

Self-assessment and evaluation have been a core component of the Education Studies degree and are discussed within this reflection of the full learning journey. Assessment is known to be a continuing process that a teacher facilitates and is described by Wiliam (2010) as the bridge between teaching and learning, which aims to improve standards and effectively meet the needs of students. The feedback received for assignments, combined with self-assessment and evaluation are explored in a series of reflections and are linked to the principles of these skills. This is to discover how assessment develops learning strategies, approach to assignments and ultimately, how it will support the approach to and development of educational practices.

Both formative and summative assessment provides a framework for learning and a structure for measuring and improving standards so that educational practitioners can provide appropriate learning experiences to develop knowledge and understanding within subjects. Feedback from assessments is then delivered with the intent of it being an opportunity for students to independently revise their work and further develop their knowledge within a subject (*Evans, 2013*). This is further expanded to describe feedback as; motivational and able to influence engagement, a positive or negative reinforcement, and a tool to direct performance (*Nelson and Schuun, 2009*). Feedback has a direct influence on an individual's future learning, therefore considerations of the learner's direction and personal attributes should be made to ensure feedback acts as a motivation (*Evans, 2013*). To ensure that assessment processes are transparent and to minimise inconsistencies in marking, criteria is accessible to all students. This is a resource that can be used to promote learning and prepare students for where feedback will be provided. It has been suggested that when students know what they will be assessed on, particularly for exams, that it can develop strategies of learning surface knowledge to meet particular criteria, instead of having an in-depth knowledge base (*Scouller, 1998*). Yet when students have sufficient information on their learning goals and outcomes it enables them to effectively self-assess. Self-assessment is a tool to develop critical thinking skills to explore ways in which a student can better communicate their understanding of a subject (*Black and Wiliam, 2001*). It has also been noted that written feedback is not always an effective tool to change behaviour as it can be inadequate at providing clarity in what needs improvement and inadequately addresses individual learning strategies. It is said that further discussion could embed feedback directly and expand on specific elements of the feedback to further develop an individual's understanding (*Perera et al, 2009*). Yet it could also be argued that higher education emphasises independent work, meaning verbal discussions could be unnecessary (*Evans, 2013*) and also allows students to self-assess, critically evaluating how improvements can be made. By reflecting on assignment feedback students also have the opportunity to adapt their learning strategies and develop an approach to assignments which effectively demonstrates that improvements have been made and closes the gap identified in previous assessments (*Black and Wiliam, 2001*). Formative assessment is a way of facilitating self-directed learning and helps develop individual awareness (*Wiliam, 2010*).

Formative assessment identifies subject knowledge and the strengths and weaknesses of each student, which can indicate how individuals could develop and progress in their learning. Formative assessment can be facilitated as a class discussion or in tasks that demonstrate evidence of learning and effectiveness of teaching (*Dixon and Worrell, 2016*). Students were

made aware of asynchronous learning tasks to engage in for each module that were to be completed before lectures. The purpose of formative assessment is to measure a learner's progression and support the development of essential skills to move closer to achieving a goal (*Pedder and James, 2012*), therefore discussion-based assessment enables the teacher to use the zone of proximal development to determine whether their instruction needs to be adapted and supports learners in cultivating their understanding of a subject (Shephard, 2005). It also provides immediate feedback to the learner which is known to better support a learner in retaining corrected information (*Epstein et al, 2002*). This type of assessment has been actively used throughout lectures by encouraging discussion and is beneficial because of the ability to self-assess at the time of participation or delivery of working. During the third year all lectures were delivered online, which incorporated further formative assessments such as quizzes and exercises to complete. These activities enabled each learner to identify where their current understanding is and increase awareness in what requires improvement (*Dixon and Worrell, 2016*).

