The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Unpacking the Narratives of Assessing Student Learning

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Assessment Cube of Misunderstandings

Definitions

Purposes/Value

Uses/Questions

Levels/Focus
Three Schools of Thought

Measurement

Compliance (Reporting)

Teaching and Learning (Improvement)

Measurement

Built upon scientific principles or empirical research, objective, rational, validity, and reliability

The Multi-State Collaborative: A Preliminary Examination of Convergent Validation Evidence ~Mark Nicholas, John Hathcoat, & Brittany Brown

- Testing and standardization
- Must be measureable
- Argue narrowing of curriculum
- Goal driven
- Focused on process
- Interventions
- Pre/post
- Comparisons

Compliance

Documenting institutional quality assurance through reporting frameworks

Is assessment destroying the liberal arts? ~Karin Brown

- Bureaucratic
- Laborious
- Time consuming
- Separated from teaching and learning
- Add on
- Accountability and quality assurance
- Reporting and archive
- Lots of data collection, minimal use

Outcome of Assessments

Gather Results

Package Results

Submit Reports

Write Outcomes

ACCREDITATION/PROGRAM REVIEW

Identify Assessments

Submit Reports

Write Outcomes

ACCREDITATION/PROGRAM REVIEW

Identify Assessments

Gather Results

Package Results
But where are the students...?

Teaching and Learning

Focus on pedagogy, understanding of student experience, informing program improvement, embedded in curricular design and feedback, builds student agency.

Does continuous assessment in higher education support student learning? – Rosario Hernandez

- Driven by faculty questions regarding their praxis – is what I am doing working for my students?
- Improvement oriented
- Focus on individual students
- Students as active participants – not something done to them
- Formative
- Feedback
- Collaborative
- Assessment for learning
- Adaptive and embedded
NILOA's mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.

- Surveys
- Webinars
- Case Studies
- Focus Groups
- Occasional Papers
- Website
- Resources
- Newsletter
- Presentations
- Transparency Framework
- Featured Websites
- Accreditation Resources
- Assessment Event Calendar
- Assessment News
- Measuring Quality Inventory
- Policy Analysis
- Environmental Scan
- Degree Qualifications Profile
- Tuning

It's not a game, it's a system change issue

Student Onboarding Akin to “Chutes and Ladders”

Kap'olana Community College Student Journey
Plan Your College Experience and Adventure
Transparency
Awareness of Learning Outcome Statements

One does not simply explore evidence alone...

Without Transparency, where is agency?

Models
These philosophies of assessment lend themselves to particular types of models for how we go about assessing student learning
Institutional or Program Improvement

Learning Improvement
Assessment as a Process...

Is trying to get us to think intentionally about our learning design

Now that we’ve seen the system...how do we talk about it??
Communication Finding

Communicating effectively about student learning remains a challenge. Colleges and universities must more clearly and persuasively communicate relevant, timely, and contextualized information on their impact on students and value to society.

Explain...

Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?

Accounting or Counting

In a piece in Change, Lee Shulman (2007) posits that accounting is a form of narrative, and argues that counting without narrative is meaningless.

The role of an institution is to give an account on the contribution to the education of its students.

But, we rarely provide info to make a compelling narrative – we tell data and process stories
“Educational assessment is at heart an exercise in evidentiary reasoning. From a handful of things that students say, do, or make, we want to draw inferences about what they know, can do, or have accomplished more broadly.” (Mislevy & Riconscente, 2005, p. iv).

Evidence-Based Storytelling
Evidence of student learning is used in support of claims or arguments about improvement and accountability told through stories to persuade a specific audience.

We need context and a story, because evidence gives stories substance, but stories give evidence meaning.
Assessment as part of our story

Makela and Rooney (2012) write of telling a story – that assessment “is essentially a process of telling a story about our people, programs, and services” that are told to many different people, in many different ways, with many different foci. They argue that the “storyline surrounding an assessment ultimately aims to include enough evidence to make well-reasoned assertions...” (p. 2)