

Analysis of assessment practices; Principles of good feedback practice & the Re-Engineering Assessment Practices (REAP) Project.

- **Sadler (1989) identified three conditions necessary for students to benefit from feedback.**

The student must:

- a) possess a concept of the goal/standard or reference level being aimed for
- b) compare the actual (or current) level of performance with that goal or standard
- c) engage in appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap

Sadler argued that in many educational settings teachers give students feedback information on (b) – i.e. how their performance compares to the standard – but this feedback often falls short of what is actually necessary to help students close the gap. For example, such information might be difficult to understand (e.g. a comment such as ‘this essay is not sufficiently analytical’) and especially if the learning goal (a) has not been fully assimilated in the first place. Black and William (1998) further elaborate on this communication issue when they discuss the links between the way a feedback message is received and what students do with that message.

...those factors which influence the reception of a [feedback] message and the personal decision about how to respond...[include]...beliefs about the goals of learning, about one's capacity to respond, about the risks involved in responding in various ways and about what learning should be like (p21)

- **Teachers should focus their efforts on strengthening students' self-assessment skills**

Any model of feedback must take account of the way students make sense of, and use, feedback information. More importantly, however, is Sadler's argument that for students to be able to compare actual performance with a standard, and take action to close the gap, then they *must already possess some of the same evaluative skills as their teacher*. For many writers, this observation has led to the conclusion that as well as focusing on the quality of the feedback messages teachers should focus their efforts on strengthening the skills of self-assessment in their students (Yorke, 2003; Boud, 2000).

- **7 Principles of Good Feedback Practice**

From the conceptual model and the research literature on formative assessment Nicol (2004) identified seven principles of good feedback practice, namely;

Good Feedback Practice:

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning.
2. Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards).
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem .
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching.

- **Assessment of Learning, in learning and for learning.**

Boud (2005) argues that most lecturers in Higher Education put a great deal of time and effort into assessing students at the end of their learning period i.e. for certification purposes but when there is little or no opportunity for students to learn from their assessment experience and use this feedback to enhance their subsequent performance in assessment. He argues that if students are to benefit from assessment we should increase efforts to re-design our teaching, learning and assessment strategy so that we are giving more emphasis to assessment *in* learning and assessment *for* learning and not just assessment *of* learning.