Student feedback surveys: Cant live with it, cant live without it!

*Education costs money. Ignorance costs more…*

Dr. Maria Rodriguez-Yborra
Psychology and Education Subject Group
Mar2@bolton.ac.uk
University of Bolton, UK
### What could happen in 2014?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Happening? (1 low – 3 high)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Cameron Resigns</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Queen abdicates</td>
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<tr>
<td>England wins the world cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manchester United is relegated</td>
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</table>
What could happen in 2014?

All these might not happen at all...

One thing will: Students satisfaction demands will increase!
Why ‘Surveys’?
Why ‘Surveys’?

- Students' perceptions of their experiences at university
- Snapshot of university performance (from students’ point of view)
- Statistical (reliable?) data / evidence
- Periodical view of progression of students’ experiences
- Accountability?
Why ‘Surveys’?...

It is usually convenient because...

• Allows departments to limit questions to certain objectives, allowing for more efficient analysis

• Several surveys can be comparatively analysed to detect themes (triangulation)

• Results can be easily summarised
Why ‘Surveys’?...

• Results can be compared with open-ended responses and/or interviews to detect themes

• Can be used with direct assessments of student learning to comparatively analyse for themes (surveys are not considered methods of direct assessment of student learning)
But... what is a Survey?

- A survey is a method of measurement by which respondents offer their opinions in respect to specific questions.
- Answers are usually limited to certain questions and are measured on a specific scale.
- Surveys can also contain open-ended questions that lead to qualitative analysis, which can then lead to a comparison with closed-ended responses.
Type of Surveys: aimed to...

1. Student
2. Alumni
3. Employer
4. Performance
5. Field Experience
6. Internship/Placement
7. others…
What do they normally cover?

- The teaching and/or research on programmes
- Academic support
- Organisation & management
- Learning resources
- Assessment & feedback
- Personal development
- Overall satisfaction
- Student Union
UoB most common students’ surveys
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Eligible</th>
<th>Dates (2013)</th>
<th>Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSS</strong> National Student Survey</td>
<td>All final year students (including HND, FD, but not top-ups)</td>
<td>14\textsuperscript{th} Jan to 30\textsuperscript{th} April (14/01 – 28/02 for prizes)</td>
<td>Led and run externally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PTES</strong> Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey</td>
<td>All postgraduate taught students (including overseas and partners)</td>
<td>18\textsuperscript{th} Feb to mid April</td>
<td>Led by HEA but run by UoB using Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRES</strong> Postgraduate Research Student Survey</td>
<td>All postgraduate research students</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{th} of March to 31\textsuperscript{st} of May</td>
<td>Led by HEA but run by UoB using Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>USSS</strong> Univ. Student Satisfaction Survey</td>
<td>All students not included in NSS (including overseas but not CPDs)</td>
<td>18\textsuperscript{th} of March to Mid May (before exam boards)</td>
<td>UoB led &amp; run using Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MES</strong> Module evaluation survey</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Every trimester/semester</td>
<td>UoB led &amp; run using Bristol template*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further details on results in the UoB Sharepoint
The NSS...
The NSS is a survey for final year students conducted by Ipsos MORI, the second largest market research organisation in the UK, on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The results from the NSS have been used heavily to determine student satisfaction levels and affect university rankings.
According to HEFCE

On the NSS,

‘The National Student Survey (NSS) gathers opinions on the quality of students’ courses. The purpose of this is to contribute to public accountability and help inform the choices of prospective students.’
NSS criticisms...

• ‘NSS scores' inclusion in KIS could offer perverse incentives. *(Times HE)*

• There is also widespread concern about the nature of the NSS, which many believe equates high student satisfaction scores with quality, and its effect on KIS. *(King's College London)*

• NSS scores contained in the sets could be used to rank universities without considering the profiles of each institution's students. *(Duna Sabri, research fellow in higher education policy)*

• An increased focus on the survey through the KIS could distract universities from more meaningful ways to improve courses. *(Lancaster University)*

• It is all about processes, satisfaction and treating students as customers... *(THE)*
Influence of KIS

KIS: Key Information Set

‘Items of information which students have said they find most useful when making choices about which course to study’. HEFCE

