

# THE ROLE OF TEACHER FEEDBACK IN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION: MONITORING STUDENTS' PERSONAL PROGRESS AND GOAL SETTING

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## ABSTRACT

**Aim.** This study aims to explore the role of teacher feedback in competency-based education, focusing on how it supports students in setting learning goals, engaging in reflection, and sustaining their learning processes.

**Methods.** The research was conducted in two Lithuanian schools and involved six primary school teachers and 108 fourth-grade students. Data collection methods included the analysis of students' goal-setting notebooks, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and focus group discussions with students.

**Results.** The findings indicate that structured and timely feedback significantly enhances students' motivation to set learning goals and engage in reflective practices. Students who consistently received personalised feedback demonstrated a stronger ca-

capacity to track their learning progress and maintain engagement in the learning process. Additionally, parental involvement was identified as a significant factor reinforcing students' motivation and independence in monitoring their progress.

**Conclusion.** The study highlights the crucial role of teacher support in fostering students' autonomy in goal-setting, analysing, and reflecting on their learning. Formative feedback emerges as a key mechanism for promoting motivation, deeper cognitive involvement, and the ability to sustain progress in a competency-based learning environment. Future research should investigate effective formative feedback strategies across diverse educational contexts, including the potential of digital tools to strengthen reflective learning practices.

**Research restrictions.** The study was limited to two schools and fourth-grade students, which may affect the generalisability of the findings to other educational levels and contexts.

**Cognitive value.** This study is significant as it reveals how purposeful and personalised teacher feedback can substantially strengthen students' motivation, goal-setting, and reflection. These insights provide practical value for both teachers and school leaders aiming to improve the quality of education and implement the principles of competency-based learning.

**Keywords:** competency-based education, formative feedback, learning goals, primary school students, student engagement, motivation

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational paradigm, increasing attention is being given to competency-based education, which focuses not only on the transmission of knowledge but also on students' capacity to apply acquired knowledge in real-life situations (Brochu & Villemure, 2022; Ghezir et al., 2021; Holmes et al., 2020; Ponomarioviene et al., 2025). This approach emphasises active student participation, self-regulation, and reflection, with feedback being one of the key elements in these processes. Feedback plays a crucial role in monitoring students' progress, setting learning goals, and achieving them, providing structured guidance on their strengths and areas for improvement (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Ding, 2025; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Pitt et al., 2020).

In the context of competency-based education, formative feedback serves a dual function: on the one hand, it allows teachers to monitor students' learning processes and adapt their instructional strategies accordingly; on the other hand, it empowers students to become active participants in their learning, enabling them to assess their progress and implement new learning strategies (Carless & Boud, 2018; Fratatarola et al., 2024; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wisniewski et al., 2019). Research shows that effective feedback not only increases student motivation but also promotes

deeper cognitive engagement, fosters self-regulation, and contributes to better academic outcomes (Ding, 2025; Shute, 2008).

However, the effectiveness of feedback depends on various factors, including its timeliness, specificity, and the quality of teacher-student interaction (Lipnevich et al., 2016; Sandal et al., 2022). Additionally, the teacher's ability to individualise feedback based on different student learning styles and needs is of significant importance (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

*The aim of this study is* to analyse the process of monitoring students' personal progress, with a particular focus on goal setting, its implementation, and the teacher's role in providing feedback from the perspective of competency-based education. The research seeks to understand how students formulate their learning goals, how they reflect on their progress, and what impact teacher feedback has on students' motivation, self-reflection, and self-monitoring skills.

#### Research Objectives:

- To theoretically substantiate the concept of formative feedback and the significance of teacher feedback in helping students achieve their personal weekly or monthly goals.
- To conduct a qualitative content analysis of interviews with teachers and student focus groups, examining how students perceive goal setting, whether they set goals independently, what kind of support they need, what encourages them to actively pursue goals and reflect on their learning, and how their motivation changes over time.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Formative Feedback in the Context of Competency-Based Education**

Formative feedback is an integral part of competency-based education, helping students gain a clear understanding of their learning progress, identify knowledge gaps, and effectively plan further steps towards their learning goals (Bader et al., 2024; Black & Wiliam, 2018; Ding, 2025; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Tay & Lam, 2022). It assists students in recognising the gap between their current abilities and desired outcomes while providing guidance on how to bridge this gap (Alt et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2020; Molloy et al., 2020; Sandal et al., 2022; Snowball & Sayigh, 2007). This enables students not only to reflect on their learning process but also to actively engage in its improvement.

This approach is based on the theoretical model proposed by John Hattie and Helen Timperley (2007), which categorises feedback into four types: task-level, process-level, self-regulation, and personal feedback. This classification ensures that students not only understand their learning gaps but also apply feedback to enhance their learning strategies. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also outline three key questions

that effective feedback should answer: *Where am I going?* (What are the learning goals?), *How am I doing?* (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and *Where to next?* (What actions should be taken to improve progress?). These questions help students structure their learning process and strive towards their objectives in a focused manner.

Recent studies suggest that feedback is most effective when it focuses on the learning process and strategic thinking rather than solely on task outcomes (Carless & Boud, 2018; Ding, 2025; Shute, 2008; Tay & Lam, 2022). Assessment dialogues between students and teachers are particularly significant, as they not only clarify misunderstandings but also foster a deeper understanding of the learning process (Bader et al., 2024; Chou & Zou, 2020; Deeley, 2018; Wiliam, 2011). Formative assessment should be grounded in social dialogue, where feedback becomes a continuous exchange of information between teacher and student (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). These assessment dialogues not only help identify learning gaps but also encourage self-assessment, which is essential for deeper understanding (Sandal et al., 2022; Voerman et al., 2012).

In competency-based education, feedback plays a crucial role as it is used to develop competencies, and learners perceive it as an essential part of instruction that confirms their understanding and progress. Competencies in this context refer not only to subject-specific knowledge and skills but also to broader abilities, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication, that students need to succeed in real-world situations. Feedback provides students with guidance on how well they are mastering these competencies, highlights areas for improvement, and encourages them to take ownership of their learning. This continuous feedback loop helps ensure that students develop the necessary skills to meet both academic and personal challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of the material and the ability to apply it effectively.

