Methods of Evaluation of Teachers and Curricula by Students

Students’ point of view

Isa Immonen, University of Helsinki
Marlies Schnierer, Vetmeduni Vienna
Methods of Evaluation of Teachers and Curricula by Students

- **introduction:**
  - Importance of student evaluation
  - legal prerequisites
  - negative aspects
- motivation of students to evaluate
- ways for students to influence
- **examples** of teacher-/course-evaluations of Helsinki and Vienna
- evaluations of **curricula**
- **examples** of Helsinki and Vienna
Introduction

• Why is evaluation important?
  • improvement of teaching and learning
  • possibility to plan course schedules and curriculum with the best interest of students in mind
  • co-operation and interaction between different levels within the University
  • beneficial in providing Information to the University about the functionality of their programme
  • Student evaluations have been shown to have high validity in studies

• “The student is an active and responsible participant in the academic community.”
Introduction

• **Legal prerequisites for student involvement / evaluations:**
  
  • **EAEVE:**
    • one student member in visiting teams
    • majority of student to be involved in internal quality assurance program
  
  • **Helsinki:**
    • according to the Finnish state law University board of directors has to include student members
    • the University is responsible for evaluating and enhancing teaching and learning possibilities
  
  • **Vienna:**
    • students must be included in collegial committees by state law; University statues request student involvement in almost all committees, work groups, ...
    • student course evaluations: students have a voice in quality assurance of teaching, results of student evaluations have to be considered
Introduction

• **Negative aspects**
  • What can be assessed?
  • Can personal issues between students and teachers influence the evaluation?
  • Evaluation can be very subjective
  • poorly conducted evaluations
  • student motivation - some students will evaluate only if mandatory?
Why do students evaluate?

- **identification** with the University
- awareness of importance to improve the education
- improving the **taught content**
  (theoretical and practical competences)
- improving the **quality of teaching:**
  - e.g.: didactical competences of teachers, motivation to learn, enthusiasm of subject transferred to students
- improving the **context:**
  - e.g. social conditions, respectful teacher-student contact, more self-confidence, ...
- **willingness** of teachers to change
- willingness of the university board **to change**
- changes for future students only
Enhancing motivation

- anonymous
- transparent process (for students) of what happens
- easy access, no “new” technical applications
- short evaluation forms, short essay questions
- reminder/motivation by lecturers
- voluntary vs. mandatory – legal?, incentives
- **results must have consequences!**
- communication of results & consequences to students
Ways for students to influence

- Chance to influence directly or via representatives
  - University collegial body
  - Board of the Faculty
  - Academic and Student Affairs committee
    - Curricular working group
  - Management team of the University Animal Hospital
  - Committee of Teaching Skills
  - Committee of Student Selection
  - Board of appointment for professorships, habilitation committee
  - Student subject association of the faculty
  - Course/teacher/whole year/degree evaluations
  - EAEVE
Evaluation of teachers and courses
Vienna

- Competence-orientated course evaluation:
  - focused on learning outcomes and competence development, related to learning objectives according the curriculum
  - each course is evaluated
  - web based application, anonymous
  - different kinds of survey templates for different types of courses (e.g. lectures, group work, lab work, ...)
    - in cooperation with psychologists & sociologists
- questions concerning:
  - acquisition of professional, methodical, social competence of students;
  - conditions of teaching & learning;
  - special likes/dislikes;
  - student’s context & his/her surrounding conditions
- access to results for students
Evaluation of teachers and courses
Vienna

- **Others:**
  - student representation in various committees, e.g.:
    - Habilitation Committees, Appointment Committees
    - to evaluate didactical competences
  - “Teacher of the Year”
  - Vetucation®- Award
  - Student news paper:
    - Oscar
    - Detlef

© drawings by Sarah Postner
Evaluation of teachers and courses Helsinki

- **Course evaluation**
  - Year 2006 - working group appointed to create a student feedback system
  - Some course evaluations before 2006 but no organised system
  - Main focus on learning, teaching, alignment of the courses and workload
  - Evaluations collected from
    - Individual courses, the whole of study year and after completion of a degree.
    - Evaluations of immediate impressions AND of longer timeframe
    - Allows the students to evaluate and compare the courses within one study year
  - Feedback forms: electronical, written, discussions
  - Feedback submitted anonymously/with a name
Evaluation of teachers and courses Helsinki

