

A History of Assessment: WWII to Present

Fall 2012 Professional Development
Tuesday August 28th, 9:00-10:15

Overview

- Tracing several themes that have impacted assessment
- Assessment and Accreditation
- Particular challenges for Community Colleges

Early Forms of Assessment

- Middle Ages – Students performed for their Master's peers. Failure meant students were certified to teach and their masters weren't send additional students.
- Recitation and Disputation were the norm.
- Students were ranked by skill and punished for bad performance.
- Later borrowed written examinations from Chinese.

Early Assessment in the US

- Initially borrowed heavily from the European models
- Middle States formed (1921)
- Grew in new directions as psychology developed as a field
 - Pennsylvania Study (1928-1932): Tested HS, College students on how learning could be measured. (12hrs, 3200 items!)
 - Proved it could be done

Early Assessment in the US

- Development of the GRE (1937)
 - Administration in Grad Schools
 - Focus on General Education (6hrs)
 - Became a measure for readiness for Grad School
- Led to an era of Test Providers
- Mostly internal use of testing.

The Impact of WWII

GOVERNMENT

- Thousands of Soldiers coming back from the War led to the GI Bill (1944)
- This was the first massive investment in individual students. (vs Morrill Act)
- Belief was Education = Patriotism

ACCREDITATION

- Government became interested in its investment (Started using Accreditation)
- 1946 Periodic review started
- 1950 Community Colleges accredited under special circumstances

Higher Education Act

- HEA (1965) was part of the Great Society
 - Grants and Loans for Low Income Students
 - Academic Libraries
 - Community Colleges
- Further investment brought little more scrutiny
- However, educational attainment was still seen as a proxy for citizenship and psychological health

Carrots and Sticks

- By the Seventies many schools were undergoing financial troubles and they became more dependant on Federal money
- Student protests changed the way education and educated people were seen
- IHEs became much more diverse
- Faculty began to question the ability of multiple choice tests to capture learning beyond correlations

The Beginning of Change

- In the 1980s Federal involvement in higher education changed – increasing need for justification
- Series of Reports on Higher Ed 1984-85
 - Access to quality Undergraduate Education
 - Integrity in the College Curriculum
 - Involvement in Learning
 - To Reclaim a Legacy
- Learning needed to be student centered and that students, faculty and institutions should be striving to improve

New Purposes of Higher Ed

- 1989: Commissions started requiring student assessment as part of accreditation
- Pulling aspects of business into looking at higher education
 - Continuous Improvement
 - Value Added
- Higher education increasingly seen as a private, rather than a public, good
 - State systems being tying performance to funding

Current State

- 1994 discussions were in place about a national exam for college students
 - CHE formed to oversee accrediting bodies
- Schools attempted to reclaim by developing their own assessments
- By 1998, fully 94% of institutions survey or plan to survey learning outcomes across the curriculum

Current State

- 2005 No Child Left Behind...in college?
- Government again putting pressure on Accrediting Associations to be harder on colleges
 - Lack of Rigor
 - Lack of Consistency
 - Lack of Public Information
 - Lack of Accountability

Current State

- 2008 Reaccreditation of HEA
 - 110 new rules added about assessment and accreditation
 - Continued to move standards out of the hands of institutions and faculty into government hands
- CHE reviewing the accreditations of individual institutions

Summary of Tensions

- For what purpose is higher education?
 - Public vs. Private good
 - Vocationalism vs. General Education
 - Value Added
- Student vs. Institution
- Individualization vs. Standardization
- Internal vs. External Control

Specifics for Community Colleges

- Who controls the standards
- Metrics
 - Retention and Grad Rates
 - Course Load
 - Transfers
 - Value Added
 - Reasons for Attending
- Victims of our own successful sales pitch