By providing recurring formative assessments and feedback, learners are encouraged to repeatedly practice their skills, consolidate their learning, and expand their knowledge and competencies (Alt et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2021). Research has shown that feedback is one of the most influential factors in enhancing learning experiences (Pardo, 2017).

Feedback should not be understood as a one-way flow of information from teacher to student or on the contrary it should be a reciprocal process in which students also provide feedback to teachers regarding their learning experiences, their understanding, and the additional support or resources they need (Chou & Zou, 2020; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Rønsen, 2013). This approach allows feedback to become an ongoing process that includes both monitoring students' learning and responding to their needs in real time (Dawson et al., 2019; Ruiz-Primo & Min, 2013).

Students' perception of the feedback provided by teachers, as well as how teachers respond to students' learning needs, plays a significant role in determining the usefulness of feedback and how it can be utilised in future learning (Carvalho et al., 2014; Gamlem & Smith, 2013; Liebenow et al., 2024; Panadero et al., 2024; Pitt et al., 2020; Sandal et al., 2022). Feedback enables students to understand how they performed a task, how they evaluated their own learning, and how they can improve specific achievements or competency areas (Quigley & Whitt, 2024).

## **The Significance of Teacher Feedback in Student Engagement**

Teacher-provided feedback is a central factor influencing students' cognitive engagement, learning motivation, and academic achievement. The interaction between teacher and student plays a key role in ensuring the effectiveness of pedagogical dialogue (Carvalho et al., 2014; Pitt et al., 2020). Effective feedback not only provides students with information about their learning progress but also encourages them to actively participate in the learning process, use the received information, and adjust their strategies accordingly (Carless & Boud, 2018; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Research suggests that feedback can significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement. Students who receive clear, timely, and constructive feedback from their teachers are more likely to engage in deeper cognitive processes such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Ding, 2025; Winstone & Boud, 2020). The impact of teacher feedback depends on how it is interpreted and utilised by students (Dann, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2018, 2020; Eriksson, 2021).

Feedback is only effective when it is delivered clearly, promptly, and specifically, as this allows students to correctly interpret and apply it in their learning process (Shute, 2008). Effective feedback should be continuous, explicit, specific, and timely, as its delivery timing can significantly affect students' learning effectiveness (Ding, 2025). Immediate feedback is particularly effective in everyday classroom interactions, whereas delayed feedback can encourage deeper reflection and higher-order cognitive processes (Clariana et al., 2000; Hattie & Timperley, 2007, 2014; Sandal et al., 2022).

Teachers must not only provide feedback but also understand how students interpret, interact with, and respond to it (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Students require not only feedback but also motivation, opportunities, and resources that enable them to act upon it (Carless & Boud, 2018). The tone and wording of feedback are essential elements influencing students' reactions and engagement. Feedback should demonstrate respect for students as active learners and encourage them to think critically, be curious, and take an interest in their learning (Brookhart, 2008; Lipnevich et al., 2016; Ropohl & Rönnebeck, 2019).

Feedback has a strong motivational function, which can help students maintain a high level of engagement and foster their learning autonomy (Luckett &

Sutherland, 2000; Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Students should not be passive recipients of feedback—on the contrary, they should understand and evaluate its role in improving their work and actively participate in the process. This approach promotes learning engagement, which is reflected in how students comprehend, interpret, and apply the feedback they receive (Carless & Boud, 2018; Frattarola, 2024; Sanchez-Gil-Machín et al., 2025).

Melissa M. Nelson and Christian D. Schunn (2009) identify three primary functions of feedback: motivational, reinforcement, and informational. This structure ensures that students not only receive valuable insights into their learning progress but are also motivated to apply them in practice. Motivational feedback aims to encourage students, boosting their confidence and enthusiasm to continue learning. Reinforcement feedback focuses on affirming correct responses or behaviour, helping students recognise their strengths and maintain effective learning strategies. Informational feedback provides specific guidance on what needs to be improved, offering clear suggestions on how students can progress further.

The impact of feedback on student engagement depends on two key factors: contextual factors (e.g., teacher-student relationships, feedback methods) and individual factors (e.g., students' learning goals, beliefs about feedback) (Chong, 2021). Contextual factors refer to the environment in which feedback is provided, including the quality of the teacher-student relationship, the timeliness and frequency of feedback, and the approach used (e.g., written, verbal, peer feedback). These factors influence how feedback is perceived and its effectiveness in promoting learning. Individual factors involve the student's own characteristics, such as their motivation, prior knowledge, and attitude towards feedback. Students who view feedback as a tool for growth and believe it will help them achieve their goals are more likely to engage with and benefit from it.

The specificity of feedback is also relevant for student engagement. Simple evaluative feedback, such as “*Good job,*” is not as effective as detailed, individualised, and constructive comments (Brookhart, 2008; Ropohl & Rönnebeck, 2019). Teachers must find a balance between overly general and overly detailed feedback, as too much detail can overwhelm students, while feedback that is too vague may fail to provide clear guidance on how to improve learning (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Another important aspect is peer feedback. Encouraging students to evaluate their peers' work can enhance their understanding of assessment criteria and their own learning progress (Nicol et al., 2014; Nicol & McCallum, 2021). Peer assessment fosters the use of higher-order cognitive processes, such as problem diagnosis, solution generation, and the application of criteria. This aligns with the principles of social constructivism, which emphasise that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration (McConlogue, 2015).

Finally, a teacher's sensitivity to students' learning needs is another crucial factor determining the quality of feedback (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Pitt et al., 2020).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Aim

The aim of this study is to analyse the process of monitoring students' personal progress, with a particular focus on goal setting, goal implementation, and the teacher's role in providing feedback within with an interactional and purpose-oriented perspective. The research seeks to understand how students formulate their learning goals, how they reflect on their progress, and the impact of teacher-provided feedback on students' motivation, self-reflection, and self-monitoring skills.

The study was conducted in two Lithuanian schools (Table A1). Schools were intentionally selected to analyse educational practices in diverse contexts and situations.

### Teacher and Student Context

The research aims to understand how students formulate their learning goals, how they reflect on their progress, and the impact of teacher-provided feedback on students' motivation, self-reflection, and self-monitoring skills.

