

Investigating Students' Perceptions of Effective Feedback Strategies that Support Their Learning

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Abstract: Feedback is widely recognized as one of the most powerful influences on student learning and academic achievement. However, the effectiveness of feedback depends not only on the techniques employed by teachers but also on students' perceptions, interpretations, and utilization of the feedback provided. This qualitative study investigated students' perceptions of effective classroom feedback strategies among Form Three students in a Kenyan high school and freshman university students in the United States. Guided by the theory of co-generative dialogues, the study explored the feedback strategies commonly experienced by learners and examined how students perceive and respond to various forms of classroom feedback. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, nominal group discussions, document analysis, and questionnaire notecards. Findings revealed that students generally preferred immediate and explicit feedback, although feedback that encouraged learners to generate their own corrections produced deeper learning outcomes. Trust and supportive classroom relationships emerged as essential conditions for effective feedback. Differences were observed between secondary and university students regarding preferences for teacher and peer feedback. The study recommends that teachers adopt learner-centered feedback approaches and that teacher education programs integrate feedback literacy into professional preparation.

Keywords: Feedback, student perceptions, classroom assessment, co-generative dialogue, qualitative research, feedback literacy.

1. Introduction

Feedback occupies a central position in the teaching and learning process. Educational researchers have consistently identified feedback as one of the most influential factors affecting student achievement and learning outcomes. Effective feedback assists learners in identifying strengths, recognizing areas requiring improvement, and developing strategies for future learning.

Fyfe (2016) demonstrated that feedback provided on academic tasks positively influences student performance and engagement. Similarly, Landers and Reinholz (2015) found that meaningful feedback contributes significantly to learners' understanding and achievement. Despite the recognized importance of feedback, teachers employ diverse feedback strategies influenced largely by their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Williams and Burden (2012) argue that teachers' beliefs strongly influence classroom practices. These beliefs shape decisions regarding the timing, nature, and delivery of feedback. Conversely, students enter learning environments with preexisting perceptions, expectations, and attitudes toward learning and assessment (Schulz, 2011).

When teachers' feedback practices differ substantially from students' expectations and preferences, learning may be negatively affected. Students may misunderstand feedback, ignore it, or perceive it as discouraging. Therefore, feedback effectiveness depends not merely on its delivery but on students' ability to understand, relate to, and utilize it.

This study investigates students' perceptions of effective feedback strategies among secondary school and university students. Understanding learner perspectives can contribute to the development of feedback practices that support meaningful learning.

A. Problem Statement

Providing students with feedback positively impacts learning and achievement (Fyfe, 2016; Landers & Reinholz, 2015). However, numerous feedback strategies exist, and teachers often select these strategies based on personal beliefs and instructional philosophies.

Teacher beliefs significantly influence classroom practices and instructional decisions (Williams & Burden, 2012). At the same time, learners enter classrooms with particular expectations, beliefs, and attitudes concerning teaching and feedback (Schulz, 2011).

A mismatch between teachers' beliefs and students' perceptions may negatively affect motivation, teacher-student relationships, and academic achievement. Feedback becomes effective only when students understand it, value it, and apply it to improve their learning.

Consequently, there is a need to investigate students' perceptions regarding effective feedback strategies in order to align classroom practices with learner needs.

B. Research Questions

1. What common feedback strategies do students receive in classrooms?
2. How do students perceive classroom feedback strategies?

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C. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify common feedback strategies used in classrooms.
2. To examine students' perceptions of effective feedback practices.
3. To compare perceptions among secondary and university students.
4. To determine implications for classroom instruction and teacher education.

D. Significance of the Study

The study contributes to scholarship on feedback practices by foregrounding student perspectives. Findings may assist teachers in selecting appropriate feedback strategies, guide teacher education programs, and inform professional development initiatives.

2. Literature Review

Feedback has increasingly become one of the most extensively researched areas in educational assessment and classroom instruction. Educational scholars consistently identify feedback as among the most powerful influences on student achievement, motivation, and academic performance. However, while teachers often regard feedback as a straightforward instructional practice, students may perceive and interpret feedback differently. Consequently, the effectiveness of feedback depends not only on what teachers provide but also on how learners understand, value, and use the information they receive.

This review examines theoretical and empirical studies concerning feedback and learning, teacher beliefs, student perceptions, timing of feedback, explicit and implicit feedback, peer feedback, feedback literacy, trust in classroom relationships, and feedback across educational levels.

