Socially Just Assessment

Gavin W. Henning
Anne E. Lundquist
Assessment Institute
15 October 2019
“Assessment...should be conceived as a practice that attends more fully to the social and political position that it occupies within institutions.”

Wall, Hursh, & Rodgers, 2014
What’s in an identity?
CONTEXT
Assessment Landscape in Higher Education

• Accountability for higher education generally
• Changing student demographics
• Diversity, equity and inclusion
• Focus on student learning outcomes
• Employability
• High impact practices—First year experiences, learning communities, service learning, capstone projects, global learning
The Field of Higher Education

-Assessment

-Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Survey Results: Overall Themes

• Terminology not widely defined, used, or shared understanding

• Some intentional collaboration between DEII offices and assessment offices/experts

• The current state of socially just assessment focuses on language for demographic questions/response options, disaggregation of student data by population, climate surveys, and “embedding” diversity, equity and inclusion work more seamlessly and intentionally
The Field of Higher Education

Socially Just Assessment

Inquiry

Inclusion
Philosophical Underpinnings of Assessment/Research
Philosophical Paradigms

- Positivism
- Post-Positivism
- Interpretivism
- Constructivism
- Critical Theory
- Poststructuralism
- Transformativism
Foundational Assumptions, Worldview, Philosophical Paradigm, Culture

Procedures and Methods
Continuum of Socially Just Assessment

- Bias Free Assessment
- Culturally Responsive Assessment
- Socially Just Assessment
- Assessment for Social Justice
- Deconstructed Assessment
Bias Free Assessment

• Removing cultural and contextual bias

• Ensure context does not affect assessment
  • Clear instructions
  • Neutral location

• Review assessments for bias
  • Language/terminology
  • Inclusive options
Culturally Responsive Assessment

- Mindful of the student population that the institution serves
- Expand our view of what constitutes “demonstration” of learning (including co-curricular learning)
- Use language appropriate for all students when developing learning outcomes statements
- Developing or using assessment tools appropriate for different students
Socially Just Assessment

• “Both a process and a goal” (Bell, 2007)
• Takes into account power structures and how they impact reality
• A two-pronged term:
  • The justice of assessment practices and processes within higher education
  • Role of assessment in nurturing forms of learning that will promote greater social justice in society as a whole (McArthur, 2015)
Deconstructed Assessment

• Traditional assessment may silently reinforce systems of power and oppression

• Expose structures that create systems of power and oppression

• Need to approach assessment from a perspective of inquiry—trying to not only understand the phenomenon, but also what influences that phenomenon

• Reflection is critical element to deconstructive assessment
Assessment as Social Justice

- Assessment shouldn’t be transactional or procedural—it should be transformational.

- Intentional shift from implementing assessment to using assessment to **deconstruct** systems of oppression by first exposing them.

- Need to uncover and examine biases in the assessment process and then determine how we ensure culturally responsive and socially just assessment.

- Cannot understand students’ experience without understanding the systems of oppression that they live in.
Retention Examples
Retention Examples

Bias free assessment
Ensuring response options in demographic items in an engagement survey used to predict retention are exhaustive and not exclusive

Culturally responsive assessment
Offering data collection for retention exit interviews in Spanish or sign language for hard of hearing/deaf individuals and using a variety of data collection methods as individuals express their learning in different ways
Retention Examples

**Socially just assessment**
Assessment of retention that seeks to understand the impact of campus climate on student’s continuation at an institution.

**Deconstructed assessment**
An assessment of retention that examines influence of climate would also investigate structures such as how student complaints of microaggressions are addressed or impact of the local political climate may have on student experience.
Examples

Assessment for social justice
Assessment of retention would intentionally approach this topic to understand why there are retention gaps for different groups of students and identify potential solutions for addressing those.
Assessment as Inquiry

It is important that we actively engage in understanding ourselves and those who are different from us in order to critically examine the picture we are painting. Who is in it and who is missing? Have we considered lived experiences different from our own? Are we aware of which stakeholders will also be looking at this picture and how it will be interpreted?

