

ATTITUDE OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS TO STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION (SEI)

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to assess the attitude of academic staff in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions student evaluation of instruction (SEI), and to find out if the expressed attitude was influenced by academic staff's characteristics such as gender, school type, academic staff discipline, academic qualification, professional status and teaching experience. The study was a survey, with questionnaire as instrument for data collection. Academic staff in Cross River State were sampled for the study using a proportional stratified and simple random techniques to select 600 academic staff that took part in the study. Four hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA. The findings were as follows: (i) Nigerian academic staff displayed a significantly positive attitude to SEI, irrespective of the purposes to be served by the evaluation, although the attitude was more positive under formative than summative purposes; (ii) staff of the Faculties of Education and Arts displayed a significantly more positive attitude than staff from Science-based disciplines; (iii) their expressed attitude was significantly influenced by staff's professional status and academic qualification; (iv) staff of College of Education expressed a relatively more positive attitude to SEI than their counterparts from the Universities. It was concluded that Nigerian academic staff are the same as their counterparts abroad where faculty evaluation in general and SEI in particular have become part of the school system. It was therefore, recommended that faculty evaluation

should be introduced in our tertiary institutions as a way of enhancing the quality of teaching at that level of our education.

Introduction and Review of Literature

In Nigeria today, serious concern has been expressed by parents, lecturers, employers of labor and the entire society about the quality of graduates from universities and other tertiary educational institutions. Several reasons have been suggested for the poor quality but perhaps, no consensus has been reached as to the effect of classroom interaction on the quality of our graduates. It is, however, no secret that most academic staff has compromised the teaching aspect of their primary responsibilities due in part to the proverbial “publish or perish” syndrome. Consequently, teaching suffers and grades are awarded whether or not students are taught or guided to learn. This seeming lack of interest in what transpires in the classroom may be a serious factor in the quality of graduates produced. Certain kind of monitoring is therefore necessary if higher education is to achieve its objectives. It is at this juncture, coupled with the way our higher educational institutions are operated, that student evaluation becomes imperative.

Student evaluation of instruction (SEI) is one of the popular approaches of faculty evaluation. Other approaches include: classroom observation, peer evaluation, self-evaluation and so on. Student evaluation of instruction means that students as consumers of instruction are made to express their opinion and feeling concerning the effectiveness of the lecturer’s instructional process and activities during the semester and the extent to which they benefited from that process. Although student evaluation has been engrossed in controversy, it is often used to improve instruction, enhance the professional growth of the academic staff and used as a measure of observed instructional performance of the lecturer from the student standpoint (Joshua, 1999).

This controversial approach of faculty evaluation has gained currency following the following assumptions or conclusions of Remmers who is known to be the father of SEI: (i) there is a warrant for ascribing validity to students’ rating, not merely as measures of students’ attitude toward instructor but also as what students actually learn of the content of the course; (ii) students’ judgments as criterion of effective teaching can no longer be waved aside as invalid and irrelevant; (iii) teachers at all levels of the educational ladder have no real choice as to whether they will be judged by those they teach, but the real choice any teacher has is whether he/she wants to use this knowledge in his/her teaching procedures; (iv) as higher education is organized and operated, students are pretty much the only ones who observe and are in a position to judge the teachers’ teaching effectiveness; and (v) no research has been published invalidating the use of student opinion as one criterion of teachers’ teaching effectiveness (Remmers, 1927). Since then, the use of student-ratings as an index of teaching effectiveness has attracted several studies. While some results are spurious, others are quite revealing and interesting.

Many of these studies e.g. Marsh (1987), Marsh and Dunkin (1991), Mckeachie (1983), Roe and MacDonald (1983) have found positive attitude of teachers or academic staff (faculty) to student evaluation of instruction/instructor. Of course, these findings attest to the usefulness and accuracy of student evaluation as an index of teaching effectiveness. Other studies have found teachers’ or faculty’s negative attitude to SEI, e.g. Kauchak, Peterson and Driscoll (1985); and Joshua and Joshua (2003).

