

Original Paper

Pedagogical Counselors' Self-exploration of Writing Feedback on Preservice Teachers' Teaching Journals

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Abstract

The study examines types of feedback pedagogical counselors write in response to preservice teachers' reflective writing in Teaching Journals during their practicum. The study also examines variables that can affect written feedback on reflective writing: year in the college, preservice teachers' levels, changes in feedback over time and personal differences among counselors. 689 comments written by five counselors from 74 Teaching Journal entries were explored. The results showed eight feedback types, in which asking for clarifications and leading preservice teachers to infer from pupils' responses, were the most frequent. Differences of feedback types written to student teachers was affected by year in the college, by levels of the student teachers and by the context of the practicum. The discussion will focus on the eight feedback types and the linguistic aspect of the feedback.

Keywords

teaching journal, written feedback, reflective writing

1. Introduction

Teaching Journals are a type of reflective writing that our preservice teachers have been engaging in as part of their practicum assignments for the last 20 years in special education department. Our experience with Teaching journals shows improvement in self-reflection although we did not find significant improvement in critical thinking. In our previous study, we found differences in level of reflection of two groups in which different feedback they received affected differences in level of reflectivity (Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012). Our experience with face to face feedback suffers from gaps between our feedback/evaluation and student teachers' point of view and evaluation. We tried alternative of collaborative reflection with colleagues as the respondents, but the results of this move ended with praising and left behind professional knowledge and critical thinking on the reflective writing.

Studies on the importance of feedback on reflective writing, led us to self-exploration of the feedback that we pedagogical counselors write. We expected that this self-exploration will give us insights to the interaction on the reflections with preservice students and understandings of the variables that affect this feedback. Four years ago when we searched for studies on feedback on reflective writing, we did not find empirical descriptions of feedback given to reflective writing on teaching.

We therefore decided to examine the type of comments we, as pedagogical counselors, write. We also wished to examine the variables that can affect feedback on reflective writing such as iteration of the reflective writing (first, second or third time), preservice teacher level, year in the college and individual differences among the pedagogical counselors.

Reflective writing: Reflective writing in the teacher education practicum is a platform to promote professional development. It enables preservice teachers to examine pupils' learning in light of their instructional techniques, test their planning ideas, observe their pupils' achievements, analyze the dynamic of groups in class discourse and shape their beliefs and educational conceptions. One of the main ideas of reflective writing in teacher education is to connect theory to practice in order to construct pedagogy within an academic frame. McGuire, Lay and Peters (2009) describe the act of reflection as a "core skill for functioning effectively". Reflective writing mediates between existing and new knowledge and breaks habitual ways of thinking.

The act of writing process is considered to generate ideas, organize and elaborate on them throughout drafting, revising and editing (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987, 1991). A high- quality writing process is not a recall but rather a reconstruction of knowledge (Flower, 1990). Hence, the act of reflective writing can support and enhance critical thinking as part of meta-cognitive processes (Davis, 2006; Monyanont, 2014; Ryan & Ryan, 2015). Although reflective writing is described as an act of self-exploration that enhances meta-cognition it requires formative feedback in order to reach a high level of reflection (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 2002; Davis, 2006; Brookhart, 2008; Fry, Ketteridge, & Marshall, 2009).

Since the nineties, reflective writing in teacher education developed in several forms, creating different kinds of feedback dialogue in writing journals.

Drawing on research and accounts of practice, Lee (2008) described four types of reflective journals in teacher education and their benefits for preservice teachers: 1) *Dialogue journals* involving reciprocal responses of college teachers and preservice teachers' writing and the exchange of ideas. Its benefit lies in promoting autonomous learning, enhancing confidence, and helping preservice teachers connect between different subjects in their teaching. 2) *Response journals* relating to preservice teachers' personal reactions to what they read, write, observe and hear, discussing their reactions with others and its benefits for learning. This is mainly a self-exploration journal. 3) *Teaching Journals* based on teaching experiences in the practicum aiming to involve preservice teachers in writing and exchanging ideas with their pedagogical counselor about teaching. This journal is very popular in field experience in teacher education. 4) *Collaborative/Interactive group journals*, focusing on group dynamics and

synergy created by the preservice teachers. It encourages preservice teachers' responsibility for their learning by sharing ideas and developing insights among colleagues, skills that will benefit them throughout their careers. All forms of journals benefit from feedback, which deepens self-exploration.

Feedback: Feedback can be a powerful tool if performed well. Its power lies in addressing both cognitive and motivational factors, giving learners information they need so they can understand how to react and what to do next. Hattie and Timperley (2007) proposed a model describing the complexity of feedback in three dimensions: feed up, feedback, and feed forward, by asking three questions: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? Each question can address four levels of feedback: (1) about the task, (2) about the process (strategies that could be used), (3) about self-regulation (preservice teachers are informed how to continue), (4) about the preservice teacher as a person.

In an instructional setting, feedback is described as one of the many procedures that inform a student whether his/her response is right or wrong. Additionally, feedback can also provide instructional information to the student that gives a reason for why a response is correct or incorrect. The meta-analysis of Hattie's database of 7000 studies (Hattie, 2015) point at feedback as one of the most effective variables in improving learning.