A. Conceptualizing Feedback

Feedback generally refers to information communicated to learners concerning their performance with the intention of improving future learning. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), feedback is information provided by an agent, such as a teacher, peer, or self, regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding. Effective feedback reduces the discrepancy between current performance and desired goals.

Sadler (1989) argues that effective feedback enables students to compare their current performance with expected standards and to take action to close the gap between the two. Similarly, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) view feedback as an essential component of self-regulated learning because it helps learners monitor progress and make necessary adjustments.

Historically, feedback was understood largely from a behaviorist perspective as reinforcement that strengthened desirable behaviors and discouraged undesirable ones. Contemporary perspectives, however, emphasize feedback as a social and dialogic process involving interaction between teachers and learners (Carless, 2015). Consequently, feedback is no longer viewed merely as information transmitted from teacher to student but rather as a collaborative process in which

learners actively interpret and apply information.

B. Theoretical Perspectives on Feedback

1) Behaviorist Perspectives

Behaviorist learning theories conceptualized feedback as reinforcement. According to Skinner (1958), immediate reinforcement strengthens desired behaviors and increases the likelihood of repeated performance. Within this perspective, positive responses are rewarded while incorrect responses receive corrective information. Although behaviorism contributed significantly to educational assessment practices, critics argue that it treats learners as passive recipients of information.

2) Cognitive Perspectives

Cognitive theories emphasize the internal mental processes involved in learning. Feedback assists learners in processing information, identifying misconceptions, and restructuring knowledge. Shute (2008) argues that feedback serves cognitive functions by providing information that helps learners modify their understanding and improve performance. Cognitive approaches emphasize explanatory feedback that facilitates understanding rather than merely indicating correctness.

3) Constructivist Perspectives

Constructivist theories view learners as active participants in knowledge construction. From this perspective, feedback supports learning by encouraging reflection, inquiry, and problem-solving. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction. Feedback therefore becomes a process of dialogue and negotiation rather than a one-way transmission of information.

The present study aligns with social constructivist principles because it examines feedback through students' experiences and interactions.

C. Feedback and Student Learning

Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of feedback in improving learning outcomes. Hattie and Timperley (2007), in a comprehensive synthesis of research, identified feedback as one of the most powerful influences on achievement. Their model proposes that effective feedback answers three questions:

1. Where am I going?
2. How am I going?
3. Where to next?

Similarly, Black and Wiliam (1998) found that formative assessment and feedback significantly improve student learning. Their review concluded that effective feedback produces substantial gains in academic achievement.

Fyfe (2016) examined computer-based algebra homework and found that feedback improved students' mathematical performance. The study demonstrated that timely feedback assisted learners in identifying errors and correcting misconceptions. Landers and Reinholz (2015) found that students considered feedback valuable when it helped them understand mistakes and provided guidance for future work. Collectively, these studies indicate that feedback contributes to improved academic performance, increased motivation better

self-regulation, enhanced metacognitive skills and greater learner engagement.

However, these benefits occur only when learners understand and use the feedback provided.

1) *Teacher Beliefs and Feedback Practices*

Teachers' beliefs strongly influence instructional practices and classroom interactions.

Williams and Burden (2012) argue that teachers interpret educational experiences through belief systems developed through training and professional experiences. These beliefs influence decisions regarding timing of feedback, nature of corrections, student participation, assessment practices and error treatment.

Borg (2003) found that teachers' cognitions significantly shape classroom practices. Teachers may believe that immediate correction prevents errors from becoming permanent, while others believe delayed correction promotes learner independence.

Similarly, some teachers favor explicit correction, whereas others employ indirect methods that encourage self-discovery. Because teachers hold diverse beliefs regarding learning and assessment, students experience different feedback environments across classrooms.

2) *Student Perceptions of Feedback*

Students enter classrooms with prior beliefs, expectations, and experiences regarding feedback. Schulz (2011) found significant differences between teachers' and students' beliefs concerning corrective feedback. Students often desired more explicit correction than teachers considered necessary. Weaver (2006) reported that students frequently experience difficulties understanding written feedback. Many students perceive comments as vague, overly critical, or insufficiently specific. Hyland (2003) argues that students' responses to feedback are influenced by emotional, social, and contextual factors. Learners may accept, reject, ignore, or reinterpret feedback depending on their experiences and beliefs and student perceptions influence factors such as motivation, confidence, teacher relationships, learning behaviors and academic achievement. Consequently, understanding learner perspectives is essential for effective feedback practices.

