An Approach to Supporting and Enhancing Self-Assessment through Asynchronous Online Peer-Feedback

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Abstract

Teacher-student hand-holding in further/higher education is no longer viable. For far too long the teacher's role was to enlighten students on where they are, where they should go and how they should get there. However, today's competitive knowledge economy demands graduates who are capable of setting their own standards of performance and monitoring their own progress via meaningful and relevant self-assessment. Hence, this thesis seeks to add to the body of research concentrated on developing self-regulated learners using new methodologies and technologies.

The main difficulty with self-assessment is the inability of students to assess their work comparable to the way a teacher would assess it, especially when self-grading is involved. Numerous studies confirm students tend to over/under estimate their performance. Such lack of correspondence gives rise to questions such as: can external feedback reduce grade distortion? Can peer feedback come to the rescue as teacher feedback is in decline? Can technology augment the self-assessment activity? This study explored if Asynchronous Online Discussion technology could support a peer-feedback self-assessment process and further investigates if such online peer-feedback could support and enhance self-assessments. To answer these questions, quantitative and qualitative data was collected through questionnaires, documentation and participant observations.

The study conclusively showed that if an asynchronous online peer-feedback self-assessment is to be pedagogically sound, proven constructs must be utilised in its design, construction and implementation. Once such strategies are effectively implemented along with comprehensive teacher support, the technological platform not only supports self-assessment but offers capabilities that supersede classroom alternatives. Likewise, the online peer-feedback supported self-assessment to the extent of producing self-grades aligned to teacher-grades and certifying assignment grade increases. In particular, it was evident that online peer-feedback enhances self-assessment by delivering immediate improvements to current self-assessment tasks and generating rational and relational 'learning-to-learn' skills transferable to further education and future work self-assessment tasks.