

Asian Students' Views on Course, Instrument, and Faculty Evaluation

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Abstract:

The subject of student evaluation of faculty and courses at the undergraduate level is very controversial. Many studies have been carried out on student evaluation over the years with little or no consensus. In fact they generated controversy and debate. This study attempts to identify the views of Asian students relating to course and faculty evaluation and the factors that they perceive influence their evaluation of courses and teachers in an environment where students and faculty live on the same campus, where they have more interactions with each other, compared with non-residential education institutions. The findings are mixed and divided with the agreement that course and faculty evaluations are important but with little agreement on factors that influence their evaluation of them.

Introduction

What is good university teaching? How good should university teaching be? These are two difficult questions. Who should decide what good university teaching is or should be? Should students be the ones to judge? Similar questions have been asked by other researchers who are interested in student evaluations of teaching (Iyamu and Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005). The subject of student evaluation of teachers and courses at the undergraduate level in the western world is a controversial matter. Thousands of articles have been written about student evaluations (Marsh and Dunkin, 1992). All these research studies have not yielded a consensus on what good university teaching is, how the data collected from student evaluations of teaching should be used or even whether the information gathered should be used at all (Wachtel, 1998).

Previous Research

Over the last 20 years, research on student evaluation of teaching and courses has considered a number of variables that may play a role in influencing students' perceptions. These include course structural variables (Kulik and Kulik, 1974; McKeachie, 1997); instructor variables (Marsh and Roche, 1997); personality (Best and Addison, 2000); and student variables. The findings relating to the influence of these variables are far from being conclusive. The research findings have generated much controversy and debate over the years. The debate still continues.

Many questions and issues have been raised as a result of student evaluation research (Haefele 1992, and Darling-Hammond, Wise and Pease, 1983). It has been argued that students are not valid sources of evaluation, and that their responses are based on superficial liking or disliking of teachers. As early as 1987, Jacobs argued that the faculty expressed confidence in students' ability to judge good teaching, but he did not believe students gave adequate thought to the evaluation process, nor did he believe that students were in a position to evaluate a number of issues such as knowledge of the subject matter, and whether material is up to date (Jacobs, 1987). A similar issue was raised earlier by Brandenburg (1979, cited in Mason, Edwards and Roach, 2002) when he questioned whether students take evaluation seriously. Wachtel (1998) is among those to question whether students have the capacity to actually evaluate teaching and teaching effectiveness. Following the same line of reasoning, Simpson and Siguaw (2000) argued that students do not have the knowledge necessary for appropriate rating of teaching. They are not necessarily the best evaluators of their instructors' performance (Casey, Gentile, and Bigger, 1997), looking at it 'from very limited or even tainted perspective' (p. 472).

Marsh and fellow researchers have suggested that piquing student interest in the course content may put into play positive attributional processes for the teacher (Marsh, 1984; Marsh and Roche, 1997). In other words, students may attribute particular teaching abilities to the teacher rather than to the favourable learning environment that a teacher can create when he or she is surrounded by students who are obviously interested in the material.

Others simply do not want to give students a voice in decisions that affect a faculty member's career (Eble, 1974; cited in Iyamu and Adura-Oglebaen, 2005). Iyamu and Adura-Oglebaen (2005) went as far as to say that lecturers generally do not accept student evaluation, particularly when it is for summative purposes. Hence, the use of student evaluation for instructional improvement by faculty is very limited (Spencer and Flyr, 1992, cited in Senior, 2000) because many instructors harbour the question of fairness and usefulness of the student evaluation surveys (Senior, 2000).

Reliability and validity issues are closely related to the factors that influenced students' evaluation of teachers and courses. One of the factors is grade leniency, which generated a lot of debate. Studies have shown evidence of moderate correlation between grade leniency and student ratings of faculty (Chacko, 1983; Vista and Sarmiento, 1979; Powell, 1978; Hewett, 1988; Gigliotti, 1987; cited in Senior, 2000). This is a commonly held perception among faculty (Heine and Maddox, nd). Hiene and Maddex (2006) point to the fact that of all the student variables that might affect evaluation of teaching, none has generated as much controversy as the role of actual grades, with a number of studies finding positive correlations between grades or expected grades and the evaluation of the faculty. This is one of the most researched issues in teaching evaluation. Despite many studies on the effect of grading leniency, this issue is far from being resolved.

