

(Music) Talking about innovation in teaching and education. Popular pedagogy, discussions that are topical and sometimes philosophical. Popular Pedagogy, Popular Pedagogy.

Chris Carlton: Hi there. Thanks for joining us, and welcome to another episode of Popular Pedagogy where we try to bring big ideas in teaching and education to life.

I'm your host, Chris Carlton. And this podcast is being brought to you by the Faculty of Education at Queens University. In this podcast, I am excited to be speaking with Katrina Carbone. Katrina is a PhD student here at Queens University and her research area is in educational assessment and evaluation. Now, before you say no more assessment and evaluation, wait until you hear where her research is leading her and what our conversation is going to be all about, I promise.

It will be interesting, so don't go anywhere.

I'd like to introduce our guest to our podcast today, and that is PhD student through Queens University, Katrina Carbone. Welcome to our podcast, Katrina.

Katrina: Thank you for having me.

Chris: Katrina, I was looking over your bio and research concentrations, and I was interested to read that you are a member of the Ontario College of Teachers certified to teach K through 12. I always talk to my teacher candidates about how many amazing doors can open after you become a teacher. So I am curious as to why you pursued a PhD and why this particular research area of assessment.

Katrina: So I started at Queens University in 2018 as a Bachelor of Education student. And throughout this program, the pivotal moment for me was actually the alternative practicum.

So for this practicum, I was in the assessment and evaluation concentration, and I had the opportunity to actually go to Switzerland and I compared the assessment practices in Canada to what I was seeing in Switzerland. And from that moment, I realized how different assessment looked like in different context.

And that in addition to the assessment and evaluation group, that's a research group at Queens, I decided to pursue my master's and then I just fell in love with research. Everything to do with research. Uh, and so I ultimately decided to pursue a PhD. That is amazing. that's what I love the alt prac so much about is it allows you to do something different still in the education realm, but go out and, and test the waters in some of their area Switzerland.

Chris: Uh, that's amazing. Um, Now, I must admit when I hear the topic title of assessment and evaluation, I don't always get that excited because I often find it just to be a rehash of the same ideas that we, as teachers have heard before. But when you add the idea of mental health and wellbeing of students to the mix, Well, I'm all in.

And that's what we were talking about is that you are looking at this through your lens now. So from your research, Katrina, what is the dynamic between mental health, wellbeing and testing, and how are students affected by these things?

Katrina: So a core of my dissertation focuses on the relationship between mental health, wellbeing, and assessment. And so although I'm in the early phases, the goal is really to understand how assessment practices can be supported, developed, and enhanced by prioritizing student mental health and wellbeing. And for me specifically, it's really about how assessment can be used to support student flourish. And so when I say flourishing, I mean, um, the key to improving the quality of life per se.

So it's very broad, but it's something that is being integrated into a lot of research policy and practice right now. And so when we think about flourishing, when we think about constructs of wellbeing, we think about strengths, growth, resilience, and so how can we use assessment to promote students to feel flourished in the c?

And so something that I'm sort of drawing on is, um, Martin S's Herma model. So thinking about positive emotion engagement, positive relationships meaning an accomplishment. And what I really like about this model is that the components are not disre discreet. Um, so they are intermingling with one another to predict flourishing of the individual.

And so from the assessment side, the goal for me is really to focus on assessment practices that might reverse. The distress that students feel. Um, but at the same time, assessments can also be improved by incorporating these mental health and wellbeing aspects. So how are teachers constructing assessments, rubrics, and how are students affected by this?

And so it can affect motivation. Self-perception, confidence, the relationships that we're they're having with peers. And the two sort of common ones that we traditionally will think about are test anxiety, performance anxiety. And so as educators, we need to consider the ways in which our assessment practices influence the students, because ultimately we want them to just succeed in success for every student looks very.

Chris: I absolutely love the, the couple things you said there, you said prioritize student mental health and wellbeing, which I is amazing. And then so that the individual can flourish and isn't that what we're supposed to do as teachers is we want our kids to flourish? And then you talked about, uh, testing anxiety and stress.

Um, we have all seen right from the youngest age, uh, right through university, uh, and we see it all the time. So, um, what an incredible opportunity to look into how do we have that positive emotional and relationship building to help with assessment, um, and testing. Uh, just, just incredible. So that leads us to the next question of how do we as teachers play a role in assessment based on your research?

And do you find that the teacher's assessment identity influences how they assess their own students?

Katrina: sdxThis is also something that I love to talk about because my master's thesis focused on teacher assessment identity, and so I'll sort of bring us back for a moment to think about just the construct of what identity is.

We're constantly developing, we're experiencing changes as we navigate and move through different interactions and context. And teachers are constantly interacting with their environment with those around them. Their identities are continuously shaped and reinforced. Um, and so a lot of this thinking of teacher identity is where teacher assessment identity comes into play.

So the way in which a teacher perceives themselves as an educator, as an assessor, which is shaped by their experiences, interactions, and the discussions that they're having in the classroom with colleagues. . And so what I really like about teacher assessment identity is that it goes beyond just knowing and doing assessment.

