LECTURER'S FEEDBACK AND ITS IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING: A STUDY OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Feedback is an essential part of effective learning. It helps students understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement, but this impact can be either positive or negative. Providing students with meaningful feedback can greatly enhance their learning and achievement. Lecturer's feedback plays an integral part in enhancing student learning in higher education. While effective feedback has frequently been identified as a key strategy in learning and teaching, little known research has focused on students' perceptions of feedback and the contribution feedback makes to students' learning. This study examined the impact of lecturer feedback on student learning. This study involved both Degree and diploma students studying in various fields in a local university in Sarawak. The sample size used for the study was 370 students. Lecturer feedback was measured using a scale developed by Susan Brookhart (2008). The results of the study show a significant and positive relationship between lecturer feedback and student learning. Another finding of the study is that motivational feedback is the main determinant of student learning followed by mode of feedback. This study also highlights how feedback can enhance student learning in higher education. Limitations and recommendations are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

There is a substantial and growing body of research in HE contexts considering feedback and its importance in student learning. Feedback is seen as a crucial way to facilitate students' development as independent learners who are able to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their own learning, allowing them to feed-up and beyond graduation into professional practice (Ferguson, 2011). In higher education, the learning process is very important because a student is bound to work on their own effort. In order for the student to understand the nature of their studies, lecturers should provide them clear guidance. That is why feedback is very important

for student learning. According to Ovando (1994), feedback refers to the input of the past from output system returned or a process. In other words, feedback is the response from the lecturers about activity they give including; assignment, project, test, and quiz. Feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process. Formative assessment gives information to teachers and students about how students are doing relative to classroom learning goals. Effective feedback should be part of a classroom assessment environment in which students see constructive criticism as a good thing and understand that learning cannot occur without practice. A number of influential meta-analyses have confirmed that feedback is central to student learning (Hattie et al. 1996; Black & Wiliam, 1998; Hattie & Jaeger, 1998). Ramsden (2003) argues that effective comments on students' work represent one of the key characteristics of quality teaching. Hounsell (2003) notes that 'it has long been recognized, by researchers and practitioners alike, that feedback plays a decisive role in learning and development, within and beyond formal educational settings. We learn faster, and much more effectively when we have a clear sense of how well we are doing and what we might need to do in order to improve'. Gibbs & Simpson (2004) highlight the importance of feedback being understandable, timely and acted upon by students. Yorke (2003) argues that as well as the content of feedback, an awareness of the psychology of giving and receiving feedback is vitally important to student learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback is one of the main element key in the formative evaluation process. The earlier studies have clearly demonstrated that feedback plays an essential roles in the learning process by the student like the ones practiced by Clynes & Ratfery (2008). There are several work of numerous researchers which have been highlighting on the same point regardless of the feedback function like Hattie et al. (1996) and Kluger & DeNisi (1996). Plus, previous study have reviewed and confirmed that feedback was the influence of formative assessment especially in improving the quality of student learning and achievement. Besides, "formative assessment feedback, involves student to understand their own learning in a way to understand on how to become better" (Ecclestone & Pryor 2003).

According to the research findings of Black and William (1998), there are two main functions of feedback which are can be identified as directive and facilitative. Directive feedback can be understood as to the situation which tells the student what needs to be fixed or revised. This kind of feedback basically tends to be more specific compared to the second function which is facilitative. This is because facilitative feedback can be seen as providing comments and suggestions to help guide the students in their revision and conceptualization. For example, there are several types of feedback from the literature which have been subjected to accuracy of the solution, response specific and goal-directed. It is also related with student achievement and performance and feedback formats and procedure. So, to be summarized, the feedback purposes can be considered as the response in terms of information which specifically to increased student understanding and their ability in performing the tasks given.

Higgins et al.(2002) and Shute (2008) stated that two main identifications of feedback which often discussed in other literature are formative assessment and summative feedback. The research conducted by Irons (2008), identified that formative feedback can be considered as any information, process or activity which can be an acceleration towards student learning based on any comments given regarding their assessment. It is with the purposes to change the learner thinking or behavior skills in order to improve their self-learning (Shute, 2008). Plus, the main purposes for this feedback are in order to increase student knowledge and understanding in various areas. Overall, as we can understand formative feedback actually explains and provide students with the means to achieve student learning objectives. Feedback is an essential component in all learning contexts and serves a variety of purposes including evaluation of student achievements, development of student competences and understanding, and elevation of students motivation and confidence (Hyland, 2000). In order to be effective, the feedback should be timely, constructive, motivational, personal, manageable and directly related to assessment criteria

Meanwhile, summative feedback is more focused in empowering students. This can be explained by relating the feedback with the guidance toward identification on students strength and weaknesses and help them to develop improvements for their future performances. This can be considered as a final touch of the coursework and module and a chance for students to improve. For instances, there are number of feedback methods can be delivered to the students as identified by Higgins *et al*.(2002) which include written feedback, oral feedback, face-to-face feedback and also grouping feedback with the internet-based feedback.

