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**STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSES:
ITS ROLE IN INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION, QUALITY ASSURANCE OF
PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FACULTY**

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ABSTRACT

Tertiary institutions have invested heavily in gaining student feedback on courses through the course questionnaire, which is a performance indicator for measuring quality of teaching and materials in a particular course.

This paper examines the key role of the course questionnaire in institutional evaluation, the quality assurance of educational programmes and strategic planning for teaching faculties. The methodology includes:

- a literature review on course feedback models;
- an examination of the course questionnaires used by The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.

The three main findings are that:

- there is sufficient research to attest that the course questionnaire offers a reliable, verifiable and useful means of determining course quality and consumer satisfaction;
- it is important to know the purpose of the instrument and use the results appropriately;
- the outcomes of course evaluation procedures can be quality assurance of courses and strategic planning for faculties.

STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSES: ITS ROLE IN INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION, QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROGRAMMES AND STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR FACULTY

INTRODUCTION

It has been known for a long time that we learn from our students and it's a silly lecturer or curriculum that does not pay heed. As Anna from the 'King and I' musical said: "*If you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught*" (Rodgers, 1951).

Nowadays, the New Zealand Government, through its accountability mechanisms for tertiary providers, requires such student analysis. While the Government presented the need for such analysis as new and formalised requirements of tertiary institutions, clearly student feedback on the curriculum and how it is delivered were commonplace long before current Government policy. The demands of the New Zealand Government for greater accountability and of consumers (society as a whole) for a greater say in the post compulsory education and training sector have been widely documented. Much of the Government's rhetoric in the late 1980s and 1990s, based around the consumer model of education and influenced by the quality improvement movement, found its way into subsequent legislation. The Education Amendment Act, 1990, introduced increased accountabilities through the quality assurance processes of tertiary providers. Tertiary providers, in order to gain taxpayer subsidies, are required to have their courses meet quality standards (Ministry of Education, 1998, p 20). Tertiary Institutions participate in quality assurance defined as: "*processes that ensure the quality of qualifications, teaching and research*" (p 21).

The New Zealand Government signalled its intention in the Tertiary Education Review: Policy Directions for the 21st Century, White Paper (1998) to make available to the public the result of quality audit of providers, qualifications and courses (p 25). In addition, the processes are to be strengthened to enable students to lay complaints about the quality of courses (p 24). Although the Tertiary Education Review has not yet been implemented, clearly all tertiary providers who wish to continue or to gain access to public funding need to assure others (for funding purposes) that they have systems in place to gain valid, reliable and comparable performance data on their courses and teaching quality, and that these will stand up to close public scrutiny.

Faculties strive for academic excellence and evaluation also serves for self-assurance. The main outcomes of course evaluation procedures should not be limited to quality assurance of an institution's educational courses and programmes for funding purposes and consumer satisfaction, but should also serve strategic planning for faculty. Student feedback is a key component of any institutional evaluation system and is one of the techniques used to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of courses (Calder, 1994, p 241).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the key role of student course questionnaires in institutional evaluation, the quality assurance of educational programmes, and strategic planning for faculties. The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) over recent times has reviewed how best to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of current instruments of student evaluation of courses. This paper reviews current practice of tertiary institutions and examines the TOPNZ experience in establishing its present set of course and programme questionnaires. This paper does not present research regarding the validity and reliability of any one course questionnaire.

This paper begins with a look at how external quality assurance requirements impact on the institutional evaluation of courses and programmes by students. From there the discussion moves to an overview of current practice in gaining student feedback by New Zealand and overseas tertiary institutions. Two well known standardised instruments- the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) - (Ramsden , 1991b) and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS) - are highlighted for closer examination, as these were chosen by TOPNZ and adapted and modified for distance and open education. The next section of the paper looks at the TOPNZ Past Student Destination Survey and compares that with the CEQ. Some interesting issues arise around the marketing perspective of the purposes of student feedback instruments and that of faculty. The following section looks at the range of feedback models adopted by TOPNZ, raises concerns about the possibility of over-surveying students, and questions some of the reasons for doing so. An important focus in the next section covers how student course feedback is used by TOPNZ faculty in their strategic planning. The paper concludes with some guidelines to assist institutions to review student course feedback models and a summary of the main findings.

INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

In order to gain accreditation to award national qualifications and degrees, tertiary institutions must satisfy such external agencies as: the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA); the Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) of the New Zealand Universities Vice Chancellors Committee (NZVCC); and the Association of the Polytechnics in New Zealand (APNZ) Programmes Committee (NZPPC). These agencies require assurance that appropriate quality management systems are in place, including the evaluation of courses and programmes. Institutions, as part of their quality assurance processes, are involved in moderation of their courses and annual auditing of courses and programmes.

A common response of institutions to these external requirements is to develop academic regulations, policies and procedures that refer specifically to the monitoring, evaluation, and review of courses and programmes.

The following definitions of 'evaluation', 'programme' and 'course' have been adopted by TOPNZ (1998b) and are used in this discussion:

"Evaluation is the process of making judgements about programmes and courses regarding performance against a set of standards and/or identification of aspects that could be improved."

"Programme means a course or set of courses leading to an award."

"Course is a course of study or training as defined in the Education Act 1989"

How course and programme are defined can cause confusion, and the TOPNZ definitions are not necessarily universally accepted. It is acknowledged here that course, depending on the circumstance it is being used, can refer to a whole diploma or degree.

CURRENT PRACTICE OF INSTITUTIONS IN GAINING STUDENT FEEDBACK ON COURSES *(including programmes, diplomas and degrees)*

It is common practice to survey students and many of the course questionnaires in use that have been developed as performance indicators for measuring the quality of teaching and materials in a particular course. According to Kaufman (1988):

"Performance Indicators (PIs) specify the measurable evidence necessary to prove that a planned effort has achieved the desired result" (p 80).

The development and application of PIs in tertiary institutions in New Zealand are a direct result of the economic model of education imposed by the Government under the guise of greater public accountability. The Government makes inputs: that is, provides funds to support the delivery of courses (such as academic salaries) and expects to measure (e.g., through the student questionnaire) outputs (such as the quality of teaching and materials).

Student evaluation of teaching is prevalent in the university sector world-wide, with student ratings being used as a basis for lecturers' promotion and tenure (Timpson & Andrew, 1997, p 55). One example of this is the 'Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality' (SEEQ), which is one of the most researched and validated instruments used on Australasian students (Marsh, 1987).

There is no one right method of gaining student feedback on courses. Many tertiary institutions use a variety of methods depending on the purpose for seeking feedback. The way face-to-face institutions and distance and open learning institutions elicit feedback from students differs. Face-to-face institutions can gain direct feedback at lectures or from formal written response forms, whereas distance and open learning institutions rely more heavily on postal surveys. Both types of institutions also use such interactive methods as focus groups and telephone surveys. This paper looks specifically at the role of written response course questionnaires.

Institutions have developed a range of written course feedback instruments for a variety of purposes: for example, fast-feedback questionnaires, used by lecturers to gain information on how students are experiencing the course and teaching. Institutions have also invested in researching and designing their own routine course questionnaires. A number of institutions have developed computerised item banks for lecturers to pick and choose from depending on the purpose of the feedback. There is the potential for online courses to gain student feedback via questionnaires on the Internet. Gaining feedback on the Internet is not without controversy. However, according to Lusk (1998), students are able to complete evaluations online, with security and anonymity maintained throughout the process by using a unique password known only to the individual student.

Many institutions adopt standardised student feedback questionnaires, used both in New Zealand and overseas. Institutions, which opt for standardised instruments tend to do so because they have been well researched and validated (prior to the institutions adopting them) and are therefore likely to provide reliable results that can be used by faculty. For example, two well known standardised instruments are Ramsden's Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) and the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS). These two instruments are discussed in detail in the next section as they were selected by TOPNZ as the ones most likely to be adopted for use with graduates.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION CONTROVERSY

There is some controversy around the usefulness, validity and reliability of student feedback as a source of data for course evaluations. It is common practice in tertiary institutions, nonetheless, to use student evaluation as a major source of course feedback (Calder, 1994). The literature in this area is immense. Arguments have been posited for and against the use of students to evaluate teacher and course effectiveness. Doyle and Crichton (1978) found that there was a high correlation between students' opinions and those of significant stakeholders involved in the same teaching and learning environment. Marsh (1987) carried out an extensive literature review on the

usefulness, validity and reliability of student evaluations and their relation to teaching effectiveness. He concludes that student ratings are a valid and reliable component in evaluating teacher effectiveness. Centra (1980) asserts that student evaluation of courses is both useful and accurate when compared with other evaluation methods such as peer evaluation. Baxter (1991) suggests that teachers find student evaluations of teaching beneficial, reliable and consistent. Ramsden (1991a) suggests that bias in student evaluation can be kept to a minimum by demanding stringent controls over the administration processes used in student evaluations and by limiting student feedback on teaching staff to those aspects about which they are informed.

