



**Competence area: Communication and collaboration**

**Competence 1: Provide clear and constructive feedback**

## **MANUAL "HOW TO USE FEEDBACK"**

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## 1. Introduction

"Learning is experience, everything else is simply information", Albert Einstein already stated. The transmission of theoretical knowledge without linking it to practical application situations is not enough on its own to develop competences. Knowledge mutates into "passive, not immediately usable" knowledge as long as it is not linked, enriched and supplemented with practical application situations and experiences.

In addition to this, the concept of proficiency was described by Neuweg 2020. He describes: " Proficiency is based on a holistic, practical understanding of what actually has to be done and the ability to actually do it" and further: "In their practice, experts follow rules that are only fully constituted in their rule-applying action and are therefore not only always retrospective (Ortmann 2003, p. 47), but are also continuously renewed. Proficiency is knowing, it only shows itself in the mode of its exercise. Knowledge, on the other hand, is freezing of practice." (Neuweg, 2020, p. 20).

The goals of modern vocational training are not only the mastery of elementary technical skills but also social competences such as independence, personal responsibility, communication and certainty about one's own self-efficacy. Schools and training companies and their coaches also want a high level of willingness to perform and reliability as well as compliance with generally applicable and internal company regulations and the quickest possible integration into internal company processes.



## 2. Coaching

For learning and training to be successful in the long term, trainees absolutely need an appreciative, stimulating learning and training environment and meaningful, clearly defined, understandable tasks as well as Motivation, energy (supply, sleep, and attention). Equally important are reliable personal relationship structures with trainers/coaches. These enable a positive training process, even beyond any difficulties.

Trainees appreciate a clear presence and clear words from the trainers, whether it is a matter of praise or constructive criticism. In addition, a friendly word now and then, related to the personal, private level of the trainee, can certainly work small miracles.

The communication between trainer and trainee should be designed in such a way that the trainee also feels seen and accepted as a person, the higher the identification with the training company will be. This effect can be increased even further if the trainees are allowed to offer constructive criticism of training procedures or training staff. Openness creates trust, as the trainees in our counselling repeatedly confirm (Clement, 2011).

Teachers/coaches should represent a changed form of presence and a "new authority" (Dewey, 1997), should at the same time have a supporting, orienting and structure-building effect on the trainees.

The following table illustrates this change in the role of trainers / coaches:

Traditional authority	New authority
Distance	Proximity
Control	Self-control
Hierarchy	Network
Immediate reaction	Persistence
Immunisation against criticism	Transparency
Praise and punishment	Relationship gestures



Especially important for learners/trainees are:

- Guidance and accompaniment,
  - appreciation,
  - gradual transfer of responsibility,
  - regular, clear feedback on their performance and behaviour at all levels.
- (Hilzensauer)



### **3. Feedback**

#### **a. What is Feedback?**

Feedback has been on everyone's lips for years, although for a long time it had a rather shadowy existence in educational science, subject didactics and school contexts. Since the publications of Hattie (cf. Hattie & Timperley, 2007) at the beginning of the 2000s, however, there has been a broad consensus about the conditions under which feedback can unfold its learning-promoting effect in the school context.

Currently, feedback is even considered one of the "most effective interventions for promoting learning and development processes" (Ditton & Müller 2014, 8).

Feedback is ideally an ongoing and repetitive cyclical process (Bürgermeister, 2013). In the course of this process, the discrepancy between a learning goal and the current performance level of a feedback recipient should be reduced. The active involvement of the learner/trainee in all steps of the process is a core element of feedback (Bürgermeister, 2013).

Feedback is a gift of attention, of time, of thought. Giving and receiving feedback is always voluntary, optional.

Giving feedback means informing the other person about what I have heard and/or seen from them or how I have experienced them and how this affects me (how I have understood it). (Managementstellen.ch)

Feedback is not an evaluation or interpretation, not a judgement, not a provocation and certainly not an accusation. It is only as information about what I have heard and seen and how I have experienced it that feedback develops its strength: as a means of control, as a "mirror" for the partner. Giving feedback in a session is the easiest way to clear up suspected misunderstandings.

Giving feedback has to do with two kinds of perception: With the perception of the other person and with my self-perception. It is important to be aware that every perception is selective, situational and subjective.



## Perception

Selectively: Because we always select from the whole range of information and then perceive what seems meaningful to us. This usually happens in the subconscious.

