



Assessing the Quality of Teaching at Afghanistan Universities

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ABSTRACT

The current paper is a quantitative study in which we used a survey instrument to gather data regarding teaching quality at Afghanistan universities. The purpose of this study is to identify the quality of teaching of university lecturers at Afghanistan universities. The data for this study was collected from university students through an online questionnaire containing the questions designed by the Ministry of Higher Education plus a questionnaire used by an internationally supported educational organization. The data was analyzed using the Excel program. The findings show that the quality of teaching at Afghanistan universities is satisfactory. As well as the participants have had a positive perspective regarding university teachers' teaching.

Keywords: quality teaching, university lecturers, teaching method, understandable

Introduction

Quality teaching from a cognitive perspective is linked to the beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and disposition teachers bring into the profession (Wang et al., 2011). "Quality education includes processes through which trained teachers use child-centered teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities" (UNICEF, 2000, P.4). Quality teaching is one which extends what learners already know in facilitating the ability to acquire, construct, and create new knowledge, (Hollins, 2011). Hollings (2011) added that the essential knowledge, skill, and understanding for quality teaching include (a) knowledge of human growth and development; (b) deep understanding of the learning process that combines findings from new learning sciences with a theoretical perspective on learning as a framework for classroom practices and the assessment of learning; (c) deep understanding the organizing ideas for a discipline; (d) an understanding pedagogy as a clearly designed and interrelated pattern of learning experiences embedded within a particular theoretical perspective and guided by a clearly articulated philosophical stance that provides vision and purpose for long and short-term learning outcomes; (e) an understanding of how to identify and develop appropriate classroom assessment approaches for evaluating learners' progress in relationship to discipline-specific knowledge and practice and how to manage demands of standards-based curriculum and assessment; and (f) an ability to maintain a strong professional identity, engage in self-directed professional growth and development, recognize characteristics and qualities of professional communities in different contexts, and work collaboratively with colleagues within a professional community to improve learning.

Policy discourses about teaching quality are closely related to particular ideas of teacher accountability and responsibility (Singh, Allen, & Rowan, 2019). Student-centered methods contain a great number of various instructional methods, for example, project-based learning, problem-based learning, just-in-time teaching, and discussion methods, (Holubova, 2010). Also, Holubova (2010) has found in her projects that students are interested in interactive teaching strategies and experimental laboratory tasks. In order to have quality teaching, Holubova (2010) has suggested several modern teaching methods such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, consensus decision-making, brainstorming, mind mapping, and heuristic methodology. One of these interactive methods is problem-based learning. It is often referred to as a form of inquiry-based learning which describes an environment in which learning is driven by a process of inquiry by students.

According to Biggs and Tang (2011), the most important ways of improving teaching are: (1) recognizing that good teaching is as much a function of institution-wide infrastructure as it is a gift with which some lucky academics are born. Thus, policies and procedures that encourage good teaching and assessment across the whole institution need to be put in place. (2) Shifting the focus from the teacher to the learner, and specifically, to define what learning outcomes students are meant

to achieve when teachers address the topics they are meant to teach. The authors added that these two points are mutually supportive. In addition, they stated that most UK universities today might describe course and program outcomes in terms of the outcomes students are intended to attain. They added, that in outcome-based teaching and learning (OBTL) we state what we intend the general outcomes a graduate of a university should achieve, and following from that, we derive the content-based program and specific course-level outcomes.

Darling-Hammond (2012) pointed out, “The impact of good teaching is increasingly cited as a major determination of the economic well-being of a society and its citizens” (P.1). Yet, she has stated that teaching is demanding and complex in nature. Those individuals who make it a lifelong career, under the right circumstances, become much better at it over time. Darling-Hammond (2012) added that teachers must be offered challenging and interesting career paths and professional opportunities to use their expertise in a variety of interesting roles because their skills evolve over a well-defined continuum of growth. Miskeljin & Arsenijevic (2014) stated that one of the basic purposes of applied evaluation activities and procedures for monitoring should be developing teachers’ education programs.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do Afghanistan university lecturers have quality teaching?

