

# WAYS TO ADJUST THE FEED-BACK IN THE TRAINING ACTIVITY

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**Abstract:** *It is obvious that in the last decades the feed-back became a very important variable in the overall structure of the training process, the peremptory proof being the fact that at present it is a true didactic principle that must be respected by all people involved in various types of training and learning. As a general note, in order to maximize the effects of using the feedback in the training / learning activity, teachers need to know more about the variable in question, of which the most important are the following: a) definition and generally conceptual delimitations in an attempt to dissociate this variable from other elements of the educational process; b) knowledge of typologies that dissociate several types of feed-back; c) the concrete ways to use feed-back in different learning contexts. Respecting this paradigm, there is a good chance that the feed-back will gain efficiency and usefulness.*

**Key words:** *feed-back, learning contexts, analysis of feedback.*

## 1. Introduction

It is obvious that in the last decades the feed-back became a very important variable in the overall structure of the training process and the peremptory proof is at present a true didactic principle that must be respected by all people involved in various types of training and learning.

The importance of feedback in training-learning is revealed by many psycho-pedagogical papers, and in a recent paper, Hattie (2014) places the feed-back on a list of factors influencing school performance in 10th place with an effect size of 0.75, which means very much if it is taken into account that this list contains 150 variables, the first position being the *Autonomy / Expectations of pupils* with a size of 1.44, and the last, *Change of Home* with a size of -0.34.

In other respects, it should be remembered that a good management of feedback from teachers requires them to master several aspects related to this important variable, of which the most important are the following:

- a) the definition and, in general, the conceptual delimitations when it comes to dissociating this variable from other elements of the educational process;
- b) typologies that dissociate several types of feed-back variants;
- c) the concrete ways of using the feed-back in various training situations and contexts, this treatment paradigm being convenient both from the point of view of the specificity of

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the feed-back as a very important variable of the training and learning process, and from the prospect of its use and materialization.

In the following, our contribution to addressing this issue is:

- Critical analysis of the various forms of feedback, mentioning the advantages and limitations of each form of feedback;
- Indicating the ways in which feedback is used in different learning contexts;
- Indicating the historical evolution in the analysis / approach of feedback.

## **2. Definitions of Feed-back**

The Larousse Dictionary (2006, p. 1040) define the *feed-back* as “action to return an effect to its own cause”, and as a teaching principle it is more recent because the term dates back from 1948, when it was introduced by Wiener (1948) in cybernetics.

Doron and Parot (2006, pp. 320-321) define feed-back as a “retroactivity of a state of the dependent variable on the independent variable, an effect on the cause it has produced”.

It should also be noted that the two authors make a dissociation between the feed-forward that “designates a regulation that anticipates a later state of the system, such as in the athletic adaptation of the athlete to a near phase of the ball trajectory” and the verbal feed-back a notion that “applied to the acquisition of the first and / or the second language refers to the verbal reactions of the experienced locators (parents, teachers, etc.) to the productions of the beginner locators. It can be verbal approvals and disapproval, exact or partial rehearsal of the teachings, expansions (implicit corrections), explicit corrections, and extensions of the interlocutor's language (statements extending the meaning of the preceding sentence).

Gamble and Gamble (1993, cit. in Pănişoară, 2009) defines the feed-back as “all verbal and non-verbal messages that a person conveys consciously or unconsciously in response to another person's communication” (p. 151).

Schaub and Zenke (2001, pp. 109-110) approaches the feed-back with concrete reference to cybernetics (in this context the feed-back provides information in the input-output circle, specifying whether the value reached is on the correct line of the processes), the programmed learning (the positive or negative feed-back is the information that determines whether the answer is correct or wrong), the communication and interaction relationships (the individual learns through the feed-back how it works on the partner and what influence on interpersonal relationships).

Ştefan (2006, pp. 134-135) defines the feed-back as “an action to inform the educator, through control and evaluation, on the results of his educational action, to continue to take action to improve the activity”.

As far as we are concerned, we consider the feed-back as an important didactic principle stipulating that in the training activity, the teacher must always receive information about the echo of his / her messages at the level of the students, about their performance in the learning activity, helping to bring corrections and improvements to the whole educational-learning process from one stage to the next.

### 3. Typology of Feed-back

In connection with the feed-back typology, over the years, attempts have been made to identify hypostases under which it can materialize, and in the interactive model developed by De Landsheere and Bayer (1969) among the functions attributed to the teacher are also found in the “positive feed-back functions” respectively “the negative feedback functions”, within the first category the teacher can manifest behaviours such as:

1. approves in a stereotyped manner;
2. approves by repeating the pupil's response;
3. approves in a specific manner;
4. approves in another manner.

In the second category are incorporated somewhat opposite behaviours such as:

1. disapproves in a stereotyped manner;
2. disapproves by repeating the student's response in an ironic or accusatory manner;
3. disapproves in a specific manner;
4. disapproves in another way;
5. feedback delayed.

Here too, in the feed-back typology, we note that Raynal and Rieunier (2005, p. 143) make a distinction between the regulatory feed-back and the information feed-back, the latter materializing in four forms, as follows:

1. a form of social assessment: “*You are excellent in the elaborate commentary*”;
2. a form of symbolic evaluation: “*This work fits with A*”;
3. a form of evaluation: “*Test result: 90% success, target achieved*”;
4. a form of normative assessment: “*You are the 12th of 30*”.

