

Efficacy of periodic students' instructor evaluation to enhance lecturer's performance: A content analysis

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Abstract

Systematic collection and analysis of data from students on lecturer's endeavours in the instruction process is one of the crucial ways of getting feedback on lecturer's performance. This study underscores the critical aspect of utilizing student feedback as a valuable tool for improving instructional practices and enhancing higher education pedagogical experiences for both educators and students. It focuses on the effectiveness of Periodic Students' Instructor Evaluation (PSIE) at university level aiming at identifying common themes and areas for improvement. Using the content analysis methodology, the study utilized relevant secondary data sourced from Google web search engine for the period 2018 to 2024. Findings showed that PSIE insights are influential assessment of lecturer's teaching effectiveness and is an important source of information to the lecturers and the administrators and it enhances quality and programme improvement. Furthermore, PSIE encourages the students' voice and active participation in university affairs through confidential participation, thereby ensuring that the students' experiences are foregrounded at the university learning and teaching interface. This meaningful input from students can be critical in the success of such teaching evaluation systems. The researchers also realized that PSIE should be coupled with discussions and consultations of the feedback receivers in order to maximise its utility. Researchers concluded that PSIE is not a witch-hunting exercise but, when properly done, it becomes an important tool with positive impact. This study recommends feedback survey tools that can be tailored to the specific pedagogical approaches and university learning outcomes.

Keywords

Efficacy, lecturer performance, periodic students' instructor evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, students' evaluation of lecturers at universities and other institutions of higher learning is taking precedence in the education fraternity. Zhao et al. [1] traced the history of students' evaluation of teaching and found that it dates back to the 20th Century where in the 1920s, the earliest college student evaluation system in the world began in the United States after the Purdue University crafted the first student

evaluation scale in 1915 in the same country. The same source pointed out that it was in 1927 when the use of the standardized student evaluation scale began, thus, the beginning of the student evaluation system. It then spread gradually to other countries in the institutions of higher learning and today, it has become a norm.

Research shows that evaluation is a phenomenon that has been in practice for quite



some time and this widespread activity is practised in most academic institutions of higher learning [2]. Such evaluations are a crucial component of managing human resources and are extensively utilized so as to gauge the effectiveness of lecturer performance in higher education [1], [3], [4]. Students' evaluations provide information and feedback to management regarding lecturers' performance in teaching in order for them to reflect and make essential improvements in their immediate future endeavours, that is, from the time the lecturer receives the evaluations [5]. Hagen [6] concurred that evaluating the teaching performance of lecturers in higher education is important for both the universities and the lecturers themselves. These students' evaluations also facilitate the development of professional practice and urge universities and lecturers to be accountable. Such impacts inevitably lead to improved performance.

The reason why students' evaluations can be important is because evaluation, coupled with feedback has a modest but significant effect on improving instruction. In universities, evaluations are necessitated by the requirements from university performance management systems that include the quality assurance division. It should be noted that, these evaluations need to be done systematically and periodically, otherwise they fail to be as useful as they are supposed to be as Rafiq et al. [7] found in a study; hence the PSIE. Still PSIE has its own evaluation related challenges as Do et al. [4] argued that to evaluate faculty members' overall performance using a range of criteria is one of the key evaluation-related challenges. Related literature also confirms that the concept of students' evaluation of teaching has been always a controversial issue [1], [5] for it is difficulty to conclude that instructors use that feedback to improve their teaching. The same literature tends to agree that, ideally, student feedback has great potential to improve teaching if faculty is motivated to utilize such evaluations to improve teaching.

It can be said that students' lecturer evaluation is a norm in many universities and has a potential of providing useful feedback that benefits the lecturer and the universities. There are however challenges associated with that process that need to be curbed in order to improve the utility of such evaluations.

When systematically and periodically done, students' lecturer evaluations can lead to lecturer and instruction improvement. The challenge is that, many universities that conduct students' lecturer evaluations still face poor performance by lecturers, an act that drags down university standards and eventually leads to the production of non-competitive graduates. This study focused on examining the effectiveness of lecturer's evaluation by students using the following research questions: (RQ1) To what extent do PSIE contribute to instructor improvement in the universities?; (RQ2) Which are the associated challenges to effective PSIE in the universities?; (RQ3) What can be done to enhance PSIE utility in the universities?

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative study employed the document analysis methodology. It was chosen due to its efficiency, cost effective and broad coverage of the subject at stake, that is, university students' lecturer evaluation. Related information was also readily available for this study and was thus, taken advantage of.

In order to reduce biased in the selection of data, the researchers investigating a diverse range of online research studies related to university students' lecturer evaluation from Google web. Focus was mainly on recent publications with current information, that is, publications from 2018 to 2024; only a few old very relevant studies were also used for gap filling in the study.

