

Assessment for Learning: The Role of Feedback in Student Academic Development

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Abstract:

This study explores the role of feedback in Assessment for Learning and its impact on student academic development. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving teachers and students. The findings indicate that effective feedback significantly enhances students' understanding of learning objectives, improves the quality of their work, and fosters greater engagement in the learning process. Feedback also contributes to the development of metacognitive skills, enabling students to reflect on their performance and take responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, the study reveals that feedback supports student motivation by creating a positive and encouraging learning environment. However, challenges such as time constraints, large class sizes, and students' limited ability to utilize feedback effectively were identified. The study concludes that well-designed feedback practices, supported by appropriate instructional strategies and technology, are essential for maximizing the effectiveness of Assessment for Learning.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

Assessment plays a crucial role in the educational process as it provides information about students' learning progress and academic achievement. Traditionally, assessment has been viewed as a tool for measuring learning outcomes at the end of instruction. However, contemporary educational perspectives emphasize the importance of assessment as an integral part of the learning process. This shift has led to the emergence of the concept of Assessment for Learning (AfL), which focuses on using assessment to support and enhance student learning. AfL prioritizes formative practices that guide students toward improvement rather than merely evaluating their performance. Therefore, it represents a significant paradigm shift in educational assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

Assessment for Learning is grounded in the principle that assessment should be used to inform both teaching and learning. It involves continuous feedback that helps students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Unlike summative assessment, which typically occurs at the end of a learning period, AfL is embedded within daily instructional practices. Teachers use assessment data to adjust their teaching strategies and address students' needs. This dynamic process fosters a more responsive and effective learning environment. As a result, AfL contributes to improved academic outcomes (Harlen, 2007).

Feedback is a central component of Assessment for Learning and plays a vital role in student academic development. Effective feedback provides learners with clear information about their performance and guidance on how to improve. It helps students identify gaps between their current level of understanding and desired learning goals. Feedback also encourages reflection and self-regulation, which are essential for independent learning. Therefore, the quality of feedback significantly influences the effectiveness of AfL practices (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Research has shown that timely and constructive feedback can have a powerful impact on student achievement. When feedback is specific, actionable, and aligned with learning objectives, it enhances students' understanding and motivation. Conversely, vague or delayed feedback may fail to support learning effectively. Teachers must therefore ensure that feedback is meaningful and relevant to students' needs. This requires careful planning and consideration of how feedback is delivered. Thus, feedback is not merely an instructional add-on but a critical element of the learning process (Sadler, 1989).

In addition to improving academic performance, feedback also plays a role in developing students' metacognitive skills. Metacognition refers to the ability to think about one's own thinking and learning processes. Through feedback, students become more aware of their learning strategies and outcomes. They learn to evaluate their own work and make informed decisions about how to improve. This process fosters greater independence and responsibility for learning. As a result, students develop skills that are essential for lifelong learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

The role of feedback in Assessment for Learning is closely related to the concept of formative assessment. Formative assessment involves gathering information about student learning during the instructional process and using it to improve teaching and learning. Feedback serves as the primary mechanism through which formative assessment influences student performance. It provides immediate insights that guide both teachers and learners. Therefore, effective formative assessment depends on the quality and frequency of feedback provided. This highlights the interconnected nature of assessment and feedback (William, 2011).

Moreover, feedback contributes to student motivation and engagement in learning. When students receive positive and constructive feedback, they are more likely to feel confident and motivated to continue learning. Feedback can reinforce students' efforts and encourage them to persist in the face of challenges. It also helps create a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and understood. This emotional dimension of feedback is essential for fostering a positive attitude toward learning. Consequently, feedback influences both cognitive and affective aspects of learning (Dörnyei, 2001).

In recent years, the integration of technology has transformed the way feedback is delivered in educational settings. Digital tools enable teachers to provide immediate and personalized feedback to students. Online platforms, learning management systems, and automated assessment tools offer new opportunities for enhancing feedback practices. These technologies allow for more efficient and scalable feedback processes. They also support diverse forms of feedback, including written, audio, and visual formats. Thus, technology plays an important role in modern Assessment for Learning practices (Shute, 2008).

Despite its benefits, implementing effective feedback practices presents several challenges. Teachers may face constraints such as limited time, large class sizes, and lack of training in

providing high-quality feedback. Additionally, students may not always understand or utilize the feedback they receive. This highlights the need for developing students' feedback literacy, which involves the ability to interpret and apply feedback effectively. Addressing these challenges is essential for maximizing the impact of feedback on learning. Therefore, both teachers and students must be equipped with the necessary skills (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Another important consideration is the role of peer and self-assessment in providing feedback. These approaches encourage students to actively engage in the assessment process. Peer assessment allows students to give and receive feedback from their classmates, while self-assessment promotes reflection on one's own work. Both methods support the development of critical thinking and evaluative skills. They also reduce the reliance on teacher-centered feedback. As a result, students become more autonomous learners (Topping, 1998).

