Progressing Culturally Responsive Assessment for Higher Education Institutions

Authors: Dr. Denise Burns, Dr. Martin Brown, Professor Joe O'Hara, Professor Gerry McNamara

Citation:
Burns, D., Brown, M., O'Hara, J. and McNamara, G. (2019), "Progressing Culturally Responsive Assessment for Higher Education Institutions", Diversity and Triumphs of Navigating the Terrain of Academe (Diversity in Higher Education, Vol. 23), Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 63-85. https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-364420190000023006

Abstract

The chapter establishes the rationale for the development of an online professional development course in designing culturally responsive assessment for Faculty of the Institute of Education in Dublin City University. As the literature on which the course is based is from several countries, the course may be considered relevant for Faculty in various countries and can be accessed as the course is online. The course of about 3.5 hours in duration begins with a definition of culturally responsive assessment before emphasising the desirability of culturally responsive assessment based mainly on the obligation to design tests that are fair to all test takers. Key elements of the program are the concepts of multicultural validity, construct validity, language issues, dimensions of cultural difference impacting on learning and assessment and the lecturer/supervisor as researcher of their own students as well as of their own enculturation. The focus is on the implications of these concepts for professional practice. The course synthesizes several sources to posit eight criteria for the preparation, process and outcomes of culturally responsive assessment before presenting several assessment modes that have potential to be culturally fair. Finally, the course provides the opportunity for participants to design culturally responsive assessment in their own disciplines and then requests the participants to evaluate their designs in light of the criteria. Twelve respondents to a pilot study were essentially very positive about the value of the online course.

Keywords

Culturally responsive assessment, multicultural validity, higher education institutions, online course

Introduction

This chapter addresses the need to develop culturally responsive assessment for staff of a University. The chapter describes the online course developed and piloted with Faculty of the Institute of Education in Dublin City University and argues that such a course could be suitable for Faculty in other universities where there are students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The literature that informs the course is drawn from several countries on different continents. This implies that culturally responsive assessment is an issue in many countries and it is argued therefore that this online course may be relevant to Faculty in different parts of the world.

The course is structured in five modules and, as stated in its learning outcomes, seeks to ensure that participants will:

- Gain increased awareness of the issues surrounding the development of culturally

responsive assessment

- Gain knowledge of the criteria for culturally responsive assessment
- Gain awareness of the potential of some assessment modes to be culturally fair

- Develop skill in the design of culturally responsive assessment instruments.

In alignment with the principles of adult learning, the course combines information from literature on culturally responsive assessment with opportunity for professional reflection and skill development. The chapter will begin by exploring the rationale for the development of an online professional development course for university academic staff.This will be followed by an overview of the course developed, paying particular attention to the key building blocks of the progam and linking these to the overall learning outcomes.The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the broader implications of the development of this program.

Background and Rationale

Bledsoe and Donaldson (2015) state that the call for cultural responsiveness "has reached a deafening crescendo" (p. 7). There are several reasons that a university may have students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Enrolment might include students from a minority culture in their own country, students who travel to a university as a temporary immigrant or students who might be permanent residents in a country as first or second generation immigrants.

The call for cultural responsiveness therefore has several bases: minority cultural groups within a population, the migration of peoples and globalisation. This latter phenomenon, according toPortera (2008) is resulting in populations observing and participating in cultures different from their own (p. 481). While there are legal requirements such as the International Law on the Rights of Minorities, the literature emphasizes the moral demand for fairness and the desirability of diversity as being a primary driver in the emergence of cultural responsiveness.

In recent decades Ireland has changed from being one of the most culturally homogeneous countries in Europe to one where11.24% of the population are classified as "non-Irish nationals" in the most recent census (CSO, 2017).There are students from migrant backgrounds in primary, secondary and tertiary education and there is an increasing awareness of the need to reconceptualize core areas of educational provision in order to take account of these rapid demographic changes (Brown, McNamara, O'Hara, Hood, Burns & Kurum, 2017). At the University under discussion in this Chapter, Dublin City University (DCU), there has been a strategic focus on expanding the rate of enrolment of students from diverse ethnic, cultural and national groups.This policy has been enhanced in practice by the designation of DCU as a "University of Sanctuary" in recognition of a range of initiatives demonstrating commitment to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees into the university community and to fostering a culture of inclusion. Another important element of DCU's commitment to examining issues of diversity in a rigorous and academically appropriate manner is the formal link between the Centre for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment at the University of Illinois (CREA) and the Centre for Evaluation, Quality and Inspection at DCU (EQI). EQI hosts CREA (Dublin) and there are active Faculty exchange and research programs as well as broad institutional support for enhancing links.

As a result of these initiatives DCU has an increasingly diverse student body with a range of educational and other needs and a significant number of research and teaching active staff committed to enhancing their educational opportunities. A number of our students are recent migrants from areas of conflict, others are working in English as a second or third language whilst a significant number are coming from systems of compulsory education that differ markedly from the one that is currently in place in Ireland. This diversity is mirrored in other Higher Education Institutions on the island of Ireland.The projections for tertiary enrolment

from 2015 to 2029 published by the Department of Education and Skills presents growth scenarios the most likely on the basis of current policy objectives in the higher education sector, including "increasing internationalisation of the student population" (DES, 2015, p. 5).

The changing demographic profile of Irish higher education has resulted in re-think of provision at many levels, with one of the most significant taking place in the area of assessment. Increasingly it is being argued that as assessment drives learning, it is important that assessment is culturally responsive for **all** of our students. It is seen as being particularly important that lecturers and supervisors are aware of the dimensions of culture that impact on learning for their students (Rothstein-Fisch& Trumbull, 2008 pp.1-2).

