

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions and Experiences on Engaging Students in Feedback Dialogues to Promote the Voices of Students in Learning in Higher Education

Thulisile Mngomezulu¹

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Abstract

Students' involvement in discussions on feedback in higher education is often undervalued. Students' voices in matters of teaching, learning and assessment need to be incorporated so that learning is not left only in the teacher's control. This study explored the perceptions and views of both the students and lecturers regarding students' participation in feedback dialogues, aiming to access the subjective meanings participants ascribe to the phenomenon of 'feedback'. The current feedback model typically positions lecturers as the primary source of information, with students acting as passive recipients of feedback. A shift in the conceptual feedback landscape is necessary to perceive feedback as a tool for improving performance and learning through collaborative lecturer-student dialogues. Archer's theoretical model of feedback underpins this qualitative study, which employed a phenomenological design. Data were collected from 15 undergraduate education students and 6 lecturers through purposive and convenience sampling. Face-to-face, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 21 participants alongside two focus group discussions with the students. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that both students and lecturers embrace students' involvement in feedback dialogues. Additionally, some lecturers actively engage students in feedback dialogues before conducting assessments. The findings suggest that lecturers should foster assessment and feedback conversations to improve student engagement with feedback. Furthermore, higher education institutions should monitor the implementation of feedback practices.

Keywords: assessment feedback; dialogic feedback; feedback uptake; transmission model; lecturers

Introduction

Feedback is an essential component of the students' learning process. The entanglement of assessment and feedback as fundamental processes in higher education often compromises the effectiveness of feedback, as greater emphasis is placed on assessment (Winstone and Boud, 2020; Winstone and Boud, 2022). Effective and high-quality feedback is the key element of quality teaching and learning that can shape the future of higher education, and its success is dependent on engaging students in feedback processes through dialogic discussions. Dialogic feedback allows students to exert agency and voice in their learning (Rowe *et al.*, 2014: 1). Such a learning opportunity may eventually enable students to fully participate in a democratic way of life, leading to social responsiveness, one of the future endeavours for higher education. Academic achievement holds primary importance in the context of an education system aimed at the progressive scholastic achievement of the student (Sing and Choudhary, 2015). Dialogues between students and lecturers have the potential to transform higher education, making it more relevant to the global community's needs. This aligns with the call for a more experiential, creative, multicultural and democratic education that develops a person holistically, necessary for students to engage critically in a global society (Rector-Aranda and Raider-Roth, 2015).

The significance of this study for teaching and learning is that dialogic feedback addresses the significance of students' engagement in feedback processes. The current study may challenge academics about the established feedback conceptualisation and practices through critical evaluation. Academics may be stimulated to think of

¹University of Zululand, MngomezuluF@unizulu.ac.za | <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0046-4945>

reconceptualising current feedback practices, thus provoking them to think afresh about the way they conceptualise and provide feedback and, subsequently, evaluate their feedback practices. Additionally, the study may help those with the responsibility for the strategic development of assessment at higher education institutions, programme and module developers to ensure the incorporation of feedback as a fundamental component of the teaching and learning process. The exclusion of students' voices in matters of their education renders teaching and assessment teacher-centred, an approach which does not promote the futures of higher education envisioned in discourses on the critical role of higher education in creating relevant, sustainable, democratic and responsive education which may offer diverse skills in students future for global relevance. Students seem less engaged in student-lecturer talks and are more on the receiving end of the assessment process. One of the reasons for feedback failing to empower students to perform better and become self-regulating critical thinkers is the non-involvement of students in assessment discussions, particularly in issues around feedback (Felten *et al.*, 2016; Winstone and Boud, 2022; Owen, 2016; Benjamin, 2012). Exploring lecturers' and students' experiences and perceptions of assessment feedback practices is attempting to close the gap between current feedback practices and the envisioned feedback practices in which students contribute to their own learning. Student agency and voice initiatives should be set in place to re-align feedback practices to be relevant for shaping the future of humanity in general and education in particular.