- Some items are from DLHE (Destination of Leaver from HE)
- Some Items are from NSS (9 questions)
DLHE (HESA) survey

- Graduates activities (studying, working, looking, travelling)
- Job description
- Company or nature of job
- Destination across subject areas
- Longitudinal (recent graduates and 40 months later) to follow-up. Results of both are brought up together
KIS

- Staff are good at explaining things
- Staff have made the subject interesting
- Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course
- I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies
- Feedback on my work has been prompt
- Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand
- The library resources are good enough for my needs
- I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to
- I am satisfied with the student union
Main issues @ UoB

Lower response rate

UoB consistently has shown a lower student satisfaction on assessment and feedback

Affecting our University ranking
The USSS...

Lower response rate? Incentives (‘you said we did’, prices, more student engagement, Proactive SU, other good practices in the sector, etc)

UoB consistently has shown a lower student satisfaction on assessment and feedback: tutorials explaining meaning, reflect on impact, etc

Affecting our University ranking: support subject areas struggling, celebrate those that are outstanding, disseminate, strength academics-learners collaboration
Challenges to overcome

**Survey ‘fatigue’** phenomenon

**Time** and staff to deal with large amounts of unprocessed data

Staff’s perception that surveys are being used primarily for **summative** (and possibly) **punitive** purposes and/or for **invalid comparisons** across different programs

**Lack of clarity** about how best to improve the situation once an enhancement priority is identified

**Lack of engagement** with improvement efforts

A potential failure to put the use of such tools into perspective, to determine **what they are and are not good for** *(what students can and cant tell us)*

*Disseminate the completion of the NSS!*
So, what *can* we do with the collected data?

- It is often helpful to use several different sources of information (*surveys and other assessments*) so that common themes can be detected from different sources.

- Triangulation means that these *themes* are detected from different sources (preferably detected in faculty meetings).
Examples of possible triangulations (1)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

University Student Satisfaction Survey (USSS)

National Student Surveys (NSS)
Examples of possible triangulations (2)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Postgraduate Taught Experience (PTES)

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Examples of possible triangulations (3)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

University Student Satisfaction Survey (USSS)

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Examples of possible triangulations (4)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

National Student Survey (NSS)  Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Examples of possible triangulations (5)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Staff Self-Reflection

Student Assessment/achievement
Examples of possible triangulations (6)

Module Evaluation Survey (MES)

Student Assessment/achievement

Peer Observation of Teaching (POT)
Creating meaning and closing the ‘loop’

- **Ideally**, subject groups play a role in designing surveys (when possible), reviewing their use, analysing data, and producing findings

- **Important note**: Survey findings can only be useful in assessment if they lead to helping our understanding of how students' perceptions of their experiences at university are to be interpreted

- **Important also**: Any assessment **can only** be useful if it leads to documented action that leads to enhancement of student learning and experience
Conclusion

Interpreting the results of student evaluation questionnaires as ratings of satisfaction are unlikely to result in major improvements for the students.

Instead we should use the results to help our understanding of how students' perceptions of their experiences at university are to be interpreted in relation to their previous experiences, dispositions and learning activities so that changes in policy and practice can be based on reliable evidence.

This is likely to be much more productive in improving those experiences - as well as students' overall satisfaction rating.
'The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. There are consistently high correlations between students’ ratings of the “amount learned” in the course and their overall ratings of the teacher and the course'.
WE OFTEN ARE ASKED HOW WE PROCESS OUR RESEARCH.

FIRST, WE CHECK ALL OF THE RESULTS.

SECOND, WE THROW AWAY THE ONES WE DON'T LIKE.

THIRD, WE TABULATE THE REMAINDER.
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO DO STATISTICS BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER BECAUSE I DIDN'T HAVE DATA.
Main references

HEFCE website (accessed 03.06.2013)

Prof. Terry Doyle’s Blog http://learnercenteredteaching.wordpress.com/articles-and-books/evaluating-teacher-effectiveness-%E2%80%94research-summary/ (accessed 03.06.2013)


UNISTAT [online 21/06/2013  http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/
Many Thanks!

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