



Elbra-Ramsay, Caroline ORCID logo ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7281-0166> and Clarke, Matthew ORCID logo ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4693-248X> (2022) Double Indemnity: Dualities, tensions and loss in the moral economies of feedback. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 50 (3). pp. 266-281.

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## **Double Indemnity: Dualities, tensions and loss in the moral economies of feedback**

**Keywords:** Assessment; Feedback; Neoliberalism; Performativity; Teacher Education

### **Introduction**

Billy Wilder's 1944 film noir classic, *Double Indemnity*, from which our paper takes its title, tells the tale of Phyllis Dietrichson and Walter Neff, a pair of lovers who plan and execute the murder of Phyllis's husband in order to take advantage of a double indemnity clause in his life insurance policy, whereby the insurance company commits to paying double the amount stated in the contract in the case of accidental death. Unsurprisingly, things do not go to plan and their crime is uncovered. As Walter remarks in the film's opening, 'I killed him for money and for a woman. I didn't get the money and I didn't get the woman.' Indeed, the notion of 'double indemnity' can be extended, beyond its specific reference to a legal clause, to capture how the characters in the film embody dualities as objectifier and objectified, exploiter and exploited, deceiver and deceived, as they find themselves entangled in multiple and morally complex layers of experience, as they grapple with situations characterised by irresolvable tensions and contradictions between pragmatism, passion and (self)deception, and as they experience irretrievable loss. Our paper draws on these themes – on notions of irresolvable dualities and contradictions and on notions of loss – in order to read the emerging practices and understandings of student teachers in relation to assessment in terms of the moral economies of feedback. In doing so, we draw on "a 300-year-old tradition of figuring desire, vitality, or life itself, in economic terms" (Bennet, 2017, p. 3), in order to highlight how feedback practices involve the production and exchange of moral, as well as pedagogical, worth or value. As a concept and a practice, feedback is necessarily dual or 'double' in various ways. At a basic level, feedback usually involves at least two participants – a giver and a receiver of the feedback. It also often involves summative and formative elements. However, while this duality surely exists and while feedback is indeed multi-faceted, feedback can also be a site of tensions – for instance, teacher feedback may not be recognised by students, and even when feedback is recognised, it may not be perceived as the teacher intended (Van Der Kleij & Adie, 2020). These tensions become ever-more evident when we employ a moral lens to explore some of the conceptions of feedback held and practised by student teachers, as we do in this paper. Indeed, student teachers are particularly well placed to highlight the dualities and tensions inhering in feedback for a number of reasons. Firstly, student teachers essentially live a double life as they occupy the role of practising teacher and learner within their training programme – a fact which prompted Deborah Britzman to refer to the term 'student teacher' as an oxymoron (1991, p. 221). Both of these roles are rich in feedback opportunities since, as students they are receivers, while as teachers they are givers, of feedback. Whilst the same could be argued for other professional roles and training

programmes e.g. medical training, there is perhaps even more closer alignment with education. Indeed, not only do student teachers give and receive feedback, their teacher education curriculum also includes content on the subject of feedback. They are expected to account for and evidence the feedback they provide, and the impact of this feedback on pupil progress and, as a core competence within the Teacher Standards (DfE, 2011), their use of feedback ultimately informs whether or not they become a qualified teacher.

Just as student teachers are not just practitioners of feedback, feedback itself is not some neutral, technical process. Feedback is complex and contested, with differing conceptualisations holding sway in different contexts. For example, teacher versus learner centric, dialogic versus monologic. Student teachers may discover that they hold conceptions of feedback, which *may* or *may not* align with those of the university and school communities within which they practice. They will likely begin their teacher education programmes with understandings of feedback developed through their pre-course experiences. Furthermore, and as will be argued with reference to the data presented, the conceptions they hold can have both benefits and costs in relation to their likelihood of completing the course and being judged as an 'effective' teacher, potentially creating competing pressures between following an idealistic versus an instrumental course of action. Lastly, and as significantly, as the paper seeks to understand these conceptions and practices of feedback through a moral lens, we make reference to both the familiar virtuous (e.g. 'making a difference') and the demonic (Kotsko, 2018) aspects of teaching arising from the punitive and performative context it operates within. The oxymoronic, dual roles of those in the group studied, and the tensions and ambiguities exposed by the critical lens of our analysis, echo Stronach et al's notion of "the professional self and its disparate allegiances as a series of contradictions and dilemmas that frame the identity of the professional as an implementer of policy" (Stronach et al.2002, p. 109); These contradictions and dilemmas, tensions and dualities, that the students experience are part of the double indemnity they encounter as givers and receivers of feedback while learning to teach.