- **Teacher evaluation**
  - Rarely evaluated individually
  - Evaluation is based on quality of teaching
  - Teachers are encouraged to collect evaluations of their teaching

- **Other**
  - Feedback of feedback–system: A summary of student comments and evaluation, how their feedback will be taken into consideration in the development of teaching
  - Experiences of teaching and learning questionnaire (OPPI)
    - A mandatory part of the Bachelor’s portfolio
    - Filled out during first and third year
  - HOPS-self evaluation
  - Student evaluation of teachers before recruitment
Evaluation of teachers and courses Helsinki

• **How are the results interpreted and used?**
  • A network of pedagogical lecturers, one in every UH faculty
  • Generally results of the feedback are discussed during the departmental teachers’ meetings
  • Larger entities discussed with the disciplines concerned and in the Academic Planning Committee
  • Every department has an appointed teacher for student counselling, quality assurance and development of teaching
  • Results of the whole year evaluation are published

• **At the same time...**
  • Students tend to fill the forms only if they were particularly displeased or happy with the course/teachers.
    • If not mandatory – response rate usually less than 50%
Evaluation of curricula

• important tool of quality assurance

• evaluations initiated by University
  • evaluations of years / tiers
  • evaluation of the whole curriculum
  • evaluations after graduation

• University board / committees / student associations etc
• failing / drop-out rates

• EAEVE-visiting teams incl. student member
Evaluation of curricula

- **Why?**
  - students’ point of view
  - earlier courses as preparation for later courses
  - vertical & horizontal integration
  - preparation for clinical work
  - workload of a certain study year
  - transparent procedure, visible results & consequences
Evaluation of curricula - Vienna

Analysis of students’ competences (I):

• measure and monitor the transfer and acquisition of student competencies
• model of competences (standards of EAEVE, EQF, current research)
• twice during students’ life:
  • after 3rd year;
  • after clinical rotations
• online questionnaire
• pilot in autumn/fall 2013

© Evelyn Bergsmann, Petra Winter, Barbara Schober & Christine Spiel
Analysis of students’ competences (II):

- in cooperation with educational psychologists (University of Vienna)
- students: self-analysis
- teachers: taught competences
- teachers of later courses
- instructors: students’ competences in “real world”
- + course evaluations → efficient, comprehensive concept for quality assurance in teaching at Vetmeduni

© Evelyn Bergsmann, Petra Winter, Barbara Schober & Christine Spiel
Evaluation of curricula Helsinki

• **Evaluation**
  - 2003-2004 planning and trial of an organised student feedback system - whole year and degree feedback
  - 2006 a working group for student feedback system established
  - Functions in the same way as course and teacher evaluations in general
  - Evaluation of the whole study year and after completion of a degree play a key role
    - Focus: functionality, overlapping and workload of the curriculum
    - Whole study year evaluation allows students to compare courses
    - Crucial for curriculum planning and enhancement of functionality and teaching quality
Evaluation of curricula Helsinki

• **Motivation and importance**
  • Academic credits
  • Mandatory in order to complete a study year / degree
  • Changes made because of previous evaluation results!

• **Other**
  • HOPS, OPPI - self evaluation
  • Student attendance within University
    • Board of the Faculty
    • Collegial body
    • Curricular workgroup
    • Committees
    • Subject association
    • Direct feedback

• **Results in constant development and improvement of the curricula**
• "Students are in a **better position than anyone else** to judge certain aspects of teaching, such as how clear, interesting, respectful, and fair a course instructor is."

• “They’re the only ones who can say how an instructor has influenced their **attitude** toward the course subject, their **motivation** to learn it, and their **self-confidence**.”

• “For these and other reasons, student ratings should be considered an **essential component** of faculty teaching performance evaluation.”

  - FELDER RM, BRENT R