STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF DIDACTIC FEEDBACK IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This article is based on the study of students and master's students' perception of didactic feedback in university education. Effective feedback is designed to determine the level of understanding and development of a learner's skills, as well as to plan the next steps in order to achieve learning intentions or objectives. In order to identify the way in which the students and master's students perceive the feedback provided by the teaching staff in university courses and seminars, we applied an online questionnaire to a number of 160 subjects. The answers received to the 10 questions of the questionnaire were statistically processed and presented in the paper, in order to provide an overview of the following aspects of the didactic feedback: the degree of satisfaction of students, on the way in which the teaching staff provides feedback in the courses and university seminars; the extent to which students and master's students are encouraged by the teaching staff to provide feedback during courses and seminars; the advantages and disadvantages of giving and receiving didactic feedback on those who learn; the way in which students and master's students would prefer feedback to be provided by teaching staff; the perceived influence of didactic feedback on the motivation for learning; the extent to which teachers' feedback influences the academic performance of students and master's students; the feedback collection methods frequently used by teachers; the type of didactic feedback preferred by students and master's students; proposing ways to provide feedback, which will make students and master's students more motivated to learn.*

Key words: *didactic feedback; students' motivation; academic performance; academic satisfaction; students' perception.*

1. Introduction

In higher education, new theories of didactic feedback focus on developing a culture of feedback that emphasizes the needs and active

participation of students, promoting a learning environment in which they are directly involved in their own educational process. According to Carless and Boud (2018), this "feedback culture" involves not only teachers' provision of corrective comments or assessments, but also an open and ongoing dialogue between teachers and students, as well as between students themselves. The aim of this model is to turn feedback into an essential tool for developing reflexivity and self-regulation of learning.

2. Theoretical foundation

Clarifying the concept of feedback at the educational micro-level is carefully analyzed in the pedagogical literature. In particular, in the **Dictionary of Pedagogy**, feedback is defined as a mechanism for regulating the educational process, at this level, through which feedback can be given and received by both educators and learners. It includes both the action by which educators obtain information about the effects of their pedagogical efforts, and the action by which learners receive information about the results of their learning efforts. It emphasizes that feedback is a fundamental principle of didactic communication activities, facilitating effective teaching and learning processes.

 A concrete example of this mechanism is described as follows: "Feedback involves ambivalence, it manifests itself during the direct or mediated interaction between the teacher and the student/pupil, and can be given and received by both. (...) The more complex and in greater quantity the feedback is, the higher the quality of didactic communication. (...) The feedback collected and constantly offered by teachers allows the negotiation of the didactic act, so that it responds to a greater extent to the specific training needs" (Bocoş et al., 2021).

 The functions of feedback that reflect on both the teaching and learning activities are emphasized, contributing to the growth of the repertoires of knowledge, skills, language and common behaviors between those who are educated and those who educate them. (…) The means of obtaining feedback differ according to the lesson category, but there are also some that are universal (non-verbal indicators of conscious participation, the degree of active involvement, independent work). (...) Feedback in education does not only aim at the relationship between the agents of educational action, but also at that between teaching, learning and evaluation, as elements of the instructive-educational process." (S.-E. Bernat, 2003).

Without aiming to detail the conceptual elements, we present the current meanings that highlight the active role of students in the **feedback process**, shifting the emphasis from a traditional approach, where students are mere receivers, to one where they become active participants. Thus, we identify:

- **feedback as a collaborative process:** One of the new models in development is the relational approach to feedback, where the discussion between teacher and student is seen as an open collaboration. This type of feedback is intended to encourage reflection and continuous learning, providing support for the development of students' critical skills (Heron et al., 2023).
- **feedback literacy**: Modern theory promotes the concept of "feedback literacy," which involves both students' ability to understand and use feedback, and teachers' ability to provide it in an accessible and constructive way. This is based on student-centred learning, with the aim of encouraging active engagement and self-assessment (Molloy et al., 2020).
- **online feedback and peer feedback**: Another relevant dimension is online feedback, especially peer feedback, which is becoming increasingly popular in virtual learning environments. It has been shown to be effective in developing critical skills and stimulating reflective thinking among university students (Theelen et al., 2023). The conditions of the online environment also have an important impact on how feedback is given and received.

From the perspective of effective feedback, it is essential to assess the level of understanding and development of a learner's skills, but also to guide his future learning path. This type of feedback is based on several modern educational theories that emphasize both the evaluative and formative components of the educational process.

