

Teachers' Feedback Practice and Students' Academic Achievement: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. Previous literature on teachers' feedback practices has revealed that feedback has a strong effect on students' academic performance. Nevertheless, feedback is a challenge for teachers to use in teaching and the learning environment due to time constraints and teachers' inability to provide students with feedback they need for self-improvement. Furthermore, teachers are often unsure whether the feedback given will meet students' academic needs as students have to work on improving themselves after receiving feedback from their respective teachers. Hence, it is necessary to determine how teachers' feedback correlates with students' performance in school. Feedback highlights students' strengths guides them on how to develop and regulate their learning strategies. Feedback also provides better learning opportunities, while simultaneously guiding them to improve their current weaknesses. This paper presents a comprehensive review of past studies about feedback and its impacts on students' learning in the classroom. This paper is using systematic literature review (SLR) to explore the connection between students' academic performance and teachers' feedback. The analysis discovered that although teachers' feedback played a significant role in helping students improve themselves academically and in motivating them to become independent, feedback, particularly in written form, could negatively influence or impede learning.

Keywords: Teachers' feedback; students' achievement; closing the gap

1. Introduction

Malaysian education practice regards feedback as a summative procedure where grades and marks are awarded, and written work is seen as a product. Profound changes were made to how academic subjects were taught, learned and assessed, including school-based assessment (SBA). Other revamps transformed the country's traditional education curricula of assessment of learning (AoL) to assessment for learning the (AfL) (Hazita, 2009; 2016). Advances in the education

landscape occurred when the government recognised that future generations must be equipped with the requisite skills to cope with a rapidly evolving and increasingly globalised world and job market. Nevertheless, teachers in Malaysia have obstacles in affording needed feedback in an examination-oriented environment due to several reasons, specifically, 1) dominance of superficial and rote learning in classroom assessment practices, 2) assessment materials are not critically reviewed and discussed with peers, 3) strong emphasis on grading instead of learning, and 4) assessments do not result in the desired washback effect (Mustaffa et al., 2011; Hazita, 2016; Hamzah & Paramasivan, 2017).

As explicated in past studies on the importance of teachers' feedback on students' academic achievement (Ahmad, Saeed & Salam, 2013; Carvalho et al. 2014; Fyfe & Rittle-Johnson, 2016; Al-Bashir, Kabir & Rahman, 2016; Afzal & Afzal, 2017), feedback has a prominent role in classrooms, as teachers use it to inform students of their current academic progress. Giving feedback on how students perform in the classroom or on specified tasks allows them to reorganise what they understand or know to accommodate new and better ideas and skills. Nonetheless, providing feedback does not fall solely on teachers as feedback can be given by peers during group work and students can create their feedback when working on academic tasks. Feedback is significant in the formative evaluation where teachers will be able to identify their students' weaknesses and use the information to improve their delivery.

Although teachers are cognizant that feedback promotes students' learning, they encounter multiple obstacles throughout the teaching and the learning process. Teachers believe it is arduous in furnishing feedback to the pupils personally. According to Anne and Hazita (2020), teachers are still doubtful about feedback's potency in academically engaging students. Further, Carver (2017) mentioned that teachers usually feel that it is onerous to provide students with the feedback they need and apply. In education, students are consumers, and teachers are compelled to provide accurate feedback that is specifically tailored to address students' demands and interests. Therefore, teachers must realise that feedback enriches students' learning by presenting information about how much progress they have made and what they need to do next to move forward. Nonetheless, subjects examining feedback practices in secondary schools in Malaysia are still lacking. Consequently, this study presented a synthesis of contemporary studies on teachers' feedback to learn how it could enhance secondary school students' academic performance.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Feedback Practice and Purpose

Hattie and Timperley (2007) defined input as knowledge given by teachers, peers, parents or experiences as to how one performs, or understands a matter. Feedback occurs after a student's response or when a student is given input on a certain task (Henderson et al., 2019). Systematically, teachers use feedback to shift students' focus from grades to the importance of knowing how much they have mastered a given task. Furthermore, feedback, at its best, is not just a list of comments but it is personalised to cater to students' specific needs. However, the impact feedback

has on students is dependent on its type, when and how it is used. Practically, teachers inform students of their progress while learning through the feedback loop (Chalmers, Mowat & Chapman, 2018). In these instances, students are informed of their current progress, reach their learning goals and gauge their performance against their peers.

