WHAT MOTIVATES TEACHERS TO SEEK FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS?
THE REAL BENEFITS OF MIDCOURSE FORMATIVE EVALUATION

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Midcourse formative evaluation of teaching

« Action and activities initiated by the individual teacher to collect information to inform decisions about how to improve. »

(Smith, 2001, p.51)
Purpose

Quality improvement of educational experience

- Identify aspects of courses and teaching that are effective
- Explore suggestions for improvement to modify teaching practices

(Hughes, 2002)
Characteristics of the process

- Reflective
- Voluntary
- Flexible

(Centra, 1993)
Steps

1. Seek feedback
2. Analyze it
3. Organize findings
4. Discuss it
5. Act on it
Students are interested in giving feedback on teaching if…

- It can lead to improvement in teaching, in course content or format
  (Chen & Hoshower, 2003)

- They can provide meaningful feedback
  (Chen & Hoshower, 2003)

- If they and future students can benefit from the improvements made
  (Caulfield, 2007)
Context UofM

Institutional practice: End-of-term course evaluation
Results private

2001 Midcourse formative evaluation of teaching encouraged

2005 Institutional recommendation paper

2009 Report on midcourse formative evaluation of teaching experiences

2009 Production of video to promote teacher-initiated midcourse evaluation of teaching

Student-lead appraisals of teaching, in class and online

Teachers’ union mistrust of evaluation of teaching

UofM is
• 50 000 + students
• 5 500 teachers
• Research-intensive
How can we encourage more teachers to initiate midcourse formative evaluation of teaching?

Do they understand:

- The process?
- The instrumentation?
- The benefits?
Preoccupation with dissemination

Recommendation paper
  • Administrative, prescriptive text

PD Video
  • Teachers’ reality
  • Descriptive, non prescriptive text
Video production process

- **Goal:** Generate institution-specific examples which might encourage other faculty members to conduct mid-term formative evaluation of teaching

- **Data collecting technique:** Interviews with 6 teachers, 3 students
  - 30 minute interviews
  - Questionnaire to guide the interviews

- **Purpose of interviews:**
  - Understand how teachers were conducting mid-term formative evaluation of teaching at UofM
  - Understand their students’ perceptions of the process

- Confront findings with the literature study
Findings

**Differences in**
- Methods and instruments used (individual/group; open-ended/closed-ended questions...)
- Acceptation of feedback (with difficulty...positively)
- Use of information (short term...long term)
- Reporting to students (descriptive...dialogue)

**Similarities in**
- Attitudes of teachers
- Reported benefits of midterm formative evaluation of teaching
## Benefits for teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What teachers say</th>
<th>What the literature says</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>« I could <strong>improve</strong> things immediately... »</td>
<td>Bring change to practice (Centra, 1993)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« It gave me a way to <strong>converse</strong> with my students .»</td>
<td>Improved communication (Hunt, 2003; Aultman, 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« It allowed me to <strong>discuss</strong> their responses. »</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« It establishes a <strong>positive interaction.</strong> »</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>« It allowed me to establish a <strong>dialogue</strong> with the students...with a solid base from which to start. »</td>
<td>Dialogue on teaching and learning (Diamond, 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« It allowed a very interesting <strong>dialogue</strong> between professor and students. »</td>
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<tr>
<td>« I can show the students how I have improved the course <strong>over the years.</strong> »</td>
<td>Increased sense of accountability towards teaching (Tognazzi &amp; al. 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« The <strong>confidence</strong> the group now has in me, that I really want to help them learn... »</td>
<td>Increased confidence (Diamond, 2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New ways of teaching (Diamond, 2004)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Consensus (Cook-Sather, 2009; Younes, 2009)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Not all experiences are positive...

« The first time, I got caught, I reacted to their comments. I was defensive and I tried to justify myself. I was very formal, I compiled their answers, I classified them and I placed myself in a defensive position. When I heard myself talking to the class, I didn’t feel good and I said to myself, ‘That’s a failure.’ Now I do it with an open attitude. »

Pierre
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<th>What students say</th>
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<td>« The student feels respected... »</td>
<td>Voicing opinions, perspectives and identifying problems (Hunt, 2003)</td>
</tr>
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<td>« It establishes like a dialogue with the teacher... »</td>
<td>Feeling heard, cared about, respected (Tognazzi and al. 2008)</td>
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<td>« We didn’t think our comments were important... (until the professor projected them for discussion) »</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>« We feel directly involved in the structure of the course... »</td>
<td>Increased sense of accountability towards learning (Tognazzi and al. 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>« We are more interested in coming to the course, in discussing course content... »</td>
<td>Increased motivation (no reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« I really saw changes to the course, for instance we had said... »</td>
<td>Changes to course (Cook-Sather, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« It’s so nice to see changes being brought... »</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« It enhances learning... »</td>
<td>Improved learning (no reference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« The first benefit is the relationship with the professor, the fact the teaching and learning are important in higher education... »</td>
<td>Improved relationship (no reference)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benefits

Course objectives and content

Teaching

Learning

Teacher

Student

Relating

(Houssaye, 1988)
Benefit – a new finding

Joint responsibility vis-à-vis the educational experience

« It allows a co-responsibility. The students said they wanted longer discussion periods. I said, with pleasure, but you must be more willing to talk...»
Preoccupation with dissemination

Recommendation paper
- Administrative, prescriptive text

Video
- Teachers’ reality

Intended audience
- Teachers
Discussion questions

1. What can you say about the attitudes of teachers that the process of midterm student feedback presupposes/implies?

2. In order for the first experience with midterm feedback to be positive, what precautions should a teacher take?

3. What can a teacher realistically change in a course at midterm and under which conditions?

4. What can a centre do to enhance the usefulness of professional development videos?

Discussion in 4 groups: 10 minutes
Sharing: 10 minutes