DREAMS OF LEARNING

Ineffable Learning Outcomes

Raymond J. Shaw, Ph.D.

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WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO LEARN?

8.2 The institution provides clear public statements about what students are expected to gain from their education....

8.3 Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know ....

Assessment is…

"the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning."

Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments and General Education by Barbara E. Walvoord (John Wiley & Sons, 2004, pp. 2-3.)

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR STUDENTS TO LEARN?

The primacy of what's practical…

What do you have ***time*** to measure?

What do you ***know how*** to measure that takes the least amount of time?

(too cynical?)

"Learning goals" is a term that only applies to what we can measure, and can promise that students can achieve.

There are some big and important values that we *hope* students will get (lifelong learning, ethics, appreciation of art), but they aren't learning goals.

They are difficult if not impossible to assess meaningfully.

~ Linda Suskie, blog post May 2, 2018

"Without thoughtful reconsideration, learning assessment will continue to devour a lot of money for meager results. The movement's focus on quantifying classroom experience makes it easy to shift blame for student failure wholly onto universities....

Worse, when the effort to reduce learning to a list of job-ready skills goes too far, it misses the point of a university education."

~ Molly Worthen, New York Times, The Misguided Drive to Measure 'Learning Outcomes' February 23, 2018

"Just the other day, a friend of mine… was railing against her university's imposition of a requirement that every faculty member provide 'learning outcomes' for their courses. It was the end of the semester, and she'd worked hard to provide a meaningful class for her students, and it felt cynical to then tack on a bunch of meaningless outcomes. Who hasn't felt anger at this increasingly frequent, seemingly cynical tendency of institutions to reduce the complexity of learning to a metric, productivity and outcomes?"

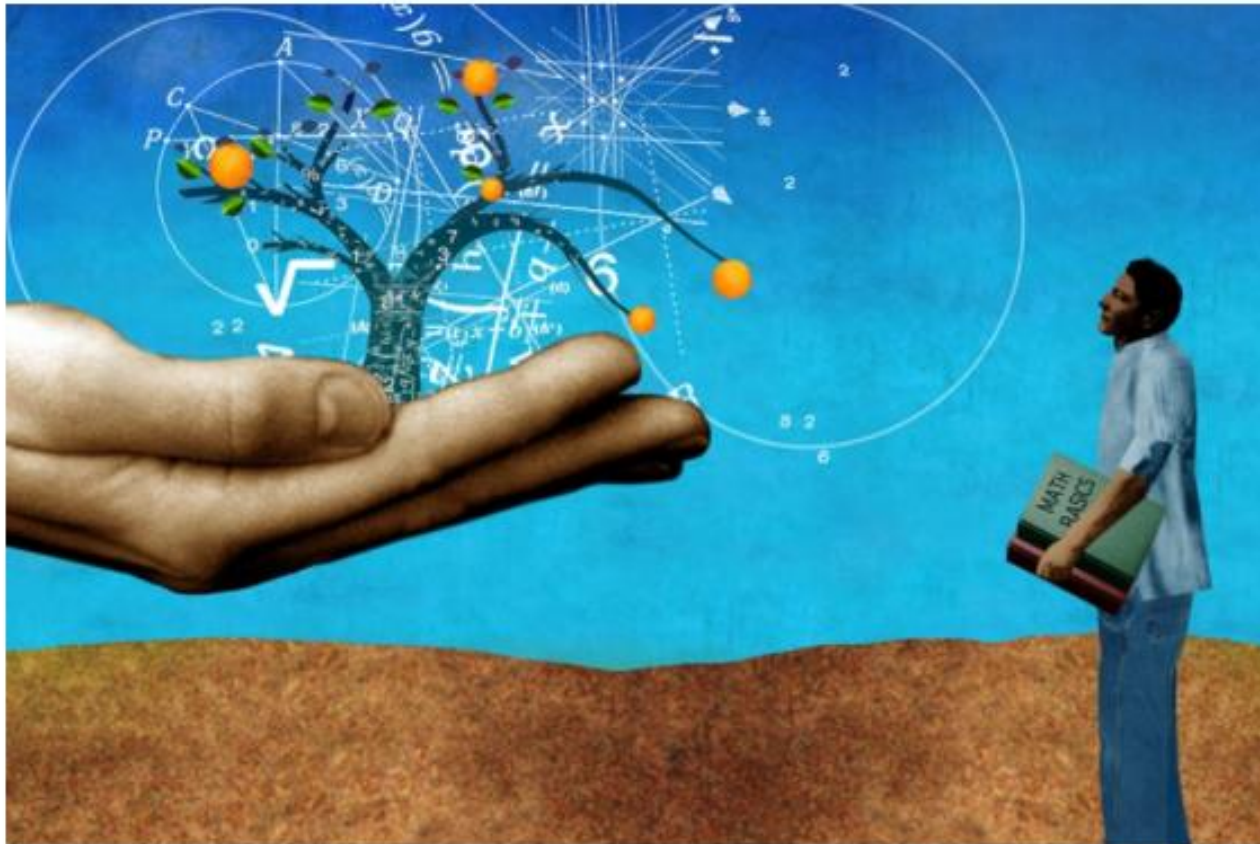~ *Cathy N. Davidson, Inside Higher Ed, Aug 28, 2017*

FR. PAUL L. CIOFFI, S.J.