Teachers have the power to influence student learning. And the way in which that they're approaching their assessment is heavily impacted by who they are as an assessor. So thinking about, you know, what a teacher might think of is, what do I know about assessment? What do I believe assessment is or should look like?

Am I confident in my assessment practices? What is my role as an assessor? How do I feel about assessment? They're all questions that we need to consider when we think about our assessment identity. . Now, these were derived from, uh, Looney and Colleagues' framework, which is a resource that I'll share, share for listeners.

But something that I really like about this model is that it acknowledges assessment identity as complex, responsive to context, continuously evolving. So, for example, I might believe assessment is meant to be high stakes and anxiety provoking because of my own educational experiences as a student and as educators.

That's why it's so important to think about how our personal and professional experiences. Shape the way we assess our students, because ultimately the reason that a lot of us become teachers is the students. We want them to succeed, and so we need to be offering assessment practices, policies that meets their needs, providing them opportunities to demonstrate their learning in ways that are meaningful for them.

I couldn't agree more. And, and when you talk about shaped by their experiences and what they know about assessment, um, a lot of teachers that are out there went through that paper and pencil testing that was just standard for everybody. Um, I remember myself even through university that I, I never saw.

The relevance and real life application of the assessment that was being given to, given to me. So it's, it's so important that as teachers we look beyond what we're familiar with and, and sort of move towards the, the looking at the emotional, physical, uh, health and wellbeing of our students, and attaching that to the assessment as well.

So Katrina, how do we, how do we get past that? How do we get past the fact that a, a lot of teachers might still be using that assessment technique that is personally attached to them. How do we move forward and become better at assessment, but including that prioritizing student mental health and wellness into it?

Yeah, that's a really great question. I think that. The dominant paradigm of education has shifted so much, and we see that in the literature. But what is not necessarily reflected in practice is that we should be moving away from those traditional tests, um, the traditional notions of assessment. And not to say that they're not good, there is definitely a place for them, but we want to be incorporating more authentic.

Experiential learning opportunities for students. And so in terms of how to break the cycle of assessment identity, I think the number one thing is to just take the time to reflect and question what we're doing, what went well, what can I do better? Why did I approach assessment in this way? And then coming from the wellbeing side is how did my students react to this assessment?

What were the emotions that the students were giving off when they were completing it or when they finished the assessment? Thinking about the value and the accomplishments that students want as well out of a course, how did this assessment help provoke new ideas or bring them to understand and recognize sort of their own professional goals?

And so an example of how we sort of provoke reflection in teacher candidates specifically was through a workshop with the community artists integrating expert voices to facilitate reflection through. Um, but in terms of in-service teachers, I mean, the obvious might be to lean to professional development, additional qualifications, attending conferences, workshops, training.

Um, and while it's important, it's also not always feasible. Teachers are overworked and burnout is obviously a significant concern. So what I think I would say is have an open door policy. It's so easy to isolate yourself as a teacher, but connect with colleagues. Chat with them in the lunchrooms, what's working, what's not working.

Because at the end of the day, we are each other's best resources and we often gain new perspectives when we are speaking to others. And that's that collaboration that is so important, uh, within a teaching profession. Um, I love that you said take the time to reflect and assess what you are doing and then.

You took it even further and said, and ask your students, and it comes back to that student voice, student choice. Our students are very good at telling us how they are feeling, how that assessment went, and as teachers, I sometimes find that we're reluctant to ask the student when that's the best source of information as to how the assessment is going.

I know that when I do an assessment piece, it's also assessing my own teaching skills. So was I providing enough information or do I need to go back, revisit something? And often the only way to find that out is through that student conferencing and going through that process of reflection and evaluation.

Now we've come to our last exit question, Katrina, and you sort of answered it already, and I, I've got my notes here that I, I betcha I'm gonna pick up on what you're gonna say, but I always ask our guests, uh, one final tip from you. If you were to just in two short sentences, give teachers sort of the idea of, of what should teachers do to make a difference in assessment for their students?

And I know you've, you've told us a lot about it, but just two, sort of two sentences to summarize. My final piece of advice to teachers would be to try something new. Go beyond the traditional ideas of what assessment looks like and get creative with it. Involve your students in it. Teachers are no longer seen as the knowledge keepers, but facilitators.

Lean on your students. Learn from your students, and engage them in the assessment process. Wow, I love that. Learn from them. Lean on them. And Katrina, what was the last one? Engage them in the assessment process. That is absolutely wonderful. What a way to, to end our conversation. Thank you so

much, Katrina, for sharing your expertise, experience, and, and passion because you can tell it's your passion with us today.

Uh, it was a pleasure and very educational for me and hopefully for our listeners as well. We're going to include some information at the end that you've provided for us as well. So again, Katrina, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. Thank you for having me. That does it for another episode of Popular Pedagogy.

Again, thank you to our amazing guest, Katrina Carone. I hope you take the time to visit our podcast website for additional resources from K Katrina. Josh, as always, where can our listeners subscribe to make sure they don't miss any of our popular Pedagogy podcasts? Yeah, you can find this podcast on Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, Spotify.

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Stay healthy. Stay safe and stay connected, and we will see you next time for another amazing episode of Popular Pedagogy.