Chapter XXXVI
Constructivist Online Learning Environment Survey

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BACKGROUND

Understanding the psychosocial classroom environment has been important in both traditional face-to-face courses and online education. Trickett and Moos (1974) pioneered the use of postcourse self-report instruments to measure the classroom environment through the classroom environment scale. More recently, Taylor and Maor (2000) developed the Constructivist Online Learning Environment Survey (COLLES) to examine the students’ perceptions of the online learning environment in light of social constructivist pedagogical principles.

The 24-item, Likert-type COLLES instrument is a popular measure for examining online learning environments for at least two reasons. First, it measures the online learning environment along constructivist categories, which makes it in line with the dominant pedagogical philosophy for online instruction. Second, the COLLES instrument is freely included in the survey module of Moodle, the most popular open source course management system available. This makes it particularly convenient for online instructors to use COLLES in their teaching and research.

COLLES assesses the learning environment using six scales:

- **Relevance**: How relevant is online learning to students’ professional practices?
- **Reflection**: Does online learning stimulate students’ critical reflective thinking?
- **Interactivity**: To what extent do students engage online in rich educative dialogue?
- **Tutor Support**: How well do tutors enable students to participate in online learning?
- **Peer Support**: Is sensitive and encouraging support provided online by fellow students?
- **Interpretation**: Do students and tutors make good sense of each other’s online communications? (http://surveylearning.moodle.com/colles/)

Each of these scales is represented by four items. In filling out the form, an individual indicates the relative frequency (ranging from almost never to almost always) that different activities occur in the online course.

An individual’s score on the COLLES is determined by summing responses across all six