The HKU Scholars Hub   The University of Hong Kong   香港大學學術庫

Title	Students' perceptions of a reporting and feedback system for learning and development in an 'inviting school' in Hong Kong
Author(s)	Chung, YB; Yuen, M
Citation	Pastoral Care In Education, 2012, v. 30 n. 3, p. 241-262
Issued Date	2012
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10722/152887
Rights	This is an electronic version of an article published in Pastoral Care in Education, 2012, v. 30 n. 3, p. 241-262. The article is available online at: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02643944.2012.671344

Students' perceptions of a reporting and feedback system for learning and development

in an 'inviting school' in Hong Kong

Y. B. Chung

Mantak Yuen

Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education

The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to: Mantak Yuen, Centre for

Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education, Faculty of Education,

The University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, China (e-mail:

mtyuen@hku.hk).

About the Authors

Y. B. Chung is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Hong Kong. He has experience in secondary education, school guidance, and curriculum development. His research interests include invitational education and students' self-regulation. *Contact address:* Mr. Y. B. Chung, Ph.D. postgraduate research student, Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, China. E-mail: ybchung@hku.hk

Mantak Yuen (Ph.D.) is an associate professor and Director of the Center for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong. He was trained as an educational psychologist at the University College London. He is a registered counseling and educational psychologist in Hong Kong. His professional interests are in social-cognitive theory, school counseling, invitational education, gifted education, and life career development. Since August 2001, he has been the leader of a research team examining life-skills development and connectedness among children and youth in relation to school guidance and counseling programs. *Contact address*: Dr. Mantak Yuen, Center for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong, China. E-mail: mtyuen@hku.hk, Telephone: (852) 2857 8542

**Students' perceptions of a reporting and feedback system for learning and development
in an 'inviting school' in Hong Kong**

Abstract

This small-scale study aimed to explore how the reporting and feedback system in an inviting

school in Hong Kong attempts to facilitate students' learning and development. In particular,

the study examined how students in an inviting setting felt about the reporting system in

relation to their own learning and development. Any associations between feedback given to

students and their subsequent development of greater self-regulation were considered. Data

were generated from individual and focus group interviews with a small sample of Grade 7

and Grade 10 students. The results revealed four key aspects of the school context that

students regarded as helpful to facilitate the function of the reporting system. The potential

relationship between feedback and reflection, and the roles these play in the acquisition of

self-regulation in students, are discussed.

Keywords: feedback; inviting school; reporting system; self-regulation

Introduction

The term 'reporting and feedback system' (hereafter called 'reporting system') as used in this paper refers specifically to the practice of regularly providing students and their parents with written detailed information on the student's progress and achievements. This information is supplemented with practical advice on steps each student needs to take in order to maintain or improve their performance.

Different from individual subject assessments in the curriculum, a reporting system includes a broader perspective on learning and development of the student as a whole (Brookhart, 2004). For accountability purposes, a reporting system is an essential way to communicate student overall achievement in the school to the people concerned (e.g., students, teachers, and parents). An effective reporting system is not represented merely by annual report cards but may include multiple reporting formats, practices, and frequency of use (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Ideally, a reporting system should do more than simply indicating students' current levels of attainment. It should also serve an important ongoing *educational* function by providing students with relevant feedback that helps them directly in their learning and personal development, such as highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, offering strategies to improve their future performance. An effective report can help students become more aware of and responsible for monitoring, adapting, and focusing their own efforts (Brookhart, 2004). However, there is a common tendency in many schools to

over-emphasise the administrative and accountability role of reporting and this may have

inhibited its educational function. If schools place more focus on the *educational* purpose of a

reporting system, this would almost certainly contribute more effectively to students' learning

and development.

Indubitably, a reporting system is one of the major sources of feedback to students. It

supplements the many other sources of feedback that exist within the school environment,

such as comments made by teachers to individual students during lessons, teachers' written

remarks on students' papers, comments from peers, and personal observations that students

make on the quality of their own work.

To utilize the feedback for students' learning and development, the most effective,

well-focused and constructive forms of reporting are often criterion-based and linked directly

to key aspects of a particular learning task (Good & Brophy, 2007). If, for example, students

are made fully aware of the exact requirements (criteria and standards) for a particular

learning task or sequence of tasks, the feedback they later receive can address specifically

these criteria and standards. Effective feedback information should assist students in

narrowing any gap between the criteria set and their own performance. Without clear task

requirements and assessment criteria, reporting and feedback tend to remain disconnected and

vague (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Unfortunately, according to some studies (e.g., Rust,

Price & O'Donovan, 2003) it is hard to find teachers who make learning criteria and standards

explicit enough in class. To improve this situation, much more guidance from teachers is

necessary to keep students well informed on assessment criteria and task requirements.

On the other hand, there has been a large body of empirical evidence proving that

feedback is one of the most important factors that can enhance the development of

self-regulation (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Butler & Winne, 1995; Hattie & Timperley, 2007;

Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). While a generally accepted goal of education is to encourage all

students to become autonomous and self-regulated learners (Lapan, Kardash, & Turner, 2002;

Lee, Yin, & Zhang, 2009; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006), it is desirable that more research

be conducted to explore the association between reporting practices and students'

self-regulatory learning behaviours.

