Reflection essay OM1 “Giving feedback”

The case video I’ve seen is about four students discussing what good and bad feedback is and how they use it in their studies. In this essay, I will discuss the problem ***“We judge too much and too powerfully, not realizing the extent to which students experience our power over them”.*** I will reflect on my own experiences of feedback as a student, how the statement relates to positive and negative feedback, and how I would address this as a learning assistant. I will also discuss the video and the literature I’ve read.

I want to start with defining feedback. The literature I’ve read defines it as *“information provided by an agent (teacher, peer, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one´s performance or understanding”*. In my opinion, an accurate definition to some extent. However, I want to add the definition of *good feedback* according to the students in the video I’ve seen to this definition, to make it complete. They define itas“*good feedback is clear, provides explanations and motivates*”. To me, this definition, together with the literature’s, is spot on. If it’s not clear, then the student is left confused and wondering what learning assistant was talking about. To provide explanations and motivation is crucial. How will the student learn how to do something right if the learning assistant is just saying: “This is wrong, fix it”, and not explaining how the student can “attack” the task/assignment to get it right? Motivation is also important, without it, the student may fall behind and just do the assignments because they are mandatory, and not because they want to learn. As a student myself, I’ve done this plenty of times. I lack motivation already, and the feedback I get does not encourage me to learn more about the subject.

Now that I’ve defined feedback, it’s time to share my experience as a student. I have an example from my math class in high school. The teacher took us aside after a test we’ve had. He explained to me what I had done right, and what I had done wrong. He then moved on to explain me how I could do the things I had done wrong, right. After this, he said, “Altogether a good job, keep it up!”. To me, this was perfect feedback. He did not just tell me what was wrong and what was right, but also explained what I could have done. As the literature I’ve read states: “*Remember that even the slightest good comment can make a student feel good*”, the “good job” I got from my teacher was a huge motivation boost, even though it was just four words. Moving on to an example of a bad feedback I’ve got. It happened while in college. I had received the grade for an exam I had taken. When I asked for justification for the grade, I was referred to the proposed solutions. This feedback led me to just be happy with my grade and not do anything about it. The literature I’ve read talk about “feedback that lacks guidance” and “feedback that is too general or vague”. I would place this feedback in those categories. What was so bad about this feedback was that they said nothing on my own answers, they didn’t make it personal.

Over to the statement “We judge too much and too powerfully, not realizing the extent to which students experience our power over them***”*.** I believe as a learning assistant, I do not judge too much and too powerful. My students are my age (or older), so I’m at their level, and know what it’s like to get feedback from a learning assistant. I also try to befriend them and show them I’m their peer and not a scary and powerful teacher. I can see how the statement relates to regular teachers and professors. They have much more authority and aren’t familiar with how it’s like to be a student getting feedback from them. I think the statement refers more to a negative feedback rather than a positive feedback. If you know your position and know what it’s like to be at the receiving end at a feedback, you are more likely to give positive feedback, and not coming across as powerful.