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K-12 QUALIFYING DOCTORAL EXAMINATION

ELMP K—12 DOCTORAL PROGRAM

FALL 2009

EXAM DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2009

Directions

Attached please find the Qualifying Exam. There are five (5) sections as outlined below.

- Before you begin, create a header for each page with your student ID number (found on the label of this envelope), the name of the exam you are taking [Qual K12] and today’s date.

- You will answer one question in each of the Sections I - IV and all questions in Section V.

- When you complete a section, insert a page break before starting the next section.

- Please indicate on each question answered, the number and title of that question. (i.e. Question 2 – Policy, etc.)

In developing your responses, be sure to organize them in a logically coherent way and to make optimal use of relevant current research and literature applicable to each question.

I. CURRICULUM

II. PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVES

III. ORGANIZATION

IV. RESEARCH

V. STATISTICS (Answer ALL questions)
You are asked to prepare a critique of the following Educational Leadership professional journal article, "Informative Assessment: Learning to Love Assessment". In so doing, be certain to include in your discussion the relationship of this article to current literature and related research on this topic. It is also important to employ the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation in writing your critique.
Learning to Love Assessment

Carol Ann Tomlinson

From judging performance to guiding students to shaping instruction to informing learning, coming to grips with informative assessment is one insightful journey.

When I was a young teacher—young both in years and in understanding of the profession I had entered—I nonetheless went about my work as though I comprehended its various elements. I immediately set out to arrange furniture, put up bulletin boards, make lesson plans, assign homework, give tests, compute grades, and distribute report cards as though I knew what I was doing.

I had not set out to be a teacher, and so I had not really studied education in any meaningful way. I had not student taught. Had I done those things, however, I am not convinced that my evolution as a teacher would have been remarkably different. In either case, my long apprenticeship as a student (Lortie, 1975) would likely have dominated any more recent knowledge I might have acquired about what it means to be a teacher. I simply "played school" in the same way that young children "play house"—by mimicking what we think the adults around us
The one element I knew I was unprepared to confront was classroom management. Consequently, that’s the element that garnered most of my attention during my early teaching years. The element to which I gave least attention was assessment. In truth, I didn’t even know the word assessment for a good number of years. I simply knew I was supposed to give tests and grades. I didn’t much like tests in those years. It was difficult for me to move beyond their judgmental aspect. They made kids nervous. They made me nervous. With no understanding of the role of assessment in a dynamic and success-oriented classroom, I initially ignored assessment when I could and did it when I had to.

Now, more than three decades into the teaching career I never intended to have, it’s difficult for me to remember exactly when I had the legion of insights that have contributed to my growth as an educator. I do know, however, that those insights are the milestones that mark my evolution from seeing teaching as a job to seeing teaching as a science-informed art that has become a passion.

Following are 10 understandings about classroom assessment that sometimes gradually and sometimes suddenly illuminated my work. I am not finished with the insights yet because I am not finished with my work as a teacher or learner. I present the understandings in something like the order they unfolded in my thinking.

The formulation of one insight generally prepared the way for the next. Now, of course, they are seamless, interconnected, and interdependent. But they did not come to me that way. Over time and taken together, the understandings make me an advocate of informative assessment—a concept that initially played no conscious role in my work as a teacher.

Understanding 1: Informative assessment isn’t just about tests. Initially I thought about assessment as test giving. Over time, I became aware of students who did poorly on tests but who showed other evidence of learning. They solved problems well, contributed to discussions, generated rich ideas, drew sketches
to illustrate, and role-played. When they wanted to communicate, they always found a way. I began to realize that when I gave students multiple ways to express learning or gave them a say in how they could show what they knew, more students were engaged. More to the point, more students were learning.

Although I still had a shallow sense of the possibilities of assessment, I did at least begin to try in multiple ways to let kids show what they knew. I used more authentic products as well as tests to gain a sense of student understanding. I began to realize that when one form of assessment was ineffective for a student, it did not necessarily indicate a lack of student success but could, in fact, represent a poor fit between the student and the method through which I was trying to make the student communicate. I studied students to see what forms of assessment worked for them and to be sure I never settled for a single assessment as an adequate representation of what a student knew.

Understanding 2: Informative assessment really isn’t about the grade book.

At about the same time that Understanding 1 emerged in my thinking, I began to sense that filling a grade book was both less interesting and less useful than trying to figure out what individual students knew, understood, or could do. My thinking was shifting from assessment as judging students to assessment as guiding students. I was beginning to think about student accomplishment more than about student ranking (Wiggins, 1993).