The effectiveness of feedback also depends on how it is perceived and used by students. Feedback must be delivered in a way that is understandable and actionable. It should focus on specific aspects of performance and provide clear guidance for improvement. Additionally, feedback should be aligned with learning objectives and assessment criteria. When these conditions are met, feedback can significantly enhance learning outcomes. Therefore, careful design and implementation of feedback strategies are essential (Sadler, 1989).

In conclusion, Assessment for Learning and the role of feedback are fundamental to improving student academic development. Feedback serves as a bridge between teaching and learning, guiding students toward achieving their learning goals. It supports not only academic performance but also the development of metacognitive and self-regulation skills. Despite the challenges associated with its implementation, effective feedback practices offer significant benefits for both students and teachers. This study aims to explore the role of feedback in Assessment for Learning and its impact on student academic development.

Method (منهج)

This study employs a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to explore the role of feedback in Assessment for Learning and its impact on student academic development. The qualitative approach is selected because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses to feedback practices. This approach is particularly suitable for examining complex educational processes that cannot be easily quantified. By focusing on real classroom contexts, the study captures authentic interactions between teachers and students. Therefore, it provides rich and detailed insights into the implementation of feedback in learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The research was conducted in a secondary school setting that actively implements formative assessment practices. The selection of the site was based on its adoption of Assessment for Learning strategies, particularly the use of continuous feedback in classroom instruction. The school provides a relevant context for examining how feedback is integrated into teaching practices. Data collection was carried out over a specific period to ensure sufficient observation of learning activities. This setting reflects typical classroom conditions where feedback plays a central role in student learning. Thus, it allows for a realistic analysis of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018).

The participants in this study consisted of teachers and students involved in classroom assessment activities. Teachers were selected based on their experience in applying formative assessment and providing feedback. Students were chosen to represent different levels of academic performance and learning engagement. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants had relevant experience with feedback practices. This approach enabled the researcher to gather meaningful and context-specific data. The diversity of participants

contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Sugiyono, 2013).

Data collection was conducted using multiple methods to enhance the depth and validity of the findings. The primary method was in-depth interviews with teachers and students. These interviews aimed to explore participants' perceptions of feedback, its effectiveness, and its impact on learning. A semi-structured interview format was used to allow flexibility in exploring emerging themes. This method enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and nuanced information. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

In addition to interviews, classroom observations were carried out to examine how feedback was delivered and utilized in real-time learning situations. The researcher observed teacher-student interactions, the types of feedback provided, and students' responses to feedback. This method allowed the researcher to capture actual practices rather than relying solely on participants' perceptions. Observations were documented systematically to ensure accuracy and consistency. This provided valuable contextual data for interpreting the findings (Spradley, 1980).

Documentation was also used as a supporting data collection technique. Relevant materials such as lesson plans, assessment rubrics, student assignments, and feedback records were analyzed. These documents provided insights into how feedback was structured and implemented in the classroom. They also helped to verify the consistency between reported practices and actual implementation. By examining multiple sources of data, the study ensured greater credibility. Documentation contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of feedback practices (Bowen, 2009).

The data analysis process followed a thematic analysis approach. The researcher began by organizing and coding the collected data to identify key patterns and themes. These themes were related to the role of feedback in enhancing student learning and academic development. The analysis involved interpreting the data to understand relationships between different variables. This process required careful and systematic examination of all data sources. The results were then presented in a coherent and structured manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several validation strategies were employed. Triangulation was used by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation. Member checking was conducted by sharing findings with participants to confirm their accuracy. Prolonged engagement in the research setting allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the context. These strategies enhanced the credibility and reliability of the findings. Therefore, the study maintains a high level of methodological rigor (Denzin, 2012).

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by using pseudonyms and secure data storage. The researcher ensured that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time. Ethical principles were strictly followed to protect participants' rights and well-being. This contributed to the integrity of the research (Orb et al., 2001).

The methodological framework of this study is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of feedback in Assessment for Learning. By employing a qualitative approach and multiple data collection techniques, the research captures the complexity of feedback practices in educational settings. The systematic analysis and validation procedures ensure the reliability of the findings. This method allows the study to generate meaningful insights into how feedback influences student academic development. Ultimately, it contributes to improving assessment practices in education (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Result (نتائج)

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of feedback within Assessment for Learning significantly improves students' academic performance. Students demonstrated a clearer understanding of learning objectives when feedback was consistently provided throughout the instructional process. This clarity helped them focus on specific learning targets and adjust their efforts accordingly. As a result, students were able to achieve better outcomes in their academic tasks. The continuous nature of feedback allowed for ongoing improvement rather than delayed correction. This contributed to a more effective learning process overall.