3) *Explicit Feedback*

Explicit feedback directly identifies errors and provides corrections. Some examples include correct answers, detailed explanations, direct comments and error identification. Students frequently prefer explicit feedback because it provides clarity. Schulz (2011) found that language learners strongly favored direct correction. Similarly, Lyster and Ranta (1997) reported that explicit corrective feedback often results in immediate learner uptake. Shute (2008) argues that elaborated feedback is particularly effective because it explains why answers are incorrect and provides guidance for improvement. However, excessive dependence on explicit correction may reduce opportunities for independent thinking.

4) *Implicit Feedback*

Implicit feedback provides hints or prompts that encourage students to identify errors independently. Examples include clarification requests, recasts, hints and guided questioning.

Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that prompts encouraging learner-generated repair often resulted in deeper processing. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) argue that feedback should support self-regulated learning by helping students become active participants in assessment.

Although learners frequently prefer direct correction, indirect approaches may produce greater long-term learning because they require students to think critically and solve problems. This finding corresponds with the results of the present study.

5) *Timing of Feedback*

The timing of feedback significantly affects its usefulness.

Immediate Feedback:

Immediate feedback occurs shortly after task completion. According to Kulik and Kulik (1988), immediate feedback is particularly effective for procedural tasks because it allows learners to correct errors quickly. Students often prefer immediate feedback as it is relevant, it prevents misconceptions, it supports motivation and it allows immediate application. Fyfe (2016) similarly reported that prompt feedback improves student performance.

Delayed Feedback:

Delayed feedback occurs after a period of time. Butler and Winne (1995) argue that delayed feedback may encourage reflection and self-monitoring. However, excessive delays may reduce effectiveness if students no longer remember the task. The literature generally supports timely feedback while acknowledging that optimal timing depends on the learning context.

Written and Oral Feedback:

Teachers commonly provide feedback orally or in written form. Written feedback allows students to revisit comments and monitor progress. However, written comments may be misunderstood. Weaver (2006) found that students frequently struggle to interpret written comments. Oral feedback offers opportunities for clarification and dialogue. According to Carless (2015), dialogic feedback promotes understanding because students can ask questions and negotiate meaning. Both forms of feedback have advantages and limitations, suggesting that teachers should employ multiple approaches.

Peer Feedback:

Peer feedback involves students evaluating one another's work. Topping (1998) argues that peer assessment promotes collaboration, reflection, critical thinking and communication skills. Falchikov (2005) found that peer feedback enhances student engagement and responsibility. However, acceptance of peer feedback varies across educational levels. Younger learners often prefer teacher authority, whereas university students may value collaborative evaluation. Trust and training influence the effectiveness of peer feedback.

Trust and Classroom Relationships:

Feedback occurs within social relationships. Hyland and Hyland (2006) argue that students are more likely to accept feedback from teachers they trust. Positive teacher-student relationships contribute to emotional safety, motivation, confidence and engagement. Students often interpret feedback emotionally. Harsh criticism may damage confidence, whereas

supportive feedback encourages persistence. Therefore, effective feedback requires both cognitive and emotional support.

Feedback and Motivation:

Feedback influences student motivation significantly. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory suggests that supportive feedback promotes autonomy, competence, and motivation. Constructive feedback encourages effort, builds confidence and promotes persistence while negative feedback may reduce self-esteem, increase anxiety and lower engagement. Brookhart (2008) argues that feedback should focus on tasks rather than personal characteristics to maintain motivation.

Feedback Literacy:

Recent scholarship has introduced the concept of feedback literacy.

Carless and Boud (2018) define feedback literacy as students' capacities to appreciate, interpret, and use feedback. Feedback-literate students are often able to understand assessment standards, interpret comments, manage emotional reactions and apply feedback to future work. Teachers therefore have a responsibility not only to provide feedback but also to help students develop skills for using it effectively.

D. Feedback Across Educational Levels

Students at different educational levels often possess different feedback preferences with secondary school students typically preferring immediate correction, teacher authority and explicit guidance while university students value peer discussion, independent learning and reflective feedback. Evans (2013) found that mature learners demonstrate greater capacity for self-regulation and feedback utilization. These developmental differences justify comparative studies involving different educational contexts.

E. Co-Generative Dialogue

The study was informed by co-generative dialogue theory. Emdin (2011) argues that teachers and students should collaboratively identify classroom problems and develop solutions. Co-generative dialogue emphasizes shared responsibility, mutual respect, reflection as well as collaboration. Applied to feedback, this perspective suggests that students should actively participate in discussions regarding effective feedback practices. The theory provides an appropriate framework for investigating students' perceptions because it positions learners as co-constructors of knowledge.

