Student's Cognizance About Evaluation Process: A Neglected Area

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ABSTRACT
Student Feedback to evaluate teacher performance and administrative facilities is imperative to create a good learning climate and maintain quality in educational environment. It is a neglected area in many countries though it weighs much in quality academic institutions worldwide. This study identifies the challenges and opportunities from student's perspective about the utilization and impact of the student feedback. It is a qualitative exploratory study conducted with forty undergraduate medical students. Data was collected through Focus Group Discussions. The findings revealed that the students understand the purpose of feedback however they had concerns about the effective utilization of the findings of feedback. Due to the lack of implementation from faculty and administration, students were less interested to provide genuine feedback. They believed that the evaluation findings are not considered to improve the system; therefore, some students were not interested in filling feedback forms accurately. The assumption that the student feedback is a neglected area was reinforced because faculty and administration are not complying with the teacher evaluations. Due to the lack of adherence to data protection and privacy policies, teachers and administrative staff influence student feedback and express biases against the students.

INTRODUCTION:
Student evaluation in universities and colleges, is one of the most important methods to measure the performance of faculty and administration (Lizzio and Wilson 2002). It involves student input and analysis for identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the educational systems. The purpose of this exercise is to enhance the academic and administrative quality in universities and colleges (Nicol, Thomson, and Breslin 2013; Chen and Hoshower 2003b; Gray and Light 2002). The primary objective of any college or university is to promote academic environment; therefore, students are the key stakeholders to provide input based on their experience to evaluate the academic and administration quality. The evaluation based on student feedback results in policy influence and improvement in the quality of learning activities (Arthur 2009; Mandouit 2018).
The evaluation methodologies vary across the institution and academic structures. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methodological approaches are adopted in evaluations. In some cases, a single approach is used, while in other cases, more than one methodology is used. The type of data and data collection tools depend on the design of the evaluation, whether it is qualitative, quantitative or mixed. In most cases, feedback forms or questionnaires are used, while in some cases, individual interviews and group discussions and observations are also used.

In public and private domains, the senior leadership and management intend to understand the ongoing situation in the institution they are managing. They desire to know the performance of employees and their efforts to achieve the set objectives. The key to evaluating the system is to collect the beneficiaries' experiences in the form of the students' feedback (Alderman and Towers 2012; Kember, Leung, and Kwan 2002).
Evaluations vary in their structure and procedures due to the differences of institutions and their functions. Different academic activities lead to different interactions between students and teachers, supervisors, researchers and administration (Tsou 2020). These students have a little different experience than the primary sciences student due to their program structure. The students of medical sciences complete the course work and are placed in hospitals for the clerkship(Ching 2019).
The standard features of the evaluations include assessment of teaching and measuring the learning outcome. These features are utilized to increase teaching effectiveness and learning outcome for students. Generally, all the students participate in the feedback process by providing input on each course they complete, and each teacher they interact academically. Technically, the evaluations are based on data from the whole students' population, but the results and analysis are generated for individual subject and teacher mainly(Robins et al. 2020; Tripon 2019).
There are many studies conducted to understand and evaluate the student feedback system. The current study focuses on exploring the phenomenon qualitatively, its pros and cons and recommendations for research and policy reforms in this area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student feedback for teachers in universities has become standard practice worldwide. Teachers' evaluation is now a requirement for all formal courses taught in the universities. Except for the formal feedback from the students, teachers also receive feedback from student through several channels like social media, emails and personal contacts.

Several studies have attempted to define the teacher's evaluation to determine the teaching quality good or bad. The teachers' evaluations are based on Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETs), which is known to start in the 1920s conceptually. SET is a recent concept used with several other similar concepts like Student Evaluation of Education Quality (SEEQ). SET is based on students' experience with the teachers, and many studies have been conducted to explain the phenomenon. Due to many studies on different aspects of student feedback, it is not easy to determine the comprehensive definition of the teachers' evaluation. SET can be described briefly as a process using students input regarding the teacher's general activity and attitude. Chen and Hoshower (2003) shared the findings of their study that the students who score high GPA were more involved and agreed to the appraisal of the professor with positive feedback. One reason is their close and frequent interaction with their teachers, which led them to learn more about their teachers.

