Do Students Value Feedback? - A Study On Differing Perceptions By Students In The Feedback Process In Medical And Health Sciences University

*Abstract:*Feedback is conceptualized as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, but this impact can be either positive or negative. Its perception by students is studied by us. Our study provides a conceptual analysis of feedback and reviews the evidence related to its impact on learning and achievement. This evidence shows that although feedback is among the major influences, the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differentially effective. A model of feedback is then proposed that identifies the particular properties and circumstances that make it effective, and some typically thorny issues are discussed, including the timing of feedback and the effects of positive and negative feedback. Finally, this analysis is used to suggest ways in which feedback can be used to enhance its effectiveness in classrooms.

Index terms: feedback, assessment, student and teacher learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Provision of effective and high quality feedback has been identified as a key element of quality teaching.Results indicated a diversityof preferences suggesting that a balanced approach in providing feedback would be most effective to meet individual needs. Studies have shown that there are clear preferences for verbal feedback when generic and provided to group as a whole.Written feedback was preferred ,on the other hand when offered a specific comments addressed to the individual on an assignment or exam.previous research has identified several construct involved in the feedback process :the source of feedback (teachers and students). Previous research has identified several constructs involved in the feedback process: the sources of feedback (teachers and students) ;the mode of feedback (how it is presented) ;the content (information conveyed);and the occasion (when it is presented).

While there has an attempt by some researchers to explain relationships between some variables, little has been done to integrate these constructs into a coherent theoretical model. Few studies have focused on teacher feedback about student performances,and fewer on student perceptions or preferences.Avialable research sugguests that feedback is most effective when provided soon after task performance and is presented in a manner sensitive to the students' learning styles:clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses;has sugguestions for improvements; and is constructive and motivating.

1. II. AIM & OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the students' perceptions about the role of feedback

2. To study if feedback provides students with added help in their learning.
3. To study if there is a possible link between student feedback preferences and learning approaches.
4. To study the effect of feedback on student's attitude .

III. MATERIAL & METHODS

In this prospective study University students were surveyed.2nd year Students from Medical,Dental and Nursing college were included to participate in the survey. Participation with in these colleges was completely voluntary .Ethics approval was attained from research committee. A modified questionnaire used in previous studies using themes of our objectives as well as themes used in the literature was administered.

The Questionnaire was divided into six sections:
  i)   Demographic Data   ii)Type of Feedback
  ii) Perceptions of Feedback,   iii)Value of Feedback
  iii) Preferences for Feedback   vi) Suggestions for Feedback.
 Sections ii), iii) iv) and v) required students to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements on a five point Likert scale,ranging from 'strongly disagree" to "ranging from "to "strongly agree".

For part of section ii) a five-point Likert scale with numerical point reference.(0%, 25%, 50%, 75% and 100%) was used.

There were two open- ended questions on the importance of feedback (section iii) and suggestions to improve it (section vi).

Questionnaire details:
1. Demographic data and research experience of students:

Age in years: Gender: Nationality: College:

Year/Semester: Previous degree & education background:

Languages known- Arabic (   ) , English (   ) ,Others(   )

2. Feedback Provided by the University

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	agree	Strongly agree
I receive enough feedback from my faculty					
The feedback I receive is relevant to my goals as a student					

The feedback I receive is related to the purpose of the assignment					
My lecturers and Instructors provide enough information to make feedback useful					
Feedback on assignments/quiz/exams are always provided within two weeks					
Teaching staff are always willing to provide feedback					
The feedback I receive can be applied to my studies and/or work					
Class feedback is presented in a way so that everyone can participate					
Teaching staff need to be more active in providing feedback					

Please indicate how often (as a percentage of time) you receive the following types of feedback:					
	0%	25%	50%	75%	100%
No feedback					
Grades					
Individual written comments from the faculty					
Group verbal feedback from the faculty					
Peer feedback					
Self-assessment					

3. Perceptions of Feedback

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. When responding think about what you consider to be the most important aspects of feedback:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	agree	Strongly agree
Feedback is a justification of the grade I have received					
When the faculty gives me feedback it shows me that they care about the work I have done					
Feedback tells me what I need to do to improve my performance in a subject					
Feedback explains my grade for an assignment					
I deserve feedback when I put so much effort into study and assignments					

When the faculty provides feedback I don 'tworry as much about the subject					
Feedback is a response from the faculty to something I have said in class					
When I receive a lot of feedback I feel encouraged					
Feedback is any individual contact with the faculty					
Receiving feedback does not reduce my anxiety about a subject					
Feedback is an evaluation of my strengths and weaknesses					
Feedback tells me what the expectations of the faculty are					
Feedback motivates me to study					
When I don't receive any feedback I feel that the faculty does not respect me					

Feedback is important because …

4. Value of Feedback

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:					
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	agree	Strongly agree
Feedback is important to me					
I always collect my assignments					
I always read the feedback on my assignments					
I use feedback to try and improve my results in future assignments					
Feedback is only useful when I receive a low grade					

5. Preferences for Feedback

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:					
	Stron	Disagr	Neutral	agree	Strongly

	gly disag ree	ee			agree
General feedback provided in class helps me learn independently					
Faculty written comments are often difficult to read and poorly explained					
Feedback is only useful when it is positive					
Individual feedback is better because I can clarify any issues with the faculty					
I feel encouraged when faculty provide general feedback in class					
An important part of learning ; being able to discuss the subject with my faculty					
I learn better when the faculty encourages me to think deeply about the subject matter					
Verbal feedback is easier to understand					
I don't like it when teaching staff encourage questions in lectures because it wastes time					
Specific feedback is better because it helps me to understand what I did right and wrong in an assignment					
I learn more when my faculty focuses on the questions I got wrong					
It is boring when faculty provide general feedback to the class					
Written feedback is unreliable because tutors have different marking criteria.					
The grade is more important to my learning than feedback					
I prefer general feedback in class because it's not personal					
I prefer verbal feedback because I can communicate with the faculty and clarify information					
It is more important for me to see the reason why I received a particular grade, than to know how other students went					
Group feedback is best because I can see where other students have experienced similar problems					
I forget verbal feedback easily Written feedback is better because I can refer to it later					

6. Suggestions for Feedback

 What are your suggestions for improving feedback ?

