Performing teacher feedback literacy in peer mentoring meetings

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Abstract

In this study, we examine how university teachers perform teacher feedback literacy (TFL) during problem-based peer mentoring meetings (PPM). Using video observations, we analyse the topics and moment-to-moment interactions as the teachers collectively reflect on challenges experienced during feedback encounters with their graduate students and plan more productive feedback encounters in the future. Our findings provide examples of how TFL can be performed collaboratively by teachers sharing experiences, asking explorative questions and envisioning future scenarios together. In these interactions, teachers discuss topics addressing the feedback context, the candidate's responses, feedback strategies as well as relational and emotional aspects of feedback encounters. The study's empirical insights contribute to our conceptual understanding of TFL as a set of situated practices that include not only practices of enacting feedback encounters with students, but also practices of reflecting on previous feedback encounters and planning feedback encounters ahead.

Keywords: Feedback literacy; Reflection; Academic development; Peer mentoring

Introduction

Learning to understand and use feedback information is a complex process that requires practice and guidance over time (Authors 2019). Teachers are central figures in organising

feedback opportunities for their students and supporting them in using feedback in their learning. To help students use feedback productively, teachers need to develop *teacher feedback literacy* (TFL; Carless and Winstone 2020). Compared with the growing body of empirical studies on student feedback literacy (Carless 2020; Han and Xu 2019; Molloy, Boud, and Henderson 2019), the empirical work on TFL is still in its infancy. What TFL studies have in common is the insight that feedback-literate teachers engage in a range of different activities. Using classroom observations and interviews, Xu and Carless (2017) illustrated that enabling students' productive engagement with feedback requires teachers to carefully plan and orchestrate classroom activities to help students learn how to understand and use feedback information. Likewise, in her interview study, Tuck (2012) found that providing feedback is a complex social practice that requires teachers to navigate relationships, purposes and institutional requirements.

In a recent paper, Carless and Winstone (2020) proposed the conceptualisation of TFL as teachers' 'knowledge, expertise and dispositions to design feedback processes in ways which enable student uptake of feedback' (4). The authors take a point of departure from the socio-constructivist idea that TFL is closely intertwined with student feedback literacy and can be developed via interaction and shared sensemaking (Thomson and Trigwell 2018; Palmer 1993). As shown in earlier work, forming teacher learning communities can help teachers explore and reflect together on their assessment and feedback practices (Hargreaves 2013).

Building on this research, this study aims to make both conceptual and empirical contributions to understanding how TFL may be performed as a joint endeavour. Conceptually, we aim to further elaborate on the situated nature of TFL by drawing on socio-cultural theories of human learning and development (Linell 2009; Vygotsky 1978). From this perspective, we conceptualise TFL as a set of situated practices that teachers *perform* by engaging in such activities as planning, enacting and reflecting on feedback encounters. We highlight how teachers perform these practices not only alone but in interaction with their disciplinary environment, the available resources and their students and colleagues. Empirically, we aim to exemplify one possible way of performing TFL—namely, the specific case of 'problem-based peer mentoring' (PPM), a method aimed at establishing teacher learning communities in which teachers meet regularly to discuss problematic cases from their teaching and supervision work and provide mutual advice. Using video observations of PPM meetings, we address the following empirical questions:

1) What topics do university teachers address while performing TFL during PPM meetings?
2) How do university teachers interact while performing TFL during PPM meetings?

From student to teacher feedback literacy

First introduced to the field of higher education research, the concept of feedback literacy originally referred to students and was only later widened to encompass the feedback literacy of teachers. Sutton (2012) was among the first to define student feedback literacy, whereas

Carless and Boud's (2018) conceptual work eventually set off a wave of conceptual and empirical work. Carless and Boud (2018) defined student feedback literacy as the 'understandings, capacities and dispositions needed to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies' (2). In a similar vein, Han and Xu (2020) conceptualised student feedback literacy as 'cognitive and social-affective readiness to provide and use feedback' (682). From this perspective, the teacher is a facilitator who plans activities and supports and makes suggestions that help students develop their 'feedback literacy' (Han and Xu 2020; Xu and Carless 2017). Empirically, studies taking this perspective tend to search for indicators that trace the development of feedback literacy in individual students. For example, Han and Xu (2020) used interviews with three students and the written peer feedback they provided to each other in a course of a semester to trace the students' developments in 'cognitive and socio-affective readiness' to provide and use (peer) feedback.

