HOW FUTURE PEDAGOGUES (PEDAGOGY STUDENTS) UNDERSTAND WHAT IS GOOD FEEDBACK

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to reveal what is good feedback in the opinion of future teachers (pedagogy students). The topic received a lot of attention in the scientific literature due to the training process being carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was researched which form of feedback is better. However, a few studies have been made on how pedagogy students understand what constitutes good feedback. 23 students of pedagogy who are future teachers in schools or kindergartens participated in the research for this paper. The data was collected in January-March, 2021. This is a qualitative study, based on the methodological approaches of social constructivism.

When analyzing the peculiarities of good feedback identified by pedagogy students, we can distinguish the following subcategories: creating a pleasant, safe and benevolent environment; positive effects; helping or encouraging self-assessment; clear feedback; other observations.

Future educators, when talking about good feedback, paid attention to the emotional, benevolent environment being created during the feedback; methodological aspects of providing feedback (clear recommendations for improvement, encouraging self-assessment), but did not mention the appropriate choice of the type of feedback at all.

Keywords: feedback, feedback types, future pedagogues (pedagogy students).

Introduction

In the study process, feedback provides opportunities for the students to find out what they need to improve. The students receive useful information about what and how they understood, what and why they did not understand, what mistakes they made, how to do better, and they receive recommendations for more successful studies. Thus, feedback aims to encourage students and educators to discuss teaching and learning activities together and their consequences. In the education reports initiated by the European Commission for the European Union, great attention is paid to formative assessment and feedback, stating that it is particularly important for improving the results of education, as well as for creating good relations between teachers and students in pedagogical interaction.

There is a call to look for practices to organize feedback in better ways (Cefai, Downes, & Cavioni, 2021; Siarova, Sternadel, & Mašidlauskaitė, 2017).
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In the pedagogical literature, a lot of attention is paid to discussing different types of feedback, analyzing what is good feedback, and looking for advanced feedback practices. Not only is feedback discussed in the pedagogical methodological literature, but it is also explored in scientific research. It was investigated, which feedback strategies are used by science teachers in the classroom setting with it being noted that “science teachers were found to most often use praise statements in the classroom setting” (Ozkale & Kanadh, 2021). This study revealed that science teachers were found to most frequently use praise statements in the classroom setting. However, they should focus more on using effort-based feedback statements in the classroom. Following a constructivist approach, teachers need to prefer feedback statements that can facilitate students’ learning and transfer them to new learning situations. “Teachers are therefore recommended to use less negative feedback and protect gender balance when giving effort-based feedback” (Ozkale & Kanadh, 2021). However, another study investigates direct written corrective feedback with metalinguistic explanations and concludes that the findings suggest that metalinguistic explanations provided as part of the feedback to language learners’ writing is conducive to a higher level of cognitive engagement and leads to better learning outcomes (Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021). Other publications note that students take too little care of feedback, they show too little involvement. Hast (2021) notes that especially in the COVID-19 situation, it was important to think about organizing feedback, to decide what kind of feedback would be appropriate, and how to involve students in providing remote feedback. In his paper “Higher Education in Times of COVID-19: Giving Online Feedback Implementation Another Look”, when making some recommendations on how to organize feedback, the author recommends further exploring the aspect of “how student engagement with online feedback might be fostered further, in the hopes of mitigating the interference emphasizing the current global situation” (Hast, 2021, p. 6). These studies and theory of pedagogy make it clear that the educator must not only be able to organize feedback, but also to respond flexibly to the general situation (e.g. COVID-19) and to find good feedback practices. Analyzing the themes of the published articles, it appears that the COVID situation (where students and teachers did not have face-to-face contact) has encouraged researchers to explore feedback more, as more diverse published studies have appeared.

When preparing future teachers, one of the goals in the study process is for them to experience various feedback practices during their studies, not only to learn about feedback theory. However, it is not clear what concept of feedback the future pedagogues personally form. So it is important to explore different concepts of student feedback to help the students understand the importance of

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1 “Effort-based feedback points out to the student’s efforts or desires in the process of showing up the desired performance or things the student needs to do to achieve the desired performance (e.g. You are a real hard-worker)”. (Ozkale & Kanadh, 2021, p. 440).
feedback and to help them understand what good feedback is. This will allow for more effective feedback and engagement of students too.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to reveal what is good feedback in the opinion of future teachers (pedagogy students). In order to achieve this goal, two tasks are set: 1) to reveal essential features of feedback, based on theoretical literature; 2) to introduce the concept of what is good feedback to future teachers (pedagogy students). The object of the article is the concept of good feedback for future educators. The following questions are raised: what concept do future educators have of good feedback, and what features of feedback are important to them. The research methods used were an analysis of academic literature and educational documents, and structured interviews. The criteria for research participants are as follows: a student of pedagogical studies who has studied for at least half a year (semester); studied at least one semester remotely (COVID-situation). The data was collected in January-March, 2021.