The study involved 108 students, consisting of 53 boys and 55 girls. The Table A2 shows that some students agreed to participate in the study but did not engage in filling out the goal-setting booklets and returned them uncompleted (see Table A2). These students were not included in the total number of participants.

The participating students had not previously set monthly and weekly goals in a structured way, nor had they monitored and analysed their progress in achieving them. During this study, students attempted for the first time to set monthly and four-week goals, reflect on their progress, analyse their achievements, and record their observations in the booklet.

### Research Method

Action research was chosen as the research method because it is recognised as a qualitative approach that is democratic, equitable, and context-sensitive (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Koch & Kralik, 2006). Rather than relying on control, it emphasises observation and analysis, allowing participants' experiences, emotions, and perspectives to emerge. This methodology also positions participants as active contributors, encouraging them to make informed decisions within the educational process. Moreover, action research supports the identification of challenges as they arise and facilitates the search for practical solutions (Soucy et al., 2020; Soucy, 2019).

## Data Collection

The qualitative research was conducted in two stages as follows.

### *Stage I*

The research data was collected through action research, analysing students' self-set goals, reflections, observations, and systematically organising the findings into thematic categories that emerged from the data. Additionally, collaboration with teachers was an integral part of the process, as their insights and feedback contributed to the interpretation and application of the findings.

**Students' Monthly Goal Setting, Planning Steps to Achieve the Goal, and Reflection at the End of the Month.** During this study, each student was given a booklet titled "Learning to Achieve My Goals" to complete. In the booklet, students were required to write down their monthly goal and outline the steps they would take to achieve it (see Figure A1).

The illustration shows that students had complete freedom to decide on their goal and determine the steps they would take to reach it.

Throughout the month, students monitored themselves, analysed their progress in achieving their goals, and assessed how well they followed the steps they had planned. They recorded their reflections in a table (see Figure A2).

After a month, regardless of whether they achieved their goal or not, students were required to write their opinion on why they succeeded or failed to reach their goal (see Figure A3).

**Students' Weekly Goal Setting and Reflection at the End of the Week.** For four weeks, students set weekly goals, monitored their progress throughout the week, and recorded their reflections in the booklet (see Figure A4). Students had complete freedom (equally in all the classrooms) to choose the area in which they wanted to achieve personal progress over the week. Considering the learning content and activities, as well as analysing their individual situation and abilities, students defined their weekly goals. Importantly, throughout the week, students reflected on their progress and documented in the booklet how well they were progressing toward their goal and whether they managed to achieve it.

### *Stage II*

To further deepen the data analysis, semi-structured interviews (Baškarada, 2014; Yin, 2018) were conducted in February 2025 with all teachers. Additionally, student focus groups were formed for each class. A total of six focus groups were created, each gathering of five students.



To explore how students perceive goal setting, whether they set goals independently, what kind of support they need, what motivates them most to actively pursue their goals and reflect on their learning, and how their motivation changes over time, teachers were asked to answer seven questions (see Table A3).

To determine what influences students' priorities in goal selection—whether it is academic performance, personal interests, or other factors—and to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions of personal goal setting, the study explored several key aspects. These included the type of support students need, how they monitor and evaluate their progress, the challenges they face in regularly reflecting and completing the booklets, and how they connect their set goals with achieved results. To investigate these aspects, students were asked five questions (see Table A4).

The analysis of students' *Learning to Achieve My Goals* booklets, along with interviews with teachers and students, provided an integrative approach that contributed to a more precise and comprehensive interpretation of the research findings.

The interview results were analysed and systematised using qualitative thematic content analysis, aiming to identify key themes reflected in teachers' and students' responses. In analysing students' monthly and weekly goal setting and their reflections on goal pursuit and achievement, recurring motivations, perspectives, and experiences were identified. This process not only helped determine the most common strategies used by students but also revealed how teachers encourage students to consistently pursue their goals and what forms of support were essential for them (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Creswell & Poth, 2018; King & Horrocks, 2010; Patton, 2014).

The analysis of student and teacher interviews helped uncover both common insights shared by teachers and students and key differences as well as specific aspects of teaching practices that contribute to students' learning, motivation to set and achieve goals, self-monitoring, and reflection on their experiences. Furthermore, the study highlighted how the reflection process, along with teacher support and motivation, influences students' ability to reflect, revealing both challenges and effective strategies implemented in the school environment.

## Research Ethics

The study was conducted following the ethical principles of research outlined by Vytautas Magnus University, as approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Educational Research (Resolution No. 2025-01, dated 28 January 2025). Confidentiality requirements were adhered to throughout the study. Students and teachers were informed about the study's purpose and procedures and their right to withdraw from participation without any consequences. Students' parents provided individual consent for their children to complete the "Learning to Achieve My Goals" workbook and for their set goals and reflections to be analysed. Additionally, parents gave consent

for their children to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The data is presented with participant responses translated from Lithuanian into English.

## RESULTS

In the empirical data analysis section, due to the limited scope of the article, we will present only a part of the analysis of student and teacher interviews, focusing on: the types of support students needed, how it was provided, and how students' motivation changed in the process of pursuing their goals.

This article will not discuss the specific goals students aimed to achieve; instead, it will concentrate on their experiences in goal-setting and reflection, as well as the factors that had the greatest impact on their engagement and progress monitoring.

Additionally, we will analyse how different forms of teacher support contributed to students' development of autonomy, how students responded to the assistance provided, and the significance of teacher support and encouragement in the goal-setting and reflection process (see Table A5).

The research findings reveal that students used various sources of support when setting their goals, including family members, teachers, friends, or independently setting their own goals. These results provide a deeper understanding of the factors that help children clearly define and achieve their objectives. Some students emphasised that parents played a significant role in the goal-setting process. Parents not only reminded them of their goals but also helped them refine and clarify them. For example, one student mentioned that they struggled to decide on a goal, but after discussing it with their mother, they realised that the key was to focus on one activity. In other cases, parents suggested ideas that later became students' goals, such as learning to draw or solving a Rubik's cube quickly. These findings indicate that family involvement can help children better understand their aspirations and focus on achievable goals.

