

Effective Student Evaluation of University Teaching through On-Line Evaluation System

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to bring up the current issues on student evaluation of university teaching and to find a way to improve the evaluation. For this, the survey was conducted with a sample of 1,690 students and 24 professors were interviewed from W university. The results showed that most of students and instructors agreed to the necessity of the course evaluation and revelation of the evaluation results. However, the evaluation method and the use of the evaluation results were recognized as problematic. Findings suggested that development of valid evaluation instruments, provision of full information related to course evaluation and the active use of evaluation results by establishing a supporting and management on-line system.

Keywords: *University teaching student evaluation, Course satisfaction*

1. Introduction

The paradigm of higher education reform has changed recently and quickly from teacher-centered to student-centered, weighting on teaching competency that are inseparable from research. Many universities in Korea have designed and implemented a variety of student course evaluation policy for improvement of quality of teaching despite the following concerns.

First of all, students are not mature enough to evaluate their instructors' lectures. Second, instructors are unlikely to admit the fact that they are judged even from immature students under the Confucian tradition. Third, both students and instructors should be fully informed of the purpose and methods of evaluation, share with them, and further students need to be trained to be elaborated evaluators [1]. Indeed, Mckeachie(1997) suggested a solid qualitative study revealing how the students felt when they evaluate their instructors and classes, which would be of use to the development of teaching evaluation tools [2].

A current method based on students' rating on the courses they have taken is subject to be problematic [3]. The first step to improve the current course evaluation is to examine how key participants, i.e., students and instructors perceive this evaluation policy and what they recognize to be problematic in the process of evaluation. To delve into such things, this study carried out a survey targeting students and instructors in W university in Korea.

2. Research Method

2.1. Sample

A sample of the study is a total of 1,690 students from 54 departments in W university in J province. In May 2011, three thousands of survey questionnaires were distributed to the departments, collected for one month, and finally 1,690 completed survey questionnaires returned. A total of 24 instructors were selected randomly from 6 colleges for face-to face interviews and interviews lasted for about 2 months.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Sampled Students and Instructors

Classification		Frequency (%)	Total (%)	
Student	Gender	Male	837(49.5)	
		Female	853(50.5)	
	College	College of science and technology	246(14.6)	1,690
		College of food science	76(4.5)	(100)
		College of physical education science	85(5.0)	
		College of education	87(5.1)	
		College of pharmacy	80(4.7)	
		College of oriental medicine	109(6.4)	
		College of health and welfare	613(36.3)	
		College of culture and society	394(23.3)	
	Grade (prior Semester)	Above 95	121(7.2)	1,690
		90~94	388(23.0)	(100)
		85~89	438(25.9)	
		80~84	204(12.1)	
		75~79	88(5.2)	
70~74		51(3.0)		
65~69		30(1.8)		
Instructor	College	Freshmen	329(19.5)	
		College of science and technology	4(16.5)	24
		College of culture and society	5(21.0)	(100)
		College of health and welfare	4(16.5)	
		College of education	5(21.0)	
		College of oriental medicine	3(12.5)	
	Position	College of liberal arts	3(12.5)	
		Full-time instructor	3(12.5)	24
		Assistant professor	4(16.5)	(100)
		Associate professor	4(16.5)	
	Professor	13(54.5)		

As illustrated in Table 1, among the 1,690 students, half of the students are female (50.5%) and the majority of students (68.2%) obtained more than 80 points out of a possible 100 points in their grades prior semester. About 60% students are from College of health and welfare and College of culture and society. Among the 24 instructors, 13 (or about 55%) are professors.

2.2. Survey Instrument

The survey questionnaires consist of 9 domains with 15 questions, excluding items asking respondents' background (See Table 2). Reliability (Cronbach α) of the Likert scale items is .633.

Table 2. A Summary of Survey Items

Domain	Items	Scale
Necessity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think the course evaluation is necessary? 	Yes-No
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think the university is operating the course evaluation properly? Did you evaluate the lecture sincerely based on objective facts? 	Yes-No
Lecture Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much do you think the contents and teaching skills of the evaluated class have improved after the course evaluation? 	5 Likert
Factors affecting evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecture style Experiments or practices Size of lecture Required or elective course Course for major 	5 Likert
Release scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think the course evaluation score should be open? How much do you think the course evaluation score should be revealed? 	Yes-No
Participating reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What makes you participate in the course evaluation? What do you think is the biggest problem in the current course evaluation? 	Multiple
Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose one that is the most urgent thing to improve the course evaluation 	Multiple
Utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which do you think is the most appropriate use of the evaluation outcome? 	Multiple

2.3. Data Analysis

A descriptive statistical analysis with the data of students was performed to see how students perceive each question in general. The data from the interview with instructors was transcribed and categorized by the key words, considering the domain of the survey questionnaires.

3. Result

3.1. Survey Results of Students' Perception of the Course Evaluation

Regarding necessity and proper operation of the course evaluation, about 83% of the students and 46% answered "yes" respectively as showed in Table 3. When asked if the students evaluate the course sincerely based on objective facts, about 83% answered positively, however about 36% responded negatively about the degree of improvement of the class through the course evaluation. In addition, student evaluations are affected by the instructional materials, type of main instruction (i.e., experiments or practices), and class size.

In the meanwhile, half of the students participated in the evaluation because they expect the improvement of the class by providing useful information of the lecture. With regard to the biggest problem that the students recognized, about 30% of the students pointed that "the indifference of students" and about 22% did "unrevealed course evaluation result", which is the most responses.

