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"WAS IT GOOD ENOUGH?": THE ACTUAL AND EXPECTED PERSPECTIVE ON FEEDBACK IN UNDERGRADUATE FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Sylvia Mustika Sari[1*], Iis Inayati[2], Gandes Retno Rahayu[3]

[1]Department of Medical Education, Faculty of Medicine Universitas Jenderal A.Yani, Cimahi – INDONESIA
[2]Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine Universitas Jenderal A.Yani, Cimahi – INDONESIA
[3]Medical Education and Bioethics Department, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta – INDONESIA

ABSTRACT

Background: In the undergraduate setting, formative assessment is mainly done during learning activities. Feedback is the essential part of formative assessment to facilitate self-regulation learning. This concept needs to consider by both sides, teacher and students. This study explores the undergraduate students' and teachers' perspectives on actual and expected feedback in formative assessment.

Methods: We conducted a qualitative with a phenomenology approach. Data collection was saturated in seven FGDs (N=56) from undergraduate students and twelve in-depth interviews with teachers. The transcribed data from teachers and students were coded and categorized separately. Finally, we combined the categories from teachers and students to interpret the subthemes and themes.

Results: We found students' perceived the actual feedback as the 'daily score', teachers' explanation, and influenced by teachers' characters. The expected feedback from students represents the need for 'room' to speak, be more objective, and use "kind" language. Meanwhile, teachers perceived feedback as the obligation to fill the score, give direction about learning goals and describe students' attitudes. Teachers expect students to be more active in feedback seeking and standardization of feedback content. Therefore, we identified the themes representing 'from the actual to expected' feedback experience in formative assessment, such as (1) From 'daily score' to the objective description of performance; (2) From teachers' explanation to the student's room to speak; (3) From teachers' authority to teachers' beneficence.

Conclusion: Our study showed the teachers' and students' perceptions of actual and expected feedback experiences. The results describe the awareness of a better feedback form in formative assessment. Further studies can explore more participatory research to lead to a collaborative and bidirectional feedback approach.

Keywords: assessment, formative, undergraduate, qualitative

*corresponding author, contact: sylvia.mustikasari@lecture.unjani.ac.id

PRACTICE POINTS

- The awareness of good criteria of feedback from student and teacher contribute to the paradigm change into bidirectional and collaborative feedback.
- The teacher-centered approach influences the feedback delivery and feedback-seeking behaviour in formative assessment.
- The teachers' beneficence in feedback delivery should be a synergy with students' learning skills improvement and actively seeking for feedback.

INTRODUCTION

The formative assessment is the continual assessment during learning activities that facilitate students' learning improvement through feedback.[1] In undergraduate settings, formative assessment is often done in various learning activities, such as lectures, tutorial sessions, or clinical skills learning.[1,2] The formative assessment does not focus on the pass or fail judgment but allows students to reflect on weakness as the fundamental aspect of their improvement. In this way, formative assessment has a significant role in preparing students to face the summative assessment.[1,3] The excellent quality of formative assessment will shape students' performance in learning and academic achievement.[3]

Following the formative assessment goals, many scholarly articles have proven feedback as the 'driving force' in learner improvement.[4] The feedback changes learner behavior related to the self-regulatory learning capability.[4,5] Despite its positive impact, studies also showed adverse feedback effects, such as demotivation, which could become a learning improvement obstacle.[6] These problems encourage more studies to focus on the feedback experience, such as the learner-teacher relationship and their interactions that influenced the impact of feedback.[5,6]

Studies on feedback continue to shape its paradigm change.[4-6] In the early 2000s, feedback was primarily defined as one-way information about students' performance.[4,6] The framework on feedback describe the content of feedback on the teachers' side, such as the famous feed-up, feedback; and feed-forward from Hattie and Timperley.[7] The approach of feedback delivery brings teachers' awareness to facilitate students' reflection. First, teachers should objectively describe students' achievements by appreciating and correcting their mistakes. Secondly, the feedback should continue with the planning or improving future learning.[4,7] Recently, studies on feedback have begun to emphasize the role of the teacher-learner relationship that led to the collaborative and bidirectional feedback approach.[5,8]

As studies grow, feedback is closely related to the socio-constructivist approach.[5,8] The social experience of feedback, including the teacher-learner relationship and the feedback conversation, were considered to construct students' knowledge.[8] Due to its social interactions, many studies showed the contextual or cultural factors related to the feedback experience.[8-10] The collegial relationship in Western countries was a positive factor that facilitated the bidirectional feedback conversation.[12] Despite this, the hierarchies within East culture tend to inhibit collaborative dialog in feedback.[12,13]

Feedback in formative assessment during undergraduate education is the best way for students to practice self-regulation learning skills.[4,7,8,10] However, studies show the challenges in feedback experience, such as the teacher-learner relationship and actual feedback experience.[6,8,12] This underlies the researchers to explore the perspective of undergraduate students and teachers about their existing and expected feedback experience during formative assessment.

