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Supportive Feedback Received in Finnish Students' Experiences of Teachers' Caring

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Abstract

This paper examines Finnish lower secondary school students' experiences of receiving supportive feedback in the context of experienced teachers' caring. Caring, according to research concerning students' experiences, is seen in personal interactions between students and teachers in informal encounters or communications as well as in student-centered, well-constructed learning situations that increase student well-being and school engagement. The data were collected via semi-structured interviews. The analysis was data-driven, and the results concerning supportive feedback were placed in three communicative situation categories: during lessons, in out-of-class communication and during assessment processes. Because experiences of supportive feedback are depicted in students' own words, this article contributes to current discussions of students' well-being in schools and may generate ideas for teachers and teacher educators on how to give feedback in a supportive and caring manner, thereby building caring and supportive teacher-student relationships.

Keywords

Support, Teacher-Student Communication, Feedback, Caring, Teacher-Student Relationship

1. Introduction

Caring in the school context usually refers to teachers' caring attitudes (Noddings, 2005; Schussler & Collins, 2006), although the origin of the ethics of care is rooted specifically in women's experiences and even in the mother-child relationship, integrating both intellectual judgment and emotional engagement (see Held, 2006; Ruddick, 1995). The ethics of care becomes apparent in relationships with other human beings, in which emotions such as sympathy, empathy, sensitivity and re-

sponsiveness can be improved by reflection and education (Held, 2006). Because the original idea was to respond to the needs of the children in a way that is both thoughtful and emotional (see Ruddick, 1995), caring affects the school climate through the quality of interactions between school personnel and students (see Forsyth et al., 2011; Goddard et al., 2009; Sherblom et al., 2006).

Earlier research concerning teachers' caring-related issues has focused on the teacher-student relationship (Teuscher & Makarova, 2018), teachers' emotional support and conduct during lessons (Bakx et al., 2015; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Havik & Westergård, 2020; Pöysä et al., 2018, 2019), the school and classroom atmosphere (Ryan & Deci, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sherblom et al., 2006) and student assessment (Caldwell & Sholtis, 2008; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; Stipek, 2006). However, lower secondary students' experiences of supportive feedback in terms of caring have been less studied.

Finland's education system is guided by the Finnish National Agency for Education, which leads the development of the Finnish curriculum and specifies guidelines for developing school cultures. The Finnish curriculum is obligatory, although teachers are granted great autonomy in planning and conducting teaching (see Lavonen, 2020; Reinius et al., 2022). According to the curriculum, a school should aim to "promote learning, interaction, participation, well-being and a sustainable way of living" (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014: p. 24). Concerning assessment, the curriculum says.

Assessment plays an important role in promoting the learning of the pupils. Assessment supports learning and is an essential part of the learning process…The foremost task of assessment is to guide and encourage the pupil. Pupils are not compared to each other. Instead, pupils are guided to reflect on their own learning against the objectives. The teachers help the pupils understand the objectives and recognize their own strengths and development needs. The teachers provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills for self-assessment and peer assessment so that they can both give and receive constructive feedback. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2016).

Assessment has also been reported by students to be a part of the experience of caring (see Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; Stipek, 2006). According to Caldwell and Sholtis (2008), teachers who care about students' learning are interested in the subject, and in assessment, they evaluate students' work, observe the learning situation, and take tasks other than tests into consideration.

This article contributes to the conversation regarding the ethics of care, students' well-being in schools and the school atmosphere. It is based on research that describes the elements that students find meaningful regarding their teachers' caring actions (Hosio, 2021, 2026) and focuses on the students' experiences of supportive feedback. The two research questions in this study are as follows:

RQ 1: What kind of teacher feedback has been perceived as supportive?

RQ 2: In what kinds of communication situations has the received feedback been perceived as supportive?

2. Caring in Teacher-Student Communication, Learning Situations and Feedback

Caring is a central value in teachers' professional ethics (Gholami, 2011, 2025; Noddings, 2002, 2012), and it means having a sense of being part of a community and entails the capability to use one's whole capacity for the well-being of the community (Noddings, 2005, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002). Students can experience caring in informal, respectful and attentive one-on-one encounters and discussions with teachers as well as in formal classroom situations in which teachers demonstrate their interest in learning and value the learning atmosphere and respectful communication (Hosio, 2021, 2026). A teacher-student relationship, defined as two-dimensional, interactive interaction, affects both the student and the teacher (Korthagen et al., 2014). Moreover, caring is seen in teachers' pedagogical reasoning, which aims for what is best for students (Gholami, 2011).

