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STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF GEOGRAPHY-LECTURERS' PERFORMANCE AT UNIVERSITY OF GARMIAN IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017

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ABSTRACT

Evaluation forms are a basis for boosting educational quality. Consequently, it can be defined as an analysis and control process designed to determine the relevance, affectivity, significance, impact of specific activities, and the resultant effectiveness.
This study was a descriptive study aimed to evaluate the performance of lecturers in geography department at University of Garmian, based on students' view point. To this end, a standard appraisal questionnaire designed by Ministry of Science and Research of Iraq was used. This questionnaire is administered to college students at all Iraqi-Kurdistan universities to assess the lecturers. It is comprised of eight questions. Students use a five point Likert Scale to score lecturers performance. Sample included the whole students in geography department. After omitting the unfilled and defective questionnaires, 163 subjects participated in the study.
Findings indicated that question no. 6 got the highest score (allocating time to answer the questions raised by students), and question no. 3 obtained the lowest score (timely onset and finish of each session). The overall scores rated the geography lecturers as ǧood"based on standards defined by the Ministry of Science and Research in Iraq.
Although, all investigated aspects were rated as good, the educational staffs are young in this department. Consequently, enforcing the positive dimensions and correcting the negatives aspects can improve the educational quality.

Keywords: evaluation, questionnaire, Iraqi-Kurdistan Region, geography department.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is a major mission for a university, a professor, or an instructor. Improving teaching quality leads to improvement of education at universities. Lecturer evaluation is one of the procedures used to this end. Educational evaluation is a process through which relevant data are collected and converted to information useful for decision-making (Shakurnia et al. 2011). Through evaluation process, the collected information helps us to review diverse aspects of lecturers' performance, and judge about their competence and qualification. It also helps to decide on measures to boost lecturers' competence and improve acquisition process (Peterson 2000).

Almost every country that engaged in educational issues, are active on evaluation of lecturers. Asking for students' opinion is one of the common evaluation methods increasingly used at educational centers of the world including Iraq. Easy scoring procedure, pre-defined evaluation behaviors, and great number of studies devoted to its reliability and validity have made it as a golden standard for deciding on employment and promotion of lecturers (Kolitch & Dean 1999). Due to the importance of the process, the evaluation should include variables influential in teaching process. Results of research conducted show that students' evaluations are affected by such factors as scientific status and popularity of lecturers, gender and Personality traits of students, difficulty or simply of the courses, timing of the class, timing of evaluation, expected scores by students, rigor of the lecturer, and amusing teaching procedure, etc. (Shakurnia et al. 2006).

Some of studies indicate that students' opinion may be affected by factors not relevant to lecturer evaluation. On this regard, numerous studies have been conducted to approve or reject this type of evaluation. Aultman (2006) believes that lecturer evaluation by students can provide valuable feedbacks to improve education. He has a particular belief to formative evaluation of lecturer by students. On the other hand Mason et al (1995) stated that the lecturers evaluation by students, have not scientific accuracy. Because students don't have enough knowledge and they don't know whether lecturers offer subjects related to their or not. As a result, students' awareness to judge and evaluate this part of the performance of lecturer does not seem enough.

Despite harsh criticism of lecturers' evaluation by students, most of the studies show that students are valid sources of information about lecturers. Lecturer evaluation scores are reported to be valid and reliable (Emery et al. 2003). The most prominent goal of evaluation in education and educational systems is awareness of present status and its distance from desirable status. The evaluation data can be used in a comprehensive and strategic plan to improve the existing conditions and optimize the utilization of present facilities and resources to achieve the intended goals (Fich 2003).

Educational administrators ask of university-students' opinions about mode of instruction of lecturers and decide based on these opinions about lecturers. This type of evaluation has been used in numerous applications, e.g. deciding on lecturers' careers (promotion, employment, etc.). Consequently, it is important to study its reliability and validity to make sure the precision and accuracy of obtained results (Skakurnia et al. 2011). Due to rapid growth of evaluations by university students in the last decades, researchers have tried to review questionnaires, remove their deficiencies and improve the validity and reliability of the results (Wachtel 1998).

Dewinstanley (2007) investigated lecturer evaluation by university students and concluded that the reliability of the results depended on the number of students. An increase in the number of students ends in more reliable results. At least 30 students are needed in each class to obtain reliable results. A similar study in Washington University (Gillmore 2000) concentrated on lecturer evaluation by university students. Evaluation scores of 2800 lecturers in 23000 classrooms were collected during a five-year period (1995-1999). The results showed that students' evaluations have sufficient stability. Mousavi et al (2011) studied the educational performance of midwifery department at Jondishapur Medical Science University of Ahvaz. The results indicated that most of educational aspects of lecturers based on students' opinion were nearly satisfactory, but rendering clinical lessons were not desirable. Sheykhzadeh & Samari (2010) studied the teaching methods of lecturers at Azad Universities in West Azarbaijan Province of Iran. They concluded that Communicating power, research-based teaching, and personality were the most significant aspects of effective teaching in university-students' view point. Also, most of lecturers used active procedures in teaching, and such kind of lecturers are more than lecturers who used inactive teaching methods. Moreover, lecturers with active procedures have more attention about variables like establishing interpersonal relationships and accepting criticism from students.

