

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENT'S FEEDBACK ON IMPROVING THE TEACHING PRACTICES OF THE FACULTY

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To determine the significance of students' feedback on improving teachers' performance.

METHODS: The students' feedback on teachers' performance was analyzed for 38 faculty members from 2011 to 2014 including feedbacks from four semesters. The means and standard deviations were used to determine the trend in the overall performance of the teachers. One sample t-test was used to determine the significance of these trends in the teachers' performance for same semester means, whereas the paired t-test was applied for comparison of means between the semesters.

RESULTS: The analysis showed an overall improvement in the performance of teachers analyzed for the three out of four semesters while there was a slight decline in the fourth semester from 89.9 ± 5.0 to 86.6 ± 6.1 , at 95% confidence level. However, the dip does not cross over the benchmark of 70% set by the Quality Enhancement Cell of the University.

CONCLUSION: The teachers' evaluation processes have shown a positive impact in their overall performance and are effective mechanism for keeping the teachers and students to work for the collective objective towards their learning. The reasons for the slight decline in the fourth semester have remained unearthed in the current study and need to be explored through qualitative studies.

KEY WORDS: Student Feedback Questionnaire (Non-MeSH), Quality Enhancement Cell (Non-MeSH), Feedback (MeSH), Students (MeSH), Faculty (MeSH), Teaching (MeSH); Medical Education (MeSH).

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers' evaluation survey is one of the feedback mechanisms devised to improve the system of imparting education in a class room setting. Teachers' grading through students has become an essential part of accountability in higher education. Over the past years, comparatively standard procedures for teacher evaluation have progressed, including the four main types: student, peer, self

and administrative evaluation. One of the most frequently used, and still one of the most debatable, is student ratings.¹ Some researchers criticize the use of student ratings for feedback on faculty's performance, explaining that students are not capable to judge whether an instructor effectively knows the subject matter or not.²

Student feedback for teaching are often prejudiced by aspects viewed by

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some researchers as inappropriate to teaching-learning processes, and as a result rationality estimates may easily be perplexed and difficult to understand.³ Others have challenged this argument by describing that the effect of many of these indicators on student grading of instruction is genuine and not biased.⁴ Focusing on faculty, the question becomes what factors affect their attitudes towards students' ratings of instruction? Student ratings have been shown to be positively correlated with student learning and achievement, i.e. students rate most highly those instructors from whom they have learned the most.⁵

One of the motives for having student feedback questionnaire is that it is an open requirement, or felt by university administrations to be an implicit compulsion. In technologically advanced countries, the universities use the course evaluation survey to assess their programs.⁶ Keeping in view the advance trends and demands of education and to inculcate the skills and outcome oriented delivery in the class, more focus is given to improve the quality teaching in a classroom by a teacher. To achieve the goal, feedback by the students for their instructor teaching is in practice, worldwide.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan established Quality

Enhancement Cell (QEC) in Public and Private sector universities under the umbrella of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Pakistan. The QEC was established in Khyber Medical University (KMU) in 2009-2010.⁷ The Quality Enhancement Cell conducts teachers' evaluation survey from the students to get their feedback regarding teaching and class delivery of their course Instructor for that specific period (semester) on a prescribed performa.

These evaluation reports are shared with the faculty members. Keeping in view the focus on this survey and its regular conduct at the end of each semester, it is matter of interest that how much this exercise is significant for the faculty members, either they find it helpful for their role as a teacher, or any modification is required in the process. Moreover, we also wanted to evaluate the significance of teachers' evaluation survey with students' feedback.

METHODS

This study was carried out at Khyber Medical University, Peshawar, Pakistan by the Quality Enhancement Cell of the KMU. The study was based on students' feedback questionnaire on teachers' performance. Permission was obtained from the University Ethics Board to use the students' feedback questionnaire database, from 2011-2014, for purposes of evaluating the impact of students' feedback.

We sampled the feedback on faculty members from the seven institutes of the University. There are two semesters of six months each, in a year at the KMU programs. All the students are required to provide feedback on their teachers' performance at the end of each semester. We included those teachers in the sample for whom a minimum of four

student evaluations were available. The sample included permanent and visiting faculty members. There were 38 faculty members who fulfilled the criteria to be included in this study.

