Authentic Assessment for Student Learning: An Ontological Conceptualisation

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Abstract

Authentic assessment has been proposed as having potential to enhance student learning for a changing world. Conventionally, assessment is seen to be authentic when the tasks are real-to-life or have real-life value. Drawing on Martin Heidegger's work, we challenge this conceptualisation as narrow and limited. We argue that authenticity need not be an attribute of tasks but, rather, is a quality of educational processes that engage students in becoming more fully human. Adopting the mode of authenticity involves calling things into question, challenging public assumptions and striving to take a stand in the situations encountered. In addition to assessing student achievement, then, authentic assessment can enhance integration of what students know and how they act with who they are becoming.

Key words: authentic assessment, assessment and ontology, authenticity, inauthenticity, becoming

Introduction

The current context in which changes constantly occur in our social, economic, and political situation presents challenges in shaping futures that can accommodate these changes. Education is seen to have a crucial part to play in preparing for the future. In this context of change, attention is being directed to ways in which educational programs can contribute to preparing students for a changing world. Renewed interest has been directed to assessment, in particular, because it has been demonstrated to drive student learning. Authentic assessment has been proposed as having potential to enhance student learning in preparation for a changing world.

While authentic assessment has previously been used in both school and higher education contexts (for example, see Darling-Hammond, Ancess & Falk, 1995; Denman, 1995; Herrington & Herrington, 1998; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Newmann, Marks & Gamoran, 1996; Ridley & Stern, 1998; Wiggins, 1989), there is a lack of systematic conceptualisation of authenticity and authentic assessment (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999; Kreber et al., 2007; Maclellan, 2004; Newmann, Brandt & Wiggins, 1998). Conventionally, assessment is considered authentic when the tasks are real-to-life or have real-life value.

Such a conceptualisation emphasises attributes of the tasks and, consequently, the design of the tasks. A strong emphasis on attributes and development of the tasks highlights knowledge and its uses in real-life situations, an epistemological focus. In so doing, this emphasis risks overlooking ontological aspects of education, or who students are becoming. For authentic assessment to have value for students, it needs to "engage the whole person: what they know, how they act and who they are" (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007, p. 691). In this way, assessment can assist students to form and establish themselves in the world. Authentic assessment is not an end in itself; rather, it is an opportunity for students to learn to become who they endeavour to be. Through engaging in assessment processes, students can learn to develop their ways of being and inhabiting the world with other people and things. In this way, authentic assessment can prepare students for living and working in a changing world.

This paper re-captures an ontological dimension of education, which has been lost in research on authentic assessment to date. We put forward and elaborate an ontological conceptualisation of authentic assessment, given its potential in enhancing student learning for a changing world. In reconceptualising authentic assessment, we draw on Heidegger's concepts of being-in-the-world, authenticity and inauthenticity. We also indicate implications of authentic assessment for educational programs that place a heightened focus on integration of epistemology with ontology.

Being-in-the-World

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explored the being of human and non-human beings. Being, as defined by Heidegger, is "that which determines entities as entities" (1962, p. 25). In determining entities as entities, being does not "trace them back in their origin to some other entities" (p. 26), or define them in terms of physical and non-physical categories. Rather,

being differentiates one entity from others through the meanings we attach to those entities. For example, if a fail grade *is* under 4 on a 7-point scale, then, 4 *is not* a fail grade.

Being itself is not an entity, nor a quality among others that belong to entities, such as clarity or spatiality. Instead, being is "the source, ground and power" of entities, which are concrete forms of existence (Heidegger, 1959, p. 11). In other words, being is ontologically inseparable from entities. Being can only be encountered through interactions among entities (Mulhall, 2005, p. 8). Thus, the study of being is inseparable from studies of those interactions (Heidegger, 1962, p. 26).

William Blattner (2006, p. 38) explained the being of human beings by saying that "your being is who you are, and who you are includes and suffuses how you feel, how you act, how you are disposed, how you talk, with whom you congregate". Given our being is who we are, it is embodied in the stands we take and the way we lead our lives (ibid, p. 38). Our being is expressed through how we operate in the world, our attitudes and our worldview and, therefore, how we relate to others and things.