1) Empirical Studies on Student Perceptions of Feedback

Several studies have investigated students' perceptions of feedback.

Weaver (2006) found that students often perceive written comments as unclear.

Schulz (2011) reported mismatches between teachers' and students' beliefs regarding corrective feedback. Landers and Reinholz (2015) found that students appreciated feedback that was timely, understandable, and actionable. Carless (2006) argued that effective feedback requires dialogue between teachers and learners.

Despite these contributions, relatively few studies have:

- Compared secondary and university students.
- Examined African educational contexts.
- Applied co-generative dialogue theory.
- Investigated students' perceptions across different educational systems.

F. Research Gap

Although extensive literature exists concerning classroom feedback, several gaps remain.

- First, many studies emphasize teacher practices rather than student perceptions.
- Second, little research compares students across educational levels.
- Third, African educational contexts remain underrepresented.
- Fourth, few studies apply co-generative dialogue as a theoretical framework.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining students' perceptions of effective feedback strategies among Kenyan secondary school students and American university freshmen.

The literature therefore demonstrates that feedback significantly influences achievement, motivation, and engagement. However, effective feedback depends upon students' interpretations and responses. Students generally prefer immediate and explicit feedback, although indirect feedback may promote deeper learning. Trust, relationships, educational level, and feedback literacy further influence perceptions.

The review also highlights the importance of involving students in conversations about feedback. Guided by co-generative dialogue, the study seeks to contribute to the growing literature on learner-centered feedback practices.

G. Research Methodology

The methodological choices were guided by the study objectives, research questions, and the theoretical framework of co-generative dialogue. The study sought to understand students' experiences and interpretations of classroom feedback practices. Since perceptions are subjective, socially constructed, and shaped by classroom interactions, a qualitative approach was considered most appropriate. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), qualitative research enables researchers to explore meanings, experiences, and interpretations that individuals attach to particular phenomena. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative inquiry is suitable when researchers seek to understand how participants make sense of their lived experiences.

H. Research Paradigm

The study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and that multiple realities exist depending on individuals' experiences and interpretations (Crotty, 1998). Unlike positivism, which seeks objective and measurable truths, interpretivism emphasizes understanding human experiences

within their social contexts. Students' perceptions of feedback are shaped by previous learning experiences, teacher-student relationships, classroom environments, educational cultures and individual beliefs.

According to Schwandt (2000), interpretivist researchers attempt to understand the meanings individuals assign to their experiences. Since the present study sought to explore learners' subjective experiences regarding classroom feedback, interpretivism provided an appropriate philosophical foundation. The interpretivist paradigm further aligns with co-generative dialogue theory, which emphasizes collaboration, shared meaning-making, and negotiated understanding among classroom participants (Emdin, 2011).

I. Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspectives of participants within their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Sarantakos (2005) notes that qualitative methods are particularly suitable when studying attitudes, beliefs, values, and perceptions.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research focuses on meaning, understanding, process, context and participant perspectives.

Students' perceptions of feedback involve emotions, experiences, beliefs, and interpretations that cannot easily be quantified. Therefore, a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to obtain rich descriptions of students' experiences. Cohen et al. (2018) argue that qualitative research is especially appropriate when researchers seek to understand participants' lived realities. The approach allowed the researcher to investigate how students perceive various feedback strategies and how these perceptions influence learning.

J. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative multiple-case study design. Yin (2018) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. Case studies are particularly useful when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear.

The study involved two cases:

1. Form Three (grade 11) students in a Kenyan secondary school.
2. Freshman students in a university in the United States.

The multiple-case design enabled the researcher to compare feedback perceptions across educational levels and cultural contexts. Stake (1995) argues that case studies provide detailed and holistic understandings of complex social phenomena. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasize that case studies are appropriate when researchers seek an in-depth understanding. The design was therefore selected because it allowed investigation of feedback within natural classroom settings, comparison between educational contexts, use of multiple sources of evidence, rich descriptions of participants' experiences and triangulation of data.

K. Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by the co-generative dialogue theory

developed by Emdin (2011). Co-generative dialogue emphasizes collaborative conversations between teachers and students aimed at identifying classroom challenges and jointly developing solutions. According to Emdin (2011), classroom participants should negotiate shared understandings concerning the teaching and learning processes. The theory assumes that students possess valuable knowledge about classroom experiences, learning environments improve through collaboration, dialogue promotes mutual understanding and classroom participants share responsibility. Within the context of feedback, co-generative dialogue suggests that students should actively participate in discussions concerning feedback practices. The theory provided a useful framework for understanding students as active contributors rather than passive recipients of feedback.

