Abstract

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to identify the typical barriers encountered by faculty and administrators when implementing outcomes-based assessment program review. An analysis of interviews with faculty and administrators at nine institutions revealed a theory that faculty and administrators' promotion, tenure (if applicable), and/or renewal of contracts are often not dependent on whether they use results from outcomes-based assessment program review to improve their students' learning and development.

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IDENTIFYING BARRIERS IN IMPLEMENTING OUTCOMES-BASED ASSESSMENT PROGRAM REVIEW: A GROUNDED THEORY ANALYSIS

While conversations proposing standardized testing within higher education abound (Allen & Bresciani, 2003; Department of Education (DOE), 2006; Ewell, 1997a, 1997b; Ewell & Jones, 1996; Maki, 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999), proponents of outcomes-based assessment program review are still applauding the value and extent that the process can be used to inform decisions to improve student learning and development (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani, Zelna, & Anderson, 2004; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004). As such, practitioners of outcomes-based assessment continue to seek various ways to meaningfully engage in outcomes-based assessment program review in order to find ways to improve student learning and development.

Even so, there are many others who do not believe the process adds value to their day-to-day teaching or administrative duties (Banta, 2002; Wergin, 1999). Regardless of whether individuals agree upon the level of value that engaging in outcomes-based assessment may bring to improving student learning and development, many instructors, administrators, and scholars still experience barriers in the implementation of the process.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to identify the typical barriers encountered by faculty and administrators at a variety of institutional types when implementing outcomes-based assessment program review. While the intent of the study was to identify barriers and explore strategies that institutions use to address those barriers, a theory emerged as to why the practice of outcomes-based assessment is not pervasive even in institutions whose leadership emphasizes the importance of such a process to improve student development and learning.

Literature Review

The Common Institutional Barriers

Research has been conducted to illustrate the common barriers to implementing outcomes-based assessment. The reasons that outcomes-based assessment is not pervasively practiced or practiced at all are often classified into three categories: (a) time, (b) resources, and (c) understanding of assessment (Banta, 2002; Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

As these categories are dissected further, additional reasons are revealed.

Time. Research posits that the manner in which one allocates time is influenced by how one prioritizes one's values (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Argyris & Schon, 1996; Dalton, Healy, & Moore, 1985; Sandeen, 1985). As such, human beings, regardless of their profession, will allocate their time that is devoted to work based on what they value or what they are told to value by those responsible for evaluating job performance (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Argyris & Schon, 1996; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Furthermore, while it can be assumed that all people have been given the same amount of time, all do not have the same number of priorities or level of responsibilities pressing upon their time. Thus, it is uncertain as to how decisions are made in accordance to varying number of priorities or responsibilities that press upon the amount of time that each person has to spend.

Certainly, in addition to personal and professional values, personality styles and time management strategies play a role in how people choose to prioritize their work projects in the time that they have allocated to their profession (Hackman, 1990; Kirkpatrick, 1993). The manner in which a person is evaluated and the criteria applied to personnel review also may influence how persons allocate their time at work (Hackman, 1990; Petrini & Hultman, 1995).

Resources. Resources have been presented as a reason that people do not engage in outcomes-based assessment including (a) the cost of providing professional development to faculty and administrators in order for them to learn how to engage in quality outcomes-based assessment, (b) the cost of the time re-allocated from actually teaching to the evaluation of teaching or from delivering the program to its evaluation, and (c) the cost of providing retreats so that faculty and administrators can actually reflect on what the outcomes-based assessment data are telling them about their program or curriculum. In addition, there is the cost of the administration and analysis of the evaluation tools used in outcomes-based assessment, as well as the cost of the improvements recommended for the program as the data suggests (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996).