Situational: Because every behaviour in a certain situation has a certain meaning and the situation is constantly changing. This means that we know nothing about a person from a single observation, but only something about their behaviour in a concretely experienced situation.

Subjective: Because it has to do with the individual value system of each person, what they perceive and how they evaluate it. What bothers one person may please another. That is why feedback says more about the one who gives it than about the one who receives it. (Managnementstellen.ch)

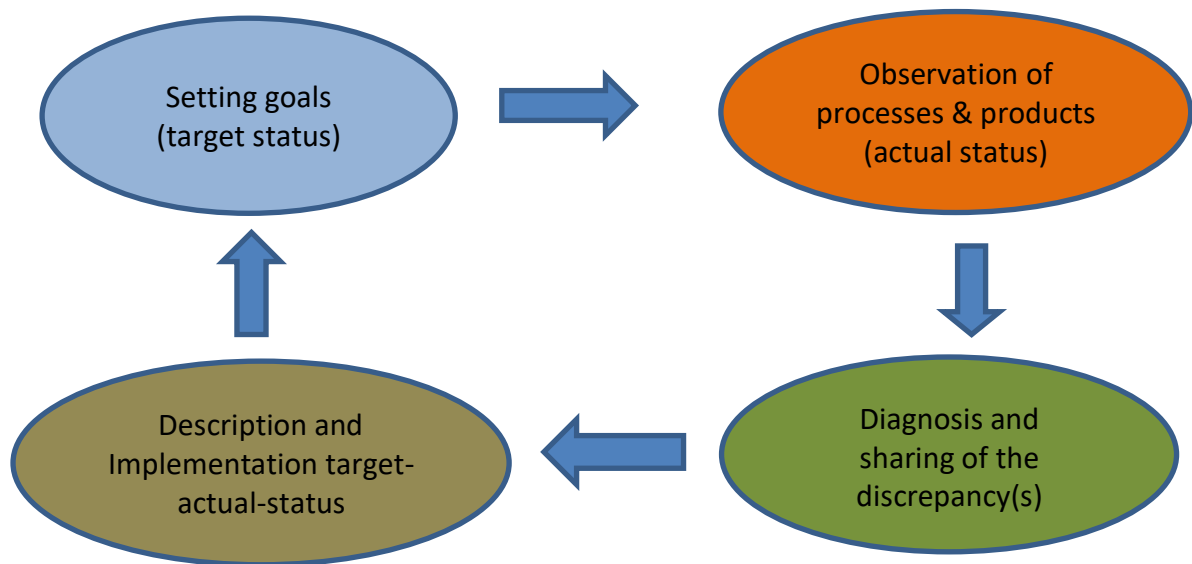
Transferring Dewey's reflection process to learning itself, we assume that there is a primary learning action at the beginning, which is influenced by various dimensions. If blockages occur during the primary learning action (i.e. if this primary learning action comes to a standstill due to external or internal circumstances), then a second learning process (on a meta-level) can/must be drawn in by reflecting on the causes of the blockage. The learning activity as such is reflected and positively supported in the sense of the forward looking (learning) action. (Hilzensauer, 2008)

### **b. Coaching supported by Feedback**

To enable a better understanding of the connections between teacher/coach competencies and feedback that promotes learning, it is explained below:

In the classroom and learning company, feedback understood in this way involves four steps:

- I. (Transparent and joint) setting of learning goals (target status),
- II. purposeful observation of processes and products (actual status) on the way to achieving the goals,
- III. Diagnosis and exchange about the discrepancy between the actual and target status,
- IV. Description and implementation target-actual-status (cf. Hattie et al. 2014).



Picture 1: Process of coaching that promotes learning supported by feedback (own overview)

The process is as individualised as possible between teachers/coaches and learners/trainees. This feedback description thus describes a form of external teacher-learner feedback, whereby internal feedback processes are disregarded here.

The following section explains which professional characteristics on the part of the teachers/coaches are relevant for the implementation of this type of "feedback that promotes learning" in training.

### c. General requirements for the implementation of feedback

Successful implementation of feedback that promotes learning in schools and practical training requires, first of all, a generally high level of subject-specific, subject-didactic and pedagogical-psychological knowledge (Lipowsky, 2011).