According to Heidegger (1962, p. 81), human beings do not exist in a 'side-by-side' state with things and other people in the world. Things and people have meaning to us, which arises through our interactions with them. A textbook can be an invaluable teaching tool, a student can be someone who enlivens a class, and a conference can be where we encounter new ideas. As we go about our everyday activities, we are always embedded in, and intertwined with, our world (Dall'Alba, 2009a). To some extent, as a result of our involvement in the world, our life is not entirely ours in the sense that other people and things play a role, too. We would not be teachers without our students, our teaching tools, or our educational institutions, for example. Together with others and things, we form the world. In this sense, being does not reside in individual human beings or things. Being is relational; it is being-in-the-world.

Our entwinement with the world points to our mode of being-in-the-world as being-amidst or inhabiting the world. Hubert Dreyfus (1991, p. 45) commented on this mode of being-in in the following way: "when we inhabit something, it is no longer an object for us but becomes part of us and pervades our relation to other objects in the world. This way of being-in is dwelling". Dwelling in the world, our life is lived there, in the web of meaningful interactions with others and things. Our lives as teachers relate to people we work with, such as students and colleagues; facilities we need to do our work, such as pens, papers, computers and books; and events we encounter in our work, such as workshops and meetings. These people and

things are integral to how we live our lives as teachers. In this way, the world is the 'home' for our everyday activities and interactions.

While the world is our home, it also transcends us. It is there before we are born, and will be there after we die. As we do not initiate the world, conformity to social conventions is a condition for us to participate in the world (Dreyfus, 1991; Haugeland, 1982). We learn to do things in an accepted manner; we do what makes sense according to public norms. As teachers, we teach what is in the curriculum in a way that other teachers would normally teach. We become one with the public. Every one of us is doing what everyone else is doing, more or less in the same manner.

As we all exist "in the womb of externalised and public existence" (Barrett, 1964, p. 196), most of the time we live and carry out our activities in a public way. While a degree of conformity to social conventions is necessary, for Heidegger, total conformity can be troublesome. This is because we tend to accept things as they are, without calling them into question. We tend to take things for granted. As teachers, we may give handouts and talk over PowerPoint slides in teaching whole classes. The danger is that we are discouraged from "new inquiry and any disputation, and in a peculiar way, [total conformity] suppresses [things] and holds them back" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 213). We may not be open to exploring other possibilities, including renewing usual ways of perceiving and doing things. For instance, we may not be open to other ways of teaching whole classes, such as using technologies to interact with students. In conforming to the public way, we "fall" into the world and become "lost" in it (ibid, p. 220); we no longer own ourselves (King, 2001).

In order *not* to lose ourselves entirely in the world, we need to take a stand on our being (Guignon, 1983) and take responsibility for who we are (Guignon, 1984; Vu & Dall'Alba, 2011). We must not lose ourselves entirely in the world if, as human beings, we are also to be self-determining. Stephen Mulhall (2005, p. 15) clarified this self-determining aspect by stating that for human beings, "living just is ceaselessly taking a stand on who one is and on what is essential about one's being, a being defined by that stand".

In other words, our being is an issue for us. Human beings are distinct from other beings in that we "care" about our being (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 26-35). According to Heidegger (1962, pp. 237-238), this essential and ontological characteristic of being, care, needs to be understood as twofold. Care directs the 'I' towards itself; we care about *who we are*. As a result, we are interested in making our own way in the world: this is the way *I* do it, this is what *I* perceive it to be. Indeed, "we are a life to live" (Blattner, 2006, p. 36). Given that our life is embedded in a web of meaningful interactions with people and things, care also directs

the 'I' towards these others and things. We are concerned about *how we are to be with others and things*. It is the 'self' and 'others' aspects that signify the unity and totality of our being, such that they are to be considered as "jointly posited" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 237).

In short, as human beings, we exist through our meaningful involvement in the world. Our being is being-with others, being-amidst the world we share with others, and in which we dwell and make our home. Our existence is conditional upon our everyday understanding of how we go about the world in common with others. For this reason, as human beings, falling in with a crowd is part of how we live our lives. If, however, we follow the public all the time, there will be no space for personal creativity and advancement. If falling in with a crowd pervades our mode of being, our own self will be suppressed, and we will no longer be *fully human*. Therefore, we must resist falling in with a crowd to some extent. We must, at times, call things into question, engage in renewal and explore other possibilities, including our own possible ways of being. The paradox of falling in with a crowd and resisting falling was highlighted when Heidegger raised the concepts of inauthenticity and authenticity, which are explored below.

