Online Feedback: What do Students Like?

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Reality Check

Electronic submissions
- completely online
- blended approach
- ordinary
- reasonable choices

Most of the online assignment systems
- the simple uploading
- automated/correcting function

Deepened learning from feedback/individualized teaching

Limited research
- students’ views of e-feedback on submissions
Exploratory survey

What their perceptions on e-feedback

five categories
- accessibility,
- timeliness,
- legibility,
- quality and
- personal

Online feedback (e-feedback) vs. hand-written
Research Questions

Do students support e-feedback or handwritten feedback?

What are students’ perceptions of e-feedback in regards to the five themes: accessibility, timeliness, legibility, quality and personal?
Literature Review

Accessibility

- a general expectation of students in the millennial generation
- a most recognized component in defining useful feedback


Literature Review

Timeliness

◦ Preferred
◦ Would move on if it’s late
◦ Bridge et. Surveyed: 88% of the students favored online feedback vs. hand delivered feedback


Literature Review

Legibility

- Readable when typed
- A significant element
- Illegible writing: Frustrated and disappointed


Literature Review

Quality
- A big concern: poor and low quality feedback
- In course evaluation
- Quality—constructive and helpful
- Quality—easy to understand
- Quality—where and how to improve
- Would wait if feedback is in good quality


Literature Review

Personal

◦ Useful to students
◦ Desired to receive positive and personal feedback
◦ Personal feedback—
  ◦ mild tone vs. hush or negative one,
  ◦ polite vs. disrespectful
◦ Showing care
Participants and Setting

7,200 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university
Data Collection

The online survey
- hosted on Survey Monkey
- based on the five themes:
  - accessibility,
  - timeliness,
  - legibility,
  - quality, and
  - personal
- a few corresponding items, on a 7 point Likert scale, under each of the themes
  - e.g. four factors under the theme of accessibility:
    - (a) allows me to get information easily,
    - (b) allows me to receive and send information conveniently,
    - (c) allows me to ask questions easily
    - (d) makes me feel secure to receive feedback from the professor.
Procedure

the Institutional Review Board approval,

the survey link sent out to the undergraduate students,
   ◦ first prompted with a study information sheet,
      ◦ the purpose of the study,
      ◦ ensured confidentiality,
      ◦ voluntary participation.
   ◦ Complete the survey

a first follow-up letter electronically sent two weeks later,
a second follow-up letter sent two weeks later,
the study closed up two weeks later.
Data Analysis

First research question: “Do students support e-feedback or handwritten feedback?”

Second research question: “What are students’ perceptions of e-feedback in regards to the five themes: accessibility, timeliness, legibility, quality and personal?”

- SPSS 20
- non-parametric and parametric tests
- A Chi-square test of independence
- Independent t-tests
- All students’ justifications or preferences for e-feedback


Results and Discussion

The first research question: “Do students support e-feedback or handwritten feedback?”

- 763 undergraduate students responded, with a return rate of almost 11%.
- The majority of the participants (n=476, 63.3%) supported e-feedback.
- The studies conducted by Denton, Parkin, Chang et al. yielded similar findings.
- T-test compared how much preference for handwritten and e-feedback based on choice of feedback (see Table 1).
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tr>
<td>Handwritten</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.92139</td>
<td>29.33</td>
<td>748</td>
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<td>E-feedback</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Results and Discussion cont.

The second research question: “What are students’ perceptions of e-feedback in regards to the five themes: *accessibility, timeliness, legibility, quality and personal*?”

Each of the themes reported as follows:
Accessibility

Four factors under the theme of *accessibility*, the majority of which were supported:

◦ *(a)* [E-feedback] *allows me to get information easily* (n=468; mean=1.511; SD=0.773),

◦ *(b)* [E-feedback] *allows me to receive and send information conveniently* (n=466; mean=1.280; SD=0.703),

◦ *(c)* [E-feedback] *allows me to ask questions easily* (n=467; mean=1.830; SD=1.164),

◦ *(d)* [E-feedback] *makes me feel secure to receive feedback from the professor* (n=464; mean=1.882; SD=1.167).
Accessibility cont.

