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academy

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# What's so new about the 'new paradigm' of feedback?

# New vs old paradigm

**Old paradigm:** “feedback as information that is provided: comments for students, as it were.” (Carless 2015, p.191)

**New paradigm:** “feedback as a process in which students engage with feedback from various sources and make use of it to improve their work and/or develop their learning” (Carless 2015., p.192)

“I shall call this the ‘old paradigm’ of thinking about feedback because it has dominated conventional thinking over the last few decades. In recent years, however, assessment researchers have produced a body of work that indicates limitations of views of feedback mainly predicated on providing information to learners in the form of comments.” (Carless 2015, pp.191-2)

# Previous research

Focus on feedback information has diminished, but persists

Focus on feedback process has increased

- Van der Kleij et al (2019)
  - How the student role in the feedback process has been presented in research literature from 1969 onwards
  - Student agency has been increasingly recognised (though lower-agency representations still happen, so not linear)
- Winstone et al (2022)
  - Change in language used to talk about feedback in research literature, 2009-2013 and 2015-2019
  - Learning-focused representations have increased, though transmission-focused representations do persist

# Previous research

- Buckley (2022)
  - Convenience sample of L&T textbooks 1969-1996
  - Historical focus is on feedback information
  - Interest in the feedback process
    - Worries about lack of student engagement with feedback
    - Evidence of new paradigm thinking
      - “one of your responsibilities will be to train students in the methods of studentship they need in a distance teaching university. Learning from tutors’ comments is one such method” (OU 1988, p.68)

