



## **A New Vision on Evaluation from the Perspective of the Constructivist Approach**

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### **Abstract**

*The constructivist evaluation within the cognitivist training activity is conceived as the relationship between contextual, situational constructivist learning and constructivist teaching, engaged as information/training/knowledge, being concerned with how the student processes information and how he builds knowledge. Constructivist assessment methods and techniques take into account the fact that within the training activity, learning produces a set of different results, highlighting the process of achieving learning. These methods and techniques emphasize metacognition, with students being able to present learning outcomes. Assessment in constructivism is a complex activity that involves both students and teachers and focuses on the process by which the individual student has achieved the construction of knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Assessment; constructivist approach; methods and techniques

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## **1. Introduction**

Currently, the assessment concept has undergone some changes, indicating a gradual transition from the standardized assessment of students' knowledge and abilities to the authentic and/or contextualized assessment, focused on the formation of school skills. School assessment is approached from two perspectives: cognitive and metacognitive. From a cognitive perspective, assessment is placed in the center of attention, highlighting the cognitive processes of the learner (cognition). The metacognitive perspective is defined synthetically with the formula "the student's knowledge of his knowledge". Today the student does not learn to be evaluated, but is evaluated to learn. Assessment is aimed at assessing students' understanding rather than their surface knowledge.

The evaluation of school results is a component of the didactic process, segmented by both the teacher and the student. According to the Reference Framework of the National Curriculum, "the fundamental role of evaluation consists in ensuring a permanent and appropriate feedback, necessary both to the actors of the educational process, to the decision-makers, and the general public". For some, evaluation refers to measurement and marking. Others see the primary role of assessment as promoting learning (Wiliam, 2011).

The evaluation process was heavily influenced by the social constructivist evaluation model researched by O'Donovan et al. (2016) and the principles of good assessment and feedback advocated by Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006). The main interventions were the use of assessment criteria and standards, examples, feedback, classroom assessment workshops, and whole-class feedback sessions. Assessment for learning is an approach to teaching and learning that creates feedback that is then used to improve student performance.

Constructivist pedagogy approaches 'assessment as a construct', which capitalizes on constructivist learning and teaching constituted as 'contingent processes', also focusing on the assessment of the whole process. In constructivist theory, assessment is seen as part of the learning process in which students themselves become aware of their progress, organizing new information around the existing conceptual framework that facilitated learning. Therefore, constructivist learning facilitates the transfer of learning and problem-solving from one conceptual framework to another. Assessment from this perspective must be context-specific and cannot be used uniformly for all students. The concept of constructivist evaluation, which is based on the basic principles of the constructivist paradigm, seeks to "provoke" analysis, integration, and valorization of knowledge, and creativity.

## **2. The conceptual framework of constructivist assessment**

The evaluation from a constructivist perspective focuses on the activities carried out continuously by the students, describing step by step the algorithm that contributed to the results obtained. Siebert (2002, p.187) defines constructivist assessment as "a necessary didactic action within the cognitivist training activity, which is designed with constructivist, self-conservative, contextual, situational learning and constructivist teaching, employed as information/training/intermediate, active, professional, implicit knowledge". Its object of action is the results of constructivist learning, based on a change in the student's cognitive structure, which makes it viable, as part of real life, within a circular spherical model engaged in the concentric resumption of essential information, didactically fixed through conceptual maps (Cristea, 2015).

In the last decade, practice has confirmed the discovery of the enormous potential of evaluation as a learning tool for quality management and assurance, claiming the importance of involving the evaluation process to develop and strengthen learning capacity. Three meanings of assessment are proposed, namely: assessment of learning, assessment for learning, and assessment as learning (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Concepts of assessment in relation to learning

Assessment of learning	Assessment designed primarily to make judgments about student achievement of knowledge and/or skills at a given point of time.
Assessment for learning	Assessment designed primarily to promote student learning and guide instruction.
Assessment as learning	Assessment designed primarily to provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning.

The purpose of constructivist assessment is to measure students' process skills by involving students' initiatives and personal investments. It is based on an alternative methodology, it is formative in that it does not refer only to results (knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, competences), but also to how they were constituted. Students' creative instincts and abilities to express knowledge in a variety of ways are developed, with students having the opportunity to transfer new knowledge to real life.