L. Research Sites

The study was conducted in two educational institutions.

Kenyan Secondary School:

The first site was a public secondary school in Kenya involving Form Three students (grade 11). Form Three students were selected because they possess substantial experience with classroom assessment practices and receive regular feedback from teachers.

Secondary school classrooms provide numerous opportunities for feedback through assignments, homework, class exercises, examinations and oral classroom interactions.

United States University:

The second site was a university in the United States involving freshman students.

Freshman students were selected because they are transitioning from secondary education into higher education and are adjusting to new assessment expectations. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how feedback perceptions evolve across educational levels.

The inclusion of two educational contexts enhanced the comparative nature of the study.

M. Participants

Participants consisted of form three students enrolled in a Kenyan high school and freshman university students enrolled in a university in the United States. These were selected in line with Patton's (2015) assertion that qualitative studies select information-rich participants who possess experiences relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell and Poth (2018) add that qualitative researchers intentionally select individuals who possess experiences relevant to the research problem. Participants were selected because they had direct experiences with classroom feedback, had participated in various assessment activities, could describe their experiences meaningfully and were willing to participate voluntarily. 15-20 students of each category participated in the study.

N. Data Collection Methods

Multiple methods were used to ensure triangulation and enhance credibility.

According to Denzin (1978), methodological triangulation improves trustworthiness by combining different sources of

evidence.

1) *Classroom Observations*

Classroom observations enabled the researcher to observe feedback practices within their natural contexts. Observation focused on teacher feedback behaviors, student responses, timing of feedback, classroom interactions and participation patterns.

Cohen et al. (2018) argue that observations allow researchers to examine naturally occurring behaviors rather than relying solely on self-reports.

2) *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences and perceptions as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe interviews as conversations designed to obtain descriptions of participants' lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews provided flexibility while ensuring consistency across participants. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

3) *Co-Generative Dialogues*

Co-generative dialogue sessions were conducted to allow participants to reflect collaboratively on feedback experiences. According to Emdin (2011), co-generative dialogues create opportunities for teachers and students to identify challenges and negotiate solutions.

Students discussed effective feedback practices, challenges associated with feedback, suggestions for improvement and teacher-student communication. The discussions generated rich insights regarding students' perceptions.

4) *Nominal Group Technique*

The nominal group technique was used to identify and rank preferred feedback strategies. Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson (1995) describe the technique as a structured group process that promotes participation and consensus. The procedure involved individual idea generation, sharing ideas, discussion and ranking of priorities. This method minimized domination by outspoken participants and ensured equal participation.

5) *Document Analysis*

Document analysis involved examining marked assignments, examination scripts, teacher comments, assessment records and feedback sheets. Bowen (2009) argues that documents provide stable and unobtrusive sources of data. Document analysis enabled the researcher to examine actual feedback practices and compare them with students' perceptions.

6) *Questionnaire Notecards*

Anonymous notecards were distributed to students where students recorded preferred feedback methods, challenges experienced and suggestions for teachers. The anonymous format encouraged honesty and reduced social desirability bias.

3. Data Analysis

Given the exploratory nature of the study and the emphasis on participants' experiences, the study employed thematic analysis to analyze data collected from classroom observations, interviews, co-generative dialogues, nominal group discussions, document analysis, and questionnaire notecards. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method

for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The approach is flexible and particularly suitable for studies seeking to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative data analysis involves preparing data, coding information, identifying themes, and interpreting meanings. Thematic analysis was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand students' experiences and perceptions of classroom feedback across two educational contexts. It also allowed identifying common patterns across multiple participants while preserving individual voices (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and provided a systematic procedure for organizing and interpreting diverse forms of qualitative data from interviews, observation notes, dialogue sessions, documents and questionnaire responses.

A. *Preparation and Organization of Data*

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that qualitative data analysis is an iterative process that often occurs simultaneously with data collection, data analysis began immediately after data collection. The collected data was first organized according to source and each participant assigned a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. In line with Poland's (1995) assertion that accurate transcription contributes significantly to the rigor and credibility of qualitative research, audio recordings from interviews and dialogue sessions were transcribed verbatim while observation notes were expanded immediately after classroom visits to preserve contextual details and researcher reflections.

