

The Power of Feedback: Improving Instruction and Supporting Student Well-Being

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Need for Innovation

Feedback is generally considered a “consequence of performance” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81) and generally is positive or negative (Wolf et al., 2010). Conceptually, feedback is “information provided by an agent (i.e. teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). As an instructor, we know the value of providing feedback to our students about their learning, but we must also value their feedback as it relates to our teaching. To improve instruction and increase teaching effectiveness, instructors/professors should be willing to incorporate a variety of methods to gather student feedback (Kennette, 2019; Seldin, 1997). Methods such as end of course evaluations, comment cards, and even web-based forms (Google® forms) can be used to gather student feedback that can help to improve student learning, outcomes, and course content delivery (Hazari & Schnorr, 1999; Kennette, 2019). During virtual learning, obtaining feedback was best facilitated through the creation of a Google Form entitled “Lesson Feedback Survey” and added to each week’s lesson on the learning management software, Moodle, used for course delivery.

How It Works

To encourage students to provide timely feedback at the conclusion of each lesson, the use of a Lesson Feedback Survey, created in Google Forms, was implemented in AEE 101: Introduction to Career and Technical Education, which had 28 undergraduate students enrolled during the Fall 2020 semester. The learning management system, Moodle, was used to house the course modules and a link to the Lesson Feedback Survey was included after each lesson to allow students to provide feedback by identifying themselves or anonymously. The Lesson Feedback Survey asked students to enter their name or “anonymous” in the first submission followed by the date and title of the lesson covered. The next section included a Likert Type scale survey (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree; N/A) with the following prompts:

- 1) I was interested in this topic BEFORE we started to study it.
- 2) I am interested in this TOPIC after having studied it.
- 3) I think this lesson was interesting and relevant.
- 4) I liked how this information was presented.
- 5) The use of technology helped me to learn
- 6) Technology was a useful and important part of this lesson.
- 7) I enjoyed this lesson.
- 8) I will remember what I learned from this lesson

The next four sections required students to enter short responses to the following questions:

- 1) Think about the different parts of this lesson. What did you like most about the lesson?
- 2) Think about the different parts of this lesson. What did you like least about the lesson?
- 3) How can I make this lesson better in the future?
- 4) How are things going? Please be constructive and specific so that I can identify what parts are going well and some ways I might adapt the lessons during our remaining time together.

Results to Date & Implications

Due to the transition to online classes as a result of COVID-19, every other week was scheduled as a synchronous class for students to join using Zoom. The alternate weeks involved students completing an asynchronous lesson that was self-guided. For the entire semester, 14 weeks were scheduled with the class meeting every Wednesday. Two sections were involved with a class meeting at 8:30am-9:20am and a second section at 9:35am-10:25am. Students were given the autonomy to attend either section time during the virtual, synchronous classes. Of the fourteen classes, twelve (12) of the classes included the Lesson Feedback Survey for students to provide feedback based on the questions included in the above section. Lesson feedback was received 42 different times from 18 different students (2 submissions were anonymous). The highest submission rate from an individual student was six (6) different submissions throughout the course.

One of the primary purposes for the Lesson Feedback Survey data was to allow students to check in and openly communicate some of the challenges presented by virtual learning and the university mandate for students to vacate campus and return home due to COVID-19. Feedback from students was used to improve the course by providing lesson PowerPoints and materials prior to the lesson as students desired to take notes during the virtual instructional delivery. While the instructor's main goal of this Lesson Feedback Survey was to acquire beneficial ideas or suggestions for continual improvement, this tool also provided an outlet for students to willingly express challenges related to school or home and reach out for help and guidance. In a sense, it provided a bi-weekly "advising" appointment should there be any concerns. This allowed the instructor to constantly seek information about students in the course and share resources throughout the semester based on the concerns shared through the Lesson Feedback Survey.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Gathering feedback is beneficial only if it is utilized to improve teaching and learning. Committing time to analyzing the feedback and taking action to improve future course content and lesson delivery is critically important to the outcomes of gathering feedback. Expansion of the questions/statements on the Lesson Feedback Survey is recommended based on the needs of the instructor, students, and course. Feedback data should remain confidential, despite the students' selection to identify themselves or not, and instructors/professors should follow university guidelines for reporting health and well-being concerns to the appropriate agencies.

Costs/Resources Needed

No monetary costs were associated with the development and implementation of the Lesson Feedback Survey. Time commitment to create the survey, post with each lesson, and review the feedback was needed. Approximately three hours each week was devoted to this task. Knowledge of creating Google Forms, exporting data, and using Microsoft Excel will help effectively implement the Feedback Survey and analyze the data.

References

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