WCES 2012

Online vs. traditional teaching evaluation: a cross-sectional study

Khorsandi M [a] *, Kobra A [b], Ghobadzadeh M[c,] Kalantari M, [d] Seifei M [e]

[a,] *Faculty member of Arak university of Medical sciences, Arak,Iran , b Arak university of Medical sciences, Arak,Iran: c: University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, USA d; MD Arak university of Medical sciences, Arak,Iran ,e: Faculty member of Azad uinversity of Arak,Arak,Iran*

Abstract

Teaching evaluation contributed to the improvement of teaching quality and faculty's teaching skills. Faculty course evaluations have the potential to affect professional and career advancement. It is also important to medical education systems because is often used as the basis for evaluations of teaching effectiveness and improves the quality of manpower performance. This study's goal was to compare two methods of student evaluations of faculty, the traditional method versus online. This was a cross-sectional study. The study population was 658 students. The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire to evaluate the quality of faculty teaching gathered through paper-based approach or completed online. The findings showed that students preferred the online method for evaluating the quality of teaching (p<0.001) over the traditional method. Compared to traditional evaluation, online evaluation tends to have significantly greater advantages. The findings suggest that online evaluation of faculty may be a suitable alternative to the paper evaluation.

Keywords: Online evaluation, students, and quality of faculty teaching

Introduction

Faculty Course Evaluations are used to improve the quality of teaching and learning through feedback to both individual faculty members and promotion committees[1]. Responses to the Faculty Course Evaluation provide information on students' perceptions of their engagement, learning outcomes, the instructor's behavior and course activities. Virtually every academic institution regularly performs student evaluations of faculty teaching performance, the majority of which are conducted in a classroom setting with paper surveys[1].

Within the past few years, several papers have reported the development and use of online faculty evaluations for students receiving their instruction over the Internet[2].

The online method of gathering faculty evaluations has numerous advantages over the traditional, in-class method. The benefits of having students complete faculty evaluations online as compared to the traditional paper format include time and cost savings, less susceptibility to influences, and faster reporting of results[3].

With paper-based evaluations, students have only one opportunity to provide their opinion of their professor. However, with the online method of evaluation, students have multiple days on which to provide their evaluation[4]. Furthermore, since the online method is less time sensitive than traditional method, students can provide as complete a response to the questions as they wish[5].

* Khorsandi M. Tel.: 098-8614173638
  E-mail address:khorsandi_mahboobeh@yahoo.com

Previous studies showed that students prefer completing online faculty evaluations to traditional method[6] . The lack of an anonymous response is a concern of students using both the traditional or online method of evaluation, as they sometimes fear that a professor will be able to identify their handwriting in answers or their ID with their responses to online questions[5].

The goal of this study was to compare the traditional paper-based evaluation with online method. The researchers also sought to discover differences in (1) The mean scores for the two traditional and online methods; (2) Anonymity and the degree to which the respondents feel confident in the anonymity of their responses; (3) The questions asked on the evaluation forms in this study also designed to reveal the students' preferred method of evaluation.

Methods

This is a cross-sectional descriptive study. Student surveys were returned by 685 individuals, from a total of 854 sent. This survey was created and administered using the online survey software. One site was created for the participants to deliver the evaluation online. They were able to conveniently access to the online forms by applying a numerical code of access recorded on the paper-based evaluation form. Students were given instructions regarding the procedures for completing the surveys. The identical evaluation instrument was used for both traditional and online formats. Traditional evaluations were given to students during the last class session. The online evaluations were available within 48 hours after completing the paper-based one. All students who had taken at least one semester in the college during the year and experienced the two evaluation methods were provided a link to the electronic survey.

The results were then analyzed by SPSS to determine differences between online and traditional evaluations.

.

Results

The findings revealed that most participants preferred the online method of evaluation ($p<0.001$). A general finding was that mean differences between online and traditional were significant. The paired-t test revealed that there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.0001$) between the online and traditional evaluation mean scores. Table 1 summarizes the results of the tests. The difference between the two means indicated an increase of 1.16 in student ratings in the online method. Online evaluations produce essentially greater quantitative scores as those administered in class. The results showed that students found more confident in the anonymity of their responses under the web-based method ($p<0.001$). The mean scores for the questions related to anonymity of both methods showed a significant difference between two methods .

Table1. Significance differences between mean scores of online and traditional methods

Evaluation Methods				paired t-tests	Results
Online		Paper-based			
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	-2.79	p<0.001
15.3	1.56	14.14	4.11		

Discussion

The study found that online evaluations produce significantly different mean evaluation scores than traditional in-class evaluations. The result of the study is in line with prior research findings that online surveys may produce a greater quantity of response to questions, for online survey the respondents tend to provide more information and felt that the web-based method was more able to preserve their anonymity[5]. In contrast with our finding, Donovan et al.[7] (1995) found no significant differences in numerical rankings between the two evaluation formats.

The findings of the current study are consistent with those of studies that found most students prefer the online method of evaluation and have little difficulty accessing and using the online system[5]. Most of participants indicated the anonymity and privacy of online evaluations were reasons they prefer them. In another study, over 90% of students marked Agree or Strongly Agree when asked if they preferred online to traditional evaluation format[9]. Another study reported that the online tool was easy to use, students liked the anonymity of the online evaluation, and the online evaluation allowed them to offer more thoughtful remarks than did the traditional paper-based teaching evaluation[10].

This study and its findings demonstrate that gathering teaching evaluations online is a suitable alternative to the traditional paper-based method.

This study is limited with only one semester of complete course evaluations data. Therefore, further studies to include more data are suggested to support the findings of this study.

Acknowledgements

References

1.) Moss, J. & Hendry, G. (2002) Use of electronic surveys in course evaluation, *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 33(5), 583–592.

2) Reid, I. C. (2001) Reflections on using the Internet for the evaluation of course delivery, *The Internet and Higher Education*, 4(1), 61–75.

3) Kronholm, E. A., Wisher, R. A., Curnow, C. K. & Poker, F. (1999) The transformation of a distance learning enterprise to an Internet base: from advertising to evaluation, paper presented at the *Northern Arizona University NAU/Web99 Conference*, Flagstaff, AZ.

4) Crawford, S. D., Couper, M. P. & Lamias, M. J. (2001) Web surveys: perceptions of burden,*Social Science Computer Review*, 19(2), 146–162.

5) Layne, B. H., DeCristoforo, J. R. & McGinty, D. (1999) Electronic versus traditional student ratings of instruction, *Research in Higher Education*, 40(2), 221–232.

6) Dommeyer, C. J., Baum, P. & Hanna, R. W. (2002b) College students' attitudes towards methods of collecting teaching evaluations: in-class vs. online, *Journal of Education for Business*, 78(1), 11–15.

7) Donovan, J., Mader,C., Constructive student feedback: Online vs. traditional course evaluations. Journal of Interactive Online Learning. Volume 5, Number 3, Winter 2006

8) Kittleson, M. J. (1995). An assessment of the response rate via the postal service and email. Health Values, 29, 2. 27-37.

9) Anderson, H.M., Cain, J., & Bird, E. (2005). Online Course Evaluations: Review of Literature and a pilot study. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 69(1), 34-43.

10) Ravelli, B. (2000). Anonymous Online Teaching Assessments: Preliminary Findings, Paper presented at: Annual National Conference of the American Association for Higher

11)Education, June 14-18, 2000; Charlotte, North Carolina.