Collaborative Qualitative Research: A Consortium Approach to Exploring the Complexity of Student Learning Outcome Practices Across Multiple Institutions

Donna Harp Ziegenfuss, University of Utah
donna.ziegenfuss@utah.edu

Steve Borrelli, Washington State University
sborrelli@wsu.edu

2014 ARL Library Assessment Conference | Seattle, WA | August 5, 2014
Agenda

• Overview of a collaborative research project that focused on the role of the library in designing, implementing, assessing and disseminating student learning outcomes (SLOs)

• Phase 1: Qualitative analysis and findings from the first part of the study collected from 20 Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) institutions

• Phase 2: Taking the preliminary qualitative study findings to the Grounded Theory level
Survey data from 23 of 32 GWLA libraries responded
• Questions on presence of student learning outcomes (SLOs) and if SLOs are assessed
• Learned that there was a disconnect between having SLOs and assessing SLOs

Interview data from 20 libraries
• Questions on SLO practices at the library, department/program and institutional levels
• Teams of paired interviewers interviewing one person at each institution
• Seven librarian researchers doing qualitative research also working in teams
Survey Numbers

Table 1: Response Frequencies for survey questions 1 & 2 about the presence of information literacy SLOs and assessment of SLOs at 3 different institutional levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Campus-Wide SLOs</th>
<th>College/Department SLOs</th>
<th>Library SLOs</th>
<th>At All 3 Levels</th>
<th>Not at any Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence of SLOs - Yes</td>
<td>13 (57%)</td>
<td>14 (61%)</td>
<td>15 (65%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>2 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of SLOs - Yes</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>6 (26%)</td>
<td>11 (48%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>7 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings:
Survey showed the gap between the presence of SLOs and the Assessment of SLOs
# The Winnowing Down of Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 17 Original Categories ...</th>
<th>become</th>
<th>The 5 Final Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Collaborations</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaboration &amp; Communications Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communication Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategies for Planning, Implementing &amp; Integrating SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Departmental Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategies for Planning, Implementing &amp; Integrating SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strategies for Planning, Implementing &amp; Integrating SLOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Culture and Priorities Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Roles/Responsibilities for Assessment and SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum and Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Roles/Responsibilities for Assessment and SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tools-Instruments-Resources for SLOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IL Topics</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Roles/Responsibilities for Assessment and SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Roles/Responsibilities for Assessment and SLOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Structures, Policies, and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accountability &amp; Reporting of SLOs</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Structures, Policies, and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structures, Policies, and Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Categories Dropped Due to Low Frequency Numbers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General (SLO catch all)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change Related</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deconstructing the Process of SLO Assessment into:</td>
<td>Building Partnerships through:</td>
<td>Embracing Change and Opportunities by:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing and articulating SLOs (library, course, program, institutional levels)</td>
<td>Collaborating with faculty, departments, and administrative groups</td>
<td>Identifying drivers and challenges and opportunities within the cultural context around SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and integrating SLOs at all levels</td>
<td>Developing relationships with campus and professional partners and units</td>
<td>Participating in professional development to broaden scope of practice and understand the higher education context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing assessments and collecting results</td>
<td>Evaluating and leveraging organizational culture (opportunities and barriers) and areas for synergy</td>
<td>Jumping on opportunities and events uncovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing and disseminating SLO information and results</td>
<td>Articulating roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Broadening the scope of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving communication between libraries and other campus audiences</td>
<td>Utilizing support from campus-wide units (e.g., teaching center, institutional research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting research to measure progress (use the assessment cycle to document and measure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Learning Outcomes Task Force

Librarians Partnering for Student Learning

| Leadership, Practice & Culture |

Introduction

The Student Learning Task Force is pleased to present a three day symposium exploring how GWLA libraries are implementing student learning outcomes and assessment. Presentations will address the following themes: scaling assessment, impact, being proactive, and a place at the table. The symposium is focused on bringing together the GWLA instructional and assessment librarians and library instruction program leaders to focus on exemplary practices in teaching and assessment of information literacy and the impact of libraries on student learning. Attendees will participate in workshops and breakout sessions around student learning outcomes, learning assessment, campus collaborations and partnerships, as well as how GWLA institutions have demonstrated library impact on student learning. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage and network with their peers from across the Alliance and to contribute to the development of a GWLA research question that aims to document the impact or value of libraries on student learning.