Based on the importance of lecturers' assessments by students, the statistical analysis of evaluation scores obtained by lecturers and finding influential variables on evaluation can be useful in correct and clear application of findings. In Iraqi Kurdistan region, it is also common to evaluate lecturers but, only the overall number is merely used for promotion or the lecturers with low scores are scolded. Consequently, the lecturers get no feedback about negative and positive aspects of their teaching. Awareness of evaluation results plays an influential role in improving the performance of lecturers. Thus, this study is devoted to review and analysis of

evaluation scores obtained by Geography department members in University of Garmian.

METHODOLOGY:

This study is classified as applied based on the goal and as descriptive-survey based on methodology. In this study that has done in geography department; college of education at University of Garmian, the population of the study includes geography students in the academic year of 2016-2017. This department was established in 2007, and 16 lecturers including guest lecturers teach in this department. It should be mentioned that this faculty only accepts BA students, and Iraqi universities offer yearly-units.

The sample was selected by census. That is, all students of this department who are busy studying in four different educational periods participated in the study (200 students). Although, participation in the study and filling out the questionnaires were voluntary, all students were encouraged to participate. After deletion of absentees and removing the distorted questionnaires, 163 subjects participated in the study. To observe ethics, no name was written on the answer-sheets, and lesson to lesson analysis was also avoided to keep information concerning each lecturer secret. The descriptive data of the sample are represented in table 1.

The research tool in this study is a questionnaire. The standard questionnaire (Lecturer Evaluation by Students) that designed by Iraqi Ministry of Advanced Science and Research was used and it is employed in all Iraqi Kurdistan region universities to evaluate the lecturers'. It is comprised of 8 questions to assess the lecturers based on the followings: tangibility and clarity of educational goals, effectiveness of teaching methods in conveying the concepts, timely presence and proper utilization of time, proper interaction and behavior with students, using proper educational props, answering the questions and taking educational needs, describing the exam and the way questions are organized, and utilizing up-to-date and proper references. Finally, the lecturers are classified in one of the following groups, based on the total score: very poor (1-1.5), poor (1.51-1.9), medium (2-2.5), good (2.51-4.49), and excellent (4.5-5). Accordingly, one main hypothesis and 8 sub-hypotheses were investigated.

To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha was used. Based on the obtained data and SPSS-22 software, Cronbach's Alpha of 0.83 was calculated for reliability of the questionnaire. This value shows the high reliability of the questionnaire and internal consistency of items. The questionnaires were used to collect the data and prepare them for statistical analysis. All statistical analyses were performed by SPSS-22 utilizing descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation), and inferential statistics (t-test, and ANOVA). The significance level of $p<0.05$ was considered for all analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive data of sample group (students of geography department at University of Garmian)

Gender / The participants	Female		Male	
	Frequently	Percent	Frequently	Percent
First Year	18	47.36	20	52.64
Second Year	23	52.27	21	47.73
Third Year	22	48.88	23	51.12
Forth Year	21	58.33	15	41.66
Total	**84**	**51.5**	**79**	**48.5**

RESULTS:

Table 2 represents the data concerning assessment of research hypotheses, along with standard lecturer-evaluation questionnaire developed by Iraqi Ministry of Science.

Table 2: The mean and standard deviation of diverse aspects of lecturer evaluation in geography department

question number	Field of study	Mean	Std. Deviation	Standard of Ministry Science
1	Aim and object	3.39	1.31	Good
2	Applying and analyzing the course book	3.66	1.31	Good
3	Timing	2.82	1.10	Good
4	Nice and respectful manner	3.47	1.39	Good
5	Using the teaching tools	3.60	1.35	Good

question number	Field of study	Mean	Std. Deviation	Standard of Ministry Science
6	Time for question and answer	4.50	.95	Very well
7	Clear information about the exam	3.40	1.26	Good
8	Using the new and suitable sources	2.92	1.31	Good
	Total score	**3.47**	**1.24**	**Good**

As evident in table 2, the highest mean is 4.50 and it concerns question 6. This question deals to each lecturer's accountability to students' questions. The findings indicate that majority of lecturers allocate sufficient time to answer students' question. The lowest score is 2.82 and it concerns question 3 (timely onset and finish of each session). Although this is the lowest score, it is still in "good" range, based on the classification provided by Ministry of Science. The geography lecturers as a whole were rated as "good". This is true for all items except for "allocating time to answer students' questions" which was rated as "very well".
In order to study the relationship between the academic year and overall evaluation of lecturers, one-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data, due to the assumption of homogeneity of variances ($p=0.07>0.05$). The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: One-way ANOVA analysis to investigate the relation between the academic year and overall evaluation scores of geography department lecturers'

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	698.157	3	232.719	4.755	0.003
Within Groups	7781.303	159	48.939		
Total	**8479.460**	**162**			

Based on ANOVA analysis and obtained F value (4.75), with 95% confidence, there is a significant difference between manner of lecturer evaluation and different educational groups ($p=0.003<0.05$). The results of Tukey Post Hoc Test reflected a significant difference between freshman and sophomore with junior and senior students ($p<0.05$). Junior and senior students assigned higher scores to lecturers' performance.
To evaluate the impact of gender on lecturer evaluation, t-test was employed. The relevant results are reported in table 4.