Heidegger's Concepts of Inauthenticity and Authenticity

Heidegger (1962, p. 68) argued that human ways of being include modes of inauthenticity and authenticity. When we fall in with a crowd, thinking and acting as others do, we are in the mode of inauthenticity. When we take a stand on our being and accept responsibility for the way we live our life, even when living a choiceless choice such as our own death, we are in the mode of authenticity. As we are a life to live and our life is lived in the world, living involves taking responsibility for who we are whilst also following the public. In other words, we operate in both inauthentic and authentic modes.

As human beings, being inauthentic is our 'default' mode of being. We inhabit our work and home spaces in our customary manner. We tend to use computers for preparing our teaching plans and phones for connecting with people. Most of the time, we go about the world and carry out our activities in a public manner. We introduce ourselves to students in the first class we meet them as it is considered appropriate to do so. We tend to follow common ways of doing things after we are 'thrown' into the world at birth. Values, understandings, and ways of being are passed down to us, pressing us into common modes of operation that are recognised within our public sphere.

According to Heidegger (1962, pp. 220-224), being in the mode of inauthenticity is a positive possibility of human beings. This mode of being enables us to accomplish our everyday activities. Like others, we teach our students, mark their work and provide them with feedback, which becomes part of our routine. Our total involvement in the world, "being absorbed" in it (Heidegger, 1962, p. 220), is signified by going about our activities in the world in a public manner. When we move to a new workplace, being able to navigate around, use the facilities, operate within the system, develop working relationships with new colleagues, and attend events that take place is a sign we are settling in and becoming part of the community. Our involvement in the world occurs through operating with others in a similar manner. To put it in Heidegger's words: "being-in-the-world is always fallen" (ibid, p. 225).

In this fallen state, inauthenticity can lead to total conformity. Carol Steiner and Yvette Reisinger (2006, p. 306) argued that in a state of total conformity, people "are pursuing the possibilities of anyone and consequently have the experiences of anyone rather than their own experiences." This can happen when teachers make choices for their students. Concurring with Heidegger, this can be both positive and detrimental. Positively, it can enable the students' progress in their field of study, but it can become detrimental when the students' own interests and originality are negated by teachers. Through totally conforming, we disown ourselves and become lost to the world (King, 2001). We are "dispersed and uncentred" (Guignon, 1984, p. 334). Teachers can experience this state of being when they are informed about new teaching policies and practices. As they move towards incorporating new practices into their pedagogy to fit in with new policies, they may experience a feeling of estrangement from what they consider as their usual and preferred ways of teaching.

As noted above, as human beings we care about our being and, more broadly, about our existence. Because we care about who we are, we are "in thrall to [our] ownmost possibility of existence" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 334). We seize upon 'falling' to 'own' ourselves (p. 224). In other words, we are confronted with the call to be authentic. In Heidegger's terms, the call to be authentic "has the character of an *appeal*" to human beings; it calls us to form our own ways of being (p. 314). It is important to note here that being ourselves does not mean "being true to oneself, where this self is understood as consisting of inner feelings, needs and drives" (Guignon, 1984, p. 322). Ontologically, the call to be our own selves summons us to take responsibility for who we are and how we live our life. We do not simply take things entirely as they are passed down to us, such as accepting a way of operating in a role because we are taught to do so. In leading a life, we must take a stand on who we are and act to define that

stand. In this way, we engage in a process of striving to become "integrated and coherent as authentic Being-one's-self" (Guignon, 1984, p. 334), although we never fully accomplish it.

For Heidegger (1962, p. 68), authenticity is not dichotomous to inauthenticity, nor does authenticity negate inauthenticity. They are simply our modes of operation. In fact, as human beings, our lives move back and forth between inauthenticity and authenticity. We learn to operate in ways in common with others, while at the same time we instantiate our own ways of operating: "I am one with the public, as well as simultaneously my own self" (Vu & Dall'Alba, 2011, p. 100; see also Guignon, 1984; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). It is only in the authentic mode, however, that we are more integrated and coherent or, in other words, more *fully human*. Given this, as human beings, it matters to us to become authentic.

