

Perception of Students' Evaluation of Teaching Performance by Lecturers in Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

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Abstract

The use of student evaluation of teaching effectiveness to assess lecturers' performance in the classroom is one of the common and most controversial practices in tertiary institutions all over the world. The need for improvement in undergraduate teaching performance necessitated continuous research of this subject. The sample included 100 respondents drawn from lecturers attending a workshop on "Improved Teaching and Learning Methods" organized in a private university in Ekiti. Data were collected from lecturers by means of the questionnaire developed by the researcher. t-test analysis was used to analyze the data for the two hypotheses tested. Results indicated no significant difference between male and female lecturers perception of students' assessment of lecturers teaching effectiveness. Responses of both senior and junior lecturers were also positive. It is therefore recommended that student evaluation of lecturers' performance should be made mandatory and conducted regularly in Nigerian universities.

Key words: University lecturers, Perception of Student, Teaching Performance

Introduction

Quality assurance in the higher learning has been an important subject of discussion for decades. Much has been written about issues of accountability in the university, including institutional and program accreditation, financial aid opportunities for students, and public funding of higher education (Miller, 2009). One of the areas of quality assurance that researchers and authors have addressed consistently over the last 40 years is teaching in the academy. At a time when an increasing number of universities seem to value research productivity more than teaching effectiveness, it is no wonder this subject continues to receive significant attention in higher learning circles.

The subject of student evaluation of teaching in higher institutions has been part of the higher education landscape for decades and has prompted extensive debate in the literature about their usefulness for teachers and learners (Beran & Rokosh, 2009). In a competitive world of education today most institutions of learning and students at large demand for effective

teaching and learning to take place, both inside and outside the classroom. They expected effective lecturers to help raise the level of students' motivation to learn so that students' academic and nonacademic achievements can be further enhanced. This would significantly contribute to satisfaction of students in learning which in turn affects the image of the learning institution as well as student loyalty (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007). Therefore, providing effective lecturers for students should be an utmost consideration in higher institutions of learning, both private and public.

Most of the time lecturers pursue their own ideas or perceptions of effective teaching and learning. Although perceptions may vary according to subjects taught or individual areas of responsibility, but often teaching and learning activities include developing and implementing effective methods of teaching, designing, preparing and developing teaching materials, assessing students' coursework, setting and marking examinations and supporting students through advisory role. Most would also employ a wide range of pedagogical approaches, considered effective, to motivate students under their supervision. The inability of stakeholders in education to evaluate the standard of classroom teaching however has contributed to the falling standard of education in Nigeria.

For many decades, the outcome of students' evaluation of teaching performance is seen as an important tool to measure the effectiveness of teaching quality (Spooren & Mortelmans, 2006). It would reflect on qualities associated with good teaching such as lecturers' knowledge, clarity, classroom management and course organization. Besides being a measurement tool on teaching excellence, the results of the evaluation is beneficial in helping the lecturers and the institutions of higher learning identify the specific areas for improving the performance of the lecturer concerned (Yeoh, Ho & Chan, 2012). In some cases, the outcome of this evaluation is often used to formulate key performance index of lecturers in staff appraisal for both promotion and tenure decisions (Griffin, 1999; Liaw & Goh, 2003). As the possible benefits that can be gained from students' evaluation are multifaceted, its importance in education cannot be ignored.

As lecturers progress with their day to day operation in the classroom, they need to know whether the implementation of good effective teaching initiatives and strategies used are well received by the students. One suitable method to measure teaching effectiveness is students' evaluation of lecturers' performance, which is often carried out at the end of the semester or at the end of a course/programme in most institutions of learning. This study looks at perception of students' evaluation of teaching performance by lecturers based on gender and teaching experience, as more experienced lecturers were found to show more preference for students rating of teaching effectiveness than their junior counterparts as reported by (Iyamu & Aduwa, 2005; Yusuf, Ajidagba, Agbonna & Olumorin, 2010).