Table 4: The t-test results to study the impact of gender on geography department lecturers

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig.
Male	79	28.16	8.770	0.301	161	0.764
Female	84	26.76	8.465			

As can be observed, the difference between the means is not significant ($t=0.301$, $p=0.76>0.05$). Consequently, there is no meaningful difference in lecturer evaluation by male and female students.

CONCLUSION:

The present study was conducted to evaluate the performance of geography department lecturers at University of Garmian. A questionnaire (Lecturers Evaluation by Students) was administered to collect the required data. The overall performance of lecturers was rated as "good". Since geography lecturers are mainly young therefore, their fervent may effect on good performance of them.
Closer investigation showed that "allocating enough time for students' questions" received the highest scores which can be rated as "very well". "Timely attendance in class" got the lowest score which was still rated as "good". University of Garmian is a newly-established university. It is probably less equipped than other universities. Also, Text-books originally compiled in Kurdish are rare. Consequently, lecturers are more sympathetic towards students and spend more time answering questions to tackle the shortcomings. Thus, they help to reduce the existing deficiencies.
Recent civil war and existing economic problems in Iraq have indirectly affected on Iraqi Kurdistan region. These have reduced the salary of governmental employees, including university lecturers, to one-third. As a

result, some lecturers may not care about timely start and finish of class periods due to such factors and in some cases, we also witness an increase in number of absentee lecturers and it seems that economic problem to be a good reason to justify this defect. Of course this is negligible in overall performance of geography department lecturers which is rated as satisfactory in this study.

Also, the results showed that using the new and suitable sources for teaching in comparison with other factors received a low score. This seems to be a widespread problem not only in geography department, but also in all departments and universities of Iraqi Kurdistan region. On the one hand, books compiled in Kurdish are rare and sometimes of poor quality. On the other hand, students study in Kurdish at schools, and they aren't proficient in no second language and at the university the main sources are in English or Arabic. Thus, they experience a lot of difficulties at universities using English or even Arabic text-books. These are some of limitations lecturers in introducing up-to-date references.

In this study, in line with Shakurnia et al (2006), no significant difference in lecturer evaluation was observed based on gender. On the contrary, Min & Baozhi (1998) concluded that gender not only affect on the participation, but also effect on the evaluation. They claimed that females' evaluation of lecturers is mainly based on feelings, while this affection filter was not observed in males. A significant difference was observed between manner of lecturer evaluation and students of different academic years. Junior and senior students assigned higher scores to lecturers' performance. Badeleh et al (2012) observed a weak correlation between lecturer evaluation and years spent at university. The more time spent at the university, the lower evaluation scores. This is in contradicts with our findings.

Our findings can be justified because newcomers, especially freshmen, seem to have unrealistically high expectations from the university and lecturers. Inexperienced students do not take the evaluation seriously or even seek revenge of more strict university lecturers compared to school teachers. In addition, the syllabus compiled by Ministry of Science offers more general courses to freshmen. General courses are not taught by geography-department lecturers, and this may deviant the results.

It can be concluded that lecturer evaluation, assesses the lecturers' success in achieving educational goals. Students are the main recipients of educational contents at universities. Their opinions should be incorporated in strategies used to improve teaching quality and achieving educational goals. Our findings showed that geography-department students rated their lecturers as "good". Senior and junior students were particularly more satisfied. Of course the classification system proposed by the Ministry of Science to evaluate lecturers is subjected to some criticisms. E.g. the classification based on the following scores is not so fair: very poor (1-1.5), poor (1.9-1.51), medium (2-2.5), good (2.51-4.49), and excellent (4.5-5). The intervals between the scores are not identical. For example, lecturers with respective scores of 2.51 and 4.49 are placed in the same group, while their performance difference is crystal clear. It is claimed that this system of classification lacks proper ability to distinguish. Anyway, it seems that the present classification is just based on overall performance of majority lecturers in recent years and represents the average score of successful lecturers in accordance with the normal distribution curve.

Although the present study suffered from a number of limitations including limited items in the questionnaire, no prior study devoted to lecturer evaluation was found in departments and universities of Iraqi Kurdistan region. We recommend similar studies to improve the existing evaluation system. Such kinds of studies help generalize the findings to future studies.

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