There is a strong conceptual and research base underpinning this position. The literature suggests that, for culturally responsive assessment, studies do not "offer formulas but they do offer insights" (Hollins, 1993, p.98). Culturally-responsive assessment requires "new thinking and practices" (Hood, Hopson &Frierson, 2015, p.xv). The short course under discussion in this Chapter therefore offers participants the opportunity to engage with the core concepts presented in the culturally responsive assessmentliterature and subsequentlyto engage in a scaffoldedprocessto design assessments based on insights gleaned from the literature. The course facilitates participants in reflecting on their level of learning and level of skill in designing culturally responsive assessment in their own disciplines.

It is argued that theeffect of building capacity of Facultywill be cascade-like as it has the potential to improve the learning of both students from an indigenous Irish culture and students from different cultural backgrounds. It could also enhance the strategic goals of the Institute of Education and of the Higher Education Authority: that is, to attract and sustain through various supports post graduate students from a wide range of national and cultural contexts (HEA, 2015). We suggest that culturally responsive assessment is a core element of this strategic goal.

Literature indicates key dimensions of cultural difference that impact on learning: epistemological beliefs and social relationships (for example, Hofstede, 2001; Parrish &Linder-VanBerschot, 2010). For this reason, the course provides participants with a method for acquiring information about student history of engagement in epistemology, teacher-student relationships and language experience/proficiency. This method is applicable to students of all cultural backgrounds; as well as providing the lecturer/supervisor with relevant knowledge of student experience of learning, it is suggested that it will heighten all students' awareness of their own cultural-historical experience of learning.

The literature which informs the course under discussion in this chapter indicates strongly that students of minority cultural backgrounds have suffered significantly and their academic achievement has been marred by assessment that was not culturally responsive. This is viewed by the authors as being a key driver for the development and dissemination of the initiative and provides a central element of the rationale for the intervention presented to Faculty. In particular, attention is drawn to the hazards that that can result from a failure to take account of culture when designing assessment.These include, although are not limited to, a situation where there is a lack of access to equal educational opportunities and an unequal allocation of resources (Hood, 2005, p.91) as well as a significant increase in non-completion rates (Bradshaw, O'Brennan & McNeely, 2008).

It is argued that the outcomes of the course under discussion help to diminish such ill effects and also to lessen the frustration of students from minority cultural backgrounds. It is also suggested that engagement with the program results in the development of a learning

environment which enhances the cultural appreciation of students from the dominant culture whilst at the same timedeepening the lecturers'/supervisors' appreciation ofthe impact of culture on learning and assessment.

The methodology of the course provides participants with information and the opportunity for skill development which shouldform a basis for staff to use and build on in a wide range ofteaching-learning settings. The use of an online method provides participants with the opportunity to complete the course at their own pace and to access it whenever is appropriate for them. This is considered to be particularly important as it takes into account the challenges of working in an already resource- and time- poor educational environment. Similarly, it is contended that the online methodology offers the possibility of sustainability to the course as it can be accessed by present, new and incoming staff members. Providing an online course also facilitates the course being accessed by Faculty other than the current host institution, DCU.

Key building blocks of Culturally Responsive Assessment

As part of the design process for the online program, the course designers sought to identify key building blocks that needed to be included if Faculty were to be given a sufficiently robust range of theoretical and practical tools with which to examine their own assessmentpractices. Drawing on a range of research produced in Europe and the US the program designers initially summarised a number of key elements of culturally responsive assessment around five social, cognitive and affective dimensions.

Table 1: Key Elements of Culturally Responsive Assessment

Key element	Description
Multicultural Validity	Multicultural validity is defined as 'the accuracy and trustworthiness of understandings and actions across simple, intersecting dimensions of cultural difference' (LaFrance, Kirkhartand Nichols, 2015, p. 57)
Construct validity	For students learning the language of the test instrument, construct validity may be a serious validity concern where language factors are 'unrelated to the measured construct' such as mathematics (DeBacker, Van Avermaet & Slembrouck, 2017)
Language	First language is the source of the student's identity, and depthing of concepts in a second language occurs via the conceptual knowledge in the first language
Dimensions of cultural differences	Cultural dimensions that are most likely to impact situations of learning and assessment
Lecturers/supervisors as researchers of their students and themselves	The need for lecturers/supervisors to research their particular students in terms of cultural affiliation and language repertoire; and to reflect on their own enculturation

In addition to the elements outlined above it was considered essential to expand the contextual hinterland of the program and thus to include definitions of culture and culturally responsive assessment, and issues of fairness. It is to these that we will now turn.

Definition of culture

In a general sense the course seeks to provide participants with an opportunity to explore what it means to discuss culture. This is facilitated by using the definition and reflection on culture from the OECD:

> "Culture" is a difficult term to define because cultural groups are always internally heterogeneous and contain individuals who adhere to a range of diverse beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the core cultural beliefs and practices that are most typically associated with any given group are also constantly changing and evolving over time. The full set of cultural resources is distributed across the entire group, but each individual member of the group only uses a subset of the full set of cultural resources that is potentially available to them (Barrett, Byram, Lázar, Mompoint-Gaillard &Philippou, 2014).
>
> People's cultural affiliations are dynamic and fluid ... These fluctuations depend on the extent a social context focuses on a particular identity, and on the individual's needs, motivations, interests and expectations within that situation. (OECD, 2016, p.7)

The reflection suggests that each individual occupies a unique cultural position and that cultural affiliations are fluid. An individual student in the lecture room or as a supervisee may have a sense of identity and belonging that is derived from a constellation of cultures. The OECD reflection points to the mainly social/behavioral aspect of an individual — how an individual student may interact with other students and with lecturers/supervisors; how a student may have experienced or expresses oneself in conventions of communication, clothes, music, cuisine, etc.

Another perspective on "culture" is described as a "cognitive" approach as it concerns the elements of culture related to "thinking, teaching, learning and making meaning" (Fetterman as cited in Rothstein-Fisch& Trumbull, 2008, p.3). Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) proceed to define "ways of knowing" to include how people "approach learning and problem-solving, how they construct knowledge, and how they pass it on from generation to generation" (p.3). This cognitive perspective on culture applies to the way a student may be thinking, learning and meaning making, so it is mainly concerned with individual cognitive processes.