METHODS

Study Design

We used the qualitative inquiry phenomenological approach to explore the actual feedback experience and the perspective about expected feedback in

formative assessment from teachers and students at the undergraduate level. This approach explored the phenomenon that was experienced in everyday life by participants.[14,15]

According to the aims of our study, we identified guiding questions for students, such as: *"How was your feedback experience in the formative assessment?"*; *"How did you feel about it?"*; *"How did the feedback mean for you?"*; *"Do you think your feedback experience met your expectation? Please explain your answer"*. For the teachers' interview, we used the similar leading question in the teaching context, such as: *"How was your experience in providing feedback for students during the formative assessment?"*; *"How did the feedback mean for your teaching activities?"*; *"What is your expectation in providing feedback during the formative assessment?"*.

Subjects and Data Collection

We purposely recruit students in the third year of undergraduate education and teachers with more than five years of teaching experience at the undergraduate level. The data was collected using the semi-structural interview method through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) for students and in-depth interviews for undergraduate teachers.[15]

Ethical Consideration

The study was approved by Jenderal Achmad Yani University Institutional Review Board Number 018/ UM1.03/2020. We provide informed consent and anonymous analysis based on ethical considerations.

Data Analysis

We used the descriptive-phenomenology analysis approach to describe the students' and teachers' experiences in formative assessment.[14] In this study, we explore "what and how" students and teachers experienced feedback during formative assessment and describe *"was the feedback good enough?"* based on exploring their experience compared with their expectations.

According to the principles of qualitative inquiry, the analysis process was done continually with data collection.[14] After each data collection, the results were transcribed and analyzed the preliminary categorizes by each author (SM and II). The interview data were member-checked by five students and two teachers. Two authors annually discuss the agreement of categories and decide the themes that emerged from the interview data. Once the authors found no new categories, the data was saturated. The data saturated in seven FGDs of students and eight in-depth interviews with teachers. Finally, the authors construct the central themes that represent the actual and expected perspectives about feedback from undergraduate students and teachers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a result of our undergraduate students and teachers' interviews, we identified the themes 'from the actual to expected' feedback experience in formative assessment, described below.

From 'Daily Score' to An Objective Description of Performance

Subtheme 1. Feedback as a "daily score"

From students' point of view, we found feedback define as the annual score in their daily learning activities. In line with students' perspectives, teachers' perceived the feedback delivery experience as their obligation the fill the scoring rubric for students' performance during learning activities. The quotations from the student and teacher are as follows:

> " They give feedback in our daily score.. the range about 0-1-2.." (Student FGD5_4)

> "We have to decide; if they are active in discussion, then we put a good mark." (Teacher_7)

During undergraduate education, the formative assessment with direct feedback is usually done during learning activities such as interactive lectures, tutorials, or clinical skills laboratory. In some works of literature, formative assessment, also known as Test-Enhanced Learning (TEL), is defined as repeated measurement during the learning process.[16,17] Hence, feedback was analogically defined as the score in each measurement. Our results showed that students and teachers perceived feedback in the formative assessment quantified as the 'daily score'. This phenomenon is possibly caused by the formative

assessment regulation that facilitates the marks of students' performance in each learning activity.[18]

Subtheme 2. A clear description of students' performance

As we dept our exploration into students' expectations, we found students need more clarification behind the score in their performance. Students expect direct feedback to describe their 'good or bad' score. Strengthening these themes, we found that teachers expect guidance on their feedback content to tell the students' achievement on learning goals and evaluate students' attitudes.