Researchers in teacher education realized that feedback messages are filtered through the preservice teacher's perception, influenced by their prior knowledge, experiences, and motivation (Kagan, 1992). The research review of Butler and Winne (1995) revealed that external feedback (such as teacher feedback) and internal feedback (such as preservice teacher self-evaluation) affected preservice teacher knowledge and beliefs. Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that the effects of feedback depend on its nature. For example, feedback that includes what to do and why, helps preservice teachers develop a feeling of control over their learning, thus acting as a motivational factor (Brookhart, 2008). Preservice teachers must be engaged with the feedback process in order to develop self-regulated skills (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996).

Feedback to Writing Journals: The purpose of feedback in higher education is to help preservice teachers monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2013). Although reflection is an act of self-exploration, researchers claim that reflective writing without feedback does not improve reflective thinking (Bain, Ballantyne, Packer, & Mills, 2002; Davis, 2006; Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012). Thomas and Packer (2013) claim that preservice teachers need help in their reflective processes otherwise they will focus on "thinking about the tasks" and "thinking about the pupils" and will leave "thinking about myself as a teacher" behind. Consequently, pedagogical counselors should encourage preservice teachers to rethink their values and recognize prejudices and contradictions between values and actions. Descriptions of the dialogue during fieldwork in Nickle's (2013) study gave us a glance on feedback of the instructor and its importance on navigating students to delve into their reflection, but this study was among student teachers in their first semester of university and was not focused on teaching.

As we inquire the research on reflective writing and the feedback of supervisors, we recognized two problems, which we experienced in our work as pedagogical counselors: First, Dissatisfactions from the feedback on reflective writing: Nicol (2010) described the dissatisfactions and difficulties of the feedback on the reflective writing from both sides, students claim on unclear feedback and Pedagogical counselors' report on misunderstandings, describing feedback as useless act which the student teachers did not change/improve their acts as suggested in the feedback. Second, a contradicting point on writing feedback: Immediate corrective feedback was found to be more effective than delayed feedback (Gürkan Serkan, 2018), without immediate feedback might leave the internal dialogue of the preservice teacher at a low and immature level of reflection. Yet, feedback from the pedagogical counselor can be interpreted as an act of assessment and might limit the self-exploration process (Ditchburn, 2015).

Considering these problems and the claim that reflective writing can be effective if preservice teachers take an active role in the process (Nicol, 2010), we decided to explore our feedback in an open platform, which will not entail remarks on the quality of reflection but only on submitting *Teaching Journals*. Preservice teachers were also encouraged to respond to our questions and were not evaluated on their level of reflective writing, but were rather credited for the act of submitting a reflective journal. Creating the right environment of reflection on teaching we decided to delve into our written feedback in order to understand how we encourage students to take a critical position and what affect our feedback.

Our main question was: What are the characteristics of counselors' feedback to reflective writing and which variables shape feedback to reflective writing?

2. Method

The study used a mixed method array regarding the following research questions:

- 1) What types of comments did we, the pedagogical counselors, write in response to the *Teaching Journals*?
- 2) To what extent did our comments on reflective *Teaching Journals* differ by year of learning in the college, iteration (first, second, third time of reflective writing), by teaching level of the preservice teachers in the practicum, and by individual differences among the counselors?

Questions 1, was analyzed qualitatively, while question 2 was explored quantitatively.

2.1 Participants

25 preservice teachers and five pedagogical counselors from the special education department in a teacher education college in the south of Israel participated in the study. Two supervisors were relatively inexperienced (four years or less) and three had an average of 20 years of experience. Three pedagogical counselors were experts in Learning Disabilities (LD) and two were experts in Complex Developmental Disorders (CDD). Three were supervisors in the second year and two in the third year.

At the end of the year, each supervisor chose 5 preservice teachers from her group who displayed three levels of performance in field experience (low, moderate, high), in terms of planning and teaching in

class, which were classified with the consultant of the cooperative teacher. Scores of 88-100 in field experience were considered “high level”, scores of 75-87 were considered “moderate level” and scores below that indicated “low-level” (Table 1). These 25 preservice teachers submitted 74 *Teaching Journals* divided between second/third year and three levels of preservice teachers as follows:

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of 74 Journals

Preservice teachers' level	Second year journals	Third year journals	Total
Low	13.6% (6)	20% (6)	16.2% (12)
Moderate	40.9% (18)	30% (9)	36.5% (27)
High	45.5% (20)	50% (15)	47.3% (35)
Total 100%	59.5% (44)	40.5% (30)	100%

Levels of functioning in the practicum was similar across years in the college. No significant difference of *Teaching Journal* submission was found between the distribution of preservice teachers ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 1.105$; n.s.).

The Context-Practicum in Special Education Department: The special education department enables the student to choose between focusing on Learning Disabilities (LD) practicum or Complex Developmental Disorders (CDD). This focus starts in the second and continued in the third year of their learning. Its meaning is mainly in the practicum but also in courses they can choose. LD needed to take 6 hours on reading, and language teaching and diagnosis and a course in emotional disturbances, while the focus on CDD courses on complex disability suggest, autism, social development issues of CDD children and a course on learning to use technology for the benefit of improving communication and learning.

