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Transparent Roles in Feedback in the Student-Faculty Partnership for Teaching and Learning

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Faculty devote effort and energy promoting learner-centered opportunities that reinforce course content. Through the use of varied pedagogical strategies, appreciating the transparency in learning and teaching (TILT) process, faculty-structured learning opportunities can promote students thinking critically about their performance, building a repertoire of skills to advance learning at higher levels. The feedback that faculty provide and the format given can enhance student-faculty partnerships and success in the service-learning or practicum classroom. Feedback considerations for type (verbal, written, or a combination) and time are paramount to promoting faculty and student partnerships. The method of feedback delivery should be taken into consideration to support student learning.

Introduction

Promotion of learner-centered opportunities and reinforcement of learning are important regardless of the educational classroom (practicum or service-learning) course by faculty members. We all want students to succeed and faculty wish to promote an engaged learning opportunity for their students. Student growth through feedback must be situated within best practices in teaching and learning. Feedback is one of the strongest metacognitive tools we have available to foster critical thinking and advancing communication skills. The feedback process encourages teamwork, buy-in to the learning process, and helps move our students to learner-centeredness. By participating in feedback opportunities, faculty encourage a collaborative, safe work environment that prepares our graduates for the reality of the workplace.

Faculty often struggle with the best method to provide student feedback (The Graide Network, 2019). The most common way an instructor provides reinforcement of learning is through various forms of feedback to students. The feedback provided and method of provision should be considered by both faculty and students (Hattie, 2013). Formative assessment feedback should have an educational basis to promote critical thinking and metacognition (Brookhart,

2008). It should detail the knowledge, or the skills that you wish for your students to develop from the feedback that you're giving them and their next steps for an assignment or learning project. Formative assessment feedback helps to reinforce more complex learning.

Powerful feedback to students must be not only accurate, clear, course relevant, but should be ongoing, consistent, and timely (Brookhart, 2008; Mindtools, 2020). By outlining goals to students and setting the bar high, but not out of reach, a student can better challenge their own learning (Dweck, 2016). Using the TILT method enhances faculty understanding through feedback about delivery and pedagogy. Anxiety, fear of failure and other closed mindset attitudes (Dweck, 2016) often block a student from “hearing” and accepting feedback about their performance. Faculty also examine their own TILT perspectives for fostering an open mindset by receiving student feedback. Incorporating technology methods into feedback is an alternative to build trust and community within a partnership for learning.

Purpose

We reinforce the importance of the powerful nature of feedback in this article. By providing a detailed explanation of the types of feedback used for student growth, method of delivery, and considerations, faculty can strengthen the learning experience. Our compilation is by no means exhaustive, but meant to help faculty thoughtfully consider options within courses. This article incorporates both sides of feedback: from both faculty and students as partners in the process.

Feedback Considerations

There are several considerations about how to give feedback. First, feedback should be ongoing and actionable. Students need opportunities to use the feedback to advance their learning. Courses that are structured with scaffolding of assignment parts benefit most from integrating previous feedback. Second, faculty must consider the target of their feedback. Is the focus higher ordered (conceptual, thesis argument) or lower ordered (mechanics) (Fiock & Garcia, 2019; Joyce, 2020). This aspect of feedback is important to help students develop breadth and depth in a topical area. Consistency is the third area. Feedback should be aligned with student learning outcomes in the course, reinforcing Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) (Wilkemes, 2016). The fourth aspect of feedback is timeliness. Timely feedback is critical for learners to take action and advance their learning (Dinham, 2008). What good is feedback that is given late,

after other assignments may be due? The student would not have an opportunity to learn, adapt and modify their submissions. The challenge present is for faculty to ask “Is the feedback given now relevant to student learning?” The fifth aspect of feedback is negative feedback. This type of feedback can serve a purpose if packaged well. If the feedback is only negative, it may reinforce self-defeatist behaviors, and promote a closed mindset (Dweck, 2016). Sarcastic and overly judgmental feedback, “did you write this last night?” does nothing to promote growth and understanding. Lastly, when providing student feedback, regardless of the medium; the feedback should be structured clearly regardless of the method provided that allows the student to succeed and take control of their own learning.