Mogonea (2007) presents major limits of the constructivist evaluation, noting that it is no longer a quantitative one, but a qualitative one; it is no longer standardized, or easily quantifiable, but is based on value judgments, often subjective assessments regarding skills, abilities, time limits, transfer possibilities. For this reason, it has also been attributed the characteristic of subjective. Moreover, the products of group activities are more difficult to evaluate than personal ones, not knowing exactly the contribution of each member of the group.

Constructivist assessment is concerned with how the student learns and emphasizes the way the student processes information and builds his knowledge. It considers not only the visible results of learning but also the context (organization, situations, methods, tools). The evaluation, therefore, must be oriented towards the evaluation of personal processes and constructions, based on knowledge. The students' prior knowledge of the type of tasks used in the evaluation influences their involvement in the act of evaluation, therefore, in all the steps taken for the constructivist evaluation, it is aimed that it gains objectivity and transparency, is open to those who learn and centered on their development.

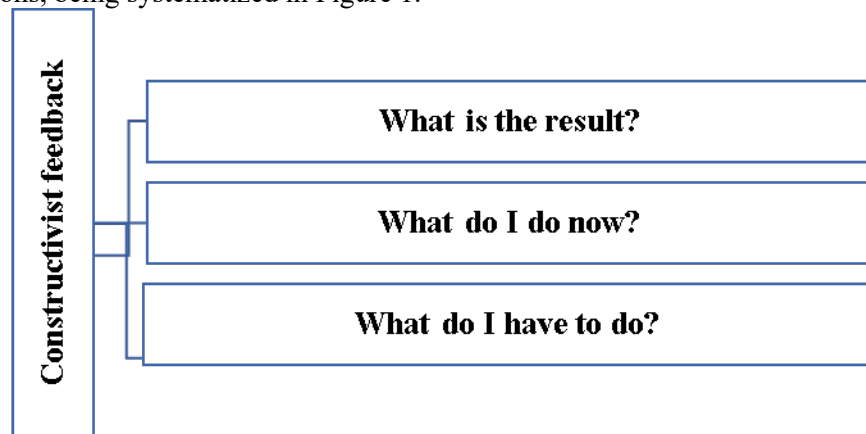
Within the framework of the constructivist assessment, the teacher's collaborative activities with the students are carried out for the construction of learning. The learning results materialize in school products and transdisciplinary products accompanied by success criteria. The teacher helps the students to present the results obtained based on the success criteria. Constructive assessments support student learning and provide real-time feedback, allowing for error correction and ensuring academic success. According to constructivist assessment, what matters are the skills that students have acquired during the learning process, their ability to use them in real life, what they have learned, and how they relate to others.

The characteristics of assessment in a constructivist classroom are (Joița, 2006):

- the triangle of constructivist training is realized: constructivist teaching, constructivist learning, and constructivist assessment;
- develops students' skills through the construction of information;
- includes the skills necessary for life;
- it is continuous, being formative, it offers new learning experiences;
- it is situational, being also transposed in real life;
- provides a new understanding and acquire the necessary skills;
- provides immediate feedback;
- improves the process of constructivist teaching and constructivist learning;
- the dialogue between the evaluator and the evaluated is carried out;
- measures the students' performance;
- promotes the development of the social and emotional aspects of students.

The constructivist approach to assessment is formative, it provides immediate feedback to the student and he reconstructs his mental constructions. The purpose of formative assessment is to improve the quality of student learning, to ensure quality summative assessment, not to provide evidence for student assessment or grading. Assessment must respond to the particular needs and characteristics of teachers, students, and scientific content.

Formative assessment is the form that is widely accepted in constructivist learning, which requires the elimination of grades and standardized tests. Here students are evaluated in the process of creating their skills and abilities. One of the factors that make this form of assessment so intriguing is the importance of feedback on student performance that should enable them to draw conclusions and improve for the future (Brown, 2004). Teachers receive and supplement feedback from students on their learning, and provide feedback to students on assessment results and suggestions for improving learning. The feedback provided must be constructive, answering three essential questions, being systematized in Figure 1.