The practicum was two days a week, LD students in regular schools, small classes or individual teaching with children in the Inclusive education program. The focus was on teaching reading and writing strategies at the different stages, alphabetic phase, solid alphabetic phase and fluency and reading comprehension. The student also practiced subject matter teaching history mathematics and other subjects according to their decision with the cooperative teacher in the classroom. Student teachers in CDD focused in their teaching on Literacy, communication capabilities and subjects related to daily life, Holidays and seasons.

2.2 Research Tools and Procedure

2.2.1 Reflective Writing

A reflective writing guide (Appendix 1) contained 10 questions which directed preservice teachers to different levels of reflective writing (a new version of the guide based on Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012).

We decided to use these question because we recognized in the questions potential to lead the students to the five levels of reflection which was described in Bain, Ballantyne, Parker and Mills (1999): Reporting (simple descriptions of the lesson), Responding (descriptions of writers' responses to the occurrences in the lesson), Relating (explanations of the occurrences), Reasoning (analysis of the occurrences in the lesson based on Educational Literature) and Reconstruction (integration of theoretical concepts, self - experience and knowledge).

The reflective writing guide according to the five levels:

- 1) Explain the objectives of this lesson and the activities that you planned to achieve them. (Reasoning)
- 2) What is the topic? Why did you choose to teach this topic and what is its importance? (Reasoning)
- 3) Describe your lesson as it was performed. (Reporting)
- 4) Describe success or failure in your lesson. (Reporting)
- 5) Did you observe children's resistance to the activity? If so, how did you handle it? (Responding and Reporting)
- 6) Did you learn anything new about the pupils in your class? (Relating)
- 7) Do you think you should change the activities in some way? Describe the change and your reason for it. (Relating)
- 8) What did you do to encourage interaction between the children? (Reporting)
- 9) Can you connect between your personal learning experience and the occurrences in your lesson? (Relating)
- 10) What kind of concepts that you learned in the special education department helped you understand your lesson? (Reconstruction)

2.2.2 Writing Feedback

Pedagogical counselors wrote their feedback on the reflective writing of student teachers. In order to start a dialogue with the preservice teachers, each supervisor wrote comments on the preservice teachers' *reflective writing*. The comments were intuitive and had no guide, but since starting a dialogue was in our mind we used a lots of questions which the students had to respond. We read the reflections and responded in various ways, relating to the lesson plan, its implementation, pupils' responses and the preservice teachers' critical thinking. We also responded to linguistic errors. This correspondence was conducted via Google Drive which enable us to create a follow up on the students reflective writing and on our responses on time.

2.2.3 Research Procedure

As part of their practicum assignments, the preservice teachers reflected on their teaching experiences in *Teaching Journals* three times each semester. We, as pedagogical counselors, wrote feedback comments in order to deepen their critical thinking. The process involved five steps:

- 1) Each pedagogical counselor presented the reflective writing guide, explaining its importance to their practicum and to teacher education development in general. Examples of reflective writing were exhibited in order to demonstrate different levels of writing. Discussion was held in order to enable the students to ask questions.
- 2) The preservice teachers wrote *Teaching Journals* about a lesson we had not observed, since our presence ended with face-to-face feedback which gave the preservice teacher insights and ideas on the lesson and would affect their reflective writing. Each reflection was written 1-4 days after the teaching lesson took place.
- 3) Reflective writing was sent to the Pedagogical counselor within a week of the lesson.
- 4) Pedagogical counselor wrote feedback and sent it to the student by email. within a week of submission.
- 5) Preservice students was encouraged to respond. The examples that follows will give a brief glance on the process.

Vignettes from the dialogue in the Teaching Journals with three different levels of preservice teachers (low, moderate and high in this order):

1) *Context:* A preservice teacher wrote about her good feeling regarding pupils' relations with them even when alone with the pupils.

The preservice teacher wrote: It may be that the pupils perceive us now as an authority more than at the beginning of the semester.

The pedagogical counselor's comment: I think this is not a matter of authority but of your caring attitude towards them [pupils], they feel that you try very hard to promote their learning abilities. (Preservice teacher did not respond).

2) *Context:* A preservice teacher asked the pupils to discuss questions about a story they read in small groups and encountered pupil's difficulties in maintaining the discussion in groups.

The counselor's comment: If you had to perform the activity again what change would you make?

The preservice teacher wrote: If I had to teach the whole class again I would change the activity from a group activity to a whole class activity.

The counselor's response: Why are you giving up on group work?

The preservice teacher's response: It is important to mention that I did not give up, and I'm a great believer in group work. But, because the pupils were asked to discuss in groups, I understood that the difficulty lay there. Therefore, looking back, I would give them pair assignments. I think it would be easier for them and it could be a step towards group work.