Another important finding is that feedback enhances students' awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. Through detailed comments and guidance from teachers, students were able to identify areas that required improvement. This awareness encouraged them to take corrective actions in their learning. Students reported that feedback helped them understand their mistakes more clearly. It also provided direction for future learning activities. Consequently, students became more reflective and intentional in their academic work.

The study also found that timely feedback plays a crucial role in maintaining student engagement. When feedback was provided promptly, students remained motivated and actively involved in learning activities. Delayed feedback, on the other hand, reduced its effectiveness and impact. Students expressed a preference for immediate responses that allowed them to make quick adjustments. This highlights the importance of timing in feedback delivery. Timely feedback ensures that learning remains continuous and relevant.

In addition, feedback was found to support the development of students' metacognitive skills. Students became more aware of their thinking processes and learning strategies. They learned to evaluate their own performance and identify areas for improvement. This process encouraged self-reflection and critical thinking. Over time, students developed the ability to regulate their own learning. As a result, they became more independent and self-directed learners.

The results also reveal that feedback contributes to increased student motivation. Positive and constructive feedback encouraged students to put more effort into their learning. Students felt recognized and valued when their work was acknowledged. This emotional support played an important role in maintaining their interest in learning. Feedback also helped reduce anxiety by providing clear expectations. Therefore, it created a supportive and encouraging learning environment.

Furthermore, the study shows that feedback improves the quality of student work. Students who received detailed feedback were able to revise and enhance their assignments. They demonstrated better organization, clarity, and depth in their responses. Feedback provided specific suggestions that guided students in improving their performance. This iterative process of feedback and revision led to higher-quality outcomes. It also reinforced the importance of continuous improvement.

The role of teacher feedback was found to be central in shaping students' learning experiences. Teachers who provided clear, specific, and actionable feedback had a greater impact on student achievement. Students responded positively to feedback that was easy to understand and directly related to their work. Teacher support and guidance were essential in helping students interpret and apply feedback. This highlights the importance of teacher competence in feedback practices. Effective feedback requires both skill and commitment from educators.

In addition to teacher feedback, peer feedback also emerged as a valuable component of the learning process. Students benefited from reviewing and commenting on each other's work. This

practice encouraged collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Peer feedback helped students gain new perspectives on their learning. It also enhanced their critical thinking and evaluative skills. As a result, students became more actively involved in the assessment process.

The study also found that self-assessment plays a significant role in developing learner autonomy. Students who engaged in self-assessment were able to monitor their own progress. They became more responsible for their learning outcomes. Self-assessment encouraged reflection and goal-setting. It also helped students develop confidence in their abilities. This practice supports the development of independent learning skills.

However, some challenges were identified in the implementation of feedback practices. Teachers reported time constraints as a major barrier to providing detailed feedback. Large class sizes made it difficult to give individual attention to each student. Some students also had difficulty understanding or applying the feedback they received. These challenges highlight the need for effective strategies in managing feedback processes. Addressing these issues is essential for maximizing the benefits of feedback.

The use of technology was found to support the delivery of feedback in more efficient ways. Digital platforms allowed teachers to provide feedback quickly and consistently. Students were able to access feedback at any time and review it as needed. Technology also enabled the use of various feedback formats, such as written comments, audio, and video. This flexibility enhanced the effectiveness of feedback. It also made the feedback process more engaging for students.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that feedback is a powerful tool in supporting student academic development within Assessment for Learning. It enhances understanding, promotes reflection, and improves the quality of student work. Feedback also supports motivation, engagement, and learner autonomy. Despite the challenges associated with its implementation, the benefits of effective feedback are substantial. The findings highlight the importance of integrating feedback into everyday teaching practices.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The findings of this study demonstrate that feedback plays a central role in enhancing student academic development within the framework of Assessment for Learning. This result supports the foundational idea that assessment should not merely measure learning but actively contribute to it. Feedback acts as a bridge between teaching and learning by providing students with information that guides their improvement. The increased academic performance observed in this study reflects the effectiveness of feedback-oriented assessment practices. This confirms that formative assessment strategies are essential in modern education. Therefore, integrating feedback into daily instruction is crucial for meaningful learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998).