While becoming authentic is to be considered as human achievement (Bonnett, 2002), it is never achieved once and for all. Human beings have "constant temptation towards falling;" we are always tempted to fall into common ways of operating due to their convenience (Heidegger, 1962, p. 221). Becoming authentic is neither straightforward nor simple. Throughout *Being and Time*, Heidegger associated becoming authentic with anxiety, guilt, ambiguity and entanglement. Given the challenges involved, an understanding of what is demanded in becoming authentic may foster a desire within us to strive for authenticity.

Becoming Authentic

Becoming authentic arises from our being-in-the-world. As we go about our activities, we have a range of possible ways to be (Heidegger, 1962, p. 68). Our involvement in the world and engagement with others opens up "possibilities for doing things, for taking actions, for behaving in certain ways" (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006, p. 304). For example, attending a conference on teaching for promoting student learning, where we encounter new ideas and practices, may inspire us to innovate in our own teaching. Our encounter with new ideas and practices can open up alternative ways of teaching our students. However, the possibilities are not limitless. When we innovate in our teaching, our new way of teaching is dependent on considerations such as our values, our understanding of teaching, our expectations of the outcomes, the institutional teaching policies and procedures, the acceptance of the new practice by stakeholders such as colleagues and students, and the availability of resources to accommodate the innovation. We seize upon what is possible, within the particular context where our life is lived, to make these possibilities our own (Heidegger, 1962, p. 346).

The possibilities we take up, either in authentic or inauthentic mode, arise from the public world (Heidegger, 1962, p. 69). Through being-in-the-world, we form our surroundings and, at the same time, are formed by them. More specifically, we form and are formed by the activities we pursue, the people with whom we interact, the available conditions for carrying out our activities, and our social institutions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Dreyfus, 1991; Inwood, 2000; Thomson, 2004). Within this space of relations and manoeuvres, our possible ways of being are realised.

In order to become authentic through making possibilities our own, we do not seize upon "any random possibilities which lie closest" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 349). Becoming authentic requires us to be critical of the possibilities that are open to us (Haugeland, 1982, p. 23) and that are integral to anticipation of our life as a complete project. We are critical when, in considering the possibilities, we claim those that are significant to us as "the meaning and sense of our existence" (Brook, 2009, p. 49). We judge what we can do and how we are to be, in light of what is possible and desirable in our particular context.

In identifying and claiming our own possibilities as a way to strive for authenticity, we draw on our everyday understanding of our involvement in the world and our expectations of those possibilities. Our understanding of our involvement in the world involves understanding who we are, what we do, and how we go about in the world. This understanding projects the possibilities for the ways we live our life and carry out our activities. For example, planning an assessment task requires understanding who we are as teachers and who are our students, as well as what type of learning is to be assessed and how that learning can be demonstrated through the assessment. It also relies upon our knowledge of assessment forms and processes that teachers would usually employ in this context. All of these inputs point us to possible ways of designing and using the assessment task. The way that we design and use the assessment task is integral to how we strive to be, as a teacher. In light of the possibilities, we realise our own way and pattern of life as a whole (Golomb, 1995; Guignon, 1984).

We become authentic by defining our future through our own life pattern, even if this means falling in with accepted ways of operating. We design and use an assessment task, even if we choose to do it in the customary manner. Hence, becoming authentic does not necessarily equate to choosing a possibility that is new or innovative. According to Charles Guignon (1984, p. 334), authenticity "seems to hinge not on what one is in the sense of what specific possibilities one takes up, but rather on how one lives." Indeed, we become authentic not through what we do but, rather, through how we are (Heidegger, 1962, p. 307). We carry

out our activities, relate to people and things in the world, and instantiate our ways of being in a manner that is significant and meaningful to our existence. We take responsibility for who we are.

At times, as we go about our activities, we are 'thrown' into 'crisis' situations which present themselves as a turning point for us to become authentic (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 346-347). For example, the context for our activities may change in that something involved in our activities may be removed or break down, or new situations emerge that demand reconfiguring how we go about our activities. These changes may prevent us from carrying out our activities in our customary manner. Alternatively, we may feel uncomfortable functioning and living our life in our usual manner. We may also glimpse a better and more effective way of carrying out our activities. We are at the point of "curiosity" of "not tarrying alongside what is closest" (ibid, p. 216); not functioning in a routine manner merely because we are familiar with it. Crisis situations, such as changes in our circumstance, our discomfort with routines or an encounter with new ideas, may summon us to explore other possibilities, including our own potentiality for being.