Problem of the Study

There has been widely recognized reduction in the quality of our graduates from tertiary educational institutions in the country. Despite this, some faculty tend to believe that it is an invasion of their privacy for any one to ask about how they are teaching their courses, what results are their teaching producing in the learners, and whether there could be room for improvement. Some faculty members tend to carry the concept of 'academic freedom' to the extreme in believing that no person should inquire about what they are doing in the classroom, and how they are teaching their students, and what students say about their teaching. Yet, students, as the major stakeholders in the instructional process, need to give their opinions on whether they have been well taught or not. But what should such opinions be used for? What is the attitude of faculty members to validity and use of such opinions? Thus, two questions agitated the minds of the researchers. These were: what is the attitude of faculty members in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions to faculty evaluation, particularly student rating positive? How is their attitude influenced by their personal and environmental characteristics? Seeking answers to these posers constituted the major problem addressed in this study.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was three-fold: to determine the nature of attitude of Nigerian academic staff to SEI; to determine whether such attitude varies with the purpose to be served by the evaluation results; and to determine whether such attitude is influenced by some personal and environmental variables.

The study, then, was designed to test four null hypotheses:-

- i. The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of lecturers' instructional effectiveness is not significantly positive.
- ii. The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of instruction is not significantly influenced by the purpose served by the evaluation results (whether formative or summative purposes).
- iii. The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of instruction is not significantly influenced by the academic staff discipline (whether Education, Science-based or Arts-based disciplines).
- iv. The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of instruction is not significantly influenced by the academic staff's gender, type of school, academic qualification, professional status and teaching experience (under formative or summative purposes).

Methodology

The study was basically a survey and questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Academic staff from Cross River (one of the 36 States in Nigeria) were used to represent academic staff in Nigeria. The accessible population of academic staff in the tertiary institutions in Cross River State was 1,586, consisting of 1,308 males and 278 females. Out of these 130 (8%) were from the only College of Education and 1456 (92%) from the universities. A proportional stratified random technique was used to select 600, academic staff from the

population. All the six-characteristics:- gender, school type, academic qualification, staff's discipline, professional status and teaching experience were represented in the sample chosen.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, constructed by the researchers and vetted by three experts in educational research, measurement and evaluation, and psychology for face and content validities. It consisted of 20 items, with items 1-10 dealing with formative perspective and items 11-20 dealing with summative perspective of evaluation. The 6-point Likert scale (Very Strongly Agree, Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Very Strongly Disagree) was used. Using Cronbach-Alpha reliability estimate, the instrument yielded 0.63. The respondents were to indicate their attitude if they knew that the results of such evaluation would be used for formative purposes (e.g. improving instructional competence and classroom effectiveness) and also when the results would be used for summative purposes (e.g. promotion, rewards, reprimands and dismissal). The 600 copies of the research instrument were personally administered on the lecturers with the assistance of friends, colleagues and relatives in the respective schools. A total of 540 copies representing 90% were duly completed and returned. The statistical analysis techniques used in testing the hypotheses were t-test statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA), at .05 level of probability.

Data Analysis and Results

These are presented hypothesis by hypothesis:-

Hypothesis One

The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of lecturers' instructional effectiveness is not significantly positive.

In testing this hypothesis, the researchers reasoned that for the attitude measure to be considered significantly positive, the score made on it should be significantly greater than 35.00 (which is the midpoint between 'agree' and 'disagree', which is 3.5 multiplied by 10, the number of items measuring the variable. The null hypothesis is that the mean score representing Nigerian academic staff's attitude to SEI is not significantly higher than 35.00. ($H_0: \mu = 35.00$; $H_1: \mu > 35.00$). The hypothesis was tested with a t-test of one-sample mean (also known as population t-test). The results are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
A Population t-test analysis of whether academic staff's attitude to SEI is significantly positive

Variable	Sample Mean	S.D	Reference Mean	t value
Academic staff's attitude to SEI when purpose is formative	41.84	5.62	35.00	28.87*
Academic staff's attitude to SEI when purpose is summative	37.08	6.98	35.00	6.94*

*Significant at .05 level (critical t-value = 1.98) $N = 540$; $df = 539$

The results in Table 1 show that the calculated t-values of 28.87 and 6.94 for formative and summative purposes respectively are each greater than the critical t-value. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. In other words, the attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of lecturers' instructional effectiveness is significantly positive, both when the purposes to be served by such evaluations are formative, and when they are summative.