> **"Because the actual cost of engaging in outcomes-based assessment has not been systematically calculated, it is difficult to determine whether the perceived or actual costs of professional development are off-set by improved student learning."**

The actual costs of implementing outcomes-based assessment often go uncalculated. In an attempt to determine actual costs of engaging in outcomes-based assessment, or rather, the attempt to evaluate the evidence of student learning and development, administrators are unsure as to whether to place the costs in the instructional category, an institutional research category, or an unfunded mandate category (Addison, Bresciani, & Bowman, 2005; Bresciani, 2006). Furthermore, the start-up costs of educating personnel to learn how to implement effective, efficient, and enduring outcomes-based assessment are often never allocated (Palomba & Banta, 1999; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). Because the actual cost of engaging in outcomes-based assessment has not been systematically calculated, it is difficult to determine whether the perceived or actual costs of professional development are off-set by improved student learning.

Understanding of assessment. Higher education apparently has been fraught with "flavor of the day" processes and reporting initiatives, and institutional memory is often long about these fads (Banta, 2002; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Petrini & Hultman, 1995; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). As such, faculty and administrators are often wary of anything else that comes along in an apparently pre-packaged version or with the threat of an unfunded mandate. While outcomes-based assessment has been around in one form or another for quite some time (Banta, 2002; Bresciani, 2006; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996), the assumption that it is really here to stay is understandably questioned because the manner in which outcomes-based assessment has been labeled has changed over the years.

Many administrators and faculty simply do not believe that outcomes-based assessment is designed to be a systematic process to improve student learning and

development, rather than a process to sustain itself (Bresciani et al., 2004; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). In addition, the increasing emphasis on accountability, using standardized testing and other performance indicators that often cannot be linked to what is actually occurring in the classroom or within the co-curricular causes further understandable confusion.

In reviewing the three primary published reasons that faculty and administrators do not engage in outcomes-based assessment, a question arises: If an institution claims in its mission statement that it values student learning and development, why is it that that statement does not translate into action such as an institutional expectation for the evaluation of how well that learning and development is done in a manner in which it can be improved?

Outcomes-based assessment has several definitions (Palomba & Banta, 1999). Regardless of which definition one is examining, the idea of continuous improvement is often a common element (Allen, 2004; Banta, 2002; Bresciani et al., 2004; Maki, 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004). Using continuous improvement in the definition, there is an assumption of purposeful planning for the delivery and evaluation of intended outcomes. In addition, the evaluation process is designed so the information gathered could be used to inform specific decisions about how the intended outcomes can be met at a greater level of quality for the group that was included in the evaluation.

There are several resources designed to assist faculty and administrators with implementation of outcomes-based assessment (Allen, 2004; Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Maki, 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004; Upcraft & Schuh, 1996), yet many faculty and administrators are still having difficulty meaningfully engaging in the process. Why is that?

The purpose of the grounded theory study was to identify the typical barriers encountered by faculty and administrators at a variety of institutional types when implementing outcomes-based assessment program review. While the intent of the study was to examine barriers and explore strategies that institutions use to address those barriers, a theory emerged as to why the practice of outcomes-based assessment may not be pervasive even in institutions whose leadership emphasizes the importance of such a process to improve student development and learning.

Methodology

To better understand how faculty and administrators are challenged with implementing outcomes-based assessment program review, a qualitative method of inquiry was utilized because the researcher's intent was to uncover rich and descriptive "meaning" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). There are several methods by which meaning can emerge and many of them share the common goal of understanding the subject's perspective. Researchers using grounded theory attempt to generate a theory that is closely related to the context of that which is being studied (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In grounded theory, the researcher interviews subjects and examines documents, then returns to evaluate the transcripts and documents using open coding analysis in order to identify categories or properties about what is being studied. Next, the researcher returns to the field to interview more subjects, continues with open coding, but also begins to use axial coding to compare the interviews in order to understand the central phenomenon, such as the reason that faculty and administrators are not pervasively engaging in outcomes-based assessment. Axial coding involves the act of constantly comparing words and meanings in order to formulate some common themes across the data. In the case of this study, the purpose of axial coding is to identify categories or conditions that may be contributing to the subjects' inability to engage in outcomes-based assessment and to identify specific strategies, conditions, and contexts

that influence practice or in this case, the student affairs/services professionals' willingness to practice outcomes-based assessment. In the third stage of data analysis, selective coding, the researcher uses the results of open and axial coding to integrate categories in order to identify a theory that further explains the complexities of the research findings (Creswell, 1998).