Summative assessment measures and evaluates the quality of a student's learning and equates the outcomes to standards set by exam boards. This helps determine an individual's level of knowledge to ensure that they have accumulated the necessary skills before proceeding into higher levels of education (*Dixon and Worrell, 2016*). Throughout the degree presentations have been delivered which is a form of summative assessment as students are directly observed applying their skills and demonstrating depth of learning. These have been documented throughout the reflection to understand how this assessment type has aided development. Summative assessment does not provide immediate feedback which could affect how well a learner is able to revise their work. This is evident in feedback for assignments which is received by students up to 2 weeks after submission, which devalues the feedback provided (*Epstein et al, 2002*). This is also the case with examinations which are usually at the end of an academic year, therefore leaving minimal application of feedback (*Scouller, 1998*)

Year 1

During the first year of the Education Studies degree key theorists were researched to develop an understanding of the history and key events of education. Through the varied modules knowledge of the essential framework, principles and learning theories were developed in a way that built upon previous learning, enabling an increase of detail in assignments. This incremental learning links to Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding theory where learners are introduced to the foundations of a topic before incorporating more in-depth components. This allows each learner to understand the core of a subject and how the different elements of the learning link together. It is a theory that was researched for the 21st Century learning presentation, therefore having the experience of learning in that way enhanced understanding of the theory and supported the approach to researching for the presentation.

Essay reflection

The feedback (1) received for the essay, which was assigned to demonstrate learning in the 21st Century module, stated that it was well structured and contained a balanced perspective

which linked to relevant sources, yet this could be improved. As noted by Shephard (2005) scaffolding is a kind of formative learning, therefore feedback could have been further personalised to the individual and details of improvement expanded upon. This would better support individuals in having clarity in areas that require additional information and refinement. Yet these details may not be included so that as a learner the motivation to address mistakes would lead to independently increasing awareness in gaps of knowledge (Lepper, Drake, and O'Donnell-Johnson, 1997). This independent problem solving could also increase engagement in and understanding of resources used within assignments which were suggested within the Past, Present and Future (2) and Individual Development (3) assignments. The individual development was capped at 40% due to late submission, yet was an assignment that was not actively engaged in, which was reflected in the feedback. As previously mentioned, being aware of what is assessed can lead to students acquiring surface knowledge to meet the requirements of an assessment, instead of having an in-depth knowledge of a topic (Scouller, 1998). As lectures were not specifically linked to the assignment that I was aware that my engagement decreased due to focusing on meeting the assignment criteria, which suggests that I have gained surface knowledge. Yet, with a recent change of teaching strategy involving active collaboration throughout the lecture, I feel this has improved. Cottrell (reference) states that active engagement....

In contrast to the essay feedback stating further focus was required on the theories instead of linking to other areas of development, the presentation (4) feedback suggested further linking to brain development was needed, with no mention of engagement and understanding of theories. Reflecting back on assignments I am aware that due to disorganised study skills, references had errors throughout due to lack of actively linking written information with accurate sources and minimal time was set to check work thoroughly which would ensure a balanced perspective is submitted. It is also understood that links to the foundational theories of each topic would demonstrate awareness of the importance of previous learning. Reflecting back, it is clear that first understanding the current practices and guidelines is essential as it has been the foundation of knowledge required across all modules.

Group presentation reflection

Throughout the first two years of study it was required to deliver group presentations. One of these presentations required each group to visit a place of learning, excluding a school, to explore ways in which learning is supported in the environment. I found this requirement of visiting a learning environment, outside of the university, useful in effectively collaborating ideas. During the times where the emphasis was solely researching individual components of a group presentation made the delivery disjointed, due to minimal group meetings outside of university. Therefore, having opportunities of critically discussing work within the class and outside of the university are beneficial as it aids collaboration (Le, Janssen and Wubbels, 2017) and as a student with ADHD was an active learning opportunity that increased focus. Self-management is also a core skill developed when working as a team and actively engaging in the process. Researching and presenting involved relying on others to contribute and effectively manage their own responsibilities (Pandadero et al, 2015). It has been noted that challenges of individuals within a group not fully participating (Le, Janssen and Wubbels, 2017) could be due to lack of prior guidance or activities that support students in collaborating in

an effective and productive way (*Blatchford et al, 2003*). For all group presentations I took the lead in creating the power-point and structuring the delivery. This was due to previous use and understanding of the software and enabled other members of the group to focus on their strengths. Collaboration is an opportunity to engage in cooperative learning with the aim to deliver a presentation that demonstrates a combination of ideas and the ability to work as a group (*Panitz and Panitz, 2014*). Yet feedback focused on how effectively the group worked together was not received until discussion and participation was evidenced on Teams, which is explored in year three. This indicates that unless supporting written evidence of group work is provided, that communicative and self-regulation skills cannot be effectively assessed (*Panitz and Panitz, 2014*).