Despite a substantial body of literature on assessment feedback (Winstone and Boud, 2020), little attention has been paid to dialogic feedback – feedback that incorporates the voices of both lecturers and students. This type of feedback is integral to assessment and can serve as a powerful tool to enhance students' learning and academic performance (Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017; Winstone and Boud, 2022). The sidelining of feedback in higher education assessment seems to be a result of the entanglement of assessment and feedback, hence, a proposition by authors to have the two processes disentangled to ensure that the legitimate purposes of both feedback and assessment are not compromised by inappropriate conflation of the two (Winstone and Boud, 2022). It is incontestable that feedback is a learning process and a tool to be given the importance and attention it deserves (Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017), yet practices in higher education evince that feedback has been given less focus than assessment. Winstone and Boud (2022) advocate for engaging students in feedback processes. A common concern is that students find it difficult to understand and interpret feedback (Higgins *et al.*, 2001; Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017) unless they are assisted by their teachers. This could be achieved through dialogic feedback discussions (Evans, 2013; Winstone and Boud, 2022) of both lecturers and students on feedback issues. Dialogic feedback creates a platform for discussions during which students' voices are heard. Effective, high-quality feedback as a key element of quality teaching depends on engaging students in feedback processes as active players in their learning. This makes feedback a forward-looking information that helps students further develop their work by having feedback systems in place (Boud and Molloy, 2013). Affording students a say in their learning could reshape learning into a more meaningful and relevant experience, a potential to fulfil the envisioned critical futures for higher education. The contribution of this study lies in reflecting the pedagogical implications of dialogic feedback on students' learning. The study could also contribute to international discourses on dialogic feedback from students' and lecturers' perspectives because it has the potential to offer new opportunities through critical dialogues for re-shaping feedback practices in higher education.

The paper is derived from my thesis which explored the experiences and perceptions of lecturers and students regarding assessment feedback in a historically disadvantaged higher education institution in South Africa. The current study focuses on one of the themes that emerged, engaging students in dialogic feedback discourses with their lecturers. The prevailing practice among higher education academics of providing feedback to students without first engaging students in dialogues about feedback is a cause for concern. Feedback should be viewed in light of mutual engagement in discourses or conversations between lecturers and students. Doing so supports a cultural change from the current one-way feedback practice, which is from lecturers to students (Archer, 2010: 106). The term dialogic refers to how meaning is created and understood in spoken and written discourse. This may be done through the creation of a dialogical learning and teaching relationship between students and lecturers by encouraging self-reflection and self-evaluation (Wegerif, 2006: 59). Dialogic feedback is a strategy to improve students' academic performance and learning (Boud and Winstone, 2020; Ajjawi and Boud, 2019). Furthermore, dialogic feedback allows students to utilise their voice and agency (Massar 2022) to meet their democratic and developmental needs. It can also serve as a new learning space to create agentic learning. The dialogues have the potential to empower students to have a say in the methods and direction of their learning. Furthermore, dialogic feedback encourages all participants to think, speak, and act as constructive members of a democratic society (Rector-Aranda, 2015), aligning with the ultimate goals envisioned for the future of higher education.

Rahman *et al.* (2011) advocate that formative assessment and feedback pave the way for students to perform better. Formative feedback is a very important part of the learning process because it starts a conversation with students and also tells them what they are doing well or incorrectly. Feedback develops them as writers and creates space for them to feel empowered about their learning process. Formative assessment and feedback are clearly for developmental purposes. Similarly, summative assessment and feedback are used for learning, teaching and developmental purposes. Teachers are empowered to restructure their teaching and assessment practices. Ntombela (2018) posits that formative assessment improves student learning and teaching by providing formative feedback during the teaching process. Other scholars echo that feedback is central to formative assessment because it promotes dialogic learning and the teaching process (HEA, 2016; Ntombela, 2018). The interrelatedness of assessment and feedback cannot be overlooked, as feedback is inherently informed by assessment, highlighting the entanglement of these two learning processes. This study is guided by two objectives: (i) to explore students' views about involving them in dialogic feedback discussions regarding improving academic performance; (ii) to explore lecturers' views about involving students in dialogic feedback discussions regarding improving academic performance.

