Summary and Submit

Details of Submitter

First Name   william
Family Name   mcguire
Institution   University of Glasgow
Email   wmg1@talktalk.net

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Showing; Not Telling: Modelling student feedback to improve satisfaction

Abstract Paper (750 word maximum)

This paper is designed to evaluate the project: 'Showing; Not Telling: Modelling student feedback to improve satisfaction' and, in doing so, address issues identified in relation to student satisfaction, as well as in assessment and feedback on the local, national, European and global dimensions. Specifically, it aims to re-shape the way we both construct and respond to extended written assignments to improve their effectiveness by blending formative and summative assessment modes to: 1. develop a positive learning & teaching culture that includes, but goes beyond the issues identified in a range of NSS and PTES surveys to foster inquisitive minds and collaborative effort; 2. achieve high levels of student satisfaction as well as timely and high-quality assessment & feedback. This will enable students to improve on a current assignment through the provision of feedback which addresses three areas of their formative work to improve their summative grade (and levels of satisfaction) by identifying: 1) positive trends at the formative stage; 2) areas requiring immediate action; and 3) marker – modelling that is needed at the meso - level to demonstrate, explicitly, how improvements can be made to an assignment, thus bridging the gap between telling students what they should do to improve their work and actually showing them what that looks like, in practice.

Assessment feedback is often problematic in relation to student surveys - NSS (2017-19), PTES (2017-19) and we have grounded our work in extant theory and so, where Brookhart (2017) identifies a range of key elements to effective feedback including: timing, content specificity and personalisation, Brookfield (2017) focuses on a kind of enhanced form of reflective triangulation, imagining the use of four lenses to ensure criticality: students, colleagues, personal, theory and research, while within the framework of Lan, L. Xiongyi, L. Steckelberg (2009), peer assessment becomes a strategy for formative assessment and a tool for reflection by students (Cheng & Warren, 1999 cited in Lan, L. Xiongyi, L. Steckelberg (2009). In policy terms, the European Programme Accreditation System (EPAS) cites student feedback processes as a criterion to meet accreditation standards in Europe. This project tries to build on all of these works, national, European and global by making use of all of the key strategies they identify within a coherent pattern. The project outcomes will be of benefit to staff and students not only within Glasgow University, but on the European and global stages where similar issues have been identified with the quality of student feedback. Additionally, in providing staff with research - based evidence generated from the project to enhance their practice, we will be able to move towards more effective procedures in assessment architecture and feedback for all forms of essay/assignment – based summative assessment.

In order to address the objectives referred to above, six focus groups of four were established to capture the views of volunteers from two courses from different Schools; the MEd/MSc in TESOL and the MEd in Professional Practice in Education. The goal was also to expand the initiative beyond the School of Education.
Braun and Clarke's (2006) model of thematic analysis was used as a paradigm followed by all four researchers throughout the process. This six step model starts with familiarisation and codification to the identification and extrapolation of themes, leading to eventual publication.
An agreed protocol for the application of this model was agreed by all researchers in advance of the data analysis. At the outset, one researcher identified the initial codes identified from one of the six data sets in order to guide the other researchers in their own analyses, while still encouraging individual analyses to capture the richness of the data.
Thereafter, the researchers each analysed their allocated data set, which was chosen to be one with which they were unfamiliar to encourage a freshness of approach.The approach taken can be characterised by a combination of inductive and deductive modes. The primary driver of the research was to explore the effectiveness of an intervention designed to generate new and improved approaches to the deployment of feedback. In this regard, the main approach was inductive-to generate new theory , although a deductive element remained - to test the effectiveness of existing approaches.
The researchers met regularly to discuss and to thematise the findings from their analyses of the data sets with the final product being collated by one researcher following the approval of the team, as a whole.

Conclusions indicate that support is required for both staff and students to shift from an instructional to a descriptive model of feedback to fully realise its potential.

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Carthy, J.

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Details of Authors

mcguire, william; Harrington, Olan; zacharias, sally; Macdiarmid, Carole
University of Glasgow, UK ;
mcguire, william
Institution/Place of work*   University of Glasgow
Country*   uk
Email Address (must be unique)*   william.mcguire@glasgow.ac.uk
This author will be presenting   1
Please select if he/she is a:
Harrington, Olan
Institution/Place of work*   University of Glasgow
Country*   uk
Email Address (must be unique)*   o.harrington1@research.gla.ac.uk
This author will be presenting   0
Please select if he/she is a:
zacharias, sally
Institution/Place of work*   University of Glasgow
Country*   uk
Email Address (must be unique)*   sally.zacharias@glasgow.ac.uk
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Please select if he/she is a:
Macdiarmid, Carole
Institution/Place of work*   University of Glasgow
Country*   uk
Email Address (must be unique)*   carole.macdiarmid@glasgow.ac.uk
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