Enhancing student learning through formative assessment

An evolutionary model of good practice

Priority areas for assessment practices
- Online assessment
- Assessing large classes
- Minimising plagiarism
- Assessing group work
- Assessing international students

The ATN collaboration

- Provision of quality feedback to students about their progress in learning.

Objectives of the project
- Identify barriers to the use of formative assessment in different discipline areas and identify good practices that provide workable solutions to these problems.
- Construct adaptable templates based on generic characteristics of workable classroom solutions that can be used effectively in different contexts.

Students’ perspective
- Formative assessment is the most important but least satisfactory experience of teaching and learning
- Quality of feedback
  - equates to teaching quality
  - reveals an academic’s care factor
  - represents an imbalance of time investments
  - determines future assessment fates

Students motives for paying attention to comments
- Extrinsic motivation
- Shallow learning
- Improvement of grades
- Feedback for grade attainment
- Destination
- Intrinsic motivation
- Deep learning
- Reflection on learning
- Feedback for educational development
- Journey

What feedback comments are desired
How they are used
Under what circumstances they are used
Academics’ perspective

• Provision of quality feedback
  • requires a major cultural shift
  • is unnecessary
  • is unappreciated
  • is a formidable (unthinkable) task

(un) stylised communication

• Students say
  • There is a lack of adequate feedback
  • Feedback is untimely

• Academics say
  • There is a lack of attendance to advice
  • Feedback takes too much time

Need for further investigation of good practice

• What do lecturers attend to in the marking of work?
• What criteria do they use to make judgements?
• How do they go about making explicit responses to students?
• New tools + changed assessment practices → adoption of formative assessment

Barriers to efficacy

• Modulisation/atomisation
• Time/timing
• Inconsistency/specificity
• Cynicism/scepticism
• Tacit language
• Author-ity
• Praise

A tool to capture good practice

• Primary objective
  ≠ online tool
  = peer education

• Cascade model of peer education to spread and embed good practice

Crang (1999) discusses the importance of the local and global to human geography and explores the significance of the global-local nexus. He initially draws upon the arguments of Entrikin (cited in Crang 1999) to establish the importance of the local. The first argument proposed is empirical where variations between localities impact an individual’s life chances. These differences can be unifying from a cultural, social and environmental perspective, which forms the basis of the normative significance of the local. The impact of the local in determining one’s knowledge and understanding of other places constitutes the epistemological significance of the local.

In addition to the local, human geography also emphasises the importance of the global. Crang (1999) highlights four ‘discourses’ which have impacted the human geographer’s perception of the world; exploration, development, environmentalism, and compression. The discourse of compression is particularly relevant today. Global compression sees the world metaphorically shrink. People and places are now more connected through resource exchange. Your essay is a good as far as it goes. But, you have failed to identify the implicit academic discourse underpinning criterion 1.

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Underlying pedagogy

- How to provide effective feedback
- How to disseminate the tool
- A model of good practice

Criteria for written work

- Quality of ideas (ida)
- Evidence (evd)
- Critical interpretation (crt)
- Development (dev) & Organisation (org) of argument

- Style (sty)
- Correctness (cor)
Writing constructive comments

A great way to start your assignment. Simple, direct, interesting. Is there ever just a wrong or right answer? Don't draw too heavily on your source material. Try to think critically and evaluate both sides of the argument then come up with your own logical thesis.
Feed-back and feed-forward

- Students’ perspective
  - interpretation, impact, use
- Individualisation
- Electronic hotspots
- Statistical analyses
- Invitation to conversation
- Adaptability

Perspective is everything