Giving students feedback seemed to be more productive than giving them grades. If I carefully and consistently gave them feedback about their work, I felt more like a teacher than a warden. I felt more respectful of the students and their possibilities (Wiggins, 1993). I began to understand the difference between teaching for success and "gotcha" teaching and to sense the crucial role of informative assessment in the former.

Understanding 3: Informative assessment isn’t always formal.
I also became conscious of the fact that some of the most valuable insights I gleaned about students came from moments or events that I'd never associated with assessment. When I read in a student's journal that his parents were divorcing, I understood why he was disengaged in class. I got a clear picture of one student's misunderstanding when I walked around as students worked and saw a diagram she made to represent how she understood the concept we were discussing. I could figure out how to help a student be more successful in small groups when I took the time to study systematically, but from a distance, what he did to make groups grow impatient with him.

Assessment, then, was more than "tests plus other formats." Informative assessment could occur any time I went in search of information about a student. In fact, it could occur when I was not actively searching but was merely conscious of what was happening around me.

I began to talk in more purposeful ways with students as they entered and left the classroom. I began to carry around a clipboard on which I took notes about students. I developed a filing system that enabled me to easily store and retrieve information about students as individuals and learners. I was more focused in moving around the room to spot-check student work in progress for particular proficiencies. I began to sense that virtually all student products and interactions can serve as informative assessment because I, as a teacher, have the power to use them that way.

Understanding 4: Informative assessment isn't separate from the curriculum.

Early in my teaching, I made lesson plans. Later on, I made unit plans. In neither time frame did I see assessment as a part of the curriculum design process. As is the case with many teachers, I planned what I would teach, taught it, and then created assessments. The assessments were largely derived from what had transpired during a segment of lessons and ultimately what had transpired during a unit of study. It was a while before I understood what Wiggins and McTighe (1998) call *backward design*. 
That evolution came in three stages for me. First, I began to understand the imperative of laying out precisely what mattered most for students to know and be able to do—but also what they should understand—as a result of our work together. Then I began to discover that many of my lessons had been only loosely coupled to learning goals. I'd sometimes (often?) been teaching in response to what my students liked rather than in response to crucial learning goals. I understood the need to make certain that my teaching was a consistent match for what students needed to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of a unit. Finally, I began to realize that if I wanted to teach for success, my assessments had to be absolutely aligned with the knowledge, understanding, and skill I'd designated as essential learning outcomes. There was a glimmer of recognition in my work that assessment was a part of—not apart from—curriculum design.

Understanding 5: Informative assessment isn't about "after."

I came to understand that assessments that came at the end of a unit—although important manifestations of student knowledge, understanding, and skill—were less useful to me as a teacher than were assessments that occurred during a unit of study. By the time I gave and graded a final assessment, we were already moving on to a new topic or unit. There was only a limited amount I could do at that stage with information that revealed to me that some students fell short of mastering essential outcomes—or that others had likely been bored senseless by instruction that focused on outcomes they had mastered long before the unit had begun. When I studied student work in the course of a unit, however, I could do many things to support or extend student learning. I began to be a devotee of formative assessment, although I did not know that term for many years.

It took time before I understood the crucial role of preassessment or diagnostic assessment in teaching. Likely the insight was the product of the embarrassment of realizing that a student had no idea what I was talking about because he or she lacked vocabulary I assumed every 7th grader knew or of having a student answer a question in class early in a unit that
made it clear he already knew more about the topic at hand than I was planning to teach. At that point, I began to check early in the year to see whether students could read the textbook, how well they could produce expository writing, what their spelling level was, and so on. I began systematically to use preassessments before a unit started to see where students stood in regard to prerequisite and upcoming knowledge, understanding, and skills.

Understanding 6: Informative assessment isn’t an end in itself.

I slowly came to realize that the most useful assessment practices would shape how I taught. I began to explore and appreciate two potent principles of informative assessment. First, the greatest power of assessment information lies in its capacity to help me see how to be a better teacher. If I know what students are and are not grasping at a given moment in a sequence of study, I know how to plan our time better. I know when to reteach, when to move ahead, and when to explain or demonstrate something in another way. Informative assessment is not an end in itself, but the beginning of better instruction.

Understanding 7: Informative assessment isn’t separate from instruction.