Sadler (1989) contends that feedback is not just giving students their examination scores in grades or marks as these grades cannot help students better themselves. For this purpose, he considers that feedback is significant in shaping and enhancing students' academic development. He further explains that feedback helps evaluate learning by contending that formative feedback can act when it is interlinked with learning, which is the core of the entire learning process. This view is supported by Lefroy et al., (2015) and Rossiter (2016) who state that teacher's feedback, when it is not acted upon, cannot be considered as feedback for self-improvement because students use feedback to identify the areas they need to improve further. Formative feedback is only helpful when the comments are used to enhance learning to close the gap between the students' present academic achievement and the goal they strive. One of Sadler's (1989) prominent argument is that developing knowledge and skills are students' responsibilities and they should not be dependent on the teacher to tell them what is right, how to correct their errors and what they should do to improve.

In the AfL, formative feedback is essential for both students and teachers as feedback will tell students how much progress they have made, how much further progress is needed to reach their goals, the direction they need to take and how to achieve them (Tan, 2013). What separates the AfL from the AoL is the fact that in the AfL, information is utilised specifically to help students whilst learning new knowledge and skills. In situations where teachers' see assessments as essential in any learning process, they involve students in the process. Using information obtained from feedback, these teachers will make necessary adjustments to meet their students' requirements and simultaneously, students will also adjust their goals and learning techniques (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Feedback in the AfL is linked to improving students' learning activity. For feedback to efficiently complete the formative role, students must have their aims or standards that they can use to gauge their existing realisation against what they aspire to achieve and a set of actions that will motivate the gap to be narrowed down. In recognising this, Sadler (1986; 2016) re-conceptualised the idea of feedback and understood the formative nature of feedback. He challenged the concept of feedback being teacher-centred and a channel of knowledge controlled by the teacher, with the students placed as passive recipients. Sadler's argument further affirmed that students must have the capacity to regulate their learning and evaluation means. To initiate learners' control, learners should take on an influential role and work in partnership with the teachers. In Sadler's design, learners and teachers work collectively to form a partnership that empowers reading teachers' knowledge, transparent and accessible to learners.

The double-barrelled approach defines the dynamism of formative feedback, i.e. concurrently addressing motivational and cognitive constituents. Feedback intends to furnish students the awareness they require to distinguish their position on their learning curve and cognitively outline what to manage next. When students learn the direction they need to use, the feeling of control moves them to attempt learning independently (Chalmers et al., 2018; Winiewski et al., 2020).

2.2 Effective Feedback and Academic Performance

Due to previous attainments and practices, feedback or constructive criticism in an evaluative classroom situation can be positively viewed by students as they are aware that learning must happen with practice. Omer and Abdularhim (2017) posit that for teaching and learning to be considered successful, evaluation-based feedback should be constructive and suitable. On the other hand, Wisniewski, Zierer and Hattie (2020), whose analysis involved four hundred and thirty five (435) studies on the effects of feedback and students' academic achievement, reaffirmed Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis that feedback, due to its cognitive influences, was imperative in any forms of teaching and learning. Feedback is most effective when it is given during the learning process as it cognitively helps students adapt to new strategies or understand to improve learning and academic performance. Forsythe and Johnson (2017) maintain that feedback is used to develop students' understanding and help them productively and effectively change their learning and grow strong academically. This view is in line with Brown et al., (2014) who confirms that students' appreciation towards the feedback given will grow when they realise that it aids them in their academic pursuit. Previous research by Orsmond and Merry (2011), Alderman et al., (2014), and Evans (2013) support feedback's influence on students' academic excellence and on keeping them motivated.

