



Assessing and Improving Your Teaching: Strategies and Rubrics for Faculty Growth and Student Learning

Blumberg, Phyllis
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Book Review

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Assessing and Improving Your Teaching by Phyllis Blumberg describes a comprehensive plan for teacher development and offers creative strategies for teachers at all stages of their professional career. Blumberg identifies many ways by which faculty can gain insights and improve the quality of their teaching to foster better student learning. This book is an excellent resource for both beginning instructors and more experienced ones especially in terms of recommended methods and tools for assessing faculty growth and learning outcomes. The book goes beyond well-documented analysis of individual strategies and contributes to the relatively few studies that integrate strategies from a hierarchical approach to improve teaching. For Blumberg, “a hierarchical approach” is one “that places the locus of control with the instructor who wants to improve, rather than with others who need to judge teaching performance,” and “provides a robust teaching enhancement process” (4).

The first part of the book describes Blumberg’s hierarchical approach by initially establishing criteria that define teaching standards. Borrowing a commonly used, learning-centered approach to teaching, Blumberg focuses primarily on what the instructor does to promote student learning and discusses misconceptions about teaching. She then recommends alternative ideas and essential aspects of teaching for “deep and intentional learning.” The second and third parts of the book build on each other by describing a constructive self-assessment model which uses self-assessment rubrics for purposes of improving and assessing teacher effectiveness. Blumberg believes that teaching is composed of many different skills that can be learned. However, she encourages “systematic growth” which results from periodic, critical reflection on one’s teaching along with on-going critical review and the

incorporation and documentation of both.

In addition to discussing ways to improve teaching, Blumberg proposes three types of principles for assessing teaching, namely: (1) the context for assessment or what to assess; (2) the assessment methods or how to assess; and (3) the results of this assessment process. She notes that many professors who serve on promotion and tenure committees regularly comment on how little is actually analyzed or documented about the teaching process or teacher effectiveness. Using multiple sources of data about teaching effectiveness, Blumberg shows there is a need throughout the academy to supplement student course evaluation data with other appropriate procedures and tools” (116). Opposed to the older instructor-centered models in which assessment focuses on teaching performance or lecturing skills, she emphasizes other roles and skills such as course alignment, organization of educational experiences, and reflection on instruction. The tools for self-reflection and analysis include rating scales and descriptive rubrics; Blumberg also describes five cases from very different contexts of teaching and faculty members with different levels of experience.

This book is a valuable contribution to literature on the evaluation of teaching in higher education because it contains both assessment forms that others can use to assess teachers as well as tools that instructors can use for self-reflection and analysis.

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