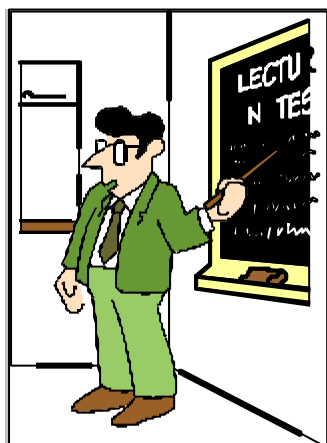


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From the Editor:

25 January 2002

'Learning Matters at Lingnan' are short papers that aim to promote a dialogue on teaching and learning. I encourage all staff to consider this as a vehicle for sharing thoughts on educational issues as they might affect us at the University. If you feel you have something which might be appropriate for inclusion in an issue of this publication, then please forward it to the TLC. I would be delighted if staff (and not only academic staff) from outside the Teaching and Learning Centre were to be prominent or even occasional contributors.



Examples of Classroom Assessment

In a previous issue of *Learning Matters* OPSIT (Ongoing Participatory Student Input into Teaching) was introduced as one approach to evaluate teaching and learning by obtaining ardent feedback from students on an ongoing basis. This issue provides capsule summaries of a few simple Classroom Assessment techniques used by Lingnan faculty in a variety of teaching and learning situations. These are examples of quick and easy approaches for gathering data on student learning. As such, they are meant to illustrate the concept of Classroom Assessment and inspire other teachers to design or adapt their own techniques for getting feedback, early and often, on how well students are learning what they are being taught.

I wish to acknowledge those colleagues whose experiences are reflected in the following examples. Though details have been changed and situations greatly simplified, I am certain they will recognise their contributions.

Example One

The 'One-Minute Paper' is a good example of a simple, quick evaluation tool. It asks students to respond anonymously to questions such as the following at the end of the class period: (1) What is the most important thing you learned in class today? (2) What question remains uppermost in your mind? and (3) What can we both do to improve teaching and learning in the next class? A faculty member in the Business Programme has found this technique effective to help make focused adjustments in the following class to capitalise on what students have already learned well and to clear up conclusions that can impede further learning. A variation of the 'One-Minute Paper' is the 'Muddiest Point' technique which seeks to get very useful feedback simply by asking students to answer one question: "What was the 'muddiest point' in my lecture today?"

Example Two

In another case, a faculty member in the Department of Management is keen to assess what her students already knew about Management before the first meeting of her required first-year course on Introduction to Business. She wants to do this for two reasons. First, she feels it will help her apportion her instructional time more effectively. By finding out what they did and did not already know, she can give more time and attention to teaching the latter. Second, it will help her identify good discussion 'openers', topics students are familiar with that can be used as bridges to new information. She asked students to send email messages to her to tell what they already knew about some management concepts and what they expect to learn from the course. In reading through their responses, the instructor had a better understanding of both their expectations and prior knowledge about the subject matter. Faced

Example Three

with the evidence and the feedback collected, she then realised that she could no longer assume that students arrived with well-informed, useful concepts of basic, key terms. In the subsequent class sessions, she followed up by using students' responses, correct and incorrect, to explicitly teach the concepts of business management.

As a third example of ongoing teaching evaluation, an English professor wondered whether some of his courses were going at the right pace with appropriate workload for students, especially the amount of readings required for the study of literature courses. Over the course of a semester, he administered a streamlined version of the 'Questionnaire to Evaluate Lectures' (in Beard and Hartley, 4th Ed.). He added questions on what percentage of the required readings students have done, and how many hours a week they are spending on the course outside of class. In this way he can gauge how serious they are as students (and therefore how seriously to take their comments) as well as whether he is being too unrealistic in the amount he gives them to read. The questionnaire was filled out by students anonymously in the 5th or 6th week of the semester, allowing the instructor to focus and reflect on teaching at a particular point in the course, and to make any changes that are obviously necessary.

Example Four

Another interesting example is forming 'Student Quality Circles' by a faculty member in the Business Programme. In his course on Total Quality Management, this instructor stresses the importance of learning a wide variety of quality improvement strategies and learning when to apply them. In other words, in this example the instructor wants to assess the students' ability to move from principles to practice. To do this, he simply divides the class into groups of four or five, and asks each of the groups to come up with ideas to improve the quality of teaching and learning in this University. In reading through the students' project reports and hearing their presentations, the instructor noted that most of the groups came up with plausible applications, and suggested many useful ideas for improving the quality teaching and learning culture of this University.

Summary

There are of course many other examples of Lingnan instructors using a variety of techniques and tools for collecting ongoing feedback from students that have not been included here. However, the most important lesson to draw from the four preceding examples is the importance of getting feedback early and often on the effects of teaching on student learning.

Despite the fact that many Lingnan faculty members are already eliciting feedback and using the responses informally to help them adjust their teaching, some faculty may have had little or no experience in systematically studying student learning. Therefore, the Teaching and Learning Centre is happy to provide professional assistance in suggesting and setting up means of collecting continuous feedback from students on teaching that suits the requirements of the discipline and needs of the students. The techniques and instruments can be customised and participation is voluntary on the part of the instructor as well as of the students.

If you wish to take advantage of this facility please contact TLC.

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This issue and the back issues of 'Learning Matters at Lingnan' can be retrieved from the following URL – <http://www.ln.edu.hk/tlc/level2/td.htm>.