Feedback can occur in several situations, specifically 1) teachers giving tips for corrective measures, 2) peers giving information for clarification, 3) students referring to a task's answer key to determine if the selected answer is accurate, and 4) students using self-reflection on previous experiences for self-improvement. When effectively provided, feedback is a powerful tool for improving learning. Feedback feeds forward into planning modifications in learning as well as in teaching for teachers whilst feedback about learning is provided to the learners with the intended purpose of improving learning (Griffiths et al., 2017).

The feedback model by Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggests that feedback must answer three main questions to be considered constructive, i.e., 1) what are the goals, 2) how to reach the goals, and 3) what is the next step (what activities are required to progress?). This model is also known as feed-up, feedback and feed-forward, where teachers can reduce the difference between what is currently understood and goals and achievement. The effectiveness of feedback is proven when three main questions are addressed. The model is as follows:

- 1) **Feed-up:** Prior to giving feedback, students must know the learning purpose. Feed-up clarifies where the students are going and what their goals are. Answers to these questions provide context for feedback.
- 2) **Feedback:** Since it revolves around how the students are doing and their progress, it monitors and assesses students' progress in learning related to the intent to learn.
- 3) **Feed-forward:** This step calls students to improve the tasks they are working on or their learning intention. Focusing on where to next and what needs to be done to move forward, feed-forward is more on asking students to refine their goals, i.e., come up with different sets of goals to achieve their target.

Students and teachers are equally responsible for reducing the learning gap. On the students' part, they need to either 1) put in more effort and effectively employ learning strategies or 2) lower or change their present goals. Carver (2017) states that teachers can give suitable goals and effectively help students using feedback and learning strategies. The feedback given can be based on four levels, namely level of tasks (what), process levels (how), addressing self-regulation lists for students, and self-level (students' personalities). According to Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Wiliam (2012), feedback based on the process and self-regulation is viewed as powerful effective.

Feed-forward is viewed as a better substitute to traditional feedback as it allows students to seek advice on the next course of action towards self-improvement (Martin & Alvarez, 2017). Students have the freedom to accept or reject the advice as the approach prepares them to accept challenges without fear of being judged. The feed-forward approach empowers them to plan for what is to come rather than brooding over what has passed. Feed-forward's positive traits let students know that the power to change is in their hands. Moreover, feed-forward's effectiveness makes students and teachers feel comfortable communicating with each other as students have the impression that their teachers are coaching them to become better without being intimidating.

Feed-forward is a favourite among students because it does not rate them on what they have done or failed to do but instead, it helps them to find permanent solutions to their current academic predicament. According to Martin and Alvarez (2017), feed-forward works on the fundamentals of assisting students by allowing them to plan and tailor their plans to meet their capabilities. On a similar note, Carver (2017) stated that apart from helping students cope with tasks related to summative evaluation, feed-forward assesses students' present achievement levels and formulates strategies to narrow existing gaps. Students who are actively present in the learning process, tend to perceive feedback as a feed-forward that helps direct them to their personal goals.

Kim and Lee (2019) state that despite, feedback's benefits, it can still be unkind and negative. As schools strive to become the best in their respective regions or districts, the real meaning of learning is negated by the importance of grades and the pressure to perform. Various studies discovered that the obsession with the number of As had affected students' interest to learn (Khan, 2014; Klapp, 2015;

Méndez López & Tun, 2017). Students lack the motivation to pursue their academic dreams as they feel that they are assessed by the grades obtained and not how much they have learned. Both teachers and students are trapped in a circle that pins students in a merciless spin of grading and teachers are pressured to prepare students to produce high grades. The high grades may put schools on pedestals, but it victimises students who are taught to become producers of countless As and not as individuals who have mastered learning.

Al-Bashir, Kabir and Rahman (2016) considered that feedback provides to teachers and students knowledge about learning while Masantiah, Pasiphol and Tangdhanakanond (2020) agreed that students need teachers' feedback to be able to reach their learning and to serve students with recognising the vital and vulnerable points of their work. Further, feedback assists narrowing down the gap between students' present extent of performance or knowledge and the aspired aim. Feedback can offer practical and influential impressions on students' learning, depending on how much information the teacher gives for additional growth. For example, Núñez-Peña, Bono and Suárez-Pellicioni (2015) reported that the use of feedback on students in mathematics class lessened the learning gaps of the results of mathematics-related anxiety, which might help them to perform well in the subject.