A second and related understanding hovered around my sense that assessment should teach me how to be a better teacher. Whether I liked it or not, informative assessment always demonstrated to me that my students’ knowledge, understanding, and skill were emerging along different time continuums and at different depths. It became excruciatingly clear that my brilliant teaching was not equally brilliant for everyone in my classes. In other words, informative assessment helped me solidify a need for differentiation. As Lorna Earl (2003) notes, if teachers know a precise learning destination and consistently check to see where students are relative to that destination, differentiation isn’t just an option; it’s the logical next step in teaching. Informative assessment made it clear—at first, painfully so—that if I meant for every student to succeed, I was going to have to teach with both singular and group needs in mind.

Understanding 8: Informative assessment isn’t just about
student readiness.
Initially, my emergent sense of the power of assessment to improve my teaching focused on student readiness. At the time, I was teaching in a school with a bimodal population—lots of students were three or more years behind grade level or three or more years above grade level, with almost no students in between. Addressing that expansive gap in student readiness was a daily challenge. I was coming to realize the role of informative assessment in ensuring that students worked as often as possible at appropriate levels of challenge (Earl, 2003).

Only later was I aware of the potential role of assessment in determining what students cared about and how they learned. When I could attach what I was teaching to what students cared about, they learned more readily and more durably. When I could give them options about how to learn and express what they knew, learning improved. I realized I could pursue insights about student interests and preferred modes of learning, just as I had about their readiness needs.

I began to use surveys to determine student interests, hunt for clues about their individual and shared passions, and take notes on who learned better alone and who learned better in small groups. I began to ask students to write to me about which instructional approaches were working for them and which were not. I was coming to understand that learning is multidimensional and that assessment could help me understand learners as multidimensional as well.

Understanding 9: Informative assessment isn’t just about finding weaknesses.

As my sense of the elasticity of assessment developed, so did my sense of the wisdom of using assessment to accentuate student positives rather than negatives. With readiness-based assessments, I had most often been on the hunt for what students didn’t know, couldn’t do, or didn’t understand. Using assessment to focus on student interests and learning preferences illustrated for me the power of emphasizing what works for students.

When I saw “positive space” in students and reflected that to
them, the results were stunningly different from when I reported
on their "negative space." It gave students something to build
on—a sense of possibility. I began to spend at least as much
time gathering assessment information on what students could
do as on what they couldn’t. That, in turn, helped me develop a
conviction that each student in my classes brought strengths to
our work and that it was my job to bring those strengths to the
surface so that all of us could benefit.

**Understanding 10: Informative assessment isn’t just for the
teacher.**

Up to this point, much of my thinking was about the teacher—
about me, my class, my work, my growth. The first nine
understandings about assessment were, in fact, crucial to my
development. But it was the 10th understanding that
revolutionized what happened in the classrooms I shared with
my students. I finally began to grasp that teaching requires a
plural pronoun. The best teaching is never so much about *me* as
about *us*. I began to see my students as full partners in their
success.

My sense of the role of assessment necessarily shifted. I was a
better teacher—but more to the point, my students were better
learners—when assessment helped all of us push learning
forward (Earl, 2003). When students clearly understood our
learning objectives, knew precisely what success would look
like, understood how each assignment contributed to their
success, could articulate the role of assessment in ensuring
their success, and understood that their work correlated with
their needs, they developed a sense of self-efficacy that was
powerful in their lives as learners. Over time, as I developed, my
students got better at self-monitoring, self-managing, and self-
modifying (Costa & Kallick, 2004). They developed an internal
locus of control that caused them to work hard rather than to
rely on luck or the teacher’s good will (Stiggins, 2000).

**Assessing Wisely**

Lorna Earl (2003) distinguishes between assessment *of*
learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning.
In many ways, my growth as a teacher slowly and imperfectly
followed that progression. I began by seeing assessment as
judging performance, then as informing teaching, and finally as informing learning. In reality, all those perspectives play a role in effective teaching. The key is where we place the emphasis.

Certainly a teacher and his or her students need to know who reaches (and exceeds) important learning targets—thus summative assessment, or assessment of learning, has a place in teaching. Robust learning generally requires robust teaching, and both diagnostic and formative assessments, or assessments for learning, are catalysts for better teaching. In the end, however, when assessment is seen as learning—for students as well as for teachers—it becomes most informative and generative for students and teachers alike.

References


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II. MORE FOCUSED PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVES

You must respond to any one of the questions listed below. There is no requirement to select a particular question based upon your program K-12 or Higher Education.

PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVES EXAM QUESTIONS

Directions: Select one (1) of the six questions presented below and respond to it in a coherent essay. Be sure to draw on your knowledge of policy analysis and the literature in higher education to frame your basic position, support the position with the best available evidence and to develop your response in clear and coherent prose.