How we become authentic highlights the interdependence between inauthenticity and authenticity. Inauthenticity provides a background for our activities and contributes to forming them (Heidegger, 1962, p. 69). As Jacob Golomb (1995, p. 98) expressed it, inauthenticity functions as a horizon upon which our possible ways of being are defined "vis-à-vis what are not genuinely [ours]." Against the horizon of common teaching practices, we can define those that are significant and meaningful to us. In the mode of authenticity, we explore possibilities arising from the public world and adopt those we claim as our own. In other words, authenticity calls and inauthenticity is called upon (ibid, p. 112). In order to hear and respond to this 'call', it is essential that we do not take things for granted and simply fall in with a crowd (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 315-316). We should be, as far as possible, aware of our being. We take responsibility for who we are in the way we strive to live our life in a coherent and integrated manner. In short, we cannot become authentic without attending to our ways of being, and acting to define our being throughout our life.

Becoming authentic coheres, then, with our everyday activities (Dreyfus, 1991 p. 322). Becoming authentic teachers, for example, is coupled with the ways we teach and develop our pedagogy. As being-in-the-world is primarily fallen (Heidegger, 1962, p. 264), we need to constantly bring ourselves to face the choice to act in our own way or to follow the public. This choice may require us to turn away from customary ways of going about in the world in order to take a stand on our life projects and seek our own ways of being. As Golomb (1995,

p. 96) pointed out, "one cannot become authentic as an ontic entity [defined by characteristics] among entities, as a static being, but only as asking, searching, Becoming".

It follows that becoming authentic has both public and personal dimensions. Becoming authentic arises from, and is informed by, public knowledge or ways of operating. However, becoming authentic does not happen accidentally, but through our continual striving to ask what we stand for, searching for possibilities for being, and becoming who we endeavour to be. As we strive to be authentic, our past and future are brought together in the moment (Heidegger, 1962, p. 17; see also Schmidt, 1996). The past contributes to shaping the future, while the future directs our present efforts to take up our own possibilities among those that are open to us (Dall'Alba, 2009b). For example, when we plan our teaching, our practice is influenced both by the ways we have been taught and how we want to teach. We are historically projected towards possibilities or, in other words, towards our future (Heidegger, 1962, p. 386). Only in the mode of being authentic can we make a difference to our future and, in a broader sense, to our world. For this reason, becoming authentic matters to us as it is not simply a mode of being, but of being more fully human (ibid, p. 334). Being fully human means taking responsibility for who we are and how we live our life, through calling things into question, challenging assumptions, and renewing our customary ways of understanding and living our life.

The discussion above on becoming authentic points to features of authenticity (see Heidegger, 1962, pp. 263-265). First, authenticity is embedded in our public existence. Indeed, authenticity "cannot be disengaged from the public world", because the public world is "the source of all possibilities" (Guignon, 1984, p. 333). Second, authenticity is not dichotomous to inauthenticity. Rather, inauthenticity provides a background for, and contributes to, forming our authentic ways of being. Third, central to authenticity is awareness of being. Given that we can only hear the call to be authentic when we open ourselves to it, we must attend to our ways of being. We need to be aware of our being in ways that bring our very own possibilities to light (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Last but not least, becoming authentic is an open-ended process that is coupled with our involvement in the world. In carrying out our activities and going about in the world, we cannot simply take things for granted and passively absorb the accepted ways of doing things. Instead, we must continually strive to take a stand on our being, and to live our life in an integrated and coherent manner. Given that becoming authentic requires constant effort (Dreyfus, 1991. p. 236), support and assistance is required in this process, which has several implications for education.