These two perspectives on culture — social and cognitive — are complementary. While they are separated theoretically and observed differently, the distinction is somewhat artificial as the two perspectives intersect and impact on an individual in both behavior and thinking. The course as a whole introduces participants to a series of structuring concepts which will allow them examine different aspects of the intersection of culture with their teaching lives. In addition a further series of systemically important ideas are explored, including that of culturally responsive assessment.

Definition for culturally responsive assessment

Building on the approach to culture outlined above, the term "culturally responsive"is developed. It is adopted as a descriptive phrase and is defined as being sensitive to, respectful of, taking cognisance of, social and cognitive cultural variations. It is argued that being respectful of a student's social perspective of culture means respect for a student's way of identifying with others both within and outside the learning environment. Respect for the cognitive perspective of culture could mean respect for a student's preferred learning style, such as a preference to learn in a group or a preference to avoid uncertainty in knowledge and

not wish, therefore, for example, to be asked for a personal response to literature. Culturally responsive assessment therefore is adopted to mean assessment design, processes and outcomes that take cognisance of cultural variations in ways of behaving/socialising and thinking, although it is acknowledged that these intersect while being manifest differently. Thus participants are provided with a series of concepts that will enable them to reflect on their own professional engagement with students in a way that takes account of 'culture' in a number of different aspects. This conceptual overview is enhanced by a more focused engagement with key aspects of practice.

Fairness in assessment

Fairness, ethics and the desirability of diversity have become central concepts in the impetus for culturally responsive assessment and this is highlighted in the program. The Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education (APA, 2004) and the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, NCME, 2014) emphasize the obligation to design tests that are fair to all test takers.

Although the concept of fairness operates differently in various countries, the literature reveals considerable agreement that fairness in assessment means:

- Recognising diversity of culture
- Acknowledging the knowledge and skill that students bring with them to the learning environment
- Being free from bias toward a particular group
- Respecting and articulating construct validity.

If assessment is unfair, as well as the undesirable impact on the motivation, morale and engagement of students, then the assessment risks being invalid and results in inequality in educational achievement.

It is argued therefore that Faculty needs to be aware of the cultural dimensions impacting on behavior, learning and assessment of their students. This does not mean knowing a whole range of facts about different cultures but it does mean knowing something of the cultural dimensions that impact a student's academic performance.

Validity and culture

The program identifies validity as a foundational notion of assessment and encourages participants to reflect in a structured and informed manner on the practical implications of this. While there is much debate about the meaning of validity, one of the most widely cited researchers in the field,Messick,maintains that the interpretations based on test scores must be supported by empirical evidence (Messick, 1989, 1995).

For students who may be in process of learning the language of the test instrument, construct validity may be a serious validity concern if the "linguistic complexity unnecessarily interferes" with the ability to demonstrate their knowledge in the situation where language factors are "unrelated to the measured construct" such as mathematics (DeBacker, Van Avermaet&Slembrouck, 2017). The purpose (particularly the construct that the assessment is intended to measure), function and outcome of assessment must be factors in addressing validity in culturally responsive assessment.

LaFrance, Kirkhart and Nichols (2015) propose a definition for "multicultural validity" as:

> the accuracy and trustworthiness of understandings and actions across simple, intersecting dimensions of cultural difference. (p. 57)

According to LaFrance et al, multicultural validity embraces five elements, both qualitative and quantitative:

- Theory (rationales support the inferences and actions based on assessment)
- Methodology (design and measurement)
- Relationship (among all forms of life including interactions among people)
- Experience (congruence with the lived experience of participants)
- Consequence (justice of outcomes).

While the authors ultimately question the construct of validity, and believe that "the moral and ethical road" (p.67) is the appropriate guide, their exploration of multicultural validity over several years has implications for practice and leads others to assert that "guidelines, exemplars, and critical reflections" remain a high priority (Greene, 2015, p. 93).

Language matters

The issue of language is a key cultural signifier and one that has direct practical implications for the design of assessment. Cummins (2000), a long-standing researcher of second language learning, makes the distinction between interpersonal communication skills and academic proficiency. He states that "Conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible" (2000). He suggests that the development of proficiency in communication skills takes about eighteen months to two years and the acquisition of academic proficiency requires five to seven years (Herzog-Punzenberger, Le Pichon-Vorstman&Siarova, 2017, p.3; Hancock, 2017).

Participants of the course are encouraged to appreciate the significance of a student's first language as it is the source of a student's identity and conceptual knowledge. Furthermore, depthing of concepts in a second language occurs via the conceptual knowledge in the first language (Luciak, 2010; Conteh&Meier , 2014; Hancock, 2014; DeBacker et al, 2017).

Researchers who support multilingualism (and plurilingualism) argue that:

- Faculty do not need to be fluent in the languages of the students
- Faculty need to be positive to all languages and to consider the language repertoire of students as a resource
- Language repertoire of students is a resource for concept and language development
- Multilingualism gives students the ability to use language resources to negotiate many different social and academic situations confidently.

These principles are supported by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) of the Council of Europe in its work in disseminating an intercultural approach to language education since 1995. The ECML (2007) considers that students need to develop a linguistic repertoire in order to "have easier access to specific languages or cultures by using aptitudes acquired in relation to/in another language or culture" (p.9). As Herzog-Punzenberger et al (2017) indicate, "multilingualism is becoming more a way of life than a problem to be solved" (p.8).

These principles have a range of practical applications that are immediately obvious to Faculty when examined. For example, when a student whose first language is not English is encountering a concept in the English language, the Faculty member can ask the student how that concept is expressed in the student's first or other languages. This facilitates the student's depth of appreciation for both concepts and language. The lecturer/supervisor needs to be

aware that the student is drawing on conceptual knowledge in the student's first language. The lecturer/supervisor role is to facilitate the student in accessing that conceptual knowledge in order to depth the concepts and also to facilitate the acquisition of another language.