Invitational Theory and Self-regulation

There is evidence to suggest that individual self-regulation can be facilitated by favourable

learning conditions (Zimmerman, 2000; McCaslin & Hickey, 2001). In other words, a

positive school climate matters in enhancing students' self-regulation. Invitational Education

(IE) (Purkey, 1991), as practised in 'inviting schools' , places emphasis on creating a positive,

welcoming, and highly supportive school environment favorable to students' learning and

development. Encouraging the development of well motivated and autonomous learners is

certainly one of the main aims of schools that operate on principles derived from the

'invitational theory' (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Schools that apply invitational theory in

practice attempt to adjust the culture of the school in positive ways in order to extend students

to their full potential in all areas. An essential aspect of IE is the belief that the places,

processes, policies, people, and programmes in a school should all be perceived as 'inviting'

to students so that they are motivated, feel valued as learners, and are willing to work hard to

achieve eventual autonomy. It has been confirmed that positive invitational 'messages'

conveyed intentionally and unintentionally in 'inviting schools' are powerful enhancers of

autonomy and self-efficacy (Usher & Pajares, 2006).

One of many ways in which an inviting school can support students' learning and

development is through individualised constructive feedback, provided within a refined

reporting system (Chung & Yuen, in press). As stated above, an effective system for reporting

on students' progress and future learning needs should help students develop greater

awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. As a result, they are also encouraged to

assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

In Hong Kong, where the study reported here was conducted, inviting schools are

encountering some obstacles due to the heritage of Confucian tradition which has maintained

a heavily examination-oriented culture in schools. In addition to this powerful residual

cultural influence, progression to tertiary education in Hong Kong is still extremely

competitive and depends largely on students' examination results (Hong Kong, 2009). This

has resulted in a tradition of fairly formal teaching methods and strict adherence to prescribed

curriculum. Berry (2011) has commented that this competitive culture makes the implementation of 'assessment *for* learning' difficult in Hong Kong, because the emphasis remains almost entirely on 'assessment *of* learning.' In this respect the reporting system of the school used in this study is atypical when compared with traditional reporting practices among most local schools[1], including those operating on IE principles. The system impinges upon all aspects of learning and teaching. It fosters communication between teachers, students and parents, and also involves professional communication among different subject teachers. Most importantly, the system provides specific and individualized feedback to students on their progress and overall performance. It encourages them to engage frequently in self-evaluation. To ensure the writing of precise comments, teachers are required to pay special attention to every student in class, and to make notes on what they have observed and any actions taken. This process of focusing thoughtful care on each and every student enhances the guidance and supportive role of all teachers. In parallel with the reporting system, regular self-reflection and self-evaluation practices are highlights of the school that help to promote students' self-learning habits. The performance of a student's self-learning and reflection is recorded in the report booklet. A strong body of research supports the value of self-evaluation and self-reflection as a basis for increasing autonomy and self-regulation (Bandura, 1993; Pintrich, 1995; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994).

Reporting System in an Inviting Context

The role of feedback in helping to promote students' autonomy and self-regulation has been

confirmed in previous studies (e.g., Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick,

2006), but the contribution of a reporting system connected specifically to invitational theory

has not been investigated. The aim of this study was to explore students' perceptions of how

such a reporting system facilitates their own learning and development within the context of

an inviting secondary school.

Three main research questions were proposed:

1.   Do students regard the reporting system as generally helpful to them?

2.   From the students' perspective, what are the aspects of the school context that best help

      the reporting system facilitate their learning and development?

3.   Are there any signs that the students are exhibiting self-regulation in the school context?

The study reported here is actually part of a much more detailed study of an inviting

secondary school in Hong Kong, comprising five phases and involving 62 school visits

throughout the school years of 2009 - 2011.

Background of the school

The school had adopted IE as its policy since the second year after foundation in 2000. It is

an aided co-educational secondary school, which shares many commonalities with other

schools in Hong Kong. The school was acknowledged as a high value-added school in its

academic performance in 2006 – 2008[2]. It was also one of the Professional Development

Schools in 2005 - 2007, nominated by the Education Bureau because it is well known for its

many innovative programmes, such as the daily reflection session[3]. The school was recipient

of the *Inviting School Award* in 2004 and the *Fidelity Award* twice (2008 and 2010) from the

International Alliance for Invitational Education.

Major Components of the System

Report Booklet

The practice of using a report booklet is one of the highlights. The booklet reports not only

students' grades in the examinations with criteria-based referencing but, most importantly,

also provides detailed information concerning students' ongoing learning attitude,

performance and specific needs. It gives suggestions on how to improve in every subject,

with personalized recommendations written by teachers. The report booklet contains clearly

stated learning objectives and criteria for every subject. Regular entries in the booklet

indicate how far the student is from achieving these criteria and what he or she still needs to

do. Suggestions for improving the student's performance are also provided, geared to the

needs of the individual.

Within the report booklet, among the grade descriptors in sections on academic

achievement and learning attitude, the emergence of self-regulatory behaviours (e.g.

self-reflection; self-learning) is highly regarded. (See sample in figures 1a, 1b)

Parents' Days

Parents and students can communicate with their class teachers and all other subject teachers, so that they have full understanding of how the student is performing in the school and what still needs to be done. The learning attitude and performance of individual students can be discussed more comprehensively at the meeting. The discussions would eventually end with agreed strategies that students will apply, fully supported by parents and teachers, in order to maintain good progress in the coming terms.

Daily Reflection Session

The school places emphasis on developing students' ability and habit to reflect thoughtfully upon their learning. The school provides opportunity for such self-evaluation, believing that it provides the essential foundation for self-regulation. Each afternoon, specific time is allocated to students for such reflection and for checking whether they have achieved their daily goals. To facilitate this process, students need also to reply to questions in a 'reflection booklet' (See figure 2) that facilitates them to think back, to evaluate themselves, and to set goals for future action. Their responses are monitored carefully by their teachers. In addition, prior to the Parents' Day, students are requested to complete a self-evaluation sheet (See figure 3), reflecting upon their own performance and setting new goals.