# Method

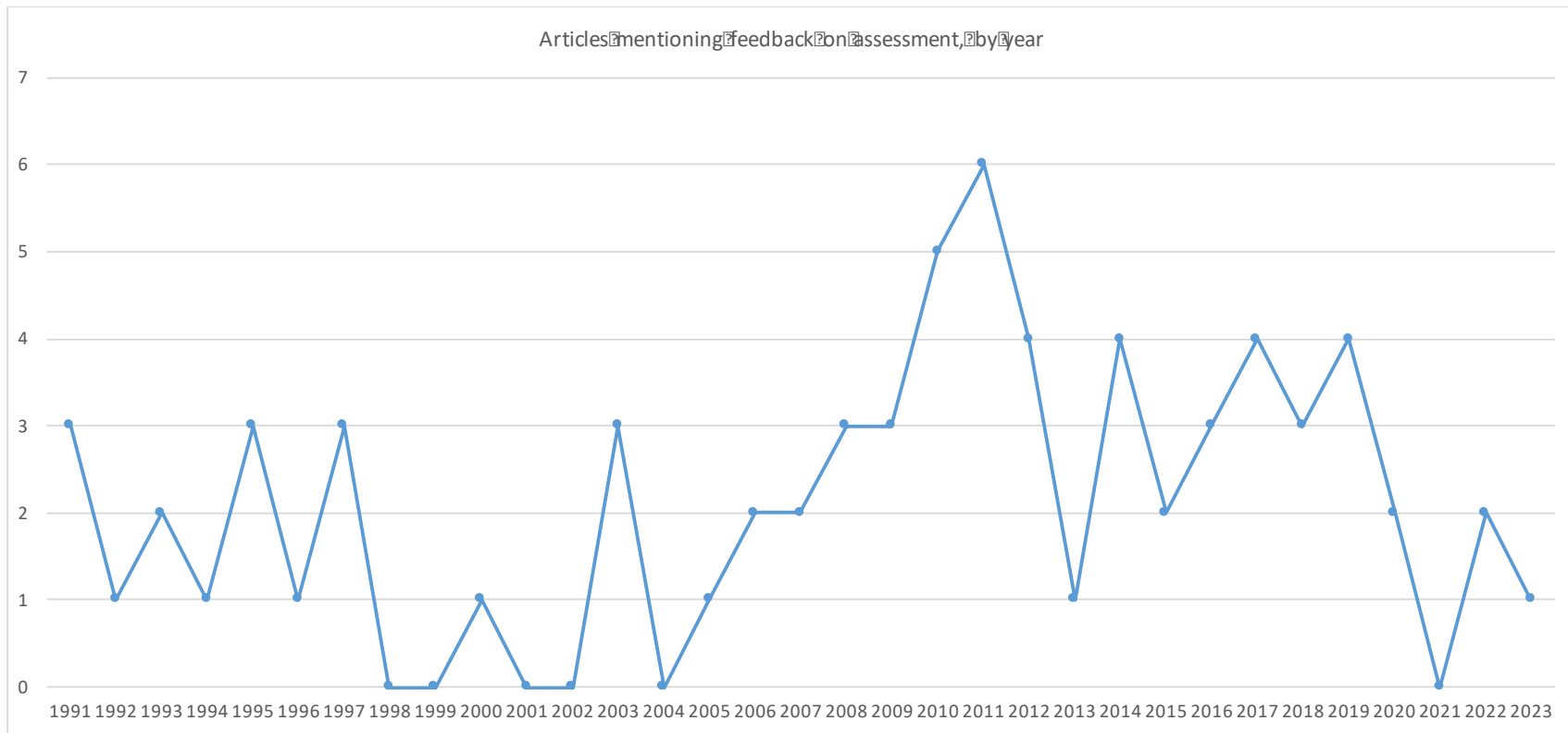
## Research-informed advice for staff

- The New Academic / Educational Developments
  - 1991 – 2023

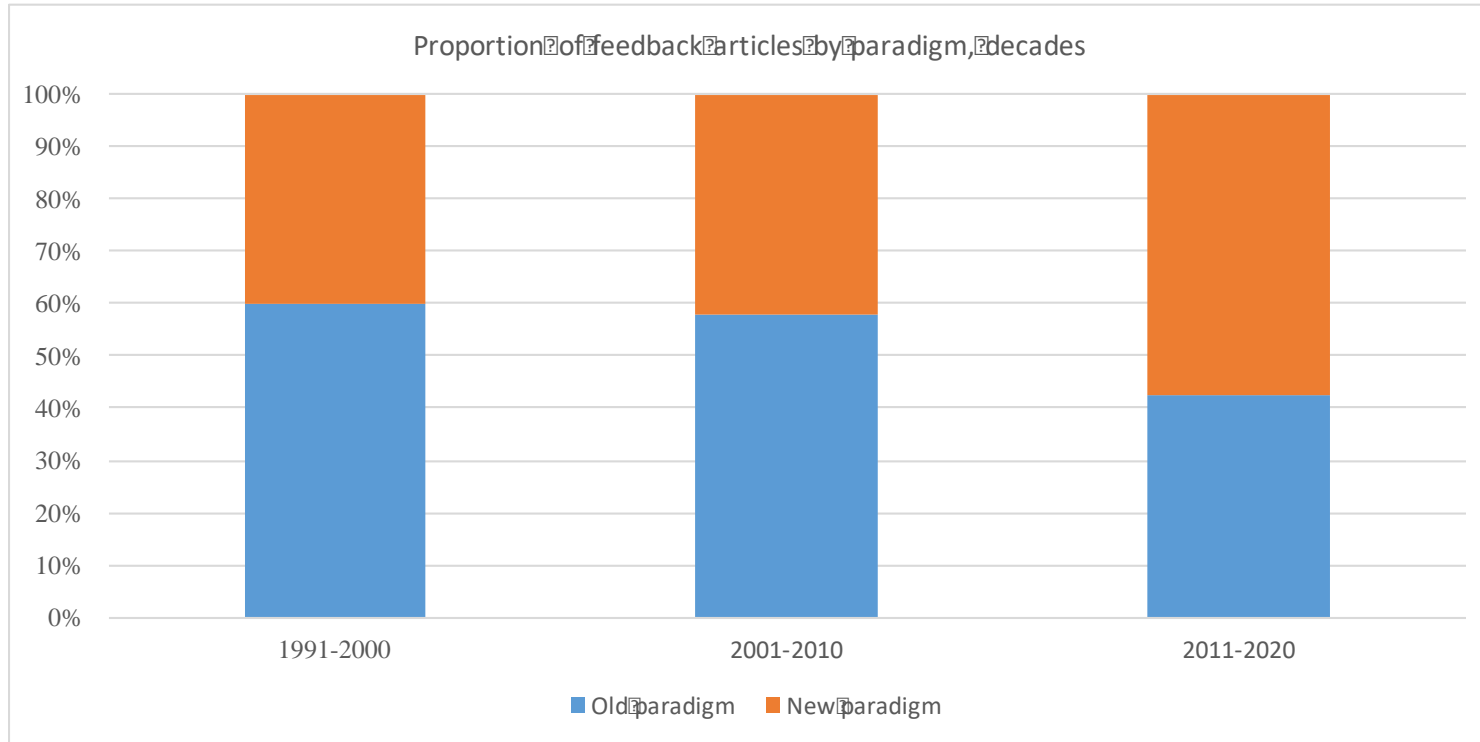
## Research

- Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education
  - 1975 – 2023
- Assessment in Higher Education Conference
  - 2013 & 2023