Dimensions of cultural difference

Hofstede's 1980 publication has been revised and expanded in 2001 and often further developed by other authors. Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) synthesised this work to posit a Framework for Cultural Differences to identify dimensions of cultural difference most likely to impact situations of teaching, learning and assessment. However, a caveat must be noted. As noted in the OECD reflection on culture, cultural affiliations are "dynamic and fluid" (2016, p.7). Recognising that culture interacts with human nature and personality, Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) maintain that the Framework dimensions do not describe "either/or conditions but spectrums along which both cultures and individuals vary" (p. 5). While it is useful to describe cultural differences along these dimensions, "within any culture individuals will differ in how strongly they display these tendencies" (p. 5). In addition, individual students with a minority cultural background will differ in the level of participation in a minority culture and in the level of acculturation to a dominant culture. Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot add that, although culture is deep-rooted, a description of any culture can only be a "snapshot of a continually evolving matrix of beliefs, values and behaviors developed through the creative interactions of its constituents as well as through interactions and clashes with other cultures" (pp. 4 – 5).

Identified cultural dimensions

Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) identify eight dimensions in three groups (p. 7 – 9) which they claim represent values (p. 6):

1. Social relationships: equality and authority, individualism and collectivism, nurture and challenge
2. Epistemological beliefs: stability seeking and uncertainty acceptance, logic argumentation and being reasonable, causality and complex systems
3. Temporal perceptions: clock time and event time, linear time and cyclical time. (p. 7 – 9)

The Framework suggests ways that each of these dimensions is manifest in learning situations. As an example of the individualism and collectivism dimension, Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) report the experience of distinguishing between helping and cheating in assessment (p. 145). Parrish and Linder-VanBerschot (2010) provide a manifestation of stability seeking as "Focus on getting right answers" whereas the uncertainty acceptance is manifest in a "Focus on process and justified opinions" (p. 8).

Bennett (2009) draws on the literature on dimensions of thinking styles to synthesize significant cultural differences into two groups:

Table 2: Thinking Styles

Group A	Group B
Analytically logical	Holistic
Abstract	Metaphorical
Objective	Subjective
Dialectic	Integrative

Doubting	Believing

Bennett (2009) illustrates that an educated person in one culture may be using mainly the thinking style of group A while an educated person in a different culture may be employing mainly the thinking style of group B (p.130,131). For intercommunication, Bennett maintains that it is important to recognize the different thinking styles.

Faculty as researchers of students

The generalizations of the Framework for Cultural Differences must be kept in balance with the experience of the individual student. Faculty need to research their particular students in terms of cultural affiliation and language repertoire. The literature strongly desires that, in order to design valid assessment that is cognisant of the cultural affiliations and language repertoires of their students, Faculty consider their students with their varied life and language experience as a resource.

The literature on cultural dimensions reveals that cultural factors impact:

- on the way a student interacts with a lecturer/supervisor
- the student's expectations of a lecturer/supervisor
- student approach to learning and to knowledge
- student attitude and behavior in terms of punctuality to class, appointments etc.

Participants of the online course examine a sample of questions for their students, noting that it is important to research all students, and not only those from a culture different from the culture of the Faculty. Questions can be asked of students either individually or in a group, about their previous academic experience examining areas such as student approaches to learning, student expectation of faculty and student attitude to assessment.

Participants of the course reflect on the implications of the student responses, in light of the Framework for Cultural Differences. Such reflection gives the lecturer/supervisor insight into student experience and expectations and also facilitates discussion and negotiation between student and lecturer/supervisor that can lead to agreement on expectations.

As noted in the section above on "Language matters," Faculty need to facilitate the student's access to conceptual knowledge in the first language and be aware of the time required to be proficient in academic language. It is valuable for Faculty to note the quote from Bourdieu and Passeron (1994) that academic language "is no one's mother tongue" (p. 8).

Faculty need to research the language repertoire of their students and to explore, for example, what languages students speak, write and think in. They also need to consider the challenges faced by students when using academic language. Thus,Faculty need to reflect on the theoretical and practical implications of student responses to these questions in terms of the lecturer guidance, support and stimulation.

Researching the Self

Developing skill in culturally responsive assessment requires that Faculty consider key aspects of being culturally competent.

In 2011 the American Evaluation Association (AEA) published a statement on cultural competence which was described as "a stance taken toward culture, not a discrete status or simple mastery of particular knowledge and skills." The statement adds, "Cultural competence is not a state at which one arrives; rather, it is a process of learning, unlearning, and

relearning." This is a daunting task, requiring the professional lecturer to reflect on practice in a deep manner.

The daunting task is more professionally and personally challenging than developing knowledge of facts. The task requires "awareness of self, reflection on one's own cultural position, awareness of others' positions, and the ability to interact genuinely and respectfully with others" (AEA, 2011).

All authors report the significance of self-awareness and awareness of one's own enculturation. Bennett (2009) suggests that a gap between knowledge and competence "may be due in part to being unaware of one's own culture and therefore not fully capable of assessing the cultural position of others" (p. 123). Bennett further suggests that reflection on a cultural framework to explore one's own position can begin the process of building intercultural competence (p. 126– 127). For this purpose, a cultural framework relevant to education such as the Framework for Cultural Differences, could be useful. Some authors offer methods and/or questions that they consider necessary for teachers' self-reflection. One example of this is the model suggested by Symonette (2015) who "offers a systematic inquiry and reflective practice protocol that fosters self-empathy and social empathy via mindfully discerning and standing in one's own perspective" (p. 121). Another is the protocol Hollins (2015) refers to as a reflective-interpretive-inquiry in which she articulates questions for teacher/lecturer/supervisor reflection on:

- beliefs about students
- beliefs about instruction
- beliefs about the social context of instruction (pp. 72 – 3).