Keynote Speakers

The keynote is bound to be engaging and informative as we are privileged to have Patricia Iannuzzi and Chris Heavey speak.

- Patricia Iannuzzi, Dean of Libraries at UNLV, will share her thoughts about the challenges and opportunities in creating a campus-wide information literacy agenda and Chris Heavey, Director of General Education at UNLV will share his story of the curriculum reform journey at UNLV and the Libraries role in that process.

Keynote Theme

Creating a Campus-Wide Information Literacy Agenda
What is Grounded Theory?

1. Inductive not Deductive – draws findings or theory from the data

2. Uses a “Constant Comparative Method” – where analysis of the data is a recursive process of coding, category formation, and theme development

3. Involves Relationship Seeking between the codes-categories and themes

4. And going back to the literature to align what you have uncovered to theory
Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999)

Instruments/Tools/Artifacts

Subject

Rules

Community

Division of Labor

Object
Activity Theory: Librarians & IL SLOs

Subject: Librarians

Object Space: Assessment of IL SLOs

Rules & Policies

Community

Division of Labor: Roles and Responsibilities

Outcomes

Mediating with Tools/Artifacts/Instruments

Social
- Planning
- Designing
- Implementing
- Assessing
- Disseminating

Technical
- LMS
- Tutorials
- Assessment Tools
- Rubrics
- Research data

- Develop awareness and buy-in around IL SLOs
- Establish a culture of assessment and continuous improvement
- Align to and integrate w/institutional outcomes
- Maintain transparent communication channels about SLOs
- Enhance and grow partnerships
- Recognize opportunities
- Become leaders & change agents
- Measure impact on student learning

- Types of roles: teacher / designer / assessor
- Responsibility levels: leader, co-partner, or support roles
- Committee service responsibilities
- Professional practice expectations
- Changing roles

- Librarian working groups
- Multiple libraries campuses
- Committee service
- Departmental & other campus unit partnerships
- Structural interactions & connections

- ACRL Standards
- Staffing & budget issues
- Institutional and library culture
- Disciplinary traditions variations
- Importance of having a place at the decision table
- Access to students
Example of Expansive Learning: 3rd generation Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999)

Librarian / Faculty Interactions
Influenced by Socio-Cultural Factors

Librarian / Campus Interactions
Driven by Change and Organizational Structures

Object Space: IL SLOs:
- Cultural Awareness
- Changing Perceptions
- Alignment

Object Space: Disciplinary SLOs
- Curriculum Ownership
- Variation of Practices
- Cultural Power

Subject: Faculty / Departments Level

Subject: Librarians

Subject: Institutional / Campus Level

Strategic Sweet Spot: “Co-Configuration”
Strategizing and dialogue to leverage opportunities, library inclusion, and student needs

Example of Expansive Learning:

3rd generation Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999)
Next Steps

• Possible future research questions
  – Use findings to target specific themes for analysis

• Recommendations going forward
  – Use findings to reflect on and analyze your own socio-cultural library-faculty-institutional context

• What our corresponding paper will include that was not presented here
  – Use findings to craft a process for institutional reflection and analysis
Grass Roots Leaders in Higher Education:

**AWARENESS**
I’m not sure where different departments are ... So I think it’s probably happening, some at you know, academic unit level, but I can’t verify that.

**TOOLS**
So we have a tool kit online that ... faculty ... browse for learning objects to support the learning, the outcomes, and we know that people use that and don’t ever contact us.

**DRIVERS**
... a typical story, the accreditors wanted more articulation and that kind of thing. So there was like a taskforce formed out of the Faculty Senate to do that.

**COMMUNITY**
And then they’re trying to get people ... involved in things like the curriculum committees, and the Literacy and Critical Inquiry Committee.

**ROLES**
So in order for us to ... to show impact ... we need to actually know what it is we are doing and so that’s the first step and then certainly the assessment and determination of the value of our collaboration is going to be coming after that.