3) *Context:* A preservice teacher expresses her opinion on the importance of the subject she is teaching:

The preservice teacher wrote: It is important to teach the students about the "seven species of fruits" (Shiv'at Haminim). It is a Jewish tradition that the students should be aware of.

The counselor's comment: Why is it so important to teach Jewish heritage? What are, in your opinion, the difficulties of teaching tradition in a mixed population (Jewish and Muslims)? How can this problem be approached by the teacher?

Preservice teacher's response: Thank you for this comment honestly I did not think of it at all. It is part of the annual program.

2.3 Data Gathering

The overall data of reflective writing included 74 *Teaching Journals* written by preservice teachers, 44 of which were written by second-year preservice teachers, and 30 by third-year preservice teachers.

Our data of comment types was based on 689 comments which we, the pedagogical counselors, had written as feedback to the *Teaching Journals* submitted by the preservice teachers across two semesters. The large number of comments enabled us to perform statistical analysis of the feedback with different variables as an answer to the second research question regarding differences of supervisors' feedback by year of learning in the college, iteration (first, second, third time of reflective writing), by teaching level of the preservice teachers in the practicum, and by individual differences among the counselors.

2.4 Data Analysis

Feedback writing of the supervisors was analyzed qualitatively by grounded theory process:

1) Analysis of comment type: We started by reading the data in pairs suggesting categories of comment types. The classification of the comments was analyzed in the group of all five researchers, in order to achieve consent. This process was repeated several times until the final version reported here was reached (Table 2).

Table 2. Types of Counselors' Feedback Comments

Categories	Sub-categories	Examples
a. Suggestions for instructional moves	Explicit suggestions	I would suggest working in pairs.
	Implicit suggestions	Did you write the numbers under the picture?
b. Express opinions and feelings	Expressing her opinion	I think it is our duty to encourage interaction between pupils.
	Asking preservice teacher to express her/his opinion	What do you think about the event?
	Asking preservice teachers to express her/his feelings	How do you feel about it?
	Expressing empathy with the preservice teacher.	I can understand your conflict.
c. Asking for	Asking for clarification on	How many times did the pupils read the

clarifications	instructional moves	text?
	Asking for clarification on	Can you think of another option?
	change in retrospect	
	Asking for clarification on	Pay attention to the time spent in reading
	instructional aims and	those two words, is it the aim of this lesson?
	expectations	
	Asking for clarification on	How do you know what your pupils
	assessment	learned?
	Asking for information about	Please write more about this pupil.
	pupils	
d. Praising the preservice teachers	Praising the preservice teachers with an explanation	Very good! I can see that you connect between the course content and your practice.
	General praise	Very nice; Excellent!
e. Asking for conclusions	Reflecting on/interpreting preservice teacher writing	I think this is not a matter of authority but of your caring attitude towards them [pupils].
	Asking for conclusions	Do you have any conclusions about peer learning?
	Raising important issues	Why is it so important to teach Jewish heritage?
		What are, in your opinion, the difficulties of teaching tradition in a mixed population (Jews and Muslims)?
		How can the teacher approach this problem?
f. Linguistic corrections	Linguistic corrections (syntax and spelling)	Please change the order of the words in this sentence.
	Paraphrasing preservice teachers' writing	I think you mean that you changed your attitude.
g. Connecting theory to practice	Asking preservice teachers to connect theory to practice	Do you remember what you learned about reading fluency?
	Directing preservice teachers to relevant reading	I suggest reading about the difference between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.
	Suggesting a concept which generalizes preservice teacher descriptions	By paying attention to pupils' needs you are improving their sense of autonomy.
h. Suggesting	Directing preservice teachers to	Did you watch the cooperative teacher?

consultation with staff	observe the cooperative teacher	Look at what she does with this pupil.
	Asking preservice teachers to consult with the cooperative teacher	Please consult your cooperative teacher on this matter.
	Asking preservice teachers to consult other members of staff	I suggest consulting the speech therapist.

3. Results

The results will be presented in two parts: frequencies of feedback types, and differences that affect feedback types.

3.1 Frequencies of Feedback Type

The graph below shows that one quarter of all the comments appeared in the *asking for clarifications* category. The other six comment types were quite evenly distributed and ranged from 15% to 8%: *expressing opinions and feelings, praising the preservice teachers, asking for conclusions, linguistic corrections, asking preservice teachers to connect theory to practice, and suggestions for instructional moves*. *Referring preservice teachers to staff* for consultation was the least frequent type, accounting for only 1.7% of the comments (Table 3, 4).