The literature suggests that for Faculty to be serious about being a culturally responsive assessor, they have to be engaged in an introspective "deliberate and self-exploring" journey (Hood, Hopson & Frierson, 2015, p. xv). Faculty need to be researchers of their own enculturation and professionalism.

Based on the thinking styles A and B proffered by Bennett (2009) and described in the section on "Identified cultural dimensions" above, lecturers are encouraged to identify which pattern is closer to their own thinking style. She suggests that someone not accustomed to style A may find it "cold, argumentative, simplistic, critical and downright unpleasant." Meanwhile, someone not accustomed to style B may find it "naive, uncritical, incoherent, illogical, and downright confusing" (p.134).

Faculty need genuinely to be reflective practitioners to identify their own enculturation in order to be able to adapt when necessary to assist and lead their students. Identifying the challenges they face and the supports they need to be culturally responsive is an important element of the reflection. The challenges are both conceptual and methodological and "remain complex, multi-faceted, context-rich" (Thompson-Robinson, Hopson, &SenGupta, 2004, p. 3).

Criteria for culturally responsive assessment

Hollins (1993) maintains that studies to not "offer formulas but they do offer insights" (p.98) for assessing students from diverse cultural backgrounds. On this basis, a synthesis of some of the literature provides criteria for culturally responsive assessment.

The American Psychological Association's 2004 Code of Fair Testing Practice in Education is designed for application to culturally responsive assessment as well as to a wider number of assessment situations. The Code provides 31 guidelines under four headings: A. Developing

and selecting appropriate tests, B. Administering and scoring tests, C. Reporting and interpreting tests results, D. Informing tests takers.

The concerns of multicultural validity and the Framework for Cultural Differences can be synthesized with the Code to provide a way of considering criteria for culturally responsive assessment. This integration yields questions that can interrogate assessment, in preparation, process and outcomes:

Table 3: Criteria for Culturally Responsive Assessment

Preparation	Process	Outcomes
1. What is the purpose of the assessment? What construct is being assessed and has that been communicated to students? What is the rationale for setting standards for the assessment? 2. Are participants in assessment provided in advance with information on the coverage of the test, the types of question formats, the directions, and appropriate test-taking strategies? 3. Are participants in assessment informed in advance of the intended purpose and use of the test, test protocol, standards of performance and all other information relevant to the use of test results?	4. Does the design, process and language of the assessment take cognisance of a. Different ways of relating to the teacher (as expert authority or as an equal) b. Different ways of student engagement with learning c. Different ways of students approach to knowledge d. Different student expectations of assessment e. Different ways of student collaboration f. Different ways of students experiencing failure g. The lived experience of participants	5. How will the results of the assessment be interpreted? What are the benefits and limitations of the tests results and their interpretation? Are test results being assigned greater precision than is warranted? What are the factors influencing interpretation of results? 6. What are the appropriate uses of the assessment results and the potential misuses? 7. Are decisions about participants in assessment made on the basis of multiples of appropriate information, rather than on a single test score? 8. Does the assessment fulfil its intended purpose?

While many of these questions are relevant to all types of assessment, they are particularly so for culturally responsive assessment.

After presentation of these suggested criteria, the participants of the course are asked what they consider is the relevance of these criteria for their current and future work in assessment/supervision; and how this interrogation is workable with their current work in assessment/supervision.

Assessment modes with potential to be culturally fair

A body of literature that addresses the search for assessment that has multicultural validity suggests that performance-based assessment has the potential to be more "culturally fair" (Hood, 1998a; Kim &Zabelina, 2015) than traditional tests. The term "performance-based assessment" is used to distinguish assessment strategies that tend to be different from "traditional" strategies in that performance-based strategies aim to assess the use, application or demonstration of knowledge and skill as opposed to simply the recall of knowledge. Performance-based assessment includes a wide variety of tasks. Baker, O'Neil and Linn (1993) describe six characteristic features of performance-based assessment as:

1. Uses open-ended tasks

2. Focuses on higher order or complex skills

3. Employs context sensitive strategies

4. Often uses complex problems requiring several types of performance and significant student time

5. Consists of either individual or group performance

6. May involve a significant degree of student choice (p. 1211).

Some authors address several aspects of performance-based assessment, including validity and reliability, as well as the practical aspects such as difficulty in construction of such tests and the greater use of resources and time invested in them (Hood, 1998b; Johnson, Thompson & Wallace, 1998; Lee, 1998). Ultimately, the authors consider that performance-based assessment should be pursued for its potential in culturallyresponsive assessment, although there are many considerations to be addressed. Darling-Hammond (1994) and Baker, O'Neil and Linn (1993) agree that serious considerations must be given to the design and purpose of the assessments. Darling-Hammond further argues that performance-based assessment is "unlikely to enhance equity" if it is used for "sorting mechanisms" and for "external monitors of performance" (p. 7).

A study by O'Hara, McNamara and Harrison (2015) found that peer- and self-assessment have potential for assessment that is "more learner-centric, flexible, and culturally responsive" (p. 226) as these approaches helped ethnic groups, including immigrants, to take "ownership of their educational progress and assessment, and in a wider sense, involvement and inclusion in society" (p. 226). Participants of the course are asked to reflect on the applicability of peer- and self-assessment in their own disciplines.

Hempel and Sue-Chan (2010) and Kim and Zabelina (2015) both recommend that including creativity assessment can address cultural bias. Creativity assessment is defined as "producing something that is novel and useful" (Kim &Zabelina, 2015, p. 136). Kim and Zabelina add that "Creativity assessment shows few differences across gender or ethnicity" (p. 136). Participants are asked what type of creativity assessment is suitable in their own discipline and they are provided with examples of creativity, for example composing an original piece, whether literature or music, synthesizing several points of view, constructing an argument or using creativity to solve a problem etc.

