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STUDENTS PERCEPTION ON THE FEEDBACK SUPPLIED BY THE SCHOOL

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Abstract: *The purpose for this study is to identify the existing relationship between elements like the original background, the biological genre, self-esteem level, the perception of self-efficiency and the learning satisfaction of the students on one hand, and their perceptions on the feedback they receive at school, on the other hand. A questionnaire has been carried out on a group sample containing 420 students, aged 15-19 years old (233 girls; 216 boys). This study has been presented to the students as an opportunity of thinking about the importance of the feedback throughout the learning process. The results distinguish the importance of developing a more profound dialogue between teachers and students, a dialogue linked to the understanding of an individual perception on the feedback. An important result of this study is the possible connection between student's preferences for feedback and the learning approaches.*

Keywords: *assessment, feedback, student's perceptions on the feedback, the preferences for the feedback*

1. INTRODUCTION

Formative assessment and formative feedback was constantly addressed in theoretical debates and empirical research, along with the development of the two concepts. Although there is scientific work done for illustrating the impact of formative feedback on learning and achievement, less effort has been directed towards establishing connections between certain characteristics of students and how they perceive the feedback provided by teachers.

Providing an effective and high quality feedback has been identified as a key element in the student's learning process. Receiving the feedback information, as well as the way in which students will respond to it, is determined by a series of elements that also include the perception on the received feedback.

The purpose for this study is to identify the existing relationship between elements like the original background, the biological genre, self-esteem level, the perception of self-efficiency and the learning satisfaction of the students on one hand, and their perceptions on the feedback they receive at school, on the other hand.

In final section, general conclusions are provided and future research ideas are suggested.

2. THE DETERMINERS OF THE STUDENTS PERCEPTION ON THE FEEDBACK SUPPLIED BY THE SCHOOL

2.1 Theoretical backgrounds. Literature founding the present study covers both the concepts of formative assessment and formative feedback. When used properly,

formative assessment provides students with feedback on their learning and provides an opportunity to control their own educational progress, increasing autonomy and self-directing learning. Thus, they become active participants in the learning process by evaluating their efforts in light of the objectives and shared responsibility to act in order to promote learning. Practicing formative assessment, teachers will provide feedback on what students know, understand and can make (Biggs, 1995; Radnor, 1994; Clarke, 1995), and through dialogue with students, teachers can generate opportunities to promote understanding and to enable students in order to better direct their learning efforts (Sadler, 1989, Brown and Knight, 1994).

Valerie Shute analyze a corpus of research on formative feedback defined as information communicated to students in order to change how the student is thinking, or behavior, to improve learning. (V. Shute, 2007). In most theoretical approaches feedback is viewed as a "consequence" of performance (Hattie, Timperly, 2007) as "the information provided by an agent (eg, teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's understanding or performance.

David Nicol and Debra Macfarlane-Dick propose a theoretical model of feedback in which students build their understanding takes messages received feedback from teachers, thus enabling self-learning with categorical effects on motivation and self-esteem. The concept of formative assessment and feedback proposed by David Nicol and Debra Macfarlane-Dick (2006) summarizes the key elements of representative research in the field (Sadler, 1983, 1989, Black and Wiliam, 1998; Yorke, 2003; Torrance and Pryor, 1998). John Hattie and Helen Timperly (2007) propose an explanatory model that identifies the particular properties and circumstances that are effective feedback, along with some thorny issues like timing in providing feedback and possible positive and negative effects. Hattie and Timperly meta-analysis synthesized 12 studies including 196 aimed at using feedback effects in the classroom, the results indicate that some types of feedback are more effective than others.

Any explanatory model concerning feedback should take in account of how students make sense of and use the feedback information. One of Sadler's arguments is that, to be able to compare their own performance with the current standard, and to be able to close the gap, students should already possess some of the evaluative skills of teachers. Their conceptual model of formative assessment and feedback synthesizes research findings on this topic, such as Sadler 1983, 1989, B & W, 1998; Yorke2003; Torrance and Pryor 1998

2.2 Why a study on student perceptions on feedback provided by teachers?.

The provision of effective and high quality feedback has been identified as a key element of quality teaching and this views well supported by meta-analytic studies (Black & William, 1998; Hattie, 1987; Hounsell, 1987; Ramsden, 2003). Nevertheless this element of teaching has been largely neglected in research, and in particular, the experience of students has not been extensively investigated.

For the purpose of this paper Hattie and Timperley's (2007) definition of feedback will be adopted, which they conceptualise as: information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one performance or understanding feedback is thus a "consequence of performance (Hattie & Timperly, 2007).

Some studies have focused at the interaction between preferences and student characteristics, that is personality, cognitive styles, attitudes, learning strategies. Such studies suggest that preferences for feedback in school are related with student's self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy. The relationship between feedback and self/efficacy has been supported both by theory (Bandura, 1986) and experimental studies, and also, some gender differences in perceptions have been found.

