Comparative Analysis of Students' Attitudes on Teaching Quality and Its Assessment in Higher Education

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Abstract - This paper presents the results of a study of students' attitudes about characteristics of teaching quality in higher education. The research was conducted using a survey method on graduate students who were asked to rank according to the importance certain aspects of quality that are checked during the teaching quality assurance procedures conducted by the University of Zagreb. Teachers' qualifications, teaching competences and personal qualities were listed as teaching qualities, while course content and course organizational characteristics were used for course assessment. Also students were asked to evaluate their own capability to participate in teaching quality assessment and that was ranked in section teaching quality assessment management. The paper will present a comparative analysis of collected results with the results of a survey conducted in year 2010. The paper will also present students' attitudes about procedure of conducting the teaching quality assessment, with special emphasis on the application of information and communication technologies for implementation of teaching quality assessment and the dissemination of the results.

Keywords - teaching quality, higher education, ICT

I. INTRODUCTION

Universities around the world use teaching quality survey results as a benchmark for measuring their progress in strengthening teaching excellence and providing high-quality learning experiences for their students. Surveys are most used method for quality control, because they are time efficient means of collecting results, detect trends and monitor and improve current methods for effective teaching. Universities have also started exploring the use of teaching performance indicators for performance based funding and for benchmarking purposes to evaluate their current performance, so it is important to explore attitudes about the quality of teaching of different participants in the educational process.

The issue of teaching quality is the subject of numerous researches. Research conducted by Malm [14] shows that a teacher needs to have professional knowledge and skills, but also values and norms, in order to perform their work well. Roberts and Dyer [17] are on the same track dividing these three framework categories in more detail into 33 teacher characteristics.

Blaškova, Blaško and Kucharčikova [15] present their model based on eight compulsory competencies (moral and ethical; technological; scientific; teaching; recognized author; role of the model; mature personality; critical thinking; communication competencies and motivational competencies) that a modern university professor needs to possess in order to be able to maintain quality of university teaching.

Young [16] considers that a teacher is effective in his work if he possesses pedagogical knowledge; he is able to prepare and plan his teaching, uses different teaching methods during teaching, and regularly monitors and evaluates the student's work.

II. METHODOLOGY

Main objective of this study was to investigate students' attitudes toward certain teacher and course characteristics which are measured in teaching assessment surveys conducted by the University of Zagreb. Secondary objective of this research was to explore students' attitudes about practical implementation of quality control procedures.

Third objective of this research was to explore students' attitudes about teaching quality assessment management process.

Students were asked to rank by importance teacher and course characteristics which influence quality of teaching. Survey was conducted by on-line questionnaire on 142 graduate students from Faculty of humanities and Social sciences in January 2020.

Since this is a longitudinal research, the results obtained in 2010 on a sample of 104 graduate students will be presented comparatively.

III. FINDINGS

A. General questions

First question asked students to express their competence for evaluation of quality of teaching on scale from one, which represents complete incompetence, to five, which represents complete competence.
Average result was 3.96 which present that students think that they are very competent to evaluate quality of teaching.

Following question asked students to estimate in what extent will their evaluation change teaching practice. They could answer on scale from 1, which represented no change at all, to 5, which represented complete change.

Students in this research ranked almost identically teacher expertise characteristics as students in research conducted in the year 2010.

Next set of teacher competence characteristics represents teacher’s ability to create good working atmosphere and teach.

The most important teaching competence that teacher should have is to teach course content clearly and self-explanatory. There were slight changes in the ranking of the second and third characteristic. Such results may suggest changing student attitudes about importance of characteristic “Lectures have a good structure and time is rationally used” which rank have lowered.

Least important characteristic in both researches was that teacher raise quality of teaching by use of modern technology.

Last category of teacher’s characteristics represents his personal qualities which influence quality of teaching.

Several studies show that teachers are still not inclined to overuse modern technology for the purpose of maintaining teaching at the higher education level. In their work, Manca and Ranieri [10] have shown that teachers limited use of social media in their teaching for pedagogical, institutional and cultural reasons. The use of modern technology for teaching purposes is also related to the teacher's digital competencies. Amhag, Stigmár and Hellström [11] showed that 54.8% of higher education teachers rated their digital competencies at a satisfactory average level. Also, 50.0% of teachers stated that they need further training in their digital skills. In addition, 55.4% of teachers attended professional development related to the digitalization of the teaching process. It is evident from the above that higher education teachers are aware of the growing trend of penetration of modern technologies into the teaching process and that they are
professionally improving themselves in order to modernize their teaching.

