Feedback Surveys As An Essential Tool In The Current Pandemic Scenario

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Abstract: Knowing the performance and understanding where one stands and which areas one needs to improve is one of the major aspects of learning and assessment. Feedback surveys helps to achieve this and are useful for teachers, students as well as research scholars for their assessment as well as improvement. My research is based on the survey conducted on a group of research scholars during the period of complete digitisation as a result of lockdown. A feedback survey done on various parameters such as online lectures, webinars, online international and national conferences, online DC meetings, online viva voce, hands on training workshops and research work indicates that most of the scholars prefer to do experimental research in the campus, whereas webinars and conferences are preferred online. The research helped to identify the effects of online learning on LSRW skills. Feedback survey is essential for all stake holders whether its students, teachers or research scholars. It is a revolutionary approach but the feedback survey helps to identify the benefits and limitations. This would serve as a platform to identify what is best for scholars, teachers and students.

Keywords: Feedback survey, assessment, digitisation, benefits

1. Introduction

The use of online platform for learning is now unavoidable. As technology advances so does our opportunity to provide feedback using various platforms. Lately for webinars , conferences, lectures etc immediate feedbacks are encouraged using feedback survey forms. This feedback is constructive and more relatable since it's provided while the session is still fresh in the minds. This can be applied for students as well. In one study that looked as delayed versus immediate feedback the researchers found that the participants who were given immediate feedback showed a significantly larger increase in performance than those who received delayed feedback (Optiz, Ferdinand and Mecklinger, 2011).Students want feedback with specific, detailed directions for future improvement, offered in a manner that is both constructive and encouraging (Fiock and Garcia). Feedbacks can provide us information on where we need to focus and the area we need to improve. Again this goes for both teachers and students. Applications like answer garden, Kahoot, Padlet, Google forms, LMS are some of the platforms used for feedback. Also platforms like Youtube , Facebook and other applications like Zoom, Microsoft teams, Goto webinar provide space for live feedback so that the teachers or presenters can clarify doubts as they proceed. There are options on how to provide a platform for feedback. It can be one on one like Google forms or a common platform where everyone can join in and comment on each other's feedback . In the feedback there could be analysis of a particular topic discussed so that only students who listened carefully would be able to answer. This would serve as a marker on how successful the lecture or class went and how many paid attention.

2. Related Literature

The purpose of giving feedback is to point out strengths and provide comments on areas of improvement and development (Leibold & Schwarz, 2015). Research suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, and takes less time, meaning the changes corona virus have caused might be here to stay (Li and Lalani, 2020). Feedback as a performance management mechanism influences the self efficacy of the individual who seeks and receives feedback (Liu & Gumah, 2020).

Good feedback is more likely to happen if a positive learning environment is created and numerous opportunities for feedback are part of the course (Bonnel, 2008). The act of teaching requires deliberate interventions to ensure that there is cognitive change in the student. (Hattie, 2009).

3. Purpose of Study

Purpose of this study is to evaluate as to how feedback can help teachers, students as well as research scholars. It is also aimed to point out the difficulties and challenges faced by the research scholars in solely depending on the online platform for learning.

The study aims to answer four main questions:
1)   Is there an improvement in any LSRW skills? Is it linked to feedback in any way?

2) Platforms preferred for learning and feedback.
3) How has COVID 19 affected the research work?
4) Is feedback an essential tool during this lockdown?

4. Methodology

A survey was taken with the help of Google forms to get the feedback from the research scholars. The form contains 20 questions. The survey was formulated to understand the research progress of scholars as well as the quality of learning. The questions pertained to the activities and the platforms used by the scholars. Questions related to LSRW skills were included. Most of the questions were related to the COVID lockdown and the different activities and tasks scholars attended online and their views on online platform for learning.

Participants
70 research scholars of different streams of study from Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science responded to the survey questionnaire.