Research Questions

In an effort to explore how pervasive faculty and administrators were engaged in outcomes-based assessment program review, the following research questions guided the analysis of the case studies and interviews.

1. How pervasively are your faculty and administrators engaged in outcomes-based assessment program review?

2. What do they report as challenges in their ability to meaningfully and manageably engage in the process?

3. How do they address those challenges?

Selection of Sample

Nine institutions were purposefully selected to participate in this study. All nine institutions were considered to be good practice or emerging good practice institutions in implementing outcomes-based assessment program review based on good practice criteria published by Bresciani (2006). There were three community colleges, three comprehensive institutions, and three research extensive universities. At least three faculty and three administrators were interviewed at each institution. At some institutions, due to the opportunity provided to the researcher, more faculty and administrators were interviewed. In addition, documents, such as personnel evaluation criteria and documents (when available), meeting minutes, faculty memos, and institutional websites were also reviewed.

"If an institution claims in its mission statement that it values student learning and development, why is it that that statement does not translate into action such as institutional expectation for the evaluation of how well that learning and development is done in a manner in which it can be improved?"

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the inability to verify among decision makers the degree to which contributions or improvements to student learning is factored into personnel evaluations. In many instances, criteria for the weight that is placed on such an evaluation could not be ascertained in faculty evaluations nor in evaluations of administrators. In addition, it was unclear, apart from the use of student evaluations of teaching effectiveness, what criteria for improvement or contributions to student learning and development were being used for faculty evaluations. Similarly, there was little evidence of criteria for contributions to student development being used for administrative evaluations.

Another potential limitation is that those who participated in the interviews were motivated to illustrate a positive or negative aspect of the extent that faculty and administrators are using outcomes-based assessment results to improve student learning and development at their institution.

Findings and Discussion

In an effort to explore how pervasively faculty and administrators were engaged in outcomes-based assessment program review, the aforementioned research questions guided the grounded theory analysis of the case studies and interviews.

A grounded theory analysis of the interviews and documents revealed a theory as to why faculty and administrators' engagement in outcomes-based assessment program review may not be pervasive. Faculty and administrators' promotion, tenure (if applicable), and/or

renewal of contracts is often not dependent on whether they use results from outcomes-based assessment program review to improve their students' learning and development. Rather, the promotion, tenure (if applicable), and/or renewal of their contracts appears to be based on a level of productivity that evidence suggests may not directly be related to improved student learning and development. Dependent on institutional type, reviews appear to be focused on either (a) number of peer-reviewed research journals published, (b) number and funding level of grants received, (c) in-class instructional evaluations by students, and (d) level of outreach activity, and/or other performance activities pertaining to increased inputs or outputs that improve performance indicators used for funding but are not necessarily related to student learning and development. To further illustrate the emergence of this theory, the findings are presented and discussed under each research question.

Pervasive Involvement in Outcomes-based Assessment Program Review

In regards to how pervasively faculty and administrators are engaged in outcomes-based assessment program review, the institutions that had leadership commitment to evidence-based decision making had faculty and administrators in every unit of their organization engaged in some level of systematic outcomes-based assessment program review. When asked how this came to be, one administrator's response was illustrative of the many others when he said:

> We didn't arrive at this level of involvement overnight. It took years of consistent commitment to building a process that faculty would recognize as first and foremost meaningful to them. They had to see that improvements [in student learning and development] would be made and that they were improvements that mattered to them and what they wanted students to learn.

While faculty, academic support specialists, and student support specialists were necessary to the establishment of a process that generated useful data to informing decisions that led to improvement, not all faculty and administrators were engaged in that process. For the most part, those that engaged in the process did so because they found the systematic practice of outcomes-based assessment valuable to improving student learning and development.

