Re-imagining Information Evaluation: Using Social Constructivist Theory to Create an Information Evaluation Method that "Sticks"

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/rachel_radom/1/
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The 5Ws method is an alternative to other acronyms, such as CRAAP (Blakeslee, 2004) and CRITIC (Bartz, 2002, Matthews & Hemke, 2004), used to help students learn evaluation skills.

The 5Ws evaluation method builds on students’ existing knowledge. It is an instructional scaffold that introduces the basic process of evaluating a source, and includes advanced questions to challenge students to conduct more in-depth evaluations.

5 Ws IN-CLASS EVALUATION ACTIVITY – SELECTED QUESTIONS

WHAT?
- What is the document? What is the writing tone?

WHO?
- Where does the author work? Has s/he published before? Does the author have qualifications that contribute to his/her authority?

WHY?
- Give examples (quotes) from the text that helped you determine the author’s purpose for writing.

WHEN?
- When did the event or research being discussed occur? Is currency or timeliness important for your topic?

WHERE?
- Where was the document published? What kind of publication is it (newspaper, blog, journal, etc.)?

HOW?
- Did the author use outside sources? Did s/he cite them? How did the author reach his/her conclusions?

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

SCAFFOLDING

Instructional scaffolding is a concept in educational theory and cognitive development and is attributed to two psychologists who worked independently of each other, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner.

Vygotsky developed the theory of social constructivism and described how experts assist novices in the learning process. Bruner coined the term “scaffolding” to describe the tools and activities experts sometimes use to help novices learn skills or behaviors.

Using a scaffold helps novices develop complex skills and higher-level thinking by building on what they know, or skills they already have.

Post-Sessions Student Survey

Student Recall & USE

85% (N=172) of students reported that they evaluated their sources for at least one assignment during the semester.

ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR SURVEY

VALUE TO & USE BY INSTRUCTORS

About the 5Ws, English 101 instructors wrote:
- “[5]easy and clear way to remember how to check a source’s credibility.”
- “Research can be overwhelming, but asking basic questions helps break down [students’] task into smaller parts.”
- “Reminded students of something familiar “…while moving them forward into new territory…”

Students were shown how to evaluate the author (who) and publication (where) in the library instruction session. This could be a contributing factor in explaining why most students stated that they did evaluate authors and publications, but did not identify the “5 Ws” as their evaluation method.

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SUMMARY:

WHY the 5Ws?

- Can be introduced in a single instruction session
- May be utilized outside of the library by course instructors
- Builds on previous knowledge; students know the framework and can jump right into the evaluation
- Useful as a small group activity
- Appropriate for multiple research levels
- Applicable to a variety of resource types
- Acknowledges “gray areas” – scholars can write opinion pieces, not everything in a newspaper is written by journalists, etc.