
Evaluation

Introduction

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information on student learning. Evaluation is the process of analyzing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment information and making judgments or decisions based upon the information gathered.

Assessment and evaluation are essential components of teaching and learning in social studies. Without effective assessment and evaluation, it is impossible to know whether students have learned, whether teaching has been effective, or how best to address student learning needs. The quality of the assessment and evaluation in the educational process is linked to student performance. Regular monitoring and feedback are essential to improving student learning. What is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how results are communicated, to students and others, send clear messages about what is really valued.

Teacher-developed assessments and evaluations have a wide variety of uses, such as

- providing feedback to improve student learning
- determining if curriculum outcomes have been achieved
- certifying that students have achieved certain levels of performance
- setting goals for future student learning
- communicating with parents about their children's learning
- providing information to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching, the program, and the learning environment
- meeting the needs of guidance and administration personnel

Assessment

To determine how well students are learning, assessment strategies have to be designed to systematically gather information on the achievement of the curriculum outcomes. In planning assessments, teachers should use a broad range of strategies in an appropriate balance to give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Many types of assessment strategies can be used to gather such information, including, but not limited to:

- formal and informal observations
- work samples
- anecdotal records

- conferences
- teacher-made and other tests
- portfolios
- learning journals
- questioning
- performance assessment
- peer-and self-assessment
- interviews
- rubrics
- simulations
- checklists
- questionnaires
- oral presentations
- role plays
- debates
- document-based questions
- panel discussion

Guiding Principles

In order to provide accurate, useful information about the achievement and instructional needs of students, certain guiding principles for the development, administration, and use of assessments must be followed. *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (1993) articulates five basic assessment principles.

- Assessment strategies should be appropriate for and compatible with the purpose and context of the assessment.
- Students should be provided with sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviours being assessed.
- Procedures for judging or scoring student performance should be appropriate for the assessment strategy used and be consistently applied and monitored.
- Procedures for summarizing and interpreting assessment results should yield accurate and informative representations of a student's performance in relation to the curriculum outcomes for the reporting period.
- Assessment reports should be clear, accurate, and of practical value to the audience for whom they are intended.

These principles highlight the need for assessment that ensures that

- the best interests of the student are paramount
- assessment informs teaching and promotes learning

- assessment is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process and is clearly related to the curriculum outcomes
- assessment is fair and equitable to all students and involves multiple sources of information

While assessments may be used for different purposes and audiences, all assessments must give each student optimal opportunity to demonstrate what he/she knows and can do.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a continuous, comprehensive, and systematic process. It consists primarily of collecting pertinent data, and organizing and analyzing such data to determine student progress and performance in relation to learning outcomes. Effective evaluation provides essential information both to teachers and students on the effectiveness of the teaching; the value of program content in relation to student's needs, progress, strengths and weaknesses; and the future direction of teaching and learning.

Effective and continuous evaluation is crucial to the successful teaching of World History 3201. Evaluation is conducted within the context of the outcomes, which should be clearly understood by learners before teaching and evaluation takes place. Students must understand the basis on which they will be evaluated and what teachers expect of them. The evaluation of a student's progress may be classified as pre-instructional, formative, or summative, depending on the purpose.

- Pre-instructional evaluation is conducted before the introduction of unfamiliar subject matter or when learners are experiencing difficulty. It gives an indication of where students are and is not a measure of what they are capable of doing. The purpose is to analyze the student's progress to date in order to determine the type and depth of instruction needed. This type of assessment is mostly conducted informally and continuously.
- Formative evaluation is conducted throughout the process of instruction. Its primary purpose is to improve instruction and learning. Formative evaluation is an indication of how things are going. It identifies a student's strengths and weaknesses with respect to specific curriculum outcomes so that necessary instructional adaptations can be made.
- Summative evaluation occurs at the end of a designated period of learning. It is used, along with data collected during the formative stage, to determine learner achievement. This assessment is used to report the extent to which curriculum outcomes have been achieved.