Clayson (2018) has discussed the reliability issues in the teacher's evaluation exercise by colleges and universities. as the student often express their biases and revenge in the feedback, which is not positively associated with the welfare of teachers.

As a result of the student feedback, the faculty members and administration get a deeper understanding of the academic conditions, strengths and weaknesses prevailing in the system and applying teaching skills and methodologies. This learning from the evaluation could help teachers and administrators improve the learning environment, administrative facilitation, equipment, and infrastructure treatment. The absence of administrative support is also a cause of the repetitive errors in teachings methodologies and student dissatisfaction (Bijlsma et al. 2019)

Dudek *et al.* (2016) stated about different structures and methods of feedback in different institutions. One of the formats is open feedback which has its advantages. Open feedback is given time and offers more time and space for the feedback providers. The disadvantage of open feedback is that sometimes it is speculative and outweighed.

Another study by Dev and Qayyum (2017) found that carrying out the feedback and teacher's evaluation after every academic term is highly valued for teachers for their development and growth professionally. Majority of the students do not pay serious attention to the evaluation of teaching due to the belief that evaluation will not have a positive effect on the teaching.

Amjad and Jahan Linda (2020) have attempted to determine the effectiveness of such evaluation where teacher's performance is measured using student feedback questionnaires related to each course they taught. It was criticized that the student feedback process is completed manually, which is highly time-consuming. Referring to the case of Stamford University Bangladesh, data collection for all course evaluations is done on paper-based questionnaires, which they believe takes much time to read, understand and respond to the given questions. An online system offered easiness for students in filling and generated output results convenient for the evaluators.

Tsou (2020) conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the process of teacher's evaluation that revealed that a debate exists on the process worldwide on reliability and validity of the results. It is a concern in higher education researchers that the process of student feedback is controversial. Despite the conflict and debate about the reliability and validity of the findings, the process is continuously working to meet the demand of the faculty performance evaluation in higher education institutions.

In few studies, it was found that the students provide honest feedback because they trust in administration to utilize the results of the evaluation effectively. McClain, Gulbis and Hays (2018) in their study revealed that, while students report a high level of honesty on SETs, they are more likely to be honest when they believe that evaluations will effectively improve the quality of the course.

A study conducted with the medical student and faculty regarding their opinion and perception on formative feedback revealed that students believed that provided feedback should be utilized to adjust the teaching according to the student needs. (Robins et al. 2020).

Student motivation and perception about the feedback system has been the focus of some studies. It is believed that student ratings of the teacher's performance have been among the most influential factors in improving the teaching outcome and course content. (Chen and Hoshower 2003b).

METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory qualitative research in its design. Qualitative research can pose open-ended questions for respondents to give them options for more comprehensive views, explain their perception and beliefs, and provide responses that the researcher does not assume. The focus group discussion was organized virtually to collect data for this research. Virtual connectivity platforms was used to connect with the selected respondents for a certain period. The participants were forty undergraduate medical students doing their clerkship in the hospital. The sample size was based on the simple principle of data saturation. Students of fourth and final year medical program were chosen. Ethical approval was obtained from IRB of the institution. The focus group discussion questions were piloted on 4 students prior to use to ensure understanding. Focus group discussions with 8 participants was arranged and the participants were asked to comment on various aspects of student feedback. All discussions were recorded and transcribed by the principal investigator. Data triangulation was done. Data analysis was done through following steps:

a. Familiarity with data by reading and re-reading of the refined final data
b. Identification of the initial codes from the data
c. Grouping and regrouping the data
d. Naming the themes based on the grouped codes and categorization of data
e. Description of the themes

f. Writing a detailed account of the themes and their relation to the research questions.

