

Development and evaluation of a formative peer feedback template for individual oral project presentations in a continuing education program for bachelor's graduates

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Introduction

“Feedback is essential to learning, and peer feedback is especially effective.” Statements like these are commonly found in the pedagogical literature, where there is a consensus that peer feedback can effectively enhance learning and reflection in an educational setting. Consequently, peer feedback has been implemented in various forms throughout the Danish education system. However, there is also agreement that peer feedback is not straightforward; effective peer feedback requires a structured approach. In the following, I will discuss pedagogical considerations for developing a formative peer feedback template for individual oral project presentations in a continuing education program for bachelor's graduates and evaluate the template's assessment.

Theory on peer feedback

To describe the concept of ‘feedback,’ I will follow Duijnhouwer’s definition (2010) of ‘information provided by an external agent regarding some aspect(s) of the learner’s task performance, intended to modify the learners’ cognition, motivation, and/or behavior for the purpose of improving performance’ (Duijnhouwer, 2010). In the context of peer feedback, fellow students act as external agents, and as a result, peer feedback differs from that provided by teachers or supervisors in several ways. One is that peer feedback is mainly formative, i.e., peers are expected to ask and suggest, but not to criticize. Another is that peers are

typically at a similar level of understanding as the student receiving the feedback.

The differences between teachers' and peers' feedback offer both advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, agreement seems to exist that peer feedback sessions can promote deep learning and enable the development of domain-specific knowledge, but also transferrable skills such as critical thinking (Adachi, Tai & Dawson, 2018). Another advantage of peer feedback is that both the giver and the receiver of feedback engage in learning during the session, and research indicates that, especially, the person providing the peer feedback may gain new knowledge (Nicol, T.A. & B.C., 2013). On the other hand, there may be disadvantages and dilemmas embedded in the sessions, as the peer providing the feedback may lack knowledge about the expected performance level, or they may tend to give non-specific feedback such as 'well done', which does not enhance learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

To accommodate these embedded dilemmas in peer feedback sessions, the teacher must consider relevant factors when framing the session. Several factors have been discussed in the literature, and practical tools to help frame the session have also been suggested (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; LCI, 2017; Müllen, 2019; Plank, 2023). This may include carefully matching students in the group, formulating clear criteria for the types of questions they can create, providing examples and non-examples of quality feedback, focusing the feedback by asking students to give input on specific learning targets, or using prompts, sentence starters, and graphic organizers to structure the process.

Project motivation and context

Throughout a one-year continuing education program for experienced nurses, students must regularly present the progress of their research projects related to the course. Each student's supervisor attends these presentations, and a course leader, along with two fellow students, provides immediate in-class oral peer feedback on the presentation's content and delivery. Each student is allotted 15 minutes to present their project, and the peer feedback for each presenter is allotted 5–10 minutes.

Since the projects are individual, participants are not otherwise involved in each other's work. Before the first feedback session, students attended a lesson led by the course leader, where they received verbal and written guidance on providing peer feedback.

During the feedback sessions, I noticed that the students primarily focused on praising the delivery of the presentation. They often find it challenging to provide reflective questions or constructive feedback regarding the presentation's content, such as the choice of research methods or insights on research findings. Additionally, we, as supervisors, were mainly present as passive listeners. Reflecting on this, it became clear to me that the focus of the feedback in this course has not been adequately clarified for either the students or the supervisors. This lack of clarity means that students do not fully benefit from the peer feedback sessions, and I believe there is a potential for improvement in facilitating these sessions.

To address this, the project aimed to develop and evaluate a short, content-focused peer feedback template for individual oral presentations in a continuing education program for bachelor's graduates.

Project intervention

Evidence suggests that to enhance learning, feedback should be specific and related to predefined goals, and it should also provide more positive than negative feedback to improve learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Based on this knowledge, I have developed a template for the “feedback giver” to support the feedback they provide to each other after each presentation (Table 1). Before the first presentation, the template was distributed to all three students, and its aim and potential usefulness were reviewed.

