





PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- 1. Background
- 2. Student evaluations at the UFS
- 3. Towards institutional evaluation system at the UFS
- 4. Recommendations

BACKGROUND

"Student feedback is one of the most powerful tools in the ongoing improvement of higher education" (Alderman, Towers & Bannah, 2012)

- Student feedback is important in quality enhancement of HEIs
- Student evaluations as a mechanism for gathering feedback from students
- Terminology: Student evaluations/ module evaluations/ course evaluations

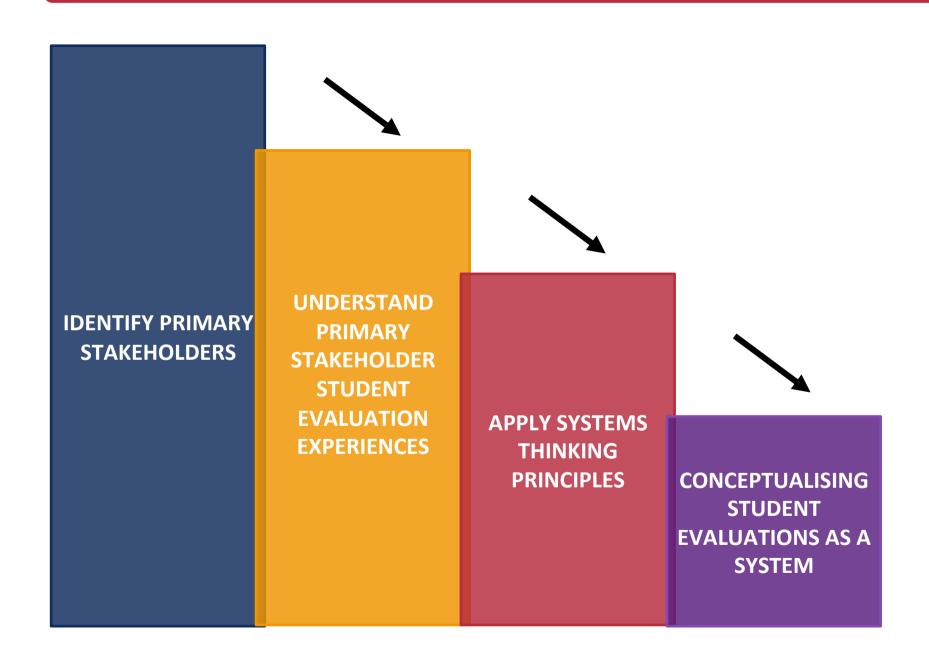


- Insight into student learning experiences alone is not enough...it
 also needs to be USED optimally: Focus of the presentation =
 optimising the way in which student feedback is gathered & used
- Student evaluations through a systems thinking lens

STUDENT EVALUATIONS AT THE UFS

BEFORE 2013	FROM 2013
 Different instruments for different faculties Different procedures Paper surveys 	 Pilot project: Review of the student evaluation instrument Stakeholder consultation Phased approach to institutionalise student evaluations
DECENTRALISED	INSTITUTIONALISED

TOWARDS INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT EVALUATIONS



Data providers

Students

IDENTIFY PRIMARY STAKEHOLDERS

Data users

- Lecturers
- Teaching and Learning Managers (TLMs)

STUDENTS

- Evaluation results of 609 modules
- 25 576 Student evaluations
- 6 Focus groups (60 students)
- 16 Interviews

PRIMARY
STAKEHOLDER
STUDENT
EVALUATION
EXPERIENCES

LECTURERS

25 Interviews

TLMs

6 Interviews

Lack of formal guidelines

- Concern highlighted by lecturers
- Some TLMs involved in student evaluations for the first time in pilot
- Pilot addressed this overall positively experienced by lecturers & TLMs

Inconsistent use of evaluation results

- Some used to adapt/ improve T&L practices some not at all
- Quantitative & qualitative comments
- Few discussions with HoDs
- TLMs focused mainly on poor results
- Promotions
- Students uncertain

PRIMARY
STAKEHOLDER
EXPERIENCES

Timing of evaluations

- At the end of the module
- Students rarely receive feedback
- Earlier evaluations recommended by lecturers and students

PRIMARY
STAKEHOLDER
EXPERIENCES

Concern with online evaluations

- Major concern with the pilot = low response rates of online evaluations
- Lecturers prefer hardcopy
- TLMs prefer online
- Students complete online evaluations in their free time

Introduction to Systems Thinking

- A system is "a set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network; a complex whole"
- Systems thinking offers a broad view and avoids approaching problems in isolation. A broad view allows one to analyse problems on a deeper level - requires a focus on the relationships between different parts of the system.