The data analysis was done using Atlas.ti software for qualitative analysis. The initial coding generated about 39 codes: which were then grouped into 12 codes and 8 themes. The themes were linked with the research question.

RESULTS
Results will be discussed under the identified themes

1.UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION
Students were clear regarding the purpose and context of feedback

"It is a way of scoring our teachers regarding how well they taught us or how well they conveyed the knowledge to us, in a way we student are supporting them by giving this feedback."

"Feedback is the student's point of view about the competence of teachers. Students could be the best people to judge a teacher on parameters of performance".

"Feedback taken helps teachers and the academic departments to improve teaching methodologies etc. The gaps in teaching methods, knowledgeability, and deliverance are identified, and measures identified to remove those gaps".

"Purpose is that, for example, the person you are delivering the curriculum how much they know, what improvement can you bring in the strategies etc"

"Message to our teachers that how well or not have they thought us… the knowledge was adequate or not and about the punctuality."

"Check whether our system regarding this evaluation is effective in improving the studies academically or if the teachers can have improvements with feedback from Students"

2.CONSEQUENCE OF STUDENT FEEDBACK
Students understood the impact of their comments

All the negative points that they get, they can improve

depends on the person who is reading the reading the evaluation

If there was a problem like some study material being not available that can be made sure that its available next time.

if the teacher hasn't delivered something well, he can deliver it or if has delivered it well he can be applauded

3.COMFORT WITH GIVING FEEDBACK
Most students felt comfortable in providing feedback

I don't have much knowledge regarding this but as far as I know confidentially is maintained and bias Is not there

4.FACTORS INFLUENCING FEEDBACK
Students described that duration and teaching quality effected feedback

how much exposure you have with them.

Most of the times the senior faculty have other things too, so more interaction is with junior faculty

Student were unanimous that teacher designation was not of importance

No teacher designation doesn't matter.

5.EFFECT OF FEEDBACK ON STUDENT LEARNING
Students were of the opinion that their learning and feedback were linked

my learning affects my feedback regarding whether the factor that influence your rating in the learning, whether the teacher is responsible, is giving you your answers, whether they are on time.

Good learning does affect the feedback

It does if I don't understand anything in that particular module I would rate according.

6.ONLINE FEEDBACK FORMAT
About the online feedback format:

The language was easy to understand

online platform was the best way

It was appropriate, nothing in particular

7.THREATS TO EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK
Some of the barriers to effective feedback identified by students included:

evaluation ….is like .. an OBLIGATION just some paperwork … nobody takes it seriously

I don't think anything would change like there will be no sudden change like I mean they would work on it but not instantaneously.

whether this feedback is accepted if there is any …. improvement

I don't think they actually read the evaluations and see what the students are trying to convey and change the way they are teaching or whatever the students want them to change.

there is no confidentiality, God forbid the teachers can have grudge for the students, so this really effects the evaluation

We have had experience one of our teachers who by student names discussed feedback. So no, I don't believe that if there is any security or confidentiality.

8.WAY FORWARD
it should be more student centered
if the evaluation system would be anonymous like in a form type
I think this should happen often because there is need of some improvement in evaluation form

DISCUSSION

The students revealed that they understand the procedure and purpose of the Evaluation and feedback. There are several reasons behind a weaker evaluation system; one is to conduct an evaluation as a formality only and not incorporate its findings for positive changes. It can be dangerous for faculty members if they are not well rated by the students, and the administration implements such poor rating. However, Evaluation as such can improve the overall academic and administrative system, and that cyclical process maintains continuous growth of the academic organizations.

This process is based on the data provided by the student, either filling of forms manually or sending online feedback. It is a cyclic process repeated at the end of each semester or the completion of each course. There could be more formats for Evaluation, depending upon the nature and structure of the institutions (Lang and Kersting 2007).