Literature Review

Literature was reviewed through the theoretical lens proposed by Julian Archer (2010), which focuses on academic feedback in higher education. The crucial tenets of Archer's theory are the feedback processes, feedback culture, dialogic feedback, feedback types and structure, feedback provision, the impact of feedback, feedback continuum, sustainable feedback practices, self-regulation and monitoring, emotional response to feedback, the influence of the recipient and interaction with feedback. Of these key issues, the current study focused on dialogic feedback. Archer condemns feedback that is educator-driven and recommends dialogic feedback that engages students as active participants in their learning. The significance of dialogic feedback is widely recognised in literature. Scholars have advocated the creation of opportunities for students to enter into a dialogue with their lecturers and peers (Winstone and Boud, 2022; To and Liu, 2018). Further emphasis is placed on dialogic feedback in literature dialogues by various authors (Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017; Espasa *et al.*, 2018; Wood, 2021; Tam, 2021; Winstone and Boud, 2022). There is a need for students to engage in dialogic feedback talks to scaffold them (Sedova *et al.*, 2014; Xu and Carless, 2017) in improving their performance and building good relations (Carless, 2013; Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017). Researchers emphasise the importance of involving students in a dialogue to facilitate self-judgement and self-regulatory practices (Black and Mc Cormick, 2010; Carless *et al.*, 2011; Nicol 2010; 2012; 2014).

Dialogic feedback taps into students' perspectives on the significance of their engagement in feedback process discussions for feedback to make sense and be well received and utilised. It highlights the importance of healthy relations between students and lecturers so that feedback may reflect the voices of students, not only the lecturers' expectations. Dialogic feedback is crucial in affording students a participatory role in feedback processes, making students active co-partners of learning in higher education assessment practices. Dialogic feedback is conceptualised as an interactive process in which students engage lecturers (Steen-Utheim and Hopfenbeck, 2019 cited in Tam, 2021) who provide feedback (Carless and Chan, 2017; To and Liu, 2018). This interactive process forms the pillar of sustainable and effective feedback. Feedback from lecturers enables a dialogue between students and lecturers about the received feedback which can facilitate the negotiation of meaning as interpretations are shared (Carless, 2013) and clarify possible confusions (Hepplestone, 2014; Carless, 2013). Engaging in dialogic feedback discussions attempts to circumvent the traditional one-way transmission models of feedback from lecturers to students. Such models promote teacher-centred learning with students being inactive participants in assessment decision-making processes regarding their education. Dialogic discussions play a role in reconciling different perceptions of the feedback processes of lecturers and students (Carless and Chan, 2017).

There has to be a common understanding between lecturers and students of the purpose of feedback and how feedback should be used. Consequently, discussions on feedback issues are therefore necessary. Researchers emphasise the importance of involving students in dialogues to facilitate self-judgment and self-regulatory practices (Carless *et al.*, 2011; Nicol 2012; 2014; Carless, 2016). Encouraging feedback dialogues is important (Carless *et al.*, 2011) as the parties involved (students and lecturers) can talk about generating or providing feedback, interpreting feedback and engaging with feedback. Dialogic feedback processes support students in self-monitoring their work thus enhancing the student's role in learning through feedback. Dialogic feedback implies an interactive exchange of interpretations, meanings and expectations by both lecturers and students engaged in the

dialogue. The active engagement of students in feedback dialogues yields the reconceptualisation of feedback as a process-oriented phenomenon, a notion making education relevant as envisaged for the future of higher education. The importance of dialogic feedback is that it makes students an integral part of the assessment process (Nicol, 2010; 2012; 2014; Taras, 2008; 2015), not just passive recipients as they are traditionally perceived. Lee (2017) asserts that teachers' beliefs about students' needs may not always align with the students' actual needs; therefore, engaging students in feedback discussions is crucial for understanding their perspectives on feedback. Dialogue is also a useful tool for reconciling the different perceptions of teachers and students (Adcroft, 2011; Carless, 2006) of the feedback process, and it reduces the dissonance between teachers' and students' views of feedback (To and Liu, 2018). It is based on this notion that this paper explores the views of students and lecturers on dialogic feedback. Meaningful engagement of students with lecturers in dialogic feedback discussions fosters a deeper understanding of what feedback entails, feedback processes, and its delivery.

