

Investigating faculty perception of instrument used for evaluating teaching effectiveness: A case of two universities in Sunyani

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at examining the perception of faculty members towards the use of student evaluations of faculty members as a basis to assess teaching effectiveness and for decision-making for annual faculty review. The study was conducted with the participation of 62 full-time members at Catholic University and Sunyani Technical University. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The main findings revealed that faculty members positively perceive the current Students' Evaluation of Faculty (SEF) instrument as effective in evaluating teaching effectiveness but do not perceive the use of the current instrument as effective in decision-making for annual review. The study also revealed that there was no association between the objectives for the adoption and usage of the Students' Evaluation of Faculty (SEF) instrument for private and public universities. Finally, the findings show that faculty are challenged both administratively and humanly in their endeavour to effectively implement SEF. Based on the findings, it was concluded that the evaluation method and instrument needed to be revised further to include a multidimensional procedure. This multifaceted method should produce independent instruments for annual faculty reviews and teaching improvement.

Keywords: Faculty evaluation, perception, teaching effectiveness, decision-making.

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INTRODUCTION

In human resources, there is a need for human resources performance management to evaluate the human capital to ensure that standards are being met. The basis for such exercise is to guarantee the quality of services and products. In academia, the process is not based on academic qualification alone but effectiveness in pedagogical approach, classroom management, and administrative competence. One major instrument for measuring teaching effectiveness is the use of the Students Evaluation of Faculty (SEF) instrument. Every policy has its goals, and students' evaluation of faculty policy is no exception. In recent times, higher education has paid increasing attention to students' views and is obtaining feedback on their experience of learning and teaching through internal surveys (Addo and Akoto 2019; Addo et al., 2020; Hemson, 2014). According to Snowball and Magda (2005), the approach of using students'

evaluation to monitor the students' experience and performance has proved to be an effective and essential component of the quality management process in higher education institutions (Addo and Panford, 2012). The quest to improve upon quality assurance in a higher educational institution in current times explains the recent popularity of the use of students' evaluation of faculty as a potential tool for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning (Addo et al., 2016). A lot of studies have been conducted adding to the already existing innumerable body of knowledge on the effectiveness of Students Evaluation of Faculty instruments as a tool for improving teaching and learning in universities around the world. This work diverts slightly from such a course and extends to investigate whether students' evaluation of faculty instruments, among other things, is achieving the same purpose in both private and public universities

in the Ghanaian context. It further investigates the policy framework in the Ghanaian context in respect of quality assurance mechanisms for measuring teacher effectiveness, which has attracted limited research. The use of the SEF instrument is to serve as a reliable and integral partner of quality assurance, besides the principal aims of monitoring teaching effectiveness and serving as a basis for an annual review of faculty. SEFs are still used by higher education institutions to assess instructional quality in a quantitative and reportable manner (Simpson and Siguaw, 2000). According to research, administrators in general have a favourable attitude toward SEF data and find it useful for personnel decisions (Campbell and Boseman, 2008; Beran and Violato, 2005). As accountability in colleges and universities grows and financial constraints in higher education tighten, these circumstances necessitate in-depth studies of teaching effectiveness (Rabovsky, 2012). Colleges and universities devote significant funds, resources, and time to assessing teaching effectiveness (Edstrom, 2008). At many universities, this evaluation of teaching effectiveness is part of the annual faculty review process (Burden, 2008; Kealey, 2010). Unfortunately, at many institutions, administering a SEF has become merely a formality, a process, and the process does not include a routine analysis of the data or a follow-up survey to gather data representing faculty perceptions to ensure the process's purpose is being met (Theall, 2010). As a result, there is a need to investigate faculty perceptions of using the SEF system and instruments to aid them in improving teaching effectiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the various methods used in evaluating teachers in the form of students giving feedback about their satisfaction with the teaching attributes of their teachers, student evaluation of faculty instruments is the widely accepted one in higher education (Beran et al., 2007). The idea of using students to evaluate teachers has been part of the modern education system as early as the 1915s (Wachtel, 1998). The use of SEF in higher education has, over the years, seen tremendous change in outlook. However, the focus for the adoption and use of SEF has not always been what its purpose serves today (Kelly, 2012). Studies by Calkins and Micari (2010) and Theall (2010) collaborate on the fact that in the last three decades of using SEF, the method has dramatically changed significantly.