System components

Bess & Dee (2012)

Environment

- Everything outside of the system that has an influence on the system
- Boundaries
- Separates system from its environment and its subsystems
- Permeability determines openness of a system
 more open interacts more effortlessly with its environment
- Sub-systems
- <u>Production: Process raw materials to create</u> final products
- <u>Supportive:</u> Enable production subsystems in the production process
- <u>Maintenance:</u> Facilitate human dynamics within a system to enable them to do their work
- Adaptive: Responsible for considering the long term survival of the system
- Managerial: Responsible for decision-making

Underlying assumptions

Holism

Dent & Umpleby (1998)

- Something can best be understood as a whole
- "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts"
- Relationships
- Interconnections between subsystems and between the system and the bigger system that it is a part of
- Interdeterminism
- Acknowledgement of the unpredictability of the effects that interventions may have on a system
- Highlights complexity of a system
- Causality
- Causality is circular rather than linear
- Series of events each taking place as consequence of the previous event.
 Instead of ending with a final event, the last event affects the first event again.

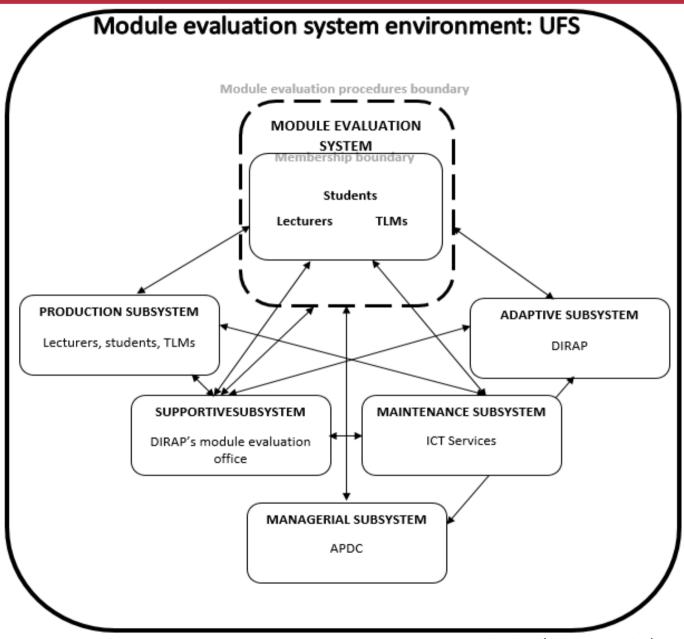
System components

Bess & Dee (2012)

Environment

- External environment (increased focus on quality of T&L)
- UFS policies (QEP & T&L policy)
- Student feedback culture
- Boundaries
- Relatively open boundaries
- Processes & procedures that govern the system
- Membership boundaries
- Sub-systems
- Production: Lecturers, students, TLMs
- Supportive: Central Student Evaluation Office
- Maintenance: ICT Services
- Adaptive: DIRAP
- Managerial: APDC

SYSTEM COMPONENTS



SYSTEM DYNAMICS

HOLISM

- Establishing student evaluations as a system bird's eye view
- Inter-relatedness of subsystems some of which not originally considered part of student evaluations system and changes in these impacts the system
- Implication for interventions need to take account of all subsystems that are likely to be affected

RELATIONSHIPS

Student evaluation system and its environment

- Role that student evaluations play within the quality enhancement framework of the UFS: this relationship enables the existence of the system
- Formal procedures to ensure the system functions more effectively within the UFS environment

Student evaluation system and its subsystems

- Relationship with its production subsystem Crucial in the production of the 2 main products of student evaluations: 1) student feedback and 2) using student feedback to understand + improve T&L practices
- Relationship with its supportive subsystem Student evaluation office & TLMs

SYSTEM DYNAMICS

INTERDETERMINISM

- Unpredictability of effects of interventions unintended consequences
- Response rates why does encouragement not always work?

