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The Role of Assessment Feedback in developing students' Academic Buoyancy

Tristan Middleton
BESA Conference: Wolverhampton 1st July 2016

Session content

- 
- Why we carried out the research
 - Our theoretical framework
 - Our research questions
 - Our methodology
 - Our findings
 - The implications for our practice
 - Questions

Why do the research?

Overall NSS score for an Education Studies course was 100%

Detailed analysis of the NSS feedback suggested that the area which received the lowest score from all the sections was assessment and feedback.

As a team we wanted to explore this further and decided to conduct this small scale research to improve our practice

Feed forward to Teaching Excellence Framework

Theoretical Framework

'the heightened likelihood of educational success despite personal vulnerabilities and adversities brought about by environmental conditions and experiences'

Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1996 p.2)




Martin and Marsh (2006) define academic resilience as *students' capacity to effectively deal with setback, challenge, and adversity in the academic setting*



Martin (2013) and Martin & Marsh (2009) distinguish between academic buoyancy and academic resilience. Academic buoyancy relates to the more everyday setbacks during formal learning, which may lead to a low level negative outcome such as an isolated poor grade or anxiety at a particular task.


Theoretical Framework



According to Martin (2013), academic buoyancy is the ability to deal with 'everyday setbacks' and 'hassles' and refers to all students whereas academic resilience refers more to the few who may suffer more extreme adverse circumstances who may be the 'hard to reach' students.

Research Questions

What do students find most and least useful in their assessment feedback?



How do students use feedback to approach future assessments?

How do students respond to feedback in terms of what they think, feel and do?

What are the implications for our practice?

Methodology




**Pilot Survey
(Bristol Online Surveys)
20 undergraduate students**



**Survey
(Bristol Online Surveys)
10 questions
100 undergraduate students on a BA Education
Studies course**


Data Findings

91 responses

- 
1. Students use their feedback more than initially thought
 2. Student use feedback in a range of ways
 3. Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.
 4. A negative emotional reaction to academic adversity in the form of a disappointing grade does not necessarily mean a student is not academically buoyant

Data Finding:


Students use their feedback more than initially thought



80/91 (88%) students sought improvement points from their feedback and felt that the information provided helped them to develop

‘Giving me the knowledge of how I can improve on the next assignment’

Data Finding: Student use feedback in a range of ways

- 
- 31% (28/91) returned to feedback when working on another assessment**
 - 28% (25/91) sought advice from a tutor or other**
 - 18% (16/91) made a plan for future assessments**
 - 13% (12/91) take notes**
 - 11% (10/91) sought help from a skills book or web source**

Data Finding:

Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.

locus of control

43/89 (48%) blamed themselves and appeared to express an internal locus of control.

'It tells me what i have done well as well of what i can improve on'


5/89 (6%) expressed an external locus of control.

'I think that the assignment wasn't fully explained'



Data Finding:

Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.



understanding grade
what are current skills and capabilities to
act as a baseline from which to improve?

*‘It shows how and why I didn’t get the
grade I was aiming for with a chance to
work towards achieving higher in the
future’*

Data Finding:

Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.

looking forward

36/91 had constructive thoughts in response to a disappointing grade. Of these, 16/36 (44%) comments were focused on looking forward towards subsequent assignments

‘How can I improve in future work?’

Data Finding:

Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.

Improvement



51/91 (57%) students said that feedback helped them to manage disappointment (subset 1a). Of these 36 responses were improvement focused

‘Because it outlines the areas I need to improve in in order to get the grade I wanted next time in another module.’

Data Finding:

Five indicators for academically buoyant behaviours were identified.



action-orientated behaviour
36/89 (40%) responses were action orientated.


‘Disappointed in myself, go to marker to understand feedback and work from it’

‘Create a plan in order to improve and note down any important notes given by the person who marked it.’


Implications for our practice

Feedback practice

4 Clear ingredients of feedback:

- 
- a) why the grade was given
 - b) suggestions for improvement
 - c) encouraging thinking towards next assessment
 - d) encouragement towards action

Implications for our practice



5 key elements: locus of control, understanding grade, looking forward, improvement, and action-orientated behaviour.

Teach about ownership


Teach about context of grades

Seeing the formative journey

Teaching to look for improvements

Action oriented - proactive

Implications for our practice



5 key elements: locus of control, understanding grade, looking forward, improvement, and action-orientated behaviour.

BUT – to develop academic buoyancy students need take responsibility for joining these together (psycho-educational approach).

Explicit presentation of key elements in a holistic / joined up way.



Questions



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