TABLE VII. COURSE ORGANIZATION CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Average rank 2010</th>
<th>Average rank 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Course goals and student duties are clearly defined</td>
<td>1,7 (1)</td>
<td>1,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Lectures where properly followed by exercises and seminars</td>
<td>2,0 (2)</td>
<td>1,97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Course organization encourages</td>
<td>2,3 (3)</td>
<td>2,15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in previous research, students emphasize that course should have clearly defined goals and student duties. This can be attributed to the fact that students are continuously evaluated during semester through series of projects and exercises on various courses so they prefer to be informed about their duties at the beginning of a semester so that they could plan their activities during semester. Last ranked course organization characteristic is that course encourages student active participation, that student perception can be attributed to fact that students have high workload during semester on various activities, so they prefer courses with lower demands.

Brint, Cantwell, and Hanneman [12] identified student’s active participation in course. This research provide an overview of the student’s academic engagement that is also related to the organization of the course. One of the characteristic is student-teacher interaction which encompasses the professional relationship that is realized between the teacher and the student in such a way that the teacher has a model that takes care of his students by providing them timely guidance and feedback. In addition, the level of academic response is very important, emphasizing the importance of high expectations, which is visible through the complexity of the course, such as seeking analysis and synthesis of reading material, critical thinking or applying theories in practice.

Research provided by Beran and Violato [13] shows that if the course is organized in such a way that discussions are expected and the application of learned work on examples, students will acquire higher levels of knowledge, and also they will have higher expectations in terms of assessment.

D. Teaching quality assessment management

Last set of questions explored students’ attitudes about teaching quality management procedures and techniques.

First question asked students their attitudes whether all students should be required to complete a teaching quality survey. Two-thirds of students (66%) answered that it should be required and 34% think that it shouldn’t be required.

Next question asked students whether they support the introduction of a compulsory quality survey of all courses taken during semester/year via student administration system. Majority of students (76%) support this mechanism of compulsory feedback on teaching quality.

Several studies ([2],[3],[6]) have highlighted the importance of providing feedback to students on implemented quality improvement procedures, so one question explored students’ opinion whether the results of the quality of teaching surveys should be made public. Majority of students (61%) think that results should be published. Students were asked in another question do they think that improvement of quality of teaching could be influenced by the publication of the results of teaching quality survey and 79% answered positively. It would be interesting to further explore this discrepancy in results where 18% of students doesn’t support publication of...
results although they think that it could be beneficial for improvement.

Overwhelming majority (93%) of students think that they should be informed of the steps taken to improve the quality of teaching. This confirm results from several researches ([1,4,7]) which showed that good communication strategy represents crucial factor in establishment of good teaching quality management system. Good teaching quality management systems envision communication strategy which presents results of actions taken to improve quality of teaching to students and teachers by which they are motivated to participate in future quality management cycle.

Students were also asked to express what would be their preferred way of completion of teaching quality survey. For majority of them preferred way is on-line form (59%), followed by “on-line form on student administration system” with (28%) and only 13% of students preferred printed forms.

IV. CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that students’ attitudes towards the characteristics of teaching quality have not changed significantly within ten years, except for the increase in the importance of practical applicability of knowledge, which can be explained by the reform activities in the past ten years. A greater change in attitudes is evident around rewarding good teachers and penalizing bad teachers. In 2010 survey, an equal number advocated penalizing poor teachers (89%) and rewarding good teachers (87%), while in this study there was a decrease in the number of students who would penalize poor teachers (80%) and an increase in the number of students who would reward good teachers (96%).

Teaching quality assessment surveys remain an important tool for collecting data on student attitudes about the teaching process, but they only represent the beginning of establishment of a teaching quality culture. Most commonly teaching quality control surveys are implemented as summative at the end of semester or academic year, but it is interesting to note that research by Winchester and Winchester [8] recommends that the utilization of weekly formative quality control survey helps teachers to improve their teaching and increase their summative score towards the end of academic year.

For conclusion, it is important to emphasize how the data collected by teaching quality survey is used, because the collected data only allow detection of problems, but doesn’t automatically instigate their resolution, so procedures aimed at improving quality are crucial to achieve higher quality of teaching.

REFERENCES