Later studies raise the issue of relying only on student evaluation of teacher and course effectiveness (Centra, 1993; Seldin, 1993). They argue that the use of one technique (student evaluation) provides a somewhat incomplete and possibly incorrect picture of the effectiveness of a particular teacher or course (ibid). They also suggest the need to use, in addition to student feedback, other sources of possible data such as peer feedback and analysis of student work (ibid).

Pedhazur et al's research on '*Faculty Perspectives on Course and Teacher Evaluation*' (1997), found that formative and summative student feedback to faculty was useful. Faculty rated student feedback from "most useful" to them to "least useful" to them. Faculty interaction with students was considered most useful. Lecturers' grading practices were next useful followed by student ratings of lecturer and course. Rated least useful was feedback on structural issues within the course. Consequently, this paper contends that there is compelling evidence to indicate that student feedback is useful, valid and reliable as one source of data for course evaluations.

COURSE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (CEQ)

Despite the controversy, tertiary institutions make extensive use of student feedback instruments such as the CEQ. Much of the recent research has been devoted to examining the validity and reliability of the CEQ and according to Wilson et al (1996):

"Present findings reinforce the confidence with which the CEQ can be used as an educational evaluation tool (p 45)."

The CEQ is used by universities and other higher educational institutions in Australia, the United Kingdom and to a lesser extent New Zealand as a measure of perceived teaching quality of a whole course or a degree programme (Ainley & Long, 1995).

There is more than one form of the CEQ. This paper refers to the CEQ that consists of 25 items in a Likert format with five scales. Despite its critics (Andrich, de Jong & Sheridan, 1994; Sheridan 1995; Waugh, 1998), the Likert format remains a widely used attitudinal scale. Respondents are required to rate each statement on a scale of 5 points, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The five scales used in the CEQ are:

Good teaching Scale;
Clear Goals and Standards Scale;
Appropriate Assessment Scale;
Appropriate Workload Scale;
Generic Skills Scale.

In addition to these scales, there is a single Overall Satisfaction Item (Ainley & Long, 1995). The CEQ is used for comparing courses within a particular field of study, within an institution and across institutions or for comparing the same course or fields of study over time (ibid, 1995).

New Zealand tertiary institutions are able to make use of extensive Australian data and norms to make comparisons within fields of study. It has been found that it is inappropriate to compare CEQ scales between fields of study such as Medicine and Education, as differences between fields can alter the mean score on a scale by more than one standard deviation (Ramsden & Dodd, 1993).

In Britain, Ramsden & Entwistle (1981) developed the Course Perceptions Questionnaire to measure students' experiences of certain degree courses and university departments. This instrument was modified by Ramsden (1991a) to produce the original Course Experience Questionnaire. The CEQ was successfully piloted on a large number of undergraduate students in Australia (Ramsden, 1991b).

The CEQ is not without its critics, however. Sheridan (1995) carried out a study of approximately 400 graduates from three universities using the Extended Logistic Model of Rasch (1980), and found that:

“Doubt exists regarding the measurement of the quality of the CEQ overall and its continued use of this instrument in its present form” (p21).

Despite its critics, however the CEQ has established itself as a key source of course feedback. The CEQ is mailed out to all university graduates in Australia along with the Graduate Destination Survey about four months after their graduation (Waugh, 1998). A number of New Zealand tertiary institutions also distribute it to coincide with routine mail outs to graduands. The CEQ is one of two standardised instruments adopted and modified by TOPNZ for use in distance and open learning.