Procedure
Created a feedback survey form in Google and the form were sent out to all research scholars and their responses were recorded and noted.
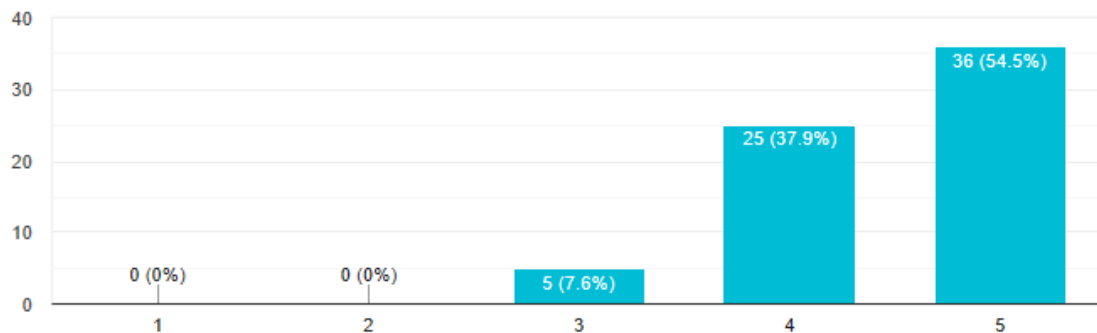
5. Result

Pie chart depicting percentage of scholars who choose different skills
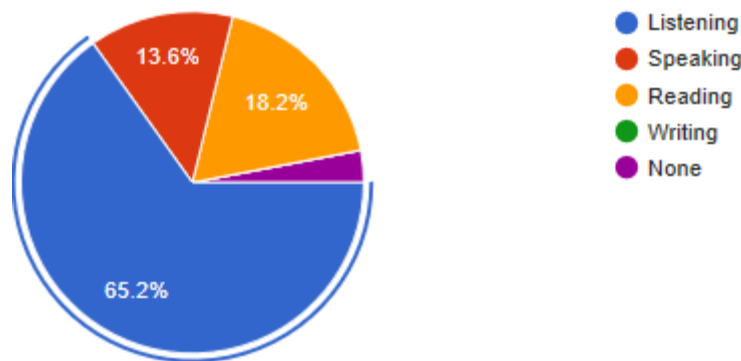
Fig. 1

Bar Chart depicting percentage of improvement of listening skills during the lockdown

