

## Using Constructive Feedback as an Effective Teaching Pedagogy

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### Abstract

The role of education in growth, social change and social mobility has been recognized as a vital component in every developmental effort in modern society. India's education system has expanded exponentially over the past decades. It aims at making children responsible and productive citizens of the society. With the recent pandemic there are various changes in the education system, and it has been observed that the educational assessments have gathered a different meaning altogether. It is seen that more focus is being laid on formative assessment to increase assess the learning of the students than summative. The core component of formative assessment is feedback. The ideal way of delivering feedback is crucial in improving knowledge and learning of the students. According to its true meaning, it is an objective description of a student's performance intended to identify areas where they are right on target and provide them with appropriate feedback for future development which intends to guide future performance. This study focuses on conceptually identifying the way teachers deliver feedback in Indian classroom setting by critically comparing the expected way of delivering feedback informed by the feedback model by John Hattie (2005) and the present way teachers deliver feedback. It suggests feasible ways in which teachers can improve the quality of feedback in order to improve learning of the students especially during times of crisis.

*Keywords: Feedback, Education, Teaching, Learning*

## Introduction

Traditionally, the education system in India involved face-to-face interaction among the teacher and the student(s) where the teacher imparted knowledge to the students. This interaction played a significant role in shaping the learning experience of the student, and aimed to enable students to uplift their performance and reach their full potential. Feedback in its basic form is the means of communication where the performer receives information that guides their future actions in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Assessment is an important tool for improving learning of students. It therefore, needs to be integrated with the process of teaching and learning. The greater the integration better is the outcomes of learning. Assessment has to be so designed that it can be used as a powerful means of influencing the quality of what teachers teach and what students learn.

Assessment refers to collecting information on the progress of student's learning using a variety of procedures and evaluation refers to making judgements on the basis of the information collected. The process and purpose of assessment should shift from merely assigning grades/awarding marks to include constructive feedback and assist with the learner's improvement. The collected information is used to have a clear understanding of what students know and can do; and, what they are expected to be able to know and do in order to improve their learning; and, move them along the developmental continuum. The information obtained from assessing students' performances can be used by teachers to form an image of the student which is critical to the process of teaching, learning and assessment. As more and more information become available from a variety of sources, the probability of getting a clear and "fair image" is enhanced. This image needs to be portrayed to the students, parents and other concerned stakeholders in a comprehensible way with the purpose of promoting learning and helping students move along the developmental continuum. It must serve, motivate and not discourage or demoralize the students. We must remember that it directly or indirectly affects the lives of the students. Assessment should serve the students' interest by guiding them properly and also by providing meaningful inputs.

Feedback is an important component of the assessment process, both formative and summative. Giving good feedback is one of the skills teachers need to master as part of effective assessment. Effective feedback helps students learn how to formulate new goals for themselves and action plans that will lead to achievement of those goals. Feedback should capture both cognitive and motivational factor. Good feedback gives students information

they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next i.e. the cognitive factor. Once they feel they understand what to do and why, most students develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning i.e. the motivational factor. Post assessment feedback is a process of informing the student objectively regarding the improvements and suggestions that have emerged through the assessment process.

In the recent times due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, the education industry has seen various changes in the delivery and conduction of teaching and assessment methods. It has been observed that to maintain social distancing and to avoid gatherings, online classes are being held across all levels of classes. Students are undertaking classes and lectures through various technology integrated methods such as Zoom, Google Meet, Skype, Go to Meeting etc. There has also been observed a rapid increase in the use of various Learning Management System Software (LMS) such as Google Classroom, Moodle etc. which aids both the teacher and the student to have an integrated classroom and serves as a platform to deliver information and collect assessments on a common platform. Due to this, the assessment criteria for the students have drastically changed from summative to more formative assessments to ease the conduction and assessment of the students in a unified and non-biased manner.

This research paper aims to build perspective about the impact of feedback on student's learning especially when formative assessments are concerned. It focusses on providing some practical suggestions for teachers on how to effectively use feedback in teaching and learning cycle within the Indian context. It emphasizes about the impact of appropriate feedback to improve student's learning and is based on a review of relevant literature with particular reference to the meta-analyses conducted by John Hattie (1999 and 2009).

### **Feedback to Enhance Learning**

Research suggests that in order to enhance learning of the students it is necessary for a teacher to know the present status or objective image of the student and the future learning outcome. Feedback helps in gathering information about the student and bringing out the desired change to bring the student closer to the desired goal.

Effective feedback requires profound understanding of the desired goal, and data-based information of the present position or image of the student in relation to the desired goal. Appropriate guidance is required on the way to close the gap between the two.

It is seen that the features of feedback should include the following characteristics in order to serve the purpose of learning:

- Clear
- Purposeful
- Meaningful, and
- Compatible

These are essential for the students to have an understanding about their present status, moreover it helps them analyse and assess themselves about future expectation. It is observed that for effective feedback it is important for the teacher to keep in mind certain parameters. A teacher should make sure that the feedback is being delivered to the student in appropriate setting. He/she should focus on the performance of the student and should avoid any biased opinion about the students by making the feedback based on direct observation using neutral and non-judgemental language. It should be based on positive aspects and the behaviour of the individual should be acknowledged and reinforce their exemplary behaviour which will give them confidence in their skills for better future performance. They should focus on highlighting the areas requiring improvement, and suggest measures for the same.

