

FEEDBACK – A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN LEARNING. A CONSTATATIVE APPROACH TO FEEDBACK LITERACY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore students' perspective on feedback and feedback literacy. Open-response data were analysed using an inductively derived coding framework and applied thematic analysis. The findings enhance two major themes regarding feedback perception in students' mindset: first and widely covered theme recognizes the role of feedback in the learning process and second theme highlights the contribution of feedback to the construction of educational relations. The students enrolled in the certification program for teaching career point out that feedback offered to teachers regarding their influence and pedagogical practices represents an acknowledgement of didactic professionalism and a new way in student-teacher relationship.*

Key words: *feedback, learning process, feedback encounters, feedback literacy, teacher education.*

1. Introduction

The importance of feedback in learning process is enhanced by many studies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hattie, 2009). Starting from feedback as information provided to learners regarding a task or the status of task completion (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), from influence on achieving significant learning goals (Hattie, 2009; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008), and feedback to increase learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), the conceptualization of feedback evolved to the interactive process of meaning making (Jensen et al., 2023), that enables students to take decisions for their future learning (Boud & Molloy, 2013). The model of feedback to increase learning developed by Hattie and Timperley (2007) was considered a teacher-oriented model addressing teachers' practices in giving feedback and was used as framework to explore feedback practices (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023). Beyond enhancing students' performance, feedback also has impact on learners' motivation and commitment (Harris et al., 2014; Knight, 2003; Rattan et al., 2012). The revised feedback model focuses on learners and social context (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023). The experience of higher university teachers with written

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assessment feedback shows varied perceptions and beliefs regarding the purpose of it (Bailey & Garner, 2010).

Feedback is an interaction between practices, contexts, and individuals (Henderson et al., 2019). According to latest research findings, feedback is a process (Dawson et al., 2018; Winstone & Carless, 2019), a contextual and social process (Esterhazy, 2019) that enhances learning (Ion et al., 2019). In life-long learning perspective, feedback has many facets, from self-generated feedback information to technology mediated (Jensen et al., 2023) and AI generated feedback information. Therefore, it requires the capacity to address the challenges of feedback process. The new feedback paradigm switches the focus from teachers to students (Winstone & Carless, 2019). In this status, student compares his achievements to the products of his colleagues, to learning objectives or to standards and performs the inner feedback (Nicol, 2021). Comparison evolves in social environments, so feedback becomes relational process that allows feedback encounters (Esterhazy & Damşa, 2019). As highlighted by authors, feedback encounters include the agency of students, their capacity to associate a meaning to the feedback and to act in consequence (Esterhazy & Damşa, 2019). To delimitate feedback encounters, three conditions are important: 1) the existence of a student generated work or performance, 2) information about students' generated work or performance, 3) a change in student's understanding regarding *learning outcomes*, their *own level*, or what would be a *good next step* (Jensen et al., 2023). Therefore, feedback encounters reflect students' capacities in understanding learning goals, in identifying the correct level of their performance, in self-evaluation of personal achievements according with a set of standards, and in finding the appropriate strategy to overcoming the gap in learning.

Research findings show that feedback literacy can be enhance in the case of students intervening in their perceptions and attitudes on feedback, as well as in their confidence and agency in the feedback process (Little et al., 2023).

2. Objectives and Method

To explore the students' perspective on feedback and feedback literacy, we conducted a qualitative study based on learning journals. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data on students' perception regarding giving and receiving feedback in learning contexts. The main goal was to explore the role of feedback in the learning process and the process of feedback itself in the perception of prospective teachers.

3. Participants, Instruments, and Procedure

The participants were a total of 144 students enrolled in the second year of the teacher training programme. The analysis plan established two major objectives: 1) to identify students' given feedback as a part of a learning journal and 2) to analyse students' feedback encounters in a written examination task. For these objectives, we used two sources for data collection. The first source of data consisted in the learning journals they were asked to realize. During an entire semester, the participants have completed a learning journal with predefined template and specific tasks regarding

pedagogical content and instructional strategies. The second source of data cut out a written exam task related to feedback in the learning process.

4. Results

The document analysis of the 144 learning journals was oriented towards the investigation of feedback given by students at the end of the semester, regarding the pedagogical subject they studied, and the strategies used during lectures. The analysis showed that 101 students provided feedback and 43 students left the task unsolved. The given feedback was directed to two major themes: the content of the learning activity (30 answers) and the learning atmosphere (79 answers). Some participants provided feedback from both categories and 3 gave superficial feedback that could not be fit in any category, as presented in Table 1.