The feedback template

The template includes four questions: three about the presentation's content and one regarding the presentation's performance. The “feedback giver” can mark a box with reflective sentence-starters and is asked to orally elaborate on each question. This process enhances the feedback's usefulness for the recipient while also fostering analytical thinking and

formulation for the “feedback giver.” Given the students' academic competencies and experience with giving and receiving feedback, the questions are designed to encourage clarifying and exploratory feedback. Additionally, sentence starters have been provided as response options to facilitate positive and constructive feedback.

Table 1. The feedback template

Questions	Yes, because...	Yes, but I think there could be MORE of...	Yes, but I think there could be LESS of...
Background: Was it clear to you why this project is relevant?	XX	XX	XX
Method: Did you understand how the data was collected and analyzed?	XX	XX	XX
Results: Was it clear to you why the results might be relevant for clinical practice?	XX	XX	XX
Presentation: Was there a coherence between the			

content on the
slides and what
was being said?

Furthermore, the focus of the questions in the feedback template strives to align with the intended learning outcomes of the course, as described by Biggs (1996), e.g., “Develop competencies to formulate research objectives and collect and compile data on their patient group”.

The intervention is tested midway through the students' course; therefore, the groups are established, and the students are well-acquainted with one another. While a safe and positive classroom climate is described as critical for successful peer feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), this area was not the focus of the intervention.

Evaluation of the feedback template

After all three students present and receive feedback, I will ask them about their experience using the template, including its potential pros and cons, the time spent, the process of giving feedback, and their experience receiving feedback.

Results and reflections

Based on my impressions from the day and the students' comments in the subsequent evaluation, the first step in integrating organized peer feedback was successful but also had limitations and room for improvement.

I noticed that the questions asked and the sentence starters provided in the response options led to more concrete feedback, focusing on the content rather than merely praising the feedback recipient for a good presentation. However, using the tool also highlighted some ambiguity regarding the meaning of the questions. One reason for this ambiguity could be that my introduction of the template to the students was minimal. Additionally, the limited time allocated for filling out the Padlet (i.e., 5-10 minutes) restricted the tool's usefulness. Both limitations

appear to negatively impact the facilitation of reflective thinking for the feedback giver and, consequently, the benefit for the feedback recipient. If the template is to be implemented in the future, it should be introduced more thoroughly, and the following considerations could be incorporated:

- That sufficient time is allocated to introducing the feedback template, i.e., how it is aligned with the course's intended learning outcomes, and how it is used in the feedback session.
- That the peer feedback sessions focus on specific parts of the presentation, for example, the background section in one session, the methodology section in another session, etc.
- That it is made clear to both the students and their supervisors whether feedback is being given on the presentation's content, such as the methodology or research questions, or on the presentation performance as a whole.

The above could facilitate structure, minimize ambiguity, and create space for more substantive reflections.

Additionally, as part of introducing the template, it might be beneficial to provide examples of quality feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). By doing this, the course leader and/or supervisors can use themselves as a tool in the session by providing feedback in the same structured way they would like the students to aim for. In this case, this would mean that the course leader and/or supervisors use the template in a structured manner and balance the focus on content versus presentation performance in the same way they expect the students to do.

After the presentations, I evaluated the template with the students, considering its impact on both the givers and receivers of feedback. The students shared valuable reflections on its significance. In alignment with theory in the field (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; LCI, 2017; Müllen, 2019; Plank, 2023), the students explained that, as both givers and receivers, the feedback felt more concrete and manageable. This led to learning outcomes for the recipients being more valuable and action-oriented than in previous feedback sessions that did not utilize a template. The students also expressed a desire for a more comprehensive introduction, stating that they were initially uncertain about how to use the template effectively. They noted that they would have preferred to be introduced

to the template earlier in the course, as it helped clarify what was expected of them as feedback givers.

Conclusion and perspectives

The initial development and testing of a formative peer feedback template for individual oral project presentations in a continuing education program for bachelor's graduates was successful but revealed areas for improvement. The structured questions and sentence starters led to more concrete and content-focused feedback, enhancing the learning outcomes for recipients. However, ambiguity in the questions and limited introduction time hindered reflective thinking.

Future implementations should include a thorough template introduction, focus feedback on specific sections in the presentation, and clarify whether feedback pertains to content or presentation performance. Providing examples of quality feedback and introducing the template earlier in the course could further enhance its effectiveness.

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