Students have a variety of understanding and perception about the feedback and evaluation system (Weaver 2003). The majority of the students understand the process, outcome and purpose of the Evaluation. They know that it is genuinely designed to evaluate the teachers' knowledge, teaching methods, and behavior. It also includes the Teacher's communication skills and relevance to the subject. However, there are differences between the understanding and the trust in the whole process (Woloschuk et al. 2011). Many of the students believe that such evaluations are conducted to fulfil the formalities only, whereas the true purpose of the Evaluation is not served. Serving the real purpose is, they think that adding and removing the good and bad practices in the system as highlighting in feedback(Zaidi and Nasir 2015). These are some reasons, despite having a good understanding of the Evaluation's purpose, students do not provide feedback keenly.

Poulos and Mahony (2008) states that among the students, several groups are observable regarding their practices and patterns of providing feedback. The good students take the evaluation process seriously and fill it with responsibility doing justice with the questionnaires. Some students understand the process and purpose of the Evaluation, but they are not happy with the response. The administration does not address the issues or consider student recommendations for improvement of the system (Kember, Leung, and Kwan 2002). The student sending online feedback cannot send observations if they are not provided with open-ended questions (Alderman and Towers 2012). Well-organized institutions value student feedback for system improvements and quality enhancement (Stecher et al. 2012).

Best practices of student feedback and faculty evaluations are essential sources of information and recommendations for rectifying the systems. The results are analyzed carefully, reviewed and added to the policies, plans and procedures with all the necessary actions. All the key stakeholders are informed about the recommendation due to their importance for implementation (Mckone 1999). The results become agents of the change in systems and academics development. Student satisfaction is a significant indicator of the appropriate functioning of the system. Therefore, it is more of a student cantered kind of activity. The administrative arrangements revolve around the student's satisfaction because the main product of the educational institutions is a student.

The whole exercise is directed to bring a positive change in teaching quality, methodologies, behavior, and infrastructure. All these changes are reviewed frequently, which create a positive impact on the system. However, sometimes, evaluation practices are not intact as of their true essence in universities and colleges (Ravelli 2000). The teachers are more efficient if they adopt changes over time and use the most relevant communication skills to transfer knowledge. In light of the student feedback, the Teacher understands the gaps in their teaching skills. Arthur (2009) suggested that teaching methodologies are an ever-evolving phenomenon with the inclusion of the current student needs, technological and social development.

High expectations among the students effect the faculty because they have to deliver their best to meet the students' expectations. Teachers are always ready to accept the new techniques in teaching, the addition of new tools to the teaching kit and more behavioral changes to enhance communication with the students. The current study discusses the college level student's perception, opinion and experience of faculty evaluation, especially in the medical field.

Student expectations of a healthy learning environment need to be addressed to offer them psychological comfort to focus on the studies. Students are comfortable when they are allowed to adjust the academic environment and continue with that. The frequent changes in the academic environment, for example, changes in the timeline, changes in the faculty, new content imposition and geographical changes, logistic issues, poor classroom setting, are all the elements of discomfort for students. The transmission model of the feedback is worth telling about the gaps in terms of knowledge, while the feedback about the individuals, i.e., faculty members, can have potential and effectiveness for change.

The best way to utilize students' feedback is to enlist and rank the problem pointed out by the student. A nuanced analysis of the mentioned problem and ranking them according to their intensity and magnitude is better helpful for administration and faculty to find out and implement solutions. The problem is longer than the available resource capacity of the institutions, but prioritization of problem and addressing them one by one is a better strategy. In this way, the integration of a solution to respond to the students' needs increases their trust in the administration and faculty, and a better learning environment is created.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of student evaluation is to improve universities' and colleges' academic and administrative affairs. The said purpose is achieved only if the student feedback or teacher's evaluation is effectively undertaken and the findings are used to highlight and remove the problems. The current research has listed the gaps in the evaluation system and the administrative neglect of student facilitation's critical areas of improvement. Effective implementation of the findings of evaluations is one

of the key contributors to sustaining high-quality educational services in institutions. That, in fact, the reason behind reputation and credibility.

The evolved methodologies include the use of multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The use of qualitative and quantitative student feedback designs and data confidentiality.

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