For feedback to be considered good or acceptable, it must contain details that can be used by the students. If teachers want students to benefit from the feedback given, they must ensure that the feedback is audible and comprehensible. Students will be unable to plan their next course of action if they cannot understand the feedback's gist. Consequently, they will ignore the advice and take the feedback lightly since they do not find the message relevant to their present situation. Regarding this, several studies have discovered that feedback, regardless of its benefits, can negatively affect students if it is given inappropriately. Moreover, students, especially those pursuing tertiary level education, tend to reject feedback and see it as pointless (Omer & Abdularhim, 2017; Rossiter, 2016; Wisniewski et al., 2020).

Fyfe and Rittle-Johnson (2016) reported that feedback's effectiveness is dependent on the learners' prior knowledge. Feedback helps learners with no or less prior knowledge of what is being learned but does not affect learners with excellent earlier knowledge on the subject. Consequently, for any feedback to efficiently meet learners' requirements, teachers must ensure that feedback discusses interests and areas that require improvement. In their research, Fyfe and Rittle-Johnson's (2016) examined three (3) secondary schools in Malaysia comprising ninety (90) seventeen-year-old participants who learned English as a second language (ESL). They studied the use of written feedback and participants' perception of the feedback. The results revealed that the participants reacted poorly towards the feedback as they felt that the feedback was demotivating despite its noble aims (Saidon et al., 2018). Such conflicting response is attributed to the fact that feedback tends to be overwhelming and excessive (Chalmers et al. 2018). Afzal and Afzal (2017) recommended that written feedback be orderly and immaculate, including the standard and necessary jargon, and avoid providing

some response. Hence, teachers need to find a balance between empowering and moving students to produce critical changes.

Students' reaction towards any forms of academic feedback is normally related to their perception of it. According to Boud and Molly (2013), how students perceive feedback from their peers and teachers is related to their growth mindset. Those who positively view feedback would see it as a positive indicator of their learning process and use it to measure how much they know and what they should do to better themselves (Forsythe & Johnson, 2017). In certain circumstances, Tippin et al., (2012) believe that the person giving feedback could influence students' perception of the feedback.

Another factor influencing students from accepting feedback is a fixed mindset (Chalmers et al., 2018). Unlike those with a growth mindset, fixed mindset student tends to be offended by feedback. These students would resort to being defensive as they feel that the feedback is a form of judgement that attacks their image and confidence. Instead of challenging them to change for the better, this group of students would view feedback as useless. Moreover, they would focus on what they are not good in rather than using the feedback to form plans or strategies that could help them grow intellectually and emotionally.

3. Objective and Methodology

This study employed systematic literature review as its research methodology and was qualitative research. It merged literary analysis and thematic analysis procedures to analyse and synthesise research papers that explore teachers' feedback and students' performance. The specific aim of this study is to identify the connection between teachers' feedback, students' learning and academic achievement. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) necessitates a stable, attentive reading and re-reading of the papers. This review's research papers were from various databases such as ERIC, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and other Scopus-indexed journals.

The search was carried out from May 2020 to August 2020. During this period, the researcher scrutinised the link between teachers' feedback and its impact on students' academic success. For this review, research published from 2013 to 2018 were included. The research papers selected for this review were sourced from several databases such as ERIC, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and other Scopus-indexed journals.

Guidelines adapted from Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) were used in this methodical literature analysis. Based on the guidelines, the following steps were used. The checklist was used as a guide and were used to develop a methodical review protocol to select literature that met the inclusion criteria. The protocol was as follows:

- i. Database search
- ii. Specific keywords related to the topic
- iii. Articles published from 2013 to 2019

- iv. Titles and abstracts were screened based on the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria
- v. Data relevant to the research questions are identified
- vi. Finalised data are summarized and reported

3.1 Selection of Studies

For selection purposes, selected articles must meet the following inclusion criteria:

- i. Studies focusing on teachers' feedback and students' academic achievement
- ii. Studies discussing problems associated with teachers' feedback and its impact on students
- iii. Studies discussing on benefits associated with teachers' feedback and its impact on students

The selected articles are examined further to determine whether they had met the pre-determined inclusion criteria. This review only includes publications written in English and published by peer-reviewed journals. Therefore, papers excluded are masters and doctoral theses and government reports and to prevent duplication, the articles' relevance are established based on their titles and abstracts.

