

FEEDBACK AS A CATALYST FOR ACTIVE LEARNING: REDEFINING ITS ROLE IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE

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Abstract



Feedback mechanisms play an important role in our daily life including professional and academic sectors. It accelerates the progress of work and acts as a catalyst for deep learning. In this conceptual paper, through the analysis of earlier researches conducted in this area, effort has been made to present the conceptual framework for understanding the role of feedback in enhancing students' learning. Effective feedback can be provided through different means and techniques with their diverse impact on improvement. Hence, it should be made an essential component of the teaching-learning process with a systematic and regular schedule.

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Introduction

It is the human tendency to strive continuously for the betterment. In this effort, after thorough and careful observation, people introspect themselves as well as take the suggestions or inputs from the others. When we take the inputs from others, in order to improve the outputs aligned with predetermined objectives, it is termed as 'Feedback'. It is a powerful tool to improve both the process and the product. According to Ambrose et al. (2010) feedback is the "information given to students about their performance that guides future behavior." Leibold and Schwarz (2015) have suggested four types of feedback. They are: corrective, epistemic, suggestive, and epistemic-suggestive. **Corrective** feedback appreciates the positive aspects first and then points out the deficiencies of the task. **Epistemic** feedback explores the deeper knowledge about a certain concept. It seeks further clarifications from the students and prompts them to think more by asking specific questions. **Suggestive** feedback is a type of advice to improve the task. It widened the meaning and scope of the concept. **Epistemic-suggestive** feedback is a blend of epistemic & suggestive feedbacks. It prompts students to seek deeper clarification along with providing certain suggestions.

We get feedback through various means, such as verbal, non-verbal, oral, written, image, audio, video, etc., and from different sources, like family members, relatives, friends, classmates, colleagues, teachers, authorities, etc; in formal settings like institutions, companies, business firms, schools, colleges, universities, etc; and informal settings such as home, functions, picnic spots, journeys, etc. Feedback can be used to enhance the students' performance (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Al-Bashir et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2021; Cai et al., 2023). It includes positive and negative aspects of the process, along with concrete, practical and constructive suggestions for improvement. An immediate feedback can prove to be more worthy as compared to a delayed one. All these attributes contribute to the effective feedback that enables the students to reflect on themselves. Besides these, effective feedback is a collaborative effort on the part of students as well as teachers. It should always be pinpointed and concise. It is focused on preferred and major aspects of the process. It is action-oriented and provided immediately after completion of the process (CTE, 2021). Effective feedback informs about students' understanding regarding content, status of their performances and directions of their subsequent endeavours (Ambrose et al., 2010). It has the

potential to accelerate the students' progress. Department of Education of (2022) Victoria State Government suggests that "Effective feedback assists the learner to reflect on their learning and their learning strategies so they can make adjustments to make better progress in their learning." It begins with the intention to learn, thereby improves the learning.

Feedback mechanisms can be used as a powerful tool to boost the students' learning. According to Reka KUTASI (2023), the aim of feedback is to help students reach their learning objectives by pointing out their strengths and recommending areas for development. Though the primary aim of feedback is to improve the process but it necessarily involves highlighting the positive aspects too so as to strengthen that aspect and motivate the person involved in the process (Van Koll & Rietz, 2016). It should not be confined to pointing out the errors or weaknesses only; rather, we should suggest practical measures to overcome them (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Here, it is better to provide a demo for implementing the suggestions, if possible. We, as teachers, should provide the feedback in such a way that students get motivated and ready to implement the suggestions or inputs. For this, we must provide positive feedback to the students first and then point out the negative aspects with suggestions for improvement so that they can be practiced and implemented. Also, feedback should be provided in a systematic and constructive way. It can either be provided in a traditional way like, orally or in writing; or it can be technology-enabled, like in the form of a survey (printed or electronic) or a blend of both. Sometimes feedback is taken anonymously to get the objective opinion towards the sensitive, delicate and vulnerable issues where fear of loss is involved. Use of technology in feedback mechanisms makes it more objective, specific, correct, authentic, transparent and acceptable. It means that our feedback should be timely, specific and actionable (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). The feedback that is given should not contain any vagueness, broadness or ambiguity. Besides these, feedback can be made more authentic, reliable and objective by using a format or an organized structure covering all the aspects of the process. It should be based on factual data. One should be careful enough that pointing out the negative aspects may not hurt the students. Feedback has a positive impact on students' learning experience (Al-Bashir et al., 2016). Through this we can improve the learning attainment level of marginalized students also. However, the feedback is not being used in a desired spirit in our education system. In a true sense, feedback mechanism is a very good tool for improving any process. Feedback is a

part and parcel of any working system. In a similar way, feedback is an essential and inseparable part of the learning process (Van Koll & Rietz, 2016) in general and of evaluation in particular.