Building on the work on student feedback literacy, Carless and Winstone (2020) were the first to conceptualise TFL by referring to the socio-constructivist idea that feedback processes are most effective when responsibilities are shared between students and teachers (Nash and Winstone 2017). They defined TFL as the 'knowledge, expertise and dispositions to design feedback processes in ways which enable student uptake of feedback and seed the development of student feedback literacy' (Carless and Winstone 2020, 4). Further, the authors proposed three different types of typical practices performed by feedback-literate teachers, here adapted to the setting of supervision: First, they recommended designing supervision environments in ways that facilitate effective feedback encounters. Second, they

proposed attending sensitively to the relational and socio-affective aspects of feedback to students. Finally, they focussed on identifying problems and managing pragmatic compromises in how feedback practicalities are handled.

While the notion of TFL is relatively new in higher education, the related concept of *teacher assessment literacy* (TAL) has a much longer tradition in the K12 literature. In 1990, the American Federation of Teachers had already developed standards for TAL. According to Xu and Brown (2016), TAL 'is dependent on a combination of cognitive traits, affective and belief systems, and socio-cultural and institutional influences' (155). They acknowledged the situatedness of the phenomenon by arguing that TAL should not be seen as a dichotomy between being literate or illiterate but rather as a 'continuum with different levels of mastery, contingent upon the context in which assessment is conducted' (159). Even so, in most school-oriented literature, TAL is considered a skill that can be measured and trained. Similarly, Carless (2020) suggested that TFL can be increased via 'formal and informal professional development for educators' (8). Following this logic, teachers can be trained in TFL, learn to coach students in using peer review, facilitate dialogues around exemplars, and design appropriate assessment sequences. However, how trained 'TFL skills' are performed by teachers in interaction with others has received little attention in the literature so far.

Conceptual framework

We take our starting point in Carless and Winstone's socio-constructivist view of TFL as an inherently social practice and offer a complementary extension of their framework. Drawing on socio-cultural theories of human learning and development (Linell 2009; Wertsch 1991;

Vygotsky 1978), we pay special attention to how TFL practices are *performed by teachers in interaction with their environment*. From this viewpoint, TFL practices are constituted by the way teachers act on knowledge and values depending on the situation, who they are talking to, what resources they use and how they navigate and make sense of feedback encounters. Even when teachers plan and enact feedback independently, their actions are influenced by previous experiences and ideas of future feedback encounters with others. In other words, performing TFL practices means that teachers gain access and contribute to the shared values, tools and conventions involved in 'acting and thinking' in a feedback-literate way.

This conceptualisation is in line with ideas by Xu and Brown (2016), who argued that teachers' assessment literacy is situated in practice and that becoming literate requires a constant settling of tensions and negotiating compromises. The authors suggest that teachers develop assessment literacy either by reflection on own practice or community activities. The latter allows teachers to engage in 'professional conversations about their assessment practices, offering opportunities to understand alternative thinking and practice of assessment, defend their own conceptions and negotiate ideas with colleagues' (Xu and Brown 2016, 158).

Drawing a parallel between teachers' assessment and feedback literacy, we argue that the development of TFL practices involves teachers engaging in feedback encounters-in-action, reflecting on performed encounters and planning future feedback encounters ahead. Feedback encounters are concrete instances of 'students making meaning of and acting upon knowledge about the quality of their performance and what they can do to improve it'