CAUSALITY

Causality of the UFS student evaluation system is circular

SYSTEM DYNAMICS

TLMs gather module evaluation information from lecturers

New group of students enter the module TLMs send module evaluation information forms to module evaluation office

Lecturers use module evaluation results Module evaluation office makes module evaluation questionnaires available to students

TLMs send module evlaluation results to lecturers

Module evaluation office extracts module evaluation results and sends it to TLMs Students complete module evaluation questionnaires

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formal institutional student evaluation guidelines and procedures

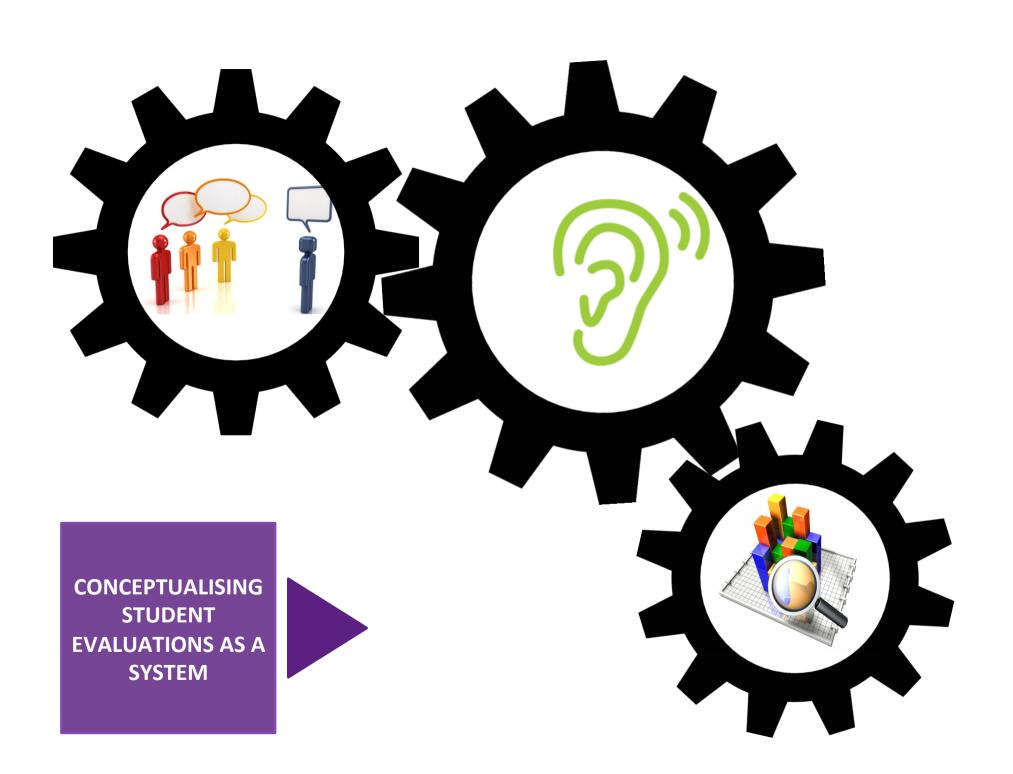
- Pilot did address the issue to an extent recommended that a policy be put in place at the UFS
- Institutional instrument

Addressing inconsistent use of student evaluation results

- Using quantitative data
- Closing the feedback loop
- Lecturers & HoDs take ownership of the student evaluation process
- If used for promotion explicit guidelines & criteria (e.g. minimum response rate + use in conjunction with other sources of data)
- TLMs use results to monitor T&L over time + work with individual lecturers

Timing of evaluations

Earlier







Reference list

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