

The Use of Enhanced Formative Feedback to Address Teachers' Challenges in Providing Timely Feedback in Printed Modular Distance Learning

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Abstract

The use of formative feedback in the assessment will help learners' knowledge and skill acquisition. This also provided a wide opportunity for the children to express themselves and help them build new skills and knowledge easily. It also represents information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner's thinking or behavior to improve learning.

This study used the descriptive method involving 3,168 teachers who formed part as respondents during the survey. It was found that most of the teachers encountered very challenging experiences in giving feedback in the results of formative assessment and providing feedback is not timely and immediate considering the modality used in distance learning.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of teachers to become the development teams in designing formative feedback sheets in printed learning materials. The study designed a 4-step process for developing formative feedback sheets in the learning materials. Formative Feedback Sheets were developed and utilized in the whole Division of Surigao del Sur across Grade 6, 10, and 12 levels. During the survey at the end of the implementation, findings revealed that there is a reduction in the number of teachers who experience very challenging situations in the provision of immediate feedback to learners. Results also revealed that the use of formative feedback in the learning materials addresses teachers' difficulty in the provision of immediate feedback. Furthermore, the formative feedback sheets attached to the learning activity materials become one tangible alternative to the scaffold of learning in distance education.

Key Words: Formative Assessment, Feedback, Challenges in Distance Learning

Context and Rationale

The education department is in the process of adapting to the new normal form of education at present, and continuous innovations of teachers and school leaders including the active involvement of other stakeholders are the driving force for its success. Modular distance learning challenged school leaders and teachers to provide meaningful educational experiences at a distance as the education world grapples with the impact of Covid-19. Formative assessment at a distance is challenging and teachers need to check for understanding to provide meaningful feedback.

Since DepEd schools are not ready for Online Distance Learning (ODL), and TV/Radio-Based Instructional Delivery (RBI/TVBI), the department implemented Modular Distance Learning through print. This modality allowed the schools to continue education and attain its mission and vision which is to provide quality

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and accessible education to every Filipino learner (Quinones, 2020). The use of printed modular delivery required teachers to design learning activity materials that will be distributed to learners instead of textbooks and other school learning resources that are still inadequate.

Through printed modality, the teacher takes the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the learners. The use of multiple platforms via e-mail, telephone, text message/instant messaging among others is encouraged to learners for asking assistance from the teacher. Whenever possible, teachers shall do home visits to learners needing remediation or assistance or learners in marginalized situations including those in hard-to-reach areas (Llego, 2020).

As the school year continued, more difficulties were encountered in the day-to-day delivery of basic education services. These difficulties include the materials, the way content lessons are based on, the references, the materials needed for learning activities, the learning activities and assignments, the activities that would facilitate learning, and the provision of timely and relevant feedback after measuring the progress of the students' learning (NUADU Education, 2020).

Moreover, schools in Surigao del Sur Division faced issues including how teachers provide immediate, timely, and relevant feedback to ensure understanding of the lessons and how learners cope with the lessons without the assistance and guidance of teachers.

In recent survey results, most of the learners are having difficulty with the new learning modality. 90% of the learners in schools had a hard time answering their modules and half of them do not have enough time to accomplish all their modules within a week (Dangle and Sumaoang, 2020).

Additionally, most of the students cannot answer all their modules independently, which is why they badly need the assistance of others. Teachers also assume that students' answers in their modules have no validity, and most probably, mastery of the lessons is impossible to attain due to tendencies of guessing to complete the tasks in the modules.

To guide schools and learning centers, the Department of Education released DepEd Order No. 31, s. 2020, the Interim Guidelines for Assessment and Grading in light of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan which served as a guide for teachers on designing assessment and feedback mechanisms that should be used to inform and improve classroom practices and promote learning outcomes. It further emphasized that in distance learning environments, schools and teachers need to utilize alternative tools and strategies for assessing, feedbacking, and supporting learning, that will help teachers, learners, and their families.

In the study conducted in Surigao del Sur Division by Correos and Huelma (2020), teachers find it difficult to provide immediate feedback in distance learning delivery. Teachers claimed that the feedback cannot be given immediately due to the delivery scheme used. This further concludes that teachers find it very difficult to reach out to students immediately to provide feedback and corrections to their answers.

The above findings prompted Surigao del Sur Division to develop a formative feedback strategy that maximized learning support through the use of self-learning materials. Thus, the idea to use formative feedback sheets was planned and developed. Formative feedback was generated by teachers as strategies to engage learners to constantly reflect on how they can approach, orient, and evaluate learning, which leads to successful learning outcomes using the self-learning activity sheets or learning modules.