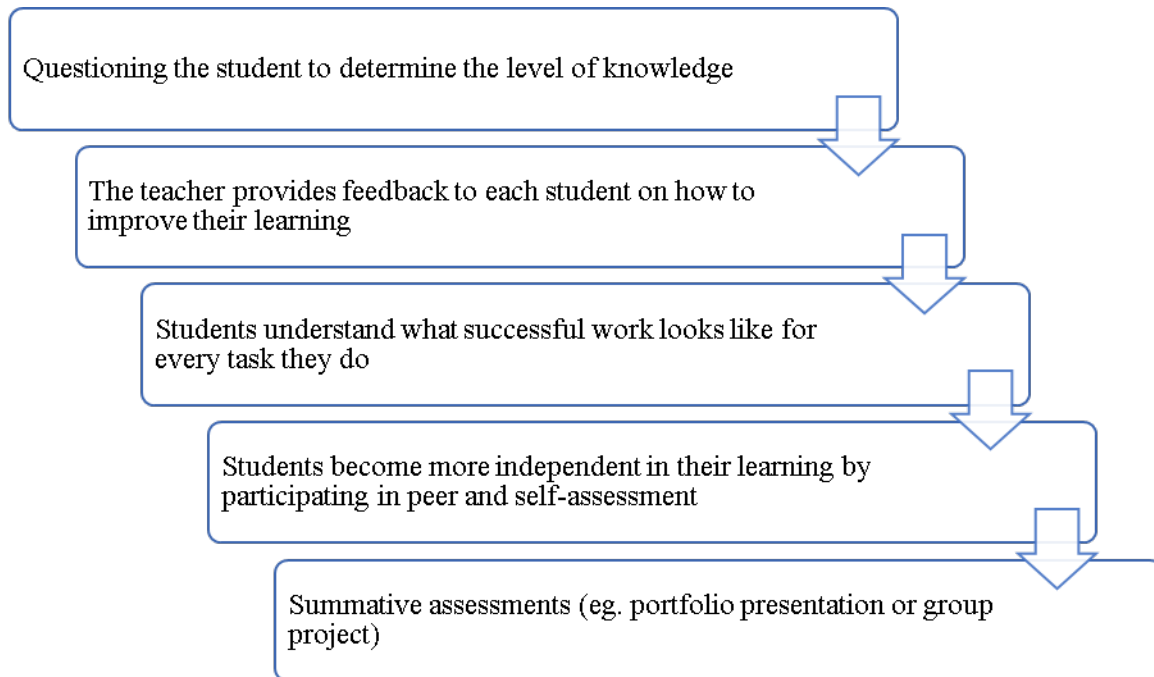
**Figure 1.** Constructivist feedback

It is context-specific, what works well in one classroom will not necessarily work in another, and is an ongoing process. Sometimes it can also be summative, taking place at the end of a module/activity. Constructivist assessment has a key role as an alternative assessment because it deals with real-life problems (Raizen & Kaser, 1989). Authentic assessment is also called performance assessment, which calls on students to demonstrate specific skills orally or in writing. An authentic or performance assessment usually provides a task for students to complete. According to some research (Bateson, 1994; Calfee & Perfumo, 1993) there is enthusiasm for alternative assessment because teachers have the freedom to choose.

In the context of the constructivist approach, assessments must assess students' progress in achieving the three major outcomes of the constructivist approach: conceptual understanding, activity skills, and independent inquiry. Sometimes it is necessary to obtain more information than can be collected, given time and/or resource constraints, the evaluator must find a way to prioritize the problematic items. All students perform learning tasks based on assimilated knowledge, feelings, and relevant skills. Meaningful learning occurs when students seek to relate new concepts and sentences to relevant concepts and sentences existing in their cognitive structure (Mintzes, Novak, Wandersee, 2000).

A central feature of this assessment for the learning paradigm is feedback and how students engage with and use it (Handley et al., 2008; O'Donovan et al., 2016). Any progress in learning depends on correct assessment and constructive feedback, it is one of the most powerful tools that influence learning and school performance. The role of feedback is to motivate the student to change something, to correct himself, therefore any form of feedback that does not help him to advance somehow can demotivate, inhibit, or produce more confusion. The characteristic of

assessment for learning is that students act on the feedback they receive. Five main processes take place in assessment for learning (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Main steps in assessment for learning (autor???)