The experience of being cared for is a result of warm and respectful verbal or nonverbal communication between a teacher and a student, and it can occur only in attentive interactions (Noddings, 2012), whether personal and informal or part of a formal, public teaching and learning situation (see Lave & Wenger, 1991). A caring teacher has good conversations with students and communicates in a respectful manner (Hosio, 2021, 2026; Teven & Hanson, 2004; Teven, 2007). Good quality teacher-student relationships (Quin, 2017), instructional support (Havik & Westergård, 2020) and informal and out-of-classroom interaction (Wang & Eccles, 2012) may also be relevant to school engagement. By establishing caring and supportive relationships with students, teachers can even prevent students dropping out of school (Teuscher and Makarova, 2018).

Caring relationships can develop when a learning situation is attentive; that is, the teacher is concentrating on teaching and actively paying attention to the students' learning and needs (Korthagen et al., 2014; Noddings, 2005, 2012; Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Furthermore, the importance of a single teacher in organizing daily teaching to enhance students' engagement by creating a caring environment has been recognized (e.g. Battistich et al., 2004).

Teachers' caring actions in learning situations also affect the classroom atmosphere (see Ryan & Deci, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sherblom et al., 2006) and can be seen when conducting learning activities and supporting students in their work; caring teachers are found to be warm and helpful and promote a supportive classroom atmosphere (see Bakx et al., 2015; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sherblom et al., 2006). Encouraging students to ask questions and engage in open discussion about difficulties or misconceptions that lead them astray is important (Atjonen et al., 2021).

There is plenty of previous research concerning feedback (see, e.g. Brandmo & Gamlem, 2025). According to Brandmo and Gamlem (2025), teachers' "high-quality, tailored, and action-oriented feedback positively affects student achievement, motivation and engagement, while negative or vague feedback can lead to demotivation and avoidance behaviors. Students prefer direct and individualized

feedback, and trust in the teacher-student relationship is crucial for effective feedback uptake" (p. 1).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) define feedback as a consequence of action. A teacher might provide accurate information and confirm correctness, a fellow student might offer an alternative approach, or books might provide information that helps a student structure their thoughts. For feedback to be effective, the person giving it must understand its goal, examine the actions required to achieve that goal and reflect on what needs to be done next. Thus, feedback includes goal achievement at both the task and process levels. It also encompasses self-assessment and an evaluation of personal commitment to achieving a goal. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), this model of providing feedback also places pressure on teachers who wish to teach effectively. Negative feedback from the teacher, as well as feedback regarding effort or ability, influences the teacher-student relationship.

Guo (2020) states that feedback teachers give their students can be affirming (e.g. when a teacher confirms that an answer is correct) or corrective (e.g. when a teacher provides a correct answer themselves). Feedback can also be constructive, such as when a teacher guides students through follow-up questions or provides hints to help them arrive at the correct answer. Teachers also give praise or negative feedback, typically in relation to the students' attitudes towards the work, their behaviour or other aspects of their conduct (Guo, 2020).

However, in their study of Finnish 5th and 6th grade students, Atjonen et al. (2021) found that although feedback often focuses on a student's self-regulation and task-related skills, the process readily transitions from an interaction to one-sided communication from the teacher to the student. Feedback directed at self-regulation appeared to students as a conclusion drawn by the teacher—success or failure—to which the student had to adapt. Students generally perceived the feedback they received as either positive or negative and only rarely as constructive (Atjonen et al., 2021).

Assessment has also been reported by students to be a part of the experience of caring (see Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; Stipek, 2006). Teachers who care about students' learning are found to evaluate students' work, observe the learning situation and consider tasks other than tests when assigning marks (Caldwell & Sholtis, 2008; Hosio, 2021, 2026). Regarding formative assessment and improving learning outcomes, Gamlem and Munthe (2014) emphasize that the quality of teachers' feedback is directly linked to whether a student knows how to utilize it. If the feedback does not include clear guidance on how the students can improve their performance, it does not lead to improved learning outcomes. Learning also requires a variety of written and oral feedback methods as well as attention directed at both individuals and the group (Brookhart, 2017).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) identified four types of teacher feedback: task, process, self-regulation and self, the last of which includes non-specific praise and comments about students' effort, although students need feedback on their per-

formance in their classroom activities rather than formal testing. Effective feedback requires an understanding of the goals—so that actions taken to achieve them can be examined—as well as reflection on what needs to be done next. In addition to the assessment of student performance, feedback provided by the teacher includes oral or written feedback given in specific situations (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Although there can be cultural differences in attitudes towards praising students (see Burnett, 2002; Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Guo, 2020) feedback also has positive consequences for students' emotions and behaviour (Harris et al., 2014).