Many of these faculty and administrators reported that they had been implementing the process, albeit informally, long before the leadership called for all to be involved in it. As one participant stated, "I had been doing this [outcomes-based assessment] for years. I just didn't know it was called that [outcomes-based assessment]." Another illustrated the thought by sharing:

> We [faculty] have discussions about how to improve student performance all of the time. We have them around the coffee pot; we have them in department meetings; we have them when we are standing in the halls; and we have them right after a student we are concerned about leaves our office. We care about improving student learning because we care, not because someone told us we had to care.

Such comments were common among the faculty represented in the institutions where outcomes-based assessment practice was prevalent. When asked why this was the case, one administrator summarized a common response among many participants when she said:

> The faculty who are engaged in outcomes-based assessment in a systematic way would have done it anyway. These faculty experiment with inquiry processes to improve student learning because they want their students to improve. All we [administration] did was help them systematize it, provide some support so they could structure the process into program review and offer some release

time and professional development to get other faculty to discover its benefits. Our faculty don't do it because they are externally [external to the academy] or internally [internal to the academy] rewarded for doing it [outcomes-based assessment]. They do it [outcomes-based assessment] because it provides them with specific information to inform decisions that will improve student learning.

Huba and Freed (2000), Maki (2004), Mentkowski and associates (2000), Suskie (2004), and Palomba and Banta (1999) have repeatedly illustrated that the primary motivation for faculty to engage in systematic outcomes-based assessment comes from the realization they discover, after trying it out, that it does indeed contribute to improved student learning and development. So, when one examines how pervasive faculty involvement is in outcomes-based assessment, does one assume that if faculty experience it and recognize its value that they will then systematically implement it? If so, how do you get the faculty and administrators who are not involved to become involved? As reported by one administrator:

> I am not sure which comes first. It is the proverbial chicken and the egg. While well-respected faculty have designed the process and to some extent, I think they have peer-pressured other faculty into getting involved… [pause] Still, not every faculty member is involved. And I don't think they have to be, even though we want them to be.

While administrators and faculty commented on whether they felt the practice of outcomes-based assessment program review on their campuses was pervasive, there was no clear definition as to what pervasive meant and how many faculty or administrators made the practice "pervasive."

In the Merriam –Webster dictionary, pervasive means, "pervading or tending to pervade" ("Pervasive," 2007). If seeking the definition of pervading or pervade, you would discover that it means, "to become diffused throughout every part of" ("Pervading," 2007). If pervasive means getting every faculty member and administrator involved in outcomes-based assessment, then when it comes to how to get faculty involved, several ideas were shared by study participants. Many of the ideas shared range from hiring faculty and administrators who are able to do outcomes-based assessment as advertised for in position descriptions, to providing release time to engage in outcomes-based assessment, to providing other rewards and incentives for involvement, and clarifying expectations for involvement (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004).

Administrators desiring for their staff to become more involved in outcomes-based assessment simply stated that, "getting them [administrative staff] involved? That is easy. They are not faculty; you can just tell them [administrators], it has to be done and they do it. They [administrators] can't hide behind academic freedom." Even with such confidence, it was clear that not every administrator was engaged in outcomes-based assessment, even when the administrative leadership felt they had made the expectations for such involvement very clear.

If pervasive does not constitute getting every person involved in outcomes-based assessment but ensuring that at least someone in every aspect of the organization is engaged in outcomes-based assessment, how does one still manage to get people who are not currently involved to participate in the process?

Challenges to Engaging in the Process

Participants in this study reiterated the common challenges to engaging in outcomes-based assessment: (a) time, (b) resources, and (c) understanding of assessment. For brevity's sake, the researcher will not expand on these challenges since they are re-affirmed in several publications (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Huba & Freed,

"…the fact of the matter is that the only way I can keep my job…the only way I can keep teaching is if I publish several articles in journals that only accept less than 10 percent of the submissions. I tried to explain this to a student once… when I could not see them because I had to get my research done."

2000; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004). What may be more compelling at this point is to discuss the barrier that participants, regardless of institutional type, felt was most difficult to address. This barrier is as follows.