When providing feedback, consider how the words may impact the individual receiving them. Is the feedback clear to the individual and how will the feedback be interpreted? How our brains work to interpret feedback is based in neuroscience. Rock et al., (2019) discussed the role that the amygdala (an emotional processing area in our brain) has with three specific action choices which are to accept the situation, flee from it, or fight. We feel before we think, therefore; when providing feedback it is important to help the student accept the feedback rather than fleeing or fighting it. Using the sandwiching method: positive-negative-positive works well. For example, “This is a great start to your paper! In this area, the topic could be better supported with a reference, but overall this is really coming along.” It is better to be clear and concise and get to the point, making sure what you intended is actually what was heard regardless of the discipline or the course subject. Asking the student to repeat the feedback is one way of doing this or asking them to adapt/modify their assignment (if possible) based upon the feedback is another consideration for a future submission.

To further detail types of feedback, consideration for the student’s viewpoint and the accuracy, timeliness, clarity, and relevancy must be presented through both student and faculty viewpoints. Feedback must be carefully structured, ongoing, consistent, and timely. Students require opportunities to use feedback and that feedback must be accurate, clear, course relevant and build trust (Brown, 2018). Anxiety, fear of failure, and other closed mindset attitudes (Dweck, 2016) often block a student from “hearing” and accepting feedback about their performance. Incorporating technology methods into feedback is important and being considerate of the student throughout the learning process. Through

using a concerted effort of TILT with analysis of feedback, we are promoting metacognitive approaches for both faculty and students.

There are multiple types of feedback (verbal, written, or video). Some types of feedback we provide more frequently than others, given the particular class type (i.e. online versus in-class). During the pandemic in spring 2020, we adapted our teaching instruction to be more conducive to student learning online solely to accommodate university in-person class cancellations and social distancing recommendations. This change resulted in an adaptation to how we think of certain types of feedback.

Verbal Feedback

We have all provided verbal feedback in a lecture and you can redirect in real-time to enhance a student's learning or ensure their understanding. In the classroom, the environment can be established to provide a "safe environment" for sharing feedback with colleagues and peers alike (i.e. a circular seating, group format versus the traditional rows of tables and chairs format). This feedback is immediate and can shape future engagement by the learner.

Written Feedback

This type of feedback provides the opportunity for examples exactly to a student through typed format. A student can "see" in print what exactly a faculty is trying to provide a student detailed information regarding i.e. track changes in Microsoft Word or a comment in a Google Doc. This feedback could potentially include: "continue with referencing, develop this thought more here, and provide more reflection on this area." Feedback that is content-based and individualized helps engage the learner.

Video Feedback

Video feedback has improved the student's ability to understand faculty intent, nuances, and caring for their learning. The combination of audio and video feedback allows the learner to see faculty expressions as we reinforce the student effort, coach the student for refinement, and assist their higher ordered problem-solving and decision making for future growth. Many learning management systems have this feature embedded. Students appreciate timely, targeted feedback offered through audio and video options (Joyce, 2020; Merlot Collection, 2020).

Peer Feedback

One other type of feedback to highlight is using peer feedback within formative assessment. Having students review each other's work helps promote collaboration. Reciprocal responsibility in feedback has a higher likelihood of promoting success to understand one's strengths and challenges and the development of critical awareness (Thorngren et al., 2012). By engaging students in collaborative active learning, they constructively develop communication skills and can facilitate other's learning (Pollock, 2012; The Learning Hub, 2019; Levan, & King, 2016). Using peer feedback is a time saving technique in large classes (Fiock & Garcia, 2019).

Conclusion

Feedback has many types, components, and formats. Clearly considering the purpose is an important consideration in how it is used to promote student learning. Formative assessment, with options for integration of feedback, is best practice. Faculty must select the feedback type wisely, remembering "one size does not fit all." When feedback is used throughout a course with varied types, courses build a community of learning.

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