The quotations from the student and teacher are as follows:

> *"I think there should be a standardization or guide for us to give feedback.." (Teacher_3)*
>
> *"Sometimes we confused whether we bad or good enough, and does the score really represent us.." (Student FGD5_4)*

feedback description from the teacher will lead to students' reflection as the essential step in their learning improvement.[4,7]

From Teachers' Explanations to the Student's Room to Speak

Subtheme 3. Teachers' explanation

Our results showed agreement from both sides (student and teacher) in describing experienced feedback on the formative assessment as a one-way explanation from the teacher. We also found that the feedback content mainly represents the learning materials or the advice about students' attitudes. The quotations from students are as follows:

> *"Mostly there was a 'feedback session', at the end of our discussion, teacher explain the right answer.." (Student_FGD3_5)*
>
> *"well sometimes it's just like a lecture session in a small class" (Student_FGD1_2)*
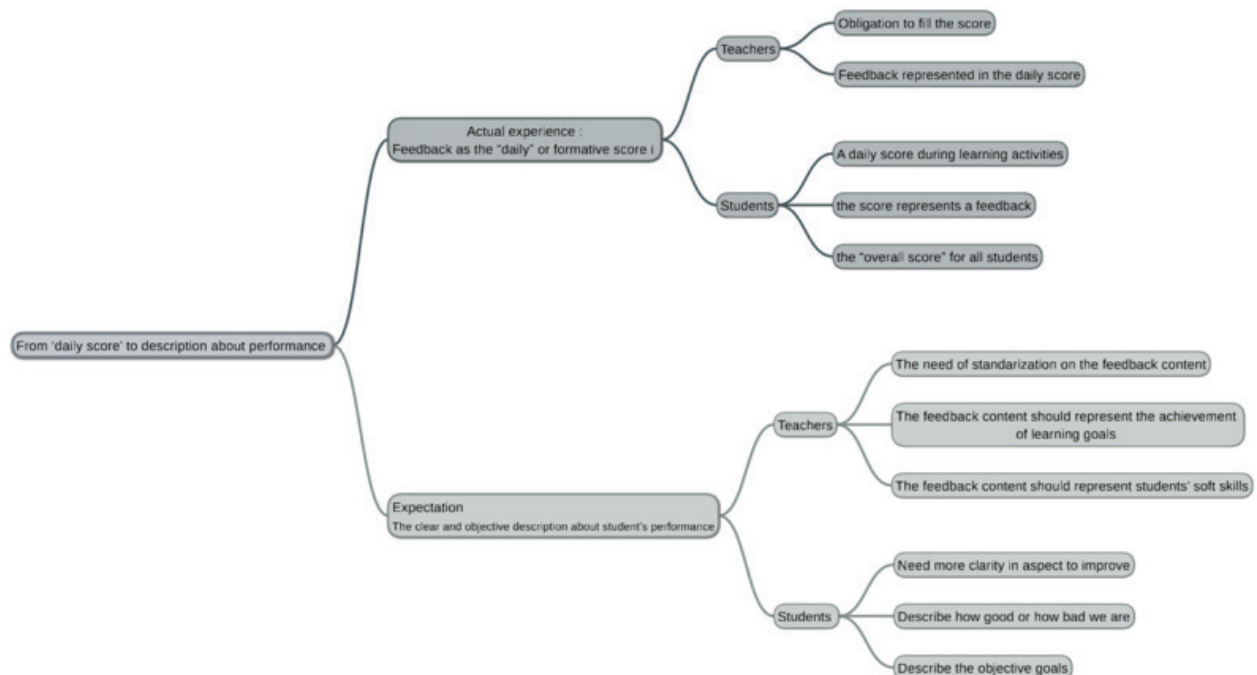

Figure 1. The Schematic Analysis Results on 1st Theme

Our first themes describe the awareness of students and teachers for better quality feedback. As already known, the feedback goal is to facilitate students' reflection. In this way, the clearer and more objective

Therefore, we interpreted the experienced feedback in formative assessment as representing the teacher-centered approach that led to the unidirectional feedback. These results showed one of the challenges

in the paradigm change into bidirectional and collaborative feedback.[8,9] The context of hierarchy culture in this research influence the power construction during feedback experience, as noted in previous studies.[10,12]

Subtheme 4. Students' room to speak

Our second theme represents the awareness of the feedback dialogue. The lack of a dialogue form of feedback describes the students' quotations such as "we need room to speak" (FGD6_5). From the teachers' point of view, we found the expectation of a more active engagement from students during the feedback session. The quotation from the teacher is as follows:

> "It happens a lot, when I ask students to answer, or I ask them to discuss anything from my explanation, they all silent..." (Teacher_8)

to engage more, the teacher also expects a similar thought. This phenomenon is in line with Claramita et al., which stated that Indonesian students want a partnership dialogue with their seniors.[19]