A significant number of students set their goals independently; however, even in these cases, some required assistance in formulating them. For instance, one student noted that at first, coming up with a goal seemed easy, but when writing it down, they realised the need to clearly define the actions they would take. Some students indicated that they thought about everyday activities that would be beneficial to them, which helped them identify their goals independently. This suggests that while many students were capable of setting goals on their own, it was still essential for them to understand how to create clear and achievable goals. According to the goal-setting theory developed by Edwin A. Locke and Garry P. Latham (2006, 2019), clearly defined and measurable goals enhance individuals' engagement and motivation to achieve them. When a person has a specific goal, he/she puts in more effort to accomplish it. For goal attainment to be effective, goals must be clear and well-formulated, as this helps individuals understand the nec-

essary actions to achieve them. Additionally, the theory considers task complexity, as more challenging goals may require a greater investment of time and resources.

In addition to family members and teachers, some students mentioned that friends helped them in setting goals. Collaboration with peers assisted them in deciding on their goals and encouraged them to achieve them. For example, one student shared that they and a friend came up with the goal of creating a dance together and successfully accomplished it. This demonstrates that the social aspect can be an important source of motivation, as students feel supported by their friends and are encouraged to pursue shared goals (Nicol et al., 2014; Nicol & McCallum, 2021). Teachers also played a crucial role, especially for students who struggled to define their goals. They helped students understand how to formulate clear, achievable, and measurable goals. For instance, some students initially set very broad goals, but with teacher guidance and prompting questions, they were able to narrow them down and make them more specific.

However, as seen in the Table A5 two teachers (T2 and T6) encouraged students to set their goals independently, pursue them, and reflect on their progress without actively discussing their progress with them. Instead, they allowed students to take the booklets home for completion. As a result, the highest number of uncompleted booklets were returned from these two classes, which can be observed in Table A2.

The results indicate that students employed various goal-setting approaches, depending on their individual needs and the support from their environment. Parents (independently from their home environment) and teachers often helped students formulate clearer, more achievable goals, while peers served as a source of motivation. These findings suggest that the goal-setting process is more effective when children receive appropriate support from their surroundings (Carvalho et al., 2014; Luckett & Sutherland, 2000; Ozan & Kincal, 2018; Pitt et al., 2020).

Another crucial teacher-related factor is providing continuous support and motivation for students throughout the entire month.

The analysis of Tables A6 and A7 indicates that teacher support, feedback, and structured assistance directly influence not only goal setting but also the development of reflection habits. Teachers who actively encouraged students not only to set goals but also to consistently track their progress and provided feedback achieved better results. For example, in the classes of teachers T1, T3, and T4, most students not only set monthly goals but also recorded reflections on each step and evaluated their overall success. "I provided continuous support to students because I realised that goal achievement and reflection are processes that require encouragement" (T4).

The biggest challenge for me was maintaining students' motivation to consistently complete their booklets throughout the entire month. We discussed them in detail, had conversations, and shared insights. The most common form of support was frequent reminders to complete the booklets and analyse their progress, as students often lacked the motivation. The standard response was: 'I'm not interested.' But when asked why, they found it difficult to explain. (T1)

Students who could clearly see their progress felt more motivated to continue. When they noticed that they were improving compared to the previous week, it encouraged them to keep going. However, those who didn't see immediate results sometimes felt discouraged, so I had to remind them that even small progress is important. (T3)

The engagement of students in completing their booklets under teachers T1 and T3 can also be observed in their creative approach—they coloured, drew, added stickers, adjusted their goals, and made notes.

Perhaps they wanted more opportunities to draw, colour, and incorporate their creativity into the tasks. Many students spent significant time drawing steps and illustrating themselves on them—it was interesting for them because it required a different way of completing the task. (T3).

This can be observed in Figures A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, and A10.

Students valued teacher support:

- Every morning before class, the teacher would hand out the booklets, and we would write down how we did the previous day <...> If the teacher hadn't reminded us, we probably wouldn't have completed them. Although sometimes the teacher didn't remind us, classmates did, saying that we needed to fill them in. (F3);
- “It was difficult to remember to complete it daily, but the teacher helped” (F1).

Meanwhile, in classes where teachers were less involved in the reflection process (T2 and T6), a clear gap was observed between goal setting and analysis. In T2's class, all students set monthly goals, but only 12 recorded the steps to achieve them, and only 4 students reflected on their progress.

Students received the booklets, but I cannot say exactly how they did in setting their goals because I did not closely monitor their work. At first, some were interested, but later, I noticed that not all of them were filling them out regularly. Some students may have taken their goals seriously, but others seemed to forget about the booklets, rushed through them, or stopped completing them altogether. (T2)

An even greater contrast was observed in T6's class, where out of 10 students, only one reflected on each step, and only one evaluated their goal achievement overall. “At first, they seemed interested, but later, I noticed that some stopped completing the booklets or did so very superficially.” (T6).

The same trend is observed in weekly goal setting. Table A7 data shows that student engagement in setting weekly goals and reflecting on them decreased over time, especially in classes where teacher support was limited. For example, in T2's class, 20 students set goals in the first week, but by the fourth week, only one student reflected on their progress. This may be linked to the fact that without consistent reminders and support, students lacked motivation to continue self-monitoring.

Students themselves also mentioned this issue: “It was difficult for me both to come up with goals and to remember to write them down and complete the tasks.” (F6), “I didn’t think this was a very serious task, so I didn’t really pursue my goals or write much. Even though I do have goals, it’s easier for me to keep them in my mind.” (F6), “Sometimes I forgot, and in the evening, I had so many other things to do that it became difficult.” (F2).

In classes where students received teacher support, encouragement, and feedback, most students expressed a desire to continue tracking their personal progress and setting new goals even after the study ended. “Yes, we will continue. Marija and I have already started. <...> I’m not sure, I’ll probably write down my goals depending on my mood.” (F1), “I still have dozens of books at home, and I will definitely aim to read them all. <...> I would like to continue because I noticed that when I put in daily effort, I really improve” (F3).

