



Faculty Engagement with Assessment: Measurement and the Effects of Self-Advocacy

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Faculty Engagement

- Highest Priority for Progress—66 % of chief academic officers (Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009).
- Failure to Engage Large Numbers (Hutchings, 2010)

“There is no single best way to support greater faculty engagement with assessment” (Hutchings, 2010, p. 17).

- Giving faculty time = ↑ level of engagement
- Lack of opportunities for faculty—making meaning of results (Ewell, 2010).

Power of Assessment

- It's all about student learning.
- Faculty engaged in inquiry into the students' experience =
↑ understand of learning outcomes

“...[faculty] have assessed student learning in their classrooms...”

“...[faculty] are noticeably less hostile to institutional assessment...”

(Ciccione, Huber, Hutchings, & Cambridge, 2009, p. 9).

Faculty Involvement in Assessment

- Faculty Attitudes—Wary of Assessment? (Haviland, 2009)

Category	Manifestation
Workload Worries	Program-level assessment = new work
Culture Gap	“Assessment” = bean counting, loss of control of work/curriculum
Poor Word of Mouth	Assessment framed → “exercise in accountability”, “increased workload”
Academic Freedom	Claims of infringing on freedom

“The authorities want more learning assessment but cannot or will not provide the resources to do it, let alone enable supporting the professorate to do its job better, and always with less.”

“What I do not understand is how anyone can hold me accountable for what the student learned or did not learn. I did not give birth to any of these students and I am, therefore, not responsible for their ability or inability to learn anything. That is a genetic and a motivational issue.”

Faculty Involvement in Assessment

- Faculty Attitudes—Seeds of Hope? (Haviland, 2009)

"Assessment should not be 'done to us'—we should be full participants in deciding..."

"Assessment must be a transformative process that feeds ... back to the faculty who are teaching the courses."

"Can't we all agree that the learning of our students is more important than our egos?"

Essential Part of Learning C

Faculty Involvement in Assessment

Faculty involvement in assessment is essential.

- Key = lies in the hands of the faculty (Ebersole, 2009).
- Alignment with faculty's interests, talents, time, and values.

It is critical that faculty play an active role in the development and implementation of assessment practices.

(Banta, 2004)

Consensus

Pedagogical
Change

Resistance

Faculty Engagement with Assessment Survey

Scales

- **Advocacy for Assessment**
- **Engagement with Assessment**
 - Meaningful Processing
 - Participation
 - Focused Attention
 - Passion
- **Consequences of Engagement**

Schreiner and Louis (2008)—Engaged Learning Index

Factor Analysis

- Analysis Criteria
 - Reliability > .70
 - Factor Loadings > .50

Advocacy for Assessment Scale

- Cronbach's Alpha = .75
- Component Matrix, Eigen value = 2.284, percent variance 57.104

Items	Factor Loadings
AA	.745
AB	.772
AC	.794
AD	.709

Engagement with Assessment: Meaningful Processing Sub-Scale

- Cronbach's Alpha = .73
- Component Matrix, Eigen value =3.165, percent variance 52.752
- Eliminated EF* from further analyses

Items	Factor Loadings
EA	.826
EB	.627
EC	.840
ED	.725
EE	.922
EF*	-.094

Engagement with Assessment Participation Sub-Scale

- Items loaded on two factors
- Separating items produced Cronbach Alphas of .80 and .55
- First group Eigen Value 2.568, with 64.189% variance explained
- Second group reliability improves to .64 by removing PFC*

Level-of-agreement Items	Factor Loadings
PA	.811
PB	.831
PC	.838
PD	.719

Frequency Items	Factor Loadings
PFA	.840
PFB	.807
PFC*	.455

Engagement with Assessment

Focused Attention

Sub-Scale

- Cronbach's Alpha < .70
- Items loaded onto two factors
- The four items of this sub-scale were separated into two factors (two on each) in the final sub-scale structure

Engagement with Assessment

Passion

Sub-Scale

- Cronbach's Alpha with one item (PAF) removed was .73
- Eigen value of 2.43 and variance explained 48.6%.
- By extracting item PAG from the final analysis, the Engagement scale loaded onto four components.