As teaching and learning in distance classes need new methods and practices, it also required teachers and school leaders to adjust the pedagogical process. This research highlighted the use of formative feedback in the learning materials as a pedagogic approach that best supports effective learning in the distance education context. This also aimed to provide a reference for teachers who will engage in providing formative assessment with formative feedback for the learner to successfully learn in distance education.

Innovation, Intervention, and Strategy

Due to the challenges of the new normal, Surigao del Sur Division enhanced the design of distance education delivery through Enhanced Formative Feedback in the learning materials or modules to ensure immediate, timely, and relevant feedback to learners. Since formative assessment is a measure of student learning in the classroom, formative feedback must be delivered during instruction immediately, allowing students to identify misunderstandings of the concepts and help them correct their errors during self-check activities.

In distance learning, the concept of immediate feedback is difficult since there are no teachers who can assist students in processing the right answers and be able to correct their answers from the formative practice activities and assessment. Therefore, the formative feedback sheets will help them understand the concepts through discussions of the right answers.

Normally, the learning activity sheets and the self-learning materials have only answer keys wherein learners will just get to know the correct or wrong answers. But there is no key to corrections that will scaffold students to explain the ideas and concepts to understand the right or wrong choices.

This intervention focused on improving the key answers available in the learning sheets and self-learning modules by adding concepts that explain the key to correct answers. The answer keys in the learning activity sheets and modules were given explanations to provide direct, immediate, and timely feedback to learners. This way, the students can self-check their answers even without the presence of the teachers. This eventually helped learners deepen their understanding after they have given instant feedback that serves as reinforcement of knowledge by correcting mistakes, affirming competence, or debunking misconceptions on the topic. This formative feedback strategy allowed also students to review the inputs and key concepts presented in the lesson and correlate their ideas, their choices, and the key to corrections.

The development and pilot testing started last September 2021, the first quarter of the school year 2020-2021. It continued to October 2021 with its rollout and series of cascading and implementation to the whole division of Surigao del Sur.

Research Questions

This research answered the following research questions:

1. What challenges were encountered by teachers in providing formative assessment?
2. What strategies/processes were done to address teachers' challenges in providing formative feedback?
3. What is the significant impact of using formative feedback on teachers in the provision of timely and immediate feedback?

4. What reflections are derived from designing and delivery of formative feedback in modular distance learning?

Action Research Methods

Participants and/or Other Sources of Data and Information

The result of the evaluation of challenges encountered by 3,168 teachers who participated in the survey about the delivery and utilization of assessment was used as the baseline data of this study. The results of these challenges were carefully analyzed to plan more comprehensive and direct actions to address the gaps.

50 teachers were selected as a poll of writers as well as trainers for the pilot implementation that runs from September to October. These writers were used for the Training of Trainers and Developers of the Pilot Materials.

30 master teachers were selected as a set of evaluators who took charge of the evaluation for refinement of the materials developed by the writers. The roll-out was conducted for Grades 6, 10, and 12 to ensure that these grade levels are equipped with the knowledge and skills in the utilization of formative feedback materials since these grade levels are crucial due to exit assessments.

Data Gathering Methods

This research used a descriptive method applying convenient sampling specifically in the conduct of the survey and evaluation of the challenges encountered by teachers in the provision of formative assessment in distance learning. A convenience sample is used because it includes all teachers who happen to be most accessible to the researcher.

Since most teachers declared that they encountered very challenging experiences in the provision of timely, immediate, and relevant feedback, teachers were conveniently chosen to become part of the survey.

In the development of Formative Feedback Sheets, purposive sampling was used in determining teachers and master teachers specifically in the development and evaluation of the material. Purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, involves using expertise to select a sample that is most useful for the purposes of the research.

A series of capacity building was provided to select teachers in the development and quality assurance of Formative Feedback Sheets to ensure that formative feedback delivers what it intends to deliver. The finished materials were then used, and another set of survey evaluations was conducted to assess if the gaps in assessment and feedback identified were addressed.

The researchers utilized the mean and standard deviation for descriptive analysis of the data specified in the use of a questionnaire. The researchers also used a 5-point Likert scale:

- 4.21 – 5.00 Extremely Challenging
- 3.41 – 4.20 Very Challenging
- 2.61 – 3.40 Challenging
- 1.81 – 2.60 Slightly Challenging
- 1.0 – 1.80 Not Challenging

Discussion of Results

The discussion is based on the data and information gathered through the questionnaire used in the conduct of the study.