Faculty and administrators' promotion, tenure (if applicable), and/or renewal of contracts is often not dependent on whether they use results from outcomes-based assessment program review to improve their students' learning and development. Rather, the promotion, tenure (if applicable), and/or renewal of their contracts appears to be based on a level of productivity that evidence suggests may not directly be related to improved student learning and development. Therefore it appears that the evaluation of personnel processes, particularly for faculty, dissuade faculty in engaging in extensive evaluation of student learning and development. As this faculty member illustrates:

> Listen, it is not that I don't care about what my students learn and how well they learn it; I do. I really care. But the fact of the matter is that the only way I can keep my job…the only way I can keep teaching is if I publish several articles in journals that only accept less than 10 percent of the submissions. I tried to explain this to a student once… when I couldn't see them because I had to get my research done… [pause] I stopped myself [from telling the student this]. How do you explain that to a student who needs your help?

Several tenured, full professors, who are actively engaged in outcomes-based assessment on their campuses and who would be described by their senior administrators as the faculty who led the design and implementation of the process that systematically improved student learning affirmed the rewards process for publications. "You can't have junior (untenured) faculty getting involved in documenting how well their students learn. You just can't. It takes too much time away from their research." These faculty expressed time and time again how responsible they were being by "protecting" assistant professors, so they could get their tenure. "They need to get their tenure, and then we will ask them to assess [student learning]", explained a full professor.

Faculty at less research intensive institutions felt the same pressure to publish first, and then to consider the evaluation of student learning second.

> I hate it when people assume we don't care about student learning; that is not the case. It's just that I have seen some teachers go untenured [pause]…the ones who only talk about student learning and measuring how well they do it…if you don't pay attention to your research, you don't get to stay.

In two-year colleges where there is little to no research pressure, this concern is expressed slightly differently.

> No, we don't have the research pressures that others have, but we get less time to plan our preps than the high school teachers get. Also, there is no time to sit and chat about we learned from our classroom assessment. I am gathering the data [about how our students learn], but we are so busy teaching, we have no time to talk about what our students are learning.

When these two-year college faculty were asked about the possibility of release time to reflect on student learning results in order to inform conversations where decisions could be made for improvements, some mentioned that their collective bargaining agreements were being interpreted by their union leadership in a manner that would dissuade them from doing this:

> I tried to get a group of faculty together where we would talk about what we were finding out in our classrooms. I was visited by a union leader who discouraged me from doing this, telling me that this type of work was outside the scope of our collective bargaining agreement. I was confused by that remark but I haven't had time to look into it further.

This faculty member, along with others in the study, understood that hosting

such conversations was not in the scope of their duties and they would need additional compensation and possibly an additional contract to have such conversations.

Other two-year faculty members engaged in outcomes-based assessment reported that they are doing it as additional work for which they are neither recognized nor reimbursed:

> If you look at how our workload is calculated, there is zero time allocated to the practice of outcomes-based assessment. We [my colleagues and I at other 2-year institutions] get evaluated based on how many FTEs [Full-Time Equivalent], SCHs [Scheduled Class Hours], seat hours, or continuing education hours we generate. That is what we hear about; that is what we understand we are to care about…just productivity of increased numbers. How can you find time to focus on student learning when that is all you hear?

Even though faculty of all institutional types may have painted a bleak picture, many of them also re-affirmed that regardless of whether they get evaluated for their contributions to student learning, they will do so, and they will use the data to discuss ideas for improvement with their colleagues. When asked how they manage to evaluate student learning and use the results, many responded with similar answers as this:

> I work my ass off. I can't fall behind on publications. It doesn't matter what level [of professor] you are around here. The higher you go [in promotion and tenure], the more work you get; the more responsibility you have. Somebody should do a study of divorce rates and loss of custody of children among faculty and why it occurs. Now, that would be something to study.

Some faculty were able to use the results of their outcomes-based assessment work for publications and thus, were able to "kill two birds with one stone." But many more faculty said that the evaluation of their students' learning was not anywhere close to what their faculty peers would value as research in their discipline.