Aleamoni (1999) documented 37 studies conducted in the last several decades that have small, but persistent positive correlations between expected or received grades and the favourability of student evaluations. The research also cited twenty-four (24) correlation studies from the same period that did not find any relationship between grades and student evaluations. The influence of grades is further supported by a more recent study. Ellis, Burke, Lomire and McCormack (2003) studied 165 courses at Minot State University. They reported a 0.35 positive correlation between average course grades and average student ratings of instructional quality. Earlier, Wachtel (1998) provided three reasons to explain the relationship: Firstly, students reciprocate the leniency of their teachers by giving them a good evaluation rating (leniency hypothesis) (Chambers and Schmitt, 2002, cited in Addison, Best and Warrington, 2006); secondly, students evaluate good teachers favourably because quality teaching enables the students to perform up to their full potential, and as a result receive higher grades (validity hypothesis); and thirdly, pre-existing differences among students influence both teaching effectiveness and student evaluations (student-characteristic hypothesis).

Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that students who expect poor grades rate instructors poorly to minimise psychological or ego threat. One study (Maurer, 2006) found support for cognitive dissonance as a significant variable affecting accuracy of student perceptions. Another study (Heckert, Latier, Ringwald-Burton, and Drazen, 2006, cited in Heine and Maddox, n.d.) found that student perceived 'effort appropriateness' was more positively related to faculty evaluation than was simple expected grade. Students who put effort, learned more, and were subsequently rewarded, rated instructors more highly than simply expected grades could explain.

The second factor is the influence of course difficulty and work load on student evaluation of faculty. Marsh (1987) suggested that course difficulty has positive correlation with ratings. Marsh and Roche (1997) study also indicated a positive relationship between high workload classes and ratings. Ryan et al. (1980) similarly reported cases where instructors lowered standards and workloads, and gave easier examinations to improve student ratings. Addison, Best and Warrington, (2006) confirmed the hypothesis that students' evaluations of instruction would be associated with their perceptions of the difficulty of the class. Students who found the class more difficult were thought to tend to assign lower evaluations, while those who found the class easier than they thought it was going to be assign somewhat higher evaluations.

A third factor is the collusion of students to punish faculty for some reason through student evaluations. Jacobs' (1987) study revealed that 40% of surveyed students admitted that they have overheard students ganging together to get back at a faculty member by collectively giving low ratings in the evaluations. Reports of this kind create distrust about the fairness and usefulness of student surveys despite all the benefits that student feedback can bring to the classroom. It is hardly a surprise that teachers facing this scenario will take little notice of students' feedback.

The fourth factor is the consistency of students' ratings. Despite general agreement among some researchers that student evaluations provide consistent feedback (Marsh and Roche, 1997; D'Apollonia and Abrami, 1997), other studies yielded a less consistent picture. Greenwald (1997) reported how he received the highest marks on a course he taught one year, only to receive an appalling rating on the same course

he taught the year after. He believes that it is possible that students' responses, at times, are determined by something other than the course characteristics or the teaching ability of the instructor. What is more interesting is the finding by Follman (1983, cited in Senior, 2000). In his study, he found that when students were asked to name their best and worst teachers, 15% to 20% of the instructors appeared on both lists.

Other factors influencing student evaluation of teachers include the Dr Fox effect¹ (Naftulin et al. 1973, Watchel, 1998), and the type of courses - elective and required (Centra, 1993, cited in Senior, 2000).

Besides the validity and reliability issues, some researchers questioned the importance or utility assigned to student evaluation in faculty performance evaluation systems (Jacobs, 1987). Although teachers appear to accept student evaluations as a valuable tool for assessing and improving classroom teaching, they argued that these evaluations do not capture information about long-term instructor and course effectiveness. Despite all the claimed benefits that student evaluations can bring, their use for instructional improvement is not frequent (Marsh 1987). A survey found that only about twenty-three (23.0) percent of faculty made changes to their teaching based on student evaluations (Spencer and Flyr, cited in Senior, 2000) and that the changes were only superficial.

Faculty's views on the reliability, validity and utility of student evaluations research varies widely. Considerable numbers of researchers conclude that the evaluations provide valid and reliable methods of judging teaching effectiveness (Centra, 1977; 1993; Cohen, 1980, 1981; Koon and Murray, 1995; cited in Mason, Edwards, and Roach, 2002). Others hold a different and opposite view (Adam, 1997; Chandler, 1978; Dowell and Neal, 1982; Goldman, 1993; Tata, 1999; Zoller 1992; cited in Mason, Edwards, and Roach, 2002). Despite all the debates and criticisms of students' evaluation research findings, the issues remain unsettled. Faculty debate continues regarding the effectiveness, reliability, validity, and usefulness of student evaluations.

