

SLO: National institute for curriculum development in the Netherlands

Keynote and workshop November 18th 2021

Keynote title and description

Improving learning by building on pupils' natural capacity to generate inner feedback

International research portrays feedback as a dialogical and relational process that pivots on teacher-learner and learner-learner interactions. In this keynote, I contend that this is a narrow view, as it fails to acknowledge that learners are naturally generating feedback all the time, even in the absence of dialogue or comments. In effect, there is an artificial disconnect in both theory and practice between planned and formal and natural and informal feedback processes.

In response, I present a new model of how feedback functions in learning that integrates formal and informal processes. The underpinning ideas are that all feedback is internally generated, that the core mechanism for its generation is comparison, and that any relevant information in comments or criteria, in textbooks or videos, in diagrams or observations, in peer works or exemplars etc. can be recruited to support the learners' making of productive feedback comparisons. All that is required to implement this model is to turn some natural comparisons into mindful comparisons with tangible outputs, and to invent new classroom activities that promote productive comparisons. This model leads to new feedback design principles that, if implemented, would not only lead to pupils learning how to better regulate their own learning but would do so without any increase in teacher workload. Examples of implementation will also be provided.

Key References

- Nicol, D. 2021. Guiding learning by activating students' inner feedback, *Times Higher, Campus*
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/guiding-learning-activating-students-inner-feedback>
- Nicol, D. 2020 "The power of internal feedback: Exploiting natural comparison processes" *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,*
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02602938.2020.1823314>
- Nicol, D. 2019. "Reconceptualising feedback as an internal not an external process." *Italian Journal of Educational Research, Special Issue*, 71–83.
<https://ojs.pensamultimedia.it/index.php/sird/article/view/3270>

Workshop description

Workshop (1.15 mins)

Designing for inner feedback

In this workshop, participants will design a feedback intervention intended to deliberately harness their pupils' own inner feedback capability. This might entail leveraging existing comparison processes, already inherent in teaching practices, or devising new comparison opportunities. To support this activity, I will provide a design template, some guiding principles for feedback comparisons, resources to support their design, and guidance on how to formulate comparison instructions. Participants will also have opportunities to share their designs and to generate feedback on them. The workshop output will comprise a design plan that participants can use beyond the workshop in their own classroom practice.

Biography

David Nicol is Research Professor leading the Teaching Excellence Initiative in the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, and Visiting Professor at the University of Padova, Italy. He is also Emeritus Professor of Higher Education at the University of Strathclyde where he was previously Deputy Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement (CAPLE) and Director of REAP, the Re-Engineering Assessment Practices project (www.reap.ac.uk), a £1m project exploring how new technologies might support improved assessment and feedback practices across three Scottish Universities. His primary role, over a career spanning over 30 years, has been working collaboratively with academic staff in higher education from different disciplines on educational improvement projects. His research interests are in teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback, in e-learning and in change management in education. He is currently collaborating on feedback projects with partners in the Netherlands, Edinburgh, Ireland, Italy, Australia, and New York. His recent research and publication on 'The power of Internal Feedback' won the Silver Award for *Innovation in the Science of learning* at the 2020 International Reimagine Education Conference. This research makes a critical contribution to how learners generate internal feedback in everyday activities and how to harness this natural capacity for feedback agency in educational and professional settings. (www.davidnicol.net).