Reconceptualising Authentic Assessment

The features of authenticity elaborated in this paper demand that authentic assessment is reconceptualised. Assessment is authentic when students are encouraged to respond to the call to be authentic and supported in striving for authenticity or, in other words, in their efforts to become more fully human. As efforts towards authenticity inhere within our public existence, students must learn about public knowledge and ways of operating, while also developing their capacities for critically interrogating and taking a stand on what they learn. Enabling this to happen requires a focus within educational programs on integration of knowing, acting and being (Dall'Alba, 2005, 2009a). This integration of epistemology with ontology requires students to interrogate what they know and are able to do in a manner that enables them to seek possibilities for their ways of being in the world. In this way, knowledge and skills are not seen as an end in themselves but, rather, empower students to form and establish themselves in the world.

Consistent with a focus on integration of knowing, acting and being, assessment practices should aim to assess, while at the same time enhancing, the extent to which students achieve such an integration. Integration of ontological aspects into assessment underlines the need to attend to students' being in the world. It demands that students are challenged to critically interrogate the way they lead their lives, and their interactions with other people and things in the world in light of who they endeavour to become. Authentic assessment extends, then, beyond merely completing tasks that engage students in meaningful learning activities (Norton, 2004). Instead, authentic assessment processes can challenge students to take up and respond to the question of who they are becoming (Dall'Alba & Barnacle, 2007; Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). Opportunities need to be created for students to take a stand on the knowledge they seek, the way they act, and how they are to be towards others and things they encounter. These opportunities can be provided through encouraging and supporting students in taking a stand on what they are learning, and to explore possibilities for their ways of being that are significant and meaningful to their life-projects.

Given that becoming authentic involves exploring one's own possibilities, this should be reflected in the assessment processes. Authentic assessment tasks sample real-life activities in realistic contexts (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Wiggins, 1989), providing students with opportunities to collaborate with other people, including their peers. Through accomplishing assessment tasks, students are required to demonstrate how their performance

has been informed by their learning (Ridley & Stern, 1998), including justifying the significance of this performance in light of who they are becoming. Involvement in such assessment practices can provide students with opportunities to synthesise and demonstrate what it means to be informed and skilful, in ways that are significant and meaningful to them. Assessment can thereby increase students' awareness of who they are becoming, as well as about what is required of them to act in defining their stand. Authenticity is, then, not an attribute of tasks but, rather, a quality of educational processes that engage students in becoming more fully human.

Heidegger directly addressed the question of how education can enable us to become more fully human, which has implications for authentic assessment. Drawing on Plato, he called for education that entails "a disruption of customary behavior and of current opinion" (Heidegger, 1998, p. 165) in a manner that is consistent with his notion of authenticity. Heidegger described this substantial disruption as "turning around the whole human being. It means removing human beings from the region where they first encounter things and transferring and accustoming them to another realm where beings appear" (p. 167). He explained that "the turning around has to do with one's being and thus takes place in the very ground of one's essence" (p. 166). This reference to 'essence' does not imply something static and unchanging, but indicates our way of being. For Heidegger, then, education that contributes to becoming more fully human requires calling into question taken-for-granted assumptions, including about what is and who we are. Iain Thomson clarified the goal of this turning around, which is to "bring us full circle back to ourselves, by first turning us away from the world in which we are most immediately immersed and then turning us back to this world in a more reflexive way" (2004, p. 457). Such a renewed, reflexive awareness enables heeding the call to authenticity and, thereby, to being more fully human.

As assessment processes direct the focus of student learning, they have a crucial part to play in what Thomson calls this "double movement … by which we are involuntarily turned away from the world and then voluntarily turn back to it, in which the grip of the world upon us is broken in order that we may thereby gain (or regain) our grip on this world" (p. 456). Authentic assessment can be employed in encouraging students to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions, while promoting reflexivity about their own ways of knowing, acting and being. However, as this "turning around has to do with one's being," it is fraught with risk and uncertainty. Loosening the familiar grip of everyday norms and routines, even temporarily, is likely to be associated with anxiety and a disorienting sense of lacking

direction. This can be expected to be particularly challenging for students who are learning to orient themselves within new practice worlds.

Engaging students in learning such that they become authentic through assessment processes places a number of conditions on teaching. As for assessment in general, the research literature emphasises the requirement to make assessment objectives and procedures clear to students (Banta & Associates, 2002; Banta, Jones & Black, 2009; Gardner, 2006; Gibbs, 2006; Meyers & Nulty, 2009; Price et al., 2011). Adequate preparation for students, including making these points clear, has proved critical in enhancing learning from assessment (Meyers & Nulty, 2009; Vu & Dall'Alba, 2007). Given that authentic assessment practices can be expected to be somewhat unfamiliar to students, adequate preparation can direct student learning for personal and career development.

