

PODIUM 1.3 -- 1:30-1:45 [10 min presentation followed by 5 min Q&A]

Making Visible Our Philosophical Positions: What Goes Unsaid When We Assess Intrinsic Competencies?

Walter Tavares;^{1,2,3} Paula Rowland;^{1,2,4} Stella Ng;^{1,5} Ayelet Kuper,^{1,3} Farah Friesen,⁵ Kathryn Hodwitz,⁶ Katherine Shwetz,⁷ Ryan Brydges.^{1,6}

1. The Wilson Centre, University Health Network
2. Post-MD Education, The University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine
3. Department of Medicine, University of Toronto
4. Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Medicine
5. Centre for Faculty Development, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto at Unity Health
6. Department of Medicine, Unity Health
7. Department of English, University of Toronto

walter.tavares@utoronto.ca

Introduction: The diversification of philosophical positions informing assessment has broadened views on the nature of constructs, as well as assessment and justification approaches. This diversity may, at times, risk incompatibility in the assumptions underlying one's choices within and between these assessment features, potentially undermining efforts. We investigated how authors used philosophical positions in assessment design and decision-making, in the context of assessing intrinsic roles. We focused on the (in)compatibility of assumptions across assessment features.

Methods: Using a representative sample of studies focused on performance-based assessment of intrinsic roles (e.g., professionalism) we extracted and interpreted information signaling authors' philosophical positions across three key features in assessment: 1) conceptualizations of constructs, 2) structure and delivery of assessment activities (including the role of the rater), and 3) methods of justification and validation.

Results: A total of 50 papers were reviewed from Academic Medicine (n=21), Medical Education (n=9) and Advances in Health Sciences Education (n=20). We found some variability in which philosophical positions appeared to inform each feature of assessment but this required a high degree of inference. This led to uncertainty about authors' underlying assumptions and commitments and therefore compatibility across assessment features could not be examined.

Conclusions: Authors appear to have adopted varying approaches to assessment without clearly articulating how their underlying assumptions justify their decisions. Leaving such details implicit threatens interpretation for those wishing to build on, use, or evaluate the work. As such, interpreting compatibility, and thus defensibility, appears to depend more on who is interpreting, rather than what is being interpreted.