Yes, because I realised that when I know exactly what I want to improve, it’s easier for me to achieve it. <...> I don’t know yet, I’m still thinking about whether I will continue. Maybe I’ll just keep my goals in my mind. (F4),

“I want to continue, but I would like to have more freedom in how I write about my progress. Maybe I would write it more like a journal.” (F5).

Teachers employed various support strategies to help students achieve their goals, depending on students’ needs and the teaching practices used, but also the teachers’ experience see Table A8). Most teachers actively monitored students’ progress and provided consistent support and feedback, which was delivered through daily short conversations, weekly reflections, and individual discussions. Daily conversations and teacher feedback helped students consistently track their progress, receive timely feedback, and address emerging challenges. Weekly reflections encouraged students to think critically about their achievements, share experiences with classmates, and develop clearer self-expression skills.

Individual support and feedback were particularly important for students who struggled with goal formulation or analysis, as well as those who missed the initial stages due to illness. Providing feedback on goal achievement can enhance students’ independence and motivation, reinforcing the idea that they are capable of improvement through consistent effort (Putwain et al., 2018; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

Some teachers did not provide direct support, arguing that they aimed to promote students’ independence and responsibility for their own learning process. This strategy was linked to enhancing students’ ability to make decisions and solve problems independently.

The overall research findings suggest that the most effective approach was a flexible support strategy, which combined structured reflection, individual discussions, and encouragement of independence based on each student’s individual needs (Dann, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2018, 2020; Eriksson, 2021).

## DISCUSSION

The empirical research findings confirm previous studies on the importance of teacher feedback in enhancing student engagement and self-regulation skills (Chou & Zou, 2020; Nicol & McCallum, 2021; Sanchez-Gil-Machín et al., 2025). Students' perception of feedback, their ability to interpret it, and act upon it depend not only on its clarity, timeliness, and constructiveness but also on individual student abilities and motivation (Lipnevich et al., 2016).

Students are not passive recipients of feedback—they actively engage in the process, evaluate its usefulness, and seek to apply it to their learning activities (Tay & Lam, 2022). However, for feedback to be effective, the right conditions must be created for its integration into the learning process.

Teachers who engaged students in reflection, goal analysis, and dialogue about their learning progress encouraged them to plan future actions. This interaction aligns with modern competency-based education principles, where students are seen as active participants in their learning, capable of making independent decisions and adapting learning strategies to their individual needs (Bader et al., 2024; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiliam, 2018).

Another key insight from the study is the form and timing of feedback delivery. Chih-Yueh Chou and Nian-Bao Zou (2020) emphasise that feedback should not only be informative but also constructive and timely. The study showed that immediate feedback (e.g., daily short teacher comments) was effective in maintaining students' motivation and helped them adjust their actions in real time. Teachers who regularly monitored students' progress and provided specific, learning-focused feedback created an environment where students felt supported and empowered to take action in general (Nicol & McCallum, 2021).

Finally, the study revealed that students' ability to utilise feedback is closely linked to their motivation. Some students were initially sceptical about the goal-setting and reflection process, but as they began to notice their progress, they became more willing to continue the practice. This highlights the importance of feedback as a long-term learning strategy—students who recognise the value of feedback become more active, responsible, and motivated to pursue personal growth (Sanchez-Gil-Machín et al., 2025).

## CONCLUSION

The study confirms that teacher feedback is a critical factor in students' engagement with setting and reflecting on personal goals. Teachers who systematically encouraged reflection and provided consistent, constructive feedback achieved significantly higher student participation and motivation in the learning process (Carvalho et al., 2014; Ding, 2025; Pitt et al., 2020; Shute, 2008).

To improve reflection habits, it is essential not only to encourage students to set clear personal goals but also to provide structured guidance and support in analysing their progress. The study revealed that students who received continuous reminders about the importance of reflection and structured support were more engaged, developed critical thinking skills, and improved their self-regulation.

Additionally, the study highlighted that students' motivation to reflect and pursue learning goals changes over time. While initial motivation for goal setting was high, it declined, particularly in classes where there was a lack of consistent teacher encouragement and reminders. Students who did not receive regular feedback signals from their teacher were more likely to forget to document their progress or fail to see the value of the activity.

This indicates that structured teacher support is essential for fostering students' independent learning reflection (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Individual discussions, group reflection sessions, and clearly defined strategies can help students engage more effectively in this process and maintain their motivation (Ding, 2025; Frattarola, 2024; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Sanchez-Gil-Machín et al., 2025; Shute, 2008).

Another important aspect is the role of family involvement in the goal-setting and reflection process. The study shows that students whose parents took an interest in their learning goals and discussed their progress with them were more likely to reflect consistently and strive for better results.

In summary, timely, specific, and motivating teacher feedback not only enhances students' academic achievement but also fosters their independence and critical thinking skills (Putwain et al., 2018; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

Student engagement in the reflection process requires consistent teacher support and clearly defined strategies that help them understand their learning progress and pursue personal learning goals more effectively (Chou & Zou, 2020; Dann, 2019; Eriksson et al., 2018, 2020; Eriksson, 2021; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & McCallum, 2021; Sanchez-Gil-Machín et al., 2025).

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has the following limitations:

- The identified and analysed aspects of teacher feedback, goal setting, and reflection in competency-based education provide valuable insights for researchers and educators seeking to enhance student engagement and progress monitoring. However, certain limitations must be considered.
- The qualitative nature of this research limits the generalisability of findings to a broader population. To strengthen these insights, a separate quantitative study would be necessary. Such a study could provide statistically significant data, increasing the reliability of findings and offering a broader foundation for understanding effective teacher feedback strategies, goal-setting processes, and reflection practices in competency-based education.



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APPENDIX

**Table A1**  
*Contexts of Schools in the Empirical Research*

School	Location	Number of Students in the School	Number of Teachers Participating in the Study	Number of Students Participating in the Study	School Context
School 1	In a big city	940	4	84	The school enrolls students from grades 1 to 8, with around 15% having special educational needs. About one-third come from multilingual or mixed-family backgrounds where the home language differs from the language of instruction. To support these learners, Lithuanian lessons are organized in smaller subgroups, ensuring more individualised guidance in language learning.
School 2	In a small town	191	2	23	The school educates children from pre-primary to grade 12 in classes of fewer than 15 students. Situated in a town where most residents speak other languages at home, the majority of students attend a Lithuanian-language school despite not having Lithuanian as their first language.