Other studies enhance a few differences in student and teacher perceptions. Such studies demonstrate the importance of considering the point of view of both students and teachers, and that teachers have to be more sensitive to student perceptions concerning the feedback.

For the last years the formative evaluation has been reconsidered in Romania, on the educational politic level and also on the



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educational practice level. In these terms, the current study can be an explanatory support but also a possible motivation of the teachers so that they could become more sensitive to the needs of the students to receive feedback and to their perception regarding the feedback received in schools..

2.3 Research questions. The aim of the study is that of exploring the students' perceptions on the formative feedback and of identifying the relations between different demographic and psychological factors on one hand and the perception on the feedback received in schools, on the other hand. The complexity of this issue binds us to acknowledge the impossibility of the ending of this subject exclusively by research which is the object of the current paperwork. In this context, we intend to identify answers to the next questions: In what way the factors such as the original background, the biological genre, the type of the high school which he/ she attends, the level of self esteem, the perceived self-efficiency, the level of school satisfaction influence the perception of the teenagers on the feedback supplied by the educational actors?

2.4.4 Method.

2.4.1 Participants The study included 420 students, between 15 and 19 years old, from different high schools from Bacau. The distribution of the subjects, according to the three independent variables, was the following:

1. the biological genre: 233 boys, 216 girls
2. the level of the attended grade: IX th grade 126 students, X th grade 114 students, XI th grade 120 students, XII th grade 89 students.
3. the original background: 238 students having an urban background, 211 students having a rural background.

4. the type of the high school: theoretic high school 157 students, technical high school 142 students, vocational high school 150 students.

2.4.2 Survey instrument. The perception of the students on the feedback supplied by the teachers has been studied by the help of a questionnaire which covered the following dimensions: the meaning of the feedback (as a motivation of the mark, as the verbal appreciation with the role of orientation / guiding the student in the learning activity, as an expression of the interest of the teacher toward the students, as an instrument of motivation for learning), the importance of the feedback , the type of feedback supplied the most by the teachers, the preference for the feedback of the students.

Both full scale and its subscales were pre-tested on a total of 30 students, all achieved an internal consistency Cronbach Alpha which allowed us to use optimal conditions of validity and reliability.

Pretest-reduced sample

scale tested	Alpha Cronbach	number of subjects
Perception of feedback	0,764	50

Full-sample testing

scale tested	Alpha Cronbach	number of subjects
Perception of feedback	0,793	420

Self-esteem was measured with the questionnaire developed by Toulouse. We chose this tool to capture the level of self-esteem and possibly overcompensation. In addition the instrument has been used successfully in Romania, easily administered. Good internal consistency (> 0.70) allowed us

to use scales in terms of statistical validity and fidelity.

scale tested	Alpha Cronbach
Self-esteem (full scale)	0,756

Questionnaire measuring school satisfaction :

scale tested	Alpha Cronbach
School satisfaction	0,875

Questionnaire to measure perceived self-efficacy:

scale tested	Alpha Cronbach
Self-efficacy	0,716

2.4.3 Results

The analysis and the interpretation of the results has been performed with SPSS 17 for Windows, where we proceed to give the definitions of the variables, the introduction of the data and then their processing by the analysis of the distributions and the setting of the existing relations between the variables, in order to be able then to check the hypothesis of the research. The hypothesis of the study have been confirmed, the statistical results proving the existence of some important differences induced by the independent variables on the dependent variable - the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by the teachers, with the four subscales (the meaning of the feedback, the importance of the feedback supplied by the school, the perception of the frequency of every type of feedback supplied by the teachers, the preference of the students for a type of feedback).

Based on assumptions, the study revealed the following:

Hypothesis 1. (The biological type influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by the teachers) has been confirmed. Thus, there are important differences induced by the biological type variable on the feedback perception variable. The girls understand by the feedback given by the teachers more a stimulus of the motivation for learning and the expression of a special

interest of the teacher toward the activity of the students than a simple justification of the mark. The latter is the meaning perceived more by the boys.

Hypothesis 2 (The original background influences the perception of the students on the feedback provided by their teachers) is confirmed only partially. Thus there are some important differences induced by the original background variable on the feedback perception variable. The students who have an urban background, as compared to those who have a rural background, see the feedback as being more a simple justification of the mark rather than a stimulus of the activity of learning, regarding the importance students with different backgrounds give to the feedback, the answers do not differ much. In the perception of both categories, the feedback proves to be essential for the learning activity. Concerning another dimension of the dependent variable, namely the perception on the frequency of a certain type of feedback , the results were surprising. It seems that the students having a rural background identified the individual feedback (written or verbal) , as being more present in the activity of the teachers than the collective one , underlined especially by the answers of the students with an urban background. With regard to the preference of the students from the two categories (rural, urban) on the feedback, the students with an urban background showed their preference for the individual- verbal feedback supplied by the teachers, and those with a rural background for the collective - written feedback.