**POLICIES/RULES**
The Office of the Provost ... has made it very clear that every school has to have evidence based learning outcomes. And that of course does include information literacy at the departmental level.

**OWNERSHIP/POWER**
Giving librarians more training and tools around how to assess student learning ... we can be, feel, more empowered, if you will to, work with the departments on their student goals and outcomes.

**CULTURE**
So I think and I guess I would say that one of the main challenges of not having institutional culture is that, we don’t get to start at the level of, “this is a good idea let’s make it happen”, instead we have to start at ... “have you heard about this, let me tell you why it’s good idea”.

...
Collaborative Qualitative Research:
A Consortium Approach to Exploring the Complexity of Student Learning
Outcome Practices Across Multiple Institutions

Donna Harp Ziegenfuss
Assistant Head of Scholarship &
Education Services
University of Utah
J. Willard Marriott Library
801-585-0542
donna.ziegenfuss@utah.edu

Steve Borrelli
Strategic Assessment Librarian
Washington State University
459 A Holland Library
509-335-8628
sborrelli@wsu.edu

Related Bibliography

A. Library Culture and Professional Practices (some articles of relevance based on our findings)


GWLA wiki (https://sites.google.com/a/gwla.org/greater-western-library-alliance/Committees/slo) and Bibliographies based on 4 Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) conference tracks based on themes from the collaborative research data of impact, scaling assessment, being proactive and a place at the table

B. Activity Theory and Expansive Learning


C. Qualitative Research & Grounded Theory


**Phase 1 of the Research Project: Framework developed from the Analysis of 20 GWLA institutional Interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deconstructing the Process of SLO Assessment into:</th>
<th>Building Partnerships through:</th>
<th>Embracing Change and Opportunities by:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designing and articulating SLOs (library, course, program, institutional levels)</td>
<td>Collaborating with faculty, departments, and administrative groups</td>
<td>Identifying drivers and challenges and opportunities within the cultural context around SLOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing and integrating SLOs at all levels</td>
<td>Developing relationships with campus and professional partners and units</td>
<td>Participating in professional development to broaden scope of practice and understand the higher education context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing assessments and collecting results</td>
<td>Evaluating and leveraging organizational culture (opportunities and barriers) and areas for synergy</td>
<td>Jumping on opportunities and events uncovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing and disseminating SLO information and results</td>
<td>Articulating roles and responsibilities</td>
<td>Broadening the scope of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving communication between libraries and other campus audiences</td>
<td>Utilizing support from campus-wide units (e.g., teaching center, institutional research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conducting research to measure progress (use the assessment cycle to document and measure)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase 2 of the Research Project: In Search of Theoretical Grounding

### Activity Theory: Librarians & IL SLOs

- **Subject:** Librarians
- **Object Space:** Assessment of IL SLOs
- **Community**
- **Rules & Policies**
- **Division of Labor:** Roles and Responsibilities

#### Mediating with Tools/Artifacts/Instruments
- Social Planning
- Designing
- Implementing
- Assessing
- Disseminating

#### Mediating with Tools/Instruments
- Technical
- LMS
- Tutorials
- Assessment Tools
- Rubrics
- Research data

- Develop awareness and buy-in around IL SLOs
- Establish a culture of assessment and continuous improvement
- Align to and integrate w/ institutional outcomes
- Maintain transparent communication channels about SLOs
- Enhance and grow partnerships
- Recognize opportunities
- Become leaders & change agents
- Measure impact on student learning

---

### Example of Expansive Learning: 3rd generation Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1999)

- **Librarian / Faculty Interactions**
  - Influenced by Socio-Cultural Factors

- **Object Space:**
  - IL SLOs: Cultural Awareness Changing Perceptions Alignment
  - Disciplinary SLOs
  - Curriculum Ownership Variation of Practices Cultural Power

- **Subject:**
  - Faculty / Departments Level
  - Librarians

- **Object Space:**
  - Accreditation Structural Issues Rules / Policies Accountability

- **Subject:**
  - Institutional / Campus Level

- **Strategic Sweet Spot:** “Co-Configuration”
  - Strategizing and dialogue to leverage opportunities, library inclusion, and student needs

- **Librarian / Campus Interactions**
  - Driven by Change and Organizational Structures