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Feedback Learning & Assessment: A Mutual Relationship

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ABSTRACT
Assessment is an important tool, mechanism and approach to ensure accreditation, recognition, quality and standardization in any university's program and courses. A good assessment that is fair, transparent and consistent should be communicated clearly between students and faculty staff to create a learning environment that is conducive to a university setting.

Keywords: summative, formative, assessment, feedback learning.

INTRODUCTION

Feedback Learning has become a very useful tool for both the students and the educators in improvising both sides' academic performances whether it is in the form of teaching or learning. Universities around the world are adopting feedback learning in order to learn and unlearn from the students on how to go about offering their programs, syllabus and its content. Students on the other hand, stand to gain, from feedback learning as they know how they are progressing in their academic semester and can endeavor to perform better based on the comments given by the educators of their respective universities. This, however, theoretically at least are correct to be said in a statement. Feedback learning theoretically is an excellent tool that serves the above mentioned purpose. The execution, however, speaks in a different manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback learning seems to be adopted by almost all higher education institution as one of the condition to be accredited, and recognized as institutions that champion the needs and demands of the industry, field of study and workplace demand. The majority of higher institutions seem to adopt feedback learning in coherent with their assessment methods.

In terms of assessment, educators play a major role in constructing it. There are 2 types of assessment, summative and formative. Summative assessment tends to focus on one-time assessment such as midterm or end of the year final examination, while formative assessment tends to be more towards an ongoing, informal, flexible assessment. Although both seems to serve a different purpose and the ratio of cognitive (intelligence), psychomotor (physical works) and affective (feelings, emotions, and attitudes) are going to be different in each field of study, summative and formative assessment seems to possess similar route to utilize feedback learning.
Assessment tends to take much of the staff and students time and efforts. Feedback also tends to be so. As an example, a lot of time is spent providing written comments on student's assignment,

but faculty staff tends to perceive their efforts as wasted if their feedback is not heeded by the students (Deeley, Smith & Karadzhov, 2019). Sadler (2010, p. 535) affirms that, 'for many students, feedback seems to have little or no impact, despite the considerable time and effort put into its production'. This suggests there is a mismatch between staff and students' understanding of feedback, especially if students consider it to be of little use or value to them (Lunt & Curran, 2010). A contributoryfactor to feedback being of value is its timing because its relevance can be lost if it is given too late, for example, after a course has been completed, as various studies have shown (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Jonsson, 2012; O'Donovan, Rust, & Price, 2015).

Understanding the academic language and concepts typically used in feedback can present a problem for students (Lea & Street, 1998; Stefani, 1998), but staff may assume that they will grasp its meaning and understand how to apply it to improve their future performance in assessment (Blair & McGinty, 2013; Sadler, 2010). In other words, the understanding and expectations of assessment and feedback can differ between students and staff and as a consequence, significant differences can emerge between what students want and what staff provide (Adcroft, 2011; Carless, 2006). The source of this discord may reside in conventions and assumptions about assessment and feedback. Challenging these assumptions may be a starting point for addressing such dissonance(Deeley et al, 2019)

ISSUES IN ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

It is imperative for the students to be informed by the faculty staff the purpose of assessment and feedback so that a mutual understanding is being created. The linkage of these two elements and its understanding by the students and staff of its learning outcomes is reffered to as 'constructive allignment' (Bings and Tang (2011,p.95). it is also important for the students to be aware of what they must do in order to attain the required standards, course aims, intended learning outcomes and marking criteria (Bloxham &West, 2004; Price, Handley, & Millar, 2010). At the same time, there may be assumptions that students understand the academic language, and terms unique to subject disciplines, that describe course aims, outcomes and criteria.In order to address this potential problem, and to help students develop metacognitive skills, overt explanations and clear communication between staff and students is essential (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Weaver, 2006).

This involves assessment and feedback literacies (Smith, Worsfold, Davies, Fisher, & McPhail, 2013; Sutton, 2012) which can beembedded in academic courses to nurture students' active participation in assessment andfeedback processes (Author 1 et al., 2017; Higher Education Academy, 2012; O'Donovanet al., 2015; Price et al., 2012). However, this necessitates dialogue and social interaction between staff and students, heralding a shift away from students' conventional passive role.

Evidence suggests that this transition enhances students' learning (Higher Education Academy, 2014) and affirms an engaged learning approach that differs from conventional didactic pedagogy.

Part of this approach may include dialogic feedback (Adcroft, 2011; Carless, 2015; Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; O'Donovan et al., 2015; Yang & Carless, 2013)and feedback (Boud& Molloy, 2013). This co-design approach serves to mitigate any mismatch between staff and students in their understanding or expectations of feedback. Students' metacognitiveskills development in appraisal and making evaluative judgements of performance contribute to their critical thinking

and independent learning, both of which are valuable for their future employment and lifelong learning. In order to facilitate students' skills development,self- and peer review are useful exercises and can be utilised as assessment methods. These co-operative activities offer a vast array of opportunities for student learning (Boud &Falchikov, 2006; Mulder, Pearce, & Baik, 2014).

Assessment and feedback are interrelated processes central to student learning,especially when formative assessment is used (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). It would be advantageous to integrate and align these processes harmoniously within accredited programmes of study. For example, rather than being planned in isolation within the domains of single courses, assessment and feedback would be more effective if they are structured, using a variety of methods (Evans, 2013), as part of the overall aims and intended learning outcomes of a degree programme. Curriculum mapping (Harden, 2001) can be used to achieve this with an explicitly planned approach to offer students a strategic and structured variety of opportunities to hone their skills and demonstrate their learning.

DISCUSSIONS

According to study by Deeley et al (2019), students tend to believed main purpose of summative assessment was to test disciplinary knowledge. Examinations are seen as a memory tests, and they agree that assessment should be about the students able to demonstrate their understanding of the subject material and to 'engage with it critically'. The students further highlight assessment should give them chances to be creative and to demonstarte innovative thinking.It is also important to note, students believe 'it should be the thought process that is assessed, not the conclusions'.

Formative assessment, on the other hand , are not perceived as important as summative, since it does not lead to substantial grades accumulation. However, the students interviewed in Deeley et al (2019) study appreciated the benefit it provides towards their learning and understanding processes.

At the same time, students perceive lack of consistency in assessment practice which should be fair and transparent is an indication of a mismatch between the students interpretations of marking criteria and the way criteria applied by staff in marking students assignments.

The help of technology enables all feedback to be sent in timely and concise manner. Personalization of feedbacks also sets motivation for students to keep on improvising, effective feedback, which is referred as timely feedback using communication that can be reached and understood by students play an important role in delivering feedback.

CONCLUSIONS

Feedbacks and assessment shares a mutual relationship when it comes to learning. An effective learning environment set by the universities should possess good foundation of feedbacks and assessment so that each students and staff members of the faculty strive to pursue the same standard towards accreditation and excellent graduation. The gap between students and staff understanding of feedbacks and assessment should be monitored on a regular basis so that a symbiosis could be created and maintained to eventually create and ideal learning tools and environment.

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