"The purpose of this course is to make your midlife crisis easier to manage."

Assessing the Intangible in Our Students

By Raymond J. Shaw | JULY 27, 2017

Michael Morgenstern for The Chronicle

http://www.chronicle.com/article/Assessing-the-Intangible-in/240744

If we tell the public only about the things we can easily assess, and that college is about acquiring only skills and content, then the public should ask:

Do people need college to acquire those skills and that content?

"Students today need a new education that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and adaptability over expertise in a single, often abstract discipline."

~Cathy Davidson, *Chronicle of Higher Education*
October 22, 2017

Toward an Expanded Taxonomy of Learning:
Four Kinds of Learning Outcomes

1. Performance (content and skills)
2. Affective (interests, attitudes, personal characteristics)
3. Intangibles (morals, ethics, social justice, life-long learning)
4. Transformational (Dreams of Learning)

Performance (content and skills)

After taking my statistics course, students will be able to

- *Calculate the main varieties of the following statistical tests: t-tests, correlation, analysis of variance, and chi-square.*
- *Correctly identify the appropriate statistical test for various research examples.*

Assessing Your *Performance* Outcomes

To get a sense of whether you are achieving your goals, the forms ask you to evaluate your listed outcomes on three dimensions:

1. How difficult is it to generate the outcomes?
2. How important are the outcomes?
3. How completely do the outcomes describe your goals?

So take a few minutes to evaluate your set of goals.

Can we try to do this online?

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/performanceoutcomes

Affective (interests, attitudes, personal characteristics)

- Interest in engaging intellectually challenging work
- Interest in political and social involvement
- Well-being
- Positive attitude toward literacy

- Interest in contributing to the arts
- Interest in contributing to the sciences
- Openness to engaging new ideas and diverse people
- Orientation toward interacting with diverse people
- Academic motivation

These items are from the Wabash Study

Assessing Your Affective Outcomes

1. How difficult is it to generate the outcomes?
2. How important are the outcomes?
3. How completely do the outcomes describe your goals?

Take a few minutes to evaluate your affective goals.

Online link…

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/affectivechange

Intangibles (morals, ethics, social justice, life-long learning)

Skills, abilities, ways of being that are hard to define and hard to measure

Personal and Social Responsibility
- Civic engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- Global learning

Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Creative thinking
- Teamwork
- Problem solving

These items are some of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics that fit the category

Assessing Your Intangible Outcomes

1. How difficult is it to generate the outcomes?
2. How important are the outcomes?
3. How completely do the outcomes describe your goals?

Take a few minutes to evaluate your intangible goals.

Online link…

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/intangibleoutcomes

Transformational (Dreams of Learning)

Dreams of Learning are transformational, life-changing, long-lasting, and may not happen to everyone. They represent your highest goals and aspirations for some or all of your students.

Examples: Stats students, engineering students, RTS students, Fr. Cioffi, Gothic Architecture

Assessing Your Transformational Outcomes

1. How difficult is it to generate the outcomes?
2. How important are the outcomes?
3. How completely do the outcomes describe your goals?

Take a few minutes to evaluate this set of goals.

Online link…

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/transformoutcomes

SO: HOW DO YOU WANT TO CHANGE YOUR STUDENTS?

Thoughts? Reactions?

How did it feel to generate the different kinds of outcomes; do they match your real goals, the ones that matter most?

BUT WHAT TO DO ABOUT NEASC?

8.2 The institution provides clear public statements …

8.3 Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements…

Are your affective, intangible, and transformational goals verifiable? Can you put them on your syllabus and the website?

INCLUDE THE INEFFABLE

After all…

- What does "measurable" mean?

- How do you "know" in your discipline?

- What constitutes "evidence" in your discipline?

That should be the basis for assessment …

Remember: Assessment is…

"the systematic collection of information about student learning, using the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, in order to inform decisions about how to improve learning."

Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments and General Education by Barbara E. Walvoord (John Wiley & Sons, 2004, pp. 2-3.)

What constitutes "information" from your disciplinary perspective?

TEACHING THE INEFFABLE

We must not be silent about the ineffable goals we have for transforming our students…

Include those goals in your syllabi, on your websites, and most importantly, *teach them*.

Some Resources

- ***Affective outcomes****: Wabash Study*

  http://www.liberalarts.wabash.edu/study-overview/

  or google "Wabash study of liberal arts education"

- ***Intangible outcomes****: AAC&U Rubrics*

  https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics

  or google "aac&u value rubrics"

Available at:
https://www.immagic.com/eLibrary/ARCHIVES/EBOOKS/T110210H.pdf

LITERARY STUDY, MEASUREMENT, AND THE SUBLIME: DISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT

Editors
Donna Heiland and Laura J. Rosenthal

With the assistance of
Cheryl Ching

Thinking about what matters in the disciplines and ways of measuring those things in a disciplinary way

Or google the title…

Dreams of Learning Project

- *What do professors want students to get out of college?*

- *What do students want to get out of college?*

- *What do graduates value most from college?*

https://www.facebook.com/dreamsoflearning/

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