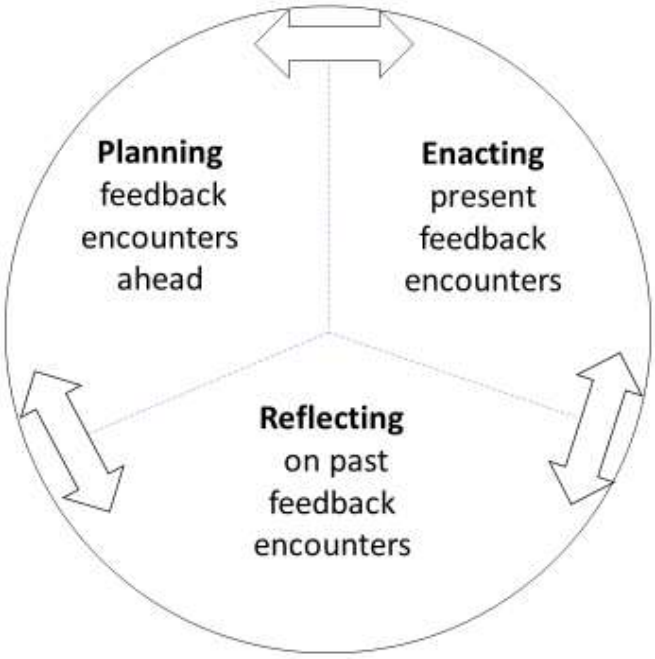
(Authors, 2018a, 1304). In the specific case of doctoral supervision, such feedback encounters are typically performed together by the supervisor and candidate. Likewise, the practices of reflecting on and planning feedback encounters do not take place in a vacuum but require teachers to relate to their surroundings and sometimes to colleagues and students who have different ideas, knowledge and experiences with feedback.

Building on these notions, we argue that TFL practices can be broken down into three main dimensions as follows:

- Planning future feedback encounters
- Enacting present feedback encounters
- Reflecting on past feedback encounters

Each dimension involves typical practices performed by the teachers, either alone or in interaction with their colleagues and their students. The practices performed in each dimension are not necessarily chronological; rather, they may take place in various orders or even simultaneously (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Dimensions of teacher feedback literacy (TFL) practices.



The focus in this study is on the practices involved in the reflection and planning dimensions of TFL. Reflection and planning are important sensemaking processes in teachers' professional development (Ohlsson 2013; Havnes 2009; Korthagen and Vasalos 2005). Teachers may reflect and plan on their own or in collaborate group settings, such as PPM meetings in which teachers look back on practical problems experienced in the past, collectively reflect on essential aspects of the situation and discuss possible actions for the future. In this study, we are particularly interested in studying how teachers jointly reflect on and plan feedback encounters during PPM meetings.

To interpret the unfolding discussions in PPM meetings, we build on socio-cultural notions of interaction, dialogue and situated communicative action (Linell, 2009). Dialogical encounters entail intellectual interdependence, and investigating these encounters involves studying moment-to-moment interactional, coherent sequences of discursive action (Authors

2019; Authors 2016). These take not only the content of the interaction into account but also how the interactional process is organised sequentially and becomes visible temporally. Therefore, we examine how dialogical sequences in teachers' reflections unfold in a temporal trajectory (of the PPM meeting). Through this interpretative analysis, we seek to understand and illustrate how TFL practices may be performed via momentary dialogues between teachers.

Methods

Case study design

This study is part of a larger Norwegian project using a multiple case design to investigate practices of collegial faculty development in four different disciplines (Authors 2018). The case used in this article is a Municipal Health Care research school that uses PPM to develop a teacher learning community to discuss, share and address challenges in doctoral supervision. The research school participated voluntarily in the project and was selected for this study because of its potential to provide empirical insights into the PhD supervisors' shared reflections and planning around their supervision and feedback practices.

The employed PPM method comprises regular meetings, typically involving five to six university teachers and conducted over a period of 1–2 years. Group members are asked to bring problems experienced during their supervision practice, which are then discussed by the group with the aim of understanding underlying reasons and find possible solutions for it. For each problem, the group follows a four-stage method that structures the discussion and is

guided by one member acting as moderator. With this formalised method, each stage is characterised by typical interaction patterns (see Table 1).

Table 1. Four-stage method of problem-based peer mentoring

Stage	Description	Interaction pattern
1	Presentation of original problem by problem owner	- Problem owner presents problem - Peers listen
2	Clarifying questions by colleagues	- Peers ask questions one by one - Problem owner responds directly
3	Advice and suggestions by colleagues	- Peers give advice one by one - Moderator notes down advice on Post-Its - Problem owner listens
4	Problem owner evaluates advice and decides how to address problem in practice	- Problem owner responds to each advice on Post-Its

Data collection

To investigate the unfolding interactions between teachers during the PPM meetings, we used observations of two different groups of five to six supervisors in the Municipal Health Care School. The two groups met each three times over the course of 6 months. Because of the varying amounts of time it took to discuss the different problems, the meetings had different lengths and included varying numbers of discussed problems. Across all meetings, the groups discussed a total of 12 different problems. On average, each problem was discussed for between 1 and 1.5 hours. All meetings were video recorded after obtaining informed consent from all participants and transcribed verbatim (original transcripts in Norwegian), resulting in 425 pages of transcripts.

