

# **Assessing teaching assessment**

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## **Abstract**

*This research examines the students' view on teaching assessment surveys conducted by the University of Zagreb. It especially focuses on student's perceived importance of this assessment and its influence on quality control.*

## **1. Introduction and background**

In manufacturing quality, control is a very important part of production. It ensures that the product is designed and manufactured to meet customer requirements. Universities try to control teaching quality by conducting surveys among students about their satisfaction about the course and about the teacher.

Tertiary education in Croatia is currently in the process of harmonising its standards with the Bologna process requirements. It is aspiring to curricula modifications, but also for implementation of pedagogical models with a focus on students. The University of Zagreb is currently in the process of establishing a quality control system. Quality control surveys are one of the key control mechanisms of this newly established quality management system.

## **2. Methodology**

The goal of this research was to find out how students rank certain teacher and course characteristics which are measured in teaching assessment surveys conducted by the University of Zagreb. Teacher characteristics were divided into three categories: teacher expertise, teaching competence and personal qualities. Course characteristics were divided into two categories: course organization and course content.

One hundred and seven students were involved in this survey which was carried out by questionnaire in May 2007. A questionnaire format was used because it offers a relatively time efficient means of collecting results. Only closed questions were used to increase

objectivity and data processing speed. Students were asked to rank by importance teacher or course characteristics within a certain category.

### **3. Findings**

#### **3.1. General questions**

Students were asked to express their competence in evaluation of quality of teaching on a scale from 1(Totally incompetent) to 5(Totally competent). Students' own average competence level was 4.04 which shows that students are very self confident in their evaluation skills.

The next question asked students in what measure do they think their evaluation will change teaching practice. They were asked to express their opinion on scale from 1, which represented no change at all, to 5 which represented almost certain change in teaching practice. Average grade was 2.09 which should alert us because students think that their opinions have very small influence in the change of teaching practices. This attitude could be caused by several reasons. The first reason could be that teaching practice really isn't changing and that students have good perception and second could be that teaching practices do change but teachers and institutions don't use good feedback strategy to communicate those changes to students. Recent studies (Colford, 2005; Harvey, 2003) showed that lack of feedback or wrong feedback strategies represent key weakness in teaching quality management cycle. When using summative evaluation lack of feedback is usual, because students express their views after whole experience of the course and they cannot see any improvement in teaching practices because they have finished that course. Formative evaluation, where students express their concerns and problems during the course, gives the teacher the opportunity to change teaching practices and students to perceive those changes.

Student's answers to the questions, should good teachers be awarded and should bad teachers be sanctioned, were almost identical. 91% of students think that good teachers should be awarded and 89% of students think that bad teachers should be sanctioned. This shows that students respect their good teachers and think that bad teachers should be sanctioned to motivate them to change their teaching practices.

### **3.2. Teacher Assessment**

Teacher assessment was divided into three categories:

- **Teacher Expertise**
- **Teaching Competence**
- **Personal Qualities**

#### **3.2.1. Teacher Expertise**

Rank	Characteristic	Average rank
1.	Gives good examples and exercises	1,52
2.	In teaching shows good knowledge of subject matter	1,89
3.	Answers question expertly	2,45

Table 1. **Teacher expertise characteristics**

This category reflects the teachers' expertise in his scientific field. As the most valuable characteristic students expressed teachers' ability to give good examples and exercises that vividly describe problems they will meet in practice. A teacher should also show good knowledge of the subject matter and answer questions expertly.

#### **3.2.2. Teaching competence**

Rank	Characteristic	Average rank
1.	Teaches course content clearly and self-explanatory	2,41
2.	Lectures are interesting and dynamic	2,89
3.	Has good communication skills and creates pleasant working atmosphere	3,05
4.	Clearly defines course goals and students' duties	3,64
5.	Lectures have good structure and time is rationally used	3,73
6.	Raises the quality of teaching by use of modern technology	5,14

Table 2. **Teaching competence characteristics**

Students think that teachers should teach course content clearly and self-explanatory. Students would like their lectures to be interesting and dynamic.

A teacher should have good communication skills and should try to create a pleasant working atmosphere. A teacher should clearly define course goals and students' duties so that students know what they should expect and what is expected from them. Very interesting was that ranked last with average ranking 5,14 was teachers' ability to raise quality of teaching by the use of modern technology which shows that use of modern technology isn't perceived as very important teaching quality.

### **3.2.3. Personal Qualities**

Rank	Characteristic	Average rank
1.	Regards students properly and respectfully	1,64
2.	Is motivated for work and consciously fulfils his obligations	2,29
3.	Is available for consultations	2,63
4.	Holds lectures regularly and on time	3,44

Table 3. **Personal qualities characteristics**

This survey showed that the most valuable teacher personal quality is a teacher's ability to regard students properly and respectfully. A teacher should also be motivated for work. Also, teachers should be available for consultations.

## **3.3. Course Assessment**

### **3.3.1. Course content**

Rank	Characteristic	Average rank
1.	Course gives insight into key problems and enables its understanding	1,75
2.	Course shows the importance of subject and application possibilities	2,07
3.	Quantity of course contents match number of course lecture hours	2,85
4.	Course literature is useful for understanding subject matter	3,34

Table 4. **Course content characteristics**

Students think that an important course quality is to give them insight into key problems and enable understanding. A course should also show importance of subject and application possibilities.

### **3.3.2. Course organization**

Rank	Characteristic	Average rank
1.	Course organization encourages students' active participation	1,87
2.	Course goals and student duties are clearly defined	1,88
3.	Lectures are properly followed up by exercises and seminars	2,20

Table 5. **Course organization characteristics**

Students would like courses to encourage their active participation. Also course goal and student duties should be clearly defined at the beginning of the course. Clearly defined course goals are a very good motivation for students and precisely defined student duties inform what is expected of them to successfully complete that course. Students expect lectures to be properly followed up by exercises and seminars which will teach them how to apply their newly acquired knowledge.

## **4. Conclusion**

This research showed that students would like their teachers to hold dynamic lectures followed up by good examples and exercises which show them how to apply that knowledge in practice. Teachers should have good communication skills and should try to create a pleasant working atmosphere. The most important personal quality of a teacher is to regard students with respect that they deserve.

Courses should introduce students to key problems and enable their understanding. Students would like courses to encourage their active participation. Course goals and student duties should be clearly defined so that students know what they should expect to learn in the course and what is expected from them to successfully complete the course.

Quality control surveys are good instruments for gathering students' opinions about the quality of teaching. For the success of quality management in higher education good communication strategy is essential so that students can receive feedback about actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and show them that their opinions and suggestions are respected and implemented in teaching practice.

## **References**

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