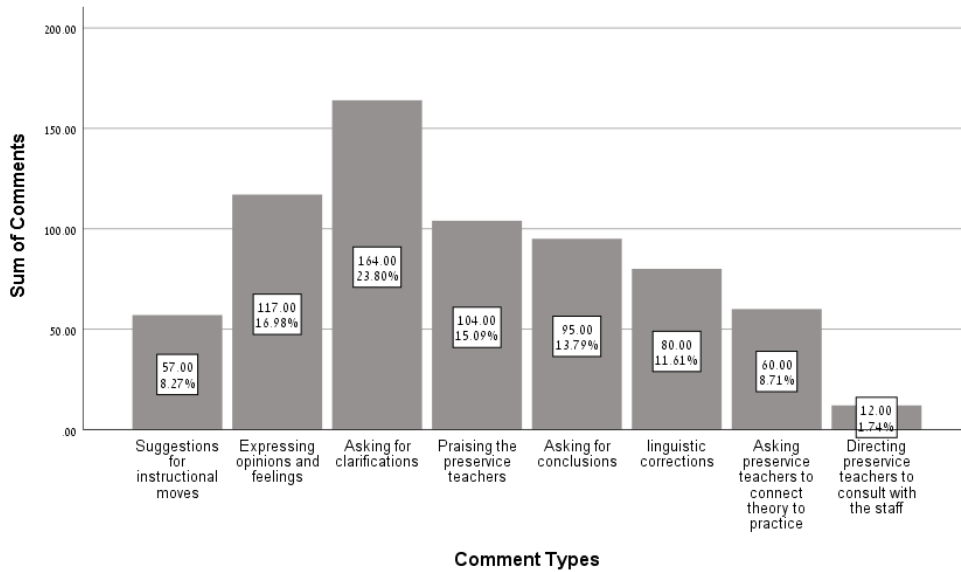


Figure 1. Frequencies of Comment Types: N=689 Comments

Table 3. Counselors' Sub-categories Frequencies of Comment Types on Reflective Writing

Categories	Sub-categories	Frequency of sub-categories
a. Suggestions for instructional moves	Explicit suggestions	65%
	Implicit suggestions	35%
b. Expressing opinions and feelings	Pedagogical counselor expresses her opinion	43%
	Asking preservice teacher to express her/his opinion	43%
	Asking preservice teachers to express her / his feelings	7%
	Pedagogical counselor expresses empathy with the preservice teacher.	7%
c. Asking for clarifications	Asking for clarification on instructional moves	48%
	Asking for clarification on change in retrospect	15%
	Asking for clarification on instructional aims and expectations	11%
	Asking for clarification on assessment	12%
	Asking for information about pupils	14%
d. Praising the preservice teachers	Praising the preservice teachers with explanation	62%
	General praise	38%
e. Asking for conclusions	Reflecting on/interpreting preservice teacher writing	14%
	Asking for conclusions	60%
	Raising important issues	26%
f. Linguistic corrections	Linguistic corrections (syntax and spelling)	70%
	Paraphrasing preservice teachers' writing	30%
g. Connecting theory to practice	Asking preservice teachers to connect theory to practice	47%
	Directing preservice teachers to relevant reading	18%
	Suggesting a concept which generalizes preservice teacher descriptions	35%
h. Suggesting consultation with staff	Directing preservice teachers to observe the cooperative teacher	43%
	Asking preservice teachers to consult with the	22%

cooperative teacher		
Asking preservice teachers to consult with other		35%
staff		

Table 4 shows the following: a. Pedagogical counselors wrote twice as many explicit suggestions for instructional moves as implicit suggestions. b. Pedagogical counselors expressed their opinions and asked for preservice teachers' opinions equally. c. Nearly half of the comments asking for clarifications related to instructional moves. d. Praising the preservice teachers with explanations was twice as frequent as offering general praise. e. Asking preservice teachers for conclusions was the most frequent feedback in that category out of three subtypes in this category. f. Linguistic corrections referred more to syntax and spelling than to paraphrasing. g. The most frequent form of connecting theory to practice was asking to connect theory presented in the courses to their practice.

h. Directing preservice teachers to observe the cooperative teacher was more common than consulting with the cooperative teacher or other staff members.

3.2 Differences That Affect Feedback Types

3.2.1 Differences by year (Table 4)

A Pearson t-test between second- and third-year preservice teachers indicates statistically significant differences for three comment types: 1) Suggestions for instructional moves were more frequent in the third year. 2) Asking for conclusions was more frequent in the second year. 3) Asking preservice teachers to consult cooperative teachers and other staff members were more frequent in the third year.

Table 4. Differences of Written Comment Types between Second and Third Year

Comment types	Year	N	Mean	S. D	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Suggestions for instructional moves	Second	44	4.28	6.76	-2.867	35	*.039
	Third	30	14.23	18.16			
Asking for conclusions and interpretations	Second	44	16.64	11.04	2.626	72	*.011
	Third	30	9.55	11.93			
Directing preservice teachers to cooperative teacher and the staff.	Second	44	0.15	1.00	-2.521	72	*.017
	Third	30	4.10	8.54			

3.2.2 Differences by Iteration (Table 6)

Supervisors wrote more linguistic comments in the first *Teaching Journal* entry (20.7%) compared to the second (9.9%) and third ones (10.6%). Expressing opinion/feelings was changed over time but these results is not statistically significant. Asking for clarifications was stable as much as other comments.