3.2 Extracting Data

The database search was conducted using search engines of notable digital libraries such as ERIC, Google Scholar, Elsevier, and other Scopus-indexed journals. Relevant articles were searched based on their title and abstracts and were analysed based on their keywords and phrases *teachers' feedback and students' academic achievement*.

Table 2.1 Keywords and phrases with inquiries for database search

Keywords and Phrases	Inquiries
Teachers' Feedback	Effects of teachers' feedback on learning; Types of teachers' feedback; psychological impact of teachers' feedback
Students' academic achievement and teachers' feedback	Academic achievement and teachers' feedback; students' perception towards teachers' feedback

The keyword search identified thirty-five (35) articles. The inclusion process saw the articles being examined further based on the titles. Five articles were removed as they were duplicated. Ten (10) articles that did not focus on issues related to teachers' feedback and students' academic achievement are eliminated leaving the list with twenty (20) articles. The second inclusion process used abstracts to eliminate more articles leaving the list with eighteen (18) articles. The articles selected was published between 2013 and 2019. The key data were: (i) Author(s) name, (ii) the region, (iii) types, (iv) sample characteristics (e.g., gender, age), (v) data analysis, and (vi) key findings. The PRISMA flow diagram is outlined in

Figure 1 shows the process of identifying relevant publications, screening process and finalized the number of articles selected.