But not only do the students experience irresolvable tensions, they undergo loss as an almost inevitable aspect of the rites of passage they pass through in learning to teach. In relation to their role as students and receivers of feedback, we have discussed the loss of control, self-esteem and a sense of self efficacy that feedback entailed for some students. In relation to their role as teachers and givers of feedback, we have described the loss of innocence resulting from their experiences of giving feedback to pupils in school. This loss too is an element in the double indemnity they confront.

### **What is feedback?**

Feedback continues to be identified as one of the most significant aspects of education (Black & William, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Hattie & Clarke, 2018; Jers & Wärnsby, 2018; Kahu, 2008) and yet frequently falls short of the promise suggested (Johnson et al., 2016; Molloy & Boud, 2013;

William, 2011). For instance, the UK National Student Survey identifies feedback as an ongoing area of dissatisfaction among university students (McArthur, 2018; Sambell, 2016; Steen-Utheim & Hopfenbeck, 2019), despite attempts in Higher Education (HE) to make it more effective beyond mere compliance with the HE quality agenda. There is clearly a disconnect between the celebrated potential and the experienced reality of feedback; but is this because feedback is more often than not positioned as purely pedagogical? Numerous writers have explored the potential pedagogical benefits of feedback, determined what is meant by effective feedback (in pedagogical terms at least) and also formulated ideal pedagogical models of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2004; Ramaprasad, 1983; Sadler, 1989). Other writers have argued that feedback carries an affective dimension and explored the emotional and relational consequences and implications of feedback (Eva et al., 2012; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). Indeed, anyone who has experienced feedback would likely support the fact that concepts of self and identity are intimately tied up with feedback. Even so, is this the full picture of what happens when we give and receive feedback? This paper proposes that there are other contradictory dynamics at play and that these have moral-ethical sources and implications. By exploring the moral dimensions, we suggest that a fuller, and more critical, understanding of feedback can be developed beyond the standard norms of feedback discourse.

Student teachers are in a unique position to gain insights into the tensions, dualities and dilemmas that make feedback so much more complex than it initially appears. On the one hand, as students in Higher Education, student teachers *receive* feedback as learners either in their academic study or during their school placements. This feedback is intended to be useful and helpful, but it can also bring about a sense of loss in relation to autonomy, agency and efficacy as a learner, as someone else passes judgement on our performance. On the other hand, they need to *give* feedback to the children in their care, which can also, as we will see later on, bring about a sense of loss in relation to altruism and innocence. So student teachers are both feedback “donors” and feedback “recipients” (William, 2011, p. 132). To complicate things further, student teachers will receive feedback on the feedback they give to pupils as part of their school experience placements. As a group, student teachers are therefore distinctive in their dual exposure to – and potentially their understanding of – feedback. Furthermore, not only is their engagement with feedback unique, they are also subjected to policy at the national and the local level, such as standards and other performative measures, some of which is associated with feedback which they may be required to provide in particular modalities and formats. This creates a tension in that they are juggling the experience of feedback with their membership of, and inevitable implication in, the performativity juggernaut. We are therefore arguing that student teachers, perhaps more than any other group of the education community, are in a position to develop a fuller and more complex understanding of feedback; and as they find themselves in situations exceeding merely pedagogical considerations, and as they wrestle with the moral dimensions of feedback, unamenable to any simple or straightforward solution, they reveal and confront

a form of double indemnity, demanding educational *and* ethical labour from them. Using data collected from student teachers as part of a three-year study, we will argue that the under-researched moral dimension allows for a more complex and nuanced understanding of feedback.