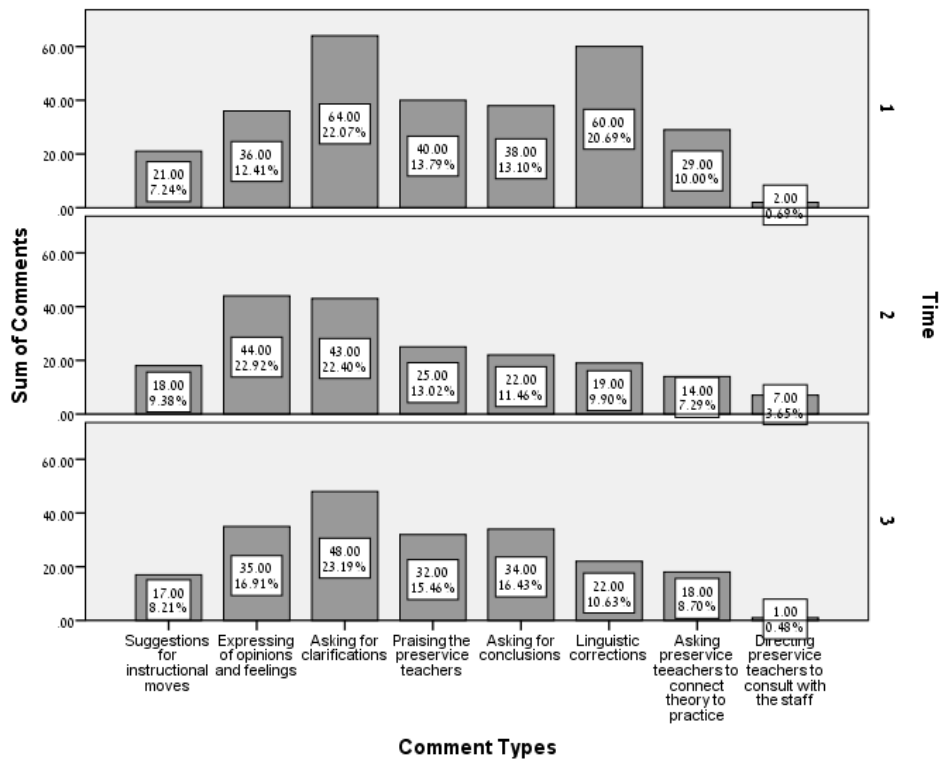


Figure 2. Differences between Counselors’ Comment Types for Three Iterations of Reflective Writing

3.2.3 Differences by Preservice Teacher Level (Tables 7, 8)

Overall, counselors wrote more comments to high-level preservice teachers (362 comments, 52.54%) compared to the number written to moderate (229 comments 33.24%) and low-level preservice teachers (98 comments 14.22%). However, *linguistic comments* were made more frequently to low-level preservice teachers (26.53%) compared to high and moderate levels (13%-11%). *Asking preservice teacher to connect theory to practice* was less frequent for low-level preservice teachers (4.08%) than for high-level ones (11.33%). *Suggestions for instructional moves* were minor for low-level preservice teachers (4.08%) compared to moderate and high-level preservice teachers (8.3% and 9.12%).

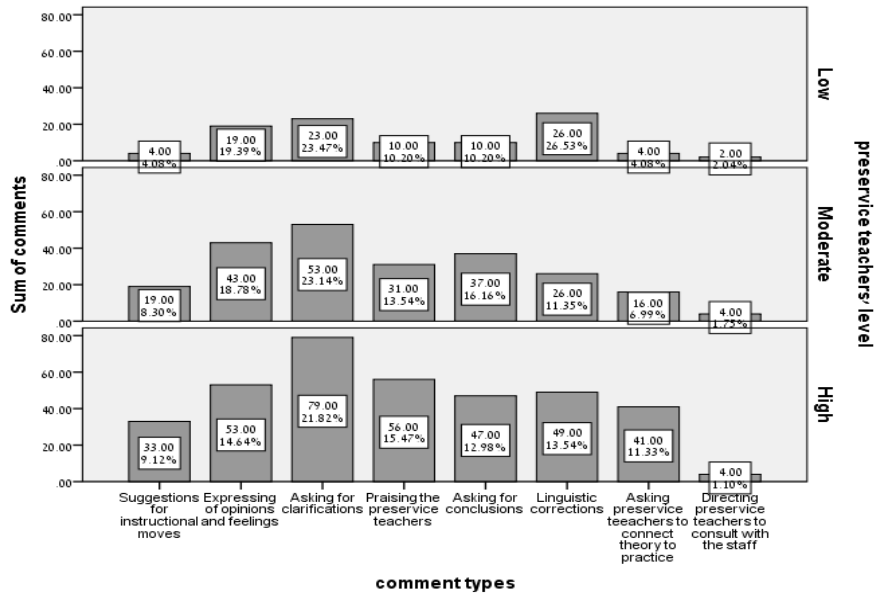


Figure 3. Differences between Counselor Comment Types for Three Levels of Preservice Teachers

Two of these differences between writing comment types and preservice teachers’ levels were statistically significant: Expression of opinions and feelings were more frequent for low-level preservice teachers, and asking preservice teachers to connect theory to practice was twice as high for high-level ones than for moderate ones and six times higher than for low-level ones.

