

*‘Strategies to encourage
staff to evaluate their teaching’*

‘Evaluation of Teaching: sharing good practice’

Dr Jen Harvey,
Dublin Institute of Technology



Evaluation...

"The systematic acquisition and assessment of information to provide useful feedback about some object." Trochim

"Research is aimed at truth. Evaluation is aimed at action." Patton

Presentation outline

- Identifying the challenge
- Clarifying the reasons
- Selling the concept
- Demonstrating by practice

Identifying the challenge

“Too often SET (student evaluation of teaching) systems have been compulsory, publicly displayed, uncontextualised, unsupported, simplistic and interpreted in isolated ways, features which render SET’s punitive bureaucratic tools rather than supporting mechanisms through which enhanced learning environments can be created and sustained.

Furthermore these characteristics are particularly inappropriate in academic environments, the very contexts in which people are encouraged to adopt critical stances to one-dimensional or naïve approaches to data gathering.”

Moore and Kuol (2005, p. 147)

In Elaine Keane & Iain Mac Labhrainn (2005)



Clarifying the reasons: why we don't evaluate

- Reliance on institutional processes
- Resourcing issues
- Other activities take priority
- Lack of confidence in methods
- Dependency on 'intuition'
- Perceived lack of usefulness

Selling the concept

- Evaluation as a political activity
- Knowing the benefits
- Knowing the stakeholders
- Identifying 'the hook'
- Making it easy but effective
- Supporting best practice
- Exemplifying best practice

Evaluation as a political activity

- Who has paid for this?
- Who stands to benefit (or lose) from it?
- Who has the power to make decisions about it?
- What will it take to persuade them of something?
- Whose perspectives will you represent?

“Evaluation is not political if:

No one cares about the program.

No one knows about the program.

No money is at stake.

No power or authority is at stake.

And, no one in the program, making decisions about the program, or otherwise involved in, knowledgeable about, or attached to the program, is sexually active.”

Michael Quinn Patton 1997

Knowing the benefits

Possible evaluation outputs

- Improvements in teaching/learning
- Changes in practice, skills development
- Staff /student Personal development planning /improvements, promotion
- Changing/new roles/responsibilities, collaboration
- Papers/presentations/reports
- Development of new resources, support etc
- Changes in policy/procedures

etc

4 purposes for teaching and/or course evaluations (Keane and MacLabhrainn (2005))

- as a formative and diagnostic feedback mechanism (for use, for example, in efforts to improve teaching and courses);
- as a summative feedback mechanism (for use, for example, in personnel and administrative decision-making);
- as a source of information for prospective students when selecting course units and lecturers; and
- as a source of data for research on teaching.

(Marsh and Dunkin; 1992; Richardson, 2003; Chen and Hoshower, 2003),



Three levels of an evaluation

- Evaluation for accountability
(e.g. the measurement of results or efficiency);
- Evaluation for development
(e.g. the provision of evaluative help to strengthen institutions/projects);
- Evaluation for knowledge
(e.g. the acquisition of more profound understanding in some specific area or field).

(Chelimsky & Shadish, 1997)



Identifying the stakeholders

Identifying the stakeholders?

These are people who have a stake in the evaluation eg

...students, managers, funders etc

What are likely to be their concerns

...efficiency, time, money, quality etc

Intended use by intended users

- Patton's studies of evaluation in the US
 - Most evaluations unread (let alone used)
- Utilization, not paradigm, is what's important
 - How can I get this used?
 - Who will act on it?
 - How will I make sure their actions are well informed?

Stimulating dialogue

Opportunities for dialogue around evaluation

- Revalidation of programmes/ School reviews
- As part of existing programmes
- Project /funding applications
- Workshops/ consultancy
- Within institutional processes
- etc

Identifying the 'hook'

Identifying the 'hook'

- Enhancement of learning
- Demonstrating impact
- Increasing cost-effectiveness
- Justification for funding
- Persuading colleagues
- Research publications

Determining Impact

- Students – learning, retention, learning?
- Staff – academic, support, workload, practice?
- Institution – programmes, facilities, funding, policy, procedures?
- Locally – communities, support, practice?
- Nationally ?

Cost effectiveness

This is a measure of COST compared to the OUTCOMES.

- COST:
 - includes time to produce the materials, maintenance and running costs etc
- OUTCOMES:
 - increased motivation, increased student success, improved student learning etc

Making it easy but effective

Making it easy

- What worked best in this module?
- What didn't work in this module?
- What needs to be changed/improved in this module?

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/etl/>

Using tried and tested methods

LOAM Tool (learning object attribute metric) has been designed as an evaluation tool for e-learning materials. It allows selection of a range of attributes or criteria against which the user wishes to assess the learning materials and then provides a series of tools to allow that assessment to be carried out and the results displayed.

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/nmp/sonet/projects/loam/>



LOAM attributes

- Interactivity
- Objective/LOs
- Media Integration
- Context
- Media standard
- Pre-requisites
- Support
- Feedback
- Self-Direction
- Support
- Layout
- Feedback
- Self-direction
- Navigation
- Assessment
- Assess./LO Alignment

Stimulating thinking...

- Do students like our new Virtual Learning Environment, study skills module etc?
 - “Yes” - but doesn’t explain why, or tell you if they like it more than the old one, or whether it can be improved, or what they do with it...
 - “No” - and doesn’t explain why, or what you should do about it, or whether they hate all VLEs, or...
- Which question will give you enough information to act on?

Making it effective

Asking good evaluation questions

- Evaluations are structured around questions
 - Shape the evaluation process
 - Define what is understood or assumed about the programme
 - Specify who or what might be involved in it
- It's important to ask good questions, rather than obvious ones

Characterising questions

- Description: seeking answers to questions about what is happening
- Cause: seeking answers to questions about whether effects are systematic
- Process of mechanism: seeking answers to questions about why or how effects are happening

(Shavelson and Towne (2001))

Demonstrating by example

Principles for good evaluation & dissemination:

- Relevance (e.g. of dissemination to audience, to people being evaluated – engagement)
- Integrity (ethics as a main principle)
- Allowing people to feel that their contribution had been acted upon in some way (that their input was valued)
- Flexibility about strategy (e.g. workshop or one to one?) – changing depending on objectives and audiences; responding to developments in project, context, etc.
- Reflective practice (think about why you're doing, what you're doing, etc.)
- Starting early on so you're in a position where you can actually see what changes (having a 'benchmark')
- Looking at things from multiple perspectives (and being aware of your powerful position), inviting these into the evaluation strategy

Taken from EFFECTS seminar (Oliver, Conole)

