Facilitating learning: reflection

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What are the issues?

- National Student Survey – feedback satisfaction scores.

- Increasing student numbers, increasing fees, drive for quality and efficiency.

- Hulme and Forshaw (2009) – identified "good feedback" from a student and tutor perspective.

- Used online questionnaires initially:

Hulme and Forshaw (2009)

- Picture in psychology mirrors national trends across subject disciplines;

- Students want quick, detailed and constructive feedback;

- Staff want to provide quick, detailed and constructive feedback;

- Issues around understanding and using feedback, and around workload.

Recommendations

This was followed by focus groups – thematic analysis to identify key issues;

And innovative e-Delphi method – to produce 'recommendations' agreed by both students and tutors.

The tutor perspective

"…I think it's very easy to say what you think is good and bad about the particular piece of work but not necessarily identify what somebody has to do, to make it better. I think that's the bit that's often missing from feedback, and that's actually the most important bit in some ways."

(tutor, Keele)

The student perspective

"I suppose good feedback is erm, quite specific and not only says that these parts are good these parts need improving but this is how you could go and improve them and kind of giving you a bit of a jolt into knowing what areas you should go into to try and improve that, rather than just saying this is a bit weak because a few people have, you get differences in markers."

(student, Leeds Trinity)

Recommendations - trialled

Biological Bases of Behaviour – 15 credit module for all second-year undergraduate students.

Seminar for coursework return. Feedback structured, typed, focused on transferable skills taken from marking criteria.

Work returned with feedback, mark with-held until end of session.

Reflective activities – what was good? What can you improve? Action planning and transferable skills.

Staff and student evaluation collected, and marks analysed.

Student evaluation comments

- Very detailed feedback.

- Constructive feedback – said how to improve, clear and well broken down into stages.

- Timely – not the end of the module.

- Waiting for mark made me anxious – but it did make me reflect on the feedback.

Evaluation

Students rated feedback as better than other modules.

Staff initially found that marking took longer – training in e-marking techniques resolved this.

Analysis

Coursework at week 6, seen exam at end.

Marks – this feedback was associated with significantly higher examination marks at the end of the module.

However, when a formative assessment was introduced at the beginning of the module, ALL marks increased.

Tips to improve efficiency

Group work on feedback means tutor can give verbal insights.

Training students to use feedback saves time later.

Efficient use of technology – e.g. podcasting, TurnItIn or Markers' Black Box:

http://www.markersblackbox.co.uk/

 - allows extensive commenting.

Conclusions

It is difficult to balance efficiency with effectiveness…but…it is possible to provide efficient and effective feedback.

- Timetabled feedback in groups

- Structured, constructive feedback with dialogue

Rewards of this for both staff (job satisfaction) and students (improved learning and transferable skills).

Students can benefit from learning to use feedback constructively, and their satisfaction with feedback is increased.