Since researchers must become intimately familiar with the data before coding begins (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the first analytical stage involved immersion in the data which included repeatedly reading interview transcripts, reviewing observation notes, examining documents, reading questionnaire responses and listening to audio recordings.

B. *Coding of Data*

This involved organizing qualitative information into meaningful categories (Saldaña, 2021). Open coding was employed during the initial stages. It involved examining each line of data and assigning descriptive labels. Some initial codes included immediate correction, delayed feedback, teacher support, student frustration, explicit explanation, peer feedback, self-correction, fear of criticism, teacher encouragement and confusion about comments.

The coding process was conducted manually to maintain close engagement with the data.

Similar responses from different participants were assigned identical codes.

For example:

"I want the teacher to tell me immediately."

"It helps when corrections come right away."

These responses were coded as Immediate feedback preference.

Coding occurred across all data sources to facilitate triangulation.

Following coding, similar codes were grouped together into

broader categories.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), categories represent clusters of related information that eventually contribute to themes. For example, *Immediate correction, quick responses, prompt comments* were categorized as Timing of feedback.

Category development reduced the complexity of the data and facilitated interpretation.

The researcher constantly compared data segments to ensure that categories accurately represented participants' experiences.

C. Theme Development

The researcher reviewed categories and combined related categories into themes or meaningful patterns that capture important aspects of the data and address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Five major themes emerged:

1. Preference for immediate feedback.
2. Preference for explicit feedback.
3. Effectiveness of self-generated repair.
4. Trust and classroom relationships.
5. Differences between educational levels.

These themes reflected both the frequency of responses and their significance to participants.

Each theme was supported by evidence from multiple data sources.

D. Within-Case Analysis

Within-case analysis was first conducted separately for each educational context.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), within-case analysis allows researchers to understand each case individually before making comparisons.

For the Kenyan Secondary School, analysis focused on teacher-centered feedback, immediate correction, examination orientation and dependence on teachers.

For the University Context analysis focused on independent learning, peer interactions, reflective feedback and academic autonomy.

Within-case analysis preserved the unique characteristics of each educational setting.

E. Cross-Case Analysis

After analyzing each case individually, cross-case analysis was conducted.

Yin (2018) argues that cross-case analysis allows researchers to identify similarities and differences across cases. Here, feedback preferences, timing preferences, teacher relationships, peer feedback perceptions and self-correction practices were compared.

The cross-case analysis revealed similarities in preference for timely feedback, desire for clear explanations and importance of supportive teachers. It also revealed the following differences. While secondary school students preferred teacher authority, university students accepted peer feedback and demonstrated greater autonomy.

F. Analysis of Data

Data from the six different sources including interviews, observation, documents, dialogue, note cards and nominal

groups were analyzed separately and then integrated. In line with Denzin (1978) argument that triangulation enhances credibility by reducing biases associated with single methods the data were triangulated, comparing personal experiences from interviews with actual practices from observations, written evidence from documents, collaborative perspectives from dialogues, anonymous opinions from notecards and prioritized preferences from nominal groups. The data were then interpreted in relation to the research questions, existing literature and the co-generative dialogue theory, in line with Patton's (2015) view that interpretation gives meaning to findings and connects them to broader theoretical understandings. Thematic analysis enabled the identification of major themes regarding students' perceptions of effective feedback strategies.

4. Ethical Considerations

Since this study involved human participants, including secondary school students who were minors and university students in higher education institutions, careful attention was given to ethical issues throughout the research process. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), ethical research requires investigators to respect participants, minimize harm, ensure voluntary participation, and maintain confidentiality. Similarly, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) argue that ethical considerations should guide every stage of the research process, from planning and data collection to analysis and dissemination.

The study adhered to accepted principles of educational research ethics, including respect for persons, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent.

A. Ethical Approval and Institutional Permission

As ethical approval provides independent oversight that protects participants and promotes responsible research conduct (Israel and Hay (2006), prior to data collection, ethical approval was sought from the appropriate institutional review bodies and relevant educational authorities. Letters introducing the researcher and explaining the purpose of the study were presented to participating institutions. Meetings were held with school administrators and university officials to explain the nature, objectives, and procedures of the study.

B. Informed Consent

In agreement with Cohen et al. (2018) that informed consent requires that participants understand the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before agreeing to participate, participants were provided with information sheets explaining the purpose and objectives of the study, the expected duration of participation, data collection procedures, possible risks and benefits, rights of participants, confidentiality procedures and the voluntary nature of participation. Written consent forms were obtained from all adult participants before participation commenced.

