
Official URL: http://conference.rgs.org/AC2019/78

EPrint URI: http://eprints.glos.ac.uk/id/eprint/7812

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Student-Faculty Partnership in Assessment

Encountering emotion and enhancing wellbeing in students

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RGS-IBG Annual International Conference
August 2019
Royal Geographical Society, London
1. Context – student wellbeing challenges

- Number of students disclosing a mental health condition has tripled since 2007/08 (Equality Challenge Unit, 2015)

- Students report significantly lower levels of mental wellbeing than the general population - more so for minority groups (Ferguson, 2017)

- HE sector is experiencing a ‘mental health crisis’ (The Guardian, August 2018)

- 20% Australian students experiencing a mental health issue (Carter et al. 2017) and a fifth of Canadian post-secondary students identifying as depressed, anxious or battling other mental health issues (Pang, 2017)
2. Student learning & wellbeing

- To enhance student wellbeing in HE, we need to work more closely with the emotional realm of learning.

- If we adopt a pedagogic partnership approach, we have the opportunity to foreground student emotions.

- To realise this process, faculty and students must be willing to work within borderland spaces of partnership (Hill et al., 2016, 2019a).
3. Student-faculty pedagogic partnership in assessment

- AY 2015-2016 - new assessment approach implemented on a second year geography module in a British university

- Aimed to improve student learning experience through dialogic feed-forward assessment

- Focus was cognitive:
  - Did the approach assert a positive influence on the student learning experience?
  - Did it enhance student performance and raise NSS scores related to feedback?

(Hill & West, 2019)
Module teaching and assessment structure

Supporting Lectures

Students choose essay from selection

Students write draft essay

Students submit draft and attend ‘feed-forward’ meeting

Students reflect on meeting and essay – grading their work

Students complete and submit final essay

Assessment discourse

Feedforward discourse

Essay marking Seminar (peer assessment)

25% module assessment

75% module assessment
Qualitative case study approach

- Individual semi-structured interviews ... two consecutive year 2 cohorts at end of module (2015-16 and 2016-17) ... analysed thematically via grounded theory

- n = 44 ( x 30 mins ), 61% response rate: male = 45% female = 55%

- Group semi-structured interviews with level 3 students elucidating post-assignment behaviour

- Essay performance data pre- and post-assessment intervention (inferential stats)

- Answers to NSS feedback questions (asked in the interviews)
Results - Enhanced learning experience

• Conversation compelled students to engage critically with their work:

‘When I have had drafts handed back to me and it’s just written over, either I don’t understand what they are trying to say, or it’s not clear enough. I can ask you questions if we’re talking to each other about it, it’s easier to see things … It’s definitely better to talk about it’

‘I’ve had it before where you get electronic feedback and you might not be sure what some of the comments mean … being able to discuss it is important. You get that progress and can discuss how you can change it as opposed to just saying this is wrong’
### Results - Enhanced learning experience

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<th>Band (%)</th>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>3*</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>28</td>
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<td>60-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number (n)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
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Significantly higher marks 2015-17 v 2011-13 (p = <0.0001)

Average Ecology mark 4.5% higher than average mark for other second year optional modules (p = 0.01)

* Did not have a meeting

Dialogic assessment
The emergence of the affective realm

- Inherently emotional experience for students of receiving assessment feedback

- Clear evolution in emotions over the feed-forward process:
  
  apprehensive, scared, disappointed, upset, ashamed
  
  enjoyment, satisfaction, motivation

- For some, the meetings were cathartic, reducing their anxiety as they ‘came clean’ with their level of progress - regained in-task self-efficacy
• Students noted that the individualised nature of the meeting made them feel valued:

'I definitely felt like you cared about what I was getting’

• Consciously encountering and talking through emotions in a collaborative manner supported a personalised and inclusive learning experience

'Generic comments can be good ... but you never know whether they are applicable to you or not. So getting personalised feedback is really useful’
• Students reported altered behaviour post-meeting, within-task and with respect to other second year work:

'It’s altered the way I approach other modules, like essay plans for exams’

• In third year, students self-avowed to increased self-efficacy, believing more strongly in their capabilities to accomplish assignments:

'I definitely had a deeper understanding of the assessment process – not only planning for and writing an essay but being able to self-critique and understand my flaws’
Pedagogic Partnership & The Affective Domain

Positive Emotions:
- Enjoyment
- Confidence
- Self-Value
- Motivation
- Success

Negative Emotions:
- Anger
- Failure
- Anxiety
- Uncertainty
- Disappointment

Enhanced Resilience
Self-Regulation
Self-Efficacy

Positive Wellbeing

Initial Emotions:
- Excitement
- Confidence
- Optimism

Positive Emotions

Negative Emotions:
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Uncertainty

Initial Emotions

Short Term Emotions

Longer Term Attitudes & Behaviours

(Hill et al. 2019)
4. Conclusions

• Faculty should not divorce the affective realm of learning from the cognitive as wellbeing issues rise into sharp focus in HE

• Consciously uniting these two realms allows learning to be tackled holistically, supporting students to develop positive emotions and resilient academic behaviours through meaningful partnership interactions

• We can use partnership to positively harness the central role of emotions in the teaching and learning process
References


Thank you for listening

Questions?

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