Given feedback and themes in content analysis of the learning journals Table 1

Given feedback	Code	Freq.	Themes	Code	Freq.
Yes	A	101	Learning content	(1)	30
			Learning atmosphere	(2)	79
			Unframeable	(3)	3
No	B	43			

The analysis of the 108 written examination tasks of the students identified feedback encounters divided in two major categories: encounters related to feedback in the learning process and encounters regarding teacher-student relationship. The participants found that feedback *“helps to understand the information”, “facilitates deeper understanding and motivation”, “is the only tool a student have to resolve confusion”, “forms the consciousness of continuous learning”, “it makes students feel valued and encouraged to put in more effort in the future learning”, “is essential in continuous learning, is growth opportunity”, “it shapes openness to continuous learning”*. They consider as well that feedback *“determines the increase in students’ motivation and confidence”, “stimulates the desire to achieve higher performances”, “keeps the interest for the subject area”, “is a key-element in assessment and evaluation”, “a useful evaluation tool, both for student and teacher”*. The students also considered that correct feedback strengthen the educational relationship between students and teachers and contributes to the healthy and harmonious learning environment, that *“educational environment in which personal development is promoted”, “feedback should be constantly encouraged to create a safe environment in which the students feel that they are accumulating knowledge”*. Feedback is an opportunity for personal and professional growth. Due to appropriate feedback, students *“become more open”*. Therefore, we may acknowledge that students’ feedback agency started to slowly develop. The themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 2. In solving work tasks related to feedback as a component of continuous evaluation, students presented feedback as an integral part of the learning process, even though when they were asked to give feedback about the course content, they enhance the

contribution of feedback to learning atmosphere, not to their own learning and development. As part of an assessment exercise, they reproduced learned aspects concerning feedback, but, when they had to produce feedback information themselves, they remained in the superficial area of interpersonal relations.

Themes and sub-themes in contents analysis of examination tasks Table 2

Theme	Code	Sub-themes	Code
Learning process	C	Comprehension in learning	(1)
		Continuous learning	(2)
		Learning motivation and confidence	(3)
		Assessment for learning	(4)
Teacher-student relationship	D	Strengthening the teacher-student relationship	(5)
		Safe learning environment	(6)
		Personal development	(7)
		Openness	(8)

The feedback encounters identified in students work enhance the double perspective on feedback process: from teacher to student and from student to teacher. Both teachers and students should ask and give feedback: *“in education we need to help each other and to develop our selves together, professionally, but also moral”*. Thus, teachers should ask for feedback about the teaching practices because feedback *“helps to plan the next steps in order to achieve the learning objectives”* or *“any teacher needs feedback from his or her students because the reaction regarding the way subject is taught may come as an acknowledgement of didactic professionalism”*. Feedback literacy is needed. According to one of the participants, *“feedback should be provided at three levels: from the self, from the colleagues and from the teacher”*.

4. Conclusions and Discussions

Previous research showed that opportunities to provide and discuss feedback in teacher education help to develop feedback literacy (Little et al., 2023), that encourages students to align their feedback expectations according to their potential and development (Ducasse & Hill, 2019). If we understand how students represent themselves in the feedback process, then we will be able to design feedback processes that best enhance students learning. In line with prior findings, our study analysed reflective journals as activities in which students develop feedback. Almost a third of the respondents (30) did not provide any feedback. They avoided solving the task even though they should have assumed the assessment task. Approximately two-thirds of respondents who provided feedback (79) focused on learning atmosphere and

environment and one third of respondents focused on the learning content and process (30). Some researchers acknowledged that *the student-driven feedback process may be beneficial for the development of feedback literacy which is valuable beyond the immediate task or even course* (Carless & Boud, 2018). Therefore, the interest in feedback process and the contribution for learning is legitimate and justified. Our findings enhance that students focus more on feedback influence in student-teacher relationships, than on learning process. The explanations could be found in the patterns of giving, receiving, and requesting feedback that they are used to.

The content analysis of the written examination task revealed a very mature perspective of some students regarding feedback contribution to learning consciousness in lifelong learning paradigm. This highlighted the premises of student-driven feedback process since feedback should be tripartite, from three parts (self, colleagues, and teachers) like a student presented. The participants underlined that students should be encouraged to ask for feedback or to seek feedback; without feedback *“the act of learning is not complete”* and *“feedback is not only important for understanding, but also for making the student feel more involved and that it matters”*. Feedback is seen as a tool for change in the learning process and a mean of self-assessment. These are arguments for highlighting feedback literacy in the case of students exposed to teaching and learning practices that provided requesting, giving, and receiving feedback.

The limitation of our investigation consists in the qualitative approach that could hardly be generalized. To cover this limitation, we intent to continue feedback investigation in teacher education with quantitative perspective of how students perceive feedback. Research openings could be exploited in an experimental study to identify the optimal strategies in the construction of feedback literacy in future teachers.

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