Consequences of Engagement Scale

- Demonstrated poor reliability, Cronbach's Alpha < .60
- Further analyses not warranted
- However, Factor loadings ranging from .39 to .74 warrants revising and extending items in future iteration of the instrument

Final Scale Structure

- **Advocacy for Assessment**
- **Engagement with Assessment**
 - Meaningful Processing
 - Participation
 - Passion
 - Feedback (New sub-scale label, replaces Focused Attention)

Correlations

Correlations

Correlations: Engagement and Advocacy

N = 81 - 91

Scales

1. Meaningful Processing	.373**
3. Participation	.604**
4. Passion	.246*
5. Feedback	.124

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$

Correlations: Demographics and Engagement with Assessment Scales

Scales	1	2	3	4
1. Meaning				
2. Advocacy				
3. Participation				
4. Passion				
5. Feedback				
6. Rank		.218*		
7. Largest Class		-.261*	-.197*	-.222*
8. Smallest Class				
9. Years HE Faculty	.240*		.200*	.204*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, $N = 81 - 91$

Limitations

- Sample – All Faith-Based educators
- Sampling Methodology
- Accreditation Season – Assessment Mania
- Institution's Assessment Loop not closed yet

Way Forward

- Improve Instrument
 - Refine Item Wording
 - Add Additional Items

Way Forward

- Possible Theoretic Expansions for Future Research
 - Learning Levels (Bloom's Taxonomy)
 - Learning Styles
 - Social Expansion Theory

Way Forward

- Let Faculty Lead the Way
 - Motivation
 - Engagement → Change Thinking
 - Evidence → Pedagogical Action
 - Effects of Engagement on Scholarship, Career, Professional ID

“Faculty development efforts that genuinely emphasize that teaching, learning, and assessment are inherently inter-related and in fact inseparable will resonate with faculty....”

Way Forward

- **Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work for Engagement**
 1. Build assessment around teaching and learning.
 2. Make place for assessment in faculty development.
 3. Integrate into preparation of future faculty.
 4. Encourage a scholarly approach to assessment.
 5. Create spaces for assessment conversation and action.
 6. Involve students in assessment.

Way Forward

- Assessment Leadership
 - From Faculty Reluctance → To Faculty Engagement
 - Leading Assessment Proactively
 - Articulating a Relevant Vision
 - Providing a Plan and Structure
 - Faculty Leaders of Assessment
 - Intrinsic Motivation

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Faculty Engagement

- Unfortunately, much of what has been done in the name of assessment has failed to engage large numbers of faculty in significant ways “Much of the rhetoric around assessment has discounted the possibility of serious faculty engagement” (Hutchings, 2010).

Faculty Engagement

- “There is no single best way to support greater faculty engagement with assessment” (Hutchings, 2010, p. 17).

Faculty Engagement

- Giving faculty time = ↑ level of engagement
- Lack of opportunities for faculty—making meaning of results (Ewell, 2010).

Why are Faculty Wary of Assessment?

- Faculty often seem wary of a system of program assessment to guide programmatic, college, and university decisions (Haviland, 2009).

Workload Worries

- A common claim is that assessment at the program level is new work – and too much work for already busy faculty to take on.

The Culture Gap

- Much of the current work of assessment is driven by a language foreign to faculty: the language of external accountability.

Poor Word of Mouth

- When assessment is framed as an exercise in accountability rather than program improvement, when faculty tell each other of increased workload, faculty are likely to pull back from assessment activities.

Academic Freedom

- A reluctance to participate in assessment is the claim that the practice infringes upon academic freedom.

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “If institutions are serious about teaching, they need to reward faculty who DO it and reduce emphasis on research.”
- “For those faculty who also do research, would you get published if your results and discussion were ‘I administered the test, assigned an A and so just trust me the experiment was a success.’ Why do some see it as an imposition to actually project the outcomes we expect and then measure them in language that is understandable and reproducible?”

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “What I do not understand is how anyone can hold me accountable for what the student learned or did not learn. I did not give birth to any of these students and I am, therefore, not responsible for their ability or inability to learn anything. That is a genetic and a motivational issue.”
- “The constant increase in demands on time and effort with no staffing or budget or training is the real problem with assessment – not the idea.”

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “The authorities want more learning assessment but cannot or will not provide the resources to do it, let alone enable supporting the professorate to do its job better, and always with less.”
- “My theory is that administrators resent the fact that they don’t earn tenure for their work, have to work regular office hours, and lack the freedom and discretion of most faculty, so they are doing everything in their power to make job security for themselves while doing the maximum damage to the faculty tenure process and academic freedom, and assessment has become the most effective weapon in their arsenal.”

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “Assessment should not be ‘done to us’ – we should be full participants in deciding what is important and then discovering if what we want to happen does indeed happen.”
- “Assessment must be a transformative process that feeds information back to the faculty who are teaching the courses.”
- “Can’t we all agree that the learning of our students is more important than our egos?”

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “Students are expected to demonstrate learning; faculty members are expected to demonstrate teaching effectiveness. Students’ grades are only one way to do that.”
- “Good teachers need to own and promote the questions ‘what are our students learning?’ ...and ‘how do we know this?’ ...and ‘what can we continue to do to enhance and improve their experiences?’ And that would be the foundation of effective, valuable assessment.”