- **Constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978)** emphasizes that students actively construct their knowledge through interaction with the environment and with others. In this context, effective feedback must support the development of autonomy and facilitate self-regulation of learning (Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978). An example of effective feedback is formative feedback, which not only evaluates performance, but provides concrete suggestions for improving it, helping students plan next steps and achieve educational goals. Thus, feedback plays a crucial role in adjusting cognitive and strategic processes for deep and continuous learning.
- **The student-centered feedback model (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006)** emphasizes the active involvement of students in the feedback process, which contributes to the development of self-reflection skills. Effective feedback should be clear, specific and provide guidance on how performance can be improved. In addition, this model emphasizes the importance of supporting self-regulated learning by giving students the

opportunity to evaluate and adjust their own learning methods, enabling them to become autonomous learners.

- **Feedback literacy (Molloy and Boud, 2020**) implies that students must develop skills not only to receive feedback, but also to understand and use it effectively. Feedback is not only an assessment tool, but also a process of training metacognitive skills essential for educational progress. Effective feedback, according to this theory, should teach students to critically analyze feedback, internalize it, and apply suggestions to improve future performance.

- **The zone of proximal development theory (Vygotsky, 1978)** suggests that learning is maximized when learners receive adequate support to push beyond the current limits of their competence, in an area known as the "zone of proximal development." Effective feedback, in this context, identifies this area and provides clear guidance for progress. Feedback should be challenging yet accessible, thus supporting students in moving to the next level of competence, ensuring sustained skill development.

- **Assessment for Learning (Assessment for Learning - AfL, Black & Wiliam, 1998)**, according to this approach, assessment and feedback are not just marking mechanisms, but essential tools for the continuous improvement of learning. Feedback provided in AfL (Black & Wiliam, 1998) provides students with useful information about their current performance and guides them on the steps needed to achieve educational goals. This type of feedback involves clear communication and is geared towards developing deeper understanding, facilitating autonomy and self-regulation of learning.

At the same time, in order to provide feedback that motivates students and master's students to learn, it is essential to adopt a personalized approach, clear and focused on the continuous improvement of learning processes. **Ways to provide motivating feedback** are: **specific and constructive feedback**, i.e. the feedback must be clear and specific so that students understand what they did well and what aspects they can improve. Constructive feedback, which outlines steps to take to correct errors, is essential for increasing motivation (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). **Positive and progress-oriented feedback**, as focusing on the positive aspects of the student's work can improve self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. Giving genuine praise and highlighting progress helps maintain a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006). **Continuous and in-process feedback**, providing feedback regularly and throughout the activities, not just at the end, allows students to correct mistakes and adjust their learning strategies, leading to greater engagement in the

proposed activities (Sadler, 1989). **Feedback that encourages self-reflection and autonomy**, such that encouraging students to reflect on their own progress and identify solutions for improvement increases their engagement and motivation. This type of feedback stimulates self-regulation of learning (Nicol, 2010). **Peer-to-peer feedback** assumes that peer feedback can create a collaborative learning environment and motivate students to improve their reflection and critical thinking skills (Theelen et al., 2023). An important aspect is also given by the **use of technology for feedback**, digital feedback, provided through online platforms, that allows quick access and more frequent interactions. Students value prompt and flexible feedback provided through digital media (Gikandi et al., 2011).

From the perspective of the **disadvantages in giving and receiving feedback**, we list the following theories and models that present characteristics necessary to be analyzed by teachers and students:

- **Poor school performance**, as feedback given in a negative, vague or non-specific way can lead to lower school performance. The "low expectations" theory (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), also known as the "Pygmalion effect," suggests that low expectations of teachers, expressed through feedback, can lead to poorer student performance.

- **Reducing the frequency of attending classes and seminars**, because negative or inadequate feedback can cause students to avoid attending classes. According to deterrence theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), lack of autonomy and feedback support can reduce intrinsic motivation, which can lead to decreased participation frequency.

- **Decreased self-esteem**, caused by critical or unstructured feedback that can affect students' self-esteem. According to self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1997), negative perception of one's own competences can lead to decreased self-esteem and confidence in learning abilities.

- **Deterioration of the teacher-student and student-student educational relationship** is given by unfavorable feedback that can damage interpersonal relationships, either between teacher and student or between colleagues. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) applied in education argues that positive relationships are fundamental to social and academic development, and negative feedback can affect these relationships, leading to an atmosphere of tension and mistrust.

- **Conflicts** that arise when feedback is unclear, ambiguous or perceived as critical can lead to conflicts between teacher and student or between peers. According to conflict management theory (Deutsch, 1973), feedback that is perceived as personal

criticism or that does not offer constructive solutions can escalate into open conflict.