A more nuanced typology of feed-back with more meaningful practical implications gives the Canadian authors Lebrun and Berthelot (1994), which identify the following characteristics:

1. general / specific (the first form transmits general information, and the second provides information on specific performance);
2. positive / negative, the positive one emphasizing on the success of the student, the negative on the failure, the lack of training;
3. product / process (the first option focuses on the learning product, the second on the process that generated the learning outcome);
4. prompt / delayed (in the first case the feed-back follows the student's response, in the second it is delayed and the bigger the gap, the more negative the effects will be).

### 4. Ways to Achieve Feed-back

Knowing the main characteristics of feed-back by teachers does not guarantee by itself the transposition of this teaching principle, since a condition must be met, namely, the way the feed-back becomes operational from the line of which Lebrun and Berthelot (1994) mention:

- a. communicating and commenting on the results obtained by students in certain tests;
- b. writing explanations on works or on tests made by students;
- c. compiling a list of additional activities for pupils experiencing difficulties to mention reading or exercises that help students overcome the gaps in their training;

- d. organizing individual meetings with pupils where each student can receive comments or comments about the subject matter in relation to the way they can motivate more effectively for learning, about the suite of activities that they would they must do so in order to achieve a great deal of success;
- e. organizing class discussions on topics or subjects less understood by students, but it should be noted that the objectives of these discussions must be very clear, otherwise there is a risk of diverting to or less relevant;
- f. the presentation of personal works by the students themselves to the teacher and colleagues, a way to highlight the degree of comprehension of the themes or subjects in relation to which the works were elaborated, the way being effective, because the views of peers are appreciated with interest by the presenter and, on the other hand, because an emulation atmosphere is created that allows information exchanges to increase the cognitive sphere of all participants;
- g. the immediate verbal comment is a feed-back that conveys the words through which the teacher can express his / her agreement or disagreement about student responses, and also a way through which additional nuance or clarification can be made to a problem or a topic.  
The efficiency of this approach will be even greater as it will be done more promptly, so it is produced immediately after a student's response or after a particular learning situation.
- h. reflecting pupils' performance using audio-visual means such as video is an effective way to achieve feed-back because students themselves can see and identify their own mistakes and their own loopholes;
- i. the comments of external observers can also be effective in the fact that, coming from outside the institution, they are in a neutral relationship with the members of the group, but also because in the act their evaluation, are not influenced by the effects of various disturbing factors and, in particular, the Halo effect and the Pygmalion effect.

An interesting point of view regarding the ways of realizing the feed-back belongs to Ionescu and Chis (2009) which identifies several types of feed-backs connected to the main moments of the didactic process, as follows:

**In teaching**

- the degree of participation of students;
- creating peak situations;
- the success of independent working moments;
- the possibility to sense significant relationships between elements;
- finding necessary causal, logical links;
- students' reaction to the teacher's message;
- the effort to apply, to materialize what has been learned;
- the quality and volume of the applied exercises;
- affective reactions of pupils.

**In fixing-consolidation**

- transfer of knowledge and skills (elasticity of transfer → hint of fixation);
- elaboration of original and original methods and means of applying the learned;
- the quality of independent work;
- drawing up examination plans that are most appropriate to the subject studied;
- quality and volume of practical applications achieved;

- the knowledge of correlations, interdependencies and interrelations between the phenomena, the processes of the studied events;
- solving some exercise exercises;
- the degree of participation of the class (the extent to which medium and low-level students are trained in the act of acquiring and using knowledge);
- the enthusiasm “squeezed” by discovering important relationships: aha moments.

**In verification**

- frontal or individual examination (a student solving a problem is required on the board);
- student compilation and use of response plans;
- orientation talks;
- oral or written examination;
- the success of front-end independent work;
- checking homework;
- the quality of the answers given not only by good students, but also by the weaker or mediocre ones;
- solving “peak moments”;
- individual but also mutual examination;
- degree of participation;
- spontaneity of responses;
- the promptness and spontaneity of answers provided by students;
- the ease with which students respond promptly to questions

Finally, we present a final vision of how to use the feed-back to optimize learning by Shute (2008), which we are making in the following lines:

- focuses feed-back on task, not on learner;
- provides elaborate feed-back (“what”, “how” and “why” reactions);
- presents feed-back prepared in manageable units (to avoid cognitive overload);
- be specific and clear in feed-back messages;
- keep feed-back in a simple but not simplistic form (depending on the needs of learners and instructional constraints);
- reduce performance and goal blurring;
- provides impartial feed-back, written focus or computer (trust sources are better received);
- promotes an orientation towards the educational objective through feed-back (moving attention from the outcome to the learning process, errors are welcome);
- provides feed-back after students have tried a solution (which leads to extra self-regulation).

**5. Conclusions**

We could not conclude these lines without highlighting some advantages of maximum relevance of feed-back in the training-learning activity that we enumerate below:

- 1) feed-back provides valuable insights into how the learning-learning process works, based on which corrections can be made if malfunctions and disturbances are identified.
- 2) feed-back provides the teacher with information about the level of pupils' training and about the difficulties they face in the complex learning process.

- 3) feed-back contributes to increasing learners' motivation for learning, and the explanation is that by receiving confirmations of the quality of their achievements they will become more self-confident and more motivated from one stage to the next.
- 4) feed-back in the case of good functioning stimulates the existence of unsided communication with all the consequences resulting from such hypostasis.

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