirements of that process, the criteria, the standards being applied and that they should subsequently produce better work.

### **Multiple Abilities: Howard Gardner (1999)**

Howard Gardner formulated a cognitive model of seven intelligences that he claimed rarely operate independently but that they are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems. This recognises that students learn and think in very different ways and thus provides a conceptual framework for assessment and pedagogical practices. Gardner also advocates that knowledge, skills and behaviours developed in one context could be used in another and that this transfer of knowledge led to the generation of new knowledge. This enhanced his

concepts of intelligence into one of multiple abilities, talents and skills. He argued that the traditional approaches to schooling emphasised only two abilities, verbal – linguistic (particularly in the written form and through traditional approaches to assessment). He advocated that we should be moving towards a multi dimensional approach in order to focus on the full range of knowledge and talents that enable us to respond effectively to our environments, This includes visual and spatial. For more information: <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/gardner.htm>. In a similar vein, Stenberg suggested that people needed three different abilities in order to be successful. These are: analytical, practical and creative. Successful people do not necessarily have to have strengths in all areas but must find ways to exploit whatever pattern of abilities they have in any given situation or context <http://yale.edu.pace/teammembers/personalpages/bob/html>

### **VARK: Neil Fleming (2006)**

VARK is not a learning style but deals with only one dimension of the complex amalgam of preferences that make up a learning style. These preferences of Visual, Aural, Read/Write and Kinesthetic, are about the ways that they want to take-in and give-out information. The VARK questions and results focus on the ways in which people like information to come to them and the ways in which they like to deliver their communication. The questions are based on situations where there are choices about how that communication might take place. Fleming found that limiting VARK to modal preferences had the most success in assisting students with their learning. Of course, changing the other dimensions affected learning, but it was the modal preferences that had the most direct application for helping learning. For more information <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp> and Fleming N and Baume D (2006)

### **Assessment Supports Learning: Gibbs and Simpson (2002)**

The power of assessment to influence learning is well reported. Gibbs and Simpson (2002) identified eleven conditions under which assessment has been established as supporting learning. Three are essentially about motivation, one refers to creating learning opportunities and seven are all about aspects of feedback. The eleven conditions are summarised (Bryan and Clegg 2006) as 5 areas:

Quality and distribution of student effort

- Quality and level of student effort
- Quality and timing of feedback
- Quality of feedback
- Student response to feedback

Sambell & McDowell (2006) provide six principles or learning conditions in which the complexity is emphasised, sparing use of summative assessment, the need for extensive assessment opportunities, the importance of formal and informal feedback and the need to develop students' abilities to direct their own learning, progress and support the learning of others.

### **Authentic Assessment: Broad (2000)**

Complex social, intellectual and rhetorical abilities cannot be validly measured through simplified instruments of standardised testing. The complexity and sensitivity are crucial considerations which need to be acknowledged in any process. The post positive approaches of constructivist, hermeneutic and

interpretive assessment address the social realities, mental constructions and interpretations rather than absolute truths.

**Tribes and Territories: Becher (1989)**

Human communication takes a number of forms but is about imparting or exchanging information, thoughts and opinions. In higher education communication is about more than evoking an understanding of what the originator is trying to impart but is also about how knowledge is conveyed to a listener or a reader in a number of ways using different media or activities. Communication is complex and needs to be situated in the right context. Induction into a disciplinary context is conducted through its ways of communication and using its language. This is most frequently in the form of written language that is acceptable to the disciplinary context. Language is of immense importance because of the individual and collective knowledge, values and traditions interpreted and expressed through language.