The numerous effects of constructivist learning and teaching expressed through assimilated-accommodated-adapted knowledge to an open context, pedagogically validated in relation to six qualitative criteria, must be evaluated from a constructive perspective (Cristea, 2015):

- a) structural symbiosis, between theory and application;
- b) circular determination through the designed and consistently pursued didactic goals;
- c) self-organization in group learning conditions;
- d) circularity of concentric, spiral learning;
- e) recursion, by permanent reference to one's own previously accumulated existence;
- f) emerging, by multiplying acquired, internalized knowledge and placing it in new cognitive networks.

Constructivist assessment is an action directly involved in training as an activity based on the construction, reconstruction, and deconstruction of reality. The assessment environment has two major subdivisions, what defines the environment and what influences the environment. The defining elements of the assessment environment are the teacher's beliefs, teacher practices, and how teachers engage students in the social context in which assessment and instruction take place.

According to Guba and Lincoln (2001), constructivist evaluation is a form of evaluation based on the propositions (basic assumptions) that underlie the constructivist paradigm. There are two phases of constructivist assessment: discovery and assimilation. The discovery phase of constructive evaluation is based on the evaluator's effort and describes "what is happening here, the 'here' being evaluated, and its context." The evaluator's task is to identify the necessary information.

Limits of constructivist assessment, from the teacher's perspective (Joița, 2006, p.180):

- there is a subjectivism determined by the lack of criteria and standardized methods of assessment;
- the lack of objectivity in the assessment;

- the difficulty in appreciating the quality, and efficiency of a student's knowledge activities and, above all, justifying, and arguing why sometimes this is not correct;
- the existence of the risk that the "products" of the knowing subject's activity, being personal achievements, subjective reflections of objective reality, may be false or wrong constructions;
- the difficulty of assessing the non-cognitive factors involved in the evaluative act;
- the need for more time to gather all the information needed to assess the quality or efficiency of the planned results.

The objective ascertainment of the quality of learning and teaching requires continuous processes of appreciation and interpretation of the subjective reality assimilated by the educated (student, the one who learns) and exploited pedagogically by accommodating internalized knowledge to new situations.

The constructivist perspective according to Guilbert and Ouellet (1997), on knowledge, and learning can be summarized in the following postulates:

- constructivism itself implies personal reflection, critical and analytical thinking, metacognition, and the search for solutions to situations, but the student needs support, guidance, orientation, and encouragement through the relationship with the teaching staff and the group;
- collaboration between students is fundamental in the class, and the group because the participants act in a community that also researches opposing opinions, and varied arguments, affirming the critical judgment of others, and the need to verbalize their ideas and listen to those of their colleagues. The group reflection processes are progressively internalized by each student.
- the student feels the need to formulate and ask open questions, to formulate hypotheses and critical reflections, or the group and the teaching staff put him in such situations of practicing, highlighting, and using errors, as starting points and orientation in research;
- in the continuous and final evaluation, the group and the teaching staff appreciate, thus, especially the processes, procedures, constructed solutions, attitudes, and the level of metacognition, rather than concrete, immediate results.

Constructive evaluation assimilation consists of the evaluator's effort to discover new information, and new constructs, demonstrating their relevance, and is the evaluator's effort to incorporate new findings into the existing construct or constructs.

### **3. Constructivist assessment methods and techniques**

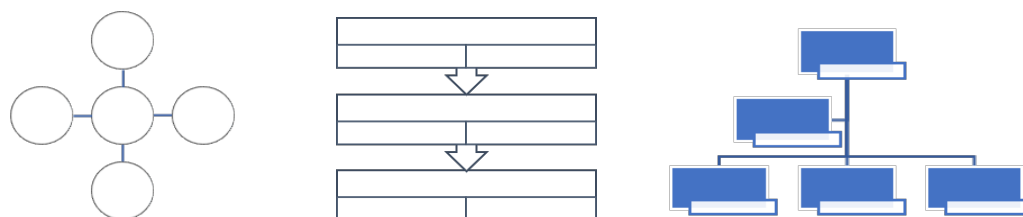
Constructivist teachers develop alternative methods of assessment according to the different learning styles of students, to allow everyone to express themselves. Consequently, all assessment tools construct their reality. Constructivist assessment methods and techniques take into account the fact that within the training activity, learning produces a set of different results, some contradictory to the extent that: a) does not manifest itself immediately; b) they are not confirmed outside the classroom and school; c) generates "defense and avoidance reactions".