Hypothesis Two

The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of lecturer's instructional effectiveness when the purpose is formative is not significantly different from their attitude when the purpose is summative. The statistical form of this hypothesis is that the mean score representing the attitude of academic staff to SEI when the result is to serve formative purposes is not significantly different from the mean score of the same staff when the result is to serve summative purposes. ($H_0: \mu_f = \mu_s$; $H_1: \mu_f \neq \mu_s$). A dependent t-test was used to test this null hypothesis and the results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

A dependent t-test analysis of difference in academic staff's attitude to SEI under formative and summative purposes

Purpose of evaluation	Mean	S.D	t	df
Formative	41.84	5.26	17.66*	539
Summative	37.08	6.89		

*Significant at .05 level (critical t-value = 1.98); $N = 540$

Table 2 indicates that the calculated t-value, 17.66 is greater than the critical t-value, 1.98 for a two-tailed test. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. It therefore means that the measure of academic staff attitude to SEI when the purpose is formative is significantly greater than the attitude measure when the purpose is summative. It can be said therefore, that the attitude of Nigerian academic staff towards SEI when the purposes to be served are formative is more positive than their attitude when the purposes to be served are summative.

Hypothesis Three

The academic staff's discipline does not have any significant influence on the attitude of Nigerian academic staff to SEI, when the purpose of evaluation is formative or summative.

The statistical form of this hypothesis is that the mean scores representing the attitudes of academic staff towards SEI, from Education, Science-based and Arts based disciplines are not significantly different ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3$). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed in testing this hypothesis. The results of the analysis are as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Results of one-way ANOVA of effect of academic staff's disciplines on their attitudes towards SEI under formative and summative purposes.

Variable	Group	N	\bar{X}	SD
Formative purposes	1(Education)	103	42.54	5.45
	2(Science-based)	229	41.54	5.58
	3(Arts-based)	208	41.83	5.75
Summative purposes	1(Education)	103	38.10	6.88
	2(Science-based)	229	35.78	6.67
	3(Arts-based)	208	38.02	7.15
	Total sample	540		

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. of F
Formative:					
Between Groups	72.05	2	36.02	1.14	.321
Within groups	16970.26	537	31.60		
Total	17042.31	539			
Summative:					
Between groups	678.66	2	339.83	7.13*	.001
Within groups	25570.59	537	47.62		
Total	26249.25	539			

Table 3 shows that for formative purposes of evaluation, the F-ratio is not significant at .05 level of probability. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. On the other hand, the situation for summative shows an F-ratio of 7.13, which is significant at .05 level; in which case, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that the attitude of Nigerian academic staff towards SEI is only affected by their academic discipline under summative purposes. It is evident from Table 3 (upper part) that the significant difference shown in the analysis occurs mainly because of the academic staff from the Science-based disciplines. The mean values representing the attitudes of academic staff from Education and Arts-based disciplines (38.10 and 38.02 respectively) are about the same, and are higher than the mean value for staff in the Science-based discipline (35.78). In other words, academic staff from Education and Arts-based disciplines displayed a higher positive attitude towards SEI than their counterparts from the Science-based disciplines.

Hypothesis Four

The attitude of Nigerian academic staff to student evaluation of lecturers' instructional effectiveness (SEI) is not significantly influenced by the staff's gender, school type, academic qualification, professional status and teaching experience when the purpose of evaluation is (a) formative and (b) summative.

The independent variables in this hypothesis are five (gender, school type, academic qualification, professional status and teaching experience), and each of these has two levels or classifications; and the dependent variable is academic staff's attitude to SEI. To test the

hypothesis, independent t-test as applied on each of the independent variables, and the results are as presented in Table 5. The figures in parentheses are for instances of summative purposes, while the ones without parentheses are for instances of formative evaluation.