METHODS

A survey design was used to reach the research objectives. The specific design was the cross-sectional design, where a sample is drawn from a population at a particular point in time (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).The sample size used for the study is 370 students comprising diploma and degree students in a local university. About 345 students returned the questionnaire giving a response rate of 93 %. Results of the instrument's Cronbach Alpha measurement show that the score of reliability is above .90 which indicates an acceptable level. This is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis (N=345)

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Lecturer Feedback	16	.926
Student Learning	5	.901

This study intend to test the following hypothesis::
H1:   There is a significant relationship between Lecturer feedback and student learning
H1a: There is a significant relationship between Timing of feedback and student learning
H1b: There is a significant relationship between content of feedback and student learning

H1c: There is a significant. relationship between mode of feedback and student learning
H1d: There is a significant. relationship between motivational feedback and student learning.
H2: Motivational feedback is the main determinant of student learning

Table 2 indicated the sample profile of the study. Majority of the respondents were female (59.1 percent) and aged between 21 to 23 years old (45.2 percent). Majority of the respondents were Malay (61.4 percent) and were from the Degree course (55.9 percent). About 58.3 percent of the sample were from Samarahan Campus 1. As for semester majority of respondents were from semester 4 (24. 9 percent) followed by semester 2 (22.6 percent).

Table 2: Respondent's Profile (N=345)

Profile	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
Gender		
Male	141	40.9
Female	204	59.1
Age		
18-20 years old	135	39.1
21-23 years old	156	45.2
24-26 years old	52	15.1
Over 27 years old	2	0.6
Race		
Malay	212	61.4
Bidayuh	27	7.8
Iban	54	15.7
Melanau	27	7.8
Others	25	7.2
Academic Level		
Degree	193	55.9
Diploma	152	44.1
Campus		
Samarahan 1	201	58.3
Samarahan 2	144	41.7
Semester		
1	20	0.58
2	78	22.6
3	36	10.4
4	86	24.9
5	48	13.9
6	55	15.9
8	22	6.4

RESULTS

Based on Table 3, the level for Lecturer feedback is moderately high (M=3.83, SD.56) and the level of student learning is high.(M=4.11, SD .60). Two dimensions of feedback had a higher means compared to other dimensions namely motivational feedback (Mean= 3.97) and content of feedback (Mean= 3.90). In addition, the study found a strong and positive relationship between Lecturer feedback and Student Learning (r = 0.615; p< 0.01). Therefore the first hypothesis of this study which indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between feedback with student learning was accepted. This indicates that Lecturer feedback is associated with higher student learning. This is shown in Table 4. Furthermore, all the dimensions of Lecturer feedback also have a significant positive relationships with student learning: .Timing of feedback (r=.485, p<0.01); Content of feedback (r=.537, p<0.01);Mode of feedback (r=.470, p<0.01)and Motivational feedback (r=.566, p<0.01). Accordingly, hypothesis 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d were accepted. The results revealed that the motivational feedback was the most dominant dimension of lecturer feedback affecting student learning with the beta value of 0.370 followed by mode of feedback with beta value of 0.239. Thus the second hypothesis of this study which indicated that motivational feedback is the dominant dimension affecting student learning was accepted. This is shown in Table 5.