GRADUATE DESTINATION SURVEY (GDS)

The Graduate Destination Survey has been used by the university sector for a number of years and by many Polytechnics in more recent times. The main purpose of the survey conducted in the university sector by the NZVCC is to identify the graduates who have gained employment, in which industry sector, and whether their job is related to their qualification and the remuneration level. The NZVCC surveys university graduates who have successfully completed programme requirements equivalent to at least one year of full time study. The NZVCC produces an annual report on graduate employment (NZVCC, 1996).

THE OPEN POLYTECHNIC OF NEW ZEALAND 'GRADUATE' SURVEY (KNOWN AS PAST STUDENT DESTINATION SURVEY)

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand is a large distance education tertiary institution teaching well over 30,000 students from throughout New Zealand and overseas. Approximately half of the students are aged 30 or over. Around 70 percent of the students live in towns and cities. The majority of students are in paid employment and seeking to improve, or have their skills recognised and gain formal qualifications (Butterfield, 1999, p1).

In early 1998, TOPNZ was looking to introduce a process to monitor the impact of TOPNZ study on 'graduates' in terms of employment status, remuneration and course satisfaction. Whatever instruments TOPNZ adopted, it was decided to adapt the instrument to meet distance and open education requirements.

The TOPNZ graduate instrument combined elements of the Graduate Destination Survey and the Course Experience Questionnaire (described above) as well as TOPNZ-specific questions. It was called the 'Past Student Destination Survey'.

According to the marketing division of TOPNZ, the intended purpose of the TOPNZ Past Student Destination Survey is to:

"...provide information on what happened to students as a result of studying with TOPNZ. It is essentially an 'outcome' measure that seeks to understand what difference TOPNZ study has made to students. On that basis, its primary purpose relates to ownership of reporting- to be able to respond to the Crown as TOPNZ's primary funder, in terms of what they are getting for their funding dollar. In addition to enabling outcome reporting to owners, a destination survey may also provide information about the perception of successful customers on the quality of our products/services and could also provide some clues to possible marketing strategies"(TOPNZ, 1998a).

At this point it is prudent to reflect on the eloquent "marketing speak" above that clearly encapsulates an institution 'owned' by and accountable to the Government 'funder'. The funder is looking for 'outputs' in measurable terms (e.g., through a standardised survey) that 'graduates' have succeeded and feel good about the 'products and services' of the institution. Thus, the Government in turn can be pleased that their funding dollar is well spent! This surely begs the question of: 'Do the academics share Marketing's view or does the faculty have a different view?' This issue is explored in the section on how faculty use student written questionnaire feedback.

The results of the Past Student Destination Survey are shared with TOPNZ staff and it is up to faculty to use the information as it sees fit. There is no specific feedback on a particular course, but there is generalised feedback in fields such as Real Estate and Psychology. Graduate evaluation can be one of the techniques used for determining the quality of courses and to identify areas for improvement. Faculty members may choose to use graduate feedback to help them with their strategic planning (explored in detail later in this paper).

The Past Student Destination Survey is designed to elicit information from all 'graduates' on reasons for studying at TOPNZ; their employment situation following study; their perceptions of the completed course or programme and about any future study plans. The survey is conducted with all students who successfully complete a course or programme of study and who do not subsequently re-enrol within six months.

The postal survey was sent out to approximately 5000 'graduates'. In 1998, this first year of the survey, there was a 40% response rate. A reminder postcard was sent to all 'graduates'. However, in 1999 this practice ceased and the response rate dropped to 27% (TOPNZ, 1999). Institutions that elicit student feedback through mail out course questionnaires are faced with the challenge of how to enhance participation to ensure a valid number of responses. Respondent incentives for returning surveys (such as cash prizes, book vouchers etc.) may enhance participation. An external contractor collated, analysed and presented the results of returned TOPNZ questionnaires. The external contractor was required to provide a report on the key results and present the results to selected TOPNZ staff. A summary of the results was used in the Annual Report.

COMPARISON BETWEEN TOPNZ PAST STUDENT DESTINATION SURVEY AND THE COURSE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The TOPNZ Past Student Destination Survey is a combination of a version of the GDS and a version of the CEQ adapted for distance and open learning. The validity of the CEQ is dependent on correct use and interpretation (Ramsden & Dodd, 1993). While the TOPNZ version is currently meeting its needs, it may not be appropriate to compare the findings with those of other institutions. The way TOPNZ defines 'graduate' (i.e. a student who has successfully completed a course of study or programme and not re-enrolled within six months) differs to the university sector's definition of a graduate (defined as having at least successfully completed one year full time study leading to a qualification or a degree).