Analytical strategy

To explore the situated and dialogical nature of TFL, we place our analytical focus on those parts of the data that show specifically how teachers discuss problems related to feedback encounters with their students. We argue that the discussions during the meetings are instantiations of the reflection and planning dimensions of TFL practices.

We analysed the transcripts of all PPM meetings by employing an analytical strategy comprising several steps. First, we divided all transcripts into meaningful 'problem segments'. We defined the start of a segment with the moment the group selects a problem to discuss (stage 1 in the PPM model), ending with the evaluation of the advice given by the problem owner (stage 4). For each of the 12 identified problem segments, we created summaries of the problems discussed (see Appendix 1 for an overview). We selected five segments (Appendix 1, problems nr. 1, 2, 5, 9, 10) for further analysis because they included data on teachers' discussions of their feedback practice. The other segments were not selected, as they did not have a specific focus on feedback. Instead, they focused on other problems such as power dynamics, managing relationships to study participants, research quality and ethical research considerations.

In the next step, we applied a more targeted thematic analysis to the five selected segments (Braun and Clarke 2006). We employed a two-fold analytical lens informed by the conceptual framework outlined above as follows:

- Topical content (the 'what') of the discussions. We applied this lens to identify what knowledge, ideas and experiences are activated during the teachers' collective

reflection and planning of feedback encounters and how these contents are conducive to the teachers' performance of TFL practices.

- Interactional turns (the 'how') in discussions. With this lens, we sought to identify and interpret dialogue segments that illustrate how teachers engage in the collective reflection and planning of feedback encounters and how these interactions are constitutive for the development of TFL.

Findings

Our findings are divided into two parts. Addressing the first research question, we present a descriptive overview of the topics addressed across the five selected problem segments, including some quotes for illustration. Thereafter, we present three excerpts from one selected problem segment for an in-depth illustration of the interactional turns involved in the performance of TFL during PPM meetings.

Topics addressed when teachers discuss problems with feedback during PPM

The teachers in the five selected segments addressed different topics during their meetings. In the overview given below, we describe the five topics that were most frequently addressed across the five segments.

When reflecting on the problems related to feedback, the teachers regularly address the **context in which problematic feedback encounters take place (CONTEXT)**. Typically, this involves describing specific situations or tasks with which the candidate is

working. For example, supervisor 1[1] describes a time where the candidate 'submitted an article against [the supervisor's] advice and got it back with comments from a reviewer that it was too descriptive and not analytical enough'. Context references can also include descriptions of the material arrangements of feedback encounters, such as supervisor 5 who explains that 'the candidate lives a bit far away, so we often have the meetings on the phone and when we do, I recommend her to record our conversations'. These context descriptions provide a basis for further discussions and are often picked up by the colleagues when suggesting alternative ways of arranging feedback encounters.

Related to the context description, teachers discuss their **feedback strategies and the comments (STRATEGY)** they have provided in the given situations. Supervisor 5 describes her feedback strategy as follows: 'I tried to make her create an outline—because things are just blurring into each other. So I tried to make her go through each section to see what it is about'. Often, the supervisors give concrete examples of oral or written comments they had provided to their students, such as supervisor 1 who explains: 'When I see something [in the candidate's text] which I think resembles something [I wish to see], I write "that's good, go on with this, can you take it a bit further?"'. The colleagues often suggest alternative strategies or ways to formulate comments that they often take from their own experience.

[1] Example quotations are chosen for their representativity for the whole data corpus; numbers indicates which problem segment a quotation stems from (see Appendix 1).

Another topic present across the data is descriptions of the **candidates' characteristics and responses (CANDIDATE)**. This may include descriptions of the candidate's assumed emotional state. For example, supervisor 1 explains that her candidate 'is exhausted […] and in a way I feel she has lost hope'. This topic also includes descriptions of candidate's abilities, such as supervisor 9 who describes her candidate as 'one whom I have experienced as very capable […] and who has shown in other texts that he has a good understanding of what an analysis is'. Finally, the characteristics also include the candidate's responses to supervision, such as supervisor 5 who explains that her candidate 'is easy to supervise in a way because she always says "yes, I will do that right away"'. These descriptions of the candidates are used to give the other teachers background information needed to understand why the issues in the feedback encounters emerge.