Fig.2

Bar graph depicting scholar's response to various platforms used during lockdown for learning.
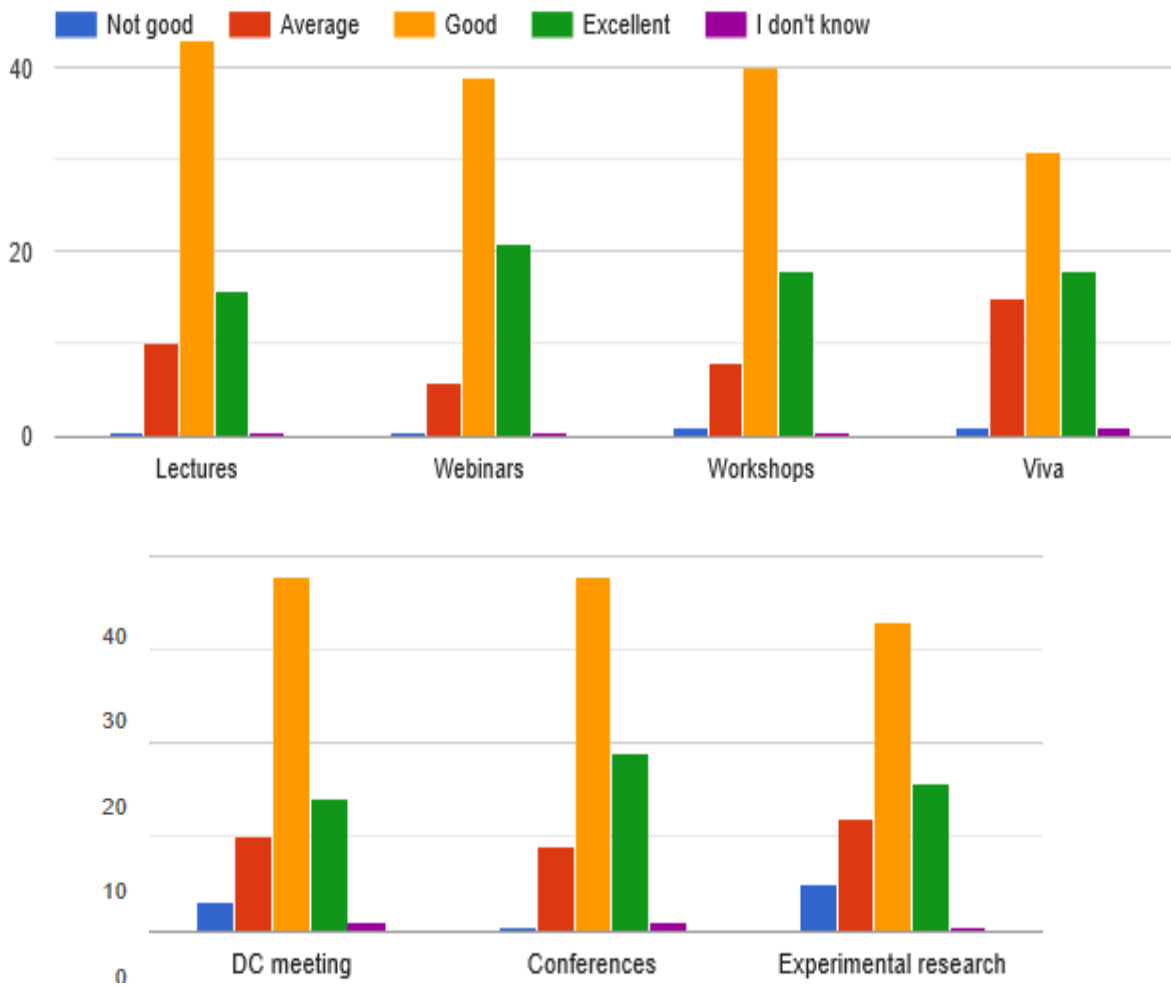
Fig. 3

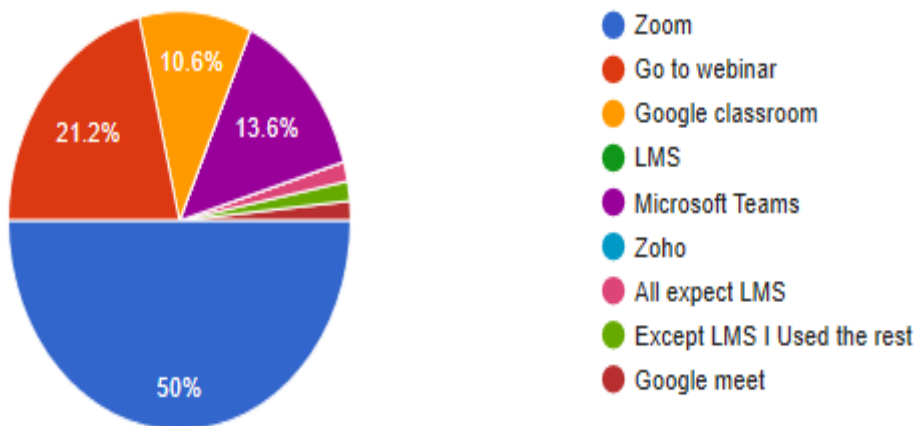**Pie chart depicting the percentage of students who opted for various apps**