Table 5. Effect of Preservice Teachers’ Levels on Comment Types

Comment types	Level	Mean	S. D	f	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Expressing opinions and feelings	Low	24.59	12.15	3.179*	71	0.04
	Moderate	16.97	12.06			
	High	14.30	12.31			
Asking preservice teachers to connect theory to practice	Low	2.79	5.13	~2.925	71	0.06
	Moderate	6.95	11.04			
	High	12.20	15.17			

3.2.4 Differences by Pedagogical Counselors as Individual

Three pedagogical counselors (A; G; E;) were experts in Learning Disabilities (LD) and (D; N) two were experts in Complex Developmental Disorders (CDD). Pedagogical counselors differed in writing feedback types as presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Differences in Comments Types among the Pedagogical Counselors

Comment type	Counselors	M	SD	Df	f	P-value
Suggesting instructional moves	A	6.42	6.90	4;69	*2.879	0.029
	G	4.08	7.98			
	D	13.60	22.91			
	E	2.34	4.98			
Expressing opinions and feelings	N	14.85	12.55	4;69	**4.126	0.005
	A	22.86	12.14			
	G	11.33	12.09			
	D	20.80	13.75			
Asking for clarifications	E	9.51	8.56	4;69	**4.954	0.001
	N	20.47	10.97			
	A	17.74	8.53			
	G	11.02	10.47			
Asking for conclusions	D	32.80	22.84	4;69	**5.824	0.000
	E	23.09	17.00			
	N	34.89	23.08			
	A	15.57	10.44			
Linguistic corrections	G	16.57	12.61	4;69	**5.928	0.000
	D	18.84	14.04			
	E	13.66	8.19			
	N	2.52	5.49			
Connecting theory to practice	A	9.14	11.36	4;69	*3.350	0.014
	G	24.51	20.45			
	D	8.70	12.92			
	E	15.56	17.49			
	N	0.30	1.17			
	A	11.23	13.00			
	G	9.22	11.51			
	D	2.02	4.49			

	E	16.69	19.23			
	N	4.19	6.37			
Turning preservice teachers to consult with staff	A	0.00	0.00			
	G	0.00	0.00	4;69	**8.199	0.000
	D	0.47	1.78			
	E	0.00	0.00			
	N	8.21	10.73			

Post hoc Duncan test indicates the source of these significant differences:

- 1) Counselors A, D and N wrote more comments expressing opinions and feelings.
- 2) Counselors G and E wrote more linguistic comments.
- 3) Counselors D and N wrote more comments asking for clarifications. They also wrote more suggestions for instructional moves, fewer requests to connect theory to practice and more comments directing the preservice teachers to consult with school staff. It seemed as if N and D supervisors of the CDD had more in common than the supervisors of the LD.

Summary of results: The results presented a broad description of feedback types on reflective writing and several significant differences regarding the variables that we explored:

- 1) Feedback comment types-Eight feedback types aimed to encourage a high level of reflectivity by asking for more information about what happened in the class, leading preservice teachers to infer from pupils' responses, urging the preservice teachers to express their opinions, asking them to link theory to practice and directing them to revise their writing. Asking for clarifications was the most frequent comment type; counselors needed these clarifications in order to understand the procedures of instructional acts and the preservice teachers' responses. We will discuss this result.
- 2) Changes of feedback over time-Feedback changed over time but only linguistic comments lessened significantly over time. We do not think that the preservice teachers improved their writing through such short experience of reflective writing, but perhaps they became more aware of their writing after reading the linguistic comments.
- 3) Writing feedback to second or third year students-The pedagogical counselors wrote more comments with practical suggestions and comments about turning to the cooperative teacher and the staff to third-year preservice teachers. But we wrote more feedback asking for conclusions to second year students. Directing third-year preservice teachers to consult with staff might be due to different goal-setting in the third year, expanding the practicum to the school system beyond the class. More feedback asking for conclusion in second year, might be due to absence of conclusion in their first reflective writing.
- 4) Writing feedback to different level of students-The dialogue with low-level preservice teachers focused mainly on linguistic corrections and asking for expression of their feelings and opinions. The

linguistic corrections that we focused on was partly due to their poor level of articulation in Hebrew. But the explanation for the second comment type we used might be that with low-level preservice teachers we did not feel free to raise doubts in order not to undermine their confidence; instead we asked them to explain their feelings and express their opinions.

5) Writing feedback and the context of the practicum-All comment types were affected by the complex developmental disorders context (second and third year). The Complex Developmental Disorders CDD counselors made more suggestions for instructional moves and directing preservice teachers to consult with cooperative teachers than other counselors. This result might be due to the complex difficulties dealing with Individuals complex difficulties.

Research limitations: This study has two limitations: conclusions from these findings need to be handled with caution due to the small sample of counselors all from one college in one special education department. These might significantly limit the generalizability of the results.

4. Discussion

The discussion will focus on the eight feedback types and the context of feedback. The second part will discuss on *asking for clarifications* as major result and as linguistic aspect of the feedback.