This implies:

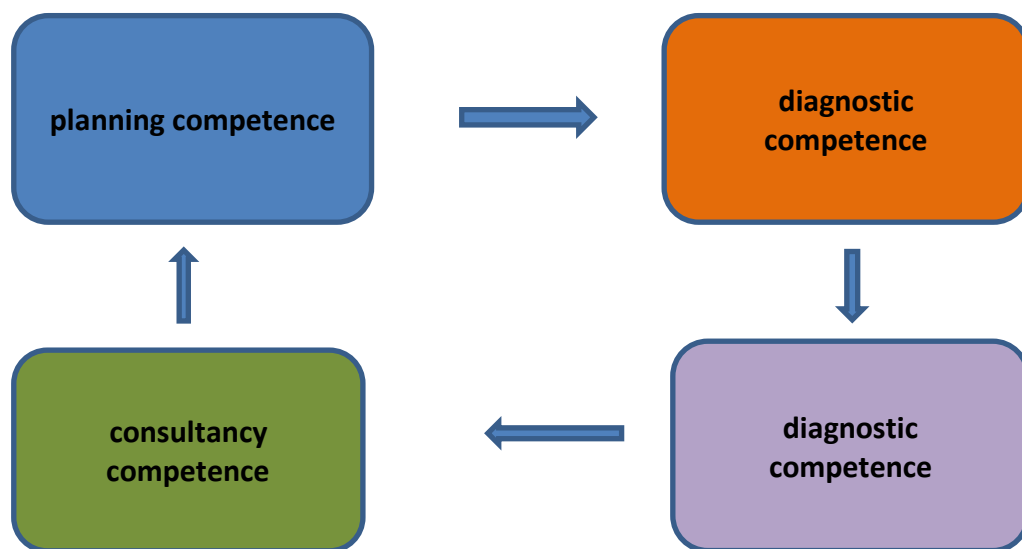
- knowledge about cognitive processes of learners/trainees,
- knowledge of procedures with which learning process-related experiences can be made visible and reflected upon,
- knowledge of the possibilities, methods, basic ideas and goals of feedback that promotes learning,

- repertoire of actions whose elements the teacher/coach can adapt to the learning situation of the learners/trainees.

Teachers/coaches should also be willing to use the knowledge gained in the feedback process for further development in practical training.

In addition to the listed knowledge, interest and willingness, a whole spectrum of competence facets is required.

Based on the four-step process of the feedback process (see picture 1), there are four competences in particular that are needed on the teacher's side for the feedback process (see picture 2).



Picture 2: Competences on the part of the teachers necessary for feedback conducive to learning (own overview).

#### d. Giving feedback: Feedback rules – examples

Giving feedback means telling another person how they are doing or whether what they are doing is serving the goal. It is a feedback to the sender of information by the receiver. A distinction is made between positive and negative feedback as well as constructive and destructive feedback. Basically, the messages must be unambiguous, clear and comprehensible for the other person. However, feedback is not always welcome and therefore needs clear rules, both for giving and receiving feedback.



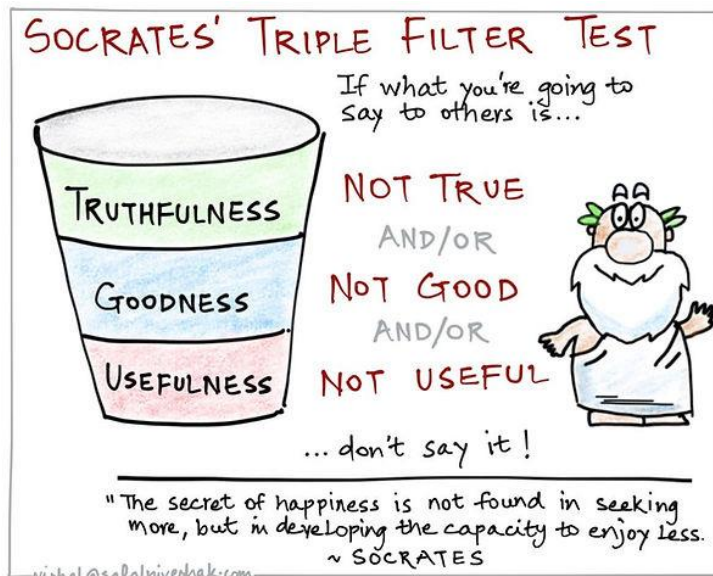


To ensure that your counterpart understands the feedback correctly and does not feel attacked or offended, the following **six feedback rules** should be observed, which go beyond the WWW rules:

### A) Provide overview

From the outside, many things look simpler. Before giving in to the temptation to delight others with one's clear-sightedness, it is important to really assess the matter competently: Are all variables really known - including the situation of the person concerned?

