

## Student Evaluation and Feedback in Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness



### Education

**KEYWORDS :** Student feedback, Feedback mechanisms, Teaching performance

Vivekananth.P

Student 2nd year MA Education Alagappa University Karaikudi

### ABSTRACT

*The student evaluation is a critical aspect of measuring a teacher's performance. Effective feedback methods have to be provided to get the feedback from students. Students feedback and evaluation has been a source of motivation and also anxiety and anticipation for teachers. Evaluation is of no importance unless the results are interpreted and analyzed and appropriate enhancement and improvement strategies are being devised. This paper discusses the different feedback mechanisms and means of enhancing student evaluation. The results and methods of enhancements have also been interpreted and improvement are also discussed. A small case study is done to study the effectiveness of feedback system and results are discussed.*

### Introduction

Feedback can be defined as information given by an agent regarding the performance or understanding of another. This agent could be a teacher, a peer, self or even a book (Timperly & Hattie, 2007). The student feedback is collected through a chosen mechanism after which it is evaluated with a view to makes suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. All institutions collect feedback in different ways to improve the quality of education given (Brennah & Williams, 2004; Ransden, 1991; Day, Grant & Hounsell, 1998; Marsh & Hocevar, 1991; Murray, 1997). As the quality assurance arrangements in educational institutions have become formal over the years, so have the arrangements used in gathering the student feedback, their analysis, and interpretation. This paper aims to discuss some of the common mechanisms

used in gathering student feedback with a view of suggesting how they can be improved to enhance the process of teaching.

### Student feedback Questionnaires

Administering questionnaire involves the use of validated instruments consisting of a list pre-set questions given to respondents to fill. Most of the questionnaires employ ordinal or Likert scales that rates the responses on a numerical scale (such as strongly agree, neutral, agree, strongly disagree and disagree). The scales consists of 4 or 5 items can be scanned easily to establish the measure of dispersion of the responses (Oppenheim, 1992). Questionnaires should not be used alone but instead should be combined with other methods of collecting information. This is because questionnaires do not fully represent the entire student fraternity in its entirety hence would be unreliable if used alone. Questionnaires are also provincial in terms of breadth and depth of information given. This is because, while the questionnaire may show that something is wrong, it will not show why (Kember, Leung & Kwan, 2002). Therefore, a variety of student feedback mechanisms is required to unravel the reasons behind the problems and suggest solutions. While these are not reasons for not using questionnaires, they offer guidance to treat the information gathered using questionnaires with caution.

It should be noted that students may feel unhappy on rating the performance of their teachers especially when they feel that their responses could be used against them. Hence, in employing the use of questionnaire to gather student feedback regarding the performance of teachers, institutions should consider the reassurance of students regarding anonymity in terms of using an independent person to distribute & collect the questionnaires, the analysis of the collected information and generally treating the results of the performance of teachers with confidentiality.

### Student representatives

Student representatives partake on most of the committees which provides a potential and viable communication channel between the students and the staff. This communication channel between the staff and the students presents several advantages

over the other channels. The student representatives can input directly into the decision-making process regarding policies that impact the teaching process with a view to improving the teaching effectiveness. The student representatives can also provide the perspective of the students about the future by commenting on the plans and proposals on programs development regarding teaching. This channel of communication is highly interactive and being a two-way communication channel, it is not limited to pre-set questions like the channel of administering questionnaires. Compared to another mechanism of collecting student feedback, this channel is cheap in terms of cost and time required to collect and process the feedback. This has the additional benefits of enhancing confidence and leadership skill of the student. This mechanism of student feedback, however, is costly in terms of training the student representatives and has been criticized for the lack of sufficient representation of the rest of the students. Hence, this technique should be combined with other methods like the discussion groups to overcome the challenge of lack of sufficient representation.

### Discussion groups

Discussion groups are provided by few institution as a way of gathering student feedback. In this context, discussion groups refer to various ways of gathering qualitative student feedback. These include structured group discussion, nominal group technique, and focus groups.

### Structured group discussion

This discussion technique is used where a large number of students is involved. The students first work individually before working in groups of increasing size (two, fours, eights) till the whole student body assembles to discuss the ideas. The success of this technique is ensured by avoiding repetition of tasks along the way but rather making the tasks be sequential and offering different challenges along different stages of the process (Partington, 1993).

For example, the students may be required to list to compile three best things and three worst things about the study program from their individual perspective. At the subsequent stage involving groups, the good and the bad aspect are compiled and refined as the groups enlarge. At the final stage of the process, each group is required to produce a poster for viewing and at the final group involving the whole class, each group is allowed to present the list in the poster to the other groups.

### THE NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

This technique involves only a small group of students of around 10 to 12 students. A facilitator has to be involved for the purpose of presenting an issue or question to the group of students (Partington, 1993). In this technique, each member of the groups notes down his or her own thoughts with regard to the issue at hand. Each student is then required to make a contribution about his thoughts to be scrutinized by the entire group. After each idea has been presented from

every member, a final list of ideas is compiled and is checked for clarification. At this stage, every idea is represented on the list after which the group is permitted to evaluate the list on a scale of importance and a consensus is made by voting for the most important idea to the least essential ideas in the final list.