Lecturers should empower students with skills to develop as independent learners capable of self-assessment. Developing self-assessment skills can be executed by lecturers through feedback dialogues (Lee, 2017). It is the responsibility of lecturers to plan and create feedback dialogues with students (Winstone and Boud, 2022) regarding the provision of effective and high-quality feedback. Feedback has been identified as a key element of quality teaching, specifically for its role in engaging students (Rowe *et al.*, 2014). The results of such dialogic discussions could see an end to lecturers' judgemental language (Boud and Molloy, 2013). The implication is that judgemental language may impede student engagement with feedback and, subsequently, learning from feedback. Dialogues should also centre on identifying problematic areas for students to work out solutions by themselves (Lee, 2017), eventually developing a globally responsible citizenry. The global lament by lecturers, shared by authors, is that students seem to be interested in grades rather than in the developmental information provided (Winstone and Boud, 2022; Lee, 2017; Dlaska and Krekeler, 2017). Lecturers should note that the reason could be not engaging students in feedback dialogues. It is crucial for lecturers to reflect on their feedback practices during the dialogues, as this may lead to reshaped practices which could improve students' knowledge and understanding (Crichton and Valdera, 2015). The traditional models of feedback fail to recognise the student as a co-creator of knowledge, as it is only the lecturer who gives feedback to students. Such an approach thwarts the critical goals envisaged for higher education by reducing students to recipients of learning. Dialogic feedback interactions can potentially address the limitations of the traditional one-way models of learning in general and assessment learning in particular. Such interactions may result in the achievement of the goal of using feedback to improve students' performance and learning. It is for this reason that feedback must assume a central position within a dialogic approach to learning and teaching, as argued by Sutton (2009).

Research Methodology

The current study employs a qualitative research design (phenomenology), drawing from my thesis, which focused on the lived experiences of lecturers and students and their interaction with the phenomenon of 'feedback'. Different people have different experiences and interpretations of a phenomenon, and all of these are equally valid. As a researcher, it was not possible to remain separate from a phenomenon (Cassim, 2021). From an interpretive perspective, meaning and understanding are co-created by the researcher and participants, so there is no objective truth or reality to which the results of my study can be compared. This paper specifically focused on lecturers' and students' views on feedback engagements and feedback discussions, whether these discussions or conversations take place and if they are thought to be beneficial to students. The researcher aimed to establish lecturers' practices in engaging students in discussions on feedback and their perspectives on these interactions. Also, students had to tell if they would like to be engaged in feedback discussions as recipients of assessment feedback.

Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed, and ethical clearance was obtained through the Ethics Committee Office at the institution where the fieldwork was conducted. After receiving it, I then recruited participants face-to-face at the lecture halls, targeting students in their second, third, and fourth years of study. A total of five students from each year's level were included, resulting in a sample of 15 students. I explained the study and rationale of the study, as well as how it could benefit the participants and other education sectors. Letters seeking consent were issued to the participants who had volunteered. I explained ethical issues such as confidentiality, voluntary participation, termination at any given moment, anonymity, pseudonymization, potential harm and data safety. The population comprised university lecturers and students. The sample was thus drawn from the population of students in the Faculty of Education in a particular university, studying English Additional Language modules in the Intermediate Phase of teacher education, using purposive and convenience sampling

procedures. Purposive sampling allowed for the selection of participants based on the anticipated richness and relevance of data to the objectives of the study (Yin 2015, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018) while convenience sampling ensured the availability of relevant participants for the study (Silverman, 2017). Therefore, a sample size of 21 participants was drawn, comprising 15 students and 6 lecturers who taught these students. From the 15 student participants, 2 focus groups were created with 7 and 8 participants, respectively. Data collection involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with all 21 participants (15 students and 6 lecturers). The interview schedule had two subsidiary separate questions for lecturers and students, both stemming from the main research questions. Semi-structured interviews provided more in-depth data collection, and a comprehensive understanding of the issue studied through probing and enabled the capturing of verbal and non-verbal cues. The semi-structured interview technique was vital as a phenomenological approach was followed, and the objective was to explore subjective meanings that participants ascribe to concepts and phenomena (Gray, 2018).

