

Research on an Assessment Method: Student Feedback on Video-Feedback on Mandatory Assignments

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Abstract: At the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway, we have a study programme called Knowledge Management. Here we have tested out video-feedback on mandatory assignments. In order to assess how students perceive this type of feedback. Previous studies show that students value feedback and supervision almost higher than lectures and other learning activities. Feedback and supervision will guide improvement and is thought to support the experienced learning outcome. However, our experiences are that students are mostly concerned whether or not the assignments are approved. Hence, providing targeted feedback may or may not be reflected upon. In order to obtain the students' attention to the feedback provided, we have tested out video-feedback. The idea is that a video file may make it more personal and thus be perceived as more targeted to their assignment. Through our research we would like to unveil several issues; if it contributes to the students' learning outcome, if they find it useful, and if they understand how to improve their assignments. In this paper, we will argue for an abductive method towards researching this topic as we will iterate between theory that will enlighten us as we are conducting the study. We chose to view this as a case study and as we are interested in the students' perceptions, we argue for a qualitative study where we conduct semi-structured interviews, both individually and in groups. We will present the research method in detail as well as our discussion of the appropriateness of this qualitative method.

Keywords: Mixed-Method, Formative Assessment, Video-Feedback, Learning

1. Introduction

Research is about collecting, analysing and interpreting data in order to understand a case or a phenomenon (Williams, 2007). In this case study, we are looking to investigate how students perceive video-feedback on their assignments. Does it give them insights on how to improve and how to better meet the learning objectives defined for the courses in question?

Our respondents are all students at the Knowledge Management study programme at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Kongsvinger, Norway. The study programme consists of four courses: Two in the autumn semester and two in the spring semester. The students are mainly adult learners in a work life.

Previous investigations have shown that what students highlight from their education, is mainly about their feedback (Mathisen, 2012) and it is the formative feedback that is referred to. However, formative assessment is not a unanimous way of providing feedback. According to Bennet (2011), formative assessment consists of several interrelated issues and indeed it has yet no standard practices. Bloom (1969, p. 48) states the purpose of formative evaluation is "to provide feedback and correction at each stage in the teaching-learning process". Hence, formative assessment is also called "assessment for learning" (Bennett, 2011).

There is a discrepancy between the time allocated to providing feedback and the time it takes to develop the feedback (Mathisen, 2012). At the same time, feedback is salient for the students' development and understanding of improvement and their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback is helping the students to establish an effective learning situation by providing an understanding of the requirements and a direction for further work. It also aids in establishing a relationship with the students and lecturers, something that has proved helpful for promoting learning (Mathisen, 2012).

According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) the quality of the feedback is determined by answering three questions:

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

These are necessary to answer as this will provide the students with an idea of their performance if they are meeting the requirements and will also push them forward. However, it is thus important that the students

understand the value of pushing forward and that this means something to them (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). Hence, Gamlem (2022) claims that students need to develop first and then experience autonomy, self-control and self-discipline.

Regarding what to present, Mathisen (2012) suggests screen capture, and recording videos. He also recommends pointing out in the text where the students can improve. This requires technology which will support this type of video-feedback and skilful lecturer to pinpoint the different areas.

To understand how to reach a level of reflection with the students, which enables the understanding of how to enhance quality, understanding and further development, is important (Gamlem, 2022). However, this requires that we can communicate what quality is and are able to promote understanding as well as pointing this forward.

Borup et al. (2014) refer to supporting immediacy which is defined by Wiener and Mehrabian (1968) as “the level of psychological distance that exists within communication”. Hence, a perceived social presence can be a premise regarding a cognitive presence, meaning to the extent that students is enabled to construct knowledge through interacting with peers. Moreover, Borup et al. (2014) claim that students find audio feedback more personal and the connection with the lecturers is strengthened. They feel that the lecturer knows them personally and that he/she care about how they (as students) are doing. This is supported by Ice et al. (2007) when they presented an analysis of data showing that audio feedback made students feel that the lecturer cared about their learning process, something that made them feel involved. Borup et al. (2014) sum up the findings regarding audio feedback as making it easier to obtain a sense of closeness, that the video displayed more emotions and was perceived as “more conversational and interactive” in addition to making it easier to feel connected.

1.1 Our case study

In our study our respondents receive written feedback in one of the courses and video-feedback in the other course in both the autumn semester and in the spring semester. In the autumn semester, the students received a 5–8-minute video with feedback on their mandatory assignment, and in the spring semester they received a 3–4-minute video-feedback.

In the first video-feedback (in the autumn), the feedback focused mostly on the assignment and their performance on the assignment, what they had done well and what they had to improve on. The second video feedback (in the spring) the focus was on how they performed according to the learning objectives and how to better meet the learning objectives.

The difference in the video-feedback was due to diving into research on formative assessment, and in particular, video-feedback. The changes made from the first to the second was based both on the feedback from the students in the autumn semester, and what the research articles concluded on. The table below (table 1) provides an overview of the semesters and the types of feedback.