RQ2: What is the student’s perspective about Afghanistan university lecturers’ teaching?

Method

This is a quantitative study which encompasses survey research with the purpose of assessing Afghanistan university lecturers’ teaching quality. Therefore, a questionnaire with close-ended questions was designed and published online.

Participants

The data for the current study has been gathered from 81 undergraduate students majoring in English language and literature. The data was collected from both male and female students. 60 of the participants were male and 21 were female. The participants were freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. The participants were from four different public universities in Afghanistan. They participated in the study and answered the questionnaire voluntarily.

Instrument

To collect the data for this study, we used an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire was made up of 26 close-ended questions. The questionnaire consisted of the questions designed by the Ministry of Higher Education to evaluate lecturers’ teaching quality and the questions designed and used by the Social Development and Research Organization for Afghans.

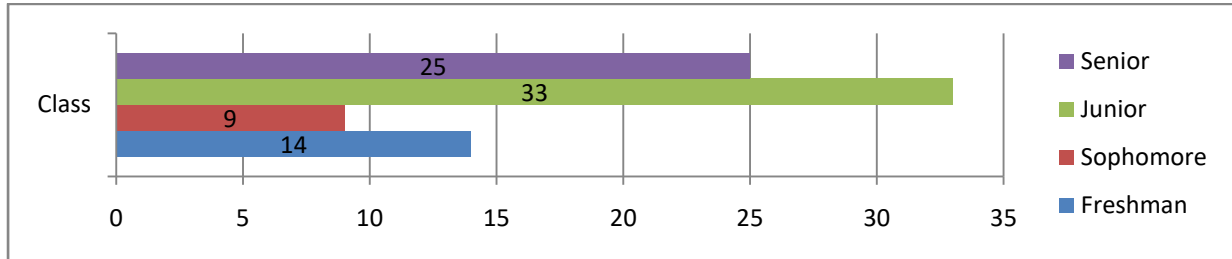
Procedure

Firstly, we provided the questionnaire using Google Forms and published it online. Secondly, we shared the link to the questionnaire with the lecturers we were in touch with and asked them to share it with their students. We left the questionnaire active for 10 days and as a result, 81 students from four different universities answered it. Then, we downloaded the form and analyzed the data using an Excel program. Finally, we displayed and described the data in the following charts.

