


ASSESSING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

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Current Challenges in Higher Education

- Affordability and accessibility
- Value to society and consumer (student)
- Funding cuts
- Emphasis on institutional performance outcomes
- Pursuing innovation vs. Preserving tradition
- Academic freedom



Current Challenges in Graduate/Professional Education

- Preparing competent graduates with relevant skills
- Transition into practice
- Pursuing innovation vs. Preserving tradition
- Interprofessional collaboration in education and practice
- Shrinking resources
- Qualified, experienced faculty



Will the systems that have served us in the past continue to serve us in the future? Are they serving us now?



Role of Effective Assessment

- Promotes learning in cognitive, psychomotor, affective domains through feedback
- Facilitates attainment of identified competencies and outcomes
- Promotes development of self-assessment skills in learners
- Allows for continuous quality improvement of curriculum (program evaluation)
- Enhances teaching/learning strategies

ASSESSMENT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING



Importance of Experiential Learning in the Professions

- Apply theory to practice
- Explore interrelationship of concepts
- Develop critical thinking, decision-making, problem-solving skills
- Engage learners
- Facilitates professional identity formation



Assessing Outcomes of Experiential Learning

- Clearly defined expected student learning outcomes
- Meaningful assessment of student learning depends upon an **intentional** alignment of assignments to the achievement of the expected outcomes
- Meaningful assignments translate expected outcomes into K,S, A that can be envisioned and assessable
- Assignments are assessments, providing data on what students know and are able to do

Assessing Outcomes through Assignments

- Outcomes are achieved through a collection of learning experiences
- Essential for there to be connections between and among the assignments in your curriculum to achieve outcomes
- The Power of Assignments - - Faculty collaboration, reflective practice, support for meaningful improvement
 - *Hutchings, Jankowski, Schultz (2016)*

Assignment Design Process: Critical to Achieving Outcomes

- “What is the most important purpose in this assignment?”
- “What do you want to see from students and what is the difference between a strong performance and a less developed one?”
- “How is this assignment related to other assignments in the course?” (or other courses, or the curriculum at large)?
 - *Hutchings, Jankowski, Schultz (2016)*

Critical Elements of Assignments: Assignment Template

- Clearly identify the primary task of the learner – what are the learners to do?
- Specify how the task should be undertaken and the outcomes communicated
- You expect a response to the assignment – how extensive should that response be?

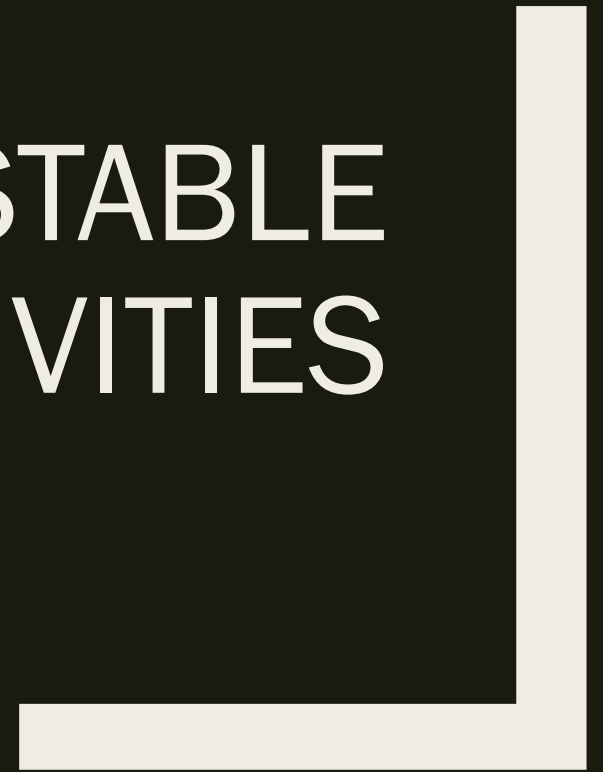
– *Ewell, 2013*



Shulman's Table of Learning: Educating Professionals

- Engagement and motivation
- Knowledge and understanding
- Performance and action
- Reflection and critique
- Judgment and design
- Commitment and identity
 - *Shulman (2002)*

ENTRUSTABLE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES



Impetus for EPAs

- Experiential learning has long relied on the amount of time spent on task as a measure of achievement (competence)
- Increasing gap between expectations in the practice world and the performance of our graduates
- Need to re-examine our way of assessing competence and managing the transition from learner to practitioner
- EPA's emerging as a framework for assessing competence

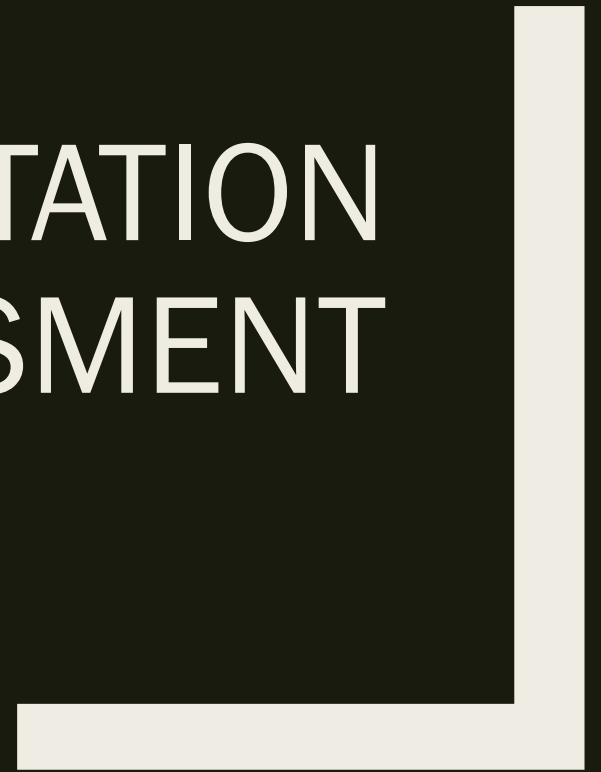
Defining EPAs

- Entrusting the learner to perform a selected activity unsupervised based upon demonstrated competency
- What are the essential tasks of the profession?
- What knowledge, skills, attributes are needed to perform those essential tasks and lead to an entrustment decision?
- Provides a framework for curricular development and assessment