Two focus group discussions consisting of eight and seven student participants were conducted to obtain detailed insights into personal perceptions and opinions. This approach aimed to capture a broader range of information that might not have been shared by individual participants. The focus groups' data were supplementary. Participants were requested to be as honest and free as possible, and the good rapport between the researcher and participants made the atmosphere relaxed and participants at ease to share their perspectives. The collected data were analysed using a thematic content approach. A list of significant statements on the participants' experiences of the phenomenon of dialogic feedback was developed. The statements were grouped into broader units of information or themes (Gray, 2018; Bertram and Christiansen, 2014; Gray, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Flick, 2018). These statements provided the foundation for interpretation. The researcher then created the textual description of the experiences of the participants, writing what they experienced and also developed the structural description of how the phenomenon occurred. Lecturers expressed how they feel about involving students in feedback dialogues, and how and when they engage students in feedback talks. Students conveyed their desire for engagement in feedback dialogues and how such interactions could enhance their academic performance and overall learning. Two main themes emerging from student data were the eagerness of students to be involved in discussions and the perceived importance of such engagements. From the lecturers' data, the following themes emerged: the views on engaging students, the importance of feedback dialogues, and lecturers' practices on discussing feedback with students.

Findings and Discussion

The key findings from students' data underscore a strong desire for students to engage in dialogic discussions, which are intellectual interactions with the lecturers or teachers. Students perceive the talks as significant for their learning experience. The evidence is indicated in the following data or quotes by students.

SP 1: *"I would like to be part of that [dialogic feedback discussions] because they [lecturers] are busy correcting me so I must be involved in that particular conversation so that I may understand but I like to be involved during the feedback."*

Speaker 3FG: *"I would like my lecturers to involve me directly, in a face-to-face manner... we can have a discussion am granted an opportunity to be able to ask ..."* and speaker 4FG asserts the data by speaker 3FG: Speaker 4 FG: *"It is very important to me as a student to engage with the lecturer who is giving feedback to me."*

Based on the data, it may be argued that students perceive dialogic feedback as significant, hence the willingness to be part of feedback dialogues. The specific significance of the dialogues surfacing out of the students' responses is that of corrections, an indication that students are eager to talk about issues on feedback, understand it and act on it to improve their academic performance. Student participants believe that they should be involved in feedback dialogues with their English language lecturers if effective feedback is to be provided. Student participants' data indicate that they understand the importance of engaging in feedback discussions with their lecturers, as indicated in SP 9:

"It [involvement in feedback discussion] will be very wise and it will help very much because the students will know what the lecturer expects from them and also the lecturer will know how to give feedback to the students"

The importance of feedback dialogue cannot be overemphasised, as evinced by the works of various authors who argue that it extends beyond a mere exchange of ideas between students and lecturers (Gravett and Petersen, 2002; Steen-Utheim and Wittek, 2017; Espasa *et al.*, 2018; Wood, 2021; Tam, 2021; Winstone and Boud, 2022; Sedova *et al.*, 2014; Xu and Carless, 2017 etc.). These authors allude to the notion that the interactions between students and teachers need to be interactive, with students expressing their opinions, understanding, conceptualisations, ideas, feelings, questions, explanations, concerns, and other issues that could be communicated. Dialogic feedback approaches emphasise the importance of engaging learners or students in dialogue around learning. Dialogic feedback reflects how meaning is created and understood in spoken and written discourse (Wegerif, 2006: 59).

SP 9: *"It [involvement in feedback discussion] will be very wise and it will help very much because the students will know what the lecturer expects from them and also the lecturer will know how to give feedback to the students so that they can make, they can try to improve their marks."*

The data above indicate that students perceive feedback discussions as essential for both lecturers and students to clarify expectations and discuss lecturers' feedback comments that are appropriate and relevant in addressing students' academic needs. Lecturers may not know students' feedback needs, subsequently, they may give irrelevant feedback. However, engaging in dialogues with students as early as possible can mitigate this issue.