Findings

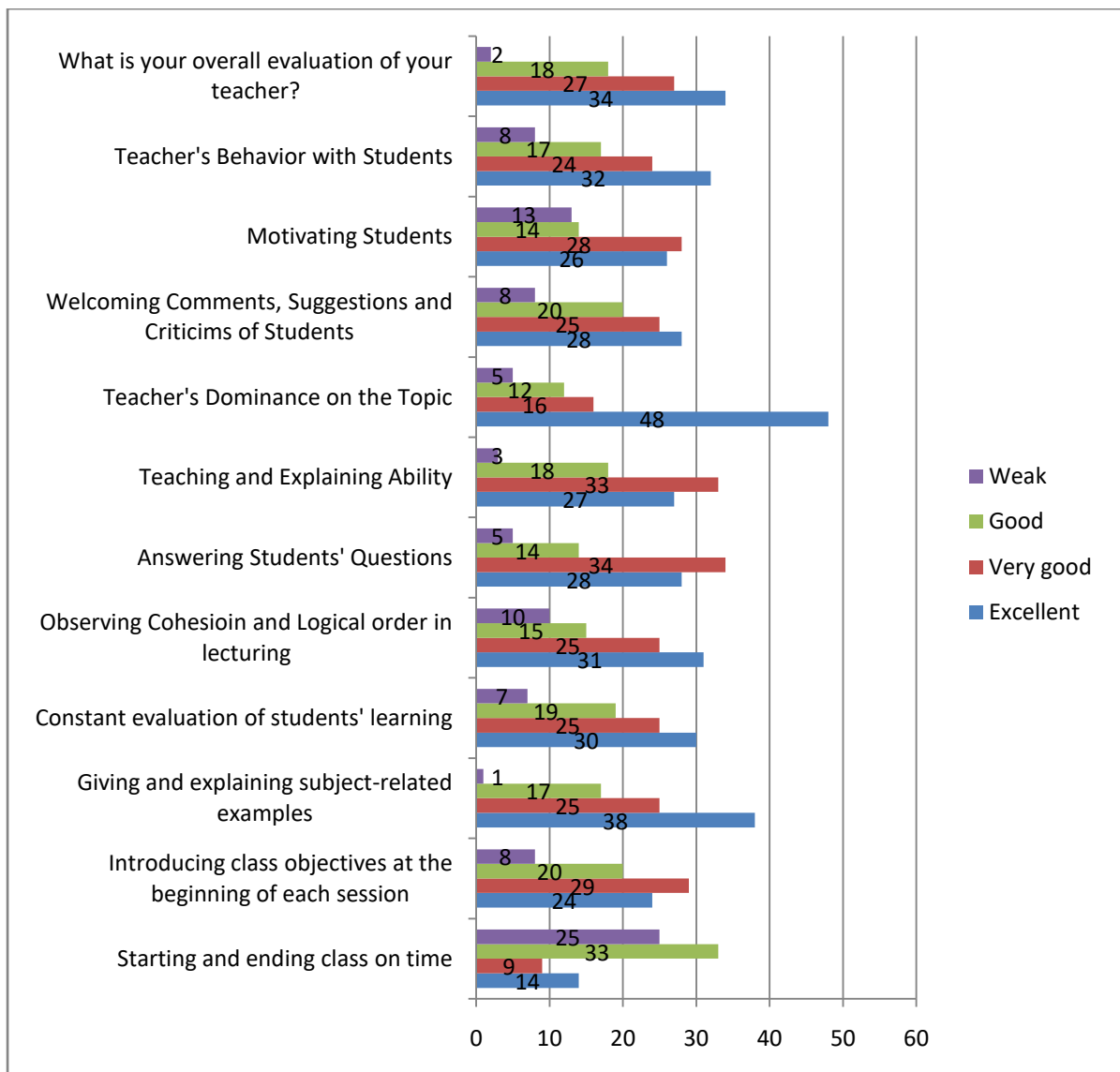
This study has been conducted to discover whether or not the lecturers in Afghanistan universities have quality teaching. The findings of the study are displayed and described in the following charts.

Chart 1



The participants of this study were from four classes. 25 of them were seniors. 33 were junior, 9 participants were sophomore and 14 of them were freshmen.

Chart 2



Note: To reach a meaningful result, we discussed the items in the charts from bottom to top.

Most of the participants stated that their classes' starting and ending was good. Some answered that the class starting and ending were weak. Whereas, most of them stated that the course objectives introduction at the beginning of each session was very good. On the other hand, almost all of the participants were happy with the subject-related examples given by their teachers. A great number of them declared that subject-related examples given by the teachers were excellent.

Regarding the constant evaluation of students' learning, a large number of participants pointed out that it was excellent and the second large number said it was very good. Based on the participants' responses, students' learning was constantly evaluated by their teachers.

Based on the participants' responses, lecturing at Afghanistan universities has been logical and cohesive. 37% of the participants stated that cohesion and logical order observation in lecturing have been excellent. 30% said that it was very good. The rest pointed out that it was good or weak.

Answering students' questions in each session is a sign of effective teaching. 76 percent of the participants declared that answering students' questions to their teachers has been excellent or very good. 34% stated that it was excellent and 42% said that it was very good. Thus, the majority of the participants asserted that they were happy with the questions answered by their teachers.