Hypothesis 3 (the type of the high school influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by their teachers) has also been confirmed.

The results obtained show that the students who come from high schools with theoretic channel perceive the feedback more as a justification of the mark intended to stimulate the motivation to learn of the students, while their mates who come from high schools with technical or vocational channel, perceive the feedback received from their teachers as a simple verbal appreciation of the activity. Regarding the importance that the students give to the feedback, it seems that the grade



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channel variable does not influence the results in any way, the three samples of subjects registering similar scores. The important differences that existed between the subjects concerning the perception on the frequency of the individual verbal feedback. Thus, the students from the theoretical high schools underlined a greater use of this type of feedback from their teachers. The results that occurred in the study by searching the variable the preference for a certain type of feedback are interesting. Thus, the students from the theoretical high schools prefer their teachers to use in the teaching- learning activity the individual verbal feedback, while their mates from the technical and vocational high schools prefer the collective written feedback, and if possible with predefined answers.

Hypothesis 4 (The level of the class influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by their teachers) has been confirmed. The results underline the fact that there are no important differences induced on the class level with regard to the perception of the feedback as a simple justification of the mark. An interesting result has been obtained on the scale the importance given by the students to the feedback, the highest scores belonging to the Xth grade pupils. Being asked what kind of feedback they prefer to receive, the Xth grade students, for whom the feedback is very important in the learning activity, showed interest for the individual feedback but also for the collective one, regardless of the form of sending it, verbally or in writing. The students from the XIIth grade showed a special interest for the collective feedback, be it written or verbal, with predefined answers, while their mates from the XIth grade showed their preference for the individual feedback without predefined answers from the teacher. The students from the IXth grade did not show

any particular preference for a certain type of feedback in their answers. Regarding the perception on the frequency of different types of feedback used in the educational activity, the IXth grade and the XIIth grade students marked in their answers the written collective feedback as being the most used by their teachers, while their mates from the Xth and XIth grade consider that the verbal collective feedback is more used in classes. According to the answers of the students, the teachers use more often the individual verbal feedback in the IXth grade and the collective verbal one in the Xth grade.

Hypothesis 5 (The self esteem influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by their teachers). The more elevated is the level of self esteem, the more the students perceive the feedback as a justification of the mark or as a verbal appreciation of their activity. The more pleased are the students by their own person, the more they will perceive the feedback as a stimulus of the school motivation. Concerning the importance that students give to the feedback received from their teachers, the more elevated is the level of the self esteem, especially of the emotional and physical self, the bigger the scores of this variable are. By the further study these correlations we notice that the students who have an elevated level of the self esteem with all its components, have the tendency to perceive as being more frequent the feedbacks supplied by the teachers, in comparison to those students, with a low level of self esteem.

Hypothesis 6 (The school satisfaction influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by their teachers) has also been confirmed. There have been made important positive average correlations between the satisfaction toward the evaluation

and the satisfaction toward personal development of the students and the perception of the feedback received in classes as a justification of the mark, but also as an appreciation of the school activity meant to direct the student in learning. The students that got an elevated level of satisfaction with regard to teaching, evaluation, interpersonal relations, development and security, perceive the feedback as an expression of the interest of the teacher toward his students. Regarding the importance given to the feedback, the students who are satisfied with the process of evaluation performed by the teachers but also with the conditions which help the personal development are those who got the highest scores in this dimension. According to the statistic results, the verbal individual feedback is perceived as being the most used in class, especially by the students with high scores in the curriculum satisfaction variable. The feedback between the students seems to be used more among students satisfied with the evaluation process but also with the interpersonal relations between mates. The preference for the feedback correlates positively with the school satisfaction, so that the students who prefer the individual feedback are satisfied with the curriculum and with the evaluation process, those who prefer collective feedback got higher scores in the teaching, evaluation and personal development satisfaction, and those who prefer verbal feedback are very satisfied with the security that the education institution provides.

Hypothesis 7 (*The level of self-efficiency perceived influences the perception of the students on the feedback supplied by their teachers*) has been confirmed. The more elevated the level of academic self- efficiency is, the more tempted are the students to perceive the feedback supplied by the teachers as a justification of their mark, as a verbal appreciation meant to direct their learning, as a stimulus of the school motivation. The level of academic self- efficiency does not influence the importance given to the feedback, for all the three lots the feedback being very important. The students with an elevated level of academic self- efficiency perceive as being very frequently used in class the collective verbal feedback.

3. CONCLUSIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study has been presented to the students as an opportunity of thinking about the importance of the feedback throughout the learning process.

The results distinguish the importance of developing a more profound dialogue between teachers and students, a dialogue linked to the understanding of an individual perception on the feedback. The way in which students perceive and approach the learning context influences their performances. An important result of this study is the possible connection between student's preferences for feedback and the learning approaches. This might evolve in a relevant theme for a further development of a study in this area.

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