

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, HEALTH, AND EDUCATION

The Principles of Ignatian Pedagogy, Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students, and a promise for Portable Professional Development

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Introduction

When I first encountered the term pedagogy I was a beginning teacher. Pedagogy, with Greek and Latin origins was posited as a term related to the intellectualization of teaching and learning. In subsequent study, I examined ideas presented by many theorists (e.g. Bloom, Dewey, Mann, Freire, Giroux, etc.), however, not one of these theorists mentioned ideas related to religious traditions let alone a mention of Ignatian pedagogy (See The Ignatian Pedagogical Model below). Ignatian pedagogy? Who knew?!

This project, my Ignatian Pedagogical Examination of the Assessment of Students will include an investigation on how to “integrate novel teaching methods and technologies” into the professional development of teachers and other educational leaders. Thus, the focus of this work will be on integrating the Ignatian Pedagogical Model outlined by Peter-Hans Kolvenback, S.J. and adapt this model to introduce or reinforce the ideas of educational assessment to teachers as identified in the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students. In addition, the pedagogical organizer serves as the foundation on which to build a professional development model using IPOD touch technology.

Context

In 1990 the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students were developed by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association. (See Standards below.) These Standards articulate the skills and knowledge critical to a teacher’s role as an educator. The organizations supported the idea that preservice preparation for teachers should include assessment training. To reinforce the need for preservice and inservice preparation for teachers in assessment, a series of studies on teacher assessment knowledge were conducted. Teachers reported weaknesses or a lack of knowledge in the fundamentals of testing. Further, few teachers are required to actually take formal courses in tests and measurements and their exposure to such content is insufficient. These original studies (e.g., Gullickson & Ellwein, 1985 & Schafer & Lissitz, 1987) were extended via a national study conducted under the auspices of the National Council on Measurement in Education, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association. Results of the national study indicated teachers were not adequately prepared to communicate assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators (Standard 6). In order to aid in the improvement of teachers’ knowledge and skills in this area, a series of professional development materials were developed to enhance their learning. These professional development materials were pretty “low-tech” as they were in the form of a workbook.

Fast forward to 2001

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110), often abbreviated in print as NCLB is a United States federal law (Act of Congress) that was originally proposed by President George W. Bush on January 23, 2001, immediately after taking office. The law reauthorized a number of federal programs aiming to improve the performance of U.S. primary and secondary schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts, and schools, as well as providing parents more flexibility in choosing which schools their children will attend. Additionally, it promoted an increased focus on reading and re-authorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

NCLB centered around the tenets of standards-based education reform, also known as outcome-based education. This focus on “standards-based education” is based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual performance in education. The Act required all states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states are to receive federal funding for schools. NCLB did not require national testing as the standards were to be set by each individual state in keeping with the principles of local control of education.

The effectiveness and desirability of NCLB has been studied, debated, and revered. Those who have criticized NCLB believe the law could reduce effective instruction and student learning because it may cause states to lower achievement goals in order to meet the required “high standards” and it will force teachers to “teach to the test.” Those in favor of the legislation suggest that regular required testing aids in the identification of schools who are not effective in teaching basic skills, allow for appropriate interventions for these schools, and in turn, will close the achievement gap for those previously disadvantaged.

Now and the future

In the nearly 20 years since the original study was conducted, the pressures of testing have magnified. However, has teacher preparation and professional development kept up with this increased emphasis? Likely not. How can Ignatian Pedagogy serve as an organizer to examine assessment knowledge as identified in the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students? This organizer led to the matrix identified in figure 1: Ignatian Pedagogy as an organizer for the Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students. How can existing technologies be utilized to enhance professional development for teachers at all levels? It is my hope that these questions will be answered in the not-to-distant future.

See Figure 1

Experience

Since the original studies in the early 1990’s a significant changes in professional development have occurred including access to multiple technologies including the internet. The future directions for the knowledge gained in this study include:

1. Replicating the national study post-NCLB
2. Developing professional learning materials using an IPOD Touch
3. Developing a website dedicated to the assessment of student learning and teacher training
4. Creation of a community of learners able to connect electronically throughout the professional development process.

Reflection

Although I have spent the better part of my career reviewing, studying, and working with curriculum, it was not until this project began that I became acquainted with the principles of Ignatian Pedagogy. As a result, this project is the impetus for a series of studies to be conducted over the next few years.

Action

Not only is the project the impetus to restructure and replicate the initial studies of teachers’ knowledge of assessment; this project is the catalyst for the creation of a program designed to make professional development portable. Using IPOD Touch technology, participants will be able to access learning anywhere, any time. It is my intention to expand this project beyond assessment to other areas of professional development. The assessment of student learning was selected as the first focus as it is an area most critical to teacher performance and essential to the culture of schools. Further, it is consistent with the Jesuit educational tradition as assessment needs to be adapted to the environment of the learner. When done well, assessment can help guide teaching and learning to meet the evolving needs of the teacher and the learner. State-of-the-art pedagogy remains only a promise until it is made functional

by competent teachers whose own personalities and perceptions provide the dynamic dimension of pedagogy.

Evaluation

Ignatian Pedagogy, according to Kolvenbach, “promises to help teachers be better teachers.” This project, and the studies to follow, will enable teachers to enrich their own content and structural knowledge in the assessment of student learning. The portable professional development model will allow teachers to tailor their learning and experiences based upon their identified needs.

Reaching teachers where they learn is essential to a professional development model. Like students, teachers can learn anywhere, any time and the more readily available and accessible learning can be the greater the likelihood it will fulfill immediate and pressing needs.

Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students

Teachers should be skilled in choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.

Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.

The teacher should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally-produced and teacher-produced assessment methods.

Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement.

Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments.

Teachers should be skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators.

Teachers should be skilled in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.

The Ignatian Pedagogical Model

Context—What needs to be known about learners (their environment, background, community, and potential) to teach them well?

Experience—What is the best way to engage learners as whole persons in the teaching and learning process?

Reflection—How may learners become more reflective so they more deeply understand what they have learned?

Action—How do we compel learners to move beyond knowledge to action?

Evaluation—How do we assess learners’ growth in mind, heart, and spirit?

Figure 1

Ignatian Pedagogy Teaching Elements	Context	Experience	Reflection	Action	Evaluation
Assessment Standards					
1. Choosing Assessment Methods	Are the methods selected appropriate for each learner?				
2. Developing Assessment Methods		Do assessments allow learners to gather and recollect material they have experienced?			
3. Administering, scoring and interpreting assessment results			Are results used to encourage students' reflection on their strengths and errors in search for truth?		
4. Using Assessment Results for Decision Making				Are results used to allow students to choose the best possible course of action from what they have learned?	
5. Using Assessment in Grading					Are the grades assigned representative of academic mastery and the well-rounded growth of the learners?
6. Communicating Assessment Results			Are the results communicated to others so that implications aid in the continued search for truth?		
7. Recognizing Unethical Practices	Are teachers well-versed in ethical and legal responsibilities in assessment and the larger impact in the learner, families, peers, and society?				

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Jesuit Education and Ignatian Pedagogy: A Desktop Primer

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