For many administrators, continuance of employment may be perceived as political or based on countable production and activity, rather than evidence of contributions to student learning and development:

> Look at how I evaluate people, there is nothing in there asking them to show evidence of their organization's contribution to student learning or development…nothing. We do it anyway though, because we know it is what we are all about.

One other senior level administrator however, made his expectation very clear, "If you don't tell me how you know you are contributing to student learning, I will tell you that you just made you, and your department candidates for 'outsourcing.'" While this administrator made his expectations very clear, there was no clear evidence that his staff was evaluated and rewarded for the extent they could demonstrate improvements in student learning and development.

"Scholars have written about the notion that lasting change cannot occur in higher education unless the rewards structure for making that change also follows suit."

Scholars have written about the notion that lasting change cannot occur in higher education unless the rewards structure for making that change also follows suit (Banta, 2002; Cox & Richlin, 2004; Doherty, Riordan, & Roth, 2002; Eckel, Green, & Hill, 2001; Frazier & Frazier, 1997; Hutchings, 2001; Kreber, 2001; Maki, 2004). Given this line of research and the findings in this study, one may wonder if the institutional leadership who are committed to improving student learning and development can sustain the efforts if their personnel evaluation systems are not updated to reflect a change in organizational values.

Addressing the Challenges

Apart from being able to arrive at a strategy to address the barrier that personnel

are not rewarded for the extent that they use evidence to improve student learning and development, the institutional expectation for improving student learning and development was still made clear at the institutions that participated in this study. As such, they were eager to share their solutions for addressing the three common barriers identified: (a) time, (b) understanding of assessment, and (c) resources.

Time. As previously mentioned, many participants discussed the fact that there was no new time to allocate to the reflection and improvement of student learning and development. Participants reiterated that time either had to be re-allocated from their personal time or from some other projects. As one administrator stated:

> Everyone cares about students here and we are a small institution so many of us carry a lot of responsibilities. In order to get this [outcomes-based assessment] done, we just get it done. We work harder and smarter. That is just the way it has to be.

A faculty member at another institution represented a different approach:

> We know that it [outcomes-based assessment] won't get done well if we don't re-allocate time to it. So, that is what we do. We have invested a lot of time in learning how to do this well. We have re-designed our faculty meetings so that we discuss the results and apply what we learned. We are not able to respond to all of the needs we see; we simply can't. But we do move forward with improvements every year. We are very proud of that.

Some common strategies discussed by most of the participants in this study included the following. (a) Re-allocation of time from the doing of the activity to the evaluation of the doing. This may mean investing in release-time from activities for both administrators and for faculty. (b) When an organization cannot provide release time, encourage faculty and administrators to engage in fewer activities so that they can reflect on the data and decisions that need to be made in order to improve learning and development. (c) Discuss results derived from outcomes-based assessment in a manner that is open and inclusive, the practice of which saves time when people are wondering how and why decisions are made. (d) Collaborate with peers to assess student learning, discuss the results, and make decisions. If you share your workload, which includes involving students in every aspect of the process, you save time because you are borrowing ideas from colleagues. They may be able to suggest solutions more quickly because they are not as invested in the history of what led you to do that which you now do and have recently discovered is not as an effective process as you had hoped.

Understanding of assessment. Similar to previous research findings, the need to understand what outcomes-based assessment is and why one should engage in it was prevalent (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004). In particular, participants spoke of the importance of balance in understanding how results would be used and the level of expectations for engagement in assessment among faculty, administrators and top level leadership:

> It is a delicate balance. You need the expectations communicated from the leadership that this is a process that will help us systematically improve students' learning, but it needs to be communicated in a manner that allows faculty the freedom to develop the process that is most meaningful to them; a process where they can discover whether the results will actually be helpful in improving learning.

Another participant explained:

> To keep this (outcomes-based assessment) from being seen as an unfunded mandate, we made sure to connect the required documentation to what we already were doing with planning and program review. Doing this was so

helpful to everyone involved; they could focus on the meaning of doing it, rather than griping about having to do it.