In accounting for the feedback encounters, supervisors also address their **relationships with the candidates and what consequences they have for their feedback interactions (RELATION)**. This topic relates to different roles in the supervision context, for example, supervisor 5 explains her struggle as follows: 'We [the candidate and supervisor] do not really have a personal conflict, but there is somehow a mismatch between our understandings of our roles'. The topic also includes questions around trust and respect. Supervisor 9 describes their relationship as follows: 'It is not characterised by distrust exactly, but it is not characterised by trust either. Well, I may have some distrust in [my candidate's] abilities and she is maybe a bit afraid of me'. Providing information on relationships is often

prompted by other teachers asking why the supervisor thinks candidates are responding the way they do.

Finally, discussions address the **teachers' emotional responses to unsuccessful feedback encounters (EMOTION)**, as illustrated by the following quotation from supervisor 1: 'I get terribly disappointed and I feel I am getting irritated, right? I get so worked up […] that I can't even talk to you about it; I need to wait a moment'. These emotions often are reported to have consequences for the way supervisors give feedback, such as supervisor 9, who admits that 'in the end, I get tired and maybe a bit frustrated and then I maybe says things in a not so diplomatic way'. The references to emotions is common during the meetings, and shared reflections on the underlying reasons frequently help identify what is at the core of the often complex issues presented in the meetings.

This overview provides an insight into the ongoing discussions during the observed PPM meetings. By sharing their reflections on these different topics, the teachers make sense of previous feedback encounters and envision ways to plan feedback in the future. The following section provides an exemplary case of how these topics were activated and built upon in the unfolding interactions of one PPM meeting.

Exemplary case of how teachers perform TFL during PPM

The selected case involves a group of five supervisors discussing a problem presented by Prof. Dahl[2], who has a doctoral candidate struggling with her qualitative data analysis

[2] Pseudonym.

(Problem 1 in Appendix 1). The supervisor finds it difficult to make the candidate realise that her analytical work does not meet the standards and feels that she is not reaching the candidate through her feedback encounters.

The case was selected because it provided rich and illustrative examples of how a group performs TFL during a PPM meeting and because the interactional turns were representative of those found in the other problem segments. In the next sections, we zoom into three excerpts from stages 1, 2 and 3 (see Table 1) and analyse the interactional turns that the teachers take while reflecting on past feedback encounters and envisioning encounters in the future. For each excerpt, we also indicate the topics addressed during the different interactional turns.

Stage 1: Presenting problem with previous feedback encounters

The excerpt below is taken from stage 1 of the PPM meeting and begins shortly after Prof. Dahl has begun presenting her problem to the group. Both the moderator and the four colleagues quietly listen to the presentation during this stage.

Excerpt 1[3]: The candidate who does not take up feedback

1	Dahl:	One of [my candidates] […] works with an article where she	*CONTEXT*
2		needs to do a qualitative analysis and she doesn't manage to	*CANDIDATE*
3		see anything in the data. […]	
4		I have tried these things […] like asking 'well, why do you think	*STRATEGY*
5		they have said this?' […] And every time she says 'yes, yes, yes,	*CANDIDATE*
6		now I will go and write this'. And then she comes back and it is	
7		the same. Just some words switched around. And she doesn't	
8		see it. So, how on earth should I help this candidate develop her	*EMOTION*
9		analytical understanding? […] I feel very incapable of helping	

10	her do this […] I have almost dictated to her and given her hints.	*STRATEGY*
11	But it's almost like … now I'm kind of out of ideas except for	
12	sitting down and writing for her. […] I think maybe there is	*EMOTION*
13	something I haven't understood […] Maybe some of you have	
14	experiences that could give some kind of hope of getting help	
15	here?	

In this first interactional turn, the problem owner gives an initial presentation of the problem CONTEXT and the CANDIDATE's issue to take an analytical view (lines 1–3). Next, she gives an example of her feedback STRATEGY and the CANDIDATE's response to illustrate her problem of communicating with the student (lines 4–8). She displays EMOTION by admitting her struggle with finding the right feedback STRATEGY to address the issue (lines 8–13). Finally, Dahl again shows EMOTION by directly addressing her colleagues and asking them for help (lines 12–15), thereby initiating the next interactional turn.