The improvement in students' understanding of learning objectives can be explained through the alignment between feedback and instructional goals. When students clearly understand what is expected of them, they are better able to direct their efforts. Feedback helps clarify these expectations and provides concrete steps for achieving them. This process enhances transparency in learning and reduces ambiguity. As a result, students become more focused and goal-oriented. This finding aligns with the principles of effective formative assessment (Harlen, 2007).

The role of timely feedback in maintaining student engagement is also significant. The study shows that immediate feedback keeps students actively involved in the learning process. This supports the idea that learning is most effective when feedback is closely linked to the learning activity. Delayed feedback may lose its relevance and impact. Therefore, the timing of feedback is critical in influencing student motivation and participation. This finding is consistent

with research on the importance of feedback timing (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The development of metacognitive skills among students further highlights the importance of feedback. Through continuous feedback, students become more aware of their thinking and learning strategies. This awareness enables them to evaluate their performance and make informed decisions. Metacognitive development is essential for independent learning. The findings suggest that feedback fosters self-reflection and critical thinking. This aligns with theories of self-regulated learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

In terms of motivation, feedback was found to have both cognitive and emotional effects on students. Positive and constructive feedback enhances students' confidence and encourages them to persist in their learning. It creates a supportive environment where students feel valued and motivated. This emotional dimension is often overlooked but plays a crucial role in learning. Motivation is a key factor in academic success. Therefore, feedback should address both performance and emotional needs (Dörnyei, 2001).

The improvement in the quality of student work can be attributed to the iterative nature of feedback. Students who receive detailed feedback have the opportunity to revise and refine their work. This process promotes deeper learning and understanding. It also encourages students to view learning as a continuous process rather than a one-time event. The findings highlight the importance of revision and reflection in learning. This supports the concept of feedback as a tool for continuous improvement (Sadler, 1989).

The role of teachers in providing effective feedback cannot be overstated. The study shows that teacher competence significantly influences the impact of feedback on student learning. Teachers must be able to provide clear, specific, and actionable feedback. They also need to support students in interpreting and applying feedback. This requires professional skills and pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, teacher training in feedback practices is essential. Effective teaching remains central to successful Assessment for Learning (Wiliam, 2011).

Peer feedback also emerged as an important component of the learning process. The findings indicate that peer interaction enhances understanding and critical thinking. Students benefit from receiving different perspectives on their work. Peer feedback encourages collaboration and active participation. It also helps students develop evaluative skills. This aligns with the principles of collaborative learning. Therefore, incorporating peer assessment can strengthen feedback practices (Topping, 1998).

Self-assessment was found to contribute significantly to learner autonomy. Students who engage in self-assessment become more responsible for their learning. They develop the ability to monitor their progress and set learning goals. This promotes independence and self-regulation. The findings suggest that self-assessment should be integrated into classroom practices. It empowers students to take control of their learning. This supports the concept of learner-centered education (Zimmerman, 2002).

Despite its benefits, the implementation of feedback practices presents several challenges. Time constraints and large class sizes limit teachers' ability to provide detailed feedback. Additionally, some students struggle to understand or apply feedback. These challenges highlight the need for effective strategies and support systems. Institutions must provide resources and training to address these issues. Without proper support, the effectiveness of feedback may be reduced (Carless & Boud, 2018).

The use of technology offers promising solutions to some of these challenges. Digital tools enable more efficient and flexible feedback delivery. Teachers can provide feedback in various formats and reach a larger number of students. Technology also allows students to access feedback at their convenience. This enhances the accessibility and usefulness of feedback.

Therefore, integrating technology into feedback practices can improve their effectiveness (Shute, 2008).

The discussion confirms that feedback is a powerful tool for enhancing student learning within Assessment for Learning. It supports academic achievement, motivation, and learner autonomy. The findings highlight the importance of effective feedback design and implementation. While challenges exist, they can be addressed through proper planning and support. This study underscores the need for continuous improvement in assessment practices. Ultimately, feedback should be recognized as a central element of effective teaching and learning.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that feedback plays a fundamental role in enhancing student academic development within the framework of Assessment for Learning. Through continuous, timely, and constructive feedback, students are able to better understand learning objectives, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and improve the quality of their work. Feedback not only supports academic achievement but also fosters essential skills such as critical thinking, self-reflection, and metacognitive awareness. In addition, it contributes to increased motivation and engagement, creating a more supportive and effective learning environment.

However, the effectiveness of feedback depends on several key factors, including teacher competence, the clarity and relevance of feedback, and students' ability to interpret and apply it. Challenges such as time constraints, large class sizes, and varying levels of student readiness must be addressed to maximize the benefits of feedback practices. Therefore, a strategic and well-designed approach to feedback, supported by appropriate use of technology and active student involvement, is essential. Overall, integrating effective feedback into daily instructional practices can significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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