Participants illustrated the importance of making sure everyone, including top-level leadership could understand (a) what outcomes-based assessment is and why it is being required, (b) the connection of assessment to planning, (c) how to use the results both as a practitioner (e.g., administrator or instructor) and as a leader, and (d) how to connect the results to external benchmarks or indicators of success. However, in order to understand how to do all this, one participant remarked:

> You really need to provide training or education or whatever you want to call it. You can't just expect that faculty and administrators are going to simply understand this just because you have shown them evidence of how the process can improve student learning. You really have to educate …and that takes time…

A commitment to providing professional development takes time and it takes resources in the manner of investing in the professional development (Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani et al., 2004; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004; Mentkowski, 2000; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Suskie, 2004).

Resources. While time can certainly be considered a resource, this section focuses on the types of resources that could be provided to faculty and administrators such as professional development to learn all aspects of the outcomes-based assessment process, including follow-up one-on-one assistance, assistance with documentation, and facilitated reflection for interpretation of results and decision-making. Most of the participants agreed that early investment in professional development was needed in order for the process to be sustainable and effective:

> We invested a great deal of money in up front professional development. When we decided to do this, we actually followed a corporate model for 're-tooling' our workforce. Now, since we have done this for a while, we really have more of a 'train-the-trainer' model so the departments absorb the professional development costs as they 'orient' faculty and staff to the way they do things.

Many scholars (Battino et al., 2006; Eddy, 2005; Kemp et al., 2006; Stanley, Watson, & Algert, 2005) discuss the importance of investing in faculty training and development in order to "re-tool the workforce" for changes in the industry such as ways to evaluate and improve student learning and development. These scholars, while not fully adopting a corporate model explain the importance of realizing that needs in higher education change, society changes, and students change; thus, to not invest in the re-equipping of our faculty and staff is irresponsible and short-sighted.

While the participants in this study found varying ways to provide and fund professional development, they all did so and continue to do so in the ways that make the most sense to each institution. However, the documentation of the process and the results and decisions still posed challenges. One participant illustrated this when she said:

> I do care about how well my students learn and develop, but outcomes-based assessment takes a great deal of time to document. We can do this easily, but documenting it all? [pause] I am just not sure that the improvements that result from engaging in it are worth the time [invested in it].

When pressed for an explanation, this faculty member returned to the earlier expressed concern that what she really needed to document were the items that went into her promotion reviews; how she used outcomes-based assessment to improve student learning was not required in that paperwork.

Recommendations

Clearly, more research needs to be conducted in order to determine the extent that faculty and administrators are not reviewed and promoted or tenured (if applicable) based on their contributions to student learning and development. Data are inconclusive.

"You can't just expect that faculty and administrators are going to simply understand this just because you have shown them evidence of how the process can improve student learning. You really have to educate…and that takes time…"

Even so, it should be noted that when reviewing all personnel evaluation guidelines, none of these institutional processes asked for faculty and administrators to provide evidence, based on a systematic evaluation process, as to how student learning and development was improved. Furthermore, while faculty and administrators recognized that this information was not provided, there appeared to be very little discussion around how to change existing processes. Further research on why that may be the case would aid additional conversations on the matter.

Given that faculty and administrators may not be evaluated and subsequently rewarded for improving student learning and development, it appears that regardless of what tool (e.g., CLA, ETS) or what process (e.g., outcomes-based assessment, CQI) is used to evaluate student learning and development, pervasive improvement in student learning and development may not come about if faculty and administrators' promotion and review processes are not influenced by the use of outcomes-based assessment for improvement. On the contrary, if faculty and administrators responsible for designing learning and development activities are told what tools and what processes they have to use without being able to develop these tools and measurements themselves, it may be likely that given these findings, there will be even less motivation and subsequent reward to improving student learning and development. Certainly there may be less clarity in regards to how to specifically improve student learning (Maki, 2004; Suskie, 2004).

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