

Pick a card - real time elicitive evaluation

Evaluation is a way of understanding the effects of our teaching on students' learning. Evaluation is an analytical process that is intrinsic to good teaching. (Ramsden, 1992).

With recent demographic and cultural shifts in higher education and a greater focus on the 'student experience', the argument for innovative pedagogic approaches has gained momentum. This paper explores the practices of assessment and evaluation in higher education. *Pick a card* seeks to develop new understanding of how picture elicitation can improve our understanding of the student experience and engage students in deeper reflection.

We live in an increasingly visual culture of signs, symbols and metaphors. A semiotic minefield for today's learners where visual methods in evaluation are still under-developed.

Evaluative feedback from students is still predominantly delivered in the form of short immediate questionnaires which are quick and easy to administer produce quantifiable information. However, the value of this established method of evaluation remains questionable, and simply provides us with feedback which typifies the first level of Kirkpatrick's four-stage model of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1959). Furthermore,

'Employing a teaching evaluation system that does not appear to demonstrate any overall improvement in teaching quality cannot be considered satisfactory'- Kember et al (2002). *Pick a card* offers new possibilities in qualitative understanding of the effects of teaching and the student experience.

Social Scientists have successfully employed visual elicitation techniques to extract information from participants for many years. *Pick a card* seeks to expand current thinking on effective assessment and evaluation in HE. It focuses on the learning journey from both the learner and the lecturer point of view. Still in its developmental stage *Pick a card* (PaC) is qualitative research located in real time. Picture card evaluation challenges the 'ubiquitous' and 'problematic'. (Shelvin et al 2004) student evaluation of teaching form.

The categories of cards used in this innovative research are, Nature, Abstract, Man made, Animals, Fantasy, Art, Ethnicity and Emotion. The cards (A4) are placed on a table(s) in the teaching area and participants are asked to pick one card or more that represents their learning experience on their current module or programme. Participants are then asked to articulate to other learners how their particular image represents their learning experience.

PaC importantly triggers a complex range of reflexive and emotive responses. The Learner evaluates their own performance in response to the teacher. The Learner visualises the learning journey and their part in it. The learner develops a sense of self and an appreciation of self within a group. PaC seeks to effectively employ Ipsative assessment (assessment that is against yourself). Learners verbalise and visualise their learning. This elicitation technique provides an opportunity to interrogate learning goals and outcomes which may not be confined to the domains of the classroom. The identity of the learner is further foregrounded within the group. PaC is inclusive in its approach to learning and teaching styles and is an example of differentiation in the classroom. Learners develop a further

sense of empowerment over their own learning. PaC further deepens their learning and the learning experience is hopefully thereby deepened.

PaC represents a unique valid snapshot of the class that can be recorded and analysed. The learning impact of the modes of delivery and presentational strategies can be immediately assessed. Because PaC is real time qualitative evaluation, it affords teachers the opportunity to instantly understand, reflect and test out the learning journeys of their students and engage in reflective dialogue.

Teachers, like their learners, build and construct a greater understanding of the identity of the group both individually and collectively. The sense of rapport and engagement with the individual teacher can be 'measured' and clearly articulated when learners reflectively interpret and discuss the images and the resonance to their learning.

A Brunel University Lecturer sums up the use of PaC in a recent workshop that they led:

'as a trainer, the instant qualitative and verbal feedback I received was advantageous in many ways, not least because it was positive or because I was able to respond directly to the students. The feedback was particularly useful in summing up that session as I did not have time to reflect on or readjust the content very much due to the short duration and intensity of the discussions during the 2 hours. This process has given a new dimension to evaluating a training session by encouraging participants to be more reflective and enthusiastic about what they wish to gain from future training'.

References

Eisner, E. W. (1991) *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice* (New York, Macmillan Publishing).

Kember, D, Doris Y. P. Leung & K. P. Kwan (2002): *Does the Use of Student Feedback Questionnaires Improve the Overall Quality of Teaching?*, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27:5, 411-425

Laurillard, D, (2002) *Rethinking University Teaching*, RoutledgeFalmer

Harper, D, *Talking about pictures: a case for photo elicitation*, *Visual Studies*, Vol.17, No.1, 2002

Melville and Readings, (1995), *Vision and textuality*, Duke University Press

Ramsden, P (1992) *Learning to teach in Higher Education*, Routledge

Shelvin, M. et al., 2004. "The validity of student evaluation of teaching in higher education: love me, love my lectures?" In M. Tight, ed. *The RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Higher Education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, pp.99–107.