Table 3. Result of Students' Perception by Items

Questions		Frequency (%)	Total (%)
Do you think the course evaluation is necessary?	Yes	1,410(83.4)	1,690
	No	280(16.6)	(100)
Do you think the university is operating the evaluation properly?	Yes	769(45.5)	1,690
	No	921(54.5)	(100)
Did you evaluate the lecture sincerely based on objective facts?	Not very much	101(6.0)	1,690
	Not much	185(10.9)	(100)
	Somewhat	574(34.0)	
	A little	338(20.0)	
	Very much	492(29.1)	
How much do you think the contents and teaching skills of the evaluated class have improved after the course evaluation?	Not very much	271(16.0)	1,690
	Not much	345(20.4)	(100)
	Somewhat	825(48.8)	
	A little	182(10.8)	
	Very much	67(4.0)	
How much do you think your evaluation is affected by teaching materials (ppt, hand-outs)?	Not very much	108(6.4)	1,690
	Not much	175(10.4)	(100)
	Somewhat	653(38.6)	
	A little	546(32.3)	
	Very much	208(12.3)	
How much do you think your evaluation is affected by ways of the delivery (experiments or practices)?	Not very much	92(5.4)	1,690
	Not much	203(12.0)	(100)
	Somewhat	738(43.7)	
	A little	475(28.1)	
	Very much	182(10.8)	
How much do you think your evaluation is affected by the class size?	Not very much	119(7.1)	1,690
	Not much	234(13.8)	(100)
	Somewhat	780(46.2)	
	A little	392(23.2)	
	Very much	165(9.8)	
How much do you think your evaluation is affected by whether the course is required or elective?	Not very much	115(6.8)	1,690
	Not much	202(12.0)	(100)
	Somewhat	764(45.2)	
	A little	445(26.3)	
	Very much	164(9.7)	
How much do you think your evaluation is affected by whether the course is liberal arts or for major?	Not very much	121(7.2)	1,690
	Not much	185(10.9)	(100)
	Somewhat	708(41.9)	
	A little	464(27.5)	
	Very much	212(12.5)	
Do you think the course evaluation score should be revealed?	Yes	1078(63.8)	1,690
	No	612(36.2)	(100)
How much do you think the course evaluation score of instructors is revealed?	Every single subjects	611(56.7)	1,078
	Top 10%	184(17.0)	(100)
	Bottom 10%	57(5.3)	
	Top 10% and bottom 10%	226(21.0)	
What makes you participate in the course evaluation?	For improvement of instruction	846(50.1)	1,690
	To give my opinions to instructors	844(49.9)	(100)
What do you think is the biggest problem in the current course evaluation?	unrevealed course evaluation score	377(22.3)	1,690
	Invalid survey questions	282(16.7)	(100)
	Indifference of students	506(29.9)	
	Indifference of professors	245(14.5)	
	Lack of administrative support	280(16.6)	

Choose one that is the most urgent thing to improve the course evaluation	Reveal evaluation score	419(24.8)	1,690 (100)
	Improve evaluation survey questions	298(17.6)	
	Obligatory reflect opinions on the evaluation	570(33.7)	
	Promote the course evaluation	229(13.6)	
	Extend incentive to the excellent instructors	174(10.3)	
Which do you think is the most appropriate use of the course evaluation outcome?	Open the evaluation score of the instructor's subject	527(31.2)	1,690 (100)
	Open the average score of the GPA of the subject	381(22.5)	
	Consider the result of evaluation in the process of instructors' performance evaluation	477(28.2)	
	Make instructors below average evaluation scores take some courses related teaching methods	305(18.0)	

Regarding the most urgent thing to be done for the improvement of the course evaluation, about 34% of the student answered that their evaluative opinions should be reflected on the next course evaluation and the course evaluation result should be open to the students so that they would be advised in choosing better classes. Overall students pointed out “inadequate system of the course evaluation operation” as a main reason, including “easy access of the evaluation result”, “assurance of confidential evaluation,” and “active promotion of the course evaluation policy”.

3.2. Interview Results of Instructors' Perception of Course Evaluation

Similar to the students' responses above, overall instructors answered the course evaluation results should be provided immediately for the course improvement. However, they responded negatively the use of the evaluation as a stick (e.g., cutting wages), showing concerns on revelation of the evaluation results;

If the evaluation results are revealed by individual instructors, the lectures will go in a way to get popularity from students. Instructors are likely to avoid difficult parts of the subjects or even passing it to part-time lecturers who are not obliged to be evaluated. (Interview with a full-time instructor)

The large number of instructors also pointed out much of the dependency on the student survey as one of the biggest problems of the current evaluation. Particularly, instructors mentioned the following things;

- A small number of open-end questions that will provide more useful information for the improvement of the course
- Invalid survey items that does not consider characteristics of particular subjects or courses; for example, the adequacy of the load of homework

In addition, instructors suggest that the course evaluation should be performed at not only individual instructor level but also at the program-, department-, and college-level and a support and management system for the course evaluation need within the university, handling planning, operating, supporting, promoting, and reporting, etc.

4. Conclusion

Considering not much literature on the course evaluation in Korea, the study investigated how students and instructors have perceived the course evaluation, employing survey and interview methods. Overall, the results show that most of the students and instructors agreed with the necessity of the course evaluation and the revelation of the evaluation result. At the same time, however, they pointed out that the survey instrument of the course evaluation is invalid and the evaluation result that are not much used for the improvement of the university teaching. For more effective course evaluation, we suggest that development of valid evaluation instruments, active promotion of the course evaluation policy, and establishment of on-line system that manages and supports whole process of course evaluation.

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