Theoretical aspects about feedback

Analyzing the literature, it can be observed that a lot of attention is paid to feedback, believing that if it is well organized, the quality of education and the learning results of students will improve. “Portfolios, holistic scoring rubrics and formative feedback can be helpful for formulating goals, monitoring student progress and assess broad competences. The systematic development of these methods should be supported” (Siarova et al., 2017). This explains that feedback improves student motivation and teacher-student communication. Cefai et al. gave even more importance to feedback: “The feedback received by students from teachers and peers in their daily interactions during the learning process, is one of most powerful learning processes” (Cefai et al., 2021). Feedback is studied in various aspects. Another study investigated how automated feedback can be integrated into traditional teacher feedback by analyzing the focus of teacher and Grammarly feedback through a written feedback analysis of language and content-related issues (Thi & Nikolov, 2022). Grammarly feedback makes the teacher's job easier, but there are still no confirmations that it fully meets the attributes of good feedback.

There are more studies which show that technology-assisted feedback is not as good as that, which is organized by a qualified teacher without any special technology. The study by Penn & Nicola (2022), concludes that “here is insufficient empirical evidence to suggest that screen-cast feedback is more effective than text feedback at enhancing student learning”. However, there are other research results, like an interesting study from the representatives of German Information and Technology sciences which states that “with in-depth knowledge

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2 “Grammarly feedback through a written feedback analysis of language- and content-related issue”. (Thi & Nikolov, 2022, p. 767).
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of JavaScript, complex feedback feedback models such as those of Hattie and Timperley as well as advanced didactic feedback concepts such as feedback literacy can be implemented in a digital self-learning environment” (Knaut et al., 2022).

Feedback helps learners understand learning goals and anticipate areas for improvement; student feedback has a direct impact on a teacher’s professional development which obliges educators to make appropriate choices about activities and questions that provide information about the effectiveness of their teaching (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process (Brookhart, 2008). In terms of feedback strategies and content, these are important features and recommendations: timing, a provision of immediate feedback for knowledge of facts (right/wrong); amount (choose points that relate to major learning goals); mode (interactive feedback, talking with the student); audience; focus (comment on the student’s self-regulation if the comment will foster self-efficacy); comparison (use criterion-referenced feedback for giving information about the work itself); function; valence; specificity (identify errors or types of errors, but avoid correcting every one); tone (choose words that communicate respect for the student and the work) (Brookhart, 2008). These signs of good feedback are perhaps the most comprehensive.

Garber highlights the importance of teacher-student interaction during feedback and clearly reveals how many aspects affect the quality of feedback (Garber, 2014). The variable for both the giver and the receiver of feedback will be determined by the perceptions of the participants. (Fig.1).

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GIVER ___________________ ► Receiver
P
Biases  E    Receptivity
Security  R    Growth
Experience  C  Commitment
Communications  E  Goals
Sensitivity  P  Self-Esteem
Expectations  T  Motivators
Values  I

Figure 1 Feedback Model by P.R. Garber (Garber, 2014)
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“Each person has their own “perceptual filters” that “color” the feedback they receive.” (Garber, 2014). P. R. Garber's feedback model clearly shows what characteristics of the teacher and the student affect good feedback (Fig.1). This model perfectly illustrates the dependence of feedback quality on a variety of
factors. For example, if a student wants to learn, is motivated, has the goal of learning from his mistakes, then he will listen carefully to the teacher. However, this may fail if the teacher will provide the student with uncertain, incomprehensible information or violate the pupil's self-esteem (e.g. you never do well) when providing feedback, not being sensitive. If the teacher and the student are differently aware of the feedback purpose, it complicates the quality of feedback. For example, if a pupil wants to receive feedback where the teacher just tells them the correct answer. However, the teacher may want to tell the student how to find out what the correct answer is (e.g. what rule to apply, etc.) during feedback.