Year 2

At the start of the second year, a needs assessment identified differences linked to ADHD which has shown to result in a variety of functioning and participation challenges in higher education (*Jansen et al, 2016*). This assessment led to receiving study skills support to develop the organisation of learning and approach to assignments. ADHD had not been identified in previous learning environments, nor had I sought additional support prior. This may be because ADHD is described as a hidden disability and is a group less likely to report areas of struggle (*Baverstock and Finlay, 2002*), therefore not recognised during formative school years. Yet in the study skills sessions, I became aware of how my organisational skills and time-management was a detriment to my work and have been able to identify strengths and weaknesses that have increased awareness in what skills require development. I feel having these additional sessions with a study skills mentor has enabled me to understand where I benefit from the support and has developed my ability to ask for help in other areas of life. As students with ADHD are more likely to drop out of education (*Baverstock and Finlay, 2002*), I believe receiving support has been a factor for continuing the degree. The study skills mentor effectively navigated each session with an awareness of how my brain can consider multiple ideas, linking back to previous work, therefore facilitated me in prioritising the information and disregarding irrelevant links. Visual aids were also used to develop my ability to prioritise information and structure my work clearly. Prior to this degree, I completed an access course with all but one assignment resulting in a distinction. This developed confidence in my ability to write academically and has aided in similar results at a level 4-6 standard. Yet, despite these results, I am aware that the process of learning and working requires development to ensure a consistent standard is delivered. By receiving additional support, it has increased my awareness of how a scattered approach can reduce the capacity to improve assessment results. Therefore, having the individual learning contract (ILC) (6) held me accountable to actively developing skills and understanding the importance of acquiring them. Reading aloud has shown to critical reasoning (*Bloxham, Boyd and Orr, 2011*), therefore it was recommended that work was reviewed aloud to hear if there are any gaps in knowledge and to revise any areas that sounded disjointed. Through receiving additional support, it has helped identify preferred learning strategies such as discussing module content and assignment requirement, which has increased active engagement in the learning process. This is in alignment with the findings reported by Hamblet (2019) in which students with ADHD that receive support were found to improve motivation and have better processing strategies. Despite challenges with social interactions, I regularly suggested to peers about meeting outside of lectures to discuss work and develop skills essential to assignments, yet this rarely

transpired. Therefore, having the opportunity for discussion-based work with a mentor developed my ability to communicate with more clarity and benefit from the ILC (6), developing strategies to manage problems caused by inhibited working memory (*Jansen et al, 2016*). These support sessions also develop an understanding of how time management and planning can improve how effective knowledge and understanding is demonstrated in assignments. Self-assessment is a key skill to refine as it involves identifying criteria and to what extent this has been achieved. When a student has the awareness of what standard they are working to it enables them to further increase their autonomy and self-directed learning (*Boud and Falchikov, 1989*). Having continually developed these skills I am able to better demonstrate my learning and achieve set goals.

The lines of enquiry module had three assignments attached to demonstrate learning and practical application of skills in placement. The reflection (7) shared an insight into how a placement within a school developed autonomy, which was then expanded upon when engaging with the literature that supports the learning experience. This has been suggested to increase self-directed learning, ability to effectively self-assess and develops a positive orientation towards learning (*Henri, Morrell and Scott, 2018*). Within the second year of study, many of the assignments linked back to the key theorists studied in the first year. This enabled previous layers of knowledge to be applied which expanded the level of critical analysis of each topic. To demonstrate learning and knowledge in approaches to classroom management an essay comparing two approaches of classroom management was analysed within an essay (5). The feedback received contained corrections of sources, as some were not academic, and encouraged an expansion of supporting documents. The feedback received for this essay could have been better understood with a verbal discussion, so that the notes suggesting further expansion on critical analysis could be actively addressed. I was disappointed with this feedback as an increase of critical engagement had been prioritised for this assignment in study skills meetings, and felt that I had improved. Yet this was evidently not improved upon, which left me feeling confused. When a learner is autonomous they have an awareness that addressing challenges is a process, which ensures feedback continues to be a form of motivation irrelevant of the content (*Henri, Morrell and Scott, 2018*).