Or formulated differently: Only give good advice to others if you can. The "3 Sieves of Socrates" are ideal as a starting point for this:



Picture 3: Sokrates' Triple Filter Test  
[www.weeklywisdomblog.com/post/socrates-triple-filter-test](http://www.weeklywisdomblog.com/post/socrates-triple-filter-test)

### B) Waiting for the right time

You should never give unsolicited advice to anyone. The willingness to give feedback must be there. Otherwise it takes on the character of an instruction. Good advice is at best an offer that the person can just as well refuse without being resented. At best, feedback is an answer to a question. Nevertheless, feedback should be given as soon as possible; otherwise the reference to the situation will increasingly fade.



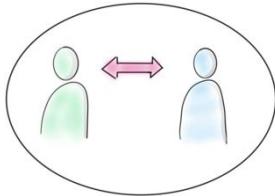


### C) Creating a conversational atmosphere

If possible, give your constructive feedback a private setting, not an arena. The ideal situation is a face-to-face discussion in which the other person can save face; especially, if the feedback is critical.



### D) Formulating "I"-messages



Constructive criticism never remains vague, but is always concrete. Generalisations and sweeping statements do not help anyone. No meaningful actions can be derived from such feedback. For feedback to be comprehensible, it should explain as concretely as possible how things can be done better.

At the same time, this puts the onus on the person giving the feedback: in the end, they have to prove how good their advice really is. The more subjectively such feedback is formulated, the better it will be accepted.

#### Technical term "I-messages":

- "I have the impression that..."
- "I have observed that..."
- "It makes me feel such and such..."
- "I would wish that..."

**Subjective I-formulations** can neither be ignored nor explained away. They are your impressions. If you describe them in this way, the other person will feel less attacked and be more willing to accept the feedback.

Therefore, always talk about your personal observations and say: what YOU would do - not what "you" do.

Example:

- "Ms Muster, I had the impression that the answers to my questions were evasive."
- "When I asked about the ... or when I asked about ... and my question about the standard procedure."



## Showing perspectives

But do not intervene! A good feedback giver never builds up pressure, which only stirs up mistrust. It is also taboo to force the other person to justify him or herself.

Feedback is about showing the other person new and better ways and perspectives; describing the situation objectively and neutrally, without belittling or insulting the other person.

Even if you have to force some people to be happy - at this point it is forbidden!



### E) Accepting feedback



A wise feedback giver will never formulate his or her recommendations in absolute terms - as if they were the ultimate wisdom and unassailable truths.

Rather, you should let the other person speak and signal openness to question your advice as well and in turn gives feedback on it. This is the only way to create a

dialogue at eye level.

**Always ask what your counterpart has understood.** This is the only way to ensure that the feedback was received exactly as intended.

Example:

Can you please repeat my feedback again in your own words?" This renewed feedback prevents misunderstandings and again shows understanding and a noble intention.

### Accepting feedback: 3 steps

**Accept:** Accept the other person's observations - for who you are: HIS perception of things.

**Ask questions:** Make sure you have understood the feedback correctly. If there is any ambiguity: ask!

**Summarise:** Mirror back to your counterpart what has been received and summarise the insights and feedback in your own words.



#### 4. Feedback in practice

##### a. How to organise a feedback meeting in-company training?

A central instrument of training assistance are regularly feedback meetings for the evaluation of training sections, which are carried out in dialogue / trilogies between trainee, trainer/coach and, if necessary, with the parents.

The regular evaluation meeting in in-company practical vocational training within the framework of the entire in-company training is presented here as an example.

At this point, the process of feedback should be briefly discussed once again (see 3.2.). Four steps are described for giving and receiving feedback:

##### ➤ Setting goals

This describes the target status. Formulate I-messages, Speak one's own mind and Clarify objectives / goal.

##### ➤ Observation of processes and products

This describes the actual status. Keep to the subject matter, speak clearly and listen analytically.