Source. Own research.

**Table A2**  
*Information about the Students who Participated in the Study*

Teachers Code	Number of Students in the Class	Number of Participating Boys	Number of Participating Girls	Number of Students Who Returned Unfilled Booklets	Focus Group Code
T1	24	9	14	1	F1
T2	24	11	10	3	F2
T3	20	9	11	0	F3
T4	21	13	7	1	F4
T5	15	5	9	1	F5
T6	14	6	4	4	F6

Source. Own research.

**Table A3***Interview Questions for Teachers*

No.	Question	Rationale (Which Scientific Sources Were Referenced, What Is Intended to Be Discovered with This Question)
1.	How did students perform in setting personal goals?	The aim is to determine how well students are able to set personal goals, the level of independence they demonstrate in this process, and the type of support they most often require. Additionally, it was important to understand the challenges students face in order to gain deeper insights into which strategies or support mechanisms can more effectively foster their goal-setting skills (Baßeng & Budke, 2024; Bubnys, 2019; Guce, 2017; Rowe et al., 2016).
2.	How independently were students able to analyse and evaluate their achievements and challenges in achieving their goals?	The aim is to determine how independently students can analyse and evaluate their achievements and challenges, as well as how they engage in the reflection process. Additionally, the goal was to understand whether students are able to independently link their achievements to the goals they have set (Aeppli & Lötscher., 2016; Anderson, 2020; Guce, 2017).
3.	What kind of support did students most often need when completing the booklets?	The aim is to determine what specific types of support students needed when completing the booklets and which support methods were the most effective (Allen, 2016; Gaitas et al., 2017; Kumps et al., 2022)
4.	How often did you provide support – was it a continuous process or based on students' needs?	The goal is to determine how frequently and under what circumstances teachers provided support to students—whether it was a continuous process or offered as needed. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how students responded to this support and whether it encouraged them to continue pursuing their set goals (Ketonen & Nieminen, 2023; Lefebvre et al. 2023).
5.	What factors most motivated students to complete the booklets and pursue their goals?	The goal is to determine which factors most encouraged students to complete the booklets and pursue their set goals. The study also analysed changes in motivation throughout the process, the reasons behind these changes, and teachers' observations regarding individual student needs for maintaining motivation (Kulgemeyer, 2021; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).
6.	How do you evaluate the impact of students' goal setting and reflection on their learning process and achievements?	The aim is to assess how goal setting and reflection influence students' learning process, achievements, and ability to plan their activities (Colomer et al, 2018; Irwin & Coutts, 2017; Lefebvre et al., 2023).

No.	Question	Rationale (Which Scientific Sources Were Referenced, What Is Intended to Be Discovered with This Question)
7.	How did students respond to their reflections?	The aim is to understand how students responded to the outcomes of their reflections and whether this activity encouraged them to make changes in their learning process. The study explores whether reflections helped students identify areas for improvement, develop self-criticism, and foster motivation to adjust their learning strategies or behaviour to achieve better results. These insights are essential for assessing the value of reflection in enhancing students' self-regulation and learning quality (Colomer et al., 2018; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

Source. Own research.

Table A4

*Interview Questions for Students Participating in the Focus Group*

No.	Question	Rationale (Which Scientific Sources Were Referenced, What Is Intended to Be Discovered with This Question)
1.	How did you find the process of coming up with and setting your goal?	The aim is to determine how students formulate and set their goals, whether this process is easy or challenging for them. Additionally, the study seeks to understand whether students can independently select their goals or if they require external support—from teachers, parents, or peers—and which forms of support were the most effective. This research provides deeper insights into students' level of independence and their need for support in the goal-setting process (Budworth et al., 2015; Jeong et al., 2023; Locke & Latham, 2006, 2019).
2.	How did you decide which goal was most important to you?	The aim is to determine how students select their most important goals and what factors—academic performance, personal interests, or other aspects—most influence their choices. The study seeks to understand what drives students to pursue specific goals and how their priorities impact their learning process and motivation (Locke & Latham, 2006, 2019; Saqr et al., 2023).
3.	How did you find the process of monitoring yourself and tracking your progress daily?	The aim is to determine how students tracked their progress and how consistently they completed their booklets. The study seeks to understand which factors—lack of time, low energy levels, or other challenges—affected students' ability to consistently monitor their progress and how they addressed these issues (Escorcía & Fenouillet, 2018; Morris, 2019).
4.	How successfully were you able to connect your set goals with your learning outcomes?	The aim is to determine how students connect their set goals with their learning outcomes and whether this helps them gain a clearer understanding of what they can achieve. The study assesses how purposeful goal-setting contributes to students' achievements, their ability to plan and monitor their progress, and how this process impacts their motivation and self-esteem in learning (Dignath & Veenman, 2021; Morris, 2019; Wijnen et al., 2018).

No.	Question	Rationale (Which Scientific Sources Were Referenced, What Is Intended to Be Discovered with This Question)
5.	After completing the study, would you like to continue setting goals and tracking your progress?	The aim is to determine students' perspectives on continuing goal-setting and progress monitoring after the study concludes. The study seeks to understand what factors encourage students to continue this process—whether it is related to motivation, a greater sense of control over their learning process, or personal benefits.

*Source.* Own research.