# The New Academic / Educational Developments: 1991-2023



# The New Academic / Educational Developments: 1991-2023

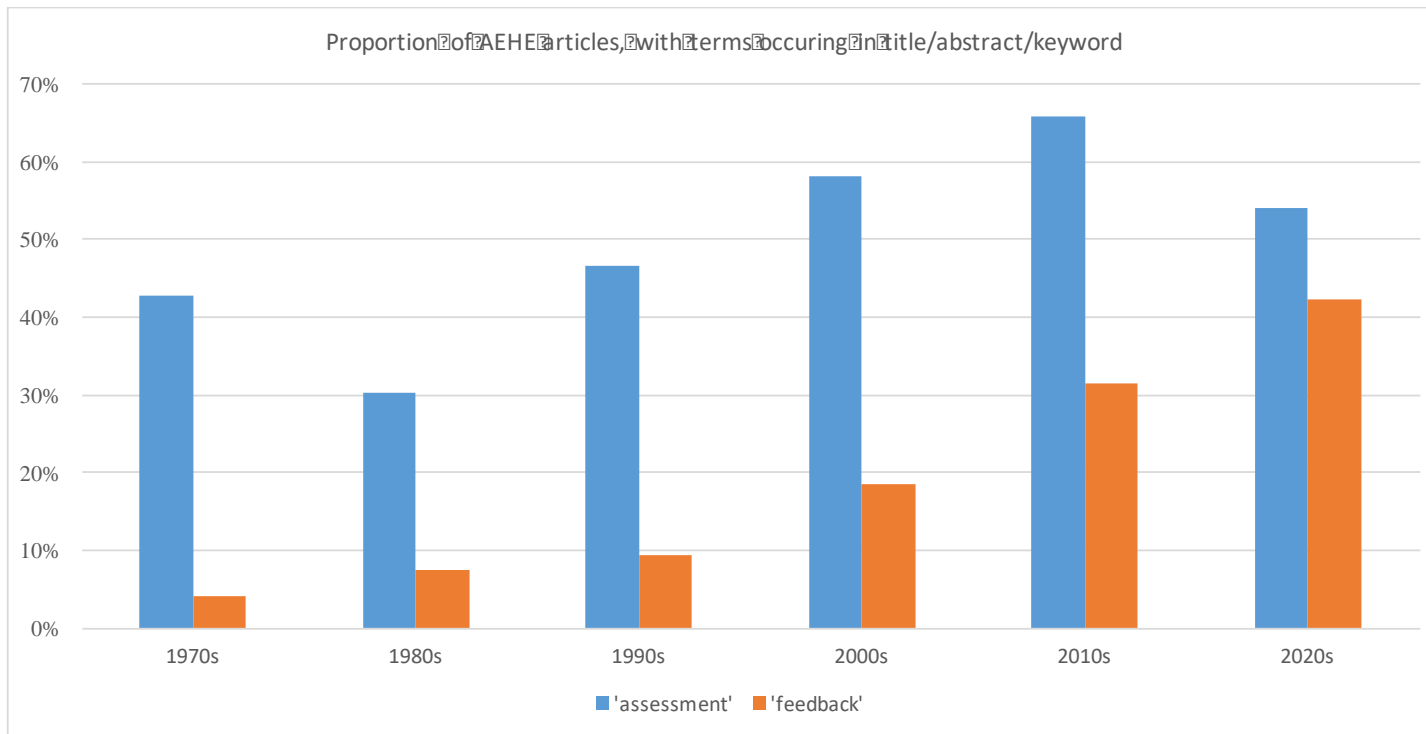


# The New Academic / Educational Developments: 1991-2023

- New paradigm elements
  - “This process of self-assessment and peer review – with cycles of feedback and reworking...” (Boud 1991, p.5)
  - “...we can help [students] to become better at giving and receiving feedback from each other.” (Race 1992, p.3)
  - “...students learn to take responsibility for their own writing by becoming the main source for giving feedback to one another.” (Badley 1993, p.5)



# Assessment & Evaluation in HE: 1975-2023



# Assessment & Evaluation in HE: first 10 feedback papers

- To get first 10 papers with the word 'feedback' in title or abstract, related to feedback on assessment takes:
