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Formative Written Feedback as perceived by the United Arab Emirates Secondary Science Students and Teachers: A Mixed Methods Study

by

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Date & Venue

Tuesday, 08/11/2022, (5 pm)

H1-0008

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Abstract:

Feedback is a vital component of the formative assessment process and the provisions of effective feedback practices have been reinforced in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recent educational government documents so they can yield a fruitful harvest for students' learning. Research, however, demonstrates that for feedback to be supportive of science learning, students need to thoughtfully consider and act on the information embedded in feedback for their ongoing improvement. The purpose of this study therefore was to examine how written feedback is commonly perceived and engaged with within the UAE secondary science learning contexts, as well as to identify factors contributing to students' engagement (or disengagement) with it. The participating sample consisted of 10th graders (n=351) and their science teachers (n=50) from public secondary schools. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed involving collecting quantitative data via questionnaires to examine and compare perceptions of participants, followed by individual interviews to further explain the initial data in more depth. Key findings revealed variance in perceptions about written feedback between the students and their teachers, specifically on issues pertaining to how feedback is conceptualized, the use of feedback for correcting mistakes and praise, and for expectations on the student and teacher roles in feedback follow-up. Moreover, findings generally reflected a productive cognitive engagement with the feedback compared to engagement at the behavioral level, and indicated some variations in students' affective engagement. Last, the findings identified characteristics that believe make written feedback information more engaging and personally meaningful as part of science learning, as well as gave rise to multiple factors influencing students' receptivity and reactions toward feedback, including academic, personal, and contextual challenges. The study suggests practical implications for making written feedback practices effective in accordance to the needs of science students at the secondary level.

Keywords: Feedback, written feedback practices, perception of feedback, engagement with feedback, secondary science education.