With this large pool of sources, the researchers purposively and methodically selected related studies and then extracted relevant data as guided by the research questions. The process started by typing related words to each research question on the search engine and getting the related documents. The researchers quickly ran-through the documents to test their suitability for each research question. The relevant ones were chosen, that is, 7 studies per each of the three research questions coming up with a total of 21 studies for analysis. This means that the extracted data satisfied the three criterions of the research questions namely: PSIE contribute to instructor improvement in universities; associated challenges to effective PSIE and finally, the procedures to enhance PSIE utility in the universities.

The collected data was then analysed into themes according to research questions. The

analysis procedure that was employed in this study can be summed up as: coding content into themes in-line with the research questions then the discussion of this themes as supported and negated with the sourced literature of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings of this study are given according to the three research questions that are addressed in this section. Focus is on the extent to which PSIE contribute to instructor improvement in universities; the associated challenges to effective PSIE in the universities and on what can be done to enhance PSIE utility in the universities.

The extent to which PSIE contribute to instructor improvement in universities

World-wide, universities use either Education 3.0 that emphasises lecturers to focus on teaching, research and community service or Education 5.0 that adds the innovation and industrialization aspects. Literature show that lecturers' performance in these areas contribute much to the status of a given university. Do et al. [4] argued that the university lecturers represent the foremost resource of a university that significantly influences the university's overall quality. Thorough evaluation of these lecturers' performance is therefore mandatory so as to effectively guide the lecturers' trajectory.

In a study, Do et al. [4] realized that the objectives of faculty assessment encompass the cultivation of professionalism among lecturers, the stimulation of self-enhancement initiatives and goal achievement orientation as well as the facilitation of lecturer progression along appropriate career pathways. Thus, the data garnered from these evaluations are instrumental in nurturing and improving lecturers' operations within the universities.

In the same line with PSIE contribution to instructor improvement in universities, Makondo and Ndebele [8] studied university lecturers' views on student-lecturer evaluation of teaching and learning process. Specific reference was given on their views on the usefulness of such evaluation using 219 lecturers that volunteered their participation. These lecturers were given the opportunity to make their comments based on the ratings of the lecturers by students. The study revealed that student-lecturer evaluations are an important source of information for university

lecturers as well as the administrators. Such information can be fruitfully utilized by lecturers to improve their teaching while the administrators can scale-up the entire university operations. This is in line with Do et al. [4] who found that students' lecturer evaluations can assist managers of higher education institutions to improve their standards for educational quality.

A similar assessment was carried out by Dorasamy [9] on students' ratings of lecturers teaching competencies. Findings showed that the ratings by students are important and they enhance student centred orientation within higher education institutions. Such ratings also provide valuable information for faculty to use in programme assessment, thus, programme improvement. The study concludes that, allowing students to evaluate their lecturers is giving them a voice through this confidential participation in university matters that are at their learning interface. On the same note, justifying students as the appropriate persons to evaluate lecturers, Mawere [3] pointed out in a study that university students, as classroom participants and stakeholders, have the most say in the teaching effect as well as having the necessary cognitive and judgment skills, therefore the students' evaluation of teaching is scientific, objective and accurate.

In a recent study where Nsibandé and Modiba [10] explored perspectives and discourses on university students' evaluations of lecturers, they found that lecturers' understanding seemed to emphasise teaching evaluations' professional development and accountability functions. Again, teaching evaluations in higher education are used primarily to monitor teaching effectiveness and promote the accountability of these lecturers.

Mawere [3] explored the perceptions of students and lecturers on online module and lecturer evaluation using a sample of 25 lecturers and 65 students at one university. Major research findings were that, students and lecturers felt the process was necessary and they were satisfied with the covered questions which they said were necessary to evaluate the lecturers and the courses. Both parties were satisfied that the questions were clear and the platform employed was easy to use.

It can be concluded that the evaluations of lecturers by their students is a useful procedure that helps the students, lecturers and the

university at large in the execution is it functional mandates.

Challenges affecting the effectiveness of PSIE in the universities

A number of studies revealed that there are some challenges that need to be addressed for PSIE to be effective in universities. Zhao et al. [1] argued that students' evaluation of teaching is a hot issue in the field of teaching evaluation. Rafiq et al. [7] investigated how lecturers' performance was thought to be impacted by the teacher evaluation process at some universities. The research examined current issues associated with the difficulties with the lecturer evaluation system. Findings revealed that there were many issues with public institutions' lecture evaluation processes, the used tools and methodologies, student perceptions of the lecturer evaluation and the evaluation results. The study concluded that, due to its poor execution, lack of proper approaches and failure to provide timely feedback, evaluation has little impact on lecturers' performance at the public sector universities.