The portfolio represents an alternative method of evaluating the students' ability to store, arrange, and present information, that is, it is a way of building knowledge, emphasizing the features of creativity: originality, and flexibility. It consists of mandatory and optional materials, selected by the student, which reflects the participation in the development and solution of the given theme; includes a selection of the best works or personal achievements of the student, those that represent him, that highlight his progress, that allow the appreciation of skills, talents, passions, personal contributions. Compiling the portfolio is a unique opportunity for the student to self-evaluate, to discover the value of his skills and possible mistakes. Constructivism encourages self-assessments, allowing students to reflect on their skill acquisition. The portfolio combines learning with assessment. The teaching staff must appreciate the time needed to develop the portfolio, offer support to the students in their composition, and plan portfolio presentation sessions. In general, the portfolio contains the following elements (Tiron, Stanciu, 2019): summary; the works that the individual student does; group works; articles; outlines;

syntheses; summaries; reports; communications; projects; homework; photos; self-assessments; and other materials.

Another method that can be done individually or in a group is the project method. Inserting the project method into the didactic activities gives a more lively and attractive character, and brings variety, increasing the student's interest in learning about the content of the lessons (Cristea, 2019). It is based on tasks that involve the reconstruction and deconstruction of knowledge. Project-based activities engage the learner in authentic, open-ended tasks, directing their effort toward someone (the intended audience) or something (the meaningful learning goal). The finished product of the project is "something", not "is about something" and creates for the student the feeling of the usefulness of what he produces. The project, being a student-centered activity, allows him to assemble the knowledge he has in a personal vision, and encourages an integral approach to learning. During the project, students often take on real-life roles and have to perform meaningful tasks. In the process of carrying out the project, the student has the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge, skills, and abilities formed in several lessons. The constructivist evaluation highlights the algorithm for realizing the project based on a theme, which caused interest at the time of its presentation. Emphasis is placed more on observation, analysis, and interpretation within the projects and portfolios, in such a way as to highlight the qualitative aspects, evaluating the students' attitudes and the process by which they reached the results.

The conceptual map is a way of organizing and structuring information through the graphic or schematic representation of some relationships between concepts/ ideas (Oprea, 2003). They allow students to explore an idea and its relationship to other concepts. Concept maps are based on Ausubel's Theory (1963): "The thorough learning of new concepts depends on the concepts already existing in the student's mind and on the relationships that are established between them". It is represented in various forms, constituting itself as an important tool for evaluation based on learned content (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Concept map models

The thorough learning of new concepts depends on those existing in the student's mind and on the relationships that are established between them. The evaluation of the conceptual map will highlight the learning progress and the degree of knowledge. The use of the conceptual map is reflected in the planning, and design of the didactic activity, the development and systematization projects of the scientific content, and the knowledge assessment lessons. The concept map method develops students' cognitive abilities (identification, examination, definition, interpretation, correlation, formulation, construction), assessment and self-assessment abilities, teamwork skills, attitudes, and, last but not least, develops critical and creative thinking of the students. It can also be done online through types of concept map designs using MindOnMap. Online tools are used to organize ideas, thoughts, concepts, and information

The investigation is a method of evaluation, which offers students the possibility to creatively apply the acquired knowledge in new situations (Tiron, Stanciu, 2019). Students carry out an investigation (documentation, observation of phenomena, experimentation, etc.) in a set time. It

can be done individually or in a group. The investigation method is a real tool for the analysis and assessment of students' knowledge, abilities, and personality. It contributes to the accumulation of knowledge and the practice of phenomenon investigation skills. It can be carried out both individually or in working groups. Group assessment is done holistically. When evaluating an investigation activity, the students' skills and their attitude towards the task itself are more evaluated rather than the level of knowledge achieved, which will include the separate measurement of the following important elements: solving strategy; application of knowledge, principles, rules; accuracy of data recording and processing; clarity of argumentation and form of presentation; inventory of manufactured products; the students' attitude towards the requirements; the development of group/individual work skills.

The 3-2-1 technique is a method of evaluation, having the following meaning (Oprea, 2003): the number three represents ideas/notions from what they have learned, the number 2 - two things about what they would like to learn, and one (1) skill or ability gained after learning. It is a way in which the student states what he has learned and self-evaluates.

The Answer-Throw-Interrogate method encourages students' feedback, highlighting their ability to communicate based on the topic learned (Tiron, Stanciu, 2019). All students will sit in a circle. A student throws an object or ball to another student. The one who throws must formulate a question about the learned topic to the one who will catch the object. After formulating the answer, the student who caught the ball will throw it to another student, etc. The student who does not know the answer will leave the game, and the answer will come from the one who formulated the question.