Exercise in designing culturally responsive assessment
Participants of the course are asked to use criteria for culturally responsive assessment numbers 1 and 4 to design a performance-based assessment instrument in their own discipline. Participants are then asked to demonstrate how the performance-based assessment instrument meets questions 1, 4 and 8 of the criteria (Table 3 above).

Similarly, participants of the course are then requested to design assessment instruments for peer- and self- assessment and an assessment instrument that involves creativity in their own disciplines and to demonstrate how the instruments they have designed meet criteria 1, 4 and 8. Participants are then requested to reflect on their most significant learning from this exercise.

Pilot study
Following the initial design period it was decided to pilot the course with a group of 12 randomly selected Faculty from the DCU Institute of Education. The piloting process saw each Faculty member complete the online course and respond to a structured written interview schedule.

In addition to comments on the technical aspects of the programme, three key thematic areas relating to the use of culturally responsive assessment in Irish higher education emerged. They were:

- Perceptions of current cultural diversity in Irish education
- Need for a culturally responsive assessment approach in Irish higher education
- Changes to professional practice as a result of taking the course.

What was striking about Faculty responses when discussing the issue of diversity in Irish education, a pre-requisite in many ways for the development of culturally responsive assessment, was the range of responses and the differentiation between varied sectors. For some, diversity was a reality in primary and secondary schools but not necessarily in higher education. This was probably best summarised by the following insight:

> In my experience Irish Higher Ed is very monocultural - but then to be fair Irish society was very monocultural until the 1990s. Having said that I am fairly sure in the next few years this is going to be a huge issue. On a daily basis we see extraordinary diversity in the primary and secondary education system. We in third level are going to have to get used to the fact that the white, Irish, Catholic makeup of our classes is going to change and change radically.

Others, while acknowledging the reality of a changing student intake, struggled with the concept of cultural difference and the manner in which different groups might be distinguished. For example:

> Well I am not sure. I have some students who look different and some with different names but they are all Irish to me. Certainly they have all come through the Irish education system, speak with Irish accents and seem to me to be the same 'culturally' as 'Irish' students. Culture is a very complex concept and I don't know how comfortable I am trying to identify the 'culture' of my students.

Some respondents explicitly challenged the ‘othering’ of diversity and its linkage to recent immigration choosing to highlight instead their experience of working with and educating an indigenous Irish minority group, the Traveller community.

A further group identified as being a significant driver of on-campus cultural diversity were students attending Irish Higher Education Institutions as part of the Europe Union funded

‘Erasmus’ programme. This is a scheme that funds students from different European countries to spend a semester in a ‘foreign’ University. This was seen by a number of respondents as being the key exemplar of cultural difference on campus with one going so far to state that:

> The most obvious cohort who could be termed culturally different are those from the Erasmus programme. These normally have good English etc but they tend to be distinctive.

Overall, there was an acknowledgement that Irish society had diversified and a willingness to recognize that this diversity was impacting on education. Notwithstanding the nuances highlighted above, the majority view saw campus life changing and believed that there was a need to identify ways to change practice in order to take account of this.Whilst acknowledging the somewhat equivocal responses detailed above regarding the nature of Irish education there was an almost universal recognition of the need for a culturally responsive approach in Irish Higher Education Institutions. This was perhaps best summarised by one respondent who stated:

> I do now! Especially given how Dublin City University has diversified and will continue to do so. I think the rationale for culturally responsive assessment in the online course was convincing.

Another explicitly linked the need for a course such as this with arecognition of the conceptual and research ‘hinterland’ that underpinned an emerging area of discourse:

> this was an eyeopener for me. I realise that there is a significant research and practice hinterland and that issues of culture and assessment are key areas of discourse in contemporary Higher Education. It is fascinating to think how we take so much for granted in terms of our ideas surrounding what 'valid' and ' objective' is.

Another reflected perhaps the majority view in stating:

> Absolutely. I found this course fascinating. It really made me aware of my own views and beliefs and how they impact on the way I assess my students. I can't see how we are going to develop a fair and equal system if we don't learn to look at culture when we are thinking about assessment.

It is interesting in general to note how the idea of culturally responsive assessment became linked in an explicit fashion to core values of equality and respect that lie at the heart of many academics’ self-definition.

Virtually all respondents identified areas in their professional practice that either would, or should, be impacted by their engagement with the online course. For some, their completion of the course provided them with a framework within which to address issues of cultural fairness and appropriateness in higher education. One respondent stated:

> It crystalised a lot of my previous experiences and gave me a theoretical framework to think about what I knew instinctively. Issues such as multi-cultural validity are fascinating and have got me thinking about the validity of all my assessments. This is a really wonderful course.

For others the key issues that emerged related to their classroom and assessment practices, particularly the way in which they employed language — a central area discussed in the online course. One stated:

> The stuff on language was an eye opener. I am not saying that I am unaware of the power of language but it I am now far more aware of how and why you need to think through the concepts and language that I use when setting assignments.

Another in a similar vein

> A few things. The role of language - both mine and my students - is critically important and something that I will be far more attentive to. I will also try to act as an 'apostle' to my colleagues, particularly those from other faculties who many not have as great a sense of the need for this type of initiative.

For others it led to considerable reflection on their own positionality vis-à-vis a cultural identity:

> Got me thinking about the idea of culturally responsive assessment as an idea. Also I am now trying to work out how my cultural background impacts on my use of assessment.

Finally, there was a welcome acknowledgment that the course did not identify a 'problem' to be solved but rather offered participants an opportunity to consider their practice in the light of a changing student demographic:

> It is presented in the course as proactive for the benefit of the whole educational community as opposed to reacting to a perceived 'problem' necessitating differentiation.

There was a realism on display in the responses as well with many of the participants explicitly stating that they felt that widespread change in this area could only be guaranteed if the resources were found to support the initiative. This was perhaps best summarised by the following comment:

> I think the major issues are going to be interest, time and money. We are so busy at the moment I think most of us will just ignore this as it is a complicating factor. Also there are so many calls on our time I am not sure how this message will be spread.