### **Importance of Feedback**

The problem often faced by the students is that they are not clear about the feedback given by the teachers. It is reason they are not able to comprehend and apply the feedback in their future performance. It is essential that feedback provided to student should assist them to map their performance on the task, and they should be able to use the information given by the teachers to assess their existing knowledge and to have a clear understanding about the way forward. It is important for teachers to give feedback which best explains the remark or grade received by the students, and comments should help understand what went wrong and what could have been done to make it better.

From the student perspective, some of the questions that need to be addressed for making feedback effective for the learning are,

### 1. Where am I going?

It is very important for students to receive the instructions from a teacher about their learning goals. More challenging goals and extensive feedback leads to more involvement. Feedback allows a person to adjust the strategy as well as the direction and amount of effort. Even once the goal is achieved feedback further guides the teacher and student about allocating the next challenging and achievable goal. Overstated or understated goals lead to inappropriate effort for the destination. Overall commitment to attain a goal is the fuel behind success. The developmental continuum is built on showing how students “grow” through an area. This growth identifies to the teachers and students “where they are going”.

### 2. How am I going?

This means providing students with a measure of their achievement levels referenced to some predefined standard or prior performance.

### 3. Where to next?

Students would always like to know where they should go to next. They need a specific direction and goal. If the students have achieved the previous goals then they need to know where to go next how they can he move forward to the desired goal. The guidance and direction by the teacher lead to further possibilities of learning.

Thus, it is seen that it is essential to give learners time to absorb and act upon or consolidate feedback comments which help in enhancing learning of the students.

## Essential Principles of Feedback

There are certain things a teacher needs to know and practice in order to make the feedback effective.

PRINCIPLES OF FEEDBACK
§ Promote dialogue and conversation around the specific goals of the learning and assessment task.
§ Engage the students' in practical exercises to help them to understand the assessment criteria.
§ Use feedback to link student performance to the specified assessment goals.

§ Emphasize the instructional aspects of feedback and not only the correctional dimensions.
§ Engage the students' in conversation around the purposes of feedback and feed forward and indicate what students need to think about in order to bring their task performance closer to the goals.
§ Design feedback comments that invite self-evaluation and future self-learning management.
§ Enlarge the range of participants in the feedback conversation-incorporate self and peer feedback.

Figure 1: Principles of feedback, taken from *Assessment: Feedback to promote student's learning* by Dorothy Spiller

Research suggests that feedback is effective if it is:

1. **Goal Directed** - Students take action to achieve the stated goal, and receive information their actions in relation to the goal. It is essential that the given feedback should focus on the learning objective.
2. **Tangible and transparent** - Teacher feedback to the students should be specific, meaningful. The student should be able to comprehend the information correctly and it should be useful to the student in enhancing learning outcome.
3. **Actionable** - Feedback must be actionable: "Good job!", "Work hard", "Improve your performance" and "B+" are not feedback at all. This type of feedback does not provide students with the advice on how to improve their performance. Students should know what the grade means, such as if the student has got C grade he/she should know why and should be given appropriate feedback on how to improve the grade.
4. **User Friendly** - Feedback is only of value if the user can understand it and act upon it. Too much feedback is also counterproductive. One or two key elements of feedback will be effective in helping students focus those areas that need most help.
5. **Timely**- The sooner students get feedback, the better. Good feedback needs to be "timely" rather than "immediate." That is, they should get it while the topic is still fresh in their minds. Some of the ways of delivering timely feedback are:
  - Returning the test or assignment the next day

- Giving immediate oral response to the student regarding the question or the concept

John Hattie identifies the following strategies to provide timely feedback:

- a) Technology is one powerful tool—part of the power of computer-assisted learning is unlimited, timely feedback and opportunities to use it. Feedback does not need to come only from the teacher or even from people at all. It is a robust assessment information system which helps in delivering feedback easily. It may be simply done through social network sites, e-mails, or with the help of certain software's. It helps in capturing a holistic view of the student and helps in individual diagnostic reporting.
  - b) Peer review is another strategy for managing the load to ensure lots of timely feedback; it is essential, however, to train students to do small-group peer review to high standards, without immature criticisms or unhelpful praise.
6. **Continuous** - Feedback not only needs to be given, but it must be acted upon by the students. This is at the root of formative assessment in classrooms. If results are less than optimal, students need opportunities, to reshape the performance to better achieve the goal. In summative assessment, the feedback generally comes too late. The ability to quickly adapt one's performance is a mark of all great achievers and problem solvers in a wide array of fields.
  7. **Consistent** - Information that is fed back to students must be useful, consistent, stable, accurate, and trustworthy. Teachers need to work together to become more consistent over time and formalize their judgments in highly descriptive rubrics that describe performance.
  8. **Authentic**- Feedback should relate to current learning objectives. No time to give and use feedback actually means that there is no time to improve learning. Research shows that less teaching plus more feedback is the key to achieving greater learning. Teachers need to explore ways to give authentic feedback.

## CONCLUSION

Use of assessment to improve the performance of students is an integral aspect of effective teaching. It further necessitates strengthening the feedback mechanism at classroom level. Feedback is an objective description of a students' performance intended to identify areas

where they are right on target and provide them with appropriate path for future development which intends to guide future performance. This paper identifies certain best practices associated with the feedback mechanism to enhance students learning. It helps to have a different perspective about feedback. The paper elaborates on the key aspect of feedback a teacher should incorporate in their teaching-learning process to enhance the effectiveness and to improve their teaching pedagogy. These techniques shall be incorporated in their various Learning Management Tools to ensure that the learning process is streamlined and the students are encouraged throughout the process of learning and development.

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