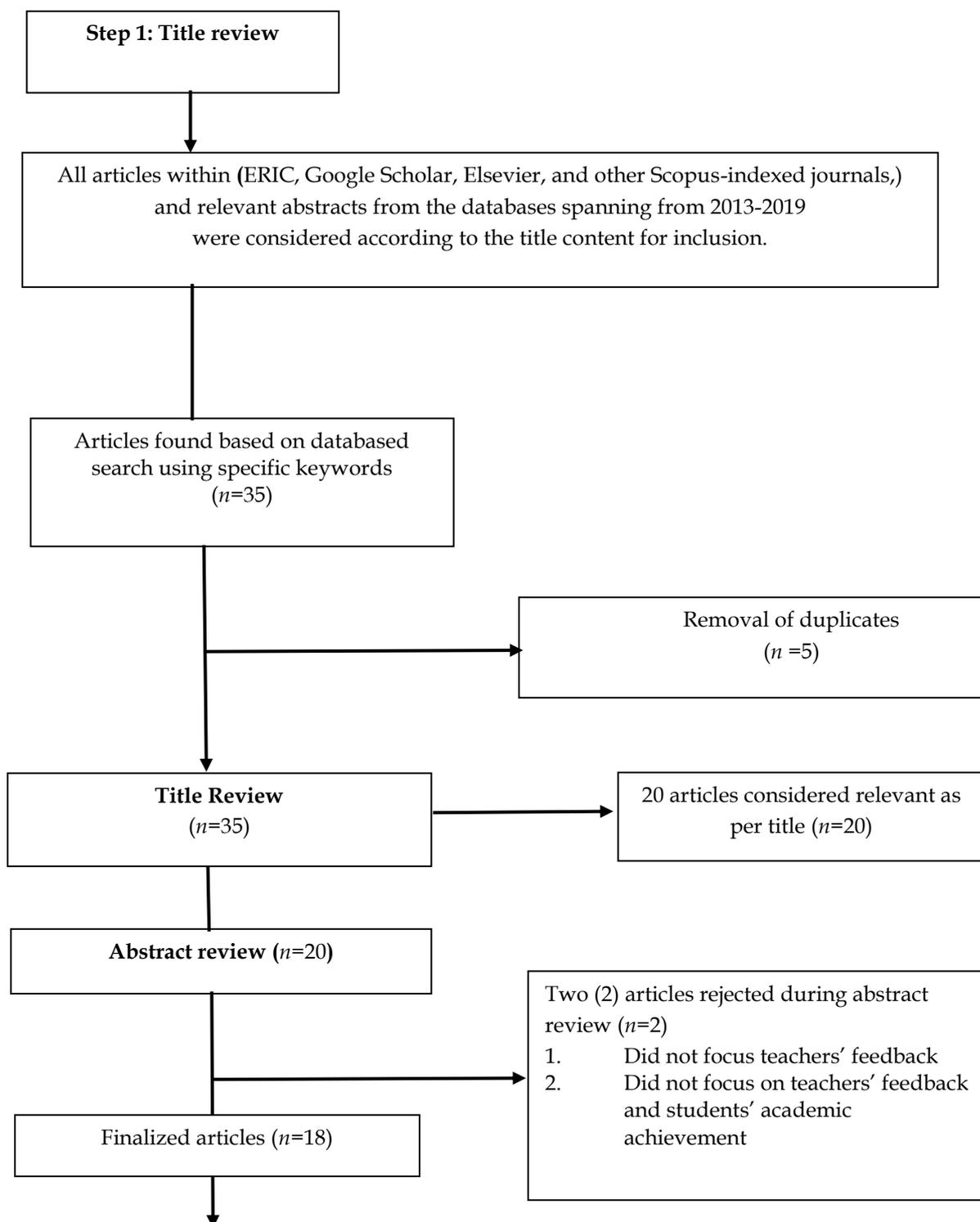


Figure 1. Steps identifying articles in examining teachers' feedback practice and students' academic achievement

4. The Results

Based on the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) administered, teachers' feedback assisted students to grow themselves to be academically sound. Teachers must offer feedback that inspires students' learning instead of demotivating them. The subjects in the analysis centred on reviewing teachers' feedback on students' academic accomplishment. The outcomes recorded that teachers' feedback could influence students in various forms, particularly their 1) academic achievement, 2) motivation to study, 3) capacity to learn independently and 4) learning-related anxiety. The outcomes are summarised and explicated in Table 1.

Table 1. A Systematic Literature Review of Teachers' Feedback Practices and Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement

Systematic Literature Review of Teachers' Feedback and Students' Achievement			
No.	<i>Teachers' Feedback and Students' Achievement</i>	<i>Explication</i>	<i>Study</i>
1.	Influence of teachers' feedback on students' achievement	The positive correlation between feedback given and students' academic performance	Ahmad et al. (2013); Al-Bashir et.al. (2016); Masantiah et.al (2018); Núñez-Peña et al. (2015)
2.	Teachers' feedback approach could improve or hinder students' motivation (perception) to learn	The positive correlation between teachers' feedback and the possibility of it affecting students' motivation and perception towards learning	Hamidun, Hashim & Othman (2013); Carvalho et al., (2014); Fyfe and Rittle-Johnson (2016); Afzal and Afzal (2017); Saidon et al. (2018); Chalmers et al. (2018)
3.	Teachers' feedback motivates students to improve themselves as independent learners	The positive correlation between teachers' feedback and students' regulating their learning independently	Fernandez-Toro and Hurd (2014), Al-Bashir et.al(2016); Masantiah et.al (2018),
4.	Teachers' feedback helps lower students' anxiety when learning difficult subjects (science and language)	The positive correlation between teachers' feedback and lowered anxiety levels	Di Loreto and McDonough (2014); Núñez-Peña et.al (2015); Martin and Alvarez (2017); Abdullah, Hussin & Shakir (2018)

5. Discussion

Teachers' feedback highlights the learners' forces and guides them on improving learning while simultaneously guiding them to address their current weaknesses. Teachers' feedback is surely connected with students' academic accomplishment, as presented on the analysis. Students require feedback for self-improvement. It

is imperative, so they will be self-supporting pupils and further intensify their scholarship. Nonetheless, teachers' feedback has flaws, particularly when it is rendered without judging students' preceding knowledge and sentiments.