As discussed above, the practice of using student evaluations to improve and increase teaching effectiveness has raised many concerns among teachers, including the basic validity of the forms and their sensitivity to external biases. Questions of bias involve the possibility that student responses are influenced by factors unrelated to the teacher's instructional effectiveness. For example, the biasing effects faculty grading practices have on student evaluations of teaching. Other influences of concern include course workload, the difficulty of the course, and the types of courses. While these issues are being commonly debated in the western world, there is limited knowledge of how students in the South-east Asian countries view their teachers and the factors they perceive, influence their opinions of their teachers and courses they take. Traditionally in Asia, students are taught to show respect to their teachers.

The Study Rationale

This study attempts to identify Asian students' views on course and teacher evaluation and the proportion of students who perceive that they are influenced or not influenced by a given list of factors relating to the evaluation of courses they take, the teachers who teach them and their opinions of the evaluation instrument in an Asian international learning and teaching context. The survey was conducted at a small private international Christian university (Asia-Pacific International University) in Thailand. The university has an enrolment of approximately one thousand students. This university offers courses in education, theology, business, humanities, science, and nursing. It is a residential university where almost all the faculty members and students live on campus. Such an education environment provides significantly more interactions between teachers and students through corporate spiritual activities, campus social events, recreational activities, and other campus events. Under such a teaching and learning environment, how do students view their courses and the performance of their teachers? What factors do they perceive to have an influence on their evaluation of courses they take, and the teachers who teach them?

The Method

1 Naftulin, Were and Donnelly (1973) presented a videotaped performance by a trained actor to two different groups of students. The third group witnessed the lecture. The actor gave false and irrelevant material, but did it in an entertaining way. The actor received more favourable than unfavourable ratings. From this it is suggested that students can be 'seduced' into thinking that they have learned more if the teacher is entertaining.

A survey questionnaire was used to gather data. The questionnaire contained 29 items relating to courses, teachers and the evaluation instrument. These items were adapted from related literature. Students were asked to respond to the items by indicating whether they agreed, disagreed or were undecided. A five-point likert scale was used - 5 represents strongly agree, 4 means agree, 3 indicates no opinion/undecided, 2 equals disagree and 1 means strongly disagree. The survey instrument was given out randomly to students. A total of 150 surveys were given to students and 123 students responded. The following table shows the details of respondents.

Table 1: Respondents by Gender

Respondents	Male	Female	Total
	87 (70.7%)	36 (29.3%)	123

Table 2: Respondents by Status

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Total
Respondents	29 (23.6%)	44 (35.7%)	29 (23.6%)	21 (17.1%)	123

Results

For analysis purposes, the responses are grouped under three categories: courses, evaluation instrument and lecturers. In order to make the results of this survey study more meaningful to readers, percentages and mean scores are used. Using mean scores alone may not always present a clear and accurate picture of the situation under investigation. Percentages are used in the discussion of results. Mean scores are shown in the tables. No statistical tests were conducted.

Table 3

Students' Rating of Courses

	S Agree/Agree	Neutral/Undecided		Disagree/S Disagree	
	5/4	3		2/1	
	%	mean	%	mean	%
I tend to give more time to carefully evaluate the courses I like.	52.0	3.41	21.1		26.0
I tend to take more time and seriousness in evaluating my major courses compared with general education courses.	44.8	3.13	22.8		32.5
I tend to take less time and seriousness in evaluating courses I do not like.	35.8	3.01	27.6		36.6
The grades I receive from tests during the semester influence my evaluations of the courses.	33.3	2.80	22.8		43.9
Overall, I think the lecturer and course evaluation is important.	69.2	4.00	21.1		9.7
Overall, I think the lecturer and course evaluation process is effective.	50.4	3.45	30.9		18.7
Average scores	47.5	3.30	24.4		27.9

5 - Strongly Agree 4 - Agree 3 - Neutral/Undecided 2 - Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree % = percent

Views on Evaluation of Courses

This part describes the students' responses relating to the items dealing with courses. As shown in Table 3, fifty-two (52.0) percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that they tend to give more time to carefully evaluate courses they like, while twenty-six percent (26.0) indicated they disagree or strongly disagree. Over twenty-one percent of respondents remained neutral. When asked about time and seriousness they put in evaluating the major courses in their programmes, over forty-four (44.8) percent of

students surveyed either agree or strongly agree that they took more time and seriousness in evaluating them compared with about thirty-two and a half (32.5) percent who either disagree or strongly disagree. Nearly twenty-three (22.8) percent of respondents gave a neutral response. Approximately thirty-six (35.8) percent of respondents said that they took less time and seriousness in evaluating courses they do not like, and over thirty-six (36.6) percent either disagree or strongly disagree. Close to twenty-eight (28.0) percent of respondents stayed neutral. When it comes to grades, over thirty-three (33.3) percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the grades they received from tests during the semester influenced their evaluations of courses. Close to forty-four (44.0) percent respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed, with more than twenty-two (22.8) percent remaining neutral or undecided.