From Teachers' Authority To Teachers' Beneficence

Subtheme 5. Teachers' authority

We found students perceived the variation in their feedback experience. Despite the friendly teachers, the authority from teachers showed more in the negative experience, such as teachers' stern faces or a higher intonation during feedback. From the teachers' point of view, we found their authority came from their attention to a 'silent student' or the wrong answer from the student. The quotations from the teacher and student are as follows:
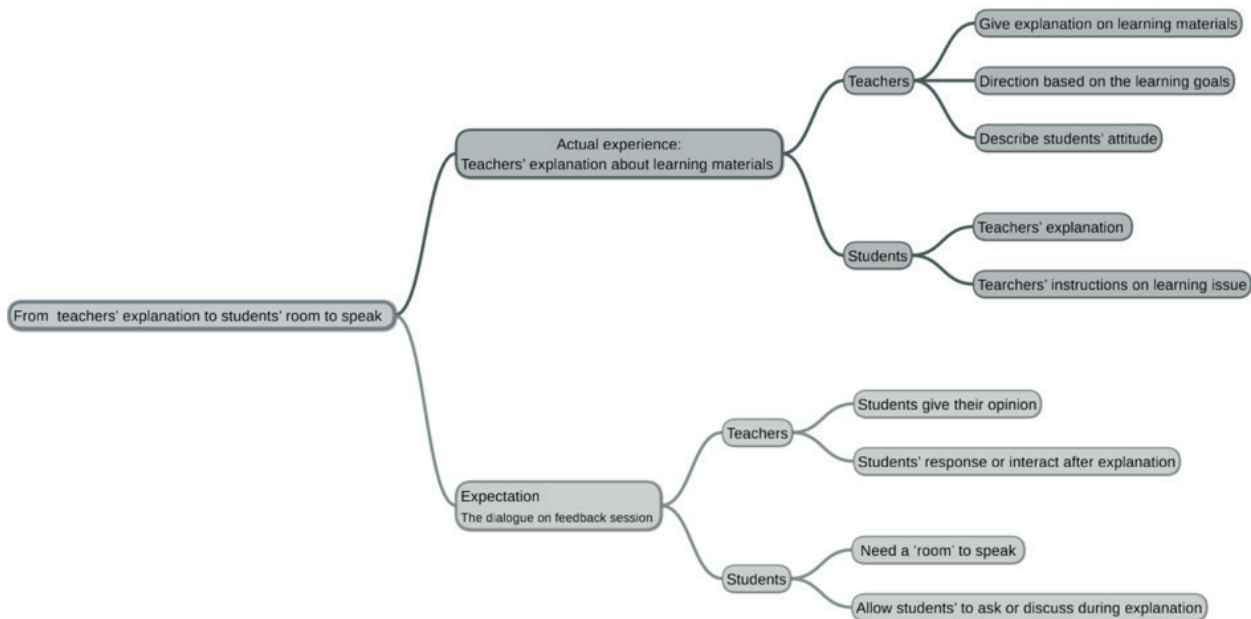

Figure 2. The Schematic Analysis Results on 2nd Theme

This result aligns with the awareness of paradigm change in feedback definition as a form of dialogue.[8,9] However, previous studies showed the inhibiting factors on feedback dialogue, such as a power disparity or the hierarchy culture.[12] The experience on feedback in our study showed the influence of power distance between teacher and student during feedback dialogue. Even though we found the students expect

