Introduction

It has become common practice to seek students’ views and satisfaction to inform improvement in higher education institutions.

“Closing the loop”

- The feedback of views and action points resulting from student feedback to students is referred to as “closing the loop” (Powney & Hall 1998) and regarded as an important element of practice (Harvey 2001).
- These practices often occur at the course or institutional level at the end of term or after course completion.
- Collecting student views at the end of the term is making resulting actions for the student cohort impossible (Cook-Sather 2009).
- Awareness of their feedback’s impact can increase student participation in feedback surveys and course satisfaction (Watson 2003).

The current project

The option of “closing the loop” with regards to students’ feedback at mid-term for one particular module is explored pursuing the following aims:

- Open a dialogue with students with regards to their feedback and how it is translated into actions
- Implement those actions during the same term and with the students that were involved in giving the feedback to ensure that action points would be timely and applicable

It was further explored whether action points derived from mid-term feedback would be reflected in end of module evaluations.

Method

Participants

- End-term: N = 170 second year undergraduate psychology students enrolled in a Psychology module at a post-92 University in the UK.
- Mid-term: N = 70 students who attended the lecture in week 6.

Procedure

- Completion of mid-term feedback forms after the lecture (week 6).
- Feeding back of results and discussing action points (week 7).
- Module evaluation via Blackboard (week 13 ff.).

Materials

Mid-term – paper questionnaires

- What do you like most about this module and/or the teaching of it?
- What do you like least about the module and/or the teaching of it?
- What suggestions can you offer that would make this course a better learning experience?
- How would you rate the module overall? (scale: 1- very bad to 10-very good)
- End-term – electronic questionnaires (institution wide)
- What were the most positive aspects of this module? (list up to 3 below)
- What improvements would you make to this module? (list up to 3 below)

Results & Closing the Loop Actions

Response rates

- Mid-term: ~59% for the lecture and 24% for the module (n = 41).
- End-term: 9% (n = 17)

Descriptive statistics: The module was rated as M = 7.04 (SD = 1.50) (scale: 1- very bad to 10-very good). This was fed back to students during the lecture in more detail by using a histogram.

Word Cloud

A word cloud resulting from mid-term feedback, displaying words in different sizes corresponding to their frequency, was presented to students in the lecture.

Frequencies of words in a positive (green) or negative (red) context were displayed (see Figure 1).

Thematic analysis and Mid-to-end-term change

- Four core themes were derived via a thematic analysis of free text from student feedback. Themes were fed back to students in the lecture including a discussion of derived action points (see Table 1).
- Figure 2 shows the derived themes and the proportion of positive and negative quotes associated with each at mid- and end-term evaluation.

Discussion

Conclusions

- Most elements improved from mid- to end-term.
- The exception was the increase in negative feedback for Supportive actions & Materials due to students asking for more support with their assessments – as action was taken this most likely points towards a difficult assessment.

Implications

- Engaging students by acting on mid-term feedback on a module level can improve teaching and learning.
- Opening a dialogue with students improves student engagement and is an important issue in terms of total quality management (Leckey & Neil 2001).

Limitations and Future Directions

- The low response rates question validity and representativeness of results.
- It is unknown whether the same or different students have completed mid- and end-term feedback forms; hence, a change in rating is possibly due to a change in respondents.
- Encourage more students to participate by stressing the impact of feedback.

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References


Harvey, L., 2001. Student feedback as input to the higher education learning cycle. EFHEER Centre for Research into Quality: The University of Central England in Birmingham.