Intriguingly, one respondent believed that not only would time and resources be an issue but the very nature of the course of action being adopted might lead to resistance as 'Some people see their assessment as an extension of themselves and to imply that it is not 'fair' will be a huge challenge to them.'

Discussion and conclusion

The need for culturally responsive assessment and supervision for the Faculty of the Institute of Education in Dublin City University is indisputable. This need is similar for the Faculty of any university with students from a diverse cultural background, whether local populations or temporary or permanent immigrants who come from a variety of countries of origin.

The need raises the question of the most effective and feasible method of increasing the knowledge and skill of Faculty to meet the situation. This Chapter presents one attempt to progress that with the recognition that educated adults who are motivated to increase their capacity essentially need exposure to expert information and opportunity for reflection and skill development. The online course therefore presents:

- Insights based on the relevant literature from several countries
- Methods for researching one's students and reflecting on one's own enculturation and practice
- Opportunities to develop skill in designing culturally responsive assessment.

While the online mode offers participants the flexibility of accessing the course in their own time, the mode limits any opportunity for interaction with other Faculty and to give and receive feedback on the instruments designed in line with the criteria for culturally responsive assessment.

Participants are encouraged to assess their own learning. In the first module, participants are asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, their current awareness and skill in designing assessment or supervising a student in a way that takes cognisance of cultural variations in ways of behaving/socialising and thinking/learning. At the end of the course, participants are asked to compare their awareness of and skill in designing culturally responsive assessment with their self-rating in the first module.

The feedback from the pilot study was very positive about the course and the responses indicate, to varying levels, the effect of the exposure to the course. While participants in the pilot study indicated that they would need further professional development opportunities to design and implement culturally responsive assessment, there was enthusiasm for the course.

About the course, one respondent stated:

> It is very well designed and easy to navigate. Regarding future professional development, design more courses like this. Take language alone and offer a course like this, then move onto other aspects of teaching students with a migration background (how to design questionnaire items). This is a very good course and needs to be used and known throughout the Institute. Far easier than sifting through material in our busy schedules.

We draw the conclusion that, within its limitations, the online course can support Faculty in becoming informed on the insights from the literature on culturally responsive assessment and in adapting practice in order to design culturally responsive assessment.

References

American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA) and National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (2014). *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* 2nd ed.). Retrieved August 14, 2017, from http://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/standards.aspx

American Evaluation Association (AEA) (2011).*Statement on Cultural Competence on Evaluation.* Retrieved July 19, 2017, from http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=92

American Psychological Association (APA) (2004).*Code of Fair Testing Practices in Education*. Retrieved June 5, 2017, from http://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/fair-code.aspx

Baker, E. L., O'Neil, H. F.Jr.,& Linn, R. L. . (1993). Policy and Validity Prospects for Performance-Based Assessment. *American Psychologist*. American Psychological Association. 48(12), 1210-1218

Barrett, M., Byram, M., Lázár, I., Mompoint-Gaillard, P. & S. Philippou (2014).*Developing Intercultural Competence through Education.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/31096123/DICE.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1511548663&Signature=0Hb4P1%

Bennett, J. M. (2009). Cultivating Intercultural Competence. In D. K. Deardorff, (Ed.). *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (pp. 121-140). Sage.

Bradshaw, C. P., O'Brennan, L. M. & McNeely, C. A. (2008), Core competencies and the prevention of school failure and early school leaving. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 19–32. doi: 10.1002/cd.226

Brown, M., McNamara, G., O'Hara, J., Hood, S., Burns, D. and Kurum, G. (2017).Evaluating the impact of distributed culturally responsive leadership in a disadvantaged rural primary school in Ireland. *Educational Management and Administration,* 8 November 2017. Sage. doi/full/10.1177/1741143217739360

Burns, D., Brown, M., McNamara, G. & O'Hara, J. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Assessment: Interventions proposed by Literature from the United States*. Dublin: EQI – The Centre For Evaluation Quality and Inspection, Dublin City University

Central Statistics Office (CSO). (2017). Census of Population 2016 — Profile 7 Migration and Diversity. Retrieved January 24, 2018 from http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp7md/p7md/

Conteh, J. (2017). Multilingualism. Conference presentation. *Minority language pupils and the curriculum: closing the achievement gap*. Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. 25 April 2017

Conteh, J. & Meier, G. (Eds.) (2014*). The Multilingual Turn in Languages Education: Opportunities and Challenges.* New Perspectives on Language and Education, 1. Multilingual Matters .

Council of Europe. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe. Retrieved July 11, 2017, from https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/

Council of Europe. (2016). *Competences for democratic culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies.* Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe. Retrieved July 11, 2017, from https://rm.coe.int/16806ccc07

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. ISBN: 9781853594731

Cummins, J. (2015). Intercultural education and academic achievement: a framework for school-based policies in multilingual schools. *Intercultural Education*. 26(6), 455-468. doi: 10.1080/14675986.2015.1103539

Darling-Hammond, L. (1994).Performance-Based Assessment and Educational *Equity.Harvard Educational Review.* 64(1), 5-31. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17763/haer.64.1.j57n353226536276

Deardorff, D. K. (Ed.). (2009). *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4129-6045-8

DeBacker, F., Van Avermaet, P. &Slembrouck, S. (2017). Schools as laboratories for exploring multilingual assessment policies and practice. *Language and Education* 31(3), 217-230. doi.org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1261896

Department of Education and Skills (DES).(2015). Projections of Demand for Frull time Third Level Education, 2015 – 2029.https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/Statistical-Reports/Projections-of-demand-for-full-time-Third-Level-Education-2015-2029.pdf

European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML).Council of Europe. (2007). *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education: Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe.* Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe. Retrieved July 11, 2017 from http://www.coe.int/lang