Dahl's reflection on past encounters in this excerpt illustrates how she enters the *reflection dimension* of TFL. In turn, her initial presentation prepares the ground for the collective reflection and planning stages that the group will go through while performing TFL. The concrete examples, ideas and interpretations provided by Dahl are—as illustrated below—picked up and referred to by the peers during the next stages in the peer mentoring. Although the other group members were asked to give no spoken response during this phase, the display of frustration and direct request for help invite the peers to sympathise with the problem owner and to engage in a common search for a possible problem solution.

Stage 2: Exploring reasons for challenging feedback encounters

In stage 2 of the meeting, the peers start asking clarifying questions. In response to the questions, Dahl provides increasingly detailed information on the case and often adds new ideas and reasoning to the discussion. Excerpt 2 illustrates a question asked by Peer 1 that is especially relevant for understanding the problem.

Excerpt 2: Have you been honest during feedback encounters?

1	Peer 1:	Is she [i.e. candidate] worried herself?	*CANDIDATE*
2	Dahl:	(*Hesitating*) I'm very uncertain about that. I think she has a	
3		slightly unrealistic understanding of the problem […] And one	
4		time I tried to tell her that '*now I need to go in and work a bit*	*STRATEGY*
5		*more intensely with your article because I think you are not*	
6		*making any progress*'. She was very surprised then and said '*I*	*CANDIDATE*
7		*am not? That is awful*!' […]	
8	Peer 3:	If I may ask, have you been honest in the conversations with her	*RELATION*
9		and said exactly that? That she has an issue with the analytical	
10		understanding and needs to practice that?	
11	Dahl:	Not that directly. I have tried to say, '*You are struggling a bit*	*STRATEGY*
12		*with seeing this*'. At the same time, I sit there being quite afraid	*EMOTION*
13		of being mean.	

The question by Peer 1 reveals that Dahl is uncertain whether her CANDIDATE has the same understanding of the problem (lines 1–3) and provides an example from a feedback STRATEGY where she confronted the student, who seemed to be surprised by her supervisor raising the issue (lines 3–6). Shortly after, Peer 3 addresses the RELATION between Dahl and her candidate and whether she feels she has been honest with her (lines 8–10). Dahl describes her STRATEGY again and explains how she tried to address the problem (lines 11–12). She explains her reluctance to be honest, sharing her EMOTION of being 'afraid of being mean' (lines 12–13).

The interactional turns in this excerpt show how the behaviour of the problem owner during these previous feedback encounters is reflected back to her by her colleagues' critical questions. The two colleagues play the student's advocate by encouraging the supervisor to think about the candidate's perspective and whether the supervisor has offered her sufficient feedback to be able to grasp the problem. This exchange opens up previously unconsidered paths for addressing the issue (e.g. by being more honest and concrete during feedback encounters).Overall, the excerpt illustrates the *reflection dimension* of TFL. It shows how the interactional turns of questions and responses during this stage allow the group members to collectively reflect on the given problem by building on each other's ideas and understandings. To ask meaningful questions, the colleagues need to relate to the presented problem and their experiences with similar situations. Therefore, the questions posed during this stage reveal the underlying topics and principles that the teachers present consider relevant for productive feedback encounters.

Stage 3: Envisioning improved future feedback encounters

In stage 3, Prof. Dahl's colleagues provide advice and suggestions for the future handling of the problem. Peer 1 is the first to speak and refers to the reflection that the group shared in stage 2 about the student's understanding of the problem.

