**Relative strengths and weaknesses of common evaluations**

Reproduced from Light, Cox and Calkins (2009)

|  | **Questionnaires** | **Interactive Teaching** | **Group Discussion** | **Informal Feedback** | **Focus Groups** | **Peer Observation** | **Students Work** |
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| ***Relative strengths*** | Broad coverage of opinion  Quantifiable for comparison  Easy to administer  Close link to particular teaching – immediate  Easily confidential or anonymous  Systematic coverage of themes  Longer time perspective  Opportunity to explore links between different aspects of course | Integration of teaching and evaluation  Frequent, immediate link with remedial action  Specific learning problems identified, linked to specific teaching  Not explicit teaching evaluation so less inhibition  Students learn about own learning in concrete situation  Students share problems | Flexible, explore issues as they arise\Can set tone to encourage criticism  More time and encouragement to think, less ‘off-the-cuff’ responses  More responsive to students’ perceptions and perspective  Can focus on really important themes  Can discuss faculty views more easily  Develop a dialogue | Explore issues at a personal level  Explore significance of the course as a while for individual students  Get to know students better  Help students to understand their own response to the course  Check on data from other sources | Students identify aspects of personal interest  Individuals feel they can contribute without being influenced (silent majority have their say)  Letting off steam, without raising emotional temperature  Provides teachers with rich information with minimal time, effort  Identifies the group’s priorities  Can identify progress towards ability to adapt to and engage in change | Faculty perspective may complement or clarify students’ perspective  May be less inhibited in certain respects  Can be reciprocal learning experience  General opportunity to share ideas about teaching | Close integration of work with evaluation  Links with areas of high concern  Enables students to learn self-evaluation  Enables students to critique their own learning  Enables students to explore own interests and motivations |
| ***Relative weaknesses*** | Frequency (*sic*) use may alienate students  May be too simple or too complex  Ambiguity difficult to eliminate  Encourages ‘off-the-cuff’ responses rather than serious reflection  Can encourage complacency  Time limited  Even with open questions teacher perspective dominant  Needs skill in questionnaire design and analysis | Students may feel over-controlled  Exclusively concerned with teacher’s learning objectives\Too specific, not linked with general review  Tendency to avoid teaching process | Dominant personalities can be over-influential Initial tone of discussion can make it difficult to change to a different point of view  Coverage of issues may be limited by time available  Difficult to assess distribution of opinion  Lack of anonymity may be inhibiting  Skill in group discussion may be needed | Can be biased by personal impact  Coverage of students poor or very time-consuming, biased sample unless careful | Aspects of interest to teachers may be omitted  May not provide causative information  More time-consuming for students | May be intimidating especially if status difference  May lead to under-emphasis of student viewpoint  May be mutual support for undesirable or restricted view of teaching | Can encourage too much introspection  May emphasize work as learning exercise ‘rather than real-life production’ |
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Light, G., Cox, R., & Calkins, S. (2009). Evaluating: teaching and course evaluation. In *Learning and teaching in higher education: the reflective professional* (2nd ed., pp. 237–269). Los Angeles, [Calif]; London: SAGE Publications Inc.