
Feedback: for education or life?

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ABSTRACT: Feedback is something that we are always interested in, even at an informal level as it tells us about our experiences of the past, our agenda for the present and our roadmap for the future. Formal feedback techniques in education and professional arenas are vital for growth, development and nurturing of individuals and ideas.

Key words: SWOT analysis, cognitive approach, motivation, Feedback Model.

I INTRODUCTION:

Feedback, contrary to popular belief, is not just about school or college evaluations, and also not about polling of opinions to endorse or reject phenomena. It is more about understanding progress to remedy lacunae on any front by an individual or entity. In a lighter vein, nowhere before in the history of mankind, has feedback been more centre stage than today's social media driven age, where the value of human quality or endeavor is judged not by actual content, but numbers of followers, groups or 'likes'. That said, feedback is indeed central to human existence as in a social set-up, to improve is essential to incorporate opinions, views and experience of others, and it's natural and instinctive for the humans to do so.

For this reason, feedback finds special place in the educational arena, as education is the systematic endeavour for all human beings to improve, mature and be nurtured. This would be practically impossible to achieve if the educator fails to

- ✓ do regular SWOT (*strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats*) analysis for the learners;
- ✓ Convey these analyses to the learners so that they can attempt course correction, rectify errors and explore knowledge and avenues for themselves;
- ✓ Invite such analysis from the learners regarding the teacher him/herself and the teaching learning ecosystem.

So how can Feedback achieve the aforementioned purposes? What follows is a brief description of the types, directions and modulations of feedback in education which also have a far-reaching impact on human life in general.

II UNDERSTANDING FEEDBACK

Feedback always, ideally has to follow a double-barreled approach wherein every feedback exercise, has the following two components: -

The cognitive approach - whichever form of feedback is being provided, the information has to be comprehensive in the sense that it ticks all the boxes, and is also easy to understand. The information provided has to be such that it is needed to strengthen the knowledge of the subject and the information processing as well as the executive skills needed to score well in the examinations as well as do well in higher studies and professional lives. That is to say, feedback can bridge the gap between what the student understands and what is aimed to be understood.

Both students and teachers have a role in reducing the gap. On the cognitive front, the teacher has to give feedback on the **task level** (what are the goals that are to be achieved) and the process level (how are these goals to be achieved), and the students

have to take one goal at a time and work accordingly. Feedback is more effective when it provides information on correct rather than incorrect responses and when it builds on changes from previous performances. It seems to have the most impact when goals are specific and challenging and task-complexity is low.

The motivational approach - it is important that the information provided through feedback is always truthful but encouraging too. Human beings will respond positively to criticism too, if their feelings are not hurt, their sense of control over their lives and their concept of self-esteem and self-efficacy is not brought into question.

Thus, on the motivational level, the teacher has to address the feedback in such a way that the **self-regulatory role** of the student is kept intact (they can be provided checklists to judge their own present and future performance). Less effective learners have minimal self-regulation and self-assessment attitudes and tend to rely on external factors. Thus, the aim has always to be to make students responsible for their learning and their performance to make them more effective learners. The **self-level** (personality) aspect is also dealt with, as all students are unique and need slightly different triggers for best development.

That is to say, every human being has his or her own reasons for:

- ✓ The *choice* of a particular action;
- ✓ The *effort* expended on the particular action; and
- ✓ The *persistence* of the effort.

Effective feedback will have to decide *why* students will decide to work on something, *how hard* they will pursue it and *how long* they will be willing to sustain the activity. Also, feedback has to be visualized to serve the following educational needs:

- ✓ *Assessive* - Feedback in various situations has to make a quality judgement, more or less good or bad along with some more descriptive adjective. This generalized form is useful, if not in enhancing learning, but to draw attention to what needs improvement.
- ✓ *Developmental* - the quality judgement, when accompanied by some practical suggestions for how to improve, leads to learner comprehension and concept development.
- ✓ *Engaging* - along with practical suggestions for improvement, feedback can create a bonding between the teacher and learner, wherein the teachers involves oneself in the task, looking at new perspectives and ideas arising out of it. The learner can actually achieve great creative perspectives and divergent thinking this way.

III HATTIE AND TIMPERLEY FEEDBACK MODEL

Hattie and Timperley (2007) created the following model for feedback, which explains this further:

WHERE AM I GOING? (FEED UP or GOALS)
HOW AM I GOING (FEED BACK or PROGRESS)
WHERE TO NEXT (FEED FORWARD or ACTIVITIES)

FIG. 1

The Hattie and Timperley **FEEDBACK MODEL**, thus deals with feedback on three aspects i.e.

- ✓ *The learning outcome to be achieved* - learning at any level or situation needs well etched out goals which need to be made known to the learner;
- ✓ *the strategy to be employed to achieve that particular outcome*- learners need to have feedback to have well drawn roadmaps in their minds towards their goals, also

learners may digress from the path of specific goal achievement so they need feedback for refocusing;

- ✓ *the lead that the particular outcome provides for further strategies and outcomes*
- feedback has to show the way forward to further learning.

It becomes clear here that this particular model is not just restricted to how students are encouraged to learn in educational institutions, but also how we progress in our professional and personal lives. Feedback, thus, helps to constantly take stock, introspect, weigh options, play safe or take risks, judge people and relationships, reinvent corporate hierarchies and reformulate goals and objectives. It is important for all of us to use feedback as a constant strategy in all aspects of our daily interactions.

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