3. Research objectives
Through this confirmatory research, we set out to identify:

a. Students' satisfaction degree, about didactic feedback during courses and university seminars.
b. Students' and master's students' perception about advantages and disadvantages of giving and receiving didactic feedback.
c. Students' and master's students' preferences about receiving the didactic feedback from teachers.
d. The perceived influence of didactic feedback on learning motivation and students' academic performance.
e. Feedback collection methods frequently used by teachers and the didactic feedback types, preferred by students and master's students.

4. Research methodology
In order to achieve the research objectives, we carried out a survey based on a questionnaire, by building an online questionnaire, applied in Google docs, which totaled 10 questions, of which the first 9 with multiple choice answers and the last question requested the construction an own answer. This questionnaire was applied to a number of 160 students and master's students, from the "1 December 1918" University in Alba-Iulia.

5. Research results
Following, we present the results of the confirmatory research carried out by us, based on the questionnaire applied to a number of 160 subjects. The first question of the questionnaire considers the degree of satisfaction regarding the way teachers provide feedback in courses and seminars.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
1 (unsatisfied)	160	2	1.30%
2 (slightly satisfied)	160	1	0.60%
3 (neutral)	160	19	11.90%
4 (satisfied)	160	53	33.10%
5 (very satisfied)	160	85	53.10%

Table no. 1. The degree of satisfaction regarding the way in which teachers provide feedback in courses and seminars

As can be seen from Table no. 1. most of the surveyed students and master's students declare themselves satisfied and very satisfied with the way in which the teachers give feedback in the didactic activities of the

university. Among the 160 subjects of the research, 53.10% state that they are very satisfied with the way the teachers provide feedback in courses and seminars, while 33.10% state that they are satisfied. Only 11.90% indicate a neutral answer to this question of the questionnaire, and the degree of dissatisfaction of the subjects is very low, 0.60% slightly satisfied and 1.30% dissatisfied.

The second question of the questionnaire concerns the degree to which students and master's students are encouraged to provide feedback during courses and seminars.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
1 (to a very small extent)	160	1	0.60%
2 (to a small extent)	160	5	3.10%
3 (neutral)	160	18	11.30%
4 (mostly)	160	46	28.70%
5 (to a very large extent)	160	90	56.30%

Table no. 2. The degree to which students and master's students are encouraged to provide feedback during courses and seminars

From Table no. 2. it can be observed that the students and master's students declare to a very large extent 56.30% and mostly 28.70%, that they are encouraged by the university teaching staff to provide feedback in the courses and seminars. Also, 11.30% of the subjects do not have a clear opinion and choose the neutral answer, while 3.10% are somewhat satisfied, and 0.60% are somewhat dissatisfied. Thus, it can be interpreted that this aspect of the university teaching activity is well fulfilled by the teaching staff.

The following question aimed to identify the advantages of teachers' feedback, on students and master's students.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
Increases motivation	160	96	60.00%
It supports student-centered learning and collaborative learning	160	84	52.50%
Increases self-esteem	160	57	35.60%
It contributes to obtaining high performance in learning	160	63	39.40%
It optimizes the educational process	160	66	41.30%
It improves educational relations	160	58	36.30%
Increases the frequency of participation in courses and seminars	160	64	40.00%

Table no. 3. The advantages of teachers' feedback on students and master's students

Thus, from Table no. 3. it turns out that the majority of 60% of the subjects of our research indicated the increase in student motivation as the main advantage of providing feedback by teachers, followed by 52.50% of supporting student-centered learning and collaborative learning. Then with very close percentages, the following statements are chosen as advantages of the feedback of university teachers, in the following order: optimization of the educational process 41.30%, increased frequency of participation in courses and seminars 40%, obtaining high performance in learning 39.40%. With fewer choices, but not to be neglected, the surveyed students and master's students indicate as advantages the positivity of educational relations 36.30% and the increase of self-esteem by 35.60%.

Regarding the students' and master's students' perception of the disadvantages in giving and receiving feedback, offered by teachers, Table no. 4. offers the following perspective.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
Demotivation	160	61	38.10%
Low school results	160	22	13.80%
Decrease in the frequency of participation in courses and seminars	160	40	25.00%
Decreased self-esteem	160	37	23.10%
Deterioration of the professor-student and student-student educational relationship	160	39	24.40%
Conflicts	160	40	25.00%

Table no. 4. Students' and master's students' perception of the disadvantages in giving and receiving feedback, offered by teachers

The most frequently indicated disadvantage, as shown in Table no. 4., is demotivation, chosen by 38.10%, followed by the same proportion of 25% by decreasing the frequency of participation in courses and seminars as well as by conflicts. Very close, with 24.40% of the choices, the deterioration of the professor-student and student-student educational relationship is indicated as a disadvantage, and with 23.10%, the decrease in self-esteem of students and master's students is chosen as a disadvantage. With the fewest choices, only 13.80% indicates the drop in school results, as being a disadvantage in giving and receiving feedback, offered by teachers. Probably the subjects of the research considered the feedback negative, as having these disadvantages, mentioned above.

