Feedback Encounters, Sensemaking and Enactment in MA Students: An Exploratory Study

Karina Cicero
UCL

Abstract

Research in Higher Education assessment has recently focused on feedback as a process, moving further away from the "transmission view" of feedback (Nicol, 2010). This means that in the process of feedback, students have an active role instead of passive receivers (Molloy et al., 2020). Supporters of this view maintain that feedback from various sources can lead to higher levels of student feedback literacy and thus deeper instances of sensemaking, leading to enactment (Nicol and McCallum, 2022; Panadero, 2023). As most research has been orchestrated around creating opportunities for students to elicit feedback (Henderson et al., 2019), but it has not replicated what happens in practical reality. I decided to explore what would happen in normal settings. My aim is to explore the leads of feedback encounters MA students engage in, to what extent these can lead to sensemaking and their link with enactment. In a small-scale study carried out at UCL, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 4 participants, after receiving draft feedback and final submission feedback. I sought to explore how they made sense of feedback comments and how they addressed gaps in their understanding. Findings yielded that the more varied feedback sources were, the more regular sensemaking occurrences were. In general, students who proactively elicited feedback engaged in more sensemaking events that led to accurate enactment. However, not all enactment presupposed successful sensemaking. These findings call for further research that looks into the implications and causalities of feedback encounters, sensemaking and its subsequent enactment in HE.