Our motive to portray the types of written feedback was to reduce the gaps on the interpretation of teaching lessons between preservice teachers and their pedagogical counselors. The process we created in five steps invited the students to respond to feedback they received. This was an act of changing view on their teaching lessons, not an act of evaluation as Dylan (2016) suggest. In order to achieve this goal our feedback was delivered without evaluation of the reflective writing of each student.

Our self-exploration pointed out on eight feedback types which can be concluded to four levels directing student teacher's to professional development:

(a) empowerment of the preservice teachers-by praising, sharing opinions and feelings; (b) improving teaching skills by explicit and implicit suggestions for instructional moves; (c) reconstructing instructional knowledge-by asking them to connect theory to practice, read up on the matter they were writing about and suggesting they consult with staff; (d) encouraging critical thinking-by asking for conclusions and clarifications on teaching moves and on pupils' behaviors.

Our findings on eight types have some similarity to late publication we found of Novillo Paula and Pujolà (2019) which pointed out on explicit and implicit suggestions in e-tutoring and asking for clarifications which was named *Inquiring for reflection* and our finding on praising was named in this study as *Giving positive feedback*. This similarity supports our thought that the reflection dialogue in special education context is similar to other teacher education programs. But, on the other hand, we found significant differences between learning disabilities and complex developmental disorders. The explanation can be that dealing with complex disorders in special education is a challenging field and differs from the regular education environment where learning disabilities classes are included. The preservice teachers dealing with complex disorders need more suggestions for instructional moves as

well as consulting with cooperative teachers than in the learning disabilities field experience. This result was found in our previous study (Cohen-Sayag & Fischl, 2012) indicating the context of field experience affecting the type of comments pedagogical counselors make on reflective writing.

Since our main feedback was asking for clarifications we wondered to what extent our feedback was mainly linguistic. Although asking for clarification might appear to be a merely linguistic matter, we distinguished them from the linguistic comments because this was characterized by focusing on the content of the lesson- asking questions about class activities, plans, interactions and navigation. These questions usually caused rethinking the teaching moves and interactions as demonstrated in the example dialogues. We can conclude that, the pedagogical counselors' feedback, demanded clarity from student teachers' reflective writing above all by asking for clarifications more than any other feedback type. Clarity is one of the main demand of writing in general, but here our clarity demands was in context of teaching and thus lead students to rethink and rephrase their teaching descriptions. The very act of writing can support and enhance critical thinking as part of the writing processes (Monyanont, 2014), by our demands for clarity we widened their critical point of view.

Most of the pedagogical counselors were convinced that linguistic comments are important. Nevertheless, the common thinking was that linguistic comments might hurt the writer's feelings. Furthermore, focusing on linguistic comments is not the main aim of reflective writing in teaching journal. In order to overcome this difficulty, we asked the preservice teachers whether they would like us to give feedback with linguistic comments or to ignore the linguistic aspect. All the preservice teachers were enthusiastic about improving their writing, some of them set a meeting to discuss their writing difficulties. A discussion like this is a strategy recommended by Kohn (1992), who argues that advancing reflective thinking in reflective writing depends on the comment type and context. He suggests encouraging discourse between the writer and the commenter.

Implications for teacher education: The implications of this study to teacher education are four:

a. Self-exploration of pedagogical counselors' feedback was our main derive of this research and we think it should be an important act of teacher education staff.

This research experience is vital to the development of pedagogical counselors in their efforts to create significant field experience for their preservice teachers. We recommend this self-exploration process for beginner pedagogical counselors, to explore their own feedback through such process. We think this point of observation can pave the way to reduce gaps and tensions between preservice teachers and their counselors that have been reported in several studies (Frankel, 2002; Cohen-Sayag, Hoz & Kaplan, 2012).

b. The use of comment type that we found can be used as indicators for self-exploration of pedagogical counselors to look at their feedback from different point of view. Further studies are needed to give a broad perspective on feedback types to reflective writing from different teaching education programs.

c. Our main suggestion is to promote preservice teachers' writing abilities through reflective writing. Although it is not the aim of reflection, but since reflection is vital in the process of writing, it seemed

that reflective writing is a good platform to enhance writing abilities in the context of professional environment.

d. The research process not only revealed differences between us, but also raised questions about the differences in the feedback given to second/third year preservice teachers and to the varying performance levels of the preservice teachers. We recommend that counselors be aware of these variables, mainly of the type of feedback we write to low-level preservice teachers in their field experience.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. A Guide to Reflective Writing

Please write your reflections on the lesson according to these questions and attach the lesson plan.

1. Explain the objectives of this lesson and the activities that you planned to achieve them.
2. What is the topic? Why did you choose to teach this topic and what is its importance?
3. Describe your lesson as it was performed.
4. Describe success or failure in your lesson.
5. Did you observe children's resistance to the activity? If so, how did you handle it?
6. Did you learn anything new about the pupils in your class?
7. Do you think you should change the activities in some way? Describe the change and your reason for it.
8. What did you do to encourage interaction between the children? (Reporting)
9. Can you connect between your personal learning experience and the occurrences in your lesson?
10. What kind of concepts that you learned in the special education department helped you understand your lesson?