3. Current Study

This study explored students' perceptions of supportive feedback as part of previous phenomenographic research on teachers' caring (Hosio, 2021, 2026). The purpose of phenomenographic research is to describe people's collective experiences of the world, in this case teachers' supportive feedback from teachers, and variations in that collective experience (Åkerlind et al., 2005; Han & Ellis, 2019; Raza et al., 2024). To answer the research questions, students were asked about their perceptions and memories of caring teachers in semi-structured interviews, from which the data for this study were collected.

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Participants

The participants were 51 students, aged 15 - 16 years, with a gender division of 27 female and 24 male students. The students were in the ninth grade, which is the final grade in the Finnish basic schooling system; therefore, these students had the broadest possible perspective on the topic of this research. The participating students were from three schools located in the same area of a large city in southern Finland. Potential participants were selected randomly from among all ninth-grade students at each school by choosing everyone who had consent given by their parents as well as the students themselves. All students who consented to participate, and whose parents also provided consent, were included.

4.2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data and allowed the participants to freely relate their experiences and perceptions of caring (Brinkmann, 2018; Ercikan & Roth, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Mason, 2002); this method is frequently used in phenomenographic research (see, e.g. Bowden, 2000; Han & Ellis, 2019). The thematic questions were tested by interviewing three students prior to data collection. The interview questions concerning the feedback were: 1) What kind of feedback or praise have you received from the teacher? 2) What about feedback when a student fails? How did it feel? And further, at the end of the interview: 3) In your opinion, what is the most important aspect of the interaction between teacher and student? The interviews were conducted privately at school in 2013-2014. The rec-

orded interviews were approximately 25 minutes in duration and were conducted in Finnish. The quotes presented in this article are translations of the original transcriptions.

4.3. Data Analysis

Conventional content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kvale, 2007) was used to process the recorded and transcribed data. This qualitative method was selected because data could be coded according to the original context of a single phrase or expression. The data were first read thoroughly by the researcher herself to obtain a sense of the overall topic and then further examined word by word. Second, the discrimination units that were found (the coding scheme) were thematized into three categories according to the nature of the received feedback situation. The discrimination units were classified, and if they were found to overlap, they were investigated again with the original transcription to determine the context of the received feedback before they were placed into relevant categories. Finally, the subgroups were addressed to reveal the aspects of received feedback (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The analysis was data driven. The categories revealing three types of received feedback situations and students' experiences of receiving supportive feedback are discussed in this article. Pseudonyms were used for all the sources of the quotes.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The participating students received approval from their parents, and they gave their own consent to participate and record the interview before the session started. All the students were provided with information about their rights (e.g. to withdraw), the aim of the study, data collection methods, and the storage and use of the data. Participation was voluntary. In the transcription process, the data were pseudonymized, and all information regarding the participants' identities (e.g. school or teacher names) was replaced with artificial identifiers (e.g. fictitious names and numbers). The interviews, analysis and use of the data followed the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2019), including instructions regarding the participants' identity (e.g. school names, teacher names) and the use of artificial identifiers. In Finland, this type of research does not require an ethics committee review.

5. Results

The results are typically presented hierarchically structured in phenomenographic research (outcome space), and the categories of descriptions are organized from lower order to higher order (Raza et al., 2024; Åkerlind et al., 2005). In this study, the units that classify the experiences of receiving supportive feedback, that are based on previous studies of students' experiences of teachers' caring (Hosio, 2021, 2026) are re-analyzed. The categories are organized from higher to lower order. Results are presented in three categories according to the communication

situation, namely communication during lessons, out-of-class communication and communication during assessment processes. The categories of descriptions are organized from lower to higher, as the category concerning assessment processes is the lowest and consequently the category of communication during lessons is the highest thus forming the outcome space of this study (see Raza et al., 2024; Åkerlind et al., 2005). The three categories cover the results of RQ 2 (In what kinds of communication situations has the received feedback been perceived as supportive?). The results answering RQ 1 (What kind of teacher feedback has been perceived as caring?) are presented in the subgroups that reveal the nature of students' experiences of receiving feedback in communication situations. The quotes from the students' responses were translated from the original data.