  - From 1975 until 1998 (23 years)
  - Until volume 23 issue 2 (455 papers)
- To get 10 papers with 'assessment' in title or abstract, related to assessment of students takes from 1975 until 1979 (4 years), volume 4 issue 2 (29 papers)

# Assessment & Evaluation in HE: first 10 feedback papers

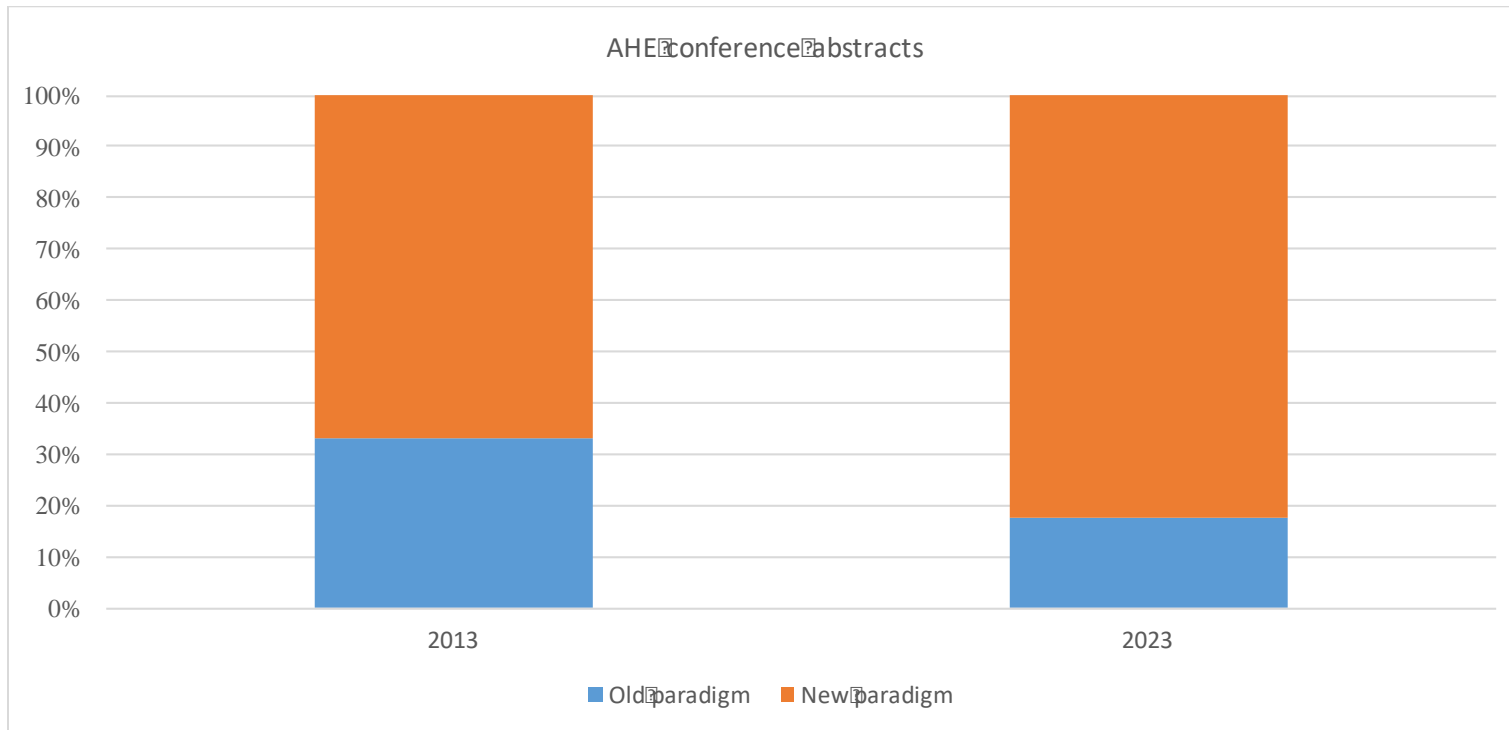
- Focus on the provision of feedback information (8/10)
  - Importance of feedback information in distance education
  - Use of technology to facilitate provision of audio feedback
  - Peer feedback information in group work
  - Importance of feedback information in UG dissertation process
  - Benefits of assessment criteria for clarity of feedback information
  - Importance of feedback information for empowering students

