



FEEDBACK AND CRITICISM

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13954499>

Abstract: As a teacher, you will come across individuals whom you have to individually stimulate and to whom you must give feedback about their behaviour and learning performance. You should do this from your own subjective viewpoint and describe your own perceptions and emotional reactions. This, and only this, is called feedback. In addition, if you want to initiate a change or need to set limits, then you are exercising criticism. Criticism should not be one-sided and negative, but should show what can be or has to be improved.

Key words: feedback, subjective viewpoint, exercising criticism, one-side, performance criteria

Providing iterative feedback is preferable as this provides the recipients the opportunity to improve before participating in the next activity and before a formal evaluation. Effective feedback is achieved by establishing a positive interpersonal relationship between the person(s) providing feedback and the recipient(s) as this creates an environment that fosters development.[1]

In this standard, performance is measured in conjunction with the pre-determined performance criteria. The grades are set while preparing the test. The grades are often given in this context, using a table or formula. If, in our previous example, we had specified that, out of a maximum of 70 possible marks, at least 60% must be achieved in order to pass the exam, then Student A would have failed.

Once the grades have been defined, plan the test feedback process and the continuation of the teaching structure. Enter the base value, inform the students about the scoring pattern and ask the students to read their feedback and to report any confusion or request clarification. Encourage a factual discussion atmosphere. Inconsistencies such as simple arithmetic errors can be ignored. If there are many queries and complaints regarding a particular task, it is advisable to calm the class and review the work in peace. In such a case you also have the opportunity to discuss the task with the class and to compare your own solutions with those of the students.

Step 1: Feedback

Feedback means, "to sense one's own emotional reactions to the behaviour of the partner and to convey it to him/her in a descriptive, non-pointing and perceivable manner, so that the partner has the possibility to correct his/her behaviour using the emotional experience." (Dorsch, p.216)

Although this non-pointing feedback is of central importance for the learning culture, not many students (or teachers) are good at it. Assessment and interpretation are hardly ever left out and feedback very often consists of assigning mistakes and blaming others. Most importantly, lead with a good example and explain time and again what feedback is all about.

Feedback...

- is descriptive, not judgmental (that is: "I see ...", "I hear ...", "I feel ...").
- relates to specific, current events, not general impressions.
- should relate to behaviour that can really be changed, should be restricted to a few observations.

- should consider the need for security.

Whoever accepts feedback...

- listens attentively.
- allows his/her counterpart to finish talking.
- checks by asking whether he/she has understood correctly.
- contemplates what he/she has heard.
- conveys how he/she has taken whatever was said and what he/she will possibly do with it.

Step 2: Criticism

It is not always adequate to give feedback without assessment. The person who is learning will wish to know what his/her weaknesses are. If you criticise, you should ensure an environment of appreciation, take enough time and pay a lot of attention to the person being criticised. Students do not always want to hear the truth, even if the teacher takes time to talk about poor performances or intolerable behaviour. Hence, prepare for the meeting and fix a time with the student during which you will not be disturbed as far as possible. Follow these three rules to ensure that criticism does not hurt:

While criticising, start with the positive things or with a self-assessment.

First, tell the student what was okay. The effort you put in to search for the positive things pays off emotionally. Thus, you do not go to the meeting charged with negative emotions. It is even more helpful if you can get the students to take a self-assessment first. You will be amazed about how self-critically people assess themselves if they do not have reproaches heaped upon them.

For the negative things, select specific and clear words instead of euphemisms.

Just tell it how it is. Be objective and describe the facts. Avoid bringing character qualities or personal feelings into play. But you need to show that you understand and empathise with the fact that the student is in a difficult situation (For example: "I can understand that you might not want to take note of this, but I have to tell you about it so that you can prepare properly for the exam."). Then ask the student how it all happened. Give him/her time to provide reasons and justifications.