5.1. Supportive Feedback Received during Lessons

The first category, supportive feedback received during lessons, reveals the students' experiences of both verbal and nonverbal feedback during lessons, which made the feedback public by nature, as well as experiences of teachers' classroom management strategies that were perceived as feedback. Although many students found public feedback inconvenient, it may also be given in a supportive manner (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Supporting feedback during lessons.

Communication situation (RQ 2)	Received feedback or supportive communication (RQ 1)	Data examples
Public, verbal	Receiving supportive feedback when asking questions	"(A teacher) may not get angry if someone asks for help or doesn't understand immediately, I mean, letting your own emotions out and towards the students, that doesn't create a good atmosphere."
Public, verbal	Receiving feedback as a group	"The teacher would get angry with us sometimes. You could tell from that that he/she actually cared about how we behaved in class."
Public, verbal	Receiving emotional feedback during discussions	"That conversation (between the teacher and the student) has a direct impact on the atmosphere in the classroom—like whether things are relaxed."
Public, nonverbal	Receiving rewards for good behaviour	"The marble jar—we used to get these little marbles, and whenever we behaved well or focused on our tasks, we'd get to put a marble in the jar. And when the jar was full, the whole class would get a treat."
Public, nonverbal	Receiving feedback conveyed through emotional expression	"(A teacher) is quite relaxed, but can still keep discipline, and that there is a good labour peace, and you can study there, but not necessarily old fashioned like total silence, though. (The teacher) just looks at you and…you just want to keep it (the labour peace)" "A teacher can, for instance, wait for the student to listen... so they don't start speaking right over that. You just have to insist on a quiet working environment."

The first subgroup of this category, public and verbal feedback, depicts teachers' methods of giving supportive feedback while answering students' questions. The

teacher suppresses their own possible negative feelings, may e.g., thank the students for asking questions and give the benefit of the answer to the group as whole. "Someone asks before others, then the teacher gives pieces of advice to everyone". This makes it easier for students to ask questions in a good atmosphere and is found to support learning.

Another way to give students feedback during lessons is asking for silence or thanking the class for something that the teacher appreciates, such as good behaviour. Students justified negative feedback; they found the teacher's reaction to be proof that the teacher cared and valued a good atmosphere.

A third way to support students verbally and publicly during lessons is to encourage them to try or to set goals. Teachers observe the learning situation and help students immediately when they are puzzled or struggling. "They (the teachers) walk around the classroom and observe". The tone of their voice is friendly, and they encourage students verbally and support a good atmosphere in class. As a result, students depict the situation as follows: "If someone needs more help to learn, there's nothing wrong with that".

Teachers' supportive feedback during lessons may also be nonverbal, such as giving students small rewards for receiving goals (e.g. stars on the classroom wall in grades one or two), which the students were recalling. To ensure that collecting tokens on the classroom wall, where everyone can see them, is supportive and acceptable, the teacher must keep student privacy, confidentiality and equality in mind. Supportive praise should always be given to the whole group instead of pointing at single students in a negative way.

Teachers' actions in promoting a peaceful and positive learning atmosphere were also nonverbal (e.g. waiting for students to calm down). Showing anger or dissatisfaction was also justified when the situation required them, such as when the group needed to be put back in order. "(The teacher) got angry every now and then; you could see that they were not indifferent to how we behaved". The teacher was also perceived as greatly valuing a supportive classroom atmosphere by showing positive emotions and enjoying the teaching situation: "By being positive, not like one who's always criticizing or complaining".

5.2. Supportive Feedback Received in Out-of-Class Communication

The second category, supportive feedback received in out-of-class communication, reveals the student experiences that have taken place outside of class in one-to-one conversations between a student and a teacher (Table 2).

The first two subgroups of this category, receiving oral encouraging feedback in teacher-student dialogue and receiving oral negative feedback in teacher-student dialogue, depict teachers' methods of giving supportive feedback, being both positive or negative by nature. According to the students, positive feedback, especially when received in one-to-one conversation, is a much more effective and encouraging way to give feedback than underlining incorrect answers or failures:

"Positive feedback is better anyway; it supports you more. If you get a lot of negative feedback, then you may not even want to try anymore, and you get the feeling that you're bad." Thus, supportive feedback may mean encouraging or even negative feedback in addition to compliments to students if it is given in a respectful and caring manner. Although negative feedback may boost motivation, students asked that it be given privately and personally: "I wish the teacher would give that feedback personally instead of always complaining to the homeroom teacher or guardians or in the class…not everyone should here it". Nevertheless, feedback received privately was found to be supportive: "Getting comments from the teacher privately really helps boost your motivation. It makes you want to try even harder!"