Two opposing yet mutually useful perceptions have been identified among researchers and scholars on the use of the Student Evaluation of faculty instrument as a barometer to make faculty decisions and to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of teachers. A huge number of researches exist in the arena of SEF. Some research showed that the SEF instrument is a valid measure of

teaching effectiveness and shielded from variables noticed as a likely bias to the process of evaluation (Thornton et al., 2010). Contrastingly, other researchers regard SEF as insufficient enough to measure teaching effectiveness and suggested that SEF is biased by many unpredictable issues (Weinberg et al., 2009). Faculty, again conceived that students' rating is influenced by the course workload, and this has the propensity once the instructor is aware for them to alter their attitude unduly to gain higher scores (ICE Report, 2005). Surratt and Desselle (2007) believed that students view SEF as an appropriate and necessary instrument for assessing teachers' performance. Yet, they doubted whether faculty members receiving the best evaluation were always the most effective teachers.

In higher education, in recent times, faculty teaching effectiveness is regularly assessed through the SEF process that has constantly been withstanding the storm of criticism for being vulnerable and pervious to bias and systemic error. Marsh (1987), Murray (1983), and Mckeachie (1979) have unanimously concluded that student evaluation is valid are useful in enhancing teaching effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method approach was used and quantitative and qualitative data were collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The quantitative method focuses on objective measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data gathered through questionnaires, and surveys. Quantitative research can yield statistically significant results (Nykiel, 2007). As a result, it can determine the statistical significance, or strength, with which apparent associations and relationships in the data gathered are likely. The qualitative research methodology is the collection of rich information from qualitative data sources such as reports and archival documents, as well as first-hand data from interviews (Jennings, 2001). Qualitative research, in particular, in the form of interviews, allows the researcher to interact with the respondents; this allows for in-depth probing of issues and yields great detail in response (Nykiel, 2007). A well-structured questionnaire was used to gather information from faculty members. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions provided pre-determined answer choices for the respondents to choose from. An interview guide was used to collect data from the heads of the quality assurance units in the faculties. It is the most common way of acquiring additional information on a candidate. The interview guide was structured in a manner that covers the objectives of the study. Dependent variable-teaching effectiveness. Independent variables-Instructional attributes used in the SEF instrument. The total population was 103. Of these, 62

participants including full-time instructional faculty members at Catholic University and Sunyani Technical University were used for the study. A purposive sampling procedure was used in the selection of the universities and random sampling was used to select the respondents using a mathematical formula as below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size

N is the total number of respondents

α is the margin of error

N = 103

α = 0.08%

$$n = \frac{103}{1+103(0.08)^2}$$

= 62 respondents

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that the use of SEF serving as an effective instrument for aiding administrative decision rank first

with a mean value of 3.70 and a standard deviation of 0.908, followed by faculty engagement in designing the SEF instrument endows the SEF with an additional value recording mean of 3.68 and standard deviation of 0.913. SEF findings provide a useful tool for faculty to improve teaching performance ranking third with a mean of 3.64 and standard deviation of 0.930, the next was the implementation of the use of SEF instrument by department heads ranking fourth on faculty perceptions, the last on the table was increased in overall knowledge of the subject matter with a mean value of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.981. The use of SEF serves as an effective instrument for aiding and reaching administrative decisions was ranked 1st with a mean of 3.70; a standard deviation of 0.908, and a standard error mean of 0.038. The engagement of faculty in designing the SEF instrument endows the SEF instrument with additional value was ranked 2nd with a mean of 3.68, a standard deviation of 0.913, and a standard error mean of 0.042. SEF findings provide an effective tool for faculty to improve teaching performance was ranked 3rd with a mean of 3.64, a standard deviation of 0.930, and a standard error mean of 0.035. The implementation of the use of a single SEF instrument by department heads was ranked 4th with a mean of 3.62, a standard deviation of 0.956, and a standard error mean of 0.038. An increase in overall knowledge of the subject matter was ranked 5th with a mean of 3.51, a standard deviation of 0.981, and a standard error mean of 0.024.