**Table A5**

*The Need for Support in Students' Goal-Setting and Formulation*

Individuals Providing Support	Examples of Students Comments (Unedited Language)	Examples of Teacher Comments (Unedited Language)
Support was provided by family members	<p>„I set my own goals, but my mom would remind me.“ (F6)</p> <p>„My mom suggested I take up art, and that's how I learned to draw.“ (F6)</p> <p>„It was difficult for me because I was thinking about too many things at once. But after discussing it with my mom, I realised that the most important thing is to choose one focus.“ (F5)</p> <p>„My parents helped me. They asked me what was the hardest for me, and I decided that I wanted to solve a Rubik's cube in under one minute.“ (F4)</p>	<p>„Parents were involved in goal-setting. This made it easier for children to understand how to set a goal. At the same time, the goals were not necessarily related to learning but also included helping family members.“ (T2)</p> <p>„Parents also provided support. It was great that I had the opportunity to collaborate with both the students and their parents on this matter.“ (T4)</p>



<b>Individuals Providing Support</b>	<b>Examples of Students Comments (Unedited Language)</b>	<b>Examples of Teacher Comments (Unedited Language)</b>
Support was provided by the classroom teacher.	<p>„I came up with my monthly goal myself, but for the weekly goals, my teacher provided support.“ (F4)</p> <p>„It was difficult to come up with a goal because I didn't know if it should be very big or small. But my teacher helped me, and then I decided that I wanted to improve my handwriting.“ (F5)</p> <p>„At first, I wanted to set many goals at once, but my teacher said it would be better to choose one that seemed most important to me.“ (F1)</p> <p>„If not for my teacher, I probably wouldn't have set a monthly goal at all.“ (F3)</p> <p>„My teacher asked me a question, and that's how I realised how to set a goal.“ (F5)</p> <p>„Coming up with a goal was interesting, but the hardest part was deciding whether my goal was actually achievable within a month. I asked my teacher for advice.“ (F4)</p>	<p>„Students needed reminders from the teacher to set their goals. I explained what areas they could focus on and asked guiding questions. If they couldn't come up with a goal, I always suggested thinking about writing or reading.“ (T3)</p> <p>„They set their first goals with my advice and support. Later, I would just remind them on Fridays to review their monthly goal and summarise their weekly goal.“ (T1)</p> <p>„At first, many students chose very broad or vague goals, such as 'I want to be better at maths' or 'I want to read more.' I had to help them refine their goals to make them clear and measurable. I asked additional questions that helped them specify their goals.“ (T4)</p> <p>„It was definitely not easy for students to set goals, and they needed help formulating them since they were doing it for the first time. They initially thought that a goal was just a wish, but that's not always the case. I explained to them that a goal should be achievable within a week or a month.“ (T5)</p>



<b>Individuals Providing Support</b>	<b>Examples of Students Comments (Unedited Language)</b>	<b>Examples of Teacher Comments (Unedited Language)</b>
Students Set Goals Independently	<p>„I no longer attend sports clubs, so I set a goal for myself—to practice martial arts at home instead. I created this goal on my own.“ (F1)</p> <p>„I set my own goal, but my mom reminded me about it.“ (F6)</p> <p>„First, I thought about it myself, wrote it down, and then tried to achieve it.“ (F4)</p> <p>„I came up with my own goals and worked on them.“ (F5)</p> <p>„I created all my goals by myself.“ (F2)</p> <p>„I thought setting a goal would be easy, but when I had to write it down, I realised I needed to think about the details. For example, instead of just ‚I want to draw better,‘ I wrote ‚I will try a new drawing technique every week.‘“ (F1)</p> <p>„I asked myself: ‚What would be useful for me every day?‘ I realised I wanted to improve my drawing skills because I enjoy it, but sometimes I feel discouraged when it doesn’t turn out the way I want.“ (F2)</p> <p>„I needed help, so I asked my teacher. The teacher told me that I had to set my own goal because it was my personal goal. So, I kept thinking about it.“ (F2)</p>	<p>„Students set their goals independently because I made it clear that this was their task. I briefly looked at what they had written and was surprised that some students’ goals were very serious, life-oriented, and wise.“ (T6)</p> <p>„I was very happy when some students fully completed their booklets independently and took them on their own when needed.“ (T1)</p> <p>„Since I did not closely monitor how students were filling out their booklets, I cannot say exactly what kind of support they needed. It is possible that they needed help in formulating their goals more clearly, as not all students are able to set specific and achievable goals right away.“ (T2)</p>
Support was provided by friends.	<p>„Paula (my classmate) helped me.“ (F2)</p> <p>„My friend helped me.“ (F3)</p> <p>„My friend and I didn’t know what to do. So, we decided to create a two-person dance, and we succeeded.“ (F3)</p>	<p>„I noticed that students discussed their goals with each other. Some even had very similar goals. It’s great that they collaborate, as this encourages teamwork and learning from one another.“ (T1)</p>

*Source.* Own research.

**Table A6**  
*The Number of Students Who Set a Monthly Goal, Planned Steps, and Wrote Reflections on Their Progress*

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Set a Monthly Goal.</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Recorded Steps to Achieve Their Goal.</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Wrote Reflections on Their Progress for Recorded Steps.</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Reflected on Their Goal Achievement.</i>
T1	N=20	N=20	N=19	N=18
T2	N=20	N=20	N=12	N=4
T3	N=18	N=18	N=16	N=16
T4	N=20	N=20	N=18	N=16
T5	N=14	N=14	N=14	N=12
T6	N=10	N=10	N=1	N=1

Source. Own research.

**Table A7**  
*The Number of Students Who Set Weekly Goals and Reflected on Their Achievement in the Booklets*

<i>Teacher</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Set a Goal for the First Week</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Monitored and Recorded Their Daily Reflections</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Set a Goal for the Second Week</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Monitored and Recorded Their Daily Reflections</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Set a Goal for the Third Week</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Monitored and Recorded Their Daily Reflections</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Set a Goal for the Fourth Week</i>	<i>The Number of Students Who Monitored and Recorded Their Daily Reflections</i>
T1	N=22	N=21	N=21	N=17	N=18	N=18	N=21	N=16
T2	N=20	N=20	N=14	N=4	N=6	N=0	N=1	N=0
T3	N=17	N=15	N=19	N=19	N=18	N=17	N=15	N=15
T4	N=20	N=20	N=20	N=18	N=17	N=17	N=18	N=13
T5	N=14	N=13	N=13	N=13	N=13	N=13	N=12	N=11
T6	N=10	N=6	N=4	N=2	N=3	N=0	N=0	N=0


Source. Own research.