IV. RESULTS

Our questionnaire was administered to students of MBBS(Medical), students of BDS(Dental) and Nursing. The age ranged between 18-23 years. Male: female ratio was 1.7: 1.Regarding Preferences and Perceptions for Feedback among Students: 74% mentioned that they receive enough feedback from their faculty.63% feel that the feedback they receive is relevant to the goals as a student. 79% stated that the faculty give useful feedback with enough information.85% mentioned that feedback on assignments, quiz and examination are always provided within 2 weeks.57% stated that the feedback given to them is applied to their studies and work.76% felt that the feedback is given in the way that everyone in the class is able to participate in it.61% felt that teaching staff is active in providing the feedback.

Regarding the types of the feedback, results showed that 73% of the feedback had been in the form of verbal feedback from the faculty. Students mentioned that 17% of feedback they get is from peer and self assessment feedback which they get during active learning sessions like problem based learning etc .Regarding the perception of the feedback 62 % of them feel that when faculty gives them feedback they care about them.89% mentioned that feedback makes them realize that they need to improve their performance in the studies.95% feel that they deserve feedback when they had put in so much efforts into study and assignments.74% mentioned that when they received feedback from the faculty they felt encouraged.73% of the students believed that they consider feedback to be an any contact with the faculty. For 29% feedback does not seem to reduce to my anxiety about a subject. Only 43% feels that feedback had been evaluation of their strengths and weeknesses.52% of the students stated the feedback tells them the expectation of the faculty and only 35% of the students had been motivated to study by the feedback given to them.76% strongly agreed that feedback is important to me.82% agreed that they need feedback to improve in future performance. For 65% verbal feedback was easier to understand.

V. DISCUSSIONS

Winne and Butler [1] provided an excellent summary in their claim that "feedback is information with which a learner can confirm, add to, overwrite, tune, or restructure information in memory, whether that information is domain knowledge, meta-cognitive knowledge, beliefs about self and tasks, or cognitive tactics and strategies".

There are many ways in which teachers can deliver feedback to students and for students to receive feedback from teachers, peers, and other sources [2]. Rather, for students, it means gaining information about how and what they understand and misunderstand, finding directions and strategies that they must take to improve, and seeking assistance to understand the goals of the learning. Kulhavy [3]- [4] demonstrated that feedback is not necessarily a reinforcer, because

feedback can be accepted, modified, or rejected. Feedback by itself may not have the power to initiate further action. In addition, it is the case that feedback is not only given by teachers, students, peers, and so on, but can also be sought by students, peers, and so on, and detected by a learner without it being intentionally sought. In our study we tried to analyze that how effective is feedback? Hattie [5] reported a synthesis of over 500 meta-analyses, involving 450,000 effect sizes from 180,000 studies, representing approximately 20 to 30 million students, on various influences on student achievement., The average or typical effect of schooling was 0.40 (SE = 0.05), and this provided a benchmark figure or "standard" from which to judge the various influences on achievement, such as that of feedback.

The most systematic study addressing the effects of various types of feedback was conducted by Kluger and DeNisi [6] .Their meta-analysis included studies which showed that the power of feedback is influenced by the direction of the feedback relative to performance on a task. Specifically, feedback is more effective when it provides information on correct rather than incorrect responses and when it builds on changes from previous trails. And the similar results were found in our study also. In our study we also tried to analyze that whether the effective feedback was able to answer three major questions asked by a teacher and/or by a student:

Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)

These questions correspond to notions of feed up, feedback, and feed forward. And it was found that effective answers to these questions served to reduce the gap which was partly dependent on the level at which the feedback operates. These included the level of task performance, the level of process of understanding how to do a task, the regulatory or metacognitive process level, and/or the self or personal level (unrelated to the specifics of the task). Feedback had differing effects across these levels.

Black and Wiliam [7] concluded, "the provision of challenging assignments and extensive feedback lead to greater student engagement and higher achievement". Too often, the feedback given is unrelated to achieving success on critical dimensions of the goal. For example, students are given feedback on presentation, spelling, and quantity in writing when the criteria for success require, is totally different. And hence such feedback are totally ineffective [8]- [9]. There has been much research on the timing of feedback, particularly contrasting immediate and delayed feedback. The meta-analysis of 53 studies, Kulik and Kulik [10] reported that at the task level (i.e., testing situations), some delay is beneficial (0.36), but at the process level (i.e., engaging in processing classroom activities), immediate feedback is beneficial (0.28) (and similar results have been shown in the various other studies done also [10]- [16]. How-ever no such correlation was found in our study.

In our study, we concluded that simply providing more feedback is not of much use, because it is necessary to consider the nature of the feedback, the timing, and how a student "receives" this feedback. And the ways and manner in which individuals interpret feedback information is the key to developing positive and valuable concepts of self-efficacy about learning, which in turns

leads to further learning. Teachers need to view feedback from the perspective of the individuals engaged in the learning and become proactive in providing information addressing the feedback questions and developing ways for students to ask these questions of themselves. Students, too often, view feedback as the responsibility of someone else, usually teachers, whose job it is to provide feedback information by deciding for the students how well they are going, what the goals are, and what to do next. And it was also analyzed that if the feedback is given to the students in the constructive manner, it has shown a remarkable change in students behavior.

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