A large number of the participants, 74% expressed that their teachers had the ability to teach and explain the subject matter of the class. In other words, most of the university teachers in Afghanistan have the ability to teach and explain.

Concerning teacher dominance on the topic, more than half of the participants stated that their teachers were excellent. It reveals that only a limited number of university teachers in Afghanistan universities have not had dominance on the topic they taught.

Based on the participants' responses, teachers' attitudes towards comments, suggestions and criticisms of students were positive. 34% declared that teachers' welcoming comments, suggestions and criticisms of students were excellent whereas 31% stated it was very good. 24% said it was good and only 10% stated that it was weak.

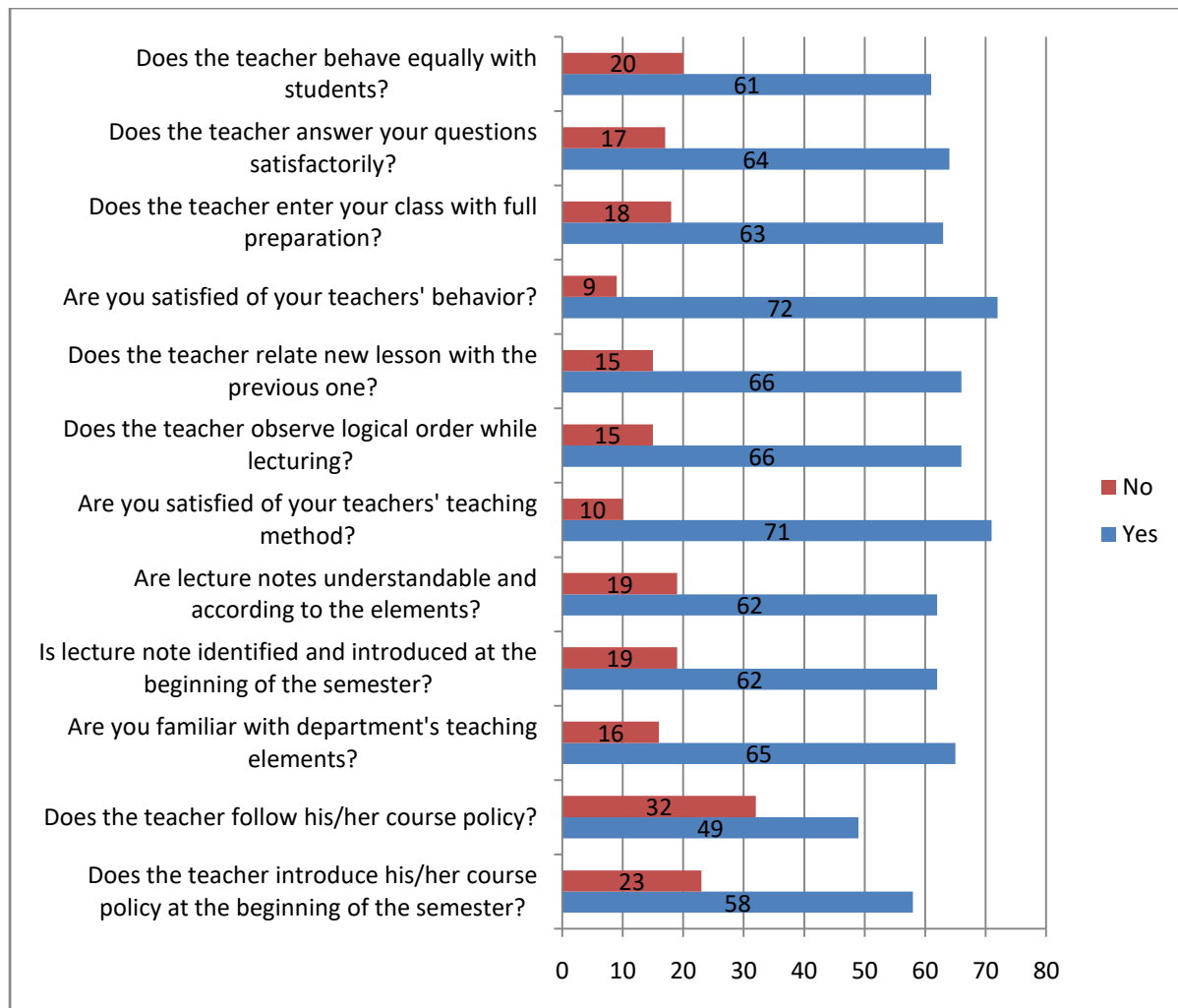
According to the participants' responses, teachers have been very good at motivating students. 32% asserted that their teachers were excellent at motivating students. It means that based on these participants, teachers constantly and effectively motivate their students. 34% declared that their teachers were very good at motivating their students. That is, they usually motivate their students. However, 17% pointed out that their teachers were good. In other words, they motivate their students sometimes. On the other hand, 16% asserted that their teachers have been weak in motivating them. It means that they either did not motivate them at all or they might have failed to motivate them effectively.