Table 2. Supporting feedback out-of-class situations.

Communication situation (RQ 2)	Received feedback or supportive communication (RQ 1)	Data examples
One-to-one conversations	Receiving oral encouraging feedback in teacher-student dialogue	"Good encouraging is when a teacher gives you a credit when you succeed but then, if you fail you are not criticized…they say like try again…" "Encouragement helps prevent you from sinking into a state where you lose faith in your abilities, feel incapable of doing anything, and consequently stop trying altogether."
One-to-one conversations	Receiving oral negative feedback in teacher-student dialogue	"Sure, you get negative feedback every now and then…but it should be given in a supportive way…like after the lessons, privately" "Constructive critical feedback certainly boosts study motivation—just as positive feedback does—because you don't want to do a worse job next time. You raise the bar for yourself!"
One-to-one conversations	Receiving oral guidance in teacher-student dialogue	"The teacher has come over to offer guidance, or someone has stayed behind during recess to look at something (an assignment)." "Some teachers give feedback—even just after the lesson, on a one-on-one basis…"
One-to-one conversations	Receiving acknowledgments	"At least back in elementary school, whenever I stood up for someone who was being bullied, a teacher would come over to thank me. It felt good; I knew I had done the right thing in that situation." "We were thanked for cleaning the hall."
Written feedback or similar	Receiving notes	"The teacher had written some nice words at the end of a piece of writing, and when an exam goes well, it says something like 'great' or the like." "In my opinion, a teacher can certainly show what they like; that way, the student learns what could have been added or what worked well…"
Written feedback or similar	Receiving tokens	"In the elementary school we got stamps!"

Teachers also have one-to-one conversations with their students to define goals. "The teacher and I, we checked out everything that was required…she [the teacher] also told me how to get the mark I need…" The discussions may also concern remedial instruction after lessons, which students found helpful in most cases: "The remedial instruction changed my attitude so that I began to trust my own know-how", although younger students sometimes found it annoying "It felt like a punishment, that [I] had to stay at school when the other students went home".

The third group of oral feedback in one-to-one conversations was acknowledgment. Most often, acknowledgment meant thanking the student for doing something extra (e.g. helping others) and the feedback was taken as encouragement to make such efforts again: "It felt good when (the teacher) said, 'Thank you.' It's nice to get acknowledgments." Thanking students may also have an impact on the school atmosphere because the teachers also used oral acknowledgment, for example, in solving students' conflicts, such as bullying.

Supportive feedback received in out-of-class communication also includes written or similar forms. Some students received supportive feedback in small, encouraging notes that a teacher wrote on a worksheet or an essay: "Quite often there was just 'Well done!' written on the paper…" "There were different figures, like bears and others, and the teacher stamped our notebooks. We were so proud of them!"

5.3. Supportive Feedback Received during the Assessment Process

The third category, supportive feedback received during assessment processes, concerns the students' experiences of teachers' actions and behaviour related to exams, tests and assessment (Table 3).

Table 3. Supporting feedback during assessment process.

Communication situation (RQ 2)	Received feedback or supportive communication (RQ 1)	Data examples
During studies	Raising the grade by making an effort	"I've sometimes talked with the teacher about how to participate better in class and raise my grade, but in the end, it's always up to me…" "A grade can also be raised by choosing a more difficult task... allowing the student to decide for themselves what grade they are aiming for and how much effort they want to put into it."
After tests	Encouraging and informative feedback	"We got a new change to take the test (if failed)…" "Teachers who provide good feedback clearly explain what the grade is based on and which factors influence it—for instance, if you've done well on vocabulary tests, a single grammar test won't necessarily bring your grade down."

The first subgroup of this category depicts teachers' methods of giving support-

ive feedback during studies. Opportunities for students to raise their grades by making an effort during studies was mentioned most often in the data. A teacher may evaluate a student's tasks by pointing to the best parts or successes instead of failures or mistakes: "It (giving extra credit for trying) is very supportive, so the whole task isn't all wrong." A teacher may also take an active part in learning situations and assessments during studies, not just evaluating according to the test results, and even give more challenging tasks to students who aim for better results. "If you are active and try your best during the lessons, it may affect your marks in a positive way…".