Table 1. One sample statistic for the perception of faculty on the SEF instrument.

| Strategies | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Rank |
|---|------|----------------|-----------------|------|
| The use of SEF serves as an effective instrument for aiding in reaching an administrative decision | 3.70 | 0.908 | 0.038 | 1 |
| Engagement of faculty in designing the SEF instrument endows the SEF instrument with additional value | 3.68 | 0.913 | 0.042 | 2 |
| SEF findings provide an effective tool for faculty to improve teaching performance | 3.64 | 0.930 | 0.035 | 3 |
| The implementation of the use of a single SEF instrument by department heads | 3.62 | 0.956 | 0.038 | 4 |
| Increased overall knowledge of the subject matter | 3.51 | 0.981 | 0.024 | 5 |

Rank: [1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree]. Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2 analyses all the variables (perceptions of faculty on SEF instrument) had t-values (the strength of the test) that were positive indicating that their means were above the hypothesized mean of 3.50. All of the variables had a p-value (significance of the test) less than 0.05; this implies that the means of these variables were not

significantly different from the hypothesized mean of 3.7. Furthermore, the 95% confidence level interval estimates the difference between the population mean weight and the test value at degrees of freedom = 61.

From Table 3, based on the value of the p-value (p – value = 0.313) as against the level of significance

Table 2. One-sample test for perception of faculty on SEF instrument.

| | Test Value = 3.50 | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean difference | 95% confidence interval of the difference | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| The use of SEF serves as an effective instrument for aiding reaching administrative decision | 2.149 | 61 | 0.020 | 0.200 | 0.08 | 0.30 |
| Engagement of faculty in designing the SEF instrument endows the SEF instrument with additional value | 1.703 | 61 | 0.011 | 0.140 | 0.03 | 0.12 |
| SEF findings provide effective tool for faculty to improve teaching performance | 2.479 | 61 | 0.021 | 0.200 | 0.04 | 0.36 |
| The implementation of the use of a single SEF instrument by department heads | 0.463 | 61 | 0.004 | 0.040 | 0.13 | 0.21 |
| Increased in overall knowledge of the subject matter | 1.664 | 61 | 0.025 | 0.140 | 0.03 | 0.31 |

Table 3. Chi-square test of independence.

| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided) | | | Monte Carlo Sig. (1-sided) | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | | | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval | |
| | | | | | Lower bound | Upper bound | | Lower bound | Upper bound |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 4.754 ^a | 4 | 0.313 | .334 ^b | 0.325 | 0.343 | | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 6.368 | 4 | 0.173 | .274 ^b | 0.265 | 0.283 | | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | 3.815 | | | .416 ^b | 0.406 | 0.426 | | | |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 0.423 ^c | 1 | 0.515 | .633 ^b | 0.623 | 0.642 | .321 ^b | .312 | .330 |
| No. of Valid Cases | 62 | | | | | | | | |

($\alpha = 0.05$), there is a need not to reject the null hypothesis and concluded as there is no association between the two variables (a type of university and adoption and usage of SEF instrument).

The result of the Relative Importance Index (RII) in Table 4 indicates that the seven (7) challenges associated with the implementation of SEF instrument in a university context as perceived by the surveyed respondents include (1) High Course Workload (RII = 0.871); (2) Low interest of students in the course (RII = 0.826); (3) Improper administration of SEF (RII = 0.819); (4) Voluntary nature of SEF instrument (RII = 0.806); (5) Anonymous evaluation (RII = 0.800); (6) Little oversight of faculty performance (RII = 0.768); and (7) Inexperience on the part of faculty (RII = 0.690). The result of this study asserts that the first six (6) challenges associated with the implementation of SEF instrument in a university

context are perceived to be the major and ranked challenges since their RII values fell above or equal to the minimum importance threshold value of 0.700 whilst the last variables (Inexperience on the part of faculty) was not perceived to be a major challenge since its RII value fell below the minimum importance threshold value of 0.700.

Interview results

The two universities both have policy documents that instruct the need for, the process for ensuring and intention for the planning, designing, and implementation of SEF and the results thereof. The study found out that Catholic University relies on the general university quality assurance policy document to implement SEF. Sunyani

Table 4. Challenges associated with the implementation of the SEF instrument.

| Innovative financing mechanisms | Responses | | | | | Weight | RII | Rank |
|---|-----------|---|----|----|----|--------|-------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| High Course Workload | 1 | 2 | 6 | 18 | 5 | 270 | 0.871 | 1 |
| Low interest of students in the programme | 3 | 6 | 4 | 16 | 33 | 256 | 0.826 | 2 |
| Improper administration of SEF | 2 | 7 | 4 | 19 | 30 | 254 | 0.819 | 3 |
| Voluntary nature of SEF instrument | 3 | 5 | 8 | 17 | 29 | 250 | 0.806 | 4 |
| Anonymous evaluation | 4 | 6 | 7 | 14 | 31 | 248 | 0.800 | 5 |
| Little oversight of faculty performance | 5 | 6 | 7 | 20 | 24 | 238 | 0.768 | 6 |
| Inexperience on the part of faculty | 6 | 8 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 214 | 0.690 | 7 |

Rank: [1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree].

