Feeding Forward for Reflective Learning in Vocational Education

A Case study

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Introduction

Teaching students in the Bachelor of Applied Technology Programme

A mixture of theory and Practical work.

Many students are international, prior learning is not as evident (Carol, 2005)

Course content is broad from design to Engineering and repair

Background

In this case study there are two courses investigated

One is at level 6, the other at level 5, both 15 credits

Repair and Transportation L6, Marine Construction L5.

Both courses require the study of practical process in theory

Courses contain a weekly 4 hour session for 16 weeks

The existing curriculum plan

Students were asked to produce a Portfolio

Initially the requirement was to write on each learning outcome

A Logbook was also in the assessment package

The Portfolio was worth 80% and the Logbook 20%

I used this existing plan for the first course

The Students needed more Help

They weren't clear on the area of study

No formative feedback was given to help them gauge their progress

Much of their study was out of context

Feedback early would allow them to reflect and apply changes looking forward (Quinton 2010)

Most well constructed comments could be applied as feed forward information (Koen 2012)

A Solution

Study a specific set of circumstances in a case study

Real situations experienced in the trade

A guide towards content that does fit with the marine environment

To provide a platform from which the student and teacher are able to work together to assist learning prior to summative assessment (Boud 1995)

An opportunity to reflect on feedback with timeliness (Quinton 2010)

Re-shaping the assessment

The Logbook requirement was removed

The Portfolio was given a value of 100% of the total assessment

The cases make up the portfolio, 4 are submitted during the semester and a 5th given as a presentation

Of the 4 cases the 1st is worth 10%, the 2nd 20%, the 3rd 25% and the 4th 30%.

Assessment feedback and learning are in one package (Koen 2012)

Feeding-forward to reflect

Feedback is both written and oral

Work is submitted on a Google doc using the comment box

Comments should be considered and forward looking giving students the opportunity to reflect (Quinton 2010)

Oral feedback is given to the entire group when there is a common theme amongst their work

Findings

Student success from 63% in 2012 to 100% in 2014/15

Retention 88% in 2012 to 100% in 2014/15

Student evaluations take place during the semester some comments;

 I felt I progressed a lot largely due to the feedback I received

  Feedback actually set the mark to which each following assignment was done

Conclusion

A case study concept appears to suit the theoretical study of practical processes

The cases present an ideal platform to feed-forward for reflective learning

Reflection is recognised as an important process in higher level learning (Brown 1995)

Working collaboratively on presentations appears to have been a supportive opportunity for some

I believe the timeliness of the feedback is an important factor towards feeding-forward

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