Developing EPAs

- Collective responsibility of the profession to define EPAs
- Identify the essential work of the discipline's professionals
- Define core set of competencies, develop EPAs that are observable, measurable
- Develop strategies to assess the competencies
- Transition into practice – EPAs for education and practice
- Shared interdisciplinary EPAs

ROLE OF ACCREDITATION IN ASSESSMENT



Purpose of Accreditation

- Protect the public and students - accountability
- External validation of quality of a program and its educational practices
- Enables students to transfer credits/continue education
- Employers may seek graduates from accredited programs
- Peer-driven, form of self-regulation
- Continuous quality improvement; self-assessment of program outcomes
- Title IV gatekeeping function – provides access to federal funds

Challenges Facing Accreditation

- Under increasing scrutiny for not holding institutions accountable
- Student outcomes focused on by the federal government: completion rates, licensure/certification rates and employment rates
- Seen as a barrier to institution/program innovation and risk-taking
- Achieving rigor, promoting innovation and honest self-assessment, and encouraging flexibility in meeting student learning needs

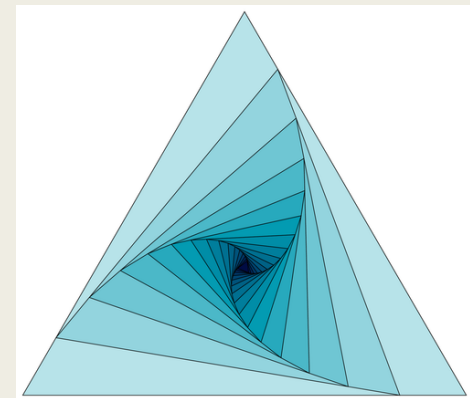


Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HR 4508 – Prosper Act)

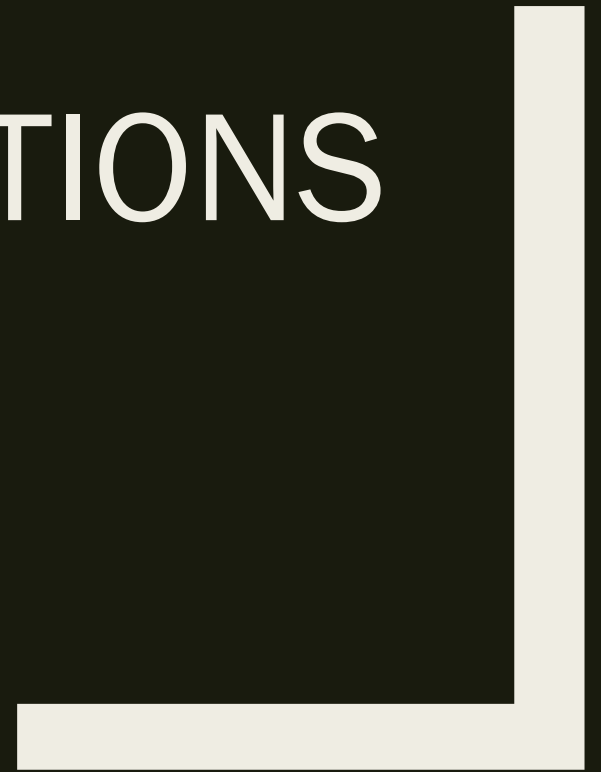
- Focus on student learning and educational outcomes
- Differentiated review of institutions and programs
- Review of competency-based education
- Promote innovation
- Demonstrate accountability, credibility and transparency

Impact of Accreditation on Professional Education and Assessment

- Promotes a focus on continuous quality improvement and quality assurance
- Does not set the direction for the profession; accreditation standards are set based upon the profession determines is essential for producing qualified graduates
- Collaboration framework – profession, educators, accreditors can drive achievement of core competencies



FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Designing Future Educational Systems

- Competency-based, time variable education (Macy Foundation, 2018)
- Identified professional outcomes, core competencies
- Systematic assessment frameworks that support and measure achievement of the identified outcomes/competencies – individual and aggregate
- Education, training, practice continuum/linkages (Macy Foundation, 2018; Halstead, 2016)
- Interdisciplinary approaches to identifying core professional competencies
- System redesigns that connect education and practice to produce desired outcomes

Faculty Development: What is Needed?

- Fostering basic competencies in assessment and evaluation strategies and learner assessment that is competency-driven
- Developing faculty with expertise in designing assessment frameworks, managing and tracking assessment data, performance dashboards, using technology to support system redesign
- Requiring a shift in teaching philosophy – formative assessment with constructive feedback that fosters “readiness for entrustment”
- Preparing learners for their role in assessment

Summary

- Addressing transition into practice is one of the biggest challenges facing professional graduate education
- Effective and intentional assessment of experiential learning is key to achieving desired outcomes
- Working collaboratively to strengthen our assessment models will increase the quality in our educational programs

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