The next question of our questionnaire aimed to identify students and master's students' preferences regarding teacher's feedback. The

obtained results are presented in Table no. 5.

Varianta of answer	N	f	%
Focused on the result	160	51	31.90%
Process focused	160	40	25.00%
Workload focused	160	69	43.10%
Focused on the learning strategies used	160	46	28.70%
Focused on self-assessment	160	37	23.10%
Focused on accepting and following instructions	160	24	15.00%
Using praise	160	12	7.50%

Table no. 5. The preferences of students and master's students regarding teachers' feedback

It can thus be observed that the majority of respondents, 43.10% prefer the feedback centered on the work task, followed by 31.90% by the feedback centered on the result, and then by 28.70% of the choices by the feedback centered on the learning strategies. Also, 25% of the students' preferences are towards process focused feedback and 23.10% indicate the focus on self-assessment feedback. The fewest options of the research subjects, 15% were for feedback oriented towards accepting and following indications, and 7.50% considered praise as a preferred way to receive feedback from university teaching staff.

The sixth question concerns the perception of students and master's students on the relationship between didactic feedback and learning motivation. The subjects were asked to answer, using a Likert scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means to a very small extent, and 5 means to a very large extent.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
1 (to a very small extent)	160	1	0.60%
2 (to a small extent)	160	2	1.30%
3 (neutral)	160	13	8.10%
4 (mostly)	160	51	31.90%
5 (to a very large extent)	160	93	58.10%

Table no. 6. Students' and master's students' perception of the relationship between didactic feedback and learning motivation

From Table no. 6. it emerges that 58.10% of the research subjects consider that there is to a large extent a relationship between the didactic feedback and the learning motivation, while 31.90% consider that there

is to a large extent such a relationship. 8.10% of students do not have a clear opinion about the relationship between didactic feedback and learning motivation, and 1.30% and 0.60%, consider that there is a small and very small relationship between didactic feedback and learning motivation.

The following question explores students and master's students' perception on the relationship between the teacher's feedback and students and master's students' academic performance.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
1 (to a very small extent)	160	1	0.60%
2 (to a small extent)	160	1	0.60%
3 (neutral)	160	15	9.40%
4 (mostly)	160	58	36.30%
5 (to a very large extent)	160	85	53.10%

Table no. 7. Relationship between the teacher's feedback and students and master's students' academic performance

Table no. 7. exposes the subjects' perception on the relationship between teacher's feedback and students and master's students' academic performance, so that we can observe the fact that 53.10% consider to a very large extent, that this relationship exists, and 36.30% believe that it is present in to a large extent. Then, 9.40% do not have a clear opinion about the relationship between the teacher's feedback and students and master's students' academic performance and thus chose the neutral answer option, while 0.60% perceive this relationship as existing to a small or very small extent.

The eighth question of our questionnaire concerned the feedback collection options, frequently used by university teaching staff. The answers obtained from the surveyed students and master's students are presented in Table no. 8.

Variants of answer	N	f	%
Questionnaire per minute	160	30	18.80%
The centered question	160	90	56.30%
Summary phrase	160	31	19.40%
The five minutes essay	160	13	8.10%
Application sheet	160	40	25.00%
Completing some sentences with a given beginning	160	8	5.00%
Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the	160	24	15.00%

teacher and the course/seminar			

Table no. 8. Variants of feedback collection, frequently used by university teachers

According to the answers provided by the surveyed students and master's students, among the options for collecting feedback, frequently used by university teaching staff, the most indicated option with 56.30% was the centered question, followed with 25% by application sheet. Other options for collecting feedback, used in the opinion of students, by their teachers are: with 19.40% the summary phrase, with 18.80% the minute questionnaire, with 15% the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher and of the course/seminar, followed by 8.10% of the 5-minutes essay and finally with only 5% the completion of some sentences with a given beginning.

The penultimate question of the questionnaire, aimed to identify the feedback types, preferred by students and master's students in courses and seminars. The results are presented in Table no. 9.