### **Economies of feedback: The Study**

The student teachers whose journey provides the empirical basis of this paper were participants in a three-year study, which explored the relationship between student teachers' conceptions of feedback as learners, their conceptions of feedback as trainee teachers, and the relations between these two sets of conceptions. Recognising that there could be multiple interpretations of an experience for the participants and that this process of constructing meaning was enabled and constrained by socially shaped discourses and practices, meant that the study embraced a social constructionist epistemological stance. This then informed a broadly phenomenographic approach to the research, highlighting the different ways in which it is possible to experience any phenomenon (Marton & Pong, 2005) and asserting that we can only understand reality (or realities) through experience. Phenomenography subsequently informed the data generation strategies deployed as part of the research design. Although previous studies focused on feedback conceptions make use of quantitative data from questionnaires (Glover & Brown, 2006; Löfström & Poom-Valickis, 2013; Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010), this is somewhat limiting when examining beliefs, particularly in studies that seek to examine change in understanding over time. As a result, the current study made use of qualitative semi-structured interviews. These interviews combined initial prompts, for example, Can you explain why you have selected this example of feedback? Can you describe your experience of receiving/giving this feedback? but also provided scope for more free-flowing conversation. The openness of the interviews allowed for extended dialogue to expose participants' assumptions (Willis, 2018), as well as providing opportunities for further questions to emerge as the interviewer sought to probe, clarify and explore further, in order to generate a picture of the participants' understanding of feedback.

There were eight participants in the study (six female, two male), all of whom were student teachers on a three-year undergraduate primary education programme. There was one mature student in the group. One student left the study at the end of year one, but the others remained until the end of year three and completed the programme successfully. There were two data generation points during each of the three years, totalling six in all. Data generation point one was at the end of semester one which was an academic assessment period, while the second data collection point was at the end of semester two, following the students' professional placement in schools or School Experience (SE). As such, the first interviews encouraged reflection on experiences and understandings of feedback as a learner, while the second interviews encouraged experiences and understandings of feedback as a teacher to be considered. In terms of analysis, an abductive approach was applied in which analysis comprised an iterative process of moving back and forth between the data and relevant

theory (Haig & Evers, 2015). Use was made of a phenomenographic outcome space to identify emerging themes during and at the end of the period of research.

As a result of this iterative process of analysis, three overarching themes were identified that together form an interrelated set of 'economies' that collectively and individually provide a heuristic device for understanding student teachers' experiences and understandings of feedback. As noted above, our use of this metaphor reflects a tendency to read aspects of human life in economic terms of production, consumption and transfer that goes back at least 300 years to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Bennett, 2016, 2017). Indeed, anything that can be created, traded, shared or accumulated can be seen as an economy, including the production, accumulation and exchange of practices and ideas associated with feedback. Running alongside, and sometime in tension with, the *pedagogical* economies that reflect the pervasive presence of concerns about the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the interview transcripts, the *moral* economies that are the focus of this paper recognise the ethical tensions and dilemmas that participants identified as part of their engagement with feedback.

### **Moral Economies**

Nietzsche (1971 [1873]) drew attention to the ways in which all human language is inevitably metaphorical, so it is not surprising to find that analogies and metaphors are commonly used within feedback literature. Examples include the feedback triangle (Yang & Carless 2013), feedback as a loop (Askew & Lodge, 2000; Mislevy, 2012), "feedback as telling" (Boud & Molloy, 2012, p. 14), feedback as a gift (Askew & Lodge, 2000; Hargreaves, , 2005), feedback as a dialogue (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; Nicol, 2010), feedback as ping-pong (Askew & Lodge, 2000), feedback as talk (Ajjawi & Boud, 2018), feedback as a consequence (Hattie & Timperley, 2007), feedback as a Trojan horse (Kirton, Hallam, Peffers, Robertson, & Stobart, 2007) or feedback as an "elaborate dance" (Dennis, Foy, Monrouxe, & Rees, 2018, p. 93). The analysis identified ethical issues and moral dilemmas as a key theme in the participants' comments on feedback during the interviews. Framing these issues and dilemmas, metaphorically, as comprising the moral economy of feedback captures how student teachers find themselves inevitably positioned within circuits of value and exchange in relation to these moral issues and dilemmas. The notion of moral economies highlights how pedagogical exchanges, like their material and financial counterparts in the wider world, have implications and consequences for individual and collective subjectivities, opportunities and obligations.