Staff Professional Development Programme

The reporting system is regarded as one key focus in the staff professional development

programme every year. The programme consists of workshops, meetings and a mentorship

scheme with a focus on maintaining a 'collaborative culture.' This helps to refresh and

reinforce the original belief and practices that underpin the reporting system within the

context of an inviting school.

Method

This is an exploratory research to reveal a contemporary phenomenon, where the researcher

will have no control and will make no interventions. An embedded, single-case design with

ethnographic approach is adopted (Yin, 2003). Holistic, native, and naturalistic perspectives

are highly valued while collecting and analyzing the data.

As well as the two-year regular and on-site unobtrusive observations, documentary

study and in-depth interviews with school personnel at different levels were conducted to

allow multiple sources of information. The ethnographic research cycle proposed by Spradley

(1980) was applied to guide the research process in the field. The process involved asking

questions, collecting data, making records, and analyzing data. These tasks followed a

cyclical pattern and were repeated many times until key themes emerged naturally from the

data. Each theme was then classified and labeled with an appropriate category.

Student Informants

The personnel in this single case are the units for study. Special attention was focused on four

Grade 7 and two Grade 10 students because they were in the first cohorts of the junior and

senior students under the full implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum (2009 –

2010). The six student informants were recommended by the school principal to provide a

suitable mix of gender and ability. Two of the students had special educational needs (see

table 1 and table 2). Unfortunately, one of the informants passed away in December 2010 due

to pneumonia, leaving five informants as the major data source. In addition, another ten

non-target students (grades 7 and 10 in 2009-2010) were also invited by the key informants

and the researcher to participate in five group interviews (see table 3). Information from all

target students was triangulated with data from class tutors and from their report booklets.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

Data Collection

Individual student and focus group interviews were conducted in which the questions moved

gradually from informal to semi-structured, and focused on students' reactions to the

reporting system and the required self-reflections. The design of the interview schedules was

therefore not followed strictly. It was based upon responses to the prior information collected

from time to time, from facts to perceptions, and from individual reporting components to

their possible associations. The tentative focus of the questions was listed across the five

phases (see table 4 and table 5). In order to determine whether the students were displaying

any self-regulatory behaviours some questions were extracted from the *Self-regulated*

Learning Interview Schedule (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988). Every individual and

group interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Interview data were first stored in a

MP3 recorder and then transcribed verbatim in Chinese.

Insert Table 3 about here

Insert Table 4 about here

Data Analysis

A continuous approach (Geotz & LeCompte, 1984) was applied for the qualitative data

analysis during the entire process. Words, phrases, and/or sentences that formed meaningful

units in the transcripts were highlighted. Preliminary coding labels were used in accordance

with the first-round classification. After reading the transcripts several times, the codes were

further elaborated to reflect higher-order attributes at the category level (See table 6). Themes

emerging from the analyzing process were carefully noted. The findings were validated by the

five group interviews by the other ten non-target students. Views from teachers, parents, and

alumnus were also put into the process of validation.

Insert Table 5 about here

Findings

In answer to research question 1 (*Do students regard the reporting system as generally

helpful to them?*) ― all students stated clearly that they were in favour of the reporting

practices. The positive comments written in the report booklet caused the students to admit

that they like being praised by their teachers. Student F, the grade seven girl who

unfortunately passed away after the first year, agreed in her first year that the positive

comments could psychologically push her to be more diligent. 'It seems like someone has

faith in me, telling me that I can make it – just try hard.' Student C commented in the first

year of his school life: 'Of course, I do [value] this booklet; there are a lot of good

comments.'

Besides the learning outcomes, the report booklet also acknowledged the process of

learning that the effort the students expended. Student C remarked: 'In the past, test papers

just showed the marks. Now, I know not only about my marks, but also my learning

attitudes.' Moreover, students expressed their appreciation that every subject teacher wrote the comments in the booklet. The booklet was therefore able to reflect students' performance holistically. 'It is pretty good. The first time when I saw this, I knew what teachers' impressions are of me' (Student H). Another four students also shared similar thoughts (Students A, C, F, and P) in both individual and group interviews.

Students generally accepted that the reporting practice could help them improve in their learning because it provides them (and even their parents) with clear directions and suggestions. Student C explained: 'The practice [of reflection and evaluation] could help me, because I would have better understanding of those comments written by teachers.' The grade ten girl, student B echoed his view: 'Through this report booklet parents will obtain a full picture. Probably, they may know what is needed for improvement. They may then provide assistance to the student.' Student D, a grade seven girl with special educational needs attributed her improvement in mathematics in the second year (from grade F to D) to the advice given by the mathematics teacher: 'The test result was not good last time. After having the teacher's detailed advice, I have shown improvement.'

Student E, the grade seven boy who has dyslexia, was observed turning repeatedly to the pages containing positive comments on some non-academic subjects and showing these off to his mother and the researcher in his first year study. However, the very positive response to the booklet was tempered slightly because of the grade effect. He expressed a

view that he was no longer in favour of the report booklet after the first term in the second

year because the grade inside did not reflect the *effort* that he had expended. He believed that

some teachers, especially new teachers, still just focused on the low grade and did not

recognize that he was trying very hard. With this exception, there was no indication that

students disliked the system or viewed it as unhelpful.