These different approaches prevent feedback from seeing feedback value. Therefore, scientists pay a lot of attention to name what is important to organize good feedback. After making conclusions from literature sources, we can state that any credible feedback should be based on these criteria:

- positive comments are given first;
- provided immediately after or during the work;
- confirms what is being done correctly;
- mistakes and gaps are identified;
- clear recommendations for improvement are provided;
- is identified in a clear, specific, reasoned and reasoned manner;
- talking about how the student feels when receiving feedback;
- it is about attitude, personal activity, but not about the person;
- choosing a right type of feedback and how to handle it;
- empathetically listened, adjusted and answered;
- feedback’s quality and what effected it; duration and time; the volume of feedback; feedback form; feedback participants; voice tone; eye contact; environment and situational circumstances; level of confidentiality; other circumstances (Indrašienė & Žibėnienė, 2014; Garber, 2014; Knaut et al., 2022).

Research design and ethics

This is a qualitative study, based on the methodological approaches of social constructivism (for people their personal understanding is not the mirror image of the knowledge or skills transmitted to them, but their personal reflection and the theoretical assumptions of social constructivism) (Creswell, 2009; Kukla, 2000).

The data was collected in January-March, 2021. 23 students of pedagogy who are future teachers in schools or kindergartens participated in the research. These are students who already have a higher education diploma and study in a one-year pedagogical study program that grants the qualification of an educator and the right to work in their pedagogical work. Students are from different study groups.
Each interview took about 15-20 minutes, and due to the COVID-19 situation, took place online. The interview questions covered the following parts: what is good feedback; what feedback is inappropriate; what kind of feedback should be in high school and in school (peculiarities, differences, similarities). This article puts emphasis on the first part of the interview – how pedagogy students (future pedagogues) indicate what is good feedback.

The research methods used were: analysis of academic literature and educational documents, structured interviews. The student selection was made according to the following criteria: a student of pedagogical studies who has studied for at least half a year (semester); studied at least one semester remotely (COVID-situation).

The qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the interview data, which allowed to draw conclusions based on the analyzed text. This method of analysis was based on systematic analytical steps: multiple readings of records (an audio record was made using a phone, some records using the Zoom software), systematic interpretation of distinguished categories and subcategories and their justification based on the evidence from the transcribed texts – the confirmatory statements. According to the qualitative research methodology, the confirmatory statements are extracts from answers provided by the participants which cannot be changed by the researcher; therefore, they are quoted exactly as given by the participants. The initial interview data was handled in such a way as to ensure that it was impossible to identify the persons involved in the study. The answers of the future educators were coded, each person was assigned the letter S and a number, according to the order of analysis, for example S1.

The research was organized, data analysis was carried out and presented based on the principles of qualitative research ethics: ensuring the respect for individual privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, with goodwill and justice (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2012).

Research results

The informants have already studied about what kind of feedback is good, and they have already had their first pedagogical practice where they watched experienced educators’ lessons. They have personally shared feedback (after receiving feedback from the educator) during their studies. It is important to find out what future educators consider as good feedback. The sound recordings were transcribed and the transcribed texts were read and analyzed many times. When analyzing the text, the following principles of data analysis were followed (Dahlgren & Fallsberg, 1991): 1. Familiarization with the research data – transcribed texts were read several times separately by each researcher, in order for each of them to form an opinion on the obtained research data. 2. Compilation of responses – the most significant elements of each research participant's
responses were identified, focusing on similarities and differences in the selected extracts. 3. Data reduction – the aim was to clarify the meaning of each response. 4. Grouping – responses that described similar phenomena were combined into groups, preliminary categories were identified, which could be reviewed and responses could be re-grouped. A preliminary list of categories was created. 5. Preliminary comparison of categories – the boundaries of the categories were defined and it was assessed whether the selected preliminary categories accurately reflected the participants' experiences. 6. Naming of categories – based on their internal features and characteristics, the key focus of these categories was highlighted and corresponding names were given to the categories.

According to the statements of students, the following categories could be distinguished for what constitutes good feedback (source table 1).