These findings are similar to those by Do et al. [4] who found that, the prominent challenge encountered by universities revolves around the attainment of equitable and precise evaluations of lecturers' performances. Thus, assessing lecturers requires the development of rigorous reference standards and evaluation criteria for insufficient benchmarks and assessment tools can lead to inaccuracies and subjective judgments when evaluating the competence of individual lecturers.

The issue of challenges associated with students' views on their evaluation of lecturers was also addressed by Piason and Maxwell [5] who examined the perceptions of students towards evaluations of lecturers. They also investigated the impact of students' evaluations on teaching and learning effectiveness using a sample of 67 students at one university. The study findings confirmed a weak correlation between student evaluations of teaching and effective teaching at that university. This finding is similar to that by Long [11] who also found no positive correlation between instructors' evaluation scores and students' course grades. This means that the adoption of student evaluations on lecturers had no significant impact in terms of improvement in teaching and learning.

Students' arguments in Piason and Maxwell [5] study were that, students feared reprisals from their lecturers in case they write negative comments and there was poor communication and feedback to students on their ratings of lecturers, thus some of them were reluctant to complete these surveys. The students also argued that they were not knowledgeable about content and pedagogical skills therefore their evaluations could be unreliable and invalid, an argument related to that by Gu et al. [12] and Stroebe [13] who believed that students are still in the process of knowledge accumulation and may have unclear cognition of teaching evaluation, a condition that can cause evaluation distortions. The study concluded that students' evaluations are generally biased and therefore they cannot be used solely to improve teaching. This conclusion is similar to that by Mart [14] and Stroebe [13] who also established that student evaluations of teaching cannot be used as a sole measure of effective teaching.

From the view point of lecturers, Nsibande and Modiba [10] found in a study that when making general remarks, lecturers pointed out that students' comments were at times unsettling and dealt with issues beyond their control, for instance, when referring to lecture venues and IT related matters. This made feedback difficult for them to use.

Nsibande [15] also argued that narrow and restrictive interpretations of student feedback are a result of focusing on specific areas of teaching, neglecting broader aspects related to the teaching context and disciplines. A similar finding by Ryan [16] showed that the partly standardised survey employed in the university not only decontextualised the evaluations but overlooked other variables that often impact teaching and learning and ought to be considered in evaluating these social activities.

On a similar trail of challenges, Mawere [3] in a study, realised the following flaws with the evaluation process for lecturers by students: the evaluations were not effectively communicated to the students and the lecturers; the lecturers did not trust students' evaluations; the timing for the evaluations, that is, at the end of the semester, was wrong; the evaluation form to be completed was too long and, finally, the students were not comfortable with giving negative feedback for fear of being identified.

On the same note, a study by Li and Meng [17] concluded that students' evaluation of

lecturers is mainly affected by the nature of the students and the teachers as well as the conditions of the schools and the offered courses. Their argument was that the evaluation process should be handled properly otherwise it is prone to adverse flaws.

Validity is another important component in evaluation that was explored by Quansah et al. [18]. The reviewed the validity of student evaluation of lecturers focusing on identifying the context where studies have been conducted on student evaluation of teaching. They also analysed the methodologies usually employed for assessing the validity of student evaluation of teaching and established the sources of measurement error in student evaluation of

teaching. Their review exposed several sources of errors while credibility and validity of teaching evaluation outcomes were questionable with the students at the centre of inconsistencies in the evaluation process. These several challenges associated with lecturers' evaluations by students led some scholars like Stroebe [13] to conclude that, such evaluations encourage poor teaching and contributes to grade inflation.

Some researchers in the area at stake came up with factors that negatively influence lecturers' evaluations by students; according to Constantinou and Wijnen-Meijer [19], the factors on the Figure 1 are responsible for the shot comings of students' evaluations.

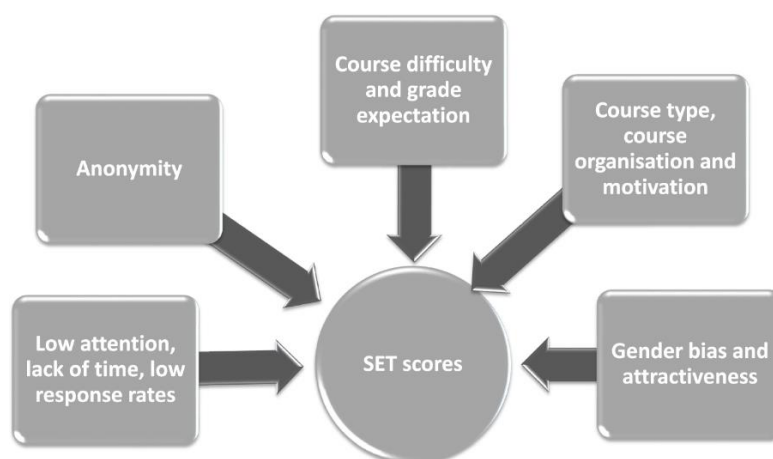


Figure 1. Factors that humper the scores of students' lecturer evaluations [19]

When considering the factors in the figure above, one can agree with Do et al. [4] who purported that there is need for a comprehensive and consistent method of faculty evaluation for effective assessment framework implementation. This can enable the evaluation facilitators to pinpoint and address areas of improvement in the evaluation criteria that encompasses surveyor tool benchmarks, evaluation process, the evaluators and the lecturers that receives the feedback.