The data was collected through approved proforma of Higher Education Commission (HEC) which is used in all the universities of Pakistan (Table I). QEC proforma was previously used in a study for independent evaluation of anatomy teachers at Kohat University of Science and Technology- Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), Kohat, Pakistan.⁸

Students completing the form had an option to mention their names or maintain anonymity. A rubric scale devised by the HEC having five level of grading i.e. A,B,C,D,E, was used to assess the teachers in numerical scale of 1-5, with E reflected as 1. The QEC office analyzed the data using MS Excel 2010 and compiled the report for teachers to facilitate them in understanding feedback on their performance.

Distribution of Teachers Evaluation Survey into major Areas

All the thirteen (13) questions are categorized into the four areas (Table II). The instrument also had additional five questions from No. 14-18 but they were excluded for not being specific to teacher performance evaluation.

Technique adopted for results compilation for Teachers report:

Marks were allotted to grades A,B,C,D,E as 5,4,3,2,1, respectively. Formula for calculations is as under:

$$\frac{\text{Number of question in the area} \times 100}{\text{Total number of Questions (13)}}$$

e.g. $4 \times 100/13 = 31$ (The figure has been rounded)

The score achieved by individual subject teachers' is out of 65 that is converted into percentage. The average percentage score of the teachers was calculated to ascertain the overall student satisfaction at the university level.

The students' feedback on performance of teachers from the last four semesters was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The means and standard deviations were measured in descriptive statistics where as we considered $p < 0.05$ as statistically significant value in the inferential statistics. The one sample t-test was used to determine the statistical significance of students' feedback and its impact on faculty teaching practices. The one sample t-test was used for same semester means, whereas the paired t-test was applied for comparison of means between the semesters.

RESULTS

The result showed an almost constant performance of the faculty members from all the institutes of the University. There was a slight downfall in the per-

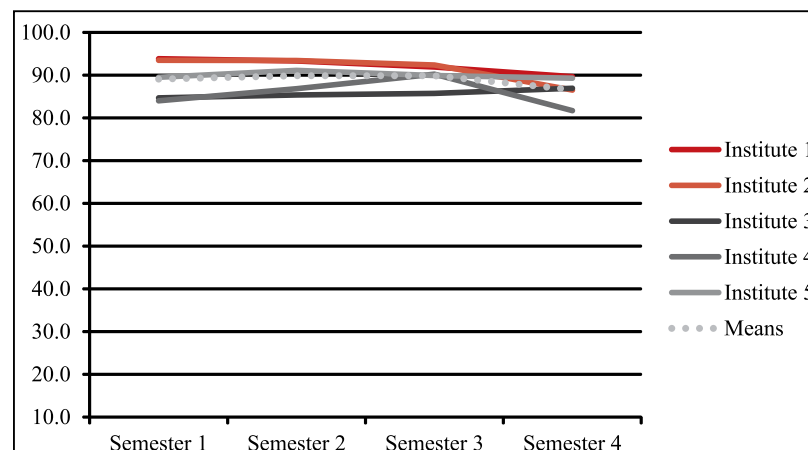


Figure 1: Overall trend of the performance of teachers

TABLE I: QUESTIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDENT FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE (SFQ)

No.	Question
1	The instructor is prepared for each class
2	The instructor demonstrates knowledge of the subject
3	The instructor has completed the whole course
4	The instructor provides additional material apart from the text book
5	The instructor gives citations/examples regarding current situations with reference to Pakistani context.
6	The instructor communicates the subject matter effectively
7	The instructor shows respect towards students and encourages class participation
8	The instructor maintains an environment that is conducive/favorable to learning
9	The instructor arrives on time
10	The instructor leaves on time
11	The instructor is fair in examination
12	The instructor returns the graded scripts etc after examination in a reasonable amount of time
13	The instructor was available during the specified office hours and for after class consultations

TABLE II: AREA WISE DIVISION AND WEIGHT GIVEN TO QUESTIONS

Areas of Assessment	Questions Incorporated from the proforma	Max Weight in percentage
Planning & Management	Q1, Q3, Q4, Q5	30
Communication Skills	Q2, Q6	20
Behavior	Q7, Q8, Q11, Q13	20

TABLE III: ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS TO DETERMINE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDENTS' FEEDBACK ON IMPROVING TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE

Semester	N	Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval				
					Lower	Upper			
Semester 1	38	89.08	5.41	0.87	87.30	90.86	101.44	37	0.000
Semester 2	38	89.89	6.08	0.98	87.89	91.89	91.15	37	0.000
Semester 3	38	89.86	5.21	0.84	88.16	91.58	106.31	37	0.000
Semester 4	38	86.64	6.13	0.99	84.63	88.67	87.02	37	0.000

TABLE IV: PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS TO COMPARE MEANS BETWEEN THE SEMESTERS

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Semester 1 Semester 4	2.43	6.85	1.11	0.18	4.68	2.19	37	0.035
Pair 2	Semester 2 Semester 4	3.24	8.02	1.30	0.61	5.88	2.49	37	0.017
Pair 3	Semester 3 Semester 4	3.22	7.63	1.24	0.71	5.73	2.60	37	0.013

formance of teachers in the semester 4 (Figure 1).