C. Assent and Parental Consent for Minor Participants

The Kenyan Form Three students who participated in the study were minors and therefore required additional ethical protections. The researcher therefore obtained permission from school authorities, written consent from parents or guardians as well as assent from student participants.

D. Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used by assigning codes to participants. Names of individuals and institutions were removed from the report and only the researcher had access to raw data. Audio recordings and electronic files were stored on secure password protected devices only accessible to the researcher.

The study therefore adhered to established ethical standards throughout the research process, thereby ensuring respect for participants and enhancing the credibility and integrity of the research findings.

5. Discussion of Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate students' perceptions of effective feedback strategies that support learning among Form Three (grade 11) students in Kenya and freshman university students in the United States. The findings are interpreted within the framework of co-generative dialogue (Emdin, 2011) and situated within the broader literature on classroom feedback, learner perceptions, and assessment practices.

The discussion is organized according to the major themes that emerged from the data.

A. Students' Preference for Immediate Feedback

One of the most significant findings of this study was students' strong preference for immediate feedback. Both secondary school and university students indicated that feedback was most useful when provided shortly after completing learning tasks. Participants reported that immediate feedback enabled them to identify mistakes before misconceptions became deeply established. Students also stated that they remembered the learning activity better when feedback was provided quickly.

This finding supports previous studies that emphasize the importance of timely feedback. Hattie and Timperley (2007) argue that feedback is most effective when learners can immediately connect information about their performance to the learning task. Similarly, Shute (2008) found that timely feedback improves learning because it enables students to correct errors while information remains active in memory. Fyfe (2016) reported that immediate feedback in mathematics instruction improved students' performance by helping learners identify misconceptions and revise their understanding. Likewise, Kulik and Kulik (1988) concluded that immediate feedback generally produces better outcomes for procedural and factual learning tasks.

The findings also support Butler and Winne's (1995) theory of self-regulated learning, which argues that feedback provides information necessary for monitoring progress and adjusting

learning strategies. Immediate feedback allows students to compare current performance with desired goals and make corrections before errors become entrenched.

Secondary school students particularly valued immediate feedback because of the highly structured nature of their learning environments. Form Three students often face frequent assessments and examinations, making prompt feedback especially important. Delayed feedback was frequently described as less useful because students had forgotten the assignment or moved to new topics.

University students similarly preferred timely feedback but demonstrated greater tolerance for moderate delays, particularly when assignments required extensive evaluation. This finding may reflect greater academic maturity and increased capacity for independent learning. The findings support Sadler's (1989) assertion that feedback can only improve performance if students receive information while opportunities for improvement still exist. Therefore, teachers should strive to minimize delays between assessment and feedback.

B. Students' Preference for Explicit Feedback

Another important finding was students' preference for explicit feedback. Participants consistently indicated that they valued feedback that clearly identified mistakes and provided direct explanations or corrections. Students expressed frustration with vague comments such as "*Improve, Be clearer, Expand this point.*"

Many participants reported that such comments failed to explain what needed improvement. These findings correspond closely with Schulz (2011), who found that students generally prefer direct correction and explicit guidance. In language learning contexts, students often expect teachers to provide clear explanations rather than indirect hints.

Similarly, Weaver (2006) reported that students frequently perceive written comments as ambiguous and difficult to interpret. Students often struggle to understand teachers' expectations when feedback lacks sufficient detail. Shute (2008) argues that effective feedback should be specific, explanatory, and actionable. Feedback that merely indicates whether an answer is correct or incorrect provides limited support for learning.

The findings suggest that students view explicit feedback as easier to understand, more useful for revision, more supportive and more efficient.

This preference may reflect students' desire for certainty and clear guidance. Secondary school students, in particular, often depend heavily on teachers for academic direction. However, while students preferred explicit feedback, subsequent findings revealed that direct correction did not always result in the greatest learning gains.

C. Feedback That Encourages Self-Repair

One of the most interesting findings of the study was the apparent contradiction between students' preferences and their learning outcomes.

Although participants expressed a preference for explicit

correction, evidence suggested that feedback strategies encouraging students to generate their own corrections often produced deeper learning.

Students reported that clues, prompts, and guiding questions forced them to think critically about their mistakes. Such feedback encouraged reflection and independent problem solving. This finding aligns with Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006), who argue that effective feedback should support self-regulation and learner autonomy. Rather than simply providing answers, feedback should help students develop the ability to evaluate and improve their own work.

