PERCEPTIONS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDENTS ON CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN RESEARCH SHARING AMONG PEERS IN IN-CLASS ACADEMIC CONFERENCES IN PRIVATE POLYTECHNICS IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract  
The study focused on perceptions of entrepreneurship students on corrective feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Survey design was adopted. A total of 126 entrepreneurship students from the four polytechnics in the study area made up the population. There was no sample since the population was manageable. A structured questionnaire was constructed, validated and used for data collection. Reliability coefficients of 0.85 and 0.88 were obtained for the two sections of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that the respondents did not differ in their mean ratings of their perception on the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences as 10 out of 11 items on indirect feedback were rated as not helpful at all while one item was considered helpful. The respondents did not also differ in the mean ratings of their perception on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences since 8 out of 10 items on verbal feedback were rated as not helpful at all while only two items were considered helpful. The test of the null hypotheses revealed that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in the mean ratings on their perception on the helpfulness of indirect and oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. It was recommended among others that at academic conferences, feedback should be directed at assisting participants to know the strengths and weaknesses in conference papers and how to overcome them. Conference monitors should be used by organizers of academic conferences to observe the activity patterns of the various groups and predict when intervention may be needed.  
Key Words: Feedback delivery; research sharing; comprehensive conferences

Introduction  
One of the most valuable contributions that anyone can make to another person’s learning in research sharing is corrective feedback. Two of the most popular methods of sharing research are paper presentation and feedback from participants at any academic conference.
conference. Implicit in the foregoing is the notion that feedback is an integral aspect of research sharing conferences one of which is the in-class academic conference (IAC).

In-class academic conference is one whose theme takes a wider focus usually situated within a field of study with sessions on a wide variety of subthemes which is usually attended by students of the same discipline (Mark, 2012). Ideally, in-class academic conferences (IACs) are vehicles for disseminating research findings, facilitating intellectual exchange of informed ideas, forging valuable professional and social networks with peers as people attend and present their papers.

The caliber and types of papers presented at IACs can vary considerably. Some are empirical, others are theoretical, some are inspiring, others are dry, some are high-tech and some are works-in-progress already in print. Whether a paper is poorly or well written, giving a conference paper is one of the few opportunities that presenters can have in person to deliver their papers and also receive inputs from other participants. However, meaningful learning from such conversations can only take place where there is room for corrective feedback. This is because as a dialogue, feedback is fundamental to productive learning.

Feedback can be seen as an active force that may stimulate interaction by means of inputs from different sources with the intention of showing those participating in the interaction what people think of their efforts with regards to their strengths and deficiencies and how to overcome them. (Bloxham & Boyd, 2008; Garrison & Frhringhans, 2007; Rogers, 2006). If people know how they are doing in relation to the standard expected of them, they will work hard to correct their deficiencies and capitalize on their strengths. Boud (2000) reported that unless those who receive feedback are able to use it to produce improved work; neither they nor those giving the feedback will know that it has been effective. This explains why Whiggins (2014) posited that the purpose of feedback should focus on learning that is directed at bringing about the much desired improvements.

Feedback may take many forms each of which is capable of eliciting from the receiver, different reactions that can either improve the task at hand or affect its reception depending on how it is given. Some of the different types of feedback include: verbal, written and generic (positive or negative) comments covering the strengths and weaknesses that may be found in the work of a particular person and comments from that person. According to Black and William (2006) the action taken by a learner in response to feedback depends heavily on the nature of the feedback, the manner in which it was delivered, the way in which it was received, the way in which it was perceived and the working context in which that action may be carried out. Similarly, Falchikov (2015) suggested that positive feedback reinforces positive action while negative feedback can cause self-devaluative responses and interfere the information of feedback. This implies
that feedback type and its delivery can impact differentially on the recipient’s perception and response to it.

This is further exemplified in direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback takes place when an error is identified after which the correct form is then provided. Conversely, indirect feedback occurs when the provider shows that an error has been made but does not provide a correct form leaving it to recipients to diagnose and correct it independently (David, 2010). This indirect feedback may be compounded by providing symbols such as question mark (?), asterisks (*), dash (-), slashes (/\), underscores (___) all of which indicate the presence of an error on a written work but cannot help the recipients to recognize the type of error made. Loup (1996) lamented that common practices in feedback are limited in their capacity to improve teaching and learning but chiefly serve as monitor of minimal competence.