##### ➤ Diagnosis and sharing of the discrepancy(s)

This is about giving and receiving feedback; Create contact, listen actively, address feelings directly and be fair.

##### ➤ Description and Implementation target-actual-status

Convincing argumentation, ask questions, formulate the goal.

Time required:

For the feedback you need approx. 0.5 to 1 hour for example at the beginning or end of the working day or approx. 1 to 1.5 hours on the last training day of the training period.

Material resources:

- Evaluation and documentation form (see 4.2.),
- Time-structured training/learning plan (if available),
- Report book on practical training in the company.



Method:

Talking between coach and trainee or moderated discussion between trainer, trainee and company manager to assess the training period with:

- Assessment of learning, performance and social behaviour,
- Content-reflective and relationship-related feedback in the teaching and learning process to build up an appropriate communication and working climate.

Targets with the evaluation:

- of the overall course of the training period,
- assessment: performance, behaviour/appearance, commitment, acquisition of knowledge, social relationship/bonding of the trainee,
- Strengths/weaknesses reflection on examples: technical from the trainer's point of view and social behaviour in the company context,
- Early and open communication, promoting a culture of dialogue,
- Adequate handling of training/work organisation,
- Communicate assessment/evaluation criteria transparently,
- explain comprehensibly in appropriate language using concrete examples,
- limit/prevent conflicts, solve them constructively if necessary,
- Clarify open questions or questions that have arisen Feedback discussion (e.g. evaluation of probationary period) in the training assistance.



## b. Feedback form on Training Stage – Example

Feedback is particularly important after a training period. Use targeted feedback questions to find out whether you have achieved the goal of the training in terms of increasing your students' competences. Use the results as constructive criticism to improve your training.

Feedback questionnaire during the training programme (short list of questionnaires)

Professional product: <training period>

Behavioural characteristic: <Professional ability>

Performance indicators: <Pace of action is correct>

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Your opinion is important to me.

Please mark the individual questions with a cross to indicate the extent to which the statements apply.

The survey is anonymous, but can be cancelled in the feedback session.

This feedback form can be used after a training period.

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Trainee: \_\_\_\_\_

Training Programme / Station: \_\_\_\_\_

Coach: \_\_\_\_\_

Learning / Training year: 1. / 2. / 3.

Duration of the practical training in a learning company:

1 month	2 months	3 months	4 months	5 months	6 months	More as 6 months
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**a) Conditions for a good training program (examples)**

There was a briefing on the work processes of the department.
I was able to obtain necessary information about the work processes from the work instructions or a guide for trainees.
There was always a suitable workplace available for me.
The technical equipment used for training was up to date.
The duration for the tasks of this training at this training period was possible to finish.

Please be aware of one/two/all points. I want a feedback from you at the end of the training period.

**b) Conditions for good work tasks (examples)**

I received multifaceted and diversified work tasks.
I was involved in integrated work processes.
I had taken on my own part in the daily work process.
My tasks promoted my self-employment.
I had enough time to try out and practise new tasks.
I received regular feedback on the tasks i had completed.



All the tasks I completed I could relate to the training content.
The tasks assigned to me were well fulfilling.
My previous knowledge was adequate for my tasks exactly suitable.
The demands made on me were exactly suitable.

Please be aware of one/two/all points. I want a feedback from you at the end of the training period.

**c) Conditions for good coaching (examples)**

I received an overview of the contents I was to be trained.
I had the opportunity to ask questions at any time.
I received clear work instructions.
If there was a problem, I always had a contact person.
I received regular feedback on the work I had done in the report booklet.
Criticism was given constructively.
My coach's feedback on my tasks helped me to complete tasks even more independently.

Please be aware of one/two/all points. I want a feedback from you at the end of the training period.





d) Conditions for good training (examples)

The coach responsible for me was named.
I was introduced to the team.
I was treated with respect by the staff.
My colleagues had integrated me into the team.
The atmosphere in the training unit was conducive to my motivation.
The atmosphere in the training station created good learning conditions.
I had the opportunity to participate in departmental meetings.
My ideas and suggestions were met with openness.
I was given the opportunity to give feedback on my satisfaction with the training and the training station on a regular basis.

Please be aware of one/two/all points. I want a feedback from you at the end of the training period.

e) Would you also want to give me as feedback for the training period?

What I particularly liked about the training station: (open question)
What did you not like so much/what do you wish you had done: (open question)



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