New models for evaluating student learning at the Queensland University of Technology

Andrea Blake

Senior Lecturer at Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Structure of Presentation

- History of evaluating student learning at Queensland University of Technology – Learning Experience Survey

- Deficiencies with this tool have lead to REFRAME

- Proposed evaluation tools/pilot projects

- Social media as an evaluation tool

- Conclusions: lessons learnt

History of student evaluations at QUT

- In 2007 QUT introduced a comprehensive policy for reviewing and improving teaching and learning.

- The most pivotal part of this was a standardized survey instrument – Learning Experience Survey (LEX).

- Survey administered online for every unit, every semester.

Standardized Questions about the unit – response 1 to 5 scale

1 - The unit activities helped me develop useful skills and knowledge.

2 - The relevance of the unit activities was clear.

3 - The structure and organisation of the unit assisted my learning.

4 - I received helpful feedback on my learning.

5 - I have been satisfied with the overall quality of this unit.

Standardised questions about the teacher – response 1 to 5

1 – This teacher demonstrated expertise in the unit.

2 – This teacher taught in a clear and helpful way.

3 – This teacher showed a positive attitude to helping me learn.

4 – I have been satisfied with the overall teaching of this staff member.

Qualitative Comments

- Unit
  - What were the best aspects of this unit and why?
  - What aspects of this unit are most in need of improvement and why?

- Teaching
  - Please comment on this staff members teaching.

Deficiencies with LEX

- Over-surveying of students has lead to poor response rates.

- There was no 'real time' evaluation to inform changes during the current teaching period.

- General feeling that the survey was not helpful to teaching staff seeking to improve student learning.

© Ron Leishman * www.ClipartOf.com/1047460

Why

Source: onproductmanagement.net

a university for the real world ®

REFRAME

- Deficiencies in LEX have lead to a complete review of teaching and learning evaluations. This project, known as REFRAME started in 2011 with a view to introduction of a new system in 2013.

- Review of literature – capture the research already undertaken on evaluation of student learning.

- Pilot programs and outcomes

- Embed successful outcomes into new student evaluation tools.

Current practice for student surveys in Australia

- Australian Graduate Survey (Graduate Destination Survey and Course Experience Questionnaire)
- Australasian Survey of Student Engagement
- Internal surveys of student experience

Review of literature

- Two independent research groups undertook studies into internal student evaluation surveys:

    1. Davies, Hirschberg, Lye and Johnston (2007).

    Surveyed all major universities (27 public and 2 private) to obtain information on 'Quality of Teaching' surveys.

    Findings: the surveys varied between institutions and lacked any kind of uniformity between parts of a sector or types of university.

2. Barrie, Ginns and Symons (2008) as part of a study on Teaching Quality Indicators.

One of the aims of the study was to analyse the content of the questionnaires with a view to facilitate benchmarking between institutions.

Authors found that survey tools remained 'idiosyncratic institutional practices, developed within universities and operating independently of any national systems and usually without reference to each other'. Conclusions drawn were that the surveys were not suited to institutions that sought to be outward looking, to benchmark with others and improve teaching and learning.

REFRAME – the elements personal evaluation strategy

- a personalised strategy you develop annually using the endorsed evaluation suite

- academic staff are expected to engage in evaluation drawing on multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data

- evaluation needs to be targeted and focus on the impact on student learning

Automated unit and learning evaluation activities

- 'pulse' survey
- In the unit (weeks 4 and 5) open for 2 weeks with 3 questions + one extended comment formative feedback to key stakeholders

- 'summary' survey

  at the end of the teaching period
  delivered and open for 4 weeks
  3 questions + one extended comment
  evaluation flows to all stakeholders

- exit survey

  delivered to students who withdraw from a unit automatically when the student withdraws can rank their reasons for withdrawal evaluation flows to key stakeholders

self-selected evaluation suite

- tailored survey

  – select from a wide range of questions to create a tailored survey to gather feedback from students, peers or industry

- peer review

  – ask a peer to review your teaching practice, materials or assessment items

- instant response

  – Use instant response tools and activities to collect and review student feedback quickly and directly.

- existing data

  – Use current unit reports, course reports and other data to review your progress and impact on student learning.

Use of social media
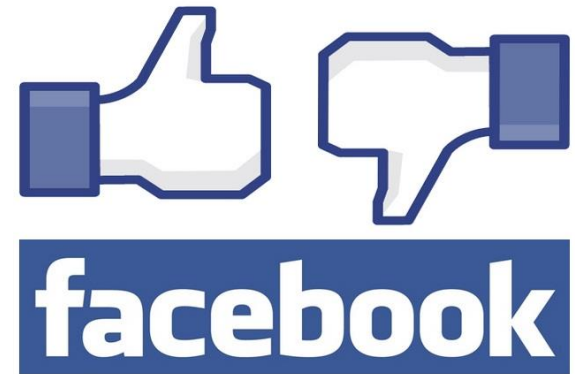
- Facebook was trialed to create a community of learners among large multi-disciplinary first year student cohorts.

- It was found that this created 'real time' evaluation of teaching.

- There were pitfalls to using Facebook and potential legal consequences for the user posted site content.

Conclusions: lessons learnt

- There is no one student evaluation tool that is suited to all units and all teachers.

- There needs to be a mix of evaluation tools that are qualitative and quantitative.

- Evaluation tools need to be designed for a particular end user with a particular purpose in mind.