A study carried out on the effect of different treatment conditions on report writing among high school teachers indicated that direct error correction produced more correct reports (88%) compared to indirect error feedback (77%). However, at the end of the semester, it was found that 836 teachers who received direct feedback had the frequency of errors made reduced much more significantly than those who received indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2010). Ferris (2010) believed that error correction can help feedback recipients to improve their writing abilities but the method used must be selective, prioritized and clear.

This is supported by Ashwell (2010), Fathman and Whalley (1990), and Ferris and Roberts (2010) who examined the effect of three different feedback treatments namely errors marked with codes, errors underlined but not marked and no errors feedback on assigned tasks in teachers’ retraining workshop, the researchers found a significant difference between the performance of error feedback group and the no feedback group. Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) analysis of feedback and learning among undergraduate students found a substantial variability in the effect of feedback. Hattie and Timperley reported that feedback about a particular task and how to do it is more effective than speaking to issues without giving the solution.

Similarly, Bepsu, Udonno and Stephen (2015) investigated the effect of written and verbal feedback on postgraduate students writing and presentation of seminar. The researchers utilized a structured questionnaire to obtained responses from 200 postgraduate students. Independent t-test was used to analyze the data collected. The depth of the findings revealed a significant differential effect of written and verbal feedback on accuracy level in students writing and presentation of seminar. The findings further indicate that the variations in feedback coupled with its delivery could result in marked differences in its effects on learning and the ability to handle the task for which feedback was given.
At in-class academic conferences as in other learning situations, people learn better and more deeply if they know what the strengths and weaknesses of their presentations are and most importantly, how to improve the quality of future research presentation and also make useful contributions to the research works of other people. The potential to improve the quality of future research endeavour depends on the ability of feedback providers to identify the gap between actual and desired quality in conference papers by indicating the standard attained on any given criterion and also provide information required to close that gap. It is this additional information which is so relevant in bringing about learning in academic conferences that makes corrective feedback effective.

Among the academic conferences in Cross River State, in-class conferences appears to be one of those where papers are presented hastily with little or no time for meaningful intellectual conversation (Agbor, 2008). Aside from IAC, It has also been observed that participants especially in some well attended academic conferences are rarely given the five minutes time to deliver a-14 or 16 page paper (Bepsu, 2012). As a result they end up reading the abstract without discussing their papers. Even when the floor is left open for feedback from other participants, only a few comments or questions are sometimes entertained. Bepsu (2012) noted with regret the near absence of meaningful interaction among participants in most academic conferences. Many factors are responsible. Among the factors as identified by the author are large conference grouping, timing at plenary sessions, prolonged plenary sessions, late arrival of most participants, late commencement of the conference all of which may translate to hasty presentations and feedback that is not adequate to facilitate learning.

Agreeably, there is very little that anyone can learn from research sharing conferences where certain practices tend to limit intellectual conversation upon which effective feedback is predicated. Like other professionals, entrepreneurship students who participate in-class conferences are not left out since the above variables are common features in such conferences. Although a communiqué on how to improve future conferences is sometimes issued at the end of the entire exercise after eliciting the opinions of participants about the organization, the challenges encountered and their suggestions on the way forward. In spite of these efforts, the problems associated with conference feedback still persist. It is the persistence of these problems that informed this study.

**Purpose of the study**

This study aimed at investigating the perceptions of entrepreneurship students on corrective feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.
Specifically, this study sought to:

1. Determine the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

2. Determine the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perceptions of the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

**Research questions**

1. What is the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

2. What is the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

**Hypotheses**

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the means rating of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