Overall performance of the teachers as per students' evaluation was high with a mean of 88.9 ± 5.6 , from semester 1, 2 and 3 with a slight downfall found in semester 4 (Figure 1). However, the performance scores were still above the standard of 70%, established by the QEC of the university. The student evaluation showed a significant ($p < 0.05$) downward trend in teachers' performance in the fourth semesters with a one sample t-test. However, this downward trend in semester 4 was not found to be significant when compared with semester 1, 2, and 3.

The student evaluation also showed a significant ($p < 0.05$) downward trend in teachers' performance from each Institute. There was a continuous downfall in the performance of teachers from institute 1 and 2 of the university (Figure 1). There was a continuous rise in the performance of teachers of institute 3, whereas an inconsistency in the performance of teachers of Institute 4 and 5 (Figure 1).

The downfall in the performance of teachers was significant ($p < 0.05$) within individual institutes (Table 3). However, the paired sample t-test did not show any significant difference in performance of teachers due to students' evaluation between semesters (Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The study was done to determine the significance of students' evaluation on teachers' performance. The results showed a constant rise in the performance of teachers' in the first three semesters however there was a statistically significant descending trend in the fourth semester within institutes (Figure

1). Although, this trend is not significant across semesters but it is still important to be addressed within the institutes. One of the institutes (Institute 3) of the university showed a slight constant rise in the teachers' performance. Keeping in view the graph of this institute it seems that more focus and attention has been given to the students' evaluation by the faculty members. Other reasons may include mentoring by the institutional head or validating students' feedback. Rest of the faculty members belonging to other remaining four Institutes showed downward trend for reasons beyond this study. As per literature, rating of the students can be beneficial if proper counseling of concerned teachers is to be practiced.^{9,10}

Overall teachers' performance is not improved and one of the reasons might be more awareness of the students of their programs through regular conduct of feedback survey and maximum expectation from the teachers. Additionally, the performance of faculty members is already quite high, that is, above 86% in all semesters. Maintaining such high performance also requires continuous faculty development activities that are offered to the faculty by the university in form of workshops, certificate courses, and masters courses.

The literature suggests counseling faculty members based on students' feedback to improve their performance, however, it is possible that some faculty members may not pay attention to the feedback report.¹ Moreover, the quality and type of counseling provided also determine how effectively it can help faculty improve their teaching skills.¹

One of the factors to improve faculty teaching skills is to engage in a faculty development program. Furthermore, it is required that the faculty members at the entry level preferably possess basic teaching skills and may have an orientation on the academic values, norms and expectation of the institutions.⁹ The faculty in this case may not have attended the faculty development program, however, this study could not explore the issue in detail.

The limitation of this study is that the significance of students' evaluation on teacher performance was evaluated in only one university because the quality enhancement cell evaluates teachers of its own university as per the policy. Proper collaboration and uniformity of policy is required between the universities for a multi-centric study. The findings need to be explored in further universities to determine the impact of students' feedback on teachers' performance. Furthermore, the SQF proformas provided by the HEC needs to be validated and tested for their reliability.

CONCLUSION

In this study it was investigated that student's feedback is significant in affecting teachers' performance. An overall performance of faculty members showed slight downward trend in the performance of faculty members in the feedback of four semesters. However, the overall performance of faculty members was high (above 86% as compared to the standard set at 70%) and a slight downward trend appeared in the semester 4. It is suggested that the evaluation process should continue with further inputs through qualitative studies from students about the reason of minor deviation to address the weaknesses and identify the remediation.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declared no conflict of interest

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Following authors have made substantial contributions to the manuscript as under:

AB: Concept & study design, acquisition of data, Drafting the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published

UM: Analysis and interpretation of data, Drafting the manuscript, final approval of the version to be published

SA: Acquisition of data, final approval of the version to be published

JA: Acquisition of data, critical revision, supervision, final approval of the version to be published

Authors agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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