Assessment for Learning Improvement by Monica Stitt-Bergh
Presentation at the Assessment Institute, October 2019, Indianapolis, IN


Slide 1

Slide 2

Shaping forces

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

Indigenous-serving institution

Very high research activity
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Shaping forces

- Qualitative methods
- Quantitative methods
- Assessment of learning
- Assessment as learning

Slide 4

What do they need?
What are they ready for?
I do not always recommend a learning improvement project.

What?!

Learning improvement

Evaluate: Faculty evaluate student learning at the end of 2020 and results are disappointing.

Change: Faculty implement a change aimed at learning improvement in 2021 (e.g., more in-class practice).

Re-evaluate: Faculty evaluate learning in 2022: results are better. Conclusion after interpretation of change and evidence = learning improvement
Learning improvement

- Two points in time
- A change or new experience aimed at learning improvement
- Examination of improvement evidence

What other learning assessment purposes & uses exist?
Some learning assessment purposes and uses

- Place students into appropriate level of instruction
- Honor students; suspend students
- Give students feedback on performance
- Determine if learning gains occurred
- Determine if learning improvement occurred
- Inform faculty/program decision making
- Monitor curriculum effectiveness
- Satisfy external requirements
- Make professional licensure decisions

The **purpose** of learning assessment and the intended **use** of results **guide** the assessment **process**

**Purpose and use guide process.**

*What does this mean for learning improvement?*
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A thoughtful moment: learning improvement

• Question/concern?
• Tip or suggestion for learning improvement?

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If learning improvement were the purpose . . .
If learning improvement were the purpose . . .

1. What about the typical assessment cycle?
2. How long does a learning improvement project take?
3. Who has the necessary knowledge?
4. How do rules about assessment change?

1. What about the typical assessment cycle?
Assessment for learning improvement

- Collect & evaluate, interpret evidence
- Make improvements aimed at learning improvement
- Align curriculum
- Agree on SLOs
- Ready faculty for change
- Examine findings

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Assessment for learning improvement

- Evaluation results before & after the improvement(s)
- Plausible reasons for evaluation results (e.g., implementation fidelity)
- Explicit agreement
- Hypothetical results
- Evidence-based
- Theory of change
- Make improvements aimed at learning improvement
- Align curriculum
- Agree on SLOs
- Ready faculty for change
- Examine findings
- Collect & evaluate, interpret evidence
Assessment reporting

- What was evaluated? (SLO)
- How was it evaluated? (measures, instruments)
- What was done with the findings? (action plan)
- Learning outcome(s) targeted for improvement
- Changes made in the learning environment
- Evaluation results before and after the changes
- Conclusions & interpretations

Assessment reporting: Waubonsee CC

**Plan/Report for Learning Improvement**

Based on your assessment results, please select one:
- Monitoring
- Assessment Procedure Change
- As Learning Environment Change: Curriculum and/or Instruction
- As Learning Improvement

Thank you for sharing: Kathleen Gorski
2. How long does a learning improvement project take?

How long does it take?

• 2-3 years
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How long does it take?

Pacific Islands Studies BA: **3 years**

Information literacy, 1st-year writing: **2 years**

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How long does it take?

- Collaboration among a group of faculty
- Administrative support
3. Who has the necessary knowledge and expertise to bring about learning improvement?

I will save the day!

What expertise is needed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject matter</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student characteristics</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual model of cognition and learning</td>
<td>Educational developer, Assessment specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy; curriculum design</td>
<td>Faculty, Educational developer, Assessment specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe &amp; evaluate learning</td>
<td>Faculty, Assessment specialist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. How do rules about learning assessment change when the purpose is learning improvement at the program/institution level?

- Reliability?
- Fidelity?
- Validity argument?
- Verb?

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Rules about learning assessment

- Confidence
- Credibility

- Apply with caution and expertise
Learning-improvement assessment by faculty for group-level decision making

Utmost confidence Reasonable confidence Not much confidence

Learning assessment for high-stakes decisions about individuals

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Learning-improvement assessment by faculty for group-level decision making

Psychometric measurement models Faculty group/program measurement models

Learning assessment for high-stakes decisions about individuals
**Rules about learning assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (sample)</th>
<th>78 out of 980 (8%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reliability coefficient (multiple raters)</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity argument</td>
<td>Qualitative; attention to consequential validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation results</td>
<td>Mean score – little change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% in category (“prepared”) – big changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Rules about learning assessment**

Responsibly apply rules by keeping in mind the differences between contexts.
Learning improvement recap

a) Evaluate learning; implement change; (re)evaluate learning
b) Rethink the assessment cycle and reporting
c) 2-3 years
d) Willing group of faculty; administrative support
e) Expertise from several areas: subject matter; educational development; learning assessment
f) Apply rules appropriate for this context and goals

Tips: Planning & reporting

- **Explicit** goal of learning improvement
- Reporting allows for learning improvement projects
  - Multi-year report, not annual report
  - Evaluation results from two points in time
  - Interpretation of findings: changes made and evaluation results
  - Acknowledge different purposes: monitoring, changing, improving
Tips: **Communicate**

- Support that is available
- Successes: tell your improvement stories (or let us tell them!)

Share stories via [learning-improvement.org](http://learning-improvement.org)

Tips: **Collaborative team**

- Start with a willing group
- Expect and plan for a multi-year project
- Gather needed expertise & provide support (resources, workshops, consultations, meeting facilitation)
Tips

• Draw upon utilization-focused principles (M. Q. Patton)
• Know when a learning improvement project will be useful and meaningful

*Not all assessment projects can and should be this type of learning improvement project*

Other tips and suggestions?
Mahalo! (Thank you!)

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3 resources

2. *Foregrounding Learning Improvement in Assessment*, Monica & Jillian Kinzie via WeaveOnline, Webinar 3

3. learning-improvement.org

Website resources:

1. Research & Practice in Assessment, Volume 13, Winter 2018:  

   a. Note: there are 6 webinars about learning improvement in the series and all are listed on the link above. Viewing is free but requires registering with WeaveOnline.

3. Learning Improvement Community: [https://www.learning-improvement.org/](https://www.learning-improvement.org/)