Considering these questions, including social justice in all pieces of our work, not just a hat we wear when called upon, will continue to lead inquiry as an act of justice.

Brian Bourke, Editor, Journal of Student Affairs Inquiry
Ask ourselves: to what extent are we promoting unconsidered inquiry?

• Contextual and historical factors?
• Forms of oppression?
• Singular vs. Multiple (theories, ways of knowing, evidence, intersectionality)
• Assumptions of homogeneity
• Structures, conditional effects are ignored
• Individuals – marginalized voices
Impact

Socially Just Assessment

Individual Competence

Organizational Competence

Culture
Practical Considerations
(DeLuca Fernandez, 2015)

• Explore and engage your worldview
• Investigate and discuss who decides, who benefits
• Confront emphases on procedures and methods
• Consider effects and justifications of "market" and economic drivers (as the primary reason for assessment)
• Discuss and critique how meaning is attached to data, results
• Consider how value is attached to what is measured
• Recognize and address the extent to which assessment work prevents social justice and structural transformations
Additional Considerations

• Positionality
• Power
• Agency
• Methodological Diversity
Socially just assessment as transformative paradigm
How?
Indigenous Research Paradigm and Methods
Social Justice Tips for Identifying and Writing Outcomes

- Reflect on what is expected and what constitutes "learning"
- Evaluate the language used in the SLOs for bias, cultural assumptions, relevance to various student populations
- Reflect on the variety of ways that students could demonstrate learning
- Include students in writing SLOs
Social Justice Tips for Assessing Learning Outcomes

Methods, Procedures, Data Collection

- Explore alternative assessment methods
- Allow students various options for demonstrating their learning
- Include and consult students during design
- Gather qualitative and quantitative evidence to complement each other and provide student voice

Collect Assessment Data
## Written Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value (Pts)</th>
<th>Achievement Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context of and Purpose for Writing</strong></td>
<td>Includes considerations of audience, purpose, and the circumstances surrounding the writing task(s).</td>
<td>20/100 pts</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Development</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre and Disciplinary Conventions</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates detailed attention to and successful execution of a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or genre.</td>
<td>20 pts</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rubric Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Value (Pts)</th>
<th>Achievement Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capstone</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milestones</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milestones</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmark</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Rubric Value**: 100 / 100 points

**Collect Assessment Data**
Portfolios
Qualitative Methods

• Enlighten experiences
• Explore issues
• Reveal processes
• Map learning environments
• Examine complex issues
Avoid Reductionist Approach—Include Many Voices

Analyze and Interpret Evidence
Where Can You Make an Impact?

- Individual Readiness to Engage in Assessment Work
- Programs and Activities Assessment
- Departmental Assessment & Program Review
- Institutional Assessment, Effectiveness, Research & Accreditation
- Higher Education Community
Transformative Paradigm

Transformed Thinking → Transformed Practice

More Equitable Education ← Transformed Culture
What’s one idea you can put into practice today?
Socially Just Assessment Podcast Series

EP 1: Culturally Responsive Assessment

EP 2: Critical Theory as a Framework to Advance Equity Through Student Affairs Assessment

EP 3: Socially Just Assessment

EP 4: Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Assessment: Graduate School Preparation for Future Student Affairs Practitioners

EP 5: The Connections between Decolonization, Social Justice and Assessment
References


References


References


References


References

• McArthur (2016) Assessment for social justice: the role of assessment in achieving social justice, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 41:7, 967-981, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2015.1053429 To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2015.1053429

• Oregon State University Institutional Review Board form: http://research.oregonstate.edu/sites/research.oregonstate.edu/files/irb/comparison_research_v_non_research_v01042017.pdf


References


Thank You!

Questions?

Anne E. Lundquist, PhD
Assistant Vice President, Campus Labs
alundquist@campuslabs.com