For instance, one student (SP4) stated:

"Yes, it can be very useful and proper to be given the ways of providing feedback before we can start any task with a lecturer so that we can be able to know how are we going to be assessed and how are we going to be evaluated"

This sentiment is echoed by another student (SP7):

"Yes, mam, it will be wise. So, sitting with the lecturer can give, it can do better or can be more important. It is where you can be able to ask whatever question you want to ask based on that topic or based on that assessment that you are given, exchanging words with your lecturers will give you more knowledge or more information on how to go through that assessment..."

Similarly, SP 8 noted:

"Feedback can be used to improve academic performance because I believe that if there a solid relationship between the student and the lecturer... and they are both willing to work together, well I do believe that there can be successful teaching and learning...."

Derived from this data is the reasoning and interpretation that students can link feedback to their assessment; hence, they state that during the feedback dialogues, they want to have discussions on assessment as well, not only feedback. Having dialogues between students and their lecturers may enhance assessment feedback (Evans, 2016). The concepts 'assessment and feedback' form a conjunction of activities that often go hand-in-hand. Whenever an assessment of learning takes place, feedback information should be provided to students (Chalmers *et al.*, 2018 cited in Winstone and Boud, 2022). It is therefore logical to say that for feedback to be effective, lecturers and students need to have a common understanding (and healthy relations) of the purpose of feedback and how feedback should be used, highlighting the importance of dialogic feedback discussions. The data reveal that students perceive effective dialogic feedback as crucial for fostering a positive relationship between themselves and their lecturers. As articulated by SP 11:

"Yes it will; that will be very important ... it creates a good relationship between me and my lecturer... So if we both have talked about feedback, I will know what is expected from me and I will know what to expect from my lecturer. ... if we don't converse, and the lecturer is just giving instructions,..... it's not going to help anybody ..."

This highlights the importance of developing trusting relationships which enable students to freely express their thoughts on feedback matters (as partners in learning). This may enhance their overall learning experiences. Another student, SP14, emphasised:

"I think it would be wise. I think it is of high importance that we discuss what kind of feedback we would love to receive as students ... to sit down and discuss with the lecturer ..., then the lecturer explains why it is important maybe to get both marks and comments."

This statement underscores students' concerns and questions regarding assessment feedback given by lecturers, and those concerns need to be addressed if feedback is to improve their academic performance, as the primary function of feedback (Winstone and Boud, 2022). Yang and Carless (2013), cited in Hepplestone *et al.* (2014), note that receiving individual feedback from tutors enables dialogue between students and tutors about the received feedback which can facilitate the negotiation of meaning and clarify possible confusion (Hepplestone, 2014). Carless (2013) and Steen-Utheim and Wittek (2017) further assert that feedback dialogue is both interactional and relational, and its effectiveness depends, amongst other things, on relations between students and lecturers, enabling students to become more reflective and autonomous learners, an envisioned goal for future higher education.

Negative feedback that is detrimental to the well-being of the students should be avoided. The effects of such are highlighted in the data by SP 12:

"... I think it will be better to discuss it first because kind of words 'stupid', 'nonsense', those words are not nice words, ... they will end up causing a situation where a student is not in good terms with a lecturer."

Similarly, this emotional sentiment was resonated by SP13:

"Yes to it [feedback discussions], because the lecturers will be going to tell me why they write these painful comments."

Providing feedback comments is a complex and daunting challenge. Higgins *et al.* (2001), regard decoding feedback as a complex process which can be fraught with difficulty; thus, feedback discussions may help in designing negative criticism and feedback comments in an acceptable way. The data of student participants captured above reflect how negative feedback may fail the purpose of providing effective feedback. It should be noted that students' views regarding their involvement in feedback dialogues differ. Contrary to the many participants who feel that they need to be involved, there are a few who think lecturers know best so as students, they may be exempted from the process of discussing feedback, as indicated in the data by SP 12:

"I think it is good that lecturers give us feedback without our involvement ... we know what is expected from us as they give us the rubric, an echo made by SP 1: "... I think they [students] can be involved on those discussions ... but I prefer that sometimes they [lecturers] do not include us, so, I think that lecturers should discuss on their own and come to class and tell us"