Table 1 Signs of good feedback in distance learning based on the concept of future pedagogues (created by the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs of good feedback that correspond to the mentioned in pedagogical</td>
<td>A pleasant, safe and benevolent environment is created.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scientific and methodological literature.</td>
<td>Positive effects for student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps or encourages self-assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs of feedback (based on future the opinion of the educators' subject)</td>
<td>Other observations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A pleasant, safe and benevolent environment is created. It seems very important for future educators to create a pleasant environment by providing feedback <...> when it improves mood <...> (S4); <...> can feel free and feel sincerity <...> (S11); <...> you are not afraid to ask and you know that everyone is benevolent <...> (S7); <...> safety ... to feel the goodwill of the teacher <...> (S16); <...> sincere and personal <...> (S18). In summary, prospective educators, when talking about good feedback, named their expectations to be pleasant and emotionally safe during the feedback. When it comes to a benevolent environment, this is expected from both the teacher and classmates.

Positive effects for students. The informants mentioned the positive effect, but named it differently, some just briefly named <...> the positive effect <...> (S1), but there were also more specific statements: <...> when you clearly understand what you have done well ... then realize that you can ... inspire to learn <...> (S19); <...> when you clearly understand what you have done well ... then you realize that you can ... inspire you to learn <...> (S22); <...> when you learn mistakes, how to correct them, it has a positive effect on learning outcomes ... (S5); <...> during my studies I understood why it is necessary to talk about the work done ... I had a hard time at work in those discussions with my principal ...

3 Original language is Lithuanian and has been translated into English.
now I feel better, I understand why it is necessary (there are students, who are simultaneously working in an educational institution and studying). When talking about the positive effects of feedback, students reveal different aspects – improving results, increasing motivation to learn, a clearer understanding of the meaning of feedback.

**Helps or encourages self-assessment.** Some pedagogical students clearly associate good feedback with their performance self-assessments and state that good feedback should help the student self-evaluate their performance: good feedback helps self-assessment (S3); ... it becomes clear how to self-assess the activities performed ... (S10); gives precise remarks, then I can self-assess (S14); when he says the pros and cons and encourages me to self-assess and draw a conclusion (S23). The observations of pedagogical students show that they associate feedback with formative assessment.

**Clear feedback.** Students believe that good feedback needs to be clear, there is a lot and variety in their observation, for example gives precise remarks, then can self-assess (S2); it must be made clear what is wrong if there are errors ... (S21); when specifically stated, one then understands how one should have done better or corrected (S7). However, some students associate the clarity of feedback with the correction of errors and the saying of correct answers: must clearly state what the correct answer is if there are errors (S15); correct errors and explain them clearly ... (S20); When you understand what you are saying (S12).

There are observations that the clarity of the feedback is related to the clarity of the task: if the task is clear, then the feedback is clear (S6). This observation may be related to the fact that the task is not very clear to the student, if there are learning gaps, then the discussion of the work done by the student related to that task remains unclear to him.

**Other observations.** Still, there were observations from students when they associated good feedback with subjective, personal expectations: when lifting the mood (S2); get real-time answers to questions (S8); When there is no criticism (S13). These student observations cannot be attributed to the essential features of good feedback. It is methodologically important that the feedback is organized as soon as possible after the activity, but especially remotely, when a long-term task is planned, the educator cannot provide feedback here and now at any time of the day. In practice, probably every teacher is faced with a situation where a student, e.g., messaged at 11 p.m. in the evening and already in the morning of the next day expresses claims as to why his letter was not answered. It can be assumed that these personal attitudes have given rise to the belief that feedback should be provided "here and now". Another

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4 This would not be attributed to the subcategory “A Pleasant, Safe and Benevolent Environment is Created,” because in the whole record we can heart about the essential desire to simply improve his mood simply by talking about anything or justifying something that improves the student's overall well-being.
misconception is to associate good feedback only with praise, without criticism. Feedback must be objective, if there is only praise and the mistakes made are not mentioned, the feedback will not be objective nor full. It is methodologically agreed that when organizing feedback, positive comments are given first, empirically listened to, clarified and answered, etc. (Indrašienė & Žibėnienė, 2014). But this does not mean that feedback must be “lifting the mood”. It can be assumed that this desire may have been influenced by the COVID-19 situation, when some people felt emotionally worse.

