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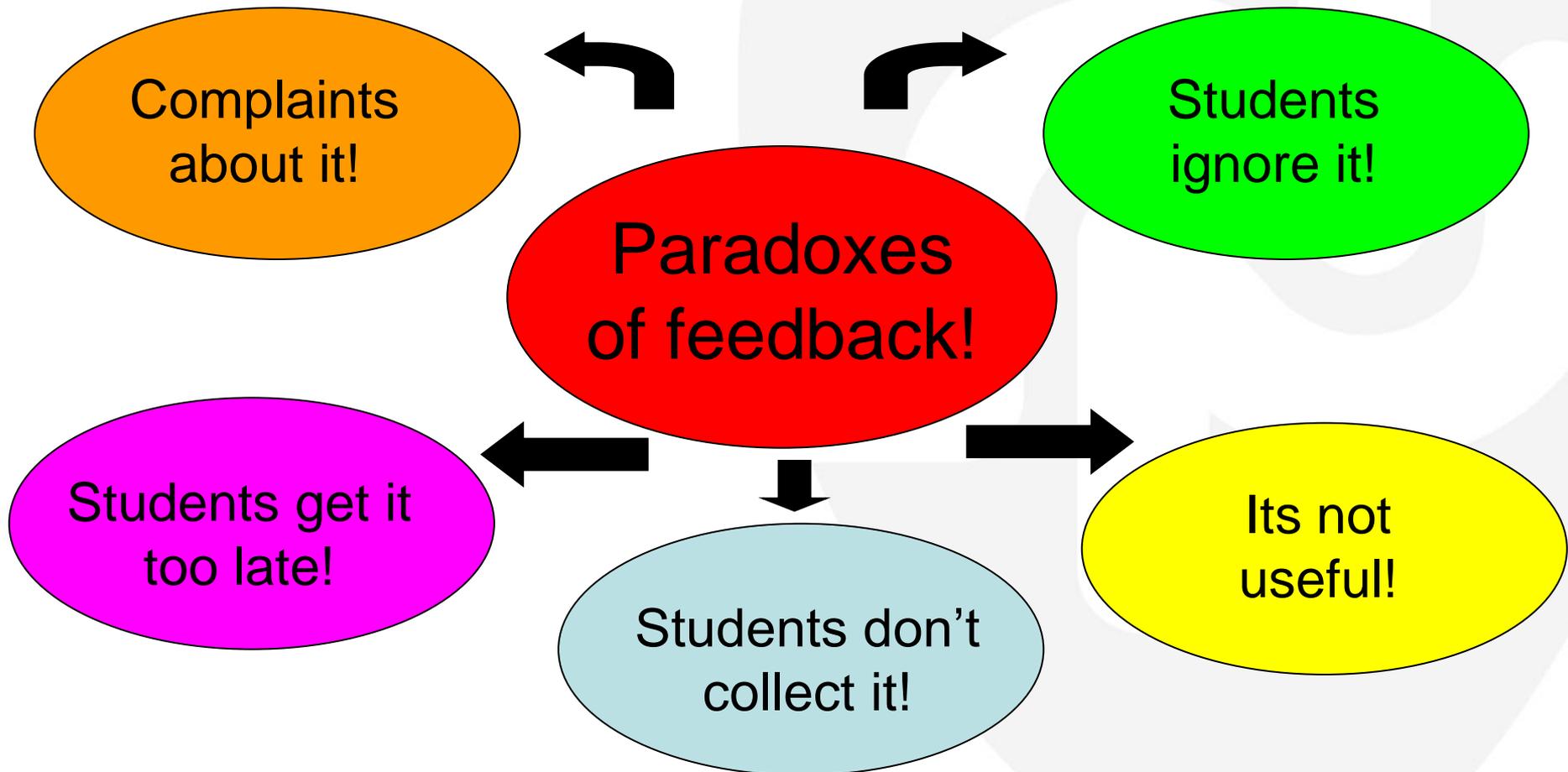
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Student's use of assessment feedback to improve their learning

Karen Beaulieu

May 2008

Paradoxes of feedback

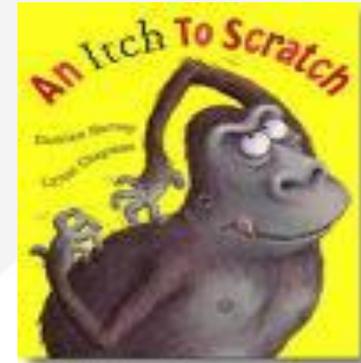


The National Student Survey



- Student dissatisfaction with feedback has been a feature of the National Student Survey for the past two years
- Within the 2006 survey 49% of respondents said that 'feedback was slow and unhelpful' (Handley *et al.*, 2007, p.1)
- Resulting in the Quality Assurance Agency (2006) stating that the variability in the timeliness of return of work was an issue of concern

Where did my research itch come from?



- Observed lecturers spending much of their time marking and compiling assignment feedback
- Believe assessment is probably the engine that drives learning (Smith *et al.*, 2007)

But,

- What do students think about it and what do they do with their feedback?



Project aim

- To explore the process of student assessment feedback and the impact it has upon learning and development

Objectives

- Explore student perceptions and experiences of assessment feedback
- Critically analyse the potential correlation between feedback and subsequent student development
- Critically evaluate the process of student feedback to make recommendations for future personal and colleague's practice

Methodology

Rationale

- A qualitative research method was selected as the purpose of this project was to understand student experiences (Brown *et al.*, 2005)

The recruitment process, sample and data collection

- Two student focus groups were recruited via a poster placed on their University notice board
- A sample of 18 final year occupational therapy students was recruited to discuss assessment feedback experiences, resulting in a collective view and data from the interaction within the groups (Cohen *et al.*, 2007)
- A focus group guide was used as a reference (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994)
- A pilot was carried out with a focus group of Masters Students to test wording, use of terminology and structure (Gallagher and Maclachlan, 2001)

Ethical strategy



- Ethical approval was provided by The School of Health Ethics Committee
- A consent form and participant information sheet included how participants would be afforded anonymity, confidentiality and had the right to refuse or withdraw at any time with no explanation required (British Educational Research Association, 2004)

Data analysis



- Transcripts provided data for analysis with the researcher going through a process of inductive reasoning (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994)
- Data was coded by concept headings being generated to reflect the meanings of words and phrases within each focus group transcript
- Concept headings were then further analysed into emerging categories which were compared and confirmed in relation to the group consensus (Wolcott, 1994)

Findings

48 Concepts were established from the focus group transcript data

8 Categories emerged from the 48 concepts;

- Timeframe
- Useful feedback
- Non useful feedback
- Student perceptions of follow up to feedback
- Inconsistency
- Consequences of students perceived poor feedback
- Justification
- Student values

Project quality enhancement objectives established



To:

- Provide faster student feedback e.g. before the next assignment submission (Race, 2005)
- Provide staff and students with clear expectations to promote trust in addition to increasing staff understanding of student's concerns about the impact of poor feedback upon their development (Carless, 2006)
- Increase student understanding and transparency of the assessment process and provide improved justification(s) within feedback



Project quality enhancement objectives established



To:

- Eradicate generalist feedback; including poor language or academic terminology which students do not understand (Sorcinelli and Elbow, 1997)
- Improve the quality of feedback; reintroduce written feedback on scripts, create timetabled opportunities for follow up with lecturers, improve feedback regarding 'how' to improve and increase formative assessment opportunities (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2007)
- Review feedback follow up to change the negative perceptions of lecturers being too busy and unapproachable (Millar, 2006)

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