Variants of answers	N	f	%
Positive	160	62	38.80%
Negative	160	2	1.30%
Specific	160	43	26.90%
Generic	160	15	9.40%
Constructive	160	118	73.80%
Corrective	160	39	24.40%
Immediate	160	49	30.60%
Delayed	160	1	0.60%

Table no. 9. Students and master's students preferred feedback type, in courses and seminars

Thus, as can be seen in Table no. 9., 73.80%, i.e. most of the surveyed subjects, prefer constructive feedback, followed by 38.80% preference for positive feedback and with 30.60% by immediate feedback. Also, a smaller part of the respondents, i.e. 26.90%, claim that they prefer specific feedback, and 24.40% prefer corrective feedback, while only 9.40% indicate that they want to receive general feedback from the teacher. Only 1.30% declare that negative feedback is the preferred one, and 0.60% want delayed feedback.

The last open question of the questionnaire aimed to identify, among the research subjects, the ways of providing didactic feedback, in order to stimulate the learning motivation of students and master's students. It was an open question, so the students' answers were grouped and they are listed below.

Answers given by the research subjects	N	f	%
They did not offer any answer	160	13	8.12%
Evaluative feedback	160	4	2.50%
Descriptive feedback	160	6	3.75%
Oral feedback, immediate, formulated to stimulate students' confidence	160	4	2.50%
Any form of feedback is welcome	160	2	1.25%
Constructive and positive feedback	160	12	7.50%
Feedback based on questionnaire	160	5	3.12%
Encouragement	160	8	5.00%
Feedback offered gently even for mistakes	160	1	0.62%
Detailed explanation	160	1	0.62%
Any type of feedback can motivate the student/master's student	160	2	1.25%
Active participation should be rewarded in the final grade	160	2	1.25%
Immediate feedback	160	9	5.62%
Individual feedback with a focus on results	160	6	3.75%
Negative feedback	160	2	1.25%
Praise	160	1	0.62%
By email	160	1	0.62%
The focused question	160	2	1.25%
General feedback	160	2	1.25%
I don't know	160	2	1.25%
Workload focused	160	1	0.62%
High marks	160	1	0.62%

Table no. 10. Feedback giving methods, which stimulate the students and master's students learning motivation

Regarding the methods of giving feedback, which stimulate students and master's students learning motivation, from the variety of received answers, we want to highlight only those with higher frequencies. Thus, as it appears from Table no. 10., the following answers were indicated in a relatively large proportion: constructive and positive feedback, indicated by 7.50% of the subjects, followed by immediate feedback,

mentioned by 5.62% of the subjects. Then another preferred form of feedback is encouragement, mentioned by 5.00% of the students and master's students, and individual feedback with an emphasis on the result, indicated by only 3.75% of the subjects. Among the 160 subjects of our study, 8.12% did not provide any answer.

6. Conclusions

Effective instructional feedback plays a key role in developing skills and guiding learners towards learning objectives. By integrating contemporary educational theories such as constructivism, feedback literacy, and Assessment for Learning, feedback becomes an essential formative tool that helps students actively construct knowledge and improve long-term performance. In order to provide feedback that motivates students and master's students to learn, it is essential to adopt a personalized, clear and focused approach to the continuous improvement of learning processes. In conclusion, the new theories emphasize the importance of an integrated, student-centered approach that includes active collaboration, development of feedback skills, and the use of modern technologies in the teaching and assessment process. According to this confirmatory research, the majority of students and master's students questioned, declare themselves satisfied and very satisfied with the way in which teachers give feedback in the didactic activities of the university. Students and master's students are encouraged to a great extent, by university teaching staff, to provide feedback during courses and seminars. The subjects of our research indicated, the increase in student motivation as the main advantage of didactic feedback, followed by support for a student-centered learning and collaborative learning. The most frequently indicated disadvantage in the way in which didactic feedback is offered, is represented by the demotivation experienced by students and master's students, followed by the decrease in the frequency of participation in courses and seminars, as well as the generation of possible conflicts. We also found out, that the majority of respondents prefer a feedback focused on the work task, followed by a result feedback, and also a feedback focused on learning strategies. Almost 60% of the subjects of the research believe that there is to a great extent a relationship between didactic feedback and motivation for learning. More than half of the subjects of our research indicate, that they perceive to a great extent, a relationship between the teacher's feedback and the academic performance of students and master's students. Among the options for collecting feedback, frequently used by university teachers, the most indicated option was the centered question, followed by the application sheet. Among the types of feedback preferred by the majority of subjects surveyed, it is constructive feedback, followed by positive feedback and immediate

feedback. And with regard to the methods of providing feedback, which stimulate the motivation for learning of students and master's students, we mention constructive, positive and immediate feedback, as the answers most frequently indicated by the subjects of our research.

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