Table 1 Challenges encountered by teachers in providing formative assessment			
Delivery of Quality Assessment	$\bar{X}$	s.d.	Qualitative Description
The provision of timely, immediate and relevant feedback to determine learners understanding and progress of assessment results	3.91	0.69	Very Challenging
The validity and reliability of formative assessment results to determine learner's progress	3.86	0.79	Very Challenging
The provision of formative practice activities in the learning materials	3.73	0.75	Very Challenging
The development of flexible formative assessment tools for learners	3.50	0.82	Very Challenging
The delivery of formative assessment to measure learner's understanding	3.50	0.83	Very Challenging
Overall	3.70	0.80	Very Challenging

Table 1 shows the challenges encountered by teachers in providing formative assessments. The overall mean of 3.70 with a qualitative description of Very Challenging is a manifestation that the teachers have encountered challenges in the delivery of quality assessment in the modular distance delivery. Bearing the highest mean of 3.91 and standard deviation of 0.69, the teachers responded very challenging in the provision of timely, immediate, and relevant feedback to determine learners' understanding and progress of assessment results. On the validity and reliability of formative assessment results to determine learners' progress, the respondents find it very challenging to manifest a mean of 3.86 and a standard deviation of 0.79. On the provision of formative practice activities in the learning materials, the teachers responded very challengingly supported by a mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 0.75. Additionally, the development of flexible formative assessment tools for learners and the delivery of formative assessment to measure learners' understanding of 3.50 and standard deviation of 0.82 and 0.83 respectively.

According to the Global Education Monitoring Report (2020), one of the issues in educational aspects is the assessment and feedback practices in modular distance learning. These necessitate teachers to design materials tailored fit to the needs and learning capacities of the students such as flexible feedback tools to ensure the learning of the lessons. Since lessons require a self-equipped format, materials to be given by teachers must have feedback in itself to ensure understanding even without teachers' assistance.

Moreover, Morisson (2019) believed that self-paced learning, assessment, and feedback must be given the most attention in the design of the material. Much evidence supports the concept that best learning occurs when a student works at his or her own pace and is actively involved in accomplishing specified learning activities, assessments, feedback, and experiences learning success, according to learning principles.

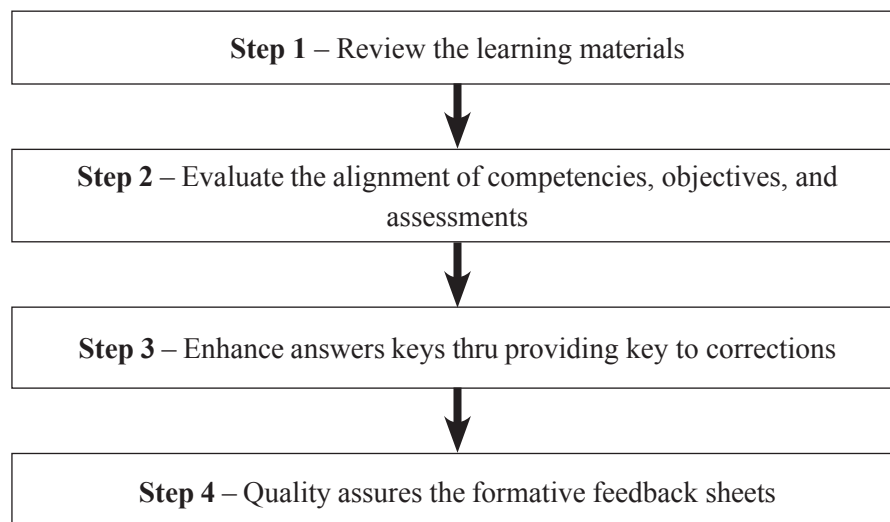


Figure 1 Strategies/processes done to address teachers' challenges in providing formative feedback

Step 1 focused on the review of the learning materials. This allowed the teachers to review the content of the learning activities or the self-learning modules. This helped teachers understand the connections between the parts of the learning materials, the contents, the activities, and the assessment toward the target learning outcomes.

Step 2 focused on the evaluation of the alignment of competencies, objectives, and assessments. Teachers are extra careful in this step because they are going to determine the comprehensiveness of all parts of the materials. If parts of the learning materials are not aligned, there is a tendency that formative assessment and formative feedback will not be organized and that affects the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

Step 3 focused on the improvement of the answers key portion of the learning activity sheets and other self-learning materials by including the key to corrections. This allowed teachers to write immediate feedback reflected in the learning materials.

Step 4 focused on ensuring the quality and alignment of the learner's materials, its assessment, and formative feedback sheets. Quality assurance is an important part of the assessment process. This QA process will provide feedback to the teachers that contribute to the quality of the developed formative feedback sheets. This process made sure that all elements and contents are aligned with the learning goals and outcomes.