In answer to research question 2 ― (*From the students' perspective, what are the*

aspects of the school context that best help the reporting system facilitate their learning and

development?) ― four main contextual themes emerged from students' comments. These

themes were identified as: i) constructive comments from teachers, ii) teachers' attitudes, iii)

relationships with teachers and peers, and (iv) self-reflection. Among these four aspects, all

student informants perceived that 'constructive comments' and 'teacher attitudes' were the

two most effective factors in facilitating their learning and development.

Constructive Comments from Teachers

Students in this study perceived that constructive comments embody the following features:

● *Either positive or encouraging*

Constructive comments are not necessarily equivalent to 'positive' comments. Although

constructive comments always address the positive attitudes and outcomes that a student has

demonstrated or achieved, it may also necessitate pointing out existing weaknesses for future

improvement. In some instances (e.g. Student A and C), it was observed that 'scolding'

comments, *if delivered with a caring attitude,* may actually be perceived to be a sort of 'encouragement' that helps a student improve. 'Even if (the comments) are not so positive, it is good' (Student C). On the other hand, comments that give praise usually highlight strengths that a student exhibits, or the effort the student has expended. In this context, 'descriptive praise' is of maximum value because it specifies exactly what is praiseworthy about a student's work or performance (Westwood, 2011). One student remarked: 'If the comments are positive, you will pay more attention to study the subject' (Student B). 'For some students whose abilities are weak, they probably like the encouragement' (Student A). In a group interview, student C even asserted that the soft-toned comments given by teachers could easily be accepted by students.

- *Focusing on room for improvement*

Addressing practical ways for improvement is one of the requirements of the constructive comments inside the report booklet. The booklet is more than the display of attainment. It offers guidance for better learning. Constructive comments provide valuable information on how a student can improve his or her performance. Students showed much appreciation for those comments with clear directions and suggestions: 'I like the report booklet because teachers advised me on the ways to improve' (Student D) 'Not only does the report evaluate my performance, it also informs me of the ways to improve' (Student A). The two grade 8

students (O and P) in a group interview affirmed that the comments clearly reflect what needs

to be done, and how they should improve for future learning.

- *Both verbal (oral) and written*Students shared their different preferences on the format

of feedback, verbal and written. Students B and E admitted that they always forgot what was

said on parents' days because there was no written record of those verbal suggestions.

However, student B agreed that the conversation on parents' days could provide a platform

for a mutual talk and free exchange of ideas between teachers and students. She also

considered that written comments could become risky and misinterpreted when displayed in

front of outsiders. Her thought was supported by student M in a group interview. These

students generally felt that both formats are necessary because they serve different purposes.

Student A perceived that written comments were occasionally presented in a routine manner,

lacking specificity and practical value. However, he also liked to revisit the most useful

comments written in the booklet. Students preferred both verbal and written comments: 'It

seems that oral comments are given more truly; but I still like the comments written in the

booklet' (Student A); and 'Written comments are long lasting, but oral comments are more

effective. I prefer both' (Student C).

- *Be multi-dimensional*

The comments in the booklet were constructive because: 'It [the booklet] contains comments

by all subject teachers, not only by class teacher' (Student C). At the same time, comments

addressed not only the results of examinations but also the learning attitude and areas for

improvement: 'This report booklet is presented from multi-dimensions. It values my attitudes

and I think it is balanced' (Student A).

Teachers' Attitudes

In general, students perceive teachers' constructive comments as reflecting a caring attitude

toward their students. Student C remarked: 'The spirit [of the report] is the teachers.' Student

N, in a group interview, told the researcher that her teacher is undoubtedly the most crucial

factor that enhances her learning motivation. Most teachers were seen as professional and

genuinely interested in helping students improve and develop their talents. If teachers have

taken time and interest to reflect carefully on how each student performed before writing their

remarks and advice, students appreciate the personal touch and will be more willing to act on

the teacher's advice: 'When teachers write the comments, they will reflect on how the student

performed. They may therefore identify some problems and pay more attention during the

class' (Student B). Student D opined that teachers could write detailed comments because

they had carefully observed students' performances during their daily teaching**.** In a group

interview, Student A showed his appreciation of the comments from his mathematics teacher.

The comments always reminded him that learning is not for competing with others but for

self-improvement. He admitted this attitude helped to release him from some of the pressures

of learning.

It should be noted, however, that some students felt comments were not always written after such careful deliberation. Student B remarked: 'The accuracy of the comments is okay, but we feel that some remarks are quite routine…It seems that they are more or less the same over years.' If teachers treat writing comments as a routine job, with little reference to personalizing the feedback to students, it is unlikely that students will benefit much by this practice. A grade 11 student N reported in a group interview that some, but not all, teachers would talk and share ideas and experiences with their students to enhance their career aspiration in future. These caring attitudes help them improve in learning.

Teachers' attitudes to the reporting task depends on how much value they place on the rationale behind the task — that is, valuing students as individuals, supporting their learning, and encouraging their increasing autonomy (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Although the students themselves may not know much about invitational theory, they all clearly understood that the purpose of the detailed comments and feedback is for optimizing their learning and helping them feel valued as members of the school community.