For us the notion of moral economies highlights how assessment and feedback are entangled with ethical values and how feedback decisions and practices have implications, not just for effective learning, but also in relation to what those involved see as the *ethically desirable* course of action. This reflects recognition of the way any course of action carries implications for the individuals in a teacher's care and how ethical and moral decision-making functions as a precondition for the profession (Oser, 2014). For many teachers, a guiding moral purpose,

reflecting their values, purpose (Pantić & Florian, 2015) and identity (Sachs, 2016), helps them to navigate these daily dilemmas. However, this is rarely a black and white matter of right or wrong but more often a matter of various shades of grey as each decision and course of action leads to a situation that in turn brings new ethical challenges.

The moral economies within education do not exist in isolation but operate in relation to the economies governing the distribution and exchange of social and cultural capital within the sector, which in turn reflect wider societal norms and political values (Sayer, 2000; Whitehead & Crawshaw, 2014). They also operate in conjunction with the imposed moral implications of professional norms as well as the personal and professional values comprising teacher and learner identity. This suggests that feedback inevitably functions in a morally complex context. As Myrick (2004) states, “there are moral complexities and ambiguities intrinsic to the teaching–learning process. Within the context of the knowledge economy and globalization those complexities and ambiguities are proliferating” ( p. 23). In particular, all aspects of education have been reshaped by the competitive logics of neoliberal discourses, notwithstanding the tendency of neoliberal education policy to disguise and disavow its own ideological and political moorings in the name of seemingly neutral signifiers such as quality, standards and excellence (Clarke, 2012).

Against this background, this study identified two dimensions to the moral economies structuring the student teacher interviews, which we characterise as the virtues and the demons of feedback. These dimensions highlight the multiple forms of loss – the double indemnity – as well as the duality in the student teachers’ experiences and understandings of feedback as learners *and* as teachers. These dimensions are illustrated below with excerpts from the student teachers’ interview data.

### **The virtues of feedback: Gifts and obligations**

It is hardly new to assert the enduring existence of a strong correlation between choosing to teach and a sense of moral and ethical purpose. Indeed, Richardson and Watt (2006) found that altruistic motivation was consistently identified as a strong reason for choosing teaching, where altruism consists of ‘worrying about or caring for the fate of others, or as a behaviour that offers benefit to others, that involves investment on the part of the bestowing person’ (Friedman, 2016, p. 630). Such altruism is characteristic of teaching as a moral and ethical calling. Yet this take on teaching is not unproblematic; in particular, it positions teachers, in Hollywood fashion, as heroes (Moore, 2006), while patronisingly positioning disadvantaged students as needing redemption ‘based on traditional 19th century perceptions of “teaching as a special mission” of moral worth’ (Lorite, 2002, cited in Heinz, 2015, p. 267), reflecting a pervasive and persistent redemptive ethos in education (Clarke, 2020; Ball, 2020; Bojesen, 2019). Hargreaves (1994) supports this critical perspective, seeing teachers’ commitment to the care of children not only as a source of motivation, but also as a source of “depressive guilt” and lost idealism, noting how it can be “emotionally devastating” when teachers are

unable to meet their own expectation of fully caring for the children they work with (p. 145). If, as Allen argues, the discourse of formative assessment facilitates “the manipulation of hope” (2014, p. 234), as a key formative assessment strategy, feedback is similarly implicated in a loss of innocence. Both can act as (quite likely, illusory) vehicles for a commitment to ‘making a difference’; yet in a system which requires a proportion of students to fail, as the English GCSE system does<sup>1</sup>, such commitment embodies a form of ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant, 2011; Moore & Clarke, 2016), thereby exposing a further tension in the moral economies of feedback.