Greene, J. C. (2015). Culture and Evaluation: From a Transcultural Belvedere. In S. Hood, R. Hopson, & H. Frierson (Eds.).*Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice.* Evaluation and Society series. 91 – 107. Charlotte, NC. Information Age Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-62396-935-6

Hancock, A. (2014). Language education policy in multilingual Scotland: opportunities, imbalances and debates. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 38(2), 167-191. doi: 10.1075/lplp.38.2.04han

Hancock, A. (2017). The challenges of multilingualism for schools. Conference presentation. Minority language pupils and the curriculum: closing the achievement gap. Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. 25 April 2017

Hempel, P.S. & Sue-Chan, C. (2010).Culture and the Assessment of Creativity.*Management and Organization Review*.6 (3). 415-435. doi: 10.1111/j.1740-8784.2010.00189

Herzog-Punzenberger, B., Le Pichon-Vorstman, E., Siarova, H. (2017). *Multilingual Education in the Light of Diversity: Lessons Learned.* NESET II report, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. doi: 10.2766/71255

Higher Education Authority (HEA). (2015). Irish Educated Globally Connected: an International Education strategy for ireland, 2016 – 2020. https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf

Hollins, E.R. (1993). Assessing Teacher Competence for Diverse Populations.*Theory into Practice.* 32 (2), 93-99. Taylor and Francis. doi: 10.1080/00405849309543581

Hollins, E. R. (2015). *Culture in School Learning: Revealing the Deep Meaning*. (3rdrded.). Routledge. New York and London. Retrieved July 26, 2017, from http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9780415743457/

Hood, S. (1998a). Introduction and Overview: Assessment in the context of culture and pedagogy: A collaborative effort, a meaningful goal. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 67 (3), 184-186. doi: 10.2307/2668187

Hood, S. (1998b). Culturally-Responsive Performance-Based Assessment: Conceptual and Psychometric Considerations. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 67 (3), 187-196. doi: 10.2307/2668188

Johnson, S. T., Thompson, S. D. & Wallace, M. B. (1998) How teachers and university faculty perceive the need for and importance of professional development in performance-based assessment. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67 (3). pp. 197-210. doi: 10.2307/2668189

Kim, K. H. & Zabelina, D. (2015). Cultural Bias in Assessment: Can Creativity Assessment Help? *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. 6 (2), 129-147. University of North Carolina. Retrieved July 18, 2017, from https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp

Kirwan, D. (2017). Case study of a linguistically diverse primary school. Conference presentation. Minority language pupils and the curriculum: closing the achievement gap. Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. 25 April 2017

LaFrance, J., Kirkhart, K. E. & Nichols, R. (2015). Cultural Views of Validity: A Conversation. In S. Hood, R. Hopson & H. Frierson (Eds.). *Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice.* (pp. 49-72). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-62396-935-6

Lee, C. D. (1998). Culturally responsive pedagogy and performance-based assessment. *The Journal of Negro Education*. 67 (3), 268-279. doi: 10.2307/2668195

Luciak, M. (2010).*Educating teachers for diversity: Meeting the challenge*. On diversity in educational contexts. In: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. In OECD/CERI, (pp. 41- 62). Paris: OECD. Retrieved July 28, 2017, from http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/educatingteachersfordiversitymeetingthechallenge.htm

Messick, S. (1989).Validity. In R. L. Linn (Ed.). *Educational Measurement*, (3rd ed.). (pp. 13–103). New York: Macmillan

Messick, S. (1995). *Test Validity and the Ethics of Assessment*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service. doi:apa.org/journals/amp/35/11/1012.pdf

O'Hara, J., McNamara, G. & Harrison, K. (2015). Culture Changes, Irish Evaluation and Assessment Traditions Stay the Same? Exploring Peer- and Self-assessment as a Means of Empowering Ethnic Minority Students. In S. Hood, R. Hopson & H. Frierson (Eds.). *Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice.* (pp. 205-231). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-62396-935-6

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2009). Toolkit for Teaching on Diversity. Retrieved August 22, 2017, from http://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=Toolkit%20for%20teachers%20of%20diversity

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).(2016). Global competency for an inclusive world. Paris: OECD. Retrieved July 17, 2017, from https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf

Parrish, P. & Linder-VanBerschot, J. A. (2010). Cultural dimensions of learning: Addressing the challenges of multicultural instruction. *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 11 (2), 1-19. Retrieved July 10, 2017, from www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/viewFile/809/1553

Portera, A. (2008). Intercultural education in Europe: epistemological and semantic aspects. *Intercultural Education* 19 (6), 481 – 491 doi: 10.1080/14675980802568277

Rothstein-Fisch, C. & Trumbull, E. (2008).Managing Diverse Classrooms: How to Build on Students' Cultural Strengths. Alexandria, US: Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2008. ProQuest ebrary.Web. 2 October 2016. Ebook. Retrieved June 13, 2017, from https://books.google.ie/books?hl=en&lr=&id=WvZQBAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=Managing+Diverse+Classrooms&ots=d6WwQ6OGC1&sig=VRytFxPURSb7ZRdVbrDUqrzU-rc&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Managing%20Diverse%20Classrooms&f=false

Symonette, H. (2015). Culturally Responsive Evaluation as a Resource for Helpful-Help. In S. Hood, R. Hopson, & H. Frierson (Eds).*Continuing the Journey to Reposition Culture and Cultural Context in Evaluation Theory and Practice.* Evaluation and Society series. (pp. 109-129). Charlotte, NC. Information Age Publishing.

Thompson-Robinson, M., Hopson, R. K. &SenGupta, S. (Eds.) (2004). Editors' Notes. *New Directions for Evaluation,* 102. (pp. 1-4). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. doi:10.1002/ev.111/epdf

VanAvermaet, P. (2017). How to respond to linguistic diversity at school? Conference presentation. Minority language pupils and the curriculum: closing the achievement gap. Marino Institute of Education, Dublin. 25 April 2017