Fig.4

Pie Chart depicting the percentage of students who prefer different modes of discussion and feedback
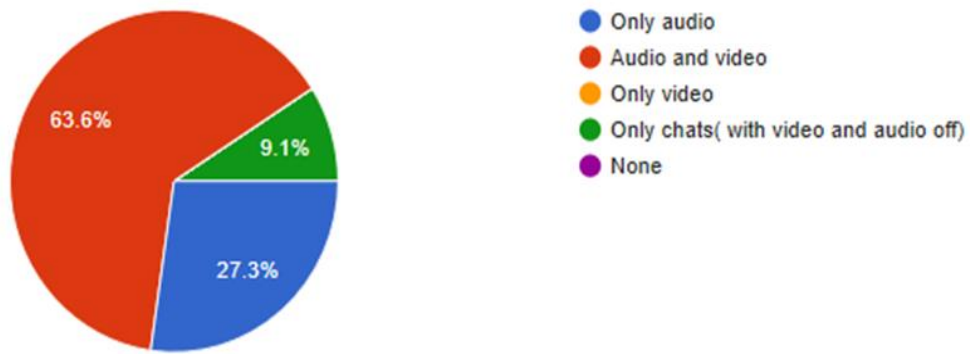
Fig.5

Pie Chart depicting about the percentage of students who felt COVID 19 has impacted their research
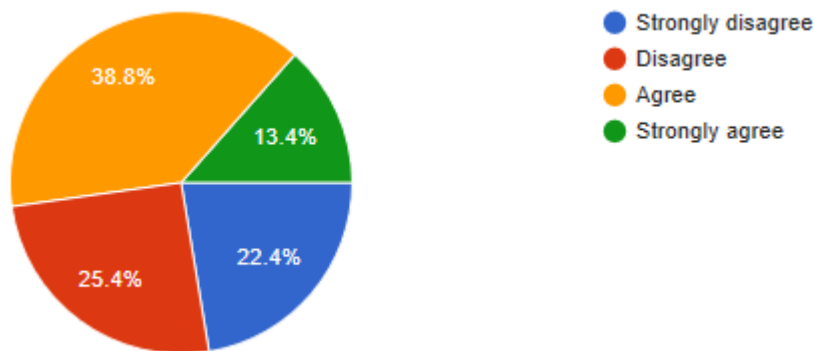

Fig.6

When asked about the one skill that improved during lockdown majority opted for listening skills according to Figure 1, which can be expected because students get more chance to listen rather than speaking or writing. Earlier there was an option of improving other skills with the same pace as we used to go out and socialize, in classrooms, for debates, writing exams or assignments etc. Thus COVID 19 has acted as a barrier for the improvement of skills except for listening skills which has shown a considerable improvement for a lot of scholars.

Figure 2 depicts that on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest level of improvement, 54.5% of scholars have chosen 5 as their level of improvement, where as 37.9% choose 4 as their level of improvement and 7.6% choose 3 as their level of improvement. No one choose 2 or 1 meaning that everyone witnessed an improvement in their listening skills.

Speaking is another major skill that has gone down since the lockdown began as scholars are provided less exposure to speak and due to technical glitches and network problems most of the online platforms prefer to get the feedback via chats as opposed to earlier where one had option of speaking or writing a feedback depending on the context. Thus most of the scholars have stated that they need to brush up on their speaking skills before the lockdown is over and half of them felt that there would be starting trouble to speak with one another once the lockdown is lifted and everyone goes back to college.

Reading and writing skills differ from person to person because scholars who utilize the time available to them would be able to get most of their research writing done. Most of the scholars were vague about the amount of time spend for research work. Some of the webinars or lectures have used applications like answer garden, kahoot, padlet to an extent which also provided as an alternative platform for feedback rather than the chat boxes or google feedback surveys.

Thus the answer to the first research question, yes listening skills witnessed an considerable improvement compared to the other skills because majority got opportunity to listen rather than speak or write or read. Feedback via speaking is not encouraged much because of technical glitches thus students rarely got chance to speak formally thus causing speaking skill to take a backseat.

From Figure 3 it is observed that for majority of the activities scholars are content with the online platform except for DC meetings and experimental research work which require real time labs. For other scholars most of them are able to manage with online platforms for their research purposes. Most of the students are able to attend many useful webinars and conferences which otherwise would have been impossible due to geographical distances.