Relationships with Teachers and Peers

The third theme emerging from students' comments covered the issue of relationships in the school. On different occasions during this field study students confirmed that the relationship between teachers and students in the school is very good. There is a school policy that teachers and students remain with the same class for three years. Teachers are totally

accountable for students' learning and performance for this period. Such an arrangement

helps to build a long-lasting relationship between teachers and students. Student C claimed:

'We [teachers and students] communicate often before the teachers write their comments. The

teachers have followed us for more than a year. They know us well.' During his first year, this

student did not consider that this policy would have any effect on his learning; but he

changed his view in the second year. To some extent, students perceived that a teacher's

working relationship with each individual student might influence what the teacher wrote in

the report booklet. Equally, the way that a student feels about a teacher could influence the

extent to which he or she would respect and follow any advice given. For example, student B

shared the view that: 'They [my classmates] think if the teacher cares about them and

responds to their needs, and puts them in a high priority, they would be more motivated and

involved in learning.' It is also probable that if the teacher-student relationship is good, the

students can more easily accept constructive criticism. This is why student A perceived that a

teacher's scolding remark is often a form of help instead of harsh censure. On the other hand,

if the relationship between teacher and student is not good, even feedback that is technically

helpful and constructive does not lead to any positive impact on students' learning and

development. This finding could also explain why students in a group interview admitted that

the co-curricular activities led by their teachers would help better academic outcomes than

those activities led by outside tutors. Relationship does really matter.

In a positive teacher-student relationship, teachers can play the role of more capable partners who provide 'supportive frameworks' within which students can perform at higher levels than when alone (Fogel, 1993). This notion has much in common with Vygotsky's (1978) earlier concept of a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through which learners make progress if provided with appropriate guidance and feedback (i.e., 'scaffolding') by teachers.

Peer relationships were also seen as important because they tend to influence how connected to the school community a student feels and how receptive he or she is to advice and guidance. Students treasure their peer relationships in their school lives. 'If you have good relationship with other students, back to school will then be an enjoyable experience' (Student B). Like student B, the response by student E shows that he may also benefit as much from their peers as from a teacher: 'Sometimes, I could solve problems by asking my peers.' Students A and J in a group interview expressed a view that students at their level (grade 10 and above) would sometimes share their short-term and long-term goals. According to the 'co-regulation' model proposed by Fogel (1993), individuals develop and learn largely through their relationships with others. Learning thus arises out of active social dynamic processes in a supportive environment.

Self-reflection

The fourth theme identified in students' comments relates to the value of personal reflection.

Although the school has put emphasis on promoting the self-reflective habit by using daily

reflection session, the students' comments on whether the practice benefits learning were

varied. Two students, A and C, were very much in favour of the daily reflection session.

Together with Student D, they seemed to benefit from it and also made good use of the

feedback provided by the reporting practices. Student C attributes his improvement to the

reflective habits: 'The most important factors are the (reflective) habits and the teachers.' But

serious reflection is an internal executive mental process that requires willing and

autonomous activation by the individual, and not all students are motivated (or cognitively

mature enough) to think independently in this introspective way—like students B and E.

Student B admitted that: 'I don't like doing it [writing reflection after reading the report]. In

fact, it won't give me any help.' Student E was also very reluctant to do self-reflection. He is

one of two informants (D, E) who complained that discussion among peers during reflection

sessions is not allowed. He told the researcher that, even so, he would ask his friends for help

quietly during the session, and they would suggest what to write.

Some students may need feedback from others or dialogue with others during the

process of reflection. Student A admitted that his performance would be better if continuous

feedback from peers or teachers is available during the reflection period. Student B also

agreed that she would put more effort into reflection if she could have feedback from others.

This tendency towards reluctance to engage fully with reflection as a solo activity was

confirmed by other students in two group interviews. They suggested that their learning could

be better facilitated during reflection time by providing opportunities for discussions with

teachers or peers. Student M in a group expressed her preference for reflection with dialogues:

'I agree it would be more useful to write our reflection after dialogue with others. …. because

discussion, rather than writing alone, could help us focus more on what we learnt or need still

to learn….. In addition, to me, the level of understanding would be higher through discussion,

instead of writing alone'.

Regarding research question 3 (*Are there any signs that the students are exhibiting*

self-regulation in the school context?)— it can be noted from Table 1 that all students,

according to their teachers and their report booklets, had either kept up steady progress above

standard or were making improvement in their overall performance. In the report booklet,

every subject teacher would give a grade / level (from min. 1 to max. 6) to represent the

performance of a student's self-learning and reflection behaviour. With the exception of

student E, the average level across two years of students (A, B, C, D) in all subjects are above

level 3. As stated above, students A and C, who were much in favour of the daily reflection

session also clearly demonstrated self-regulatory behaviours (e.g. goal setting,

self-monitoring, seeking help and self-initiation). Some, but not many self-regulatory

behaviours could be observed in two other students (B and D). Student B perceived the daily

reflection practice was not helpful to her learning: 'I don't like it (reflection session)!...It is

not so helpful….My reflective habit could not be built up even though I had all this practice

over more than three years.' Student D agreed that the reflection session could give her some

help, but she did not like it. However, these four students (A, B, C & D) all stated that they

valued reading their report booklet and its comments because it provides concrete and

practical directions for improvement. Three of these students (A, B, and C) all hold various

posts of responsibility in the school (see Table 1). It is impossible to determine whether the

reporting process linking with the reflection practice was responsible for their increase in

self-regulation, or whether this stems from a combination of their own personal

characteristics interacting with opportunities provided within an inviting school environment.

However, it is possible that constructive feedback, together with some aspects of reflection on

one's strengths and weaknesses, may help to foster greater self-regulation in learners.

Student E, with dyslexia, is the only individual in this small group whose performance

was said to be deteriorating before the second term of the second year. A conversation with

his mother (via telephone) revealed that she felt some new teachers did not understand her

son's difficulties and were doing little to help him in the first term of the second year.