**Methods**

This study adopted survey design. The population comprised 126 entrepreneurship students from the four private polytechnics in Cross River State. There was no sample since the population was small enough to be studied in its entirety. A 21-item structured questionnaire developed on four point scale of very helpful (VH) = 4, helpful (H) = 3, sometime helpful (SH) = 2 and not helpful at all (NHA) = 1 was used to collect the required data. The instrument was validated by three experts from the University of Calabar. Two validates in measurement and evaluation face-validated the questionnaire while the content validity was carried out by one validate in business education. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the
instrument. A reliability coefficient of .79 was obtained and this indicates that the instrument was reliable. The obtained data was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The following decisions guided the interpretation of results of the analyzed data. For the research questions, the real limit of numbers was used to interpret the mean values of items. Thus, any items whose mean scores ranged between 3.50 to 4.00 were regarded as VH while items of scores of 2.50 to 3.49 were regarded as H. In the same manner, any item of scores of 1.50 to 2.49 was regarded as SH and items with mean scores of 1 to 1.49 was regarded as NHA. However, t-test was used in testing the null hypotheses at probability of .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was upheld for any item in which the calculated value was less than the critical value of 2.00 at .05 level of significance and otherwise the item was rejected.

Results

Research questions

1. What is the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

Table 1: Mean ratings of the difference between the perception of male and female students on the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/n</th>
<th>Perception of indirect feedback</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Writing comments that are not related to specific facts in conference papers</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Writing abbreviated words to correct lapses in conference papers</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Underlining sentences to indicate the presence of errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Putting a mark in the margin of papers to indicate errors.</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Writing asterisks against paragraphs to show errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Writing a question mark against a phrase in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writing slashes across pages to show the presence of errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Putting a sentence in parenthesis to indicate errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Writing dashes to show the presence of errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Circling words/phrases to indicate errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Writing dotted lines to show the presence of errors in conference papers.</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key: Very helpful = VH; helpful = H; Sometime helpful = SH, Not helpful at all; NHA; Mean = X; Standard deviation = SD;

Data in Table 1 indicates the mean ratings of the opinions of respondents on their perception of the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences. The data indicates that 10 out of the 11-item statement on the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences had mean values of 1.37 to 1.49 which fell within the range of 1 to 1.49 implying that these items were perceived as not helpful at all. Only one item out of the 11 items had mean value of 2.75 which fell within the cut-off point of 2.50 to 3.49 and therefore was considered helpful in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

2. What is the difference in the mean ratings of male and female students on their perception of the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

Table 2: Mean ratings of the difference between male and female students perception on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/n</th>
<th>Perception on oral feedback</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Giving immediate oral responses to questions of facts</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Giving immediate oral responses to participants’ misconceptions</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Making criticisms without offering any insights into how to improve papers</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Giving conflicting perspectives on the same issue</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Unresolved arguments on some contentious issues</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Feedback being too generalized</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Comments directed at individuals instead of conference papers</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Aggressively negative responses from some participants</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Comments not detailed enough to improve research productivity</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Commenting on the problem and not the solution</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>NHA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Very helpful = VH; helpful =H; Sometime helpful = SH, Not helpful at all; NHA; Mean = X; Standard deviation = SD

Data in Table 2 indicates the mean ratings of the opinions of respondents on their perception of the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences. The data indicates that eight out of the 10-item statements on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic
conferences received the mean ratings of 1.34 to 1.47. Using the cut-off point of 1 to 1.49 as a benchmark, the data suggested that eight items were perceived by the respondents as not helpful at all. Only two items out of the 10 items had mean values of 2.55 and 2.58 which fell within the cut-off point of 2.50 to 3.49 and were therefore considered helpful in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

**Table 3: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of the perception of male and female students on the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-tab.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at 0.5 alpha level; df=124; critical t-val. 1.960*

Data in Table 3 indicates that the t-calculated of 0.213 is less than the tabled value of 1.960 at .05 level of significance with 124 degree of freedom. This result implies that there exit no significant difference between the perception of male and female students on the helpfulness of indirect feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. This result is negative and therefore upheld the null hypothesis.