Excerpt 3: How to make the candidate understand her issues with feedback uptake

1	Peer 1:	I think this person almost cries for frankness and honesty. I	*CANDIDATE*
2		would actually share my concern with the candidate because I	*STRATEGY*
3		see that she has some problems with taking in the [feedback]	
4		that is not positive, while she clings on to the positive things she	
5		gets. […]	
6	Peer 3:	I think in the talk with her you can also say, '*it can feel*	*STRATEGY*

7		*difficult now but […] you will understand the analysis in depth*	*RELATION*
8		*and it will become untangled'* […]	
9	Peer 4:	One piece of advice I want to give is also to tell the candidate	*STRATEGY*
10		what is at stake here. […]	
11	Dahl:	Yes. I will definitely take that on board. And I think I have done	
12		it a bit already. A little bit. But at the same time, I have a fear of	*CANDIDATE*
13		demotivating her. […]	

Picking up on the topic around honesty and openness in feedback encounters, Peer 1 gives a judgement of the CANDIDATE's needs (line 1) and suggests that Dahl use the STRATEGY of sharing her concerns with the candidate (lines 2–4). Peer 3 elaborates on this STRATEGY and suggests that it is important to build the RELATION by reassuring the candidate that getting through the difficulties will be rewarding (lines 6–7). In addition, Peer 4 adds more to the STRATEGY by emphasising the importance of telling the candidate what is at stake (lines 9–10). Dahl agrees with the advice but is wary of the risk of demotivating the CANDIDATE too much and causing negative consequences for her further work progress (lines 11–13).

The excerpt illustrates how the *reflection dimension* blends with the *planning dimension* in this phase, as the group envisions possible feedback encounters that include what might be said, likely responses and potential challenges that could be faced. In several interactional turns, ideas about possible feedback strategies are initially offered by one colleague and subsequently elaborated on or challenged by others. Emerging from the interactions during the first three phases, Dahl concludes the session in phase 4 by taking up the following two main points of action for her future feedback encounters with her candidate: being more honest in raising concerns about the feedback uptake and using concrete examples to help the candidate develop her analytical understanding.

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate how a group of teachers perform TFL practices in peer mentoring meetings as they help each other address problems with supervision and feedback. Drawing on socio-cultural notions of social practice and dialogue (Linell, 2009; Wertsch, 1991), we understand TFL as a set of practices comprising the three following dimensions: reflecting on past encounters, planning feedback encounters ahead and enacting present feedback encounters. Addressing our first research question, the findings illustrate what topics teachers address when engaging in the planning and reflection dimensions of TFL practices. Teachers addressed five topics most frequently across the different meetings, which were as follows: 1) the context in which problematic feedback encounters take place, 2) feedback strategies and comments, 3) the candidate's personal characteristics and responses, 4) the relationship between supervisor and candidate and 5) the supervisor's emotional response to previous feedback encounters. These topics were addressed both in reflections of past feedback and in the planning of future encounters. While we do not claim that the list of topics is comprehensive, we argue that the variety of topics shows how complex it is for teachers to make sense of feedback practices and how diverse and sometimes contradictory the possible aspects are that need to be considered. This finding supports the idea that developing TFL requires teachers to continuously settle tensions and negotiate compromises in practice (Xu and Brown 2016).

Addressing the second research question, we found that performing TFL involved three types of interactional turns that contributed to the groups' reflections and planning of

feedback encounters during the meetings. In stage 1, at the beginning of the meetings, the group's collective reflections are initiated by the supervisor's presentation of the problematic feedback encounters. As shown in the case of Prof. Dahl, this interaction is characterised by a monologic segment in which the group gives the problem owner time and space to elaborate on the context, the candidate, previously used feedback strategies and the emotions involved in the problematic feedback encounter. In stage 2, the prevalent interactional turns are several rounds of questions by the colleagues, followed by answers of the problem owner. In these inquisitive rounds, the group creates a common understanding of the problem and its underlying reasons. In the case of Prof. Dahl, the group explores together what effects relational aspects and different feedback strategies may have had on the candidate's struggle to take up feedback. The third type of interactional turns that teachers engaged in become visible in stage 3, in which group members give direct advice to the problem owner, who then decides which advice to take on board. In the interactions of the group around Prof. Dahl, the focus is on laying out strategies for feedback comments and planning meta-conversations about feedback with the candidate. While it is possible that teachers will perform TFL practices independently, our data provide an example of how teacher learning communities in the form of PPM may facilitate teachers' performance of TFL, particularly in the reflection and planning dimensions.

The findings complement the three types of typical practices of feedback-literate teachers proposed by Carless and Winston (2020). As these authors argued, the teachers in the PPM meetings design environments with the aim of facilitating effective feedback encounters,

they attend sensitively to the relational and socio-affective aspects of feedback to students and they identify problems and manage pragmatic compromises in how feedback practicalities are handled. The teachers around Prof. Dahl engage in these practices by sharing previous experiences with problematic feedback encounters, exploring possible reasons for them and envisioning improved future encounters, thereby performing TFL in a joint endeavour.