However, he experienced a slight surge in the last school term. Some adjustments were made

by teachers in the last term after reviewing the situation on parents' days (e.g. releasing him

from doing reflection after school; more encouragement from the teacher who is responsible

for students with special needs). As reported above, Student E did not hold very positive

views about the reporting system or the reflection activities after the second year: 'I don't

read it (the report booklet).….I just pay attention to the grade.….I totally dislike the reflection

time!' It seems that he had difficulties in reasoning with abstract ideas, and in presenting his

ideas through oral or written language. Whenever I asked questions that needed reasoning

skills he would likely reply: 'I don't know.' Rather than becoming better self-regulated over

time, if there is no intervention, this student is most likely in danger of disengaging

permanently from learning as a result of feelings of helplessness (Tiggemann & Crowley,

1993).

Discussion

Some students in this study attributed their success, at least in part, to key aspects of the

reporting system, and in two cases to engaging regularly in reflection. They perceived that

these practices could promote better learning and development outcomes when compared

with practices in other schools.

As indicated at the beginning of this paper, prior research evidence has clearly revealed

that feedback and reflection each have associations with the acquisition of self-regulation in

students. The four themes identified in this study do suggest a link between effective

feedback and the ability to reflect upon one's performance—modified and mediated to some

degree through relationships with teachers and peers. From the students' perspective, the

ultimate *value* of constructive feedback via the reporting system (i.e., the extent to which they

do act upon advice given) relies heavily on relationships with teachers. An inviting school, which puts emphases on fostering an intentionally respectful, trusting, and optimistic environment (Purkey & Novak, 1996), would be in a good position to foster the human relationships that promote such practice. It may also shed some light on the process of co-regulation (Fogel, 1993) through a reporting system in an inviting environment.

Some students do appear to find the reflection process difficult, even though they have had much exposure to it on a daily basis. Self-evaluation of personal progress is not necessarily easy, nor is it necessarily merely an *intrapersonal* activity. Thinking and reflecting can often be facilitated by input from others. Some students may benefit from dialogue to stimulate key elements of introspection and self-appraisal. This type of interpersonal processing is a central feature of social learning (McCaslin & Hickey, 2001) and is probably the reason why some students feel a need for feedback from others during the process of self-reflection. It also reconfirms that the process of self-reflection facilitated by positive interactions could enable students' self-regulation (Bandura, 1993; Pintrich, 1995; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). In order to cater for student differences in this respect, varying degrees of structure and guidance from others could be provided during the periods set aside for reflection.

Conclusion

No reporting system can be perfect, but it appears from this small-scale study that a system

providing abundant personalized feedback to students and encouraging students to assume

greater responsibility for their own learning does provide real educational benefits in an

inviting setting. More importantly, most students do recognize the rationale behind the system

and the positive contribution that the system makes.

Clearly, improvements can be made, particularly in respect to keeping all teachers fully

informed of any students in their classes who have disabilities or other special needs. With

this knowledge in mind, teachers are more likely to reflect more carefully and to write

comments that are more supportive and encouraging of the efforts the student makes. The one

student in this study who did not value the feedback and comments received in the reporting

booklet has what is often referred to as a 'hidden handicap' (dyslexia). He felt that teachers

did not understand his difficulties.

It is also necessary to ensure that all teachers new to the school fully understand the

underlying purposes of the detailed and personalized reporting system, so that they do not fall

into the habit of writing routine, vague or non-specific comments. This aspect of staff

development will need to continue as an ongoing commitment.

An obvious limitation of this study is the small sample size. However, the limitation

would not affect our initial understanding about the reality of how students perceive the

usefulness of a reporting system on their learning and development. Future evaluations of a

reporting and feedback system should use a larger sample, and should contain sufficient

students at each level of academic ability to permit researchers to determine if the effects of

feedback are different according to students' ability. There was an indication that this might

be so in the data collected here. Comparison across genders might also be worthwhile.

Notes

1. Radio Television Hong Kong (2002) 18 Jan2011,
   http://www.fkyc.edu.hk/03_interview/videos/RTHK2002Nov.wmv
2. Ming Pao (2008) 27 Oct 2008
3. Education Bureau (2006) 12 June 2011,
   http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=2&nodeID=5197&print=yes

References

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning.

Educational Psychologist, *28,* 117 – 148.

Berry, R. (2011). Assessment trends in Hong Kong: seeking to establish formative

assessment in an examination culture. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and*

Practice, 18(2), 199 – 211.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom

assessment. *Phi Delta Kappa, 80*, 1-13.

Brookhart, S. M. (2004). Assessment theory for college classrooms. *New Directions for*

Teaching and Learning, 100, 5-14.

Butler, D. L., & Winne, P. H. (1995). Feedback and self-regulated learning: A theoretical

syntheses. *Review of Educational Research*, *65*(3), 245 – 281.

Chung, Y. B., & Yuen, M. (In press). The role of feedback in enhancing students'

self-regulation in inviting schools. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice.*

Fogel, A. (1993). *Developing through relationships: Origins of communication, self, and*

culture. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Geotz, J. P. & LeCompte, M. D. (1984). Ethnography and Qualitative Design in Educational

Research. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Good, T.L., & Brophy, J.E. (2007). *Looking in classrooms* (10th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Guskey, T. R., & Bailey, J. M. (2001). *Developing grading and reporting systems for student*

learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*,

77, 81-112.

Hong Kong Year Book: Xianggang nian bao. (2009). Hong Kong: HKSAR.

Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A

historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory.

Psychological Bulletin, *119*(2), 254-284.

Lapan, R. T., Kardash, C. M., & Turner, S. (2002). Empowering students to become

self-regulated learners. *Professional School Counseling, 5*(4), 257 – 265.