Question # 1: Spiraling Cost in Higher Education: What's Going On?
There is perhaps no more urgent issue than the rapidly escalating costs of higher education, especially in the independent sector. As a scholar of American higher education, you are asked to prepare a research-based article for a popular magazine that explains why costs are escalating so rapidly and what steps colleges and universities can take to contain costs. In your response, be sure to include:

a. An analysis of how organizational structure and culture affects expenditure patterns in colleges and universities;

b. An analysis of changes in revenue streams to colleges and universities over the past decade.

c. And analysis of the impact of changing state and federal policy on institutional cost structures; and;

d. How in your judgment can higher education address the spiraling cost issue most effectively?
Question #2: Quality and Access
A classic debate regards access and financing of American higher education. Prepare an essay that develops your position with respect to these four questions:

1. Who goes to higher education?
2. Who pays for higher education?
3. Who benefits from higher education?
4. Who should pay?

In preparing your response, please consider such trends as current and historical participation rates in higher education, data & perspectives on individual and societal benefits of higher education participation, current and historical methods for financing higher education. Be certain to address all four (4) of the questions.

Question #3: Tuition / Aid Policy
- What is the high-tuition high-aid policy? Why is it attractive to some policy-makers? What are the potential problems with this policy?

Question #4: NCLB
What strategies does NCLB deploy to improve schooling for disadvantaged students? What effects has NCLB had?

Question #5: Demonstrate you understanding of policy analysis
Directions: you must answer parts A and B and either C or D or E

A. What is your “working definition” of policy? In preparing your definition please define and distinguish between “Policy Analysis” and “Policy Advocacy”.

B. Education leaders should have a good understanding of policy that affects education broadly speaking. Briefly defend this assertion in 2 to 3 paragraphs
PUBLIC POLICY PERSPECTIVES EXAM QUESTION (Con’t)

Question #5 (Con’t): Demonstrate your understanding of policy analysis

Answer one of the following: either part C or D or E

C. Theorists often refer to various models for understanding the policy process. These models include: Institutionalism, Rationalism, Group Theory, Elite Theory and Incrementalism. Identify the characteristics of three of these models and your assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of those models in understanding policy development and implementation. In preparing your response you may find it useful to prepare a table to structure your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Analysis Model (prepare response for 3 of these models)</th>
<th>Identify / explain characteristics of model</th>
<th>Identify / explain strengths and weakness of model in helping education leader understand the development and implementation of education policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elite Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incrementalism</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OR

D. Some theorists speak of the “layered” concept of policy. What do you understand about this idea? Provide examples of at least 3 layers of policy and of some policy “instruments that might be used by actors at that layer.

OR

E. Some theorists speak of the policy process or policy cycle. Chose one (there are several) policy processes or cycles. State the steps and explain briefly each step, including why the step is important. (This could be arranged as a table).

Question #6: What is public policy? What is public policy? Why study public policy? And what are the standards for policy analysis?
K-12 Qualifying Exam

III. ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATION EXAMINATION QUESTION

Identify one important school or district based organizational issue/problem that either you confront on a personal basis or is identified in the literature regarding educational organizations.

Develop a response to the issue/problem that reflects and identifies the relevant research and literature that may contribute to a successful resolution of the issue/problem.
IV. RESEARCH

RESEARCH EXAM QUESTION
Qualifying Exam Question

Choose one of the general topic areas listed below and develop a research study that addresses the topic. As you explain the study, be sure to include each of the following:

- A statement of the “problem” you intend to investigate.
  The problem statement should define the scope (magnitude) and the precise nature of the problem (dilemma, phenomenon of interest), as well as the usefulness of framing the problem in this form.

- Research questions that derive logically from your problem statement.

- A coherent research plan and appropriate methods of data collection.
  Identify what data are required to answer the questions, the sources of those data, and how the data will be obtained. Justify the effectiveness of this design in addressing the research questions.

  As you explain the data you intend to collect and the methods for doing so, be sure to clarify your strategy for ensuring reliability and validity.

- Data Analysis Plan. Articulate your plan for organizing and analyzing the raw data; specify how your analytical approach will address your research questions.