The second subgroup of this category depicts teachers' methods of giving supportive feedback after tests, referring to situations in which a student faces failure. A supportive teacher does not get angry but tries to turn students' thoughts to the future: "If you fail the test, the teacher tries to convince you that you'll succeed better next time". The teacher may even give the student a new opportunity to demonstrate their competence. Overall, students found it supportive to receive information about assessment criteria, especially when facing bad test results. Setting new targets and discussing upcoming exams may restore a student's self-confidence.

6. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate students' experiences of feedback from teachers that they perceived as supportive. The research questions were What kind of teacher feedback has been perceived as supportive? (RQ 1) and In what kinds of communication situations has the received feedback been perceived as supportive? (RQ 2). The results formed three categories of supportive feedback situations: during lessons, in out-of-class communication and during assessment processes. Each category included subgroups defining the nature of the supportive feedback received in the situation in question. The students also in this study, as well as in previous studies, found positive feedback to be more supportive than negative feedback (see also Harris et al., 2014).

Much previous research aligns with the results of this study, including studies that focus on the teacher-student relationship (Teuscher & Makarova, 2018) and teachers' emotional support and conduct during lessons (Bakx et al., 2015; Beishuizen et al., 2001; Pöysä et al., 2018, 2019). The value of a supportive atmosphere during lessons has also been addressed in many previous studies (see Ryan & Deci, 2009; Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sherblom et al., 2006). The students reported that teachers provided a supportive atmosphere in the classroom by giving instant verbal or non-verbal feedback during lessons about their behaviour and verbal feedback about the tasks of the lesson. The results of this study also indicate the importance of a good classroom atmosphere and a safe environment in which to ask questions and are thus particularly aligned with the results of Atjonen et al. (2021), who also see the importance of fostering a constructive feedback culture. Students' prerequisites for a good classroom atmosphere and supportive feedback

indicate what might be needed to meet their support needs and to prevent social isolation or bullying in class, as was also reported in studies by Havik et al. (2015) and Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006).

The students also received instructive feedback outside of lessons and information about assessment. The results conformed to those of many previous studies. The students found one-to-one conversations supportive, which was also the case in a previous Finnish study (Atjonen et al., 2021). Furthermore, teachers' support is connected to students' behavioural engagement because students are found to work more intensively when getting instructional support from the teacher (Havik & Westergård, 2020). By establishing caring and supportive relationships with students, teachers may even prevent students dropping out of school (see Teuscher and Makarova, 2018).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) identified four types of teacher feedback: task, process, self-regulation and self, the last of which included non-specific praise and comments about students' effort. In the category of assessment processes, students pictured three of the types of feedback that Hattie and Timperley (2007) identified: task, process and self. Regarding tasks, the students stressed opportunities for second chances or future possibilities when needed. Allowing extra possibilities to complete courses can be seen as a way to encourage students and offer them equal opportunities to apply for further studies (see Caldwell & Sholtis, 2008; Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; Stipek, 2006). A similarly student-centred approach to teaching was found in studies by Beishuizen et al. (2001) and Gholami (2011). The students also depicted supportive feedback when teachers had relevant conversations about assessment criteria, which gives an example of the experiences concerning processes. Relevant conversations have also been mentioned in Teven and Hanson (2004); Teven (2007). Additionally, the students specified many forms of supportive feedback and praise: spoken, written or using tokens both during lessons and in one-to-one conversations, which gives concrete examples regarding tests, processes and self (see Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Praising students in one-to-one communication was also found to be supportive (see Burnett, 2002; Guo, 2020; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

This study depicts students' experiences of teachers' supportive feedback, not to mention the importance of student voices that had not previously been heard with regard to the topic. The analysis was based on a complete study of students' experiences of teachers' caring (Hosio, 2021, 2026). Categorization and grouping were data-driven in the categories that concerned received feedback. As this study revealed considerable versatility in teachers' ways of giving feedback during lessons or in out-of-class communication in a caring manner, even during assessment processes, it is important to both teaching practice and teacher education (see Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; Stipek, 2006). However, further research is needed. In addition to student interviews, observation of teachers' classroom behaviour and teachers' commentary on students' perceptions of feedback would provide teachers' perspectives on feedback processes.

Conflicts of Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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