Even though teachers' input is confidently linked with how good students achieve in their task, past studies has also pointed out that such input could have damaging results. Students tend to perceive their teachers' feedback, especially in written form, as inconsiderate and captious of their abilities. Their adverse response to the feedback could demotivate them from learning and improving themselves. Nevertheless, students driven by the feedback tend to learn by themselves as they manage independently to reinforce their weak links and devote more enthusiasm to become better.

In addition to the teachers' role in helping students academically, analysed studies have also highlighted that students are responsible for their learning. Apart from being moved to learn independently, students should embrace feedback, regardless of its nature and tone, as a hint to adapt and evolve. The capacity to accept constructive forms of feedback will empower students to recognise that feedback does not intend to attack them personally, but instead, it emphasises what they need to prepare for self-improvement.

The analysed literature also calls to attention the dark side of feedback used in summative assessments. Instead of building students' confidence and motivation to learn, feedback will end up demotivating them as a result of summative evaluation's critical and rigid features. The rigidity hinders learning as it uses grades to determine students' academic progress and gauge their abilities against their peers. On the other hand, when feedback is formative, instead of pitting peers against each other based on their grades, the feedback will help students to recognise their fortes and weaknesses. Students will be aware of the measures they need to take to overcome the gap between their current and future goals, hence, motivating them to become better learners.

In the literature, assessment for learning is quintessential for both students and teachers. Feedback prompts one to react to experience, design new instructional methodologies and found a robust sense of new learning in the classroom. To overcome students' challenges, teachers must make it a practice to use feedback to escalate teaching and learning effectively. By following the teachers' input, they deliver information that registers where the priority is and where relevant development guidance is assigned. Feedback not only promotes learning but at the same time teachers can change their teachings based on the input during the classroom lessons. Additionally, positive feedback invigorates teachers to devise learning and information models for their students' exacted scholarship.

The reviewed literature also showed that teachers' feedback should not always be exclusively descriptive but must consider classroom situation, motivation, the capability to read, and students' readiness. These qualities should create concrete feedback and guarantee the support and progress of students while learning. Teachers' input holds an obvious difference as feedback offers students' critical

information and what they know and what they need to do to move ahead in their learning. Feedback supports students to realise where and how to develop, and it can increase their motivation to put exertion in making enhancements. Therefore, feedback can better cognitively process for more reliable execution, including, affirming and rebuilding understanding, improving learning techniques, managing students to more knowledge and recommending better strategies to improve further. Feedback draws students in metacognitive techniques, for instance, objective setting, task arranging, observing and reflection, which are vital skills for self-regulated learning.

Ultimately, the literature pointed out that feedback is essential for students and upgrades teachers' instructional teaching skills. The reflexive action of considering and reflecting upon feedback empowers teachers to look deeper into their respective teaching skills and practices while delivering the content during classroom teaching. When feedback is utilised productively, it can intensify learning activities, pedagogy, and realise its predicaments. On the other hand, students reflecting on their understanding can offer feedback to the teacher, reflecting where teaching should be given importance and core interest. When teachers are tended to modify their lesson exercises depending on the feedback, this further encourages students' learning.

Concerning teachers' feedback, prospective comparisons can consider including secondary schools from other states in Malaysia to review other factors related to teachers' feedback practices and their influences on students' performance.

6. Conclusion

In the examined literature, the potency of feedback in promoting students' learning experience has been presented. Ergo, the analysis authenticated that teachers' feedback practice is pertinent in assuring that students are informed of their academic development. Feedback practices must not be mere comments by becoming a conduit that enables learning to move forward. Mastering the art of giving feedback is no longer a choice, but compulsion as it progressively becomes a notable factor that enhances students' learning and academic performance. Nevertheless, giving feedback should be done because it can affect the students' perception of the teachers' intentions and demotivate them from striving to become better. Teaching and learning are a two-way interaction between teachers and students, and feedback encourages balance how students are taught and how teachers approach teaching to satisfy their students' academic levels. Apart from helping students be informed of their academic progress, teachers can use feedback to reflect on their teaching manoeuvrings as they must guarantee that they can customise their lessons to cater to students' diverse necessities.

Acknowledgements

We are very thankful to the experts for their valuable critiques to write this journal.

7. References

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