The report is a complementary evaluation method that allows the student to carry out research, synthesis, and identification of ideas based on the theme. The report constitutes a deepening based on content. In general, in making a report, the following algorithm is followed: establishing or selecting a topic; researching bibliographic references; drawing up the work plan; and making and presenting the report.

The Sandwich Technique is one of the ways of effective formative assessment, using feedback, based on the principles of NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) and called sandwich feedback. It is called in this way because it is made up of three sequences/layers, of which the first and third (outer shell) are based on recognizing and emphasizing the positive aspects, and the middle one (the core) contains constructive suggestions regarding the aspects that can be improved, starting from what constitutes strengths, and can be supported by concrete examples. Based on the feedback, we can evaluate the learning process in terms of achieving the learning objectives and, of course, we can help the participants to be aware of individual progress.

Constructivist assessment activities can also be:

- experimental, when students carry out an experiment individually and then come together to discuss the results;
- research projects, by which students research a topic and present their findings to the class;
- field trips, that allow students to put the concepts and ideas discussed in class into a real-world context. Field trips would often be followed by class discussions;
- movies, to provide visual context and thus bring another meaning to the learning - experience;
- class discussions, which are used in all the methods described above.

The questions designed at the level of the constructivist assessment of those who learn must cognitively stimulate the process of developing complex, reflexive, developed answers; manifestation of reflexive attitudes that engage the shared responsibility of teacher and student, in terms of self-preservation and self-organization of viable constructivist learning; application of reflexive capacities for self-knowledge of the educator's pedagogical professionalism and the student's didactic performance, leading to the permanent self-regulation of constructivist instruction (Cristea, 2015, p.548).



Self-evaluation is defined as a method by which students evaluate themselves according to criteria formed by the teacher or chosen by students among other criteria and contributes to the improvement of students' self-criticism skills. The following stages are recommended for designing and carrying out the self-assessment activity:

- Self-verification is when students check the completed tasks, facing the answer written on the board or projected on the screen.
- Self-correction, as a result of self-checking, students correct their mistakes.
- Self-esteem, as a result of self-correction, students appreciate their performance behavior.

The student evaluates your performance, showing the subjective character. Self-evaluation does not always coincide with the evaluation of the teaching staff.

Peer assessment is the process by which students evaluate their peers (s). Peer evaluation grids or criteria can be proposed. First, the results of peer evaluation could be considered a part of self-evaluation (Somervell, 1993). The collegial evaluation is subjective, being rated very well, because they are friends, sometimes rated poorly, because they don't get along.

Peer evaluation is a moment that makes the student evaluate himself correctly because one may see the mistakes of colleagues better than their own.

Co-evaluation is a method that evaluates cooperation during the learning process (Somervell, 1993). Through co-evaluation, the responsibility of the evaluator is felt and the students develop some skills regarding peer evaluation. Co-assessment can also be carried out in summative assessment, as it includes the assessor, who assesses the students.

Learning processes, in which active learning methods are used, involve the responsibilities assigned to students, which influence their behaviors. Consequently, all assessment tools construct their reality and abhor change about themselves.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In constructivist pedagogy students actively participate in their learning process, and knowledge is built based on experiences. Assessment in constructivism is a complex activity that involves both students and teachers and focuses on the process by which the individual student has achieved the construction of knowledge. It encourages students' self-evaluation through self-checking, self-correction, and self-assessment. Constructivist assessment methods are attractive and dynamic methods that develop students' skills, stimulate students' imagination, and facilitate the transfer of learning acquisitions to everyday life. Constructivist assessment methods aim at educational objectives and are used depending on the type and learning outcomes. They provide both the teaching staff and the students with relevant information about the level of training and the quality of the educational process. The use of complementary methods in assessment is important because they can develop students' ability to self-assess correctly and allow awareness of the level of preparation and aspiration

Constructivist assessment methods aim at educational objectives and are used depending on the type and learning outcomes. They provide both the teaching staff and the students with relevant information about the level of training and the quality of the educational process. The use of complementary methods in assessment is important because they can develop students' ability to self-assess correctly and allow awareness of the level of preparation and aspiration.

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