



Short Course in Learning and Teaching in the Classroom

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Session Five:
Evaluating learning and teaching in the classroom

This session aims to provide some answers to the following questions:

- What is the purpose of evaluation of learning and teaching?
- How may this be carried out?
- What are the key considerations and challenges in planning evaluation?

And also to consider some examples.....

Challenges in planning evaluation of teaching and learning

- The process and methods may not be taken seriously (by students, tutors, university as a whole)
- The evaluation may not be getting at what is really important/ what we really want to know

Questions to consider when planning an evaluation
(from Phil Race: 5000 Tips for Lecturers)

- Why are we collecting this information/ what is the purpose?
- Timing – when should we collect the information?
- What sort of information should we collect?
- What method/ process should we use?
- How to be effective in making change?

What is the purpose of evaluation of teaching and learning?

- Making judgements/ assessing quality of teaching/ accountability (measuring results, efficiency, student satisfaction)
- Knowledge (obtaining a deeper understanding)
 - To diagnose where there is a problem
 - For guidance about what to do with a problem
- To inform decision making and future developments (providing evaluative help to strengthen practices)

What is the purpose of evaluation of teaching and learning?.....cont.

- As part of the teaching and learning process
- Enabling a dialogue with students
- Encourage students' involvement / ownership of their learning experiences
- Helping students reflect upon their experiences

"two kinds of purposes for evaluation"

- **Formative evaluation:** to improve an activity as it progresses
- **Summative evaluation:** to judge its effectiveness

Baume (2003)

Levels of evaluation

- **Surface:** scanning, spotting, highlighting
- **Strategic:** reading situation, what will get good results
- **Deep:** making sense of meaning, interaction with presenting ideas

Entwistle 2004

Timing – when should we carry out the evaluation?

- For the current students to benefit from any changes – or for the next cohort?
- When we want to hear? Or when students want to say?
- Always at the end of a module? When else would be useful (e.g. end of year/ end of programme/ end or during individual sessions)

What sort of information should we collect?

- How is this decided? – do we impose a staff agenda (management or lecturer agenda) or try to discover the student agenda
- Should we use qualitative or quantitative approaches (or both)?
 - Are we seeking consultation and perceptions?
 - Are we assessing and making judgements
 - Do we want to make comparisons? (across modules/ schools/ lecturers or over time)

What process(es) of evaluation to use?

- One process for all? Or different methods for different situations and different purposes?
- Who should instigate and carry it out?
 - tutor
 - third party
 - devolve to students

What methods of evaluation to use?

- Questionnaires/ forms
 - Collecting individual views
 - Usually instant responses
- Group discussions
 - Allow for considered responses
 - E.g. Focus group/ Nominal Group Technique
- Observations (third party/ video)
- Self-reflection by tutor (individual/ groups)
- Looking at students results
- Looking at impact on students' practice

Evaluation of teaching within the classroom

- Evaluation can also be embedded within a teaching session:
- Explicit – gathering instant feedback from students
- Ongoing - tutor observation and reflection

Exercise

- A lecturer is surprised on receiving the results of the standard feedback questionnaire of a course s/he has just taught. It indicates that a large number of students consider that they were not sufficiently challenged by the material covered by the course.
- *How could this situation have been avoided and the students' learning enhanced?*

Summary of key points + How to bring about effective change through evaluation?

- We've looked at timing, methods, process and type of data – all need to be related to the purpose of the evaluation
- But also need to consider:**
- Who owns the information? (e.g. course team, students, management/ quality assurance dept.)
 - Importance of confidentiality and political positioning/ consequences
 - Importance of praise/ of collecting positive recommendations for change

and especially....

The most important feature is the quality of the conversation between students and staff – the actual processes of feedback is of secondary importance to fostering good communication.

Phil Race