Table 3: Means of Main Constructs & Dimensions of Feedback (N=345)

Constructs	Mean	S.D
Lecturer Feedback	**3.83**	**.56**
• Timing of Feedback	3.81	.56
• Content of Feedback	3.90	.59
• Mode of Feedback	3.68	.72
• Motivational Feedback	3.97	.56
Student Learning	**4.11**	**.60**

Table 4: Correlation between Lecturer Feedback Dimensions and Student learning

Variables	Student Learning (r value)
Lecturer Feedback	.615**
Timing of Feedback	.485**
Content of Feedback	.537**
Mode of Feedback	.470**
Motivational Feedback	.566*

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5: Most dominant dimension affecting Student learning

Variables	Beta value	T	Level of significance
Timing of feedback	-0.36	-5.14	.607
Content of feedback	.122	1.513	.131
Mode of feedback	.239	4.266	.000
Motivational feedback	.370	5.082	.000

DISCUSSION

This study has proven that exists a significantly positive relationship between lecturer feedback with student learning. Therefore this study has evidenced that lecturer feedback and its dimensions were significant and positively related to student learning. Thus, the findings of this study is supported by the past research. This finding is consistent with past study by Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Clynes & Raftery, 2008; Hamilton, 2009 and Anna Rowe, 2011 who have found a positive relationship between lecturer feedback and student learning.

These past studies have evidenced that lecturer feedback were significant and positively related to student learning. Furthermore, the results of this study also shows that motivational feedback has the highest relationship with student learning and was also the most dominant dimension of student feedback that affect student learning. Hence the findings of this study is consistent with a study done by Anna Rowe (2011) that indicated that feedback provides an opportunity to deal with student academic achievement on an individual level. Timperley and Hattie (2007) note that effective feedback is most often oriented around a specific achievement that students are (or should be) working toward. When giving feedback, it should be clear to students how the information they are receiving will help them progress toward their final goal. Futhermore, mode of feedback especially written and oral feedback aslo have impact on student learning.

The results drawn from this study were considering the following limitations. The researcher recognizes that there are other potential factors that may influence student learning like lecturer characteristics, motivation and teaching quality However this study did not consider any other variables that moderate or mediate the relationship between lecturer feedback and student learning. The study presents two major implications: theoretical contribution and practical contribution. In terms of theoretical contribution, the results of this study confirm that lecturer feedback and student learning are highly correlated and hence contribute to research on lecturer feedback sand student learning in higher education. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study can be used as a guideline by higher education to enhance lecturer feedback and use it to improve student learning. Consequently future researcher are encouraged to complement the previous studies or to extend this study further by considering the other factors that might be related to the variables in the study. In addition data used in this study were derived from a simple random sample from a single public university which obtained form a survey questionnaire This limitations decreased the ability of researcher to generalize the findings to other public universities. For this reason, future studies are encouraged to conduct their studies across universities in Malaysia to enable the generalizations of findings. Furthermore, a qualitative method such as the use of interviews can also be considered as an

additional method of data gathering to further explain the relationship between the feedback with student learning.

Practically, the results of this study might be used as a guideline by the university's management to strengthen the existing lecturer feedback practices in their respective universities. This objective might possibly be achieved by considering the following recommendations. Firstly, the university are encouraged to put emphasis on feedback training for their lecturers. where lecturers are contentiously trained with updated knowledge and skills in giving feedback to students. Secondly, the university should emphasize the importance of providing timely feedback to students. Thirdly, university should monitor lecturer feedback through student evaluation. Finally, university lecturers should share their feedback practices with other lecturers. These recommendation might positively drive lecturer to improve their feedback and therefore will help to enhance student learning. As a guideline, feedback is most effective when:

- initiated by the student, in conjunction with self and/or peer assessment.
- lecturers carefully gauge when feedback is needed to promote learning.
- lecturers use the kind of feedback prompt that best meets the need of the students, at the level of support they need.
- lecturers provide strategies to help the student to improve.
- lecturers allow time for, and students can independently act on, feedback to improve their learning.
- feedback takes place as a conversation.
- lecturers check the adequacy of the feedback with the students.
- Feedback is most effective when it is given at the time of the learning so that students can make improvements as they go.

CONCLUSION

The paper throws light on lecturer feedback in higher education. It shifts the focus firmly away from the old delivery models of feedback to modern, effective and more valuables ones. Giving feedback is an important skill for lecturers in higher education and has a major influence on the quality of the students' learning process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).In conclusion, the empirical findings from this study provided a greater insight as to what extent student learning was related and impacted by lecturer feedback particularly in the context of higher education in Malaysia. The findings of this study supported and extended the previous studies on effective feedback and student learning. A greater understanding of the relationship between lecturer feedback and student learning can help universities to plan and decide on effective ways to improve student learning by adopting best practices in giving feedback to students. Hence, feedback is an integral feature of effective and efficient teaching and learning,

and can be one of the most powerful ways in which to enhance and strengthen student learning. Obviously, feedback enables learning by providing information that can be used to improve and enhance performance.

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