Such views indicate social challenges of identity and power relations (noted in Bovill, 2014) existing in communities from which students and lecturers come. The notion of power dynamics is noted in the data above, where the total trust of students in their lecturers is a socially and culturally acceptable matter. For the fact that the lecturer is in a position of power and is also perceived as more knowledgeable than the student, students put their fate into the lecturers' hands, distancing themselves from being co-creators of knowledge. It is thus crucial to have dialogic discussions to reconcile different perceptions of the feedback processes and reflect on how students are also active co-constructors of knowledge, as well as monitors of their learning. This highlights their proactive role and responsibility in the feedback process (Evans, 2013; Bovill *et al.*, 2014; Bron *et al.*, 2016) to enhance self-regulation. Self-regulating students are critical thinkers and, consequently, may contribute as partners in the teaching-learning process and the development of global communities as well. Accommodating their voices (Bron *et al.*, 2016) would be a means of cultivating student agency and allowing the co-creation of knowledge.

The benefits of involving students' voices include the development of a partnership that enhances motivation and learning for both students and lecturers. Such a partnership deepens students' learning, boosts their confidence, helps them understand learning as a process, and reconceptualise teaching and learning as a collaborative process (Cook-Sather *et al.*, 2014), consequently advancing the critical future goals of higher education. For lecturers, partnership affords them new thinking and perspectives on their view of students as co-creators of knowledge. Partnerships result in developing metacognitive awareness. Students become more engaged and reflective about their responsibilities in learning and teaching, and their capacities as students. They also have an

opportunity to engage in democratic practices (Bron *et al.*, 2016), which prepare them for the global community expectations, a goal envisaged for the future of higher education. Engaging students as partners and co-creators of knowledge comes with challenges of power, inclusion, and context (Bovill *et al.*, 2014; Cook-Sather *et al.*, 2014). These challenges could be mitigated if lecturers could carefully plan on addressing them before the partnership engagements. These interactions are so important for learning and for the broader aims of higher education.

On the part of lecturers, they noted that they support dialogues with students around learning and feedback and thus need to accommodate the voices of the students in the decision-making process (Brown, 2007). For example, LP4 noted:

"I think that would help a great deal because it means the students will be involved in their learning. ... after having had this kind of conversation or dialogue, students will do better"

The data above reflect a paradigm shift in the perception of feedback in higher education as information taking, a socio-constructivist perspective and a sense-making process in which both teachers and students have an active role (Winstone and Carless, 2020; Tam, 2021). The data attest to that dialogues regarding feedback allow students to perform better. In the data above, the importance of dialogic feedback discussions is highlighted, thus lecturers should facilitate engagement of students in feedback dialogues for learning and better performance. Echoing the sentiment is LP 5:

"That [feedback discussion] is very important because ... you want to develop responsible students... we are trying to inculcate a sense of responsibility to them; and ... we want them to be free to speak and be part of the whole teaching and learning process."

Similarly, LP 2 noted:

"As students engage in dialogues, they become empowered automatically." Yes, yes, [to feedback dialogues] not only for the students but also for the teacher as well because the teacher will understand them better, by allowing them to voice out what their feelings are."

Emanating from the data is that dialogic feedback has the potential to empower students to self-regulate, monitor and learn independently, a goal relevant to the future of higher education. Sutton (2009: 2) reflects the argument that feedback has the potential to develop learning and motivate students to improve their performance through encouraging self-reflection and self-evaluation. Sadler (2013) accords that feedback should support learners to drive feedback themselves, that is, to self-regulate. It is therefore important to note that communicating assessment feedback to students should be considered a major concern (Poulos and Mahony, 2008), during which students may clarify their understanding of feedback and indicate the challenges and problems they may have. On perceiving feedback as a motivational tool to sustain positive learning, one lecturer noted the importance of avoiding negative comments as feedback to prevent demotivating students. LP 3 stated:

"I refrain from writing negative comments on the scripts because writing anything on students' scripts will demotivate them."

This underscores the necessity for lecturers to provide positive, constructive and encouraging feedback, even when the performance does not meet expectations. Rowe (2011) intimates that lecturers need to be aware of the damaging effects their negative feedback may have on students and thus should protect the self-esteem of the students. Reflecting on the lecturers' practices of involving students in feedback talks, LP5 stated:

"... I give them the direction at the beginning: 'This is how we are going to work'. It is something that you need to do in your very first lecture This is something that I have always been doing."