Positioning teaching as an altruistic practice suggests that teaching is somehow a charitable bestowing of knowledge upon the learner. This means that although the beneficiary is the learner, the teacher is the holder of knowledge and therefore has power to bestow or withhold the gift of knowledge. This suggests that altruism is not necessarily a selfless act and that, rather than altruism and narcissism being in opposition, there are actually many narcissistic benefits in altruistic behaviour (Friedman, 2016). The purpose of providing feedback may not just be to help learners but might actually serve to ‘feed’ the teacher’s “narcissistic appetite” (Friedman, 2016, p. 631), thereby filling the lack they feel in relation to the ‘ideal’ teacher. The loss of idealism and innocence entailed by the element of narcissism lurking in seemingly altruistic behaviour is part of the price student teachers pay – the double indemnity – for gaining access to the role of the teacher, reflecting dualities, tensions and contradictions with which feedback abounds.

Data collected from the participants supports our assertion that teaching, and feedback, can be understood as a charitable bestowing of knowledge by tutors and mentors as knowledgeable others.

*Evie: [in reference to her tutor and the feedback she gave] She’s more knowledgeable than us and knows more about P.E and things, so we appreciated that.*

Evie’s reference to ‘*appreciate*’ further implies that feedback was a gift as when we receive a gift we should be grateful and thankful. In addition, if the giver of feedback carries knowledge then a correlative assumption is that the feedback message is ‘right,’ should be listened to and taken on board.

*Daisy: you’re a tutor I feel like we, sort of, not trust your opinion more but, we understand that you’ve sort of got more knowledge than our peers. So if a tutor was to give us constructive criticism you would be like, okay that’s a good plan – we’ll try and implement that.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://rethinking-ed.org/is-everyone-ok/>



*...I think most of the role feedback was with the tutor .. because he was more knowledgeable than me ...so he could tell me what I needed to do...but then I think it's my responsibility to build on it and to take it into consideration.*

Daisy's comments suggest that she recognises that the learner has responsibility to take the feedback on and accept the proffered advice. However, we argue that this is a moral convention; when we are gifted something, it is only appropriate, indeed polite, to accept this guidance. Clouder & Adefila (2016) call this the gift exchange.

Similarly, when the participants were in the role of teacher, feedback was still generally conceptualised as a gift from teacher to learner.

*Daisy: Because in a teaching situation I am the expert, so I know the correct answer in most cases... So, like when I'm doing maths questions I can give them feedback knowing that I know the answer.*

However, there does appear to be a contradiction within the implicit deal between feedback giver and receiver. In the role of learner, the participants recognised that it was morally right to respond to this 'gift' from a more knowledgeable other; but when they were in the role of the teacher, the moral responsibility to respond was also theirs (as teachers), rather than the learners'. This suggests a dual responsibility – a form of double indemnity – as teachers take on responsibility for their own and their learners' actions.

*Interviewer: So, do you think [the children] ... are still relying on you?*

*Lottie: Yeah, I think they are but they're not at the same time. I suppose like if you correcting their work ... and you have done it green and you are asking them to go through and do the corrections and they don't know what to do then, ...I suppose it is my fault, I guess...*

Here we see the burden of the virtue of feedback. Lottie's use of the word 'fault' indicates blame and doing what she perceives to be the 'wrong' thing, entailing loss both morally and professionally. However, whereas Lottie saw responding to feedback as her duty and responsibility, other participants indicated a more nuanced view. Here the teachers had some, but not full, responsibility.

*Evie: ....So almost not saying to them explicitly oh you're getting, you're getting this bit wrong you need to work on that and you giving that feedback, it's more the children almost feeding back to you but actually helping themselves, do you know what I mean?*

If there is a moral duty for learners to respond to feedback from another, they may need support in realising this. Several of the participants indicated an awareness of this when they described modelling and scaffolding the learners in how to respond. As Arthur (2015) states, 'school teachers play a critical role in the formation of young people, shaping the moral character of their students. The best teachers exemplify a set of virtues which they demonstrate through personal example.' However, we would suggest that these virtues are open to debate and often come with a 'sting' in the tail, as we see, for example, in the way the gift of feedback from the teacher creates a concomitant sense of obligation in the learner. Indeed, we would go further and suggest that the virtues of feedback may not be virtuous after all, heavily circumscribed as they are by the educational policy discourses of accountability and performativity within which teaching and learning are located. This entails a loss of innocence and idealism, as we explore in the following section.