Lee, J. C. K., Yin, H., & Zhang, Z. (2009). Exploring the influence of the classroom

environment on students' motivation and self-regulated learning in Hong Kong.

Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 18(2), 219-232.

McCaslin, M., Hickey, D. T. (2001). Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: A

Vygotskian view. In B. J. Zimmerman & D. H. Schunk (Eds.) *Self-regulated learning*

and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives (pp.227- 252). Mahwah, N.J:

Erlbaum.

Nicol, D.J., & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). Formative assessment and self-regulated learning:

A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education,*

31(2), 199–218.

Pintrich, P. R. (1995). *Understanding self-regulated learning.* San Francisco, CA,

Jossey-Bass.

Purkey, W. W. (1991). *What is Invitational Education and how does it work?* Paper presented

at the Annual California State Conference on Self-esteem. Santa Clara, CA.

Purkey, W. W. & Novak, J. M. (1996). *Inviting school success: A self-concept approach to*

teaching, learning, and democratic practice (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Rust, C., Price, M., & O'Donovan, B. (2003). Improving students' learning by developing

their understanding of assessment criteria and processes. *Assessment and Evaluation in*

Higher Education, 28(2), 147–164.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (1994). *Self-regulation of learning and performance: Issues and educational applications.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Tiggemann, M., & Crowley, J.R. (1993). Attributions for academic failure and subsequent performance. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 45,* 35-39.

Usher, E. L., & Pajares, F. (2006). Inviting confidence in school: invitations as a critical source of the academic self-efficacy beliefs of entering middle school students. *Journal of invitational theory and practice, 12,* 7-16.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Westwood, P. (2011). *Commonsense methods for children with special needs* (6th ed.). London: Routledge.

Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods. *Applied social research methods series, v. 5*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications. Zimmerman, B. J. & Martinez-Pons, M. (1988). Construct validation of a strategy model of student self-regulation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 80*, 284 – 290.

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich & M. Zeidner (Eds.) *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp.13-39), Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Table 1: Particulars of the key student informants A – F in individual interviews

	Gender	Grades	Special Educational Needs	No. of interviews	Co-curricular Activities	Leadership Role (2010-11)	Performance across 2 yrs
A	M	10-11	--	10	Choral Speaking	Head prefect	Above Standard
B	F	10-11	--	8	Boy scouts	House Chairlady	Above Standard
C	M	7-8	--	6	Athletic Team	Council Leader	Improving
D	F	7-8	Hearing impairment	5	Choral Speaking	--	Improving
E	M	7-8	Dyslexia^	6	Boy scouts	--	Improving
F*	F	7-8		5	Swimming	--	--

F*: Passed away in December 2010.

Dyslexia^: With Twice-exceptional performance

Table 2: Particulars of the student informants G – P in group interviews

	Gender	Grades	No. of interviews	Other students involved during the interview
G	M	12-13	2	H
H	F	10-11	2	G, A, B
I	M	10-11	1	A, J, K
J	F	10-11	1	A, I, K
K	F	10-11	1	A, I, J
L	M	10-11	1	A, B, M, N
M	F	10-11	1	A, B, L, N
N	F	10-11	1	A, B, L, M
O	F	7-8	1	C, P
P	F	7-8	1	C, O

Table 3: Interview schedule across the five phases

Focus	2009-2010			2010-2011	
	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Facts					
1. School Information / Policy	●	●			
2. Reporting System	●	●			
3. Other potentially related components		●	●		
Perceptions					
4. Perceptions of the School		●	●	●	
5. Perceptions of the Reporting System		●	●	●	
6. Perceptions of the other potentially related components			●	●	●
7. Perceptions of their own performance			●	●	●
Perceptions of associations					
8. Perceptions of those possible associations			●	●	●
9. Make-up questions					●

Table 4: Examples of the questions in individual and group interviews

Focus	Examples of Questions
1. School Information / Policy	· Why did you (your parents) choose this school? Is there anything that attracts you? · How does the school communicate with you and your parents?
2. Reporting System	· Tell me about the reporting system in this school. How does it work? · What do you expect from the report booklet?
3. Other potentially related components	*Daily reflection sessions* · What would you do if you find reflection difficult at some time? *Parents' days* · How do you do your preparation / follow-up before / after the parents' day?
4. Perceptions of the School	· Are there any school policies / practices that facilitate your learning? How? Why? · What do you think of the relationship between teachers and students in the school? How do you regard your teachers?
5. Perceptions of the Reporting System	· Do you think that the Student Reporting System / practices help you learn and develop? How and why?
6. Perceptions of the other potentially related components	· Did the reflection practice help you learn? How? · Are you used to reflect regularly in your study? Why? · Oral or written comments, which do you prefer? Why?
7. Perceptions of their own performance	· What are the factors that affect your learning? Why? · How did you perform over these two years? Why?
8. Perceptions of those possible associations	· Do teacher-student or peer relationships affect how you regard feedback on your learning? How and why? · Do you think the arrangement of being in the same class across three years helps you learn and develop? Why? · Do you think teachers would have more understanding about you after writing the report booklet? Why do you think that?
9. Make-up questions	· Have you set any goals for yourself? What are they? · What will you do if you encountered learning difficulties? · How do you evaluate your own performance?