Technical University equally had a policy document on quality assurance but each department has direct responsibility for its implementation. The non-availability of the specific policy document for SEF informed the researcher to rely on a policy document on quality assurance, this general document provides sections that allow SEF as one of the means for attaining quality of services and products in the universities.

In the Catholic University College, the assurance policy document set out the fundamental priorities of the university when it comes to quality assurance. The documents consist of many means of attaining quality of service in all sectors of the school, encompassing classroom management, teaching effectiveness, and outside classroom activities, such as excellent faculty and department administrative procedures.

In the area of the use of SEF to evaluate teaching effectiveness and for decision-making for annual faculty review, it has been stated unequivocally, that the use of SEF is recommended and mandatory for all faculties, it provides that results obtained from SEF results shall be relied upon to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of the lecturers and consequently informed decision-making for annual faculty review which is expected to influence the promotion of lecturers, increment in their allowances and salaries. The rationale behind the use of SEF is stated and it applies to all lecturers and administrators. On the other hand, Sunyani Technical University's quality assurance policy empowers each department to be directly responsible for the implementation of SEF to ensure quality and assess teaching effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that Faculty members do perceive the use of the current SEF instrument as an effective approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness. The results from the analysis indicated a consistency in respondents' responses to the item that seeks to address the research question posed. It was found that all the perceptions on the current SEF instrument recorded a

standard deviation of less than 1, showing reliability in an agreement between respondents' interpretations concerning evaluating effectiveness in teaching. The findings showed that faculty members perceive the current SEF as an effective approach for evaluating effective teaching. As related by Wright and McMahan (1992), who pointed out that although the usefulness of SEF is still much contested and questioned about its validity, it remains the most effective approach for evaluating teaching competencies in the absence of a better alternative.

An examination of faculty members' perception of the use of SEF as effective in evaluating their teaching effectiveness showed that faculty members agreed with the assertion that the current SEF is an effective tool for improving their teaching effectiveness. However, when it comes to using the same SEF for making decisions bordering on their welfare, they exhibited divergent views. Chen and Hoshoe (2003) reported concerns from the rank and file of faculty members about the current SEF being used for decision-making. This illustrates that faculty members do not perceive the current SEF instrument as a useful tool for decision-making in annual faculty reviews. The findings align with similar findings by Calkins and Micari (2010) and Jones et al. (2012), who also reported that evaluation results for formative and summative practices are not well accepted by some faculty members. Gravestock and Gregor-Greenleaf (2008) also observed that most faculty members are inclined to believe that the use of information obtained from the current SEF results is for formative purposes of improvement and not for summative decisions.

Thematic analysis of the responses gathered from the respondents showed that in both institutions, the attempt to implement effective SEF had been bedeviled by several challenges. Thematic analysis of responses given by respondents revealed that the implementation of SEF in a University context is not immune from challenges. It was observed that the implementation of SEF in both institutions is confronted by some problems that impact the ideals and objectives behind the implementation of SEF programs. The issue of the non-involvement of

lecturers in the whole scheme of the SEF assumes the centre stage of the argument put forward by the respondents. It was also found that the use of students to evaluate lecturers was another borne of contention for the respondents. The lukewarm attitude on the part of lecturers to address deficiencies identified from SEF results is borne out of their disengagement in the process of planning and designing. Again, faculty were not comfortable with students appraising their “profession.” This was also observed by Moore and Kuol (2005), who denounced and queried students’ ability to assess teacher performance due to their limited understanding of teaching. Again, they expressed their concern towards student evaluation based on personal idiosyncrasies and moods, sabotaging their abilities to make an objective judgment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that the evaluation method and instrument needed to be revised further to include a multidimensional procedure. This multifaceted method should produce independent instruments for annual faculty reviews and teaching improvement. It was also established that challenges are associated with SEF's implementation in a University context and that the challenges are humanly and administrative in orientation. There is the need to orientate Faculty to accept the current SEF instrument as an acceptable approach for improving teaching.

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