### **The demons of feedback: Accountability, performativity and 'doing it for the file'**

As noted above, feedback practice is often founded in doing the implicitly agreed *right* thing or acting in what is perceived to be the *right* way. However, the drive to evidence performance in teaching is shifting – some would say distorting – these moral norms. We argue that the influence of performativity can be viewed as constituting a new form of morality that suggests 'alternative' virtues – akin to the notion of 'alternative facts' – echoing how "neoliberalism makes demons of us all, confronting us with forced choices" (Kotsko, 2018, p. 2). However, it is important to bear in mind that while the contemporary 'moral economy' is undoubtedly influenced by 'neoliberalism', and while 'neoliberalism' is often associated with 'performativity', this doesn't mean that 'moral economy' and 'performativity' are necessarily or inherently linked conceptually. It is more the case that neoliberal performativity provides the dominant norms and rules shaping and circumscribing today's moral economy of feedback.

Teacher Education in England is now entangled in requirements of accountability; indeed, positioned within a competitive system, it is now synonymous with neoliberal performativity (Ball, 2017). Student teachers will of course have experienced this as learners having gone through an education system where summative data is prized. As student teachers they are now part of the system themselves not only working within the performativity demands of school settings but also having their own performance evidenced, scrutinised and judged. As an additional complication, specific Standards (DfE, 2012) relate to assessment and feedback, and these too need to be accounted for and evidenced. Within the moral economies metaphor, by its very nature, accountability entails an economy in which performance is measured in order to be accountable.

In our analysis, we found that some of the participants conceptualised feedback as a way of evidencing performance. This was often when the student teachers used feedback practices to evidence *teacher* performance in order to meet the standards. For some, evidencing

progress had become the *right thing* to do or at least the *right thing* to demonstrate. This may conveniently align with pedagogical reasons but could also merely indicate uncritical compliance with the demands of performativity. Once again, the moral connotations are messy – potentially even contradictory – and far from clear-cut as efficacy requires a loss of innocence. Conforming to the structures of national or local policy is viewed to be the right action to take. In terms of professional survival, it probably is; but this is not necessarily the same as the pedagogically right or best action, resulting in the possibility of moral dilemmas.

Conceptualising feedback as evidence for performance was most apparent when the student teachers discussed written feedback, i.e. marking. Indeed, during the earlier stages of the study, written feedback was often the default frame of reference whether the discussion was focused on school or university.

*Nick: .... but then I think that some schools are stuck in the mindset of feedback as marking or the feedback that someone wants to see from us is marking.... most staff mean is about feedback and they're like "well where's your accountability if you don't mark?"*

*[and in reference to verbal feedback stamps] Well, Ofsted want to see that we're giving feedback, so we need to use these stamps.' I'm just like, 'That's not what they're for!'*

It is interesting to note here that student teachers can be critical of schools that perceive feedback to be solely about marking for the purposes of accountability. The participant is questioning what has become the normalised 'virtues' of feedback when this conflicts with what he views as morally right. This reveals his broader, less instrumental, understanding of the purpose of feedback. For others, however, the underlying purpose of formative feedback was foremost to provide evidence of performance against the Teacher Standards (DfE, 2012).

*Jenny: [in reference to an example of feedback on placement which identified a very specific target rather than one that could be applied to other lessons] it was not helpful...it was only relevant for that one lesson, that one time ... I've got to be able to show that I can respond to it and the children ... prove that I've acted on that feedback the next time someone comes in.*

The accountability demands of teacher education and education more generally mean that student teachers can be more concerned with how feedback can be evidenced (or 'proved') rather than whether the feedback had pedagogical benefits.