TABLE 5
Analyses of the effects of academic staff's gender, school type, academic qualification, professional status and teaching experience on their attitude to SEI

Variable	Group	N	Means	SD	t-value
Gender	1(Males)	379	41.91(37.35)	5.89(7.14)	0.46 (1.34)
	2(Females)	161	41.67(36.76)	4.14(6.57)	
School type	1(University)	492	41.63(36.76)	5.65(6.88)	-2.76* (-3.13*)
	2(College)	48	43.98(40.40)	4.88(7.23)	
Qualification	1(Ph.D/Masters)	423	42.75(38.69)	5.92(8.19)	1.99* (2.84*)
	2(B. Sc.& below)	117	41.59(36.64)	5.52(6.55)	
Prof. Status	1(Snr.Lect-Prof.)	145	43.54(40.02)	6.27(8.01)	4.32* (6.12*)
	2(Grad.Asst.-Lect 1)	395	41.22(36.01)	5.24(6.23)	
Teaching Exp.	1(above 10yrs)	403	41.78(37.33)	5.58(7.08)	-0.45 (1.38)
	2(0-10yrs)	137	42.03(36.37)	5.77(6.63)	
Total		540			

* *Significant at .05 level; Critical t = 1.98; df = 538*

The entries in Table 5 show the different group sizes, means and standard deviations for the groups on attitude towards SEI under formative and summative purposes, and t-values that show whether the group differences are significant. For gender, the male lecturers are not significantly different from the female lecturers in their attitude to SEI under the two purposes. For school type, the significant t-values of -2.76 and -3.13 indicate that under both purposes, the attitude of College of Education lecturers is significantly more positive than that of the university lecturers. For academic qualification, the attitude of those lecturers with Masters degrees and higher is significantly more positive than the attitude of those with bachelors degree and its equivalents, under both purposes of evaluation. For professional status, the significant t-values of 4.32 and 6.12 for formative and summative purposes indicate that the attitude of the senior lecturers (Senior Lecturers up to Professors) to SEI is significantly more positive than the attitude of the junior lecturers (Lecturer 1 and below), under the two purposes of evaluation. For teaching experience, the attitude of lecturers with 10 years of experience or less is not significantly different from that those with more than 10 years experience, under both formative and summative purposes of SEI.

Discussion of findings

The major finding of this study is that Nigerian academic staff sampled have shown a significantly positive attitude to Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI), notwithstanding the purposes to be served by such evaluation. This affirms that Nigerian academic staff are not different from their counterparts abroad where faculty evaluation in general and student evaluation of instruction in particular has taken a firm root. This finding tends to agree with those of Marsh (1987), Marsh and Dunkin (1991), Mckeachie (1983) cited earlier in this study.

In all these studies, teachers were found to display significant positive attitudes to student evaluation of teachers. Of course, this finding has further given credence to the conclusions of Remmers, the father of student evaluation of instruction (Remmers, 1927).

The next finding of this study is that academic staff were found to display more significant positive attitude to SEI when the purpose to be served is formative than when the purpose is summative. The finding here is in agreement with those of Newton and Braithwaite (1988), Joshua (1998) and Joshua and Joshua (2003). This is not surprising because teachers the world over have greater tendency towards self-preservation; and would resent the use of SEI for promotion, pay rise or demotion.

The next finding of this study is that academic staff from the Faculty of education and arts-based disciplines displayed a more positive attitude to SEI than their counterparts in the science-based disciplines. This finding is not surprising. The academic staff in Faculties of Education have gone through courses like educational psychology, curriculum development, test measurement and evaluation, teaching methodology, among others. With this background, they should be at a vantage position of being more skilful in teaching than others. Consequently, they should be more tolerable and receptive of instructor/instructional evaluation practices and approaches. This finding corroborates that of Newton and Braithwaite.

The next finding of this study is that only gender and teaching experience showed no significant influence on the staff's attitude to SEI; but that each of school type, academic qualification and professional status showed significant influence on the attitude of staff to SEI under both formative and summative evaluation. It is quite interesting, informative and encouraging to note that the relatively more senior, more matured and more academically qualified staff are the ones that exhibited more positive attitude to SEI, under the two major purposes of evaluation. On the whole, however, Nigerian academic staff sampled, seem to be unanimous in accepting SEI, their personal and environmental differences notwithstanding.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it can be concluded that Nigerian academic staff are not so different from their counterparts in USA and UK where the practice of faculty evaluation has taken a firm root, particularly against the backdrop of being widely recognized as the panacea for quality teaching. It is therefore recommended that administrators of Nigerian universities and other tertiary educational institutions should be courageous enough to formally introduce faculty evaluation, which would combine SEI with other approaches and the results used for both formative and summative purposes. The researchers believe this scenario will improve the dwindling image of that level of our educational system.

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