Literature Review

The teaching staff in many institutions of learning can vary enormously in their ability to teach effectively. Many methods can be used to measure this variation but one commonly used method is seen in using students' evaluation of lecturers' performance. Students' assessment or evaluation on performance was introduced as early as the 1915 (Wachtel, 1998). Marsh and

Bailey (1993) state that the literature on Students Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) consists of thousands of studies and dated back to the 1920s, and earlier. In studies in the late 1920s, students and expert evaluators were asked to describe teachers they considered to be effective, and to rate characteristics of good teachers. In the 1930s, scales were devised for the evaluation of teachers; these scales were based on qualities believed to be important in teaching (Barrette, Morton & Tozeu, 2006). According to Clifford (1999) and Richmond (2003), student opinion is of particular importance because it represents an important addition to the data customarily used to judge competence of lecturers. It is the one source of direct and extensive observations of the way teachers carry out their daily and long-term tasks.

Performance evaluation is a process of management. It has become compulsory in human relations information system and in the management of organizations (Karcioglu & Ozturk, 2009). Performance evaluation is an important issue in theory and practice. Thus, it is a research subject of organizational psychology (Herdlein & Hasso, 2008; Kline & Slsky, 2009). Performance evaluation is on the effectiveness of what personnel carry out and the understanding of their performance levels. According to Iyamu and Aduwa (2005), teacher evaluation refers to a periodic evaluation of teachers' performance by students. It involves a systematic gathering and analysis of information, on the basis of which decisions are taken regarding the effectiveness, efficiency and/or competence of the teacher in realizing set professional goals and the desire of the school to promote effective learning. Such evaluation can be for formative or summative purposes. Teachers' evaluation for formative purposes is used to improve classroom instruction, student learning, and to foster professional growth of the teacher. Summative purposes on the other hand are used for administrative/personnel decisions like promotion, salary increase, demotion, dismissal, award and /or meeting public/government accountability demands (Gold, 2001).

Extensive research by psychologist and educators have consistently reported that students' evaluation on performance were questionable in terms of its validity and reliability. The outcome of the evaluation was reported biased as the student assessed the teaching performance based on non-related learning measures which included race, gender, political ideology, socio-economic status, attractiveness (Huston, 2006; Riniolo, Johnson, Sherman & Misso, 2006; Merritt, 2008). In some instances, students' evaluations were influenced by the professors' smiles, gestures and other mannerisms, rather than the professors' knowledge, clarity, organization or other qualities associated with good teaching (Merritt, 2008). Although the usefulness of students' evaluation of lecturers' performance is still much doubted and questionable, yet, it is still the most common tool used to assess classroom teaching (Wright, 2006). According to Abrami (2001), there is no other evaluation tool that supplies the same sort of measurable and comparable data on students' perceptions towards their teachers than having conventional system of student evaluations. While some may deem these evaluations as highly controversial and highly debated, past studies examining the reliability and validity of data collected from student evaluation have proved that the evaluations are reasonably reliable, valid and relatively free from bias (Centra, 1993; Marsh & Dunkin, 1992; Wachetel, 1998).

Schools and teachers in developed nations of the world like the United States, Canada and Great Britain have recognized the role of teacher evaluation by students and have harnessed the immense importance and contributions of this exercise for the good of the school systems and the teaching profession. Students are the direct beneficiaries of instruction, and given that they spend a great deal of time with teachers, they can offer useful inputs in identifying flaws during instruction and ways of remediation (Iyamu & Aduwa, 2005). To make student evaluations more reliable and valid, it may be necessary to construct instruments so that factors within the teacher's control are in a separate section from those beyond his or her control. Ethnic mix in classes may need to be adjusted and teachers may need to be evaluated in a variety of types and level of causes (Barrette et al., 2006). However, a better way may be to use student evaluation of teachers for formative purposes only, emphasizing the use of qualitative feedback obtained from both formal and informal measures. Informal student evaluation of teachers began as early as the fifteen century, when students at the University of Bologna paid instructors according to their teaching abilities (Barrette et al., 2006).

