Factors affecting feedback impact

Feedback comprises many different forms within differing contexts. Feedback can be written or verbal, formal or informal comments, and related to knowledge, skills, ways of understanding, and ways of dealing with information. Students' understanding of what feedback is, their capacity to seek and act on it, therefore depends on their beliefs, motives, schema, knowledge base, self-regulatory skills, previous assessment feedback history, and confidence (Evans & Waring, 2021).

The quality of assessment design is centrally implicated, along with students' metacognitive awareness of how to capitalise on moments of contingency by being able to turn these into learning opportunities (Black & Wiliam, 2009); focus therefore, needs to be on developing such self-regulatory capacity.

Another factor is the importance of students' own conceptions of feedback – what do they consider feedback, and what do they not recognise as feedback. This perception is moulded by their personal beliefs and experiences, the perceptions of their peers, their motives and emptions, their schema of the world, their own knowledge base, mastery of self-regulatory skills, their own history and experiences of and with assessment and feedback history, and personal self- and academic-confidence (Brown et al., 2016; Dawson et al., 2019; Forsythe and Johnson, 2017; Nash and Winstone, 2017; Waring and Evans, 2015).

As a result of these variations, some form of scaffolding is required from the educator to help students filter important information from feedback, and build a development plan for their future endeavours. New students need to be guided in how to extract useful guidance from feedback, and there needs to be signposts to what is more important advice, and what is of lesser impact.

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