Similarly, Lyster and Ranta (1997) found that prompts encouraging learner-generated repair often result in greater retention and deeper understanding than direct correction.

Constructivist learning theory also supports this finding. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs through active engagement and problem-solving. Feedback that encourages students to discover solutions promotes knowledge construction. The findings further support Sadler's (1989) argument that effective feedback requires learners to possess:

1. Knowledge of standards.
2. Awareness of current performance.
3. Strategies for closing the performance gap.

Indirect feedback encourages students to participate actively in this process.

While explicit feedback may satisfy students' immediate preferences, guided feedback may contribute more effectively to long-term learning.

D. Trust and Teacher-Student Relationships

The findings demonstrated that trust significantly influences students' acceptance and use of feedback. Participants emphasized that they were more receptive to criticism from teachers whom they perceived as supportive, respectful, and caring. Feedback delivered within positive relationships was interpreted as helpful rather than punitive. Hyland and Hyland (2006) argue that feedback is both a cognitive and emotional process. Students interpret comments not only in terms of academic meaning but also in terms of interpersonal relationships.

Similarly, Carless (2015) emphasizes that feedback effectiveness depends upon trust between teachers and students. Learners are more likely to engage with feedback when they believe teachers genuinely care about their success.

Many participants indicated that harsh or humiliating criticism reduced motivation and discouraged participation. This finding supports Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, which argues that feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness influence motivation. Positive relationships contribute to emotional safety, willingness to take risks, openness to criticism and increased motivation.

Brookhart (2008) argues that feedback should focus on tasks and processes rather than personal characteristics. Feedback directed at student personally may damage self-esteem and reduce motivation. The findings suggest that effective feedback cannot be separated from classroom climate and interpersonal

relationships.

Differences Between Secondary and University Students

The study revealed important differences between the two groups of participants.

Secondary school students generally preferred immediate correction, teacher authority, explicit feedback, individual feedback and teacher led instruction.

Secondary students often viewed teachers as the primary source of knowledge and expertise.

University Students on the other hand demonstrated greater acceptance of peer feedback, reflective comments, independent learning, delayed feedback and collaborative learning.

These findings correspond with Evans (2013), who found that mature learners often possess greater capacity for self-regulation and independent learning. Topping (1998) similarly reported that peer assessment becomes increasingly valuable as learners gain academic experience, greater confidence, higher levels of autonomy, more experience with assessment and stronger self-regulation skills.

The findings therefore suggest that feedback practices should be adapted to learners' educational levels and developmental needs.

E. Co-Generative Dialogue and Student Voice

The findings strongly support the principles of co-generative dialogue. Students demonstrated considerable insight into effective feedback practices, classroom challenges, learning preferences and assessment experiences. Emdin (2011) argues that students possess valuable knowledge about classroom processes and should participate in discussions concerning teaching and learning. Participants expressed appreciation for opportunities to discuss feedback practices. Many reported that they had rarely been asked about their preferences.

The findings suggest that involving students in conversations about feedback can improve understanding, increase engagement, promote ownership and strengthen teacher-student relationships. Carless (2006) similarly argues that effective feedback requires dialogue rather than one-way communication. The study therefore supports the movement toward dialogic feedback models that position students as active participants.

F. Feedback Literacy and Student Engagement

The findings also relate closely to the emerging concept of feedback literacy.

Carless and Boud (2018) define feedback literacy as students' ability to understand, interpret, and use feedback effectively. Many participants demonstrated limited understanding of how to utilize feedback independently. Some students focused primarily on grades while ignoring comments. This finding supports previous studies showing that students often struggle to engage meaningfully with feedback (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Developing feedback literacy involves helping students understand assessment standards, interpret comments, manage emotional responses and apply feedback to future work. Teachers therefore have responsibilities beyond simply providing comments.

Implications for Practice

Several implications emerge from the findings. Teachers should provide timely feedback whenever possible, offer clear and specific comments, encourage student self-correction, build trusting relationships, involve students in discussions about feedback, adapt feedback strategies to educational levels and promote feedback literacy.

Teacher preparation programs should prepare educators to understand student perspectives or student-centered assessment, include feedback literacy and implement dialogic feedback practices, as well as encourage reflective practice.

Professional development should emphasize learner perspectives, effective feedback strategies and context sensitive approaches.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate students' perceptions of effective feedback strategies that support learning among Form Three (grade 11) students in Kenya and freshman university students in the United States. Feedback remains a powerful influence on student learning. However, its effectiveness depends upon students' perceptions and engagement.

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