Justifications

(a) [E-feedback] allows me to get information easily:
- “I'm always online, always even on my phone so it makes things easier for me.”
- “[N]o matter where you are, you usually have access to the internet therefore you can get it anywhere at any time.”
- Denton, Parkin et al. found that technology enabled students to access their grades and feedback at a time and place of their choosing.

(b) [E-feedback] allows me to receive and send information conveniently:
- “Easily accessible as it only requires one or two clicks of the mouse.”
- “Very helpful because I can log on whenever it is convenient for my schedule to check on things.”

- Chang et al. and Mertler et al. --- conveniently receiving and sending information
- Denton et al. and Parkin et al. --- students recognized and appreciated the flexibility and convenience that technology could provide in facilitating their learning
Accessibility cont.

◦(c) [E-feedback] allows me to ask questions easily
  ◦This will be addressed in the section of Personal to avoid redundancy

◦(d) [E-feedback] felt secure to receive feedback from professors
  ◦“I don't have to worry about losing it!”
  ◦“It's nice that you can always go back to refer to it when it's saved online.”

Positively preferred this theme, few other studies have examined it. Future research is warranted
Timeliness

One factor under the theme of timeliness:
- (e) [E-feedback] allows me to receive feedback fast (n=466; mean=1.504; SD=0.883).

Denton et al. and Chang et al. supported for fast and timely delivery

Justification
- “…I don't have to wait a week to hear back on how well I did or what I need to improve on.”
- “If I receive feedback that is very late, I usually disregard it because it is irrelevant.”
- Parkin et al. ---if students did not receive feedback in time for it to be meaningful germane to a task assessed, the relevance of the feedback could thus be reduced.
Legibility

Two factors under the theme of *legibility*:

- (f) [E-feedback] enables me to read the feedback (n=463; mean=1.324; SD=0.788)
- (g) [E-feedback] enables me to understand what the professor writes (n=463; mean=1.495; SD=1.021).

Justifications

- (f) [E-feedback] enables me to read the feedback
  - “Since it is typed, it is legible[,] their spelling and grammar is good at least.” “… electronic feedback wins in this category [legibility].”
  - A different view:
    - “You will always be able to read typed [feedback], but that doesn’t matter if [it] is not necessarily comprehensible and more subject to misspellings.”
- (g) [E-feedback] enables me to understand what the professor writes
  - “[E-feedback] enables me to understand what the professor writes.”
  - “If the quality of what is written is high enough, student time to making out the writing is worth it.”

Denton et al. Parkin et al. ----likely to read or use feedback if typed
Johnson, Ferguson, Chang et al. --- tend to read typed feedback without difficulty.

*Different views, more research needs to be warranted.*
Quality

Seven factors under the theme of quality: [E-feedback]

- (h) [E-feedback] offers constructive criticism or comments (n=464; mean=2.070; SD=1.180),
- (i) [E-feedback] is helpful (n=464; mean=1.819; SD=1.057),
- (j) [E-feedback] allows me to understand the content of the professor’s comment (n=465; mean=2.039; SD=1.159),
- (k) [E-feedback] allows for revisions and improvement (n=460; mean=2.078; SD=1.148),
- (l) [E-feedback] provides detailed information that I would like to know in text (n=460; mean=2.174; SD=1.259),
- (m) [E-feedback] provides detailed information that I would like to know at the end of paper (n=457; mean=2.230; SD=1.310),
- (n) [E-feedback] allows me to feel and touch the feedback, which is conducive to my reading and understanding (n=456; mean=3.384; SD=1.943).
Quality cont.