“the feedback was not restricted to that from teacher to student and so the terms *giver* and *receiver* are more appropriate than *academic* and *student*” (Cryer & Kaikumba 1987, p.149)

# Assessment & Evaluation in HE: first 10 feedback papers

- Some discussion of process issues (6/10)
  - Importance of students acting on feedback (4/10)
    - “The feedback, the responses and the reactions are those which determine whether learning will take place and whether sufficient improvements will happen in the future” (Barker 1986, p.222)
  - Feedback-seeking (1/10)
    - “learning to highlight the key points on which they would like feedback” (Stefani et al 1997, p.285)
  - Feedback-giving (1/10)
    - “Students provided very detailed, and generally useful, feedback, which was focused on the criteria (usually more detailed than that given by overworked lecturers)” (Searby and Ewers 1997, p.373)

# AHE conference programmes



# AHE conference programmes

- Less than 2013
  - Feedback information
- Same as 2013
  - Acting on feedback
  - Engaging with / processing / making sense of feedback
  - Valuing feedback
- New for 2023
  - Feedback literacy
  - Internal feedback (Nicol 2021)
  - New vs old paradigm

# Conclusion: So how new is the ‘new paradigm’?

- Substantial research interest in feedback is relatively recent
  - cf Carless (2015)
  - Less change in focus in advice to staff
- Historically, focus has been on provision of feedback information
  - But there has always been interest in process issues
  - cf Van der Kleij et al (2019), Winstone et al (2022)

# Conclusion: So how new is the 'new paradigm'?

Puzzle:

- Focus on feedback being 'useful'
  - "provide the right information for helping students to develop their skills" (Gibbs 1991, p.3)
  - "Constructive, useful feedback from tutors on coursework" (Harrop and Douglas 1996, p.8)
  - "Feedback is information that provides the performer with direct usable insights into his/her current performance" (Stefani 1998, p.348)
- Implicit interest in the feedback process
- But little discussion of how it should be used

Hypothesis: Lack of confidence that engagement with feedback is something can be influenced?



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