

Identifying best practice in SETs

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Approach

- Review current practise with reference to educational theory
- Share my reflections on personal experience with reference to current practise (and theory)
- Propose elements of good practise in a given context
- Highlight knowledge gaps for future investigation

Evaluating evaluations

- Evaluation methodology ➤ Conforms to a theoretical basis
- Implementation ➤ Results in a high response rate
- Review and response ➤ Leads to improved evaluation scores

Reviewing methodology (1/2)

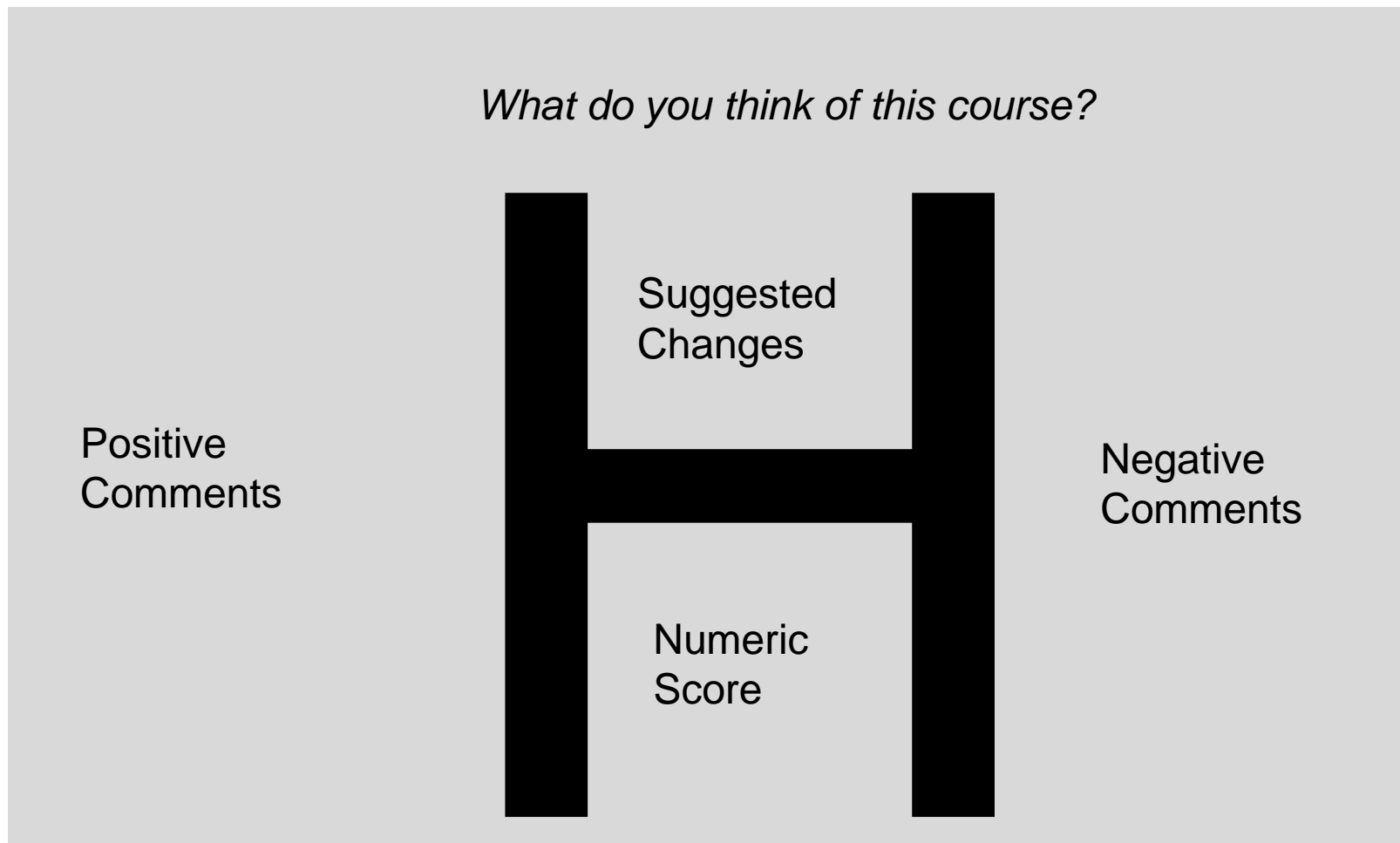
- The wording of questions and answers is important: student and teacher perceptions may differ
- Timing is important: lags affect perception
- Online evaluations are more prone to non-response than paper evaluations
- Sampling may be used to reduce inattentive response bias and maintain commitment

Reviewing methodology (2/2)

- Questionnaires may not allow students to express their opinions fully
- Long questionnaires may lead to apathy: standardisation to inflexibility and boredom
- Cognitive dissonance and revenge may, in isolated cases affect responses

The H-form

(Huxham et al , after Guy and Inglis, 1999)



Current Practice (1/2)

- In 2008 an internet survey of 22 international (incl. 15 Swedish) institutes revealed
 - 20 used questionnaires
 - Of these 5 *allowed* other methods
 - 2 institutes also used teacher-student meetings/dialogue (Chalmers and Copenhagen)
 - 2 institutes used peer review (Cardiff & Bristol)

Current Practice (2/2)

- Today most higher education institutes in Sweden use web-based questionnaires for SETs
 - 12 (of 20) explicitly recommend or propose web-based questionnaires
 - 2 only allow this approach!
 - 1 used a CEQ-based approach
 - 7 encourage continual or multi-phase evaluations
- Advice/guidance/regulations and their accessibility vary widely

Survey Style and Response Rates

- Response rates are typically <50%
 - In a survey of 31 SETs
 - Mean = 45%, range **0-128%**
 - No obvious patterns
 - *All were web-based questionnaires from 3 Swedish Universities*
- Ho et al. and Avery et al. found a reduction in response rate following the transition from paper to web-based SETs

Countering low response rates

- Avoid standard forms (Karlstad, Lund)
- Engage students (e.g. Chalmers, Malmö, Linköping)
- Allot course-time for evaluation (Karlstad, Hög. Väst)
- Be flexible!

Personal Reflections

- [some] Students want to give meaningful feedback
- A top-down approach constrains teachers *and* students
- Open questions allow students to express themselves, closed questions allow teachers to investigate specifics
- **Feedback improves teaching quality**

Recommendations for administrators

- Avoid prescriptive solutions (standard forms, single method solutions, directives from on high)
- Utilise web-based solutions with forethought
- Explore the topic, examine the literature, conduct experiments
- Issue clear and explicit guidelines, offer training and recommend reading.

Knowledge Gaps

- Does survey length affect scores?
- Does exposure increase inattentive response?
- Are web-based questionnaires treated differently by students and teachers, than paper copies or other methods?

Recommended Reading

- Cronholm, 2008. Course evaluations in Sweden- When, How, What and Why
 - <http://proc.isecon.org/2008/1514/ISECON.2008.Cronholm.pdf>
- Ho *et al.*, 2008. Evaluating Course Evaluations: an empirical analysis of a quasi-experiment at the Stanford Law School, 200-2007.
 - J. Legal Education, 388.
- Huxham *et al.*, 2008. Collecting student feedback: a comparison of questionnaire and other methods.
 - Assessment and evaluation in Higher Education, 33 (6)