Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: Past, Present, and Future

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NILOA’s mission is to discover and disseminate effective use of assessment data to strengthen undergraduate education and support institutions in their assessment efforts.
Assessment Cube of Misunderstandings

Definitions

Levels

Uses

Purposes
Added Layers

Behind each side of the cube there are:

1. Theories about how students learn
2. Beliefs around what can be assessed
3. The “best” or “proper” means to assess student learning
4. How to warrant arguments about what students know and can do as a result of education
Added Layers

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All with no agreements, leading to disputes built around unclear assumptions that impact practice with people dismissing other sides
Four Schools of Thought

Measurement

Compliance

Knowledge-Society Based

Student-centered Learning
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
VALUE report
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
Write Outcomes
Identify Assessments
Gather Results
Package Results
Submit Reports
ACCREDITATION
Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment
Knowledge Society-Based Assessment

Neo-liberal ideologies and conceptions of relationships between employers, work, and education

*The need for a talent management pipeline from higher education*~Jason Tyzsko

- Vocationalizing curriculum
- Managerial approaches
- External reviewers
- Summative
- Value-added
- Pipeline to employment
But where are the students...?
Student-Centered 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
Strategize New Student Success Plans

Name Expectations for Learning

Communicate Expectations to Learners

Collect Student Work

Determine Extent of Learning

LEARNERS
Examples

IOWA GROW®

Learning, Connecting, Reflecting

Employment during college helps contribute to student success when meaningful connections between learning in the classroom and learning on the job are made evident. IOWA GROW® uses brief, structured conversations between student employees and their supervisors to help students connect the skills and knowledge they are gaining in the classroom with the work they are doing, and vice-versa. IOWA GROW® is focused on making student employment a "high-impact activity" - one that requires students to reflect on their learning and connect their learning within and beyond the classroom.

Four Quick Questions

1. How is this job fitting in with your academics?
2. What are you learning here that's helping you in school?
3. What are you learning in class that you can apply here at work?
4. Can you give me a couple of examples of things you've learned here that you think you'll use in your chosen...
National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment

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Equity and Assessment:
Moving Towards Culturally Responsive Assessment

Erick Montenegro and Natasha A. Jankowski

Occasional Paper #29
www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
Epistemology

Assessment is fundamentally about epistemology – what does it mean to say a student knows or fails to demonstrate that they know something? How do we know students have learned? How can we say that students are learning or acquired knowledge? But what are our epistemologies?

- Compliance assessment – propositional knowledge describing a state of affairs – that students have learned
- Measurement models - set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions which determine whether someone knows something
- There are beliefs – but that is not enough because our beliefs may not necessarily describe the ways things actually are so we need to justify our beliefs.

- It’s also questions of ethics and ontology – who gets to learn? Who are the learners?
Assessment is a Field

And it is a field that moves

Moving forward, be mindful of the institutional history with assessment and institutional culture.

If we don’t address how what we are doing is different, we will be in a harder place.
FIG. 1 Representation of assessment practitioner roles.
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.

Need to tell our story and help students tell theirs.
What does good assessment look like for us here?

Why do we think that what we are doing, for these students, will lead to enhanced learning, at this time?
The ability to make causal claims about our impact on students and their learning

Institutional structures and support + student = enhanced learning
Difficulty of Causal Statements

- Mobility of students
- Untracked changes
- Changes in courses add up to program level change
- Lack of clarity on what even counts as a program
- Life
- Levels at which use occurs
- Longer than a year cycle
- Loosely coupled relationships
But...

Toulmin (2003)

Evidence → Claim

Warrant

Warrants
Arguments
Theories of Change

Why do we think the changes we make will lead to better outcomes?

What is assumed in the changes we select as it relates to how students understand and navigate higher education?
For instance...

Coverage and content
Opportunities and support
Intentional, coherent, aligned pathways

Within each of these is the belief about root causes – why students were not learning or not meeting the outcome and the mechanism by which the institution can help them succeed
Transparency

Awareness of Learning Outcome Statements
p.s. there's hope
Questions and discussion

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http://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org
www.assignmentlibrary.org
www.degreeprofile.org