**Table A8***Methods of Providing Teacher Feedback to Students*

<i>Methods of Providing Feedback</i>	<i>Teachers' Comments (Unedited Language)</i>
Daily Short Conversations	„Throughout the day, I kept reminding students to monitor their progress and fill in their booklets. If I noticed someone struggling, I would ask questions and help them find a solution.“ (T3) „Every day, we took time to discuss what was going well and what challenges they were facing.“ (T1)
Weekly Reflections	„At the end of each week, we discussed how things were going. Students shared their achievements and challenges, and we looked for ways to overcome obstacles together.“ (T3) „When we started reflecting on Fridays in class, students became more engaged because they heard their peers' thoughts and realised that this activity could benefit everyone.“ (T5)
Individual Support and Feedback Based on Needs	„If I noticed that a student was struggling to formulate a goal or understand their progress, we would have a one-on-one conversation. Sometimes, I helped them adjust their goal if it was too difficult or not clear enough.“ (T1) „Some students found it challenging to justify their answers and draw conclusions, so we worked individually and had discussions.“ (T4) „It was more difficult for students who were absent due to illness when we first started the process. So, I discussed it with them individually.“ (T5) „They often wrote very superficial responses like 'I did well' or 'It was hard,' but when we spoke individually and I encouraged them to elaborate, they started thinking more deeply and wrote more specific reflections.“ (T3)
Support and Feedback Were Not Provided	„At first, they asked for help, but it was important to me that this remained their own thoughts and independent work.“ (T2) „I encouraged students to work independently or discuss with their parents.“ (T6)

*Source.* Own research.

**Figure A1**  
*Example of a Student’s Monthly Goal and the Planned Steps to Achieve the Goal Monitoring Form*

 My monthly goal \_\_\_\_\_

Write down the steps you will take to achieve this goal. Decide how many steps you need.

1.


2.

3.

4.

Source. Own research.


**Figure A2**  
*Student’s Reflection Form for the Steps Set to Achieve the Goal*

 Once you have completed the step, write your opinion on how you achieved it?

Steps	How was it to reach each step? What difficulties did you encounter? And what was very easy?
Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	

Source. Own research.

**Figure A3**  
*Example of a Student’s Reflection Form on Achieving or Not Achieving the Monthly Goal*




Write your opinion on what helped you achieve or why you didn't achieve your goal.

Source. Own research.

**Figure A4**  
*Example of a Student’s Weekly Goal Setting and Reflection Form*

My weekly goal



My weekly goal \_\_\_\_\_

The Day	Write down how you are doing towards your goal.

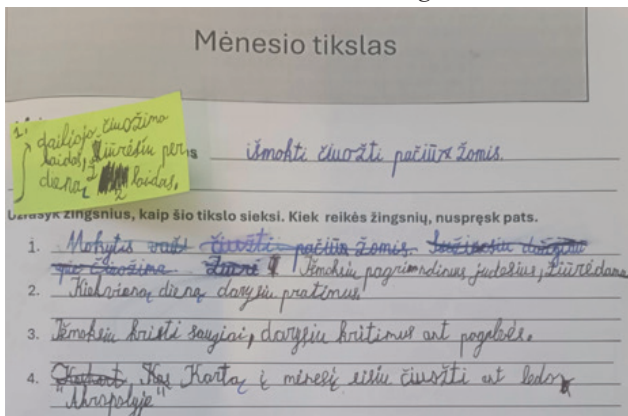


At the end of the week, write down whether you have achieved your goal. If you did, take a moment to think about what you could have done differently.

Source. Own research.

**Figure A5**

*Student's Notes and Additional Markings*



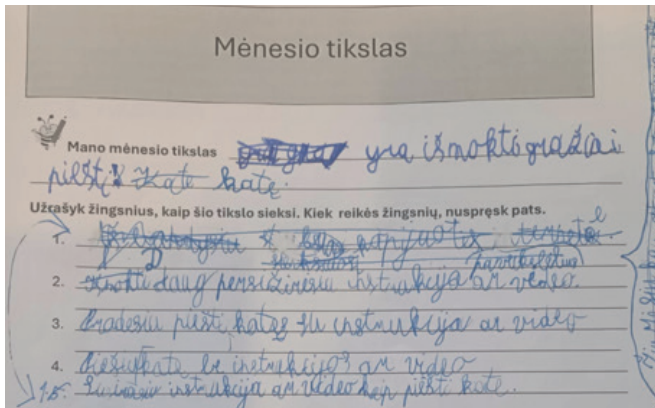
*Source.* Own research.

### Figure A6

### Stickers Attached in the Booklet



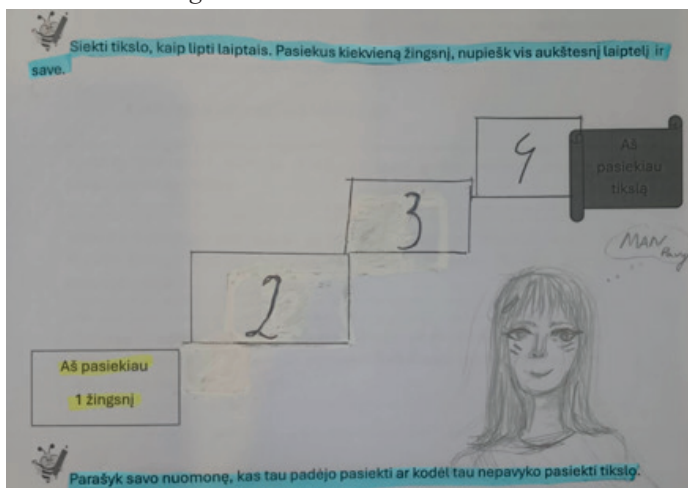
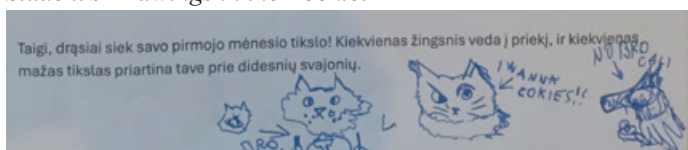
*Source.* Own research.

**Figure A7***Student's Crossings-Out and Goal Adjustments*

Source. Own research.

**Figure A8***Students Coloured the Booklet Covers*

Source. Own research.

**Figure A9***Student's Drawings in the Booklet**Source.* Own research.**Figure A10***Student's Drawings in the Booklet**Source.* Own research.