The pervasiveness of beliefs regarding appropriate gender roles for males and females in society is well documented in studies by Hughes (2001), Lederman (2003) Zikhali and Maphosa (2012). Such gender stereotype results in the internalization of specific roles for males and females and in the academic world males and female are viewed differently in terms of their abilities. There have been several studies on how students view their female lecturers and most of the studies reveal gender perceptions of students about lecturers. A study by Cortis and Cassar (2006) reveals that students have stereotypic attitudes towards their female lecturers and that they harbour negative views about female academics' authority. They denied their competence and accorded them less prestige than males. Tope (2010) attributes the gender view of female lecturers to culture and the imbedded gender stereotypes in students. Society itself has gender views of individual members (Kimmel, 2000). Students are brought up in a culture that has certain ways of viewing women and this is carried to school.

Isiaka's (1998) studies show that lecturers in selected colleges of education in Ghana and Kenya accepted the idea of students evaluating their teachers' classroom effectiveness. Smith and Anderson (2003) also found out that teachers in most American Colleges are disposed towards students' evaluation. The lecturers' acceptance cuts across gender (males and females). Isiaka's work emphasizes the use of student evaluation for formative purposes only. However, Avi-Itzhak and Kremer (1986) discovered that senior academics were opposed to the use of student evaluation for summative purposes. Although several studies have reported that gender and year of experience received different evaluation ratings from lecturers. This study will look at perception of students, evaluation of teaching performance by lecturers in Afe Babalola University.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling

The population for the study consisted of lecturers from twenty-two institutions in a workshop on "Improved Teaching and Learning Methods in Higher Education System" organized by Afe

Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria between 9th-12th April, 2013. Two hundred and twelve lecturers (212) from private, federal and state institutions were in attendance, while only one hundred volunteered and participated in the study. The sample comprises of 71 male and 29 female; 50 senior (from Senior Lecturer to Professor) and 50 junior (from Graduate Assistant to Lecturer 1) were from universities, Polytechnic and College of Education (public and private).

The questionnaire for data collection was adapted from Iyamu and Aduwa (2005) 20-item questionnaire. The instrument had a four-point Likert scale response pattern. These were: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree and were weighted 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Items 1-10 were on the general need for student evaluation; 11-15 were on formative purposes while 16-20 were on summative purposes of student evaluations. The instrument had a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The data collected were analyzed using the t-test of proportion between population and sample means, and t-test of significant difference between two independent means. All tests were carried out at the 0.05 level of significance.

Procedures

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to participants attending the three day workshop between 9th and 12th April, at Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti after announcing the purpose of the exercise on the second day of the workshop. The instrument for data collection is "Lecturers Response to Students Evaluations of Teaching" (LRSET). This was distributed to participant to collect data for the study. Those who volunteered to participate collected the questionnaire, filled and returned them at the close of the programme. This is to give enough time for individuals to patiently go through the items and sincerely give their responses. One hundred and eighty questionnaires were distributed to those who willingly wish to express their perception on students evaluation of teaching performance by the researcher. From this number, only one hundred and twelve were returned while one hundred questionnaires were properly filled and used for data analysis.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study.

1. There will be no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of the importance of students' evaluation of teaching.
2. There will be no significant difference between senior and junior lecturers' perception of the importance of students' evaluation of teaching.

Results

The results of testing the two hypotheses raised in this study are presented in table 1.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of the importance of students' evaluation of teaching.

Table 1: Means, Standard deviation and t-test value of the lecturers' perception of students' evaluation of teaching between male and female lecturers.

Gender	N	\bar{x}	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	71	15.62	15.35	99	0.15	1.98	Retained
Female	29	15.72	7.35				

* $p < .05$

The analysis of result presented in the table above was done with independent t-test statistical scale. The table shows that the calculated value (t-cal) of 0.15 is less than the table value (t-crit) at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis which states thus, there is no significant difference between male and female lecturers' perception of student evaluation of teaching is accepted. From the analysis on the table, it is evident that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female perception of students' evaluation of teaching.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between senior and junior lecturers' perception of the importance of students' evaluation of teaching.

Table 2: Means, Standard deviation and t-test value of the lecturers' perception of students' evaluation of teaching between senior and junior lecturers.

Status	N	x	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Senior Lecturer	41	16.39	16.58	99	1.77	1.98	Retained
Junior Lecturer	59	15.03	11.10				

* $p < .05$

The result on table 2 shows that the calculated t-value of 1.77 is less than the critical t-value of 1.98 at the 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between the perception of senior and junior lecturers of students' evaluation of teaching was retained.

