Overview of Best Practices in University Assessment and Program Evaluation

Much of this work is directly attributed to and summarizes the research of Natasha Jankowski, Ph.D., Director of the National Institute for Learning Outcomes and Assessment (NILOA), and David Marshal, Ph.D., NILOA Senior Scholar and Director of the University Honors Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 360 Education Building, College of Education, Champaign, IL 61820.

The purpose of this document is to provide a beginning “rubric” for review of assessment and program evaluation processes. This preliminary draft is a summary of the best practices of assessment that incorporate empirical research, objective rational validity measures, and consider reliability.

Best Practice in Assessment – Primary Factors and Criteria

Overall the following are considered primary factors that emerged from validation evidence gathered in large scale university assessment, i.e. these criteria are inherent in curriculum delivery assessment (e.g. Nicholas, Hathcoat, & Brown, 2016):

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

Other factors of importance (Lonneman-Doroff, T., (author), & Haight, R., (Committee Chair).

✓ Inter-rater reliability
✓ Multiple data points over time and at one time
✓ Psychometrics as applied to exams
  ✓ Point bi-serials, discrimination index, percent correct
  ✓ intent
✓ Triangulation of data, comparative measures
✓ Varying, multiple measures of similar variables/objectives
✓ Regular review of validity processes
✓ Measures based on field objectives, standards, expected outcomes, competencies
✓ Measures based on accreditation (field standards)
Practices of Compliance Based Assessment

An argument has been made on the meta-level of assessment that assessment processes focused primarily on compliance alone may have a negative impact on liberal arts curriculum (e.g. Brown, K.). Quality assurance based on meeting compliance requirements alone can be bureaucratic, laborious, time-consuming, can be separated from teaching and learning, is an add-on to already priority delivery tasks, requires reporting and archival procedures, and may gather massive amounts of data with minimal use (Jankowski & Marshall, 2017).

Best Practice: A Teaching and Learning Paradigm

A teaching and learning paradigm is based on a “focus on pedagogy, understanding of the student experience, informing program improvement, embedded in curricular design and feedback, and ultimately builds student agency.” Best practices are embedded in a teaching and learning paradigm that drives faculty questions regarding their praxis – “is what I am doing working for my students?” (Jankowski & Marshall, 2017). Best factors from a teaching and learning paradigm include (e.g. Hernandez, R.)

✓ Focus on improvement
✓ Attention to individual student development, student specific data with feedback
✓ Students as active participants in their goals, goal setting and feedback review
✓ High feedback (loops to all stakeholders) – students through community.
✓ Collaborative processes – shared between students, faculty, university, community.
✓ Assessment focused on learning – i.e. what, to what degree, levels of learning.
✓ Process is adaptive and embedded in curriculum
  o Substantive change to curriculum as a result of measures, and review of outcomes.
✓ Use of prior year(s) data, comparisons year to year.
✓ Simultaneous analysis and change (versus delayed cycle)
✓ Immediacy of problem identification and change based on ethical necessity (Jancowski & Marshall, 2017).
References


Additional Resources of interest:


