

CLUSTER 7. COMMENTARY

REFLECTION ON FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION AS FEEDBACK

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These three chapters focus on feedback either from the teacher or through peer-to-peer feedback as a way of enhancing learning. Hattie (2009: 12) states that 'the most powerful single influence enhancing achievement is feedback'. The authors of these chapters recognise this and have designed their innovations to demonstrate that feedback in various forms is the basis for learning. The projects also highlight the need for feedback to be part of a more open and transparent process rather than solely as a private communication between teacher and student. The quality and quantity of feedback is often cited as the one aspect of teaching and learning of which students are most critical. Each of the authors in their own way is playing a part in remedying this problem. Critical reflection, either as an individual activity or as an open and inclusive activity, is expressly or implicitly a part of the innovations discussed in these chapters. All three focus on student learning by giving students time to reflect; reflection *as* feedback. By writing their chapter, the three authors are also reflecting on their innovations, the processes and the outcomes. Reflection *as* feedback is not just a student focused activity.

Rétiová's project to introduce peer feedback on writing was designed as a way of students gaining new knowledge and perspectives as well as important skills such as critical thinking. Students began to realise the importance of collaboration and support in the learning process and some students 'experienced a shift of identity toward becoming partners with teachers and peers'. This shift may begin to address the difficulties the author discovered in her research where students expressed self-doubt and inadequacy about providing feedback. Perhaps more important is the teacher's need to monitor the peer feedback to ensure students gain confidence in providing feedback and critiquing the work of others and that the feedback is appropriate and not misleading.

Two important messages come from Rétiová's project. The first is the need to provide examples of constructive feedback and model the process. This was done and the students discussed which of the examples represent constructive feedback and why before they were asked to provide feedback themselves. The second is to explain to students that feedback is itself a way of learning rather than an expression of expertise'.

Gachallová's project used online quizzes as formative assessment that provided immediate feedback but perhaps more importantly was a way of increasing 'students' awareness of the learning process and [to] enhance their active role in it'. The innovation attempted to address the ongoing problem of students not doing their reading and being prepared for class. The online quizzes then provided a discussion starter in the class after students attempted the quiz. As with

Rétiová's project, this innovation was designed to provide opportunity for reflection *as* feedback. The formative assessment tool and the feedback and discussion resulted in improved summative assessment scores as well as facilitating students taking greater responsibility for their learning. Jaklová-Střihavková's project also focused on reflection *as* feedback using action and reflection to deepen knowledge and for students to assess understanding. Reflection was promoted by requiring students to make a group presentation and the need to think about choices. Theory was applied in practice through the group work with students presenting 'a unified group opinion' and justification as a way of understanding terminology and abstract concepts. The similarities with the other two projects are evident in that written feedback is provided and time is devoted to group discussions of student work to learn from each other and the teacher. Feedback through open discussion allows diverse perspectives to be presented and students to learn how others approach problems and solutions while still requiring individual assessment tasks.

Evaluation of the three projects was conducted through multiple sources including student feedback, peers, self-reflection and student outcomes. Using multiple sources is important and this is reflected in the varying data collected by the authors. While some sources of evidence did not indicate positive outcomes, others did. Determining the success of teaching and learning interventions or innovations is difficult due to the variables involved, in particular that students come with individual characteristics and pre-existing skills and knowledge. Ahmad et al. (2018) present an approach to investigate impact in higher education. While their work focuses more at the program level, their approach does give pointers that are useful for individual teachers looking for ways of determining success in their innovations.

The lessons learned from these three projects are evident in the description and discussion in each chapter. One lesson that may not be so evident is that sometimes (maybe more often than we wish) innovations, with all the best intentions, do not work or achieve the desired results. That does not mean that the idea was not a good idea but that many factors weigh into the outcome such as context and the students. View it as a learning experience too; reflection *as* feedback.

References

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