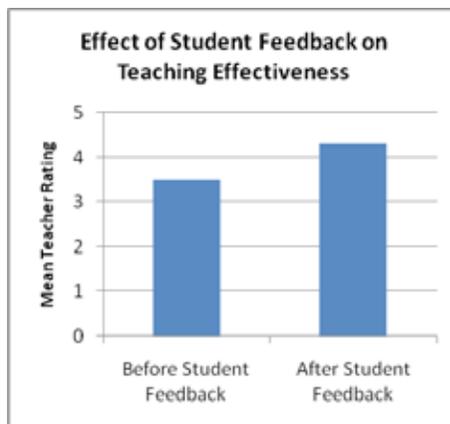
### FOCUS GROUPS

These comprise of a selected group of students (6 to 10) tasked with gathering information about the views of selected issues. These focus groups are usually run by a facilitator who is not part of the teaching staff. The members of the focus groups are selected by asking for volunteers or potential members may be approached individually either randomly or systematically to ensure the focus group is as representative of the student fraternity as possible (Morgan, 1988).

While the discussion techniques are useful whether there is a consensus about a particular issue, these methods are costly. For example, an institution is required to hire an independent facilitator and the time required to collect, analyze and interpret the data takes a lot of time. Moreover, the groups of students may intimidate the less articulate students and anonymity is not maintained. To enhance this the discussion techniques, it is recommended that other mechanisms of feedback mechanisms be exploited together with discussion method so as to capture the ideas of the less articulate students. The questionnaire is a method of student feedback collection is known for maintaining the anonymity of the students hence it should be used together with the discussion technique.

### Case Study

In this study conducted at the Sokoto State university in Nigeria, student feedback questionnaires were used to investigate the effect of student feedback on the teaching of communication skills course. The student feedback questionnaires were distributed to the student to respond immediately after the first Continuous Assessment Test (CAT) of the course. The analysis of the collected data showed that the mean teacher rating for the students was 3.5 out of 5 points (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: Relationship between Student Feedback and Mean Teacher Rating**

After receiving the analysis of the data from the student feedback, the lecturer resorted to improving the teaching methods by incorporating the student's remarks regarding the poor delivery of content during the lectures. Hence, the lecturer decided to enhance his teaching process by distributing printed notes before every lesson and incorporating a loudspeaker in the lecture room. When the another study was conducted at the end of the semester, the rating of the lecture by the students increased to 4.3 out of the possible 5.0 points.

### Conclusions

We can say from the case study that incorporation of the student feedback into the teaching process improves the teaching experience. In this case, when the first study was conducted during the mid-semester, after the first Continuous Assessment Test (CAT), it was found that the mean teacher rating by the student was 3.5 out of 5 points and after the student feedback was incorporated, the mean teacher rating from the student feedback was 4.3 out of 5 points indicating an increase of 0.8 points. So we can say that incorporating the student feedback enhances the effectiveness of teaching as has been noted by many researchers (Rasden, 1991; Centra, 1976; Marlin, 1987; Zoller, 1992; Marsh & Cooper, 1981; Worthington & Wong, 1979; Dash, 1992; Cohen, 1981; Theall & Franklin, 1991).

Lastly, it is also important to note that the methods of gathering student feedback should be as reliable as possible to make meaningful suggestions from the findings (Wislon, 1986). This can only be achieved if the student feedback mechanism is combined with others to overcome the weaknesses of each single mechanism them to come up with findings that are reliable, demanding of limited resources and representative of all the student population.

## REFERENCE

- Brennah, J. & Williams, R. (2004). Collecting and using Student feedback. York, UK: Learning and Teachings Support Network | Centra, J. A. (1976) The influence of different directions on student ratings of instruction. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 13, 277-282. | Cohen, P. A. (1981). Student ratings of instruction and student achievement: A meta-analysis of multisession validity studies. *Review of Educational Research*, 51, 281-309. | Dash, L. (1992). Survey of Faculty Opinion on Long-term Trends in Quality of Higher Education. Unpublished honors thesis. The university of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. | Day, K., Grant, R. & Hounsell, D. (1998). Reviewing your teaching. Edinburgh: Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment in association with the Universities' and Colleges' Staff Development Agency. | experience questionnaire. *Studies in Higher Education*, 16, pp. 129-150. | Kember D., Leung D. & Kwan K. (2002). Does the use of student feedback questionnaires improve the overall quality of teaching? *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 27, No 5. | Marlin, J. W., JR. (1987) Student perception of end-of-course evaluations, *Journal of Higher Education*, 58, pp. 704-716. | Marsh, H. W. & COOPER, T. L. (1981) Prior subject interest, students' evaluations, and instructor effectiveness, *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 16, pp. 82-104. | Marsh, H.W. and Hocevar, D. (1991). Students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness: The stability of mean ratings of the same teachers over a 13-year period. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 7, 303-341. | Morgan, D. (1988). Focus groups as qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. | Murray, H.G. (1997). Does Evaluation of Teaching Lead to Improvement of Teaching? *International Journal of Academic Development*, 2, 8-23. | Oppenheim, A. (1992). Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement. London: Pintner. | Partington P. (ed) (1993). Student feedback – context, issues, and practice. Sheffield: CVCP. | Ransden, P. (1991) A performance indicator of teaching quality in higher education: The course | Theall, M. & Franklin, J. (1991) Using student ratings for teaching improvement. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 48, 83-96. | Timperly, H. & Hattie, J. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81. | Wilson, R. C. (1986) Improving faculty teaching: Effective use of student evaluations and consultants, *Journal of Higher Education*, 57, 196-211. | Worthington, A.G. & Wong, P.T. (1979). Effects of Earned and Assigned Grades on Student Evaluations of an Instructor. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 71, 764-775. | Zoller, U. (1992). Faculty teaching performance evaluation in higher science education: Issues and implications (a 'cross-cultural' case study). *Science Education*, 76, 673-684. |