Justifications

- e-feedback was specific and offered useful explanations.
- “I've noticed that most of the electronic feedbacks are more in-depth in their explanations and reasons.”
- Parkin et al. --- online feedback was thoughtful.
- “The clarity I receive from electronic feedback has been better than written. I suspect that is because thoughts can be edited and organized in such a way that handwritten examples do not allow.”
- Parkin et al. --- technology could help organize and edit thoughts
- “Handwritten comments tend to be abbreviated more often and leaves you occasionally wondering if you missed something or if you correctly understand the abbreviations.”

- Chang and Chang et al. not found
- A further investigation --- warranted
Personal

Four factors under this theme, \[\text{feedback}\]

\((o)\) \[\text{E-feedback} \text{ allows me to establish rapport with my professor (n=458; mean=2.769; SD=1.647)},\]

\((p)\) \[\text{E-feedback} \text{ encourages me to read feedback (n=458; mean=2.109; SD=1.280)},\]

\((q)\) \[\text{E-feedback} \text{ shows that the professor cares about me (n=456; mean=2.540; SD=1.516)}\]

\((r)\) \[\text{E-feedback} \text{ makes me appreciate my professor's time and attention (n=456; mean=2.318; SD=1.342)}.\]
Justifications

- “There seems to be a distance between you and the professor if all feedback is just electronic.”
- Ifenthaler --- Distance instructors from students psychologically

- “Electronic [feedback] is usually more of a summary…” “. . . they . . . just copy and paste a generic statement.”
- “If feedback is copied and pasted on a student’s assignment, the student would be made to “most feel as if I’m simply a part of a mass email that is sent out to a lot of students.”
“If feedback is handwritten, it would be difficult for instructors to “duplicate” it.”
“I feel like an instructor is much less likely to copy and paste when the feedback is handwritten.”

Chang et al. ---“. . . sometimes electronic feedback feels generic and impersonal.”
Personal cont.

Supporting views
◦“. . . e-feedback was “[m]ore one on one [in] the classroom,”
◦“. . . was speaking directly to me.”
◦“[m]ore personal.”

◦Being personal motivates student learning
◦More investigations into this aspect
Personal cont.

- Careless, if e-feedback
- No face-to-face questions and answers, no feedback reading
- "[M]y professor does not get to know me this way . . ., if it can be all uniform and not unique to each student, the connection is not there so reading the "comments" is much less likely to happen."

- "The personal relationship between a professor and myself is very important to me."

- Di Costa --- students wanted instructors to consider their feelings; they wanted instructors to be empathetic and understandable.
Educational Implications

To genuinely facilitate student learning, instructors and administrators need to:

◦ start contemplating how to compose/or develop and deliver feedback,
◦ bolster quality and personal attributes
◦ Rushoff --- “engage with students, consider their responses and offer individualized challenges”
◦ provide professional development training: “... Professor training would be very helpful.”
Future Research

Comments useful and helpful

- Individualized teaching
- Effective teaching
- Advancing understanding
- Deepened learning


Future Research cont.

Why

What

When

How  e.g. email, Canvas, webs, Oncourse, phonestablet PC, iAnnotate PDF on iPad, VoiceThread, etc.
How an example

Learning Management Systems in Higher Education

○ General feedback


Example LMS
How an example cont.

Microsoft Word

• New Comment
• Track Changes
An Example Microsoft Word
Thanks for a great semester! I appreciate your feedback and I feel it will help become a great teacher in the future.
Limitations

(1) The beginning of the spring semester
(2) Definition of e-feedback
(3) Not be able to complete the survey in earnest
(4) Distracted by their surroundings

Nonetheless,

A. Make useful contributions to teaching and learning
B. Generate a stimulating topic for the best interest of students
Conclusion

Feedback preference sought

E-feedback preferred

Stronger ratings for accessibility, timeliness, and legibility

Relative lower ratings for quality and personal

The majority of students long for assistance from instructors and for receiving feedback

Awarding a single grade not helping and improving learning.

Being mindful when providing feedback on students’ assignments in terms of what, when, and how.

Feedback should truly help advance students’ learning.
References


References cont.


Thank you for coming!