The TOPNZ Past Student Destination Survey comprises 26 questions (of which only one relates to the CEQ) and has 21 items from the total 25 CEQ items. The TOPNZ survey also differs somewhat to the CEQ in that it refers to teaching material rather than teaching staff. Altering the wording on some items has altered the meaning from that of the original CEQ item. Four items found in the CEQ are not used in the Past Student Destination Survey.

It would not be appropriate for TOPNZ to compare the results of this version of the CEQ (as part of the Past Student Destination Survey) with those of other institutions because of how TOPNZ defines 'graduate' and how it has adapted some CEQ items and omitted others.

OTHER STUDENT COURSE FEEDBACK INSTRUMENTS AT THE OPEN POLYTECHNIC OF NEW ZEALAND

In addition to the Past Student Destination Survey TOPNZ has adopted a variety of feedback instruments designed to serve specific purposes. Student evaluations are analysed and the results and recommendations are shared with key stakeholders such as lecturers, Heads of School, course designers, library services and the Academic Board.

The institution gathers course and programme feedback from students through:

- the lecturer- initiated, course evaluation questionnaire, which is inserted into course packs and posted back to TOPNZ by students when the course is completed;
- student evaluation of workshops and seminar feedback sheet, designed and administered by lecturers. This is handed out at the end of the workshop and is either filled in at the time or posted back ;
- the ad hoc course questionnaire designed and administered by lecturers to get specific feedback for a particular course;
- the 'Student Evaluation of Course Questionnaire'. This is a formal postal survey of all new courses after their first year and all courses with enrolments of over 40 students. This is run over a three year cycle;
- programme evaluations, which are ad hoc comprehensive projects involving numerous stakeholders and a variety of methods such focus groups and telephone interviews;
- the 'Student Satisfaction Survey', which is used to gauge levels of satisfaction of current students services and courses. This major postal questionnaire surveys over 10,000 students and is conducted on an annual basis by an external contractor. Questions cover: enrolment, learning support, contacting TOPNZ, information services, timeliness, value of TOPNZ qualification and image of TOPNZ. Results are made available to the public and are used in the annual report to the Ministry of Education.

It is clear from the review of current practice of other tertiary institutions (discussed earlier) that TOPNZ is not unique in adopting a variety of methods of surveying students in order to gain their feedback for numerous purposes. An issue yet to be addressed is 'Are students being over surveyed?' To quote from a recently surveyed student at TOPNZ:

" I have filled in this survey (the student course questionnaire) and it took me a lot longer than the stated time, there is that survey in the course material I filled out and the 0800 had their survey (that took ages on the phone). I am pleased you want my opinion, but it is too much, it makes me angry."

Admittedly this student would be the exception and TOPNZ has policies in place to prevent this happening, but occasionally over-surveying does happen. TOPNZ is probably not the only tertiary institution where this occurs. It seems that we may ask far too many questions of students (low response rates on passive instruments are a possible indicator), when we could perhaps rationalise our questionnaires to fewer and more focused ones. Without a doubt, this is more easily said than done. Prioritising the institution's most essential questions and questionnaires and the timing of delivery may help.

Another important issue to be addressed is how much are student views being sought to provide a tick in a box and fulfil yet another internal or external quality assurance requirement? One would hope that institutions through their continuous improvement processes, aim to rationalise quality assurance requirements and thus to lessen the likelihood of respondent fatigue. The next section of this paper explores the issues of how student feedback is used by faculty.

HOW TOPNZ FACULTY USES STUDENT COURSE FEEDBACK IN THEIR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Marsh (1987) suggests that course evaluations can provide a great deal of information that is

" useful for feedback to faculty, useful for personal decisions, useful to students in the selection of courses, and useful for the study of teaching (p 369)."