According to Figure 4, 50% of scholars choose zoom as the most commonly used platform for learning and feedback. Initially many had trouble connecting to zoom followed by security concerns but as time went on mostly everyone preferred zoom because it makes for easy conferencing even with users that are not part of the company account as compared to other platforms like Microsoft teams although teams is not far behind and is currently updating a lot of its features to compete with zoom. Both Microsoft teams and zoom accepts feedback either directly through audio which is challenging in a country like India where connectivity is a major concern, another way of responding or feedback is through chatboxes which is more encouraged. Applications like Gotowebinar which is used for an audience up to 1000 people has a mechanism of polls for feedback in between the sessions so that feedback is acquired on the go as the session proceeds thus helping in immediate feedback upon which the webinar or lecture could proceed. Unlike zoom and Microsoft teams the feedback one provides is visible only to the panellist and organizers and thus feedback on each other's chats and responses can't be done but the response is shared among all. Although if one makes all the attendees as panellists then they can view and comment on each other's queries and responses. Another application like Google classroom which is used in virtual workshops has an effective way of providing feedback that can be either private or common to all students depending on the context. Frequently used feedback comments can be saved in the comment bank and used in future. Thus all applications have different methods to give feedback and should be used depending on the context. YouTube and Facebook are recently used more for webinars and conferences when there aroused a need to involve more people in online lectures/webinars. This answers to my second research question on platforms preferred for learning and feedback.

Figure 5 depicts that 63.6% of scholars prefer audio and video for learning and feedback, whereas 27.3% prefer only audio to ask questions and give feedback and 9.1% preferred only chats to give and receive feedback. It gives a better sense of understanding when one can actually see the person giving feedback or see the person receiving the feedback. It enables one to actually determine as to how far the concept is delivered and also provides both the scholar and the presenter a better sense of judgement and satisfaction.

Figure 6 is the most crucial feedback from scholars as to how many of them felt that COVID- 19 had a huge impact on their research work. 13.4% strongly agree , 38.8% agree, 25.4% disagree and 22.4% strongly disagree that it had an impact. Some of the major challenges faced by scholars include network problems, cost of data, poor audio, no reality, clarity, technical issues, limited time of teaching, lack of internet stability, time constraints in clearing doubts, outside noises and distractions, resisting impulse to do multi-tasking during lectures etc. But one of the many positive attribute is that the feedback for assessments, webinars, lectures are always immediate thus making the concept much more understanding. 59.7% prefer real time learning whereas 32.8% prefer blended learning and 7.5% prefer online learning. This answers the question as to how research work is affected during the COVID 19 lockdown.

Before the COVID 19 pandemic students had an option of meetings and discussions outside the online platform where doubts could be clarified without depending entirely on the online platform thus avoiding the challenges that came with it. But now since the only way of learning is through online platforms it is necessary that one learns how to improvise and use it to the best advantage. For every webinar, lecture, DC meetings etc., it is crucial that the students and teachers are involved and communication and encouragement takes place so that there is a clear understanding on what all needs to be improved, all doubts are cleared and learning takes place. Feedback helps in this and it is sole entity which determines how the student or teacher/organizer should proceed further. This thus answers my final research question as to feedback being an essential tool during this current pandemic scenario.

6. Conclusion

With the inferences drawn from the feedback survey it is analysed that feedback can help us advance further technologically. This feedback from research scholars helped to analyse about the skills that needs to improve, scholar's capability of using the online platform to their best advantage and the major challenges to be addressed. Although they had access to many courses one of the major challenges was for experimentation and hands on experience which was deprived for the past four months thus affecting their research work. Speaking skills could be further improved with the fixation of connectivity issues that could lead to feedback through speaking. Thus we can agree with Leibold and Schwartz that one of the purposes of giving feedback is to point out strengths and

provide comments on areas of improvement and development. One limitation of this research is that it was done with less than hundred scholars from a single university. Also the assessment and results as a result of online learning is not dealt with. Future research could be carried out on a larger group to analyse learning, feedback and assessment results.

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