LP 3 indicated that discoursing with students supports them:

"Hence we scaffold them in a direction that we have determined ourselves as lecturers, whereas we must scaffold them in a direction that speaks to their life experiences, by involving them ... learning cannot be a tradition anymore..."

It should be concluded that there is a point of convergence on the issue of involving students as partners in feedback matters, both students and lecturers expressed that engaging students in feedback dialogues would be beneficial.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Dialogic feedback needs to be implemented in higher education as it is a means of shifting from the traditional models that perceive students as passive recipients of information to a new trend of dialogic form that emphasises the importance of feedback as an opportunity for a more interactive relationship with the teacher. Having dialogues is a strategy impacting the critical future practices of higher education, especially in the field of teaching, learning and assessment. Teaching should not simply involve the transmission of subject knowledge but should also be geared towards the development of students' capacity to engage in meaningful dialogues with their lecturers through which knowledge is constantly being constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed (Wegerif, 2006: 60). It is through such dialogues that students' voices can be heard and considered. Accommodating students as partners and co-creators of knowledge in teaching and learning through engaging them in feedback discussions, is of essence. It is therefore recommended that lecturers should provide students with opportunities to engage in dialogues, developing the skill to participate globally in social, educational, political, and economic issues.

Lecturers should engage students in meaningful dialogues on feedback to avoid giving students negative feedback that may have detrimental effects. Students noted and expressed that negative feedback is deeply hurtful, discouraging and damaging to their self-confidence and self-esteem. Students should be involved in dialogues for their questions and concerns on meaning, identity and power relations to be addressed, making students partners in teaching and learning. The implications of the findings on academic feedback on higher education assessment and evaluation are that lecturers should advance their knowledge on feedback discourses as part of the assessment; they need to create a safe space for their engagements with students on feedback issues; they should discuss students' academic needs and consider the psychological impact of feedback. Higher education institutions and policymakers should review and update their assessment policies to align with the new models of assessment in an attempt to ensure relevance to the goals and envisioned futures of higher education.

Conclusion

The study set out to establish the perceptions of both students and lecturers regarding dialogic feedback discussions between students and lecturers. It was noted in the data that student and lecturer participants expressed a strong desire to be part of the discussions because they are an integral part of the learning experience. Feedback practices can be transformed when students are actively engaged in feedback processes, one of them being dialogic feedback. This shift would change the current lecturer-centred feedback practices to a more interactive student-centred approach. The transformation would ultimately lead to and foster the attainment of the higher education goals envisaged. The voices of students are important in dialogic feedback, as students are beneficiaries of feedback. Transforming feedback will be transforming the teaching, learning and assessment processes in an attempt to align education with the envisioned critical futures of higher education. Further research is suggested for a wider coverage of assessment feedback, particularly in the context of dialogic feedback (feedback dialogues) to understand discourses on engaging students meaningfully in assessment dialogues in general and feedback dialogues in particular. Feedback as an independent component of assessment is a relatively new concept, consequently, more studies need to be conducted to enhance higher education teaching, learning and evaluation processes. More research is still required on feedback processes given that dialogic feedback is an integral element of the feedback processes. Such studies may deepen understanding and improve feedback effectiveness in academic settings. Also, there might be a possibility that the study may have been limited by the researcher's population sample. A relatively small sample hinders the generalisability of the findings and the ability to draw conclusive results. Also, the research design and research instruments might have been a limitation undetected by the researcher. In addition, the delimiters of the study, those factors beyond the researcher's control, could be the scope of the study being narrow, as this paper was extracted from a doctoral thesis, which is limited in scope. Also, the power dynamics between the researcher and students may have been a delimiter, even though the researcher was convinced that a conducive setting prevailed.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: The study intersects education, psychology, and communication. It integrates pedagogical theory, and dialogic approaches to feedback, drawing on qualitative research methods to explore how collaborative lecturer-student interactions can enhance learning and assessment in higher education.

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