Chapter 5
Feedback to "Feedforward":
Promoting Student Reflection and Learning Through Teacher Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

In recognizing that effective feedback and pedagogical approaches that support social interaction in learning are vital to students' achievement, this chapter focuses on students' need to be actively involved in their learning and assessment. It reports research into how undergraduate education students utilized assessment feedback. The students provided their perceptions of the feedback strategies employed by completing a survey. This included an investigation into whether the students used the feedback to "feed forward," that is, to answer the question as to whether it was used to enhance their responses in their next assessments. The results revealed a contrast between the students' approach to their learning compared with that of the pedagogy underpinning the course, which sought to empower them in their learning through teaching and assessment practices that engaged them in critical thinking. The students appeared to lack assessment literacy since they treated the feedback as corrective of the assignment being marked and not relevant to them taking-action to improve their future work. It is recommended that this disconnect be further explored since without students' understanding of the purposes of assessment and feedback, in keeping with their educators' intent they are limited in their ability to learn.

INTRODUCTION

One of the foremost responsibilities for a professor in higher education is teaching, formative assessment, and feedback. It is known from meta-analyses of research across all levels of education that the factors which have the greatest positive effect of student's achievement are feedback and "whole-class interactive teaching" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Hendry, White, & Herbert, 2016; Petty, 2009). Formative assessment can generally be defined as an "assessment which provides the learner with information that allows them to improve their learning and performance" (Gedye, 2010, p. 40). Hattie and Timperley

(2007) argue that the "main purpose of feedback is to reduce the gap between current understandings and performance and a goal" (p. 86). Feedback will demonstrate appropriate ways of enhancing the performance on the task, and offer strategies that invite more learner responsibility to improve. Too often professors tend to focus on correctional feedback rather than instructional aspects of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In order for feedback to be useful, it should be constructive and help students to develop skills to evaluate their own performance, as well as provide them with opportunities to close gaps between current and desired performance (Nicole & Macfarlance-Dick, 2006). Feedback is an important part of the learning process, students frequently express disappointment and frustration in relation to the feedback process (Edeilken-Cooperman & Berenato, 2014). Students need to be actively involved in learning, knowing the criteria, understanding the goals and purposes of feedback. Feedback needs to be explicitly linked to the assessment criteria with students involved in the feedback process. If the conversation around assessment and feedback includes students' participation through active learning, then feedback will be useful to the students' learning. Both the professor and student should use the phase "feed-forward" to focus on future learning.

The aim of this study was to determine how undergraduate students, Elementary and/or Special Education majors, use professor feedback on their performance on graded assignments or formative assessments. Formative assessment and feedback should empower students and assist them in the development of critical thinking as well as to accelerate learning in a "feed forward" process. A survey was developed that questioned students' perceptions of feedback strategies as well as to discover if students use feedback to "feed forward" and to make subsequent improvement on their assessments.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

Research on Elementary and/or Special Education Students: Implications for the Understanding University Students Views in the Area of Formative Assessment

Research in undergraduate Elementary and/or Special Education contributed the following summary of the students' views of:

1. Assessment as a formative measure
2. Assessment in the form of personal verses electronic feedback and how useful is the personal and/or electronic feedback
3. Feedback as "feed forward" for students' next assessments

The views of the students' are discussed below.

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