The most important aspect of course evaluation is how faculty uses the results. Most staff at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand are committed to making maximum use of the feedback elicited from students through various written course and programme student questionnaires. Stanton, 1998, (from ad-hoc informal feedback from groups of Course Leaders, Section Heads, Head of Schools and Course Design Team) found they used information from evaluations on courses and programmes to find out:

- how student expectations of courses were met;
- how course materials were meeting the learning requirements of students;
- how the pace and amount of work were supporting student learning;
- how useful students found lecturers' feedback;
- if the course was pitched at an inappropriate level of cognitive difficulty for its level or stage;
- if the requirements for assessments were clear;
- if there was evidence for course revision or re-development.

Lecturers at TOPNZ recently were asked what did they think the purpose of student feedback on their courses was? They gave a variety of responses indicating clear understanding of the impact of external and internal quality assurance requirements on them. Below is a sample of their responses:

“To check on the quality of the product, a consumer test. Tied into reporting to the public eye to justify our operations.”

“ A procedure relentlessly followed, compliance.”

Other lecturers indicated that they would use student evaluations to review their course. Below is a sample of their responses:

“Should be to help TOPNZ to improve courses. I do wonder if it is to fulfil a policy.”

“ To provide a framework for course analysis and action.”

“To check on students’ perceptions of the course quality and delivery and see if there is need for improvement.”

The responses above were part of a follow up interview with lecturers after they had read an evaluation report on their course based on student reactions to: course materials; clarity of learning outcomes; workload, assessment and feedback and two open-ended questions on what students did and did not like about their course. It should be noted that most lecturers interviewed (even those who were sceptical about the purpose of the evaluation process) did, through the course of the interview, indicate a willingness to take on board their students’ comments and take action where appropriate.

Faculty management has a clear role to play in encouraging fellow academics to act as a result of the student evaluation of courses or programmes. There may be times when management needs to point out to staff that some action is required to improve the course. Mechanisms may need to be put in place that encourage reporting back to faculty management: what happened, what didn’t happen and why?

While student evaluation is primarily for faculty members to review their current courses and plan for the future, clearly students also have a right to feedback on course evaluation. One way of closing the loop with students is by providing key findings of the evaluation report through student newsletters. Students need evidence that their opinions have been listened to and appropriate action has resulted.

GUIDELINES TO ASSIST INSTITUTIONS TO REVIEW STUDENT COURSE FEEDBACK INSTRUMENTS

As a result of reviewing current practices in gaining student feedback on courses, this paper suggests that institutions which choose to review the efficiency and effectiveness of their instruments may like to consider:

- identifying the institution’s own specific purposes for gaining student feedback (e.g., strategic planning for faculty);
- identifying external factors impacting on evaluation requirements (e.g., NZQA quality assurance requirements);
- reviewing institutional academic regulations, policy and procedures on course student feedback;
- identifying best practice mechanisms for gaining student feedback on courses both in New Zealand and overseas;
- consulting with stakeholders (e.g., faculty, students, Academic Board) as to which methods to use to get feedback; for example, mail out questionnaires and/or focus groups. Also whether to go with established instruments or develop one’s own;
- identifying systems requirements (e.g., online course evaluation, student data base, postal requirements and computer software to aid statistical analysis);
- identifying the costs, benefits, limitations and potential of various student feedback mechanisms.

SUMMARY

This paper examined the key role of student course questionnaires in institutional evaluation, the quality assurance of education programmes, and strategic planning for faculty. The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) reviewed how best to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of models of student evaluation of courses. It decided on a variety of approaches depending on the purpose of the student evaluation. The institution adapted standardised instruments (the CEQ and the SDS) to become the Past Student Destination Survey. The adaptation of the CEQ impacted on the validity and reliability of the instrument.

There are three main conclusions reached: first, that there is sufficient research to attest that the course questionnaire (as one source of feedback) offers a reliable, verifiable and useful means of determining course quality and student satisfaction. Second, it is important to know the purpose of the instrument and use the results appropriately (for example, engineering and childcare have very different profiles). It's about choosing the right instrument for different purposes and backing it up with reliable records, meetings and continuous improvements cycles. Third, the outcomes of course evaluation procedures can be quality assurance of courses and strategic planning for teaching faculties.

It is right and proper that we seek student feedback because it is academically appropriate to do so. It provides an external perspective to the self-reflection academics should be involved in. It is, of course, also required as part of the economic model of education. Let us strive to ensure it comes from the first in its primary motivation and that we are not merely complying with external controls.

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