**Summary and discussion**

The peculiarities of feedback mentioned by future pedagogues (pedagogy students) can be related to the features singled out in the methodological literature. Future pedagogues understand the usefulness of feedback, but their opinion of what is good feedback varies. Some pedagogy students feel the need to talk about mistakes and say the right answers during feedback. This means that students prioritize one type of feedback – corrective feedback. However, the theoretical literature indicates various types of feedback and it is important to apply various types of feedback in pedagogical practice. But Susan M. Brookhart makes it clear that the educator doesn’t have to say the right answer, but has to encourage the student to find it (Brookhart, 2008). The intelligibility of feedback is a vital attribute. This is confirmed by A. Chaudhary, who observed how students felt about receiving corrective feedback. The results of this study revealed, that corrective feedback is well suited for students, as they receive clear information about their mistakes (Chaudhary, 2022). However, a study by H. Bozorgian & Yazdani reveals the benefits of corrective feedback when mistakes are corrected (Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021). These different opinions can be associated with different types of feedback: corrective feedback, formative feedback; based on arguments + personal contact, conversation; integral (self-person, colleagues, lecturer); self directed feedback; based on the personal commitment of the student.

We can assume that students' focus on creating a positive emotional environment during feedback may be attributed to their personal experiences or the unique circumstances of a potential COVID-19 situation, during which we were all more sensitive and yearning for positive emotions. This experience can serve as a valuable lesson for future educators, who will eventually be responsible for organizing feedback rather than receiving them. It is essential to cultivate an emotionally supportive environment when organizing feedback.

Hast talks about how to involve students in providing remote feedback (Hast, 2021). This question raised by M. Hask can also be related to the results of this study, as students mentioned expectations of an educator when speaking about good feedback, i.e., what the educator has to do. However, no such student
observations were found when identifying feedback initiatives from the student’s side. Garber makes it clear that it is important to apply different types of feedback and aim for the student to become the initiator of the feedback, not just wait for the teacher’s initiative (Garber, 2014).

Future educators identified several positive feedback characteristics. However, based on these studies, it becomes clear that when training educators, it is important to help them understand more clearly that it is important to apply various types of feedback in educational practice and to better understand the differences between these types of feedback. It should not be a personal preference for a particular type of feedback. It is possible that some future educators plan to use corrective feedback because good feedback is characterized by the provision of the correct answer. However, it is conceivable that future students are looking from a personal perspective and want to choose the fastest way, which is not to follow the recommendations received during feedback on how to find the correct answer, but to simply hear it. The observations of students (subcategory "other observations") expressing a desire to get an answer here and now are worrying. It is necessary to expand the research and clarify whether this is a consequence of the situation in higher education, where the emphasis is placed on the notion that "a student is a customer whose needs must be satisfied". Do students think that their every need must be met? Is this a consequence of modern communication? (e.g. getting an immediate response after messaging someone). Or perhaps this is an incorrect perception of future educators that the working hours of a teacher cannot be limited if the teacher is dedicated to their work and works out of vocation.

Conclusions

Literature analysis revealed that good feedback needs to be associated with these organizational and content aspects: positive comments are given first; provided immediately after or during the work; confirms what is being done correctly; mistakes and gaps are identified; clear recommendations for improvement are provided; is identified in a clear, specific, reasoned manner; talking about how the student feels when receiving feedback; it is about attitude, personal activity, but not about the person; empathetically listened, adjusted and answered and factors affecting feedback quality are taken into account (duration and time; the volume of feedback; feedback form; feedback participants; voice tone; eye contact; environment and situational circumstances; level of confidentiality; other circumstances).

While analyzing the peculiarities of good feedback identified by pedagogy students, we can distinguish the following subcategories: creating a pleasant, safe and benevolent environment; positive effects; helping or encouraging self-assessment; clear feedback; other observations. Future educators, when talking
about good feedback, paid attention to the emotional, benevolent environment being created during the feedback; methodological aspects of providing feedback (clear recommendations for improvement, encouraging self-assessment), but did not mention the appropriate choice of the type of feedback at all.

Still, research has revealed that some prospective educators still need to delve deeper into what constitutes good feedback or get out of an egocentric or personal position, because feedback cannot just be compliments, just naming good things. Also, the purpose of good feedback is not to cheer and lift the mood or expect a quick response (feedback) at any time of the day, as future educators think. This is only a presumption, further research is needed, but it is possible to assume that the concept of study quality related to the notion that "a student is a customer whose needs must be satisfied" may influence the students' perspective in the study presented in this research.

References