*Jenny: [in reference to her adapting the timings related to the returning of written feedback] ... because I thought they needed it because otherwise I*

*wasn't going to be able to prove the standard [related to pupils acting on feedback].*

Allen (2014) argues that formative assessment (and feedback) is positioned as morally desirable, stating that it works within the “morality of improvement” (p. 235) and supports the meritocracy agenda; “the focus is now on a child’s unique position as a learner ...a comparison between the child’s inner being and God’s will has been replaced by a comparison between the child today and what the child might become tomorrow” (Allen, 2014, p. 235). For Jenny, and we would suggest for many teachers, this morality of improvement has been altered to the morality of evidencing improvement.

As the participants progressed towards the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS,) many expressed an increased uneasiness in terms of the conflict between feedback policy and their own educational philosophy, resulting in clashes over what is viewed as morally right. This was particularly the case in their role as teacher as opposed to their role as university students. For some participants, such as Evie and Jenny, their awareness of the conflict was coupled with acceptance of the status quo.

*Evie: [in reference to marking] ...I was doing it because I had to do it... .... I definitely felt like that for a lot of my monitoring and assessment... that I was doing it for the file.*

*Jenny: ....but the teachers have to mark the books so that's why the feedback's given, it's not really given, it sounds really bad but it's not really given for the child, it's given for the teacher to have marked the book....to show progress.*

As the student teachers are required to shift from the morality of improvement to the morality of evidencing improvement, they experience a form of the demoralization identified by Santoro, involving “discouragement and despair borne out of ongoing value conflicts with pedagogical policies, reform mandates, and school practices” (2018, p. 9). But whereas Santoro’s work is focused on experienced teachers, our work with student teachers suggests that this demoralization is occurring even before the students become teachers, thus further indemnifying them, in the terms deployed in this paper, via a loss of optimism and sense of efficacy.

Other student teachers are aware of the need to be accountable early on, which is hardly surprising given they too are products of an education system with accountability at its heart. Indeed, the participants could identify elements of feedback practice that were purely for surveillance and this resulted in an uncomfortable conflict between the pedagogical and accountability functions of feedback. Over time, the student teachers became more conscious of the need to evidence feedback practice and their need to meet the

Standards, causing heightened tension arising from the need to navigate between conflicting values.

*Nick: that bit between actually informing children's [learning], by moving someone on and your evidence is like there's an awkward relationship there.... that's the thing I still struggle with and I still think how can my, like ethos of good quality feedback is good quality teaching, fit with a school that then says documented feedback is good for accountability.*

Of course, while accountability serves multiple purposes, some of which are beneficial, few would disagree that there can also be negative implications to accountability and the student teachers certainly became less naïve and more aware of accountability as a form of power and control over the course of their teacher education program. However, this does not necessarily lead to what Giddens (1991) and Ball term ontological insecurity (2000). One participant attempted to influence feedback practice during a staff meeting whilst on his final placement and implied that he had developed a stronger sense of what he felt was pedagogically right and wrong, despite the prevailing moral economies associated with performance. For him, the virtues of feedback were more important than the demonised form he understood as performativity. Given the prevalence of performativity and accountability within today's neoliberal educational climate, however, one wonders if occupying this high ground is possible long-term, particularly if one is to thrive in the profession.

Day (2002) argues that student or recently qualified teachers are prone to feeling the pressures of competency measures and are likely to be more resistant to changing or challenging policy given their status—more vulnerable but also more compliant—though it is important to realise that 'strategic compliance' predates the era of neoliberal performativity (e.g. Lacey, 1977).

In Lottie, we see how feedback had a somewhat devastating impact on her as a learner in that attempting to comply was ultimately unsuccessful resulting in a loss of identity, efficacy and increased vulnerability.