The findings have several implications for our understanding of TFL. They raise the question of whether teachers 'are feedback literate' or whether it is more correct to say that teachers 'act in feedback literate ways'. What may appear as a rhetorical detail in fact has wider consequences for how we think about the development of feedback literacy. The verb 'acting' implies temporal and contextual boundaries, whereas 'being' implies temporal continuity and contextual independence. Acknowledging the situated nature of the literacy notion allows us to consider that teachers will perform TFL in different ways depending not only on their 'knowledge, expertise and dispositions' (Carless and Winstone 2020) but also on the contextual characteristics of the situation and the way teachers make sense of them in the here and now. Thus, developing TFL requires teachers to analyse the situational aspects of previously experienced feedback challenges and envision ways of arranging future situations in ways that afford productive feedback encounters.

The results show an example of how TFL practices can be achieved collectively in teacher learning communities. In the specific case of PPM, the presented problem creates a shared goal for the group, which tries to make sense of ways of addressing the problem and collectively imagining possible actions in future feedback encounters. This requires the group

to collectively identify what reasons might be at the core of the problem. In the question round, the teachers follow different leads and hypotheses—for example, that the student might not be aware of the issue herself or that the ways of exemplifying qualitative analysis methods may not have been concrete enough. The different interaction sequences show how the teachers share their ideas and elaborate on each other but also refute or present counter-arguments. In these negotiations, each member brings own experiences and ideas of what good feedback is, which again shapes the further development of the collective reflections. The unfolding interactions in the case of Prof. Dahl show how her initial understanding of her problem transforms into a more complex comprehension of the potential reasons at the core of the problematic feedback encounter. Therefore, in this example, TFL can be seen as a collective achievement of the group that is built on the different ideas, questions, responses and elaborations of the different members.

Finally, our study has several limitations. Because of space limitations, our data presentation focussed on one problem segment in our material to serve primarily illustrative purposes for our conceptual argument. However, we hope to have set the stage for future research that may focus on larger scale analyses of observation data that allow us to investigate the performance of TFL practices in different settings. In particular, studies that show complete sequences of teachers' planning, enacting and reflecting on feedback encounters would be a valuable contribution to the further development of our understanding. Such an approach would also allow the study of TFL development on a longer time scale rather than only in the limited timeframe of PPM meetings.

We acknowledge also that the empirical context is limited to the specific format of feedback—namely, one-on-one feedback encounters in doctoral supervision. As such, it can be assumed that different topics would have been addressed in PPM meetings, where teachers discuss their feedback practice involving different formats and larger groups of students. Nonetheless, we argue that our illustration of how teachers reflect and plan together may still be relevant for understanding how a teacher group would perform TFL in different feedback contexts.

Another limitation is the lack of the candidate's perspective in our data. Our study does not allow us to judge whether the discussions during the PPM meeting have a positive impact on the candidate's uptake of feedback and understanding of qualitative analysis. However, from the overall project findings (Authors, forthcoming), we know that teachers reported that PPM meetings were useful for supporting their confidence as supervisors and feedback practitioners. This situation relates to a more central question of how to define the outcome of TFL. From a candidate's perspective, teachers who act in feedback-literate ways should be able to provide helpful feedback and support its productive uptake. However, from a teacher's perspective, acting feedback literate may mean more than simply helping students succeed. For teachers, it may be just as important to develop trust in their feedback approaches, gain confidence in their ideas of academic quality, and not least, find ways of providing good feedback in a time-efficient way.

Conclusion

This study has elaborated on the conceptualisation of TFL as a set of situated practices. We have provided an empirical exemplification of how TFL practices can be performed by teachers jointly reflecting on past feedback encounters and envisioning future feedback. The case of Prof. Dahl and her candidate who is taking up feedback offered rich illustrations of the interactions and topics addressed by teachers while acting together in feedback-literate ways. Our results indicate that teachers may be supported in performing TFL by providing them with opportunities in which they can collectively make sense of previous feedback encounters and how they may adapt their interpretations, behaviour or practical aspects to create more productive encounters in the future.

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