Teachers' behaviour is an important issue for almost all undergraduate students in Afghanistan. It can affect students positively or negatively. In this study, 40% of the participants stated that their teachers' behaviour with them was excellent. While 29 % pointed out that their teachers' behaviour was very good. It means that their teachers' behaviour with them was acceptable. However, 21% said that it was good. In contrast, 10% stated that their teachers' behaviour with them was weak. As a result, the majority of the participants were happy with their teachers' behaviour.

To have an overall view of the participants on the items discussed based on the variants excellent, very good, good, and weak, we posed a general question. 42% of the total participants

asserted that their teachers were excellent. 33.3% declared that their teachers were very good. 22.2% of the participants pointed out that their teachers were good. However, 2.5% of the participants said that their teachers were weak. Therefore, we imply that teachers in Afghanistan universities have generally been “very good” in terms of their basic jobs from students’ perspectives. As displayed in chart 2, the majority of the participants have had a positive response towards their teachers’ teaching quality.

Chart 3



The chart above displays students’ responses based on the questionnaire of the Ministry of Higher Education. It is designed in the order of bottom-up. We will discuss them from bottom to top.

As the chart shows, most of the participants stated that their teachers introduced their course policies at the beginning of the semester. However, 40% of the participants stated that their teachers do not follow their course policies during the semester.

The chart indicates that a great number of students are familiar with the department’s teaching elements. In other words, the teachers introduce teaching elements of the department. As well as a large number of participants pointed out that their teachers identify and introduce lecture notes at the beginning of the semester. The same number of participants stated that the lecture notes were understandable and according to the elements.

To find out students' satisfaction with their teachers' method of teaching, 88% of the participants stated that they were satisfied with their teachers' method of teaching. Moreover, 82% of the participants declared that their teachers observed logical order while lecturing. It implies that teachers enter the class with preparation and plan. The same number of the participants stated that their teachers related the new lessons with the previous one. This is also an indication of planning and preparation.

88% of the participants pointed out that they were happy with their teachers' behaviour. Meanwhile, 78% of the participants asserted that their teachers came to class with full preparation. It shows that teachers plan their sessions in advance and get preparations for them. Likewise, the same number of the participants said that their questions were answered satisfactorily by their teachers. Yet, 77% of the participants stated that their teachers behaved equally with students.

Conclusion and Recommendation for Future Research

Quality teaching is the main requirement of teaching at university and the biggest desire of students. However, some university lecturers take it for granted to plan quality teaching. The findings of this study indicate that the quality of teaching at Afghanistan public universities is satisfactory. Moreover, the findings indicate that the participants have had a positive perspective about their lecturers' teaching. Most of the participants were happy with the way they were taught and behaved at university.

Although this study gathered authentic data from different classes of university students, there is a need to conduct more research on the topic. We collected the data from four public universities. Therefore, more research is recommended to collect data from more universities so that the voices and ideas of more students from different universities are reflected.

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