

Project Title:

Exploring feedback-seeking behaviour in workplace education using Feedback Postcards

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Thank you for allocating us funding through PTAS, without which we would not have been able to conduct this research. The grant was used to fund part of a wider research project in Edinburgh Medical School, exploring how undergraduate learners seek feedback and the impact it has on their learning.

Background

In their commentaries on feedback, students often refer to “receiving feedback” but seldom mention proactively seeking their own feedback. However, organizational psychology and higher education literature suggests that learners who actively seek feedback may be perceived to have more value and improve satisfaction with less risk to self-esteem and intrinsic motivation. Therefore encouraging students to actively seek feedback brings benefits that should continue to promote active and self-regulated learning. This however has not been studied in medical education.

Aims

This research explored students’ capacity to shape their own education with respect to seeking feedback and the effect of actively seeking feedback on students’ intrinsic motivation. We also designed, developed, implemented and evaluated a formative workplace based assessment tool, the Feedback Postcards, for students in years 3, 4 and 5 of a 5 year MBChB course and aimed to allow students to proactively seek written feedback so they could reflect on it at a later date and monitor their own progression. evaluate the Feedback Postcard system to develop it further and create a toolkit for others who may wish to set up a similar system.

Methodology and methods

The Feedback Postcards were designed, developed and implemented using Mutual Consultation and Directed Consultation models, which are on the Participatory Action Research continuum (Chung and Lounsbury, 2006). Grounded theory methodology (Charmaz 2014) was used to explore the relationship between feedback seeking and students’ intrinsic motivation and capacity to shape their own learning. Data were collected using staff and student questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Focus groups and interviews were transcribed and all data were thematically analysed using NVivo during the study.

Results

The Feedback Postcards went through three developmental cycles to refine the design and were used by over 750 undergraduate students and 1000 staff across 6 different NHS trusts in Scotland, from Lothian to Stornaway and Dumfries. Over 20 300 postcards were completed.

More detailed results of the study have been presented at the following regional, national and international meetings and abstracts for the national and international meetings can be found online:

- Association for the Study of Medical Education. Aug 2015. Edinburgh. (funded by CME)
- Association for Medical Education in Europe. Sept 2015. Glasgow. (funded by CME)
- Principal's Teaching Award Scheme. June 2016. Edinburgh.
- Association for Medical Education in Europe. Aug 2016. Barcelona. (registration funded by PTAS)

We also identified areas for staff development, including the need to increase training on how to give feedback. This will allow us to focus our resources in a cost effective manner. We aimed to address some of these training needs by producing a series of videos illustrating different feedback models. These videos are available for viewing at :

In addition, we produced a Standard Operating Procedure to create and process the Feedback Postcards so other departments and universities can build on our work.

Breakdown of grant

Total £5000
Administrator support (Grade 5): 3h per week (Mailmerging, organising, scanning)
Senior staff support (Grade 8): 1 hour per month
Transcribing data from focus groups and interviews
Travel expenses and hospitality for focus groups
Fees to attend one conference to disseminate findings

References

Charmaz, K., 2014. Constructing grounded theory. Sage.

Chung, K., Lounsbury, D.W., 2006. The role of power, process, and relationships in participatory research for statewide HIV/AIDS programming. Soc. Sci. Med. 63, 2129–2140.