An increase in students' engagement and learning is characterized by high-quality teaching and learning and this includes immediate feedback even in distance learning (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). Instructional support from teachers is the most dominant factor determining student engagement and learning becomes more efficient and relevant to them if they develop new skills, knowledge, abilities, and attitudes using appropriate materials even in distance learning (Rivet & Krajcik, 2008).

Learning materials must offer new approaches and learning opportunities that enhance students' knowledge and help them overcome deficiencies (Gordon & Nicholas, 2013). Through timely and relevant feedback, students can get to learn more about the concepts of the lesson. Teachers also must be aware of the intervention

that could be done to address students' least mastered competencies (Herrera & Dio, 2016) so that they can provide supplemental materials appropriate to learners' needs. Thus, the developed formative feedback sheets are indeed a supplement to enhance learners' understanding.

Table 2 The significant impact of using formative feedback to teachers in the provision of timely and immediate feedback						
	Before Enhanced Feedback			After Enhanced Feedback		
Delivery of Quality Assessment	$\bar{X}$	s.d.	Qualitative Description	$\bar{X}$	s.d.	Qualitative Description
The provision of timely, immediate and relevant feedback to determine learners' understanding and progress of assessment results	3.91	0.69	Very Challenging	2.01	0.76	Challenging
The provision of formative practice activities in the learning materials	3.73	0.75	Very Challenging	3.33	0.71	Challenging
The development of flexible formative assessment tools for learners	3.50	0.82	Very Challenging	3.40	0.73	Challenging
The delivery of formative assessment to measure learner's understanding	3.50	0.83	Very Challenging	3.38	0.72	Challenging
Overall 3.70		0.80	Very Challenging	3.07	0.70	Challenging

Table 2 shows the results of teachers' responses on the significant impact of using formative feedback on teachers in the provision of timely and immediate feedback. After the roll-out and utilization of the formative feedback sheets, teachers' experiences with challenges in the delivery of quality assessment reduced from very challenging to challenging. Teachers claimed that the provision of formative feedback sheets helped them and eventually reduced the challenges they experienced in the delivery of immediate and timely feedback.

According to the teachers, since formative feedback provides a wide range of learning, they found it helpful for learners who are given immediate feedback on the materials through formative feedback sheets and enhanced their knowledge, skills, and values in the targeted outcomes even in the absence of teachers.

During an informal sharing of experiences, one teacher expressed...

"I observed that students were not anymore asking me for clarifications in accomplishing and understanding the task. Unlike before, where learning materials were just given without the inclusion of formative feedback sheets, students keep on asking how the answers will explain the real concepts".

Teachers also claimed that formative feedback provided learners with opportunities to go back to the concepts and self-correct their errors independently. The outputs of learners were manifestations that there is an improvement in learning outcomes through the aid of formative feedback.

Meanwhile, another teacher expressed also her sentiments...

“I observed that students in my subject can independently process their own answers and corrections to their answers. The feedback sheets guide them in deepening the lesson’s concept. Their results in the outputs submitted are really manifesting their understanding”.

However, one teacher saw another side of the results...

“Although formative feedback sheets lessen my burden in providing timely and immediate feedback through formative feedback sheets, I need more training on how to authentically design formative feedback sheets in my lessons and check learners’ progress in their learning.”

In conclusion, teachers need more training in the crafting of formative feedback to enhance their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they might, in turn, improve the learning of students, specifically those who were just users and not part of the development teams.

Reflections

Based on the findings of the research, the following reflections were drawn.

1. Formative Feedback through the key to corrections provided specific, detailed, and understandable explanations that help learners understand a concept or figure out where they went wrong with their answer or solution.
2. Formative Feedback through the key to corrections provided constructive suggestions and feedback to improve their learning.
3. Formative Feedback through the key to corrections provided opportunities for learners to review their responses/answers.
4. Formative Feedback through the key to corrections provided a self-correcting strategy that instantly relates to the information they are using and applying at the moment.

Recommendations

From the reflections derived from this study, the following recommendations were given:

1. There is a need to revisit the feedback practices and methodologies used by teachers in the delivery of formative assessment and feedback on the new normal.
2. There shall be designing of formative assessment tools appropriate to the new learning modality.
3. There must be ongoing capacity building for school leaders and teachers focused on formative assessment and timely feedback
4. There is a need to provide consistent monitoring, evaluation, and technical assistance to be provided to schools to address the gaps and mitigate risks and challenges in the delivery of formative assessment and feedback in the new normal.

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