Faculty Attitudes Toward Assessment

- “Shouldn’t it be a dimension of good teaching itself to cultivate this self-reflective query as an ongoing habit – to ask ourselves, and to encourage our students to ask of themselves as well, ‘what are we learning, and how do we know?’”
- “Good assessment is NOT about evaluating the faculty, and sad if it is being used that way. Using the assignments you already have to check the outcomes of student learning is a nicely efficient way to build a meaningful and useful system of diagnostics across your program.”

Faculty Involvement in Assessment

- Consider the student learning outcomes to be assessed
- Develop appropriate measures for assessment and ensure their reliability and validity
- Use the data to improve the teaching/learning process
- Re-evaluate the success of these improvements
- Communicate the results of the assessment process

Faculty Involvement in Assessment

- According to Banta (2004), it is critical that faculty play an active role in the development and implementation of assessment practices.



Obstacles to Faculty Involvement

- For many faculty the language of assessment has been less than welcoming.
- Faculty are not trained in assessment and assessment has not had a central place in professional development experiences for faculty.
- The work of assessment is an uneasy match with institutional reward systems.
- It may be that faculty have not yet seen sufficient evidence that assessment makes a difference.

- “However, to the extent that faculty might value program assessment, they often come to do so in a way that is different from administrators and external entities. If we want assessment systems to thrive, we must find ways to allay faculty concerns about workload and academic freedom, present the work of assessment in the language of collegiality and program improvement, and influence word of mouth so that the practice of assessment spreads rather than dies on the vine” (Haviland, 2009).

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

- What motivates faculty involvement in assessment?
- Does engagement with assessment's questions change the way a faculty member thinks about her students and the way they learn?
- How and under what conditions does it change what he does in the classroom – and are those changes improvements for learners?

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

- How does evidence – which can be messy, ambiguous, discouraging, or just plain wrong – actually get translated into pedagogical action?
- What effects – good, bad, or uncertain – might engagement in assessment have on a faculty member's scholarship, career trajectory, or sense of professional identity?

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

- “Sorry, I don’t have time right now for serious faculty engagement in assessment. I have exams to grade, questions for PhD qualifying exams to write, and a report to prepare for the dean on placement of last year’s graduates.”
- “The biggest tragedy and contradiction to the recent corporate demand that universities ‘prove their greatness’ is how much the time spent on assessment will actually shortchange students and learning.”

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

“The problem with assessment is it first appeared on our campuses couched in the rhetoric of accountability. The people promoting legitimate student learning assessment on our campuses today have never been able to scrape that stink off their shoes. The simple fact is that you test your students, you assess student learning. The dirty little secret of higher education is that we were never taught how to teach during our graduate years, we were certainly never taught anything about psychometrics and student learning, and consequently our tests are horribly unsystematic.”

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

- “Rather than using the assessment issue to deepen the gap between administrators and faculty, dialogue and education need to take place on both sides.”
- “Assessment is important. We need to know what students are learning and what they are not learning so that we can become better educators and better institutions where education takes place.”

Learning Assessments: Let Faculty Lead the Way

- “The problem is that all too often we SEPARATE assessment from teaching and learning.”
- “Faculty development efforts that genuinely emphasize that teaching, learning, and assessment are inherently inter-related and in fact inseparable will resonate with faculty. Other attempts to stimulate faculty interest in assessment culture will not, and rightly so.”

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

1. Build assessment around the regular, ongoing work of teaching and learning.

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

2. Make a place for assessment in faculty development.

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

3. Integrate assessment into the preparation of graduate students.

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

4. Reframe assessment as scholarship.

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

5. Create campus spaces and occasions for constructive assessment conversation and action.

Aligning Assessment and Faculty Work

6. Involve students in assessment.

From Faculty Reluctance to Faculty Engagement

- Shift from Assessment and Accountability TO Teaching and Student Learning (Haviland, 2009).

Leading Assessment Proactively

- For the scholarship of assessment to thrive, we must align faculty culture, institutional structures, and leadership for change (Angelo, 2002).

Articulate a Relevant Vision

- A clear vision is key to offering faculty a compelling reason to do assessment.

Provide a Plan and Structure

- Institutions should use ongoing professional development to give faculty the tools for assessment success.

Assessment Leadership

- Faculty must be the ultimate leaders of their assessment efforts. It is up to them as a group to articulate learning outcomes, identify ways to gather meaningful data, interpret the data, and craft and implement program changes.

Conclusion

- **Conclusion:** There are many reasons assessment efforts “go bad.” However, more often than not, faculty resistance is a secondary rather than a primary cause. While some faculty opt out, most are willing to devote some time and energy if they see the practice as worthwhile, taken seriously by the institution, and likely to be productive (Haviland, 2009).