Reframing Assessment to Center Equity

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Resources

bit.ly/Resources_ECA
Familiarity with the Topic

1. This is the first time I’ve heard it
2. I’ve heard of it before, but not exactly sure what it is
3. I’ve attended a workshop/presentation on the topic
4. I’m quite familiar but don’t yet use it in my work
5. I use equity-centered assessment strategies
Disparate 6-Year Graduation Rates

- Asian American (74%)
- White (64%)
- Hispanic (54%)
- Pacific Islander (51%)
- Black (40%)
- American Indian/Alaskan Native (39%)

National Center of Education Statistics (2019)
Long Term Impact

- $35,000 – median annual salary with high school degree
- $55,700 – median annual salary with bachelor’s degree
- $207,000 difference in 10 years
- $828,000 difference in 40 years
Long Term Impact

- More likely to hold a job
- More likely to be healthy
- More likely to vote
- Less likely to be on public assistance
- Pay more taxes

Ma et al., (2019)
“Often, assessment follows non-justice based paradigms, serves neoliberal external mandates, and reflects research practices that further marginalize underserved students.”

Equity and Assessment

Assessment

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Assumptions

- We all live in a dominant, colonized culture that affects us all.
- We all have internalized systemic racism (and all the other isms).
- Systemic oppression impacts privileged and marginalized peoples differently.
- Systemic oppression is woven into the fabric of other institutions and educational practices—including higher education and assessment.
Assumptions

- Not being aware of privilege, place, and identity and their differential impacts causes harm.
- We must notice, reflect, and train to develop skillful action to alleviate, prevent, and restore harm and live into communities of liberation and freedom.

Adapted from my teacher and friend, Michelle Cassandra Johnson (https://www.michellecjohnson.com/)
Assessment Is Not In A Vacuum

Basic Assessment Cycle

1. Determine Outcomes
2. Consider Methods and Collect Data
3. Analyze Data
4. Use and Share Results

CONTEXT:
- Societal Culture
- Institutional Context
- Assessor Positionality

IMPACT:
- Institutional Effectiveness
- Student Learning
- Societal Culture
Overview of Scholarship

- Responsive evaluation (Jackson, 1935)
- Culturally competent evaluation (Merryfield, 1985)
- Feminist assessment (Shapiro, 1992)
- Inclusive evaluation (Mertens, 1999)
- Multicultural evaluation (Hopson, 2004)
Overview of Scholarship

- **Culturally responsive evaluation** (Hopson, 2009)
- **Decolonizing assessment** (La France & Nichols, 2010)
- **Bias-free assessment** (Popham, 2012)
- **Critical assessment** (DeLuca Fernandez, 2015)
- **Socially just assessment** (McArthur, 2016)
Overview of Scholarship

- Mindful assessment (Watts, 2016)
- Culturally responsive assessment (Montenegro & Jankowski, 2017)
- Culturally relevant assessment (Singer-Freeman et al., 2019)
- Anti-racist assessment (Inoue, 2019)
Overview of Scholarship

- Healing-centered assessment (Jankowski, 2020)
- Equity-centered assessment (Lundquist & Henning, 2020, 2021; Henning et al., 2022)
Equity-Minded vs Equity-Centered
Equity-minded assessment is a lens
Equity-centered assessment is both a process...
...and a product
Considerations

- Our identities impact our work.
- Higher education is colonized and privileges Western ways of knowing and paradigms.
- Bias is inherently part of the process, because it is socially situated.
“We must learn how to expose, navigate, and/or dismantle oft-hidden, insidious, systemic, and institutionalized forces of oppression”

Think in New Ways
Equity-Centered Assessment

1. Determine Outcomes
2. Collect Data
3. Analyze & Interpret Data
4. Use and Share Results
Framework
Cultivate Awareness - Self

- Explore and critique one’s own worldview, biases, and cultural assumptions
- Sit with discomfort
- Adopt an inquisitive, compassionate approach to growth and self-awareness
- Actively engage in learning from and with others different from oneself
Cultivate Awareness – Assessment Process

- Realize that assessment is influenced by many things: identity, culture, Western paradigms
- Place a pause when more inclusion, dialogue or reflection is needed
- Recognize and address the extent to which assessment work prevents social justice and structural transformations
Assessment Design

- Decolonize and Indigenize design
- Recognize underlying paradigms
- Assess to understand, not just to demonstrate
- Understand harm in measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode)
- Realize how validity reifies power structures
- Involve students
Outcome Development

- Consider using alternative learning taxonomies
- Get student feedback on outcomes
- Invite students to help development/revise outcomes
- Collaborate with students to map outcomes
Course Design

- Apply UDL principles
  - Multiple ways to motivate learning
  - Multiple ways to share content
  - Multiple ways demonstrate learning

- Align course elements

- Implement transparency in teaching and learning (TILT) concepts
Assignment Design

- Review wording and phrasing in assignments, exams, rubrics, etc. for bias
- Consider how students’ cultural backgrounds affect their learning
- Discuss assignments in class or via video, not just in the syllabus
Assignment Design

- Provide students options for how they demonstrate their learning
- Provide open-ended response options for tests so students to explain/clarify answers
- Consider portfolios for program and course outcome demonstration
Grading

- Consider contract or bundle grading
- Use mastery grading
- Don’t grade all assignments
- Discuss grading tools/processes with students
- Share examples of good and poor work
Grading

- Consider weighting grades lighter earlier in the term
- Perform test-item analysis and disaggregate results by student demographic groups
- Provide flexible deadlines
- Scaffold large assignments
- Rethink grading participation
Data Collection

- Ensure demographic items are inclusive
- Review standardized instruments for bias
- Use multiple methods
- Co-create assessment measures
- Ensure inclusion of students from small populations
Analysis & Interpretation

- Disaggregate data
- Pay attention to outliers
- Use multiple data sources
- Use multiple analysts/interpreters
- Engage stakeholders in interpretation
Data Reporting and Use

- Avoid deficit-based reporting
- Avoid using dominant identity groups as norm for comparison
- Use data to identify barriers for equitable outcomes
- Use data to advocate for structural change
Program Review

- Build in expectation that program will explore and address equity issues
- Disaggregate success factors by student demographic groups
- Involve students in various steps in the program review process
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