Aim

The aim of this project is to investigate the usefulness of using Twitter and wordclouds to determine the contribution they make to clarifying learning gain for students.

Overview

How do you know what students are learning in class from day to day?

This poster describes part 1 of a process designed to effectively communicate what students felt they had learned during a classroom session. I did this to try and go beyond traditional methods of evaluation and really focus on what they felt they had learned. So, I asked students in my class to reflect on what we had done that morning with reference to our intended learning outcomes and record their thoughts on bespoke evaluation cards. The data generated by these were converted to a word cloud generator that enabled the “big ideas” to be seen. So far so good; now I knew what the big ideas were but how would I get that information back to the students? Normally I would put pictures up on Blackboard Learn but I wanted them to get the picture quickly so it occurred to me that Twitter would serve this purpose succinctly. So, the word cloud was tweeted to the students using a unique hashtag, (#pgcne16 and #pgcne16s2) and thus I could see when they accessed it and knew they were getting it in a timely fashion.

Method

Instructions for using the learning evaluation cards
- Provide students with clear instructions about how to complete the cards using short phrases or key words about what they feel they learned in the session
- Collect in the cards
- Read and analyse what they said
- Transcribe the data into a new document in Nvivo. Some data cleaning is needed here. For example, if the students have written variations of a word, like questions, questioning and question. This can be all entered as question to make sure that the idea of question is adequately represented. Only keywords need to be entered as Nvivo will analyse everything
- Code the data at a new node
- Run a word frequency query and select Wordcloud from the right hand menu
- Once you have chosen the format you like right click the wordcloud and select export wordcloud and save it as a png in a folder
- Open Twitter. Click ‘new tweet’. Use your class’ hashtag. Say something like, “here’s what we learned in class today, (#insert hashtag)”, or, “the big ideas for (#insert hashtag) were” Insert the picture and press Tweet:

Next steps
- Once all of the wordclouds had been completed the next step was to assemble them into a collage, (and Tweet)
- The collage can be arranged beside the learning outcomes from the module.
- This was then sent to the students as a ‘word search’ who were able to link the ideas in the clouds to the intended learning outcomes and see what had been achieved.
- This served to illustrate that they were on target and also identified some unintended outcomes too.

What now?
- The next thing is to carry out some research asking the students their view.
- Ethical approval for this has been granted and a focus group will facilitate the students to articulate their experience
- Using a creative method to facilitate the focus group conversation students will be asked to reflect on how useful this exercise has been and from this suggest improvement and/or refinements

References


www.ulster.ac.uk @Brimcgowan