Year 3

In the third year I received further additional support through a mental health advisor which was recommended on the needs assessment. As self-awareness is key when self-assessing, having a mentor facilitating the exploration of personal attributes that have enabled me to expand my knowledge and skillset was beneficial, as I am more likely to be self-critical.

As lectures are solely online it has required students to further develop self-motivation and self-regulation. Peer assessment and collaboration was facilitated with break out rooms enabling the continuation of developing self-assessment skills. Due to the online learning, presentations were to be pre-recorded which was an opportunity of further developing the skills of creating a power-point and embedding audio. Presentation skills also required refinement as without immediate feedback of body language, active engagement of an audience is unknown. To demonstrate awareness of formative assessment methods suitable

tasks linked to the topic such as online quizzes and activities, were incorporated into presentations to measure learning outcomes of the audiences and to increase active participation.

For the community engagement module, a project including a needs analysis and a proposal of a programme to address the needs of this community was created to demonstrate learning. Time-management skills were essential during this project due to the different elements. Effective time-management is linked with greater academic achievement and is delivered with increased confidence (*Adams and Blair, 2019*). The lack of thorough checking of the format and content of the assignment were to the detriment of final results, yet the content and sources referenced throughout were sound. Although further considerations could have been made in order to fully understand how the project would be delivered to support a community. As feedback regarding errors in reference formatting has been received throughout the course, I am aware that increased focus when proof reading is required to ensure these are detected. This feedback encouraged me to discuss this further with the study skills mentor as I am aware that careless mistakes often occur to those with ADHD (*Jansen et al, 2016*). This discussion resulted in creating a time-frame to work to ensure that work is proof read with enough time to revise any errors. It also allows for a balanced perspective of the subject to be established, with a range of supporting references. Reading aloud has shown to help identify errors (*Bloxham, Boyd and Orr, 2011*), therefore this was prompted as a strategy to implement again. Yet, this development of skills was not always sufficient in improving work. An example of this is the radical education assignment (8) of creating a prospectus for a school drawing upon critical pedagogy. Despite discussing this assignment with the study skills mentor and lecturer, my understanding of what was expected was limited. It has been noted that both students and teachers are dissatisfied with feedback, with students feeling disadvantaged with the lack of clarity about requirements of improving, and teachers frustrated that feedback does not actively improve future learning and assignments (*Evans, 2013*). As I was unable to effectively incorporate critical pedagogy into a prospectus format it was highlighted in the feedback that it required refinement, yet provided minimal suggestions as to where improvements could be made. How individuals can be supported in assessment and fostering strong self-assessment practices is an area that requires additional research. This is because factors such as the ability to self-regulate is a component that can affect how feedback is received and understood, which ultimately determines how well skills are transferred (*Evans, 2013*). This could be addressed with feedback including summaries which are directly linked to the individuals work. This has shown to result in substantial revisions being made and an increased awareness in how to effectively structure work and provide sufficient evidence (*Nelson and Schunn, 2009*).

Having reflected on the full learning journey of this degree, it is evident that the principles and theories that underpin educational practice will be the foundations as an educational practitioner career and guide approach and decision making. Assessment ensures learners identify their strengths and weaknesses and develop the self-awareness and autonomy to refine their skills to more effectively communicate their knowledge and understanding (*William, 2010*). Self-assessment has a key role in developing strategies to effectively direct learning and build awareness in preferred learning styles and how to productively apply learning (*Boud and Falchikov, 1989*). It could be recommended that reflection on feedback is emphasised as a fundamental aspect of the course and is a skill that will continue to be utilised

as an educational practitioner. An increase in knowledge surrounding ADHD and other additional learning needs could also better support the communication of importance of reflection, assessment requirements and how to access support. This is because it is evident that additional study skills can increase the embedding of learning and active engagement in developing necessary skills to address errors (*Baverstock and Finlay, 2002*). Yet it is clear that self-assessment has been the key to actively developing necessary skills to close the gap of knowledge identified and to be able to effectively link learning from all modules together and form a holistic understanding of education.

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