Enhancement to PSIE utility in the universities

Literature that pointed out the shortfalls of students' evaluations on lecturers' practices also gave possible solutions to these hiccups; Hagen [6] asserted that evaluation of lectures by students is commonly considered to be a poor form of assessing lecturer's teaching performance because of the way the exercise is conducted. He

therefore proposed some measures to improve it, that is: changing the cardinal grading of lecturers to an ordinal system in which students rank their lecturers based on specific criteria; establishing a concrete criterion which is aligned to the desired attributes of a standard lecturer; a process-oriented rather than achievement-oriented criterion to be used; increased student motivation so as to provide accurate feedback; linking these evaluations directly to teaching awards and publicized transparently; allowing lecturers to administer their own feedback surveys so as to obtain meaningful formative feedback and finally, tailoring feedback surveys to the specific pedagogical approaches and learning outcomes of lecturers' modules.

Due to numerous challenges in students' lecturer evaluations, Piason and Maxwell [5] and Do et al. [4] recommended that the universities should use multiple methods of evaluating lecturers' teaching. Also, evaluation of lecturers

by students should be conducted during the semester rather than at the end so as to give the lecturer room for improvement within the same semester; a finding related to that by Ao and Youzhi [20] who realized that the ineffectiveness of students' lecturer evaluations is caused by the summative evaluation of lecturers. On the same note, Quansah [21] indicated that taking the evaluation data in the middle of the semester yielded a more accurate response from the students than waiting until the semester ends. Similarly, Mawere [3] recommended that the evaluation form to be filled in by students should be shortened, be administered in the middle of the semester and something should be done to address student anonymity fears when filling in the evaluation forms.

In trying to redress the challenges at stake, Smith [22] developed a model for integrating student evaluation of teaching results with academic development opportunities in a way that take into account theoretical and practical developments in both fields. The model has five phases starting with the student evaluation process, then an interpretive guidance procedure that helps lecturers understand and interpret the evaluations made, then a longitudinal reporting system that initiates opportunities for staff to engage in personal and professional development in the context of a learning community, followed by lecturer structured professional development programme that builds a faculty learning community based on the evaluations received and finally a comprehensive evaluation model designed to develop and encourage the collection of evaluation data concerning the quality and impact of teaching.

Despite the challenges associated with students' lecturer evaluations, there are usually available mitigation measures. Zhao et al. [1] argued that although the influencing factors of college students' teaching evaluation are extremely complex, it is equally extremely important to overcome the negative effects of interfering factors and improve the limitation of students' teaching evaluation. They added that solving the shortcomings of the online teaching evaluation system, such as strong subjectivity of students and imperfect application of result

feedback is a problem worth exploring for researchers.

CONCLUSION

When considering findings from the reviews on the extent to which PSIE contribute to instructor improvement in the universities, this study concluded that it contributes to a great extent. When properly done, these evaluations become an important tool for the lecturer to maximise operational positive impacts and minimise the adverse ones. Such evaluations also motivate and bring in student-satisfaction by involving them in the matters of their learning as well as their university welfare. The university administrations are at an informed position through these evaluations and are able to plan and function accordingly.

This study also concluded that, besides PSIE having a plethora of challenges that need to be addressed, lest they invalidate the effectiveness of the PSIE, there are always functional mitigation measures that can be employed for effectiveness operations.

It can also be concluded that, the findings of this study can therefore facilitate the formulation of policies and strategies that enhances student satisfaction, teaching quality and university continuous professional development.

This study recommends the use of feedback survey tools with appropriate reference standards and evaluation criteria that are tailored to the specific pedagogical approaches and learning outcomes of the modules. Students should be educated on the evaluation purpose, process and significance so that they administer these tools from an informed stance. Also, there should be a reporting system that initiates opportunities for lecturers to engage in personal and professional development in the context of a teaching and learning community. Universities should find a way of motivating students to participate in the lecturers' evaluation process as well as lecturers to utilise feedback from students for it has great potential in improving their teaching endeavours. Again, more practical studies should be carried out in order to finalise on the 'when and how' aspects of students' lecturer evaluations.

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