> "They sometimes need a little 'touch' to finally speak up or get the right answer.." (Teacher_6)
>
> "I feel like a roller coaster.. it really depends on the teachers' character." (Student FGD1_5)
>
> "Sometimes in feedback session our teachers get mad, maybe the answer is wrong, or we had no attention.." (Student FGD6_4)
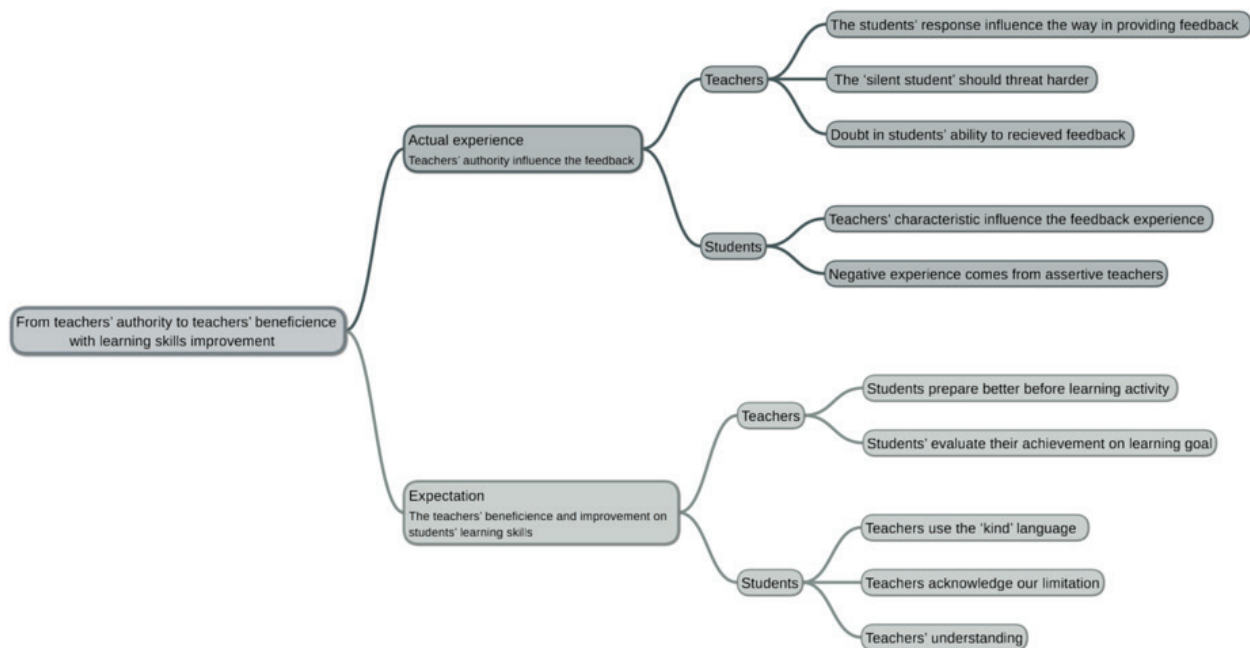
Figure 3. The Schematic Analysis Results on 3rd Theme

<u>Subthemes 6. Teachers' beneficence and students' learning improvement</u>

In interpreting this theme, we divide the students' and teachers' expectations related to their experience in teachers' authority and negative feedback experience. Students highlighted the expectation of teachers' beneficence, such as using polite language and showing their understanding. From teachers' point of view, their expectations are better preparation and student learning skills improvement.

> *"It will be much better if they use the 'kind' language.. or maybe shows a little support for us as a learner" (Student FGD6_4)*

> *"They need to prepare more, so they have some prior knowledge before tutorials." (Teacher_1)*

Our third themes describe the problem with the awareness of possible solutions to the negative feedback experience. We identified the teaching authority that sometimes led to the negative experience in feedback. Studies showed this problem negatively impacts students' motivation and reflection.[4,6] Based on the identified problem, the students expect the teachers' beneficence. On

the other hand, the teachers hope students have better learning preparation. Teachers' beneficence is needed to perform conduciveness in feedback dialogue. In this way, students can identify the aspect to improve their learning. [5,8,20]

As recent studies recommended, our study identified crucial aspects in the feedback paradigm change -from one-way information to collaborative feedback.[5,8-11] First, we explored the actual feedback experience as the starting point of change. Secondly, we identified the awareness of change by analyzing the expectation of the feedback experience. Third, we interpreted the descriptive comparison of actual and expected feedback to identify the critical points of feedback paradigm transition. Lastly, we believe the paradigm change needs a principle that takes two to tango.[8,20] In this way, we collaborate the students' and teachers' perceptions in the theme interpretation. Despite our strength in identifying the crucial aspect for a paradigm change in feedback, we reflect that our limitations, such as a single institution exploration, will not be easily generalized. However, we have been discussing our findings with the recent studies to enrich our results.

CONCLUSION

Our studies showed three central themes representing the 'actual to expected' feedback experience in the undergraduate formative assessment. We found teachers and students perceived the need to change from score-minded to a more explicit and objective description, from teachers' explanation to a student's room to speak, and from teachers' authority to the teachers' beneficence in providing feedback. These themes potentially become the base to improve feedback quality, significantly facilitating bidirectional and collaborative feedback.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results, we recommend the paradigm change in feedback should consider the interventions from both sides. Teachers should aware of students' need, vice versa. We also recommend that further studies will enrich the method of participatory action research in both sides (teacher-student) to lead the feedback paradigm change in the future.

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COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no competing interests related to the study

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Sylvia Mustika Sari – literature search, data collection, data analysis, leading the manuscript writing

Iis Inayati – data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing

Gandes Retno Rahayu – data analysis and manuscript writing

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