Making a Difference in Student Learning: Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment as Core Strategies
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Jeana Abromeit
Alverno College - Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Chair, Council for Student Assessment
Professor of Sociology
Alverno College

• Integrated professions and liberal arts college

• Women’s college at undergraduate level; masters programs are co-ed

• Approximately 2,700 undergraduate students; 410 students in three masters programs

• Who our students are:
  – 32% students of color
  – 75% first generation
  – 99% of full-time undergrads receive financial aid

• Ability-based curriculum
Principle

Education goes beyond knowing to being able to do what one knows
Principle

Educators are responsible for making learning more available by articulating outcomes and making them public.
The principle leads to questions like:

• How do you want your students to be able to think as a result of studying your discipline?

• What do you want your students to be able to do as a result of studying your discipline?
Definition of Outcomes

Outcomes are a set of statements that describe what a student can do with what s/he knows as a result of a set of learning experiences.
Alverno’s Eight Abilities/Outcomes

• Communication
  Writing, Speaking, Reading, Listening, Quantitative Literacy, Media Literacy, Computer Literacy
• Analysis
• Problem Solving

• Valuing in Decision Making
• Social Interaction
• Developing a Global Perspective
• Effective Citizenship
• Aesthetic Engagement
Important Dimensions of Abilities:

- Involve the whole person
- Are teachable
- Can be assessed
- Transfer across settings
- Are continually re-evaluated and re-defined
Principle

Abilities need to be defined in a way that our teaching of them can be developmental
Analysis

• Level 1 – Show observational skills
• Level 2 – Draw reasonable inferences
• Level 3 – Perceive & make relationships; use concepts
• Level 4 – Analyze structure & organization using concepts and frameworks
• Level 5 – Employ frameworks from major and minor disciplines in order to analyze
• Level 6 – Independently employ frameworks
Principle

Abilities must be carefully identified and compared to what contemporary life requires
Sources of Outcomes

- Institutional mission
- Accreditation standards
- Professional requirements
- Needs of society
- Nature of Discipline
- Aspirations of learners
Principle

Designing learning involves integrating abilities within disciplines and across disciplines
Increasing Degrees of Specificity

Institutional Outcomes

Major Outcomes & Accreditation Standards

Module/Course Outcomes

Assessment of Course Outcomes

Criteria (more specific than Outcomes)

Judgment of Student Performance Using Criteria
Examples from Sociology

- Relationships among outcomes at all levels – institutional, program, course, and assessment

- Sociology’s Assessment Plan
Example from selected Outcomes for Early Childhood Education

1. Integrates content knowledge with educational frameworks and a broadly based understanding of the liberal arts in order to plan and implement instruction.

2. Uses verbal, nonverbal and media modes of communication to establish the environment of the classroom and to structure and reinforce learning.

3. Acts with professional values as a situational decisionmaker, adapting to the changing needs in the environment in order to develop students as learners.
Benefits of Using Outcomes: For Students

- Provide clear direction for students
- Help students deepen and transfer learning because learning experiences are embedded in multiple performance contexts
- Allow capable students to take learning as far as they are able
Benefits of Using Outcomes: For Faculty and Administrators

- Help faculty crystallize their real intentions
- Help faculty select appropriate content, methods, resources, etc.
- All students held to consistently high standards
Benefits of Using Outcomes: For Faculty and Administrators

- Standards are linked to disciplinary expectations
- Outcomes function as standards to judge university-level learning
- Encourage inquiry and creativity
- Foster cross-discipline communication and a community of faculty with common goals
Potential Challenges for HKIEd

• Faculty are obliged to make explicit meaning of the disciplines (e.g., central concepts, tools of inquiry, values)
• Communication across faculty may be a burden
• Conceptualization takes time
Potential Challenges for HKIEd

• New faculty roles call for additional development of expertise
• Developing structures and culture to support the work and development of faculty will be needed
Principle

Assessment is integral to learning
Connections between Outcomes and Assessment

How can we take outcomes and turn them into something concrete and observable that students could be expected to do?

Create *learning* and *assessment experiences* and develop *criteria*, all of which are explicitly linked to student learning outcomes.
Student Assessment-as-Learning

A multidimensional process, integral to learning, that involves observing performances of an individual learner in action and judging them on the basis of public developmental criteria, with resulting feedback to the learner.

- Student Assessment-as-Learning at Alverno College, 1994, P. 6

It serves to confirm student achievement and provides feedback to the student for the improvement of learning and to the instructor for the improvement of teaching.
Principle

Essential to learning and assessment are:

• Public, Expected Outcomes and Criteria
• Performance
• Feedback
• Self Assessment
Principle

The effectiveness of assessment for everyone involved depends on the existence of a total dynamic system that contributes to the coherence and continuous improvement of the curriculum.