Discussion

Analysis of data in table 1, under hypothesis 1 indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of male and female lecturers in respect of student evaluation of teaching performance. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. The indication is that both male and female lecturers welcome the idea of students' evaluation of their teaching performance. Gender responsiveness has remained relevant in the assessment of a nation's human development index. In Africa, education, as a key instrument of human and societal advancement, has the mandate to offer direction and shape societal values to further enhance the quality of life of women and men in the society.

Those who viewed both male and female lecturers as equally capable said that thoroughness depended on the skills, knowledge and experience of the lecturer. This result is in consonant

with Isiaka (1998) who reported that college teachers in Ghana and Kenya accept student evaluation. The study also showed that while the acceptance cut across gender, emphasis was on the use of such student evaluation for formative purposes only. Similarly, Boyd and Grant (2005) carried out a study to establish if professional competence was affected by gender, they found that there was no significant difference in respondent ratings of overall competence of men and women prison officers. Earlier study proved that competence had nothing to do with gender. However, a study by Brain, Ashdown, Kristin and Kidoo (2007) revealed gender dynamic when it came to the preference of male and female professors.

The study established that "female professors are evaluated differently than male professors in aspects such as teaching styles and perceptual biases: and also that males were rated higher than females when it came to effectiveness. Similar results were obtained by Carson (2010) who found that male lecturers were automatically given respect and intellectual credibility while female lecturers had to work extra hard to prove their credibility.

Hypothesis 2 was rejected showing significant difference between perception of senior and junior lecturers of students' evaluation of teaching performance. This implies that both groups are convinced that when evaluation of lecturers' performance is rigorously executed, the information gained can serve multiple purposes. To the lecturers, they would be able to know their strengths and maintain it; they will also know their weaknesses as perceived by the students and improve on it. To the management, being more informed of the teaching staffs' performance can assist them in making better decisions to improve or sustain educational standards by providing excellent lecturers to students who need them most and by advancing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Obenchain, Abernathy and Wiest (2001) similarly found that most college instructors (about 70%) agree on the need for student input into the assessment of their teaching.

This result also corroborates the study of Chua and Heng (2010) who agreed that student evaluation of lecturers' performance served to benefit every participating member of the education community. The possible benefits that can be gained from students' evaluation are multifaceted and findings of such studies are considered reliable and valid. It is interesting to note, however, that the result is at variance with previous studies Urevbu (1997); Clifford (1999); Imogie (2000); Iyamu and Aduwa-Oglebaen (2005); Yusuf et al (2010) who found that senior lecturers had a more positive disposition to the practice of students' evaluation of teaching effectiveness than their junior counterparts. According to these researchers, senior lecturers tend to be less sensitive to the negative implication of student evaluation by virtue of their qualification and experience and the fact that they have reached the top of their career. The junior lecturers also are apprehensive of their academic and professional inadequacies that they may be exposed by evaluation; hence they are not in support of student evaluation.

Implications and Recommendations

The implication of the result of this present study is that, Nigerian lecturers now have positive perception of student evaluation of their teaching performance as important tool to know their strength as well as those aspects of their practice which could be further developed.

It is hoped that they would continue to maintain the strengths as detected from the empirical data of the study. Lecturers' assessment of teaching effectiveness by students should therefore be a continuous exercise to maintain high standard of university education in Nigeria.

The study also established the fact that the gender assessment of lecturers by students is no longer damaging as thought of, rather lecturers now know that the evaluation exercise is only used for overall quality improvement of teaching performance. More so, it is used by decision makers to determine their promotions.

Indication from the responses of senior and junior lecturers reveal that when institutions employ qualified lecturers, they will be committed to giving quality education that will be satisfactory to students.

The study therefore recommends that students' evaluation should be made mandatory by National Universities Commission (NUC) in all institutions of higher learning.

There should be a uniform and validated instrument for the purpose of students' evaluation of lecturers teaching performance in all Nigerian Universities.

Students as recipients of teaching and learning would be in a better position to evaluate lecturers' performance in the classroom.

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