



A Synopsis of *The Power of Feedback*

We began this study of feedback by borrowing Grant Wiggin’s definition; feedback is “information about how we are doing in our efforts to reach a goal.” What is the purpose of this information regarding our efforts, then? In their widely-cited article, *The Power of Feedback*, John Hattie and Helen Timperley (2007) classify the purpose of feedback as “reducing the discrepancies between current understandings/performance and a desired goal” (p.86). Therefore, not only does feedback tell us how we are doing toward a goal, but should additionally provide information about what is needed in order to meet it.

This purpose is why our students crave feedback regularly. Typically, a student has decided to pursue their education in order to reduce a discrepancy, whether that be a discrepancy in knowledge, in their career, or in a personal goal. By enrolling in an academic program, they are seeking instruction and guidance in reaching those goals.

Student Strategies

According to Hattie and Timperley, without feedback from their instructors, students will execute their own strategies to reduce these discrepancies. Through research and the collection of extensive data, they discovered two different strategies that students will choose between.

1. Students, most likely due to their disposition, support system and/or intrinsic motivation, could choose to: **increase their effort and employ more effective strategies**, or:
2. Students, because of their past experiences, surroundings and/or lack of self-efficacy, could choose to: **abandon, blur or lower their goals**.

Both of these options can result in the reduction of discrepancies. However, the latter results in students abandoning their original goals and settling for lower and less personal goals.

Instructor Strategies

In order to ensure that students increase their effort consistently and effectively, instructors must challenge themselves to:

1. **Provide appropriate, challenging and specific goals.**
2. **Assist students to reach them through the sharing of effective learning strategies and feedback.**

In our content-enhanced courses, subject matter experts and our instructional design team have designed “appropriate, challenging, and specific goals.” As an instructor, your role is to reinforce these goals and assist students to reach them through the sharing of effective learning strategies and feedback (Hattie and Timperley, 2007, p. 87).

A Model of Feedback

The importance of feedback is clear. We must focus then on ensuring the feedback we are providing is effective. Hattie and Timperley introduce three questions that effective feedback consistently answers.

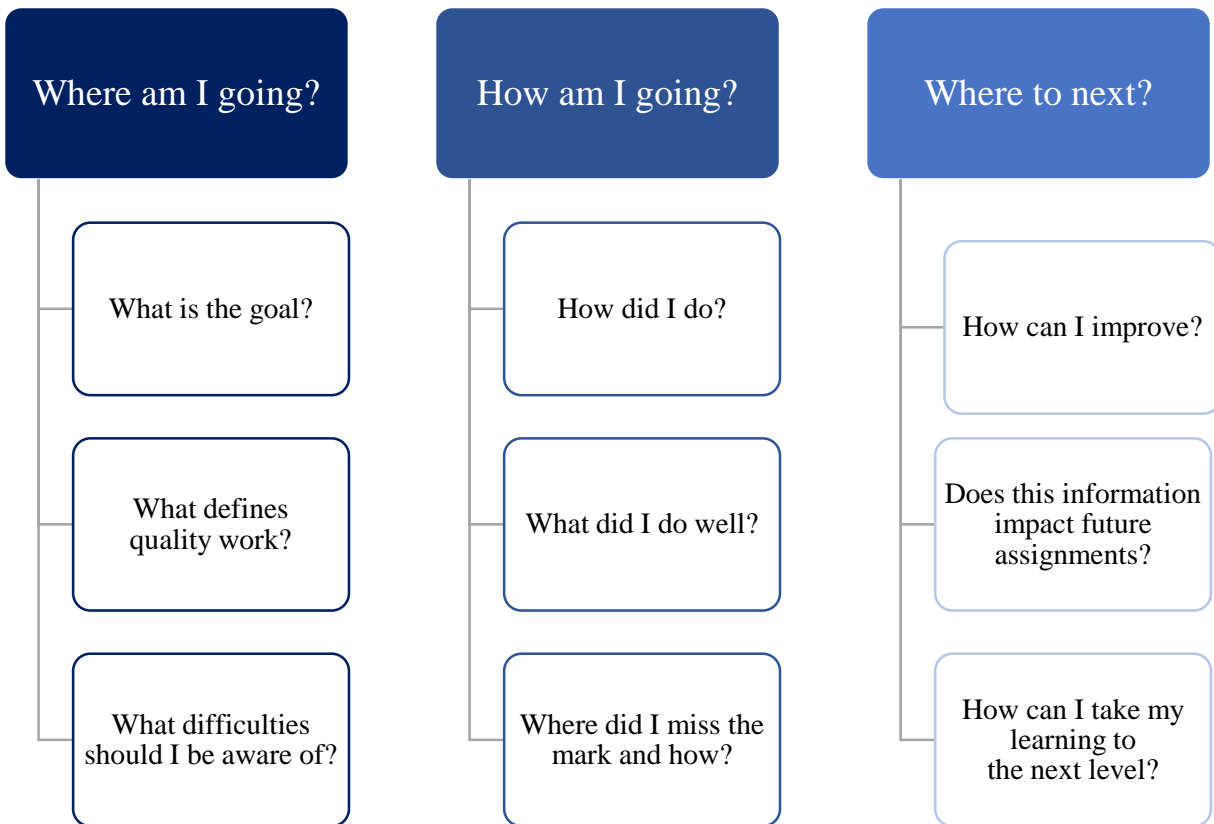
1. Where am I going?

2. How am I going?

3. Where to next?

1. Instructors have the ability to increase students’ efforts by clarifying the intended goal.
2. By providing consistent and individualized feedback that addresses errors or discrepancies, instructors can help students develop their own error detection skills and self-regulation strategies.
3. Feedback that is forward-moving, helps students plan and develop strategies toward meeting their academic goals and extending their learning.

Each of these questions can help bring more awareness to the information you are sharing with your students, directing your feedback effectively. You can break these questions down even further with smaller and more direct questions. Aligned with the three questions above, below are examples of questions that students often search for answers to, when they seek an instructor’s direct guidance and feedback (Hattie and Timperley, 2007, p. 87).



Feedback is not about feeding answers. Providing answers to the above questions, demonstrates your effort to help students ultimately become self-directed and inter-dependent lifelong learners.

Although an instructor may come across a student who, when faced with a discrepancy, would choose to “abandon, blur or lower their goals”, the instructor has the opportunity to develop and build on this student’s abilities, motivation, and direction, through the learning environment they establish and the feedback they provide.

SNHU Applied

Instructors can help students make personal and relevant connections to the course outcomes, while helping them become aware of the tools and strategies available to assist them in reaching these learning objectives.

Feedback is dynamic information that guides students toward opportunities of improvement. It is a source of motivation and support. Consider using this model as a guide in providing your students with supportive, individualized, detailed and relevant feedback.

References

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