*Lottie: I was quite positive about it at first but the more I kept trying things and then my feedback would get worse and I was like 'oh my god like what am I doing that's wrong?' and then I was trying everything in my power to be able to change things and it still wasn't getting any better .... I just cried all the time. I just thought what's the point of looking at it? Like what is the point? Like I was a bright eyed and bushy tailed student on day 1 in placement and... towards the end, it sounds bad because this is not me at all, it was just like 'what is the point? What is the point in me even trying?'*

However, there is variation too, with some student teachers more likely to reflect and critique, albeit with an awareness of the need to be compliant to some degree in order to endure. To an extent, some of the student teachers gamed the system i.e. knowing and keeping the necessary rules, thereby sacrificing a degree of innocence and integrity, but also retaining some semblance of a personal philosophy.

*Daisy: I think even though I might've been following what the school wanted me to do it wasn't necessarily my opinion ... with the teaching standards I didn't purposely think I've got to do this assessment because it's a teaching standard ... it was just more a case of I'm going to do that because that's what I have to do and that will give me evidence for the teaching standards ... it was difficult because it was trying to get the balance between being who I am as a teacher but still having to do what I'm being told to do.*

As Kotsko (2018) argues, by confronting us with forced choices, neoliberalism all too frequently makes demons of us: In Daisy's words, 'that's what I have to do and that will give me evidence for the teaching standards ...a teacher but still having to do what I'm being told to do'.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that whilst feedback is frequently discussed in the literature in terms of having pedagogical implications, feedback also involves an inescapable moral dimension, in which the unwitting student teacher, like the characters in Billy Wilder's 1944 film, can find themselves entangled. Recognition of this moral dimension offers a new reading of feedback and reveals that student teachers experience tensions, dualities and dilemmas in relation to their experience and understanding of feedback in multiple ways. Moving future feedback research beyond the existing pedagogical arguments is an opportunity to understand feedback more holistically and, as such, to move the narrative away from a technical and sometimes superficial view of feedback.

More specifically, we have argued in this paper that feedback, far from being a purely positive path to development and improvement, can also be a vehicle for indemnity in the shape of lost innocence, optimism and sense of efficacy. This indemnity is double in that loss occurs for the student teachers in both their student and their teacher roles. As such, we have argued that in the hyper-performative world of neoliberalized education, feedback may function as a source of demoralization for student teachers in the form of discouragement and despair resulting from conflicts between their own educational values and the increasingly prescriptive policies and practices they encounter in schools. At a more fundamental level, we would argue that the indemnity the student teachers encounter is symptomatic of an ontological loss that is endemic to the human condition, as a consequence of the constitution of self through identification with the other (Benjamin, 1998) and the impossibility of

unmediated access to 'reality' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), and that cannot be rectified or resolved through education or other means (Donald 1992; Ellsworth 1997; Felman 1987).

On a more positive note, feedback may also be the source of an emerging re-moralization as the student teachers work to protect and strengthen their personal and professional integrity. Specifically, as the discussion in this paper has suggested, some student teachers are aware (and often feel the burden) of the dilemmas between integrity and compliance, between the need to keep learners motivated and the pedagogical demand to move learning forward, and between relational versus performative forms of accountability. The fact they have dual roles reinforces this dilemma, enabling student teachers to vividly understand both teacher and learner perspectives. But not only do student teachers come to understand feedback as both a learner and as a teacher, they also come to see feedback as a way to both signal virtue and highlight educational demons. This is complex enough; but emerging understandings of feedback can surface ongoing dilemmas, not only around what good pedagogy and assessment comprise, but, more fundamentally, surrounding what makes a good teacher and what kind of teacher / want to be. For today's teachers, these dilemmas are circumscribed by the demands of performativity and the associated standards and accountability agendas, which further complexify notions of 'good' teaching and associated issues of the good or right way to act (Carusi, 2017). Given that, as both learners and teachers, student teachers are, as Britzman (1991) noted, themselves in a somewhat schizophrenic position, it is clear that this period, like any stage of a teacher's career, is likely to be replete with uncomfortable moral contradictions and dilemmas entailing lost efficacy as learners and lost innocence as teachers. We have known since Freud that teaching is an 'impossible profession; but the various forms of double indemnity student teachers experience in relation to the moral economies of feedback mean that for them today it is especially so.

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