

## TARA FENWICK

### **Assessment Re-Loaded: Beyond Testing**

Tara Fenwick is an Associate Professor of adult education at the University of Alberta. Her research, publications and teaching focus on workplace learning and professional development. Her recent book co-authored with Jim Parsons, *The Art of Evaluation: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers* (Thompson, 2000), has been adopted as a core text in courses on evaluation at Royal Roads University and the University of Alberta.

### **Learning Objectives**

At the completion of this presentation, participants should be able to

1. Consider the importance of determining purposes, principles, processes and traps when designing evaluation for continuing education;
2. Accept the possibility for including different kinds of evaluation besides summative assessment, to make evaluation an ongoing part of instruction;
3. Recognize questioning strategies that move beyond knowledge recall to also evaluate learners' ability to analyze, apply, and critically assess knowledge in different situations;
4. Recognize alternate assessment strategies suitable for distance education delivery that can supplement multiple-choice testing in continuing education.

### **Abstract**

In the field of adult education, evaluation of learning has become much more than summative measurement of the amount of information that learners can recall. Evaluation activities themselves can provoke important learning at different times during a course of study: helping learners to process the information, internalize it, extend and apply it. Evaluation also develops learners' ability to make decisions about what they need to do or learn next, thus enhancing motivation. Well-designed evaluation activities also develop professionals' ability to self-assess their own knowledge and judgment in everyday activity, which is one of the most important goals of any single professional development initiative.

This presentation will overview these different purposes and kinds of evaluation, and introduce evaluation processes that are becoming common in continuing professional education. I will talk about principles of authentic evaluation (ongoing, valid and reliable, comprehensive, multi-modal, instructive, and communicative) that could be useful to pharmacy educators, and mention some traps of learner evaluation (reductionism, measuring what is easiest to measure, and underestimating the message embedded in the evaluation).

Then I will share some approaches that have been developed in other continuing education programs to avoid these traps and meet the principles of authentic evaluation. These depend on developing some clear criteria and indicators to decide what specifically is to be evaluated, then combining different methods to capture knowledge-in-performance. Knowledge is about more than remembering and recognizing phrases that one has read: it is about making sense of the new information, connecting it with one's existing knowledge, using the knowledge to solve different problems, integrating the knowledge into one's everyday embodied practice, and being able to question and extend the knowledge.

We will examine some ways of designing evaluative questions that help to get at these levels of knowledge. I will also share some evaluation strategies that other distance education programs of continuing education have developed for different platforms of instruction: paper-pencil packages, computer-based individualized instruction, and online interactive delivery.

### **Resources for Further Reference**

Caffarella, Rosemary (2001). *Program planning and assessment*, revised edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.  
(available through [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com))

Fenwick, Tara & Parsons, Jim (2000). *The art of evaluation: A handbook for educators and trainers*. Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing.  
(available from University of Alberta Bookstore, Chapters, or from publisher at [www.thompsonbooks.com](http://www.thompsonbooks.com))

Haughey, Margaret & Anderson, Terry (1998). *Networked learning: The pedagogy of the internet*. Montreal/Toronto: Cheneliere/McGraw-Hill.  
(If you have difficulty finding this book for purchase, try contacting the author directly at [margaret.haughey@ualberta.ca](mailto:margaret.haughey@ualberta.ca))

Hughes, Christine. (2003). Harm reduction: Opportunities for pharmacists to prevent the spread of blood-borne pathogens. CCCEP module.

Knox, Alan B. (2002). *Evaluation for continuing education: A comprehensive guide to success*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.  
(available through [www.josseybass.com](http://www.josseybass.com))

Also, note that Jossey Bass now has a series called *New Directions in Evaluation*, a quarterly sourcebook containing an edited collection of practical articles.

## Online Resources: Evaluating Learning in Distance Education

[all retrieved on November 14, 2003]

1. *Evaluating What Really Matters in Computer-Based Education*, by [Dr Tom Reeves](#), University of Georgia. <http://www.educationau.edu.au/archives/cp/reeves.htm>

Describes 14 pedagogical dimensions of computer based education, with suggestions for ways to evaluate these. The fourteen dimensions are [epistemology](#); [pedagogical philosophy](#); [underlying psychology](#); [goal orientation](#); [experiential value](#); [teacher role](#); [program flexibility](#); [value of errors](#); [motivation](#); [accommodation of individual differences](#); [learner control](#); [user activity](#); [cooperative learning](#); [cultural sensitivity](#).

2. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*

<http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/index.asp>

The stated mission of this online journal is to “provide practitioners in online education with knowledge about the very best research in online learning. Papers emphasizing results, backed by data are the norm.” All issues and most articles are available in full text online

3. “*Assessment and Feedback*” NCVET resource

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/online/issues/assessment.pdf>

A pdf article listing some basic issues in assessing online learning, with links to other resources.

4. *List of journals, with links, related to online learning and distance education.*

<http://people.uis.edu/rschr1/sources.htm#journals>

5. *Pharmalearn: Diabetes* course. Multiple authors. Available at [www.pharmalearn.com](http://www.pharmalearn.com)