Role of Feedback in Enhancing Students' Learning

Although in literature, the provision of feedback is advocated for students only, it is equally useful for teachers also. According to Wisniewski et al. (2020), feedback is now becoming more popular in teaching research and practice. It encourages active learning among the students (Reka KUTASI, 2023). Hattie and Timperley (2007) proposed that the feedback reduces the gap between students' performance and their goals. Different feedback modalities impact students' performance differently (Holl, 2019). Individual feedback was found to be more effective when provided through web-based modalities (Van Koll & Rietz, 2016). However, written feedback provides them the opportunity to relook the suggestions at their will (Shute, 2008; Carless & Boud, 2018). While verbal feedback has the privilege of spontaneity (Keil & Johnson, 2002) and caters to large groups providing the opportunity for interactions and further clarifications. Peer feedback has the potential to enhance deep learning skills such as interpersonal, cognitive, communication, collaboration, analysis, critical thinking, and confidence (Medium, 2023). Whereas self-feedback has the potential to provide the opportunity of SWOT analysis and reflection, setting goals and contributing to self-motivation, self-directed and self-regulated learning (Carless & Boud, 2018). According to Cai et al. (2023), explanation feedback is the most powerful among all types of feedback and it was more effective in blended mode as compared to online mode. Feedback helps the students in reflecting on the self by asking the questions to own. For describing this, Hattie and Timperley (2007) proposed a model for asking three questions at three stages by students on their own. These are: 'Feed Up— where am I going? Or what are my learning intentions? Feed Back— how am I going? Or what does the evidence tell me? And Feed Forward— where to next? Or what learning activities should I do to make better progress? Feedback in combination with action yields better performance (Ambrose et al., 2010). It is directly related to students' performance and success (Department of Education, 2022; Reka KUTASI, 2023).

Conclusion

Feedback has the bright prospect of enhancing the students learning. Hence, it should not be practiced for the sake of formality. Teachers should instil the importance of feedback among the students before providing them feedback so that students may proactively involve in the process of feedback. The teacher may ask the student in which subject area or topic they expected to get improvement. They should be motivated to note down their queries and ask the questions about feedback received. Since the effective feedback is a collaborative effort, it requires active involvement of both the student and the teacher. Moreover, the effective feedback has the superiority in the sense that it has the potential to foster deep learning among the students. It works only in a collaborative and democratic environment. So, the administrators should evolve a strategy for providing systematic, regular, and immediate feedback to the students. They may create a schedule for showing the answer scripts after the examination or test or evaluating their assignments. The constructive feedback over these aspects can help students to enhance their performance in the next attempt. There should be a provision for meta-feedback (getting feedback about the quality of feedback provided) in the organization also. Teachers should use some authentic bases, such as rubrics, questionnaires, observation schedules, etc., for providing feedback. They should also take care of providing quality feedback to the students. Teachers' feedback should be specific, concise, practicable, and focused on theme. Furthermore, they should use diverse sources such as audio, video, audio-visual, online, blended mode, etc., and online tools for feedback, like Canvas, Kahoot, Formative, Turnitin, Poll Everywhere, Google Forms, Socrative, Mentimeter, Quizlet, SurveySparrow, Animoto, PollDaddy, Survey Monkey, BibSonomy, AudioNote, etc., for feedback mechanisms. Teachers should set preferences in providing feedback. The teacher should organize a discussion session over the written feedback to assess the students' understanding on the feedback they received. Furthermore, they should motivate the students to provide the feedback to their classmates. They should allow the students to engage in the process of self-feedback also and give ample time to implement the feedback. Finally, the teacher should take the follow-up after providing the feedback. They may ask them what points have been suggested in the process of feedback.

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