**Table 4: t-test analysis of the difference in the mean ratings of the perception of male and female students on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-cal.</th>
<th>t-tab.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at 0.5 alpha level; df=124; critical t-val. 1.960*

Data in Table 4 indicates that the t-calculated of 0.681 is less than the critical value of 1.960 at .05 level of significance with 124 degree of freedom. This means that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings between the perception of male and female students on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. Based on this result, the null hypothesis of no significant difference is therefore retained.
Discussion

The finding of this study indicates that learning at plenary is inhibited by the manner by indirect feedback is delivered in in-class academic conferences among peers in private polytechnics in Cross River State. The extent to which participants learn from comments that are made by feedback providers and on how to correct the lapses found in conference papers depends largely on the way by which feedback is delivered and how it is understood by the target audience. Some of the comments that the respondents agreed do not contribute to meaningful intellectual conversation in research sharing include comments that are not related to specific facts, pointing out errors with signs and symbols that are not easily interpreted and focusing on the problem and not the solution. This finding is in line with Loup (1996) who lamented that common practices in feedback are limited in their capacity to improve teaching and learning but chiefly serve as monitor of minimal competence. This result suggest that feedback in some in-class academic conferences among peers is not detailed enough to guide future research, which explains why many conference participants stumble into similar errors after having received corrections from previous conferences. This result is so because the use of signs and symbols that are not easily interpreted to indicate the presence of an error on a written work cannot help the recipients to recognize the type of error made and how to correct it.

This finding also agrees with Agbor (2008) who posited that among the academic conferences in Cross River State, in-class academic conferences appears to be one of those where peers present papers with little or no time for meaningful intellectual conversation. This finding is consistent with Ferris and Roberts, (2010). Who in their study on the effect of different treatment conditions on essay writing among high school students indicated that direct error correction produced more correct essays (88%) compared to indirect error feedback (77%). However, at the end of the semester, it was found that 836 students who received direct feedback had the frequency of errors made reduced much more significantly than those who received indirect feedback. Ferris (2010) believed that error correction can help feedback recipients to improve their writing but the method used must be selective, prioritized and clear.

The study also found that the respondents did not differ significantly in the mean ratings of their perception on the helpfulness of oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. Some of the verbal comments made by participants in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State are not detailed enough to improve research productivity. This finding is consistent with Ferris and Roberts, (2010) who in their study on the effect of different treatment conditions on essay writing among high school students indicated that direct error correction produced more correct essays (88%) compared to indirect error feedback (77%). However, at the end of the semester, it was
found that 836 students who received direct feedback had the frequency of errors made reduced much more significantly than those who received indirect feedback Ferris (2010) believes that errors correction can help feedback recipients to improve their writing but the method used must be selective, prioritized and clear.

This result also corroborates with Black and William (2006) who opined that the action taken by a learner in response to feedback depends heavily on the nature of the feedback, the way in which it was received, way in which it was perceived and the working context in which that action may be carried out. The result of this study also agrees with Hattie and Timperley’s (2007) who in their analysis of feedback and learning among undergraduate students found a substantial variability in the effect of feedback. Hattie and Timperley reported that feedback about a particular task and how to do it is more effective than speaking to issues without giving the solution. This finding appears as indicated herein because the most students are not grounded in research and therefore lack the capacity to provide written and oral feedback that could be utilized in directing future research.

The findings on the research questions indicated that male and female entrepreneurship students differed in their perceptions on the helpfulness of written and oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State. Also the findings on the test of hypotheses revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean ratings between male and female students perception on the helpfulness of written and oral feedback in research sharing among peers in in-class academic conferences in private polytechnics in Cross River State.

Conclusion

Academic conference is an invitation to intellectual conversation which is intended to bring about learning among participants and thus make them more productive in their research undertaking so that they will be able to contribute meaningfully towards entrepreneurship in particular, education enterprise and the society at large. Consequently, if conference participants and the larger society are to benefit maximally from academic conferences, the organizers and other participants must adopt and apply global standards and best practices in presenting and discussing papers (written on teaching, learning and research-related problems) that can produce important changes in entrepreneurship and all the major aspects of educational system with respect to its organization, its objectives, its curricular offerings, its procedures and its achievement knowing that long-lasting changes in education can only be made on the contribution that educational research can make to the improvement of educational practice.
Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Feedback providers at academic conferences should provide feedback affirming what paper presenters already know, what they do not know and what they need to know in a way that they will understand in order to make adjustments and improvements.

2. Organizers of academic conferences should use conference monitor to observe the activity patterns of the various groups and also make comparisons of participants, comparisons of sessions, predict when intervention may be needed and how discussion evolves throughout the conference.

3. Conference participants should provide constructive, direct and oral feedback that can be used to direct future research.

References


