

An in-depth analysis of written feedback found in ePortfolios of undergraduate midwifery students

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Background: Feedback is a key element of clinical education. It guides students in their competency development and contributes to patient safety^{1,2}. EPortfolios are often used to collect written feedback.³ An overwhelming amount of research indicates that written feedback rarely meets the characteristics of qualitative effective feedback^{4,5}. To date, there has been little research into the quality of written feedback in ePortfolios.

Aim(s): This study aims to explore the quality of written feedback found in ePortfolios that scaffold workplace learning of undergraduate midwifery students.

Methods: Based on Van De Ridder and colleagues'¹ definition of feedback in clinical education, four quality criteria were defined (performance, judgment, elaboration and improvement). The criteria guided the design of a coding scheme to analyse written feedback segments. Using qualitative content analysis, 1013 feedback segments from the ePortfolios of 23 midwifery students were coded and analysed. These feedback segments reflected how workplace and teaching staff reacted to the students' performance during workplace learning.

Results: Most feedback segments were of moderate quality. Despite the length of the feedback segments, only a minority (26%) met all four quality criteria. The quality criterion receiving least attention was 'elaboration', suggesting that the majority of segments lack details underpinning a judgment about students' performance.

Discussion (including limitations): The results of this ePortfolio study confirm findings of earlier research concerning the critical quality of written feedback in the context of clinical education⁴⁻⁷. The strength of this study is its in-depth analysis of a large number of written feedback segments found in ePortfolios. However, the results are limited to written feedback which implies they cannot be generalized to all

feedback given during workplace learning; oral feedback, for example, was not included in this study.

Implications and future perspectives and references: This study sets the scene for further research to focus on the shortcomings of current written feedback in ePortfolios that scaffold workplace learning. It provided insights into the content and quality of written feedback which can serve as a starting point for setting up feedback training.

References:

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