Learning for the future, including learning to become authentic, is a continuous process, which highlights a need for integrity and consistency of entire educational programs. Integration of assessment within a program can increase the clarity of what is expected of students in a consistent way, so as to direct them to appropriate learning and engagement in the opportunities provided to them. In addition, when assessment is integrated with the learning in which students are engaged, it can be used in providing timely feedback and assistance for student learning.

Given that becoming authentic is often associated with anxiety, guilt, ambiguity and entanglement, timely assistance is critical in supporting students in learning for authenticity. This condition on teaching highlights the necessity for teachers to be available to provide support, supervision, and direction for student learning. In particular, teachers need to provide a fear-reduced and supportive environment. As assessment assumes high stakes in educational processes where student performance is graded and certified (Price et al., 2011; Sadler, 2005, 2009), such an environment is critical. In this environment, students can find support to approach assessment tasks in a way that they consider relevant and meaningful to their values and understanding, while at the same time collaborating with peers to diversify their strategies. They also need space to challenge public assumptions, outdated ideas, and routine practices, with assistance in doing so. Through challenge and support in embarking on a journey of asking who one is, searching for possibilities for being, and becoming who one endeavours to be, students are provided with a basis from which to strive for authenticity.

Challenge and support can be provided through promoting discursive interaction among students, and between students and teachers in the assessment processes. Discursive interaction facilitates mutual understanding and trust among students, paving the way for

collaborative learning with, and from, peers. During interaction, students can form their own ways of acting and being by differentiating what are, and what are not, genuinely theirs. Through interaction of this type, students can be directed to calling things into question, challenging assumptions, and engaging in renewal. In this way, interaction has the potential to encourage students to take responsibility for who they are and extend their possibilities for being, including being with others. Interaction can also allow for meaningful feedback from both peers and teachers, which can be used to support current and future learning. In order for students to learn from interaction and resolve potential conflicts and tension, teachers should sensitively handle discussions surrounding interaction to focus student learning (Vu & Dall'Alba, 2007).

In sum, we have elaborated a broadened conceptualisation of authentic assessment. Assessment that is authentic encourages and supports students in challenging routine practices, taking a stand on knowledge and experience, and exploring possibilities in light of who they are becoming. It provides this type of encouragement and support through the ways in which students are engaged in the assessment processes. Assessment, therefore, is not an end in itself. Rather, it is an opportunity for students to learn and reflect on their learning for their personal and career development, in a way that nurtures the spirit of striving for authenticity.

Conclusion

As interest in seeking ways to prepare students for a changing world has grown, renewed attention is being directed to assessment for its potential in enhancing student learning. A notion of learning as integration of knowing, acting and being demands assessment that is authentic in the sense articulated in this paper. This form of authentic assessment aims to assess, while at the same time enhancing, students' integration of knowledge and skills into their ways of being. Through engagement in these assessment practices, students are encouraged and supported in challenging routine practices, taking a stand on knowledge and experience, and exploring possibilities in light of who they are becoming. In this manner, authentic assessment can extend students' possibilities for being, including being with others.

While this broadened notion of authentic assessment has the potential to enhance student learning for a changing world, such an alternative to a conventional assessment approach can be socially and intellectually challenging. Some of the challenges relating to the introduction of authentic assessment include possible resistance from some staff and/or students, who may

be comfortable with continuing to fall in with the current modes of assessing student learning. There is also likely to be an additional workload involved in adopting a new approach and the resultant revisions to customary teaching/learning practices. Hence, both teachers and students are likely to need encouragement to be open to the use of authentic assessment, while at the same time being challenged and supported in engaging in educational programs that promote striving for authenticity. They also need to be adequately trained and prepared for the use of new assessment practices (Boud, Cohen & Sampson, 2001; Brown & Glasner, 1999; Orpwood, 2001).

The issues identified above highlight the need to explore and evaluate the use of authentic assessment practices, given the high-stakes status of assessment in the educational system. An increased understanding of the theory and practices of authentic assessment can contribute to promoting its use in enhancing learning that prepares students for living and working in a changing world.

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