Clickers for Dialogic Feedback in the Early Years Care & Education Classroom

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Class Sizes:
27 Students

Discipline:
Early Years Care
& Education

Feedback Approaches
Automated Feedback, Dialogic feedback,
Peer feedback.

Technologies
Turning Technologies
(turningtechnologies.com)

Challenge & Aim

Among the learning outcomes from the "Principles and Practices in the Early Years Setting" module is one which requires the student to be able to participate in guided reflection.

I have found that the greatest challenge among my first year students was to create an environment which was conducive to open and frank discussion. Transition to the third level learning environment can be a daunting experience for some students. This in turn can impact on students' engagement, arguably leaving some students on the periphery of interactive learning as observers rather than participants. The aim of this research was to determine whether the use of clickers in the classroom can help to create an environment which engages all students and provides for dialogic and peer feedback.

Evidence from the Literature

Research has shown that learners greatly benefit from the learning process when they are actively engaged (Bloom, 1984). It is important that feedback in this module permeate the syllabus rather than be a one-off event (Boud and Molloy, 2013) and reconceptualization of feedback as a dialogue between peers and his/herself are feedback sources (Carless 2015). It is my experience that many first year students can find the transition to higher education course delivery difficult. In the context of supporting transition, effective feedback can contribute in fostering student motivation confidence and success (Kift, 2015).

Effective feedback shows sensitivity to students' emotional responses and psychological needs (Yang and Carless, 2015). This is particularly relevant in child protection practice.

Feedback Approach

- A workshop was designed around a developing scenario from an early years care setting.

- An initial scenario providing incomplete information was presented on a powerpoint slide and the students were presented with four "what would you do" options. They were given time for individual reflection and asked to use the clickers to anonymously vote for their preferred option.

- The preferences of the group were then displayed in the form of a bar chart on the screen. This bar chart provided feedback for each student in terms of their view vis-à-vis the group and acted as a starting point for guided dialogue and reflection.

- A second and third scenario provided additional information related to the original scenario. The options remained as before.

- The three scenarios were re-presented and the students voted again, this time without the dialogue.

- Student Feedback was gathered in three ways:
  1. The responses to the scenarios were gathered.
  2. A Likert scale survey was conducted at the end of the workshop. The students used the clickers to respond.
  3. A focus group was conducted one week later.

Outcomes

81% of students changed at least one of their votes between the first and second iteration. The average percentage change for each scenario was 44%.

88% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the clickers caused them to be more engaged in the class.

93% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they got feedback on their understanding of course concepts.

96% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the use of clickers was a positive experience. Consistent with research (Vital 2012; Caldwell, 2007), a sense of fun and enjoyment emerged as a dominant theme of the focus group.

Student Response

- *"It was inclusive and..... everybody had to take part in the class. Even the people who might be outspoken, they got to give their opinion".*

- *"Yeah. Everyone's opinion mattered like..... For example say, now, some person might say something and you feel that you mightn't agree with it, because your opinion mightn't be the same. But then, with the clicker like, no one knows how you feel....... It's just yourself. You're not embarrassed to say how you feel".*

- *"Nobody knows it was you that pressed the button".*

- *"Not everyone gets involved whereas with the clickers everyone did. We had to wait till the last person was in until it came up on the screen so everyone had to do it."*

- *On seeing the bar chart: "I thought myself that most people's views would be the same on it. And then you could see that they weren't, like, there was quiet a variety of different opinions."*

- *"Everyone said differently about the parents and stuff and you would have thought this was the right answer but realistically there's not a right answer, everyone has their own opinion about how to approach the situation because if you were in that situation, and you didn't have anyone to ask, you would think; how will I do it and that's the way we did it".*

- *"I think it (the bar graph) changed peoples mind because I still think there are some people who wouldn't be confident enough to stick with their opinion..."*

Recommendations

- A one hour class is not sufficient for this process. A two hour class will allow for reflection on the process itself and greater peer feedback.

- As the class session proceeds, focus on the dialogue and the debate.

- Technical support is needed in the room to ensure clickers operate reliably.

- Rehearse actual presentation to make sure it will run smoothly.

References

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Contact ✉

If interested in finding out more about this approach or technology, please contact Dr Teresa Brown at tbrown@ait.ie

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