Look at the future instead of the past

Do not remain stuck in the past. Focus your attention on what should happen from now on. How should the event that was criticised be avoided in the future? What does the student need to do to improve his/her performance? Look for solutions jointly with the student but do not force your own solutions on him/her.

Step 3: Constructive feedback

There is an important part of communication that is often not given enough attention: confirmation or feedback from the receiver. These are often non-verbal signals like nodding, yawning, laughing, frowning or making little noises like "mm," "yeah," or "uh- huh," which will be perceived as criticism or praise by the counterpart.

Those who are aware of this keep such responses under control and internally separate feedback from criticism. Depending on this, one decides on a combination of giving feedback, active listening and criticising.

If we want to influence the behaviour of others, we often tell them how they should behave and what they did incorrectly, even though we know that this does not actually help. Instead of this, formulate an I-message.

Non-constructive feedback: You-messages

You tell the students what you think of them or what they did incorrectly. You interpret their actions: "You are deviating from the topic," "You will not be prepared well enough for the exam," or "I think you were too nervous there."

By using You-messages, there is a risk of undermining the willingness of the students to learn and their ability to learn, because You-messages... give rise to feelings of guilt, are perceived as reproach, disparagement, criticism, rejection, give the impression of disregarding the other, often provoke retaliatory action,

can hurt the self-respect of the receiver, can give rise to resistance against change, are often perceived as penalising.

Hidden You-messages:

You-statements are disguised to appear less confrontational. The disguise in this case lies in the "We" and "One" phrasing. "We should put in more effort ..." is the disguised form of "You could put in more effort," "One could do with some ventilation here" elegantly disguises an offensive statement like "You forgot to open the window during the break."

Constructive feedback: I-messages

In the learning situation, where the students are dependent on the teacher to a certain extent, it is important that anger, disappointment, discontent and other feelings are communicated in the form of I-messages.[2]

They tell the students what you are feeling and what you have perceived: "I see that the presentation has taken longer than planned, so I'm now a bit unsure about how to continue"; "I hear a question, which, in my opinion, does not fit into the present topic"; "Please use the technical terms that we have previously defined - then we will be talking about the same thing."

I-messages:

- describe the situation, feelings and mental state of the sender.
- do not contain any negative judgment of the other person.
- do not hurt the relationship.
- facilitate a willingness to change oneself.
- indicate the basic attitude of "I'm okay - You're okay."

I-messages do not work:

- if the addressee has a different value system.
- if he/she has high requirements.
- if one of the two is not interested in a good relationship.
- if there is a clash of opinions.

Constructive feedback: Active listening

The classroom situation definitely involves elements of active listening as well. This form of feedback is particularly important in one-to-one discussions.

The most important characteristics of active listening are:

- to be there for the other person for a while.
- to be really interested in the other person.
- to be able to keep quiet.
- to adapt oneself to the other person.
- to be attentive.
- to empathise with the other person.
- dealing with whatever one comes up against.
- to accept things that are unfamiliar and strange.
- to accept the other person as he/she is, not wanting to change the person.
- to be yourself.
- not taking responsibility for the other person's problems or wanting to solve them.

The main prerequisites of active listening are that:

- Active listening needs time.

If you are under time pressure and have to constantly look at the clock, then it is not the right time for it.

- Active listening requires inner willingness.

If you are preoccupied with other things, the time is not right. If you have already formed a fixed opinion about the other party, you cannot be open to what he/she wants to say.

- You should want to listen.

It may be that you do not want to listen to what the other person is saying at this point. In that case, it is better to let him/her know about it.[3]

Conclusion

In the classroom, you will always have to deal with different individuals who significantly differ in terms of personality, learning style and prior knowledge. In order to deal with these individuals, it makes sense to examine the different learning styles. Specific didactical conclusions derived from them make it easier for the teacher to design a course to match these different styles and to expand his/her own repertoire. Students also want to be heard, understood and assessed personally. Appreciative communication, motivation, listening, giving feedback and criticising are therefore parts of the behavioural repertoire of a professional teacher.

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