Table 5: Encoding table and categorization

Highlights in the transcripts	Code (Level 1)	Code (Level 2)	Aspects
General information of the			
● School	Sch		
● Reporting system	Rep		
● Other potentially related components	O-Rep		The system from a holistic perspective
Student's Perception of the			
● School	P(Sch)		
1. Learning & development		P(Sch/L&D)	
2. Relationships Teacher-student		P(Sch/Rel)	Teacher-student relationships
Peers		P(Peer)	Peers relationships
3. Communication		P(Sch/Com)	Teachers' attitudes
● Reporting system 1. Learning & development	P(Rep)		Helpfulness of the system
		P(Rep/L&D)	
2. Reflection / evaluation		P(Rep/Ref)	
3. Consistence		P(Rep/Con)	
4. Emotion		P(Rep/Emo)	Constructive comments
5. Expectation		P(Rep/Exp)	
6. Rationale		P(Rep/R)	
7. Advice/ Comments		P(Rep/Comm)	
● Student own performance	P(Per)		Self-regulatory behaviours
● Other potentially related components	P(O-Rep)		Reflection

Figure 1a: Sample of the report booklet

(First page: overall performance of the student)

XXX College
THE FIRST TERM REPORT (2010-2011)

Name:	Class (Class No.):
Date of Birth:	Date of Issue:

This report is hereby issued to reflect the student's performance and attitudes in all learning areas. The grading system is as follows:

Academic Performance	Grade Description	Learning Attitudes	Grade Description
5* Excellent	Excels academically; demonstrates creativity, independent thinking and high self-learning ability	1 Excellent	Studies with high motivation and makes every effort to strive for excellence in learning
5 Very Good	Performs constantly well; demonstrates creativity and self-learning ability	2 Very Good	Learns actively and strives to achieve at an outstanding level
4 Good	Performs consistently above standard and demonstrates self-learning ability	3 Good	Has a serious attitude to learning and is willing to learn independently
3 Satisfactory	Performs satisfactorily and has developed self-learning ability	4 Satisfactory	Makes an effort to meet the requirements with some assistance
2 Fair	Meets the basic standard and has developed little self-learning ability	5 Fair	Is slightly passive and makes an effort to meet the requirements when closely supervised
1 Poor	Falls below the standard and has yet to develop self-learning activity	6 Poor	Has a passive attitude and firm guidance is needed to complete learning tasks

Co-tutors' Comments:

Days Absent	Committee	Co-curricular Activities / Community Service	Awards
Times Late			

Co-tutors' Names:	Co-tutors' Signatures:

Principal's Name:	Principal's Signatures:

Figure 1b: Content page: performance in one learning area

XXX College **English (英文)**

Name:	Class (Class No.)
Date of Birth:	Date of Issue:

Learning Objectives:

The focus is on developing students' skills in the following areas. Students should be able to:

Reading	- understand the main idea of a text as well as obtain specific information from it; - make use of linguistic clues and overall knowledge to infer meaning; - develop good reading habits by reading a variety of books.
Writing	- brainstorm, plan, draft, and proof-read written texts; - use appropriate linguistic and structural devices to write, stories, film review, leaflet, letters of advice, letters to the editor and argumentative essays; - present and elaborate ideas as well as arguments logically; - use connections to improve the organization of writing; - write comments and personal thoughts about the books they have read and the films they have watched
Listening	- select and combine information from both spoken and written sources in order to complete different integrated listening tasks; - understand and be familiar with different kinds of questions so as to perform tasks such as message taking, note taking and form filling.
Speaking	- argue for, and/or against a position on a subject by making suggestions, giving advice and making choices; - decide and explain a course of action, support or oppose a position;
Self Learning & Reflection	- develop the habit of self-learning, gather and analyze relevant information to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts, and reflect upon the knowledge and skills acquired so as to construct a framework of the discipline.

Achievement:

Reading
Writing
Listening
Speaking
Self Learning & Reflection

Attitude:

Ability to Work Independently
Effort
Involvement and Participation in Class Activities
Ability to Ask Questions
Co-operation and Collaboration
Completion of Tasks and Assignments
Willingness to Speak in English

Comments	Examination Level*:	I	II	III	IV	Overall

Teacher's Name:	Teacher's Signature:

* I-Reading, II-Writing, III-Listening, IV- Speaking

Figure 2: Sample of preparation and reflection booklet (translated)

No.____   Chapter: _____

Mathematics Learning Record Booklet

Class:	(	)	Name:
Cycle:			Teacher:

Preparation before class	Date of preparation:
Guidelines:	
Work:	

The level of my understanding: (Max.: 1)   1☐   2☐   3☐   4☐

I want to ask……

Reflection after class	Date of reflection:

The level of my understanding of the class: (Max.: 1)   1☐   2☐   3☐   4☐

Formulas:

Reflection:

Notes: (Printed on a new page)

New words / Symbols: (Printed on a new page under "Notes")

Figure 3: The self-evaluation sheet in the report booklet (translated)

XXX College					
S1 Student Self-evaluation on the Report Booklet (1st term, 2009-10)					
Name		Class		Class No	

Part One (Student Response): Please indicate your level of satisfaction with each subject, and briefly write your response to those teachers' comments.

Subjects	Level of Satisfaction (min.1 to max.6)	Key points of teachers' comments	Personal Response (You may set your goals, or explain your level of satisfaction)
Chi			
Eng.			
Maths			
Other suggestions			

Part Two (Parents' Response): (Filled up by parents. Or student may write down parents' suggestions)

1. Parents' level of satisfaction with each subject performed by their children (min. 1 to max. 6)

Chi	Eng.	Maths.				

		Academic Outcomes	Learning Attitudes / Performance
2. Student	Appreciation		
	Suggestions		
3. Teacher	Appreciation		
	Suggestions		
4. Others Suggestions			

Student Sig.: _____ Parent's Sig. _____ Date: _____