Research Topic Choices – Choose One:

K-12
(1) The effect of pre-school attendance on student learning in the third grade
(2) Principal support on teacher job satisfaction
(3) Inclusion on special education students’ learning

Higher Education
(4) Spiraling costs in higher education—organizational responses
(5) The effects of developmental coursework (math or English)
(6) “Information technology literacy” (i.e. digital literacy) and undergraduate education
V. INTRODUCTORY STATISTICS

QUALIFYING EXAM QUESTION

Answer ALL Questions

INTRODUCTORY STATISTICS

Statistical Analysis Questions

Answer all of the following questions and fully explain your rationale for interpreting the statistical information. The following background is provided as a context for all questions and analyses that follow. Any similarities to real programs and or data are purely coincidental and are not intended as factual.

Background:
The culture of schools from kindergarten through graduate school supports a belief system that is hierarchical rather than collegial and is often focused on teacher compliance rather than professional growth. The supervisory process at all levels K-16 is often viewed as an event rather than an ongoing process aimed at professional growth. Hoy (2009) suggests that “traditional supervision...is an outmoded concept, one that was always more ritual than reality” (p. xvii). If the process of supervision is to become effective, it must be directed by a belief system that empowers instructors to self-directed professional development. It changes the role of the supervisor to that of a facilitator rather than a manager.

In his research on reasons why K-12 teachers leave the profession, Richard Ingersoll (2003) concluded that one of the most significant causes both new and experienced educators leave is the lack of self-control in their work lives. The importance of addressing the issue of power and control cannot be underestimated. Teacher empowerment may be a hard sell at first, but the dividends will make it worthwhile and effective. The short term change and the long term transition associated with this view will have lasting and powerful effects for both teachers and their students.

As part of their doctoral studies at Seton Hall University, a group of graduate students collected data on staff motivation and the beliefs and behaviors of those in supervisory positions. A self-designed survey instrument included a five point Likert-type response to a battery of questions. A randomly selected sample of 125 New Jersey K-12 public school teachers and 75 New Jersey private and public college level instructors were involved in this study. The following questions were included in the overall analysis that was completed.

References


Question #1

One of the factors measured by the survey instrument involved teachers reporting their perceptions of their sense of self-control and their overall job satisfaction. The survey instrument provided a degree of self-control score (0-50) and an overall job satisfaction score (0-100) for each respondent. A high score on the control factor indicated high perceptions of self control. A high score on the job satisfaction indicated high level of job satisfaction. All 200 K-12 and college level instructors completed the survey instrument.

The first analysis involved a correlation study on the independent variables of self-control and job satisfaction. Complete a thorough review of the SPSS Correlation analysis below. Be certain to report and interpret all essential components of a correlation analysis. What does the following output reveal to you with respect to the relationship between control and job satisfaction. Please present a thorough analysis of the data including comments on policy, practice and future research.

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<th>Self Control (0-50)</th>
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<td>200</td>
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</table>
Question #2

The survey instrument that was used in the study consisted of statements selected from the National Center for Educational Statistics School and Staffing Survey. The mean overall satisfaction score that was obtained during the 2008-2009 administration to a national sample was 72. The Seton Hall graduate students wondered whether their sample of 200 respondents differed from the national mean. So they decided to compare the mean overall satisfaction score obtained from their study to that which was obtained for the national survey. The results are printed below. Please present a thorough analysis of the data including comments on policy, practice and future research.

<table>
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INTRODUCTORY STATISTICS
QUALIFYING EXAMINATION
FALL 2009

Question #3

Considerable research has been done recently on the collegiality model of supervision completed at the college level. The SHU graduate group next decided to compare the overall self-control scores and the overall teacher satisfaction scores for those who work in higher education as compared to those who work in K-12 education. Complete a thorough analysis of this data and comment on what leadership, management and/or policy decisions could be made from this data? Note: Two separate variables are included in the SPSS report. Report on both variables.

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Independent Samples Test

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As a follow-up to the initial study, the SHU students prepared a comprehensive staff development for all K-12 teacher participants. This in-service was presented to the teachers and their supervisors and was based on Glickman’s (2007) Developmental Supervision model. This model is based on the belief that teachers should be empowered and that developmental supervision is effective at advancing reflective practitioners. After a series of monthly meetings, the same teachers who were initially surveyed were again asked to complete a post training survey. The variable overall satisfaction was measured and is included below. The results of this final stage of the study are outlined in the SPSS printout. Please present a thorough analysis of the data including comments on policy, practice and future research.

### Paired Samples Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pair 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Post-test Scores</td>
<td>72.38</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>14.73</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Pre-test Scores</td>
<td>71.65</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>1.17</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pair 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Satisfaction Post-test Scores - Overall Satisfaction Pre-test Scores</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>2.887</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>.004</td>
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</tbody>
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