The purpose of both video-feedbacks was to support their learning outcomes and to enhance the work relevance of their education. The purpose of the methodological investigations is to establish that we are investigating our efforts in a way that we can determine that the outcome of the primary project is measuring the right things.

Table 1 Development of formative assessment from 1st to 2nd semester

	1st semester	Upgrade	2nd semester
Video feedback	Focus: feedback regarding the assignment, what was expected. Secondary: learning objective.	Faculty staff reading up and discussing. Reflective practice.	Focus: learning objectives, pros and cons regarding assignment, and (generic) pointing towards learning objectives not yet touched in the assignment.
Written feedback	Focus: some feedback on assignment, and some generic feedback with suggestions for improvement.	None	Focus: some feedback on assignment, and some generic feedback with suggestions for improvement.

We may unveil the students’ perceptions of video-feedback through questionnaires, feedback from students via email, and follow-up interviews. But how can we be certain that our efforts really pay off in form of enhanced learning outcome and that the students are able to utilize their learning back in their organizations?

In the following, we will discuss the research methodology and how our methodological choices have supported our investigations.

2. Methodological considerations

We did the research in two rounds: the first after the autumn semester and the second after the spring semester. We chose for both rounds to do a mixed method research (Creswell, 2009) using both a survey and follow-up interviews.

We also chose to look at this undertaking as a case study (Yin, 2014). However, instead of submerging into several case studies in order to generalize, we are digging into one case study over time in order to get a richer understanding of the case in question (Dubois and Gadde, 2014). According to Buchanan and Bryman (2007), case study research reflects the diversity of social sciences and this is the way of fulfilling these needs.

As we are not only looking to confirm previous research but rather investigate if any confirmations support a development of the outcome. Hence, we firstly need to know if our takes on video-feedback confirm previous studies, and secondly, if this support work relevance as outcome of the courses. We have thus chosen an abductive method mainly interpreting the quantitative data in a qualitative way, supplementing with qualitative interviews.

Also, we explored research on the topic (video-feedback) and combined with the results after the first semester, we tested a slightly different version of video-feedback. This abductive approach allows us to look for a deeper meaning, different patterns and frameworks and more importantly, different theories. The iterative way of conducting this research have allowed us to look further than how well our data cohered with previous research.

3. Results and discussion

The first round of research confirmed the theories of creating a closeness and a sense of care from lecturer. The students appreciated the personal feeling and claimed to have learned how to improve from the video-feedback. This all aligns with the theory of Mathisen (2012), Borup et al.(2014), Hattie and Timperley (2007), Ice et al. (2007) and Gamlem (2022).

As we had different ideas for the second round of video-feedback, the questions regarding their perceptions were directed towards not only towards the feeling of closeness, understanding of possible improvement, but also regarding how they understood the learning objectives of the course, and if and how this has had an impact on their understanding of the curriculum (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Gamlem, 2022). This understanding may thus improve their ability of making use of the learning back in their organizations, hence support work relevance (Vold and Haave, 2020).

The students claim to better understand the learning objectives as they feel reminded of these objectives. The combination of feedback on how their assignments align with the learning objectives have provided them with an understanding of what they need to do to improve, and better meet these learning objectives. The survey, however, showed an equally distributed response between what they agree on and do not agree on the feedback being personal. This is interesting feedback and there may be several possible reasonings for this and we need to dig deeper into this through further interviews; why do they not perceive the last version of video-feedback as personal? Is it too focused on the learning objectives and what how they need to perform in order to meet the overall learning goals of the course?

We asked the students to point out the feedback message that they valued highest and how this contributed to their learning outcome. Some of the responses are about the “technical” part of writing an assignment, but some are also about getting feedback on their understanding. These latter responses, we interpret to enhance the learning outcome (Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Mathisen, 2012; Gamlem, 2022). The follow up interviews confirm this interpretation and here the students can bring examples of understanding situations at their workplace and reference the curriculum.

4. Conclusion

The abductive way of doing an in-depth case study (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, 2014) have provided us with extended experience regarding how to conduct video conferencing, what to focus on and to some extent how

to make it work-life relevant. Targeting the learning objectives and seeking to point out where they meet the learning objectives and where they need to improve, in order to support the learning outcome, had a greater focus in the second round of video-feedback. The findings were now not unanimously towards it being perceived as “personal” but supported the learning outcome. Many of the respondents are able to point out specific “items” in the feedback that has had an impact on their further work towards meeting the learning objectives.

4.1 Further research

We still need to further establish why the students are divided in their reply regarding that they do not feel that the video-feedback was personal, and how this has impacted on their perceptions of relevance. Also, we still need to establish the connection between the video-feedback and possible connection to work relevance. We may assume that video-feedback is now provided *in a way that they are able to relate the learning to their own experiences*. We may thus utilize longitudinal studies that follow the students in their work-life.

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