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Title Achievement Explained: Engaging students in a dialogue for learning gain.

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Background and Context

Feedback has considerable influence in improving student learning and achievement both within higher education and beyond. This, however, is dependent upon feedback being both *recognised* and *acted upon* by the student. Jonsson (2012:64) maintains that there is evidence 'of both an anecdotal and scientific nature that a number of students do not use the feedback they receive, and therefore do not realise the potential of feedback for learning'. The research in this area has largely focused on the academic practice of constructing and delivering quality feedback (Nichol, 2011; Price et al, 2011), at the expense of a paucity in the literature exploring students' active engagement with feedback for effective development.

Arguably therefore, a greater understanding of both assessment and feedback from a student perspective would benefit the sector, particularly with influences such as the Teaching Excellence Framework as a key performance indicator (KPI) being used to measure the 'success' of a university. The notion of KPI accountability coupled with a genuine desire to aid student learning and working with feedback has seen a surge of literature in this area in recent years (Carless 2015, Lizzo & Wilson, 2008; Quinton & Smallbone, 2010; Sadler, 2010; Robinson et al, 2013, Winstone et al 2017). This project aimed to shift that focus, and to explore, with students, their understanding of feedback in its many forms within the learning experience, the role they perceived it played in supporting and improving their academic and personal development, and how this influenced their interaction with it.

Theoretical Approach

The language in the discourse around feedback typically refers to students 'receiving' feedback, and engenders a passive model. This project aimed to focus on students as active agents in the productive use of feedback consequentially creating a culture shift by putting students at the heart of the feedback discourse. Adopting an action research approach and engaging students, co-operatively, we sought to provoke an assessment dialogue to explore students' understanding of feedback; challenge the perceived linear relationship between assessment and feedback, and to identify ways to support students to use feedback for academic and personal development.

Employing a cooperative inquiry approach (Reason 1994, 2002) fostered a partnership whereby we were able to unpack students' understanding and recognition of feedback, and to develop, new and creative ways of looking at things. The Students worked as co-researchers in a series of action cycles that generated and analysed data from focus groups with staff and students, interactive workshops and small development working groups. The interplay between cycles of reflection and action, with all participants fully and actively involved in all decision making associated with planning and analysis, enabled the co-production of creative outcomes and resources for future use.

Results

The partnership approach produced a series of infographics co-designed to unpack and explain assessment and feedback, and illustrate how they coalesce in a reflective cycle to support achievement in all its forms. The resources aim to demystify the assessment discourse; they have been designed for action, not just awareness and as a tool for students to use and engage with, thereby promoting student achievement and learning gain.

The resources have been disseminated at a number of national teaching and learning conferences, and adopted by colleagues in other institutions who requested permission to use them. Emergent from this, and use within our own institution, are a series of short case-studies on the adoption and adaptation of the 'Achievement Explained' approach.

Implications

The student voice in this project, shifted the emphasis from the familiar, but reductionist, terms of Assessment and Feedback, to construct a more holistic emphasis on Achievement. There was a clear message that shifting the lexicon towards Achievement would foster student engagement. Also, that engaged student learning, through consistent constructive dialogue, is a key factor in learning gain.

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