Over sixty-nine (69.2) percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the course evaluation is important. More than twenty-one (21.1) percent remained neutral with almost ten (9.7) percent either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Concerning the effectiveness of the process, over fifty (50.4) percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the process is effective. Nearly nineteen (18.7) percent of respondents disagreed and over thirty (30.9) percent remained neutral. When the six items are combined together, more than forty-seven (47.5) percent of respondents indicated agreement, over twenty-four (24.4) percent had no opinion and almost twenty-eight (27.9) percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements.

Views on the Instrument and Time of Evaluation

The analyses now turn to students' responses relating to the evaluation instrument used by the institution, and its usefulness, including the time of conducting the evaluation. A majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the evaluation form was easy to use and understand (65 percent), clear (61 percent), and relevant for course and lecturer evaluation (60.1 percent). Between twenty (20.3) percent and almost twenty-eight (27.6) percent of respondents remained neutral with regard to these three items. As shown in the table, between twelve (12.2) percent and approximately eighteen (17.9) percent of the respondents did not agree. Putting the three items relating to the evaluation instrument together, the average scores for these items are: agree/strongly agree, sixty-two (62.0) percent, above twenty-two (22.7) percent remaining neutral, with almost fifteen (14.9) percent respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Please see Table 4 below for further details on responses regarding the evaluation instrument, the time of conducting the evaluation, and respondents' attitude and perception of the course evaluation. The results are also mixed, divided between agree, no opinion or disagree. Almost fifty-two (51.9) percent of students said that they were not afraid to write comments about their lecturers. Concerning the time for carrying out the evaluation, over thirty-four (34.2) percent preferred to do it at the beginning of the class period rather than the end. More than forty (40.7) percent of respondents disagree, with twenty-five (25.2) percent undecided.

Table 4
Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the Evaluation Form

	S Agree/Agree		Neutral/Undecided		Disagree/S Disagree	
	5/4	3	2/1			
	%	mean	%	mean	%	
The five point rating scale is easy to use and understandable.	65.0	3.73	20.3		14.6	
The questions asked on the form are clear to me.	61.0	3.62	20.3		17.9	
The questions asked on the form are relevant to evaluating a course/lecturer.	60.1	3.73	27.6		12.2	
Average Score	62.0	3.69	22.7		14.9	
I do not write many comments on the evaluation form for fear of being identified by the lecturer.	26.0		22.8	2.58	51.9	
Completing the evaluation form at the beginning of a class period is better than at the end of a class.	34.2		25.2	2.91	40.7	

5 - Strongly Agree 4 - Agree 3 - Neutral/Undecided 2 - Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree % = percent

The teacher

Table 5 presents the results of the responses relating to the lecturer. Seventy (70.0%) percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they took evaluation of lecturers in their courses seriously. Slightly over twenty (20.3) percent gave no opinion and approximately ten (9.8) percent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Over sixty-nine (69.2) percent indicated that the lecturer and course evaluation is necessary and important, with slightly over twenty-one (21.1) percent having no opinion. More than fifty-nine (59.4) percent of the respondents said that they are fair and accurate in their ratings of lecturers and give adequate thought and effort to the rating process. A large group (29.3 percent) remained neutral or had no opinion with over eleven (11.4) percent of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nearly fifty-eight (57.7) percent of respondents believe that teachers use students' evaluations to improve the courses and teaching, twenty-six (26.0) percent did not express a negative or positive view. Over sixteen (16.3) percent of students did not believe that teachers use their evaluations for improving of the course and teaching. Just over thirty-two (32.6) percent of respondents believe that teachers take their evaluations and comments seriously, and a large group (44.7 percent) did not give their opinion. Nearly twenty-three (22.8) percent seem to indicate that teachers do not take their evaluations and comments seriously. With regard to giving low evaluations, fifty-two (52.0) percent of respondents believe that teachers use their low ratings to improve their teaching.

Table 5
Students' Rating of Teachers/Faculty

	S Agree/Agree	Neutral/Undecided		Disagree/S Disagree	
	5/4	3		2/1	
	%	<u>mean</u>	%	<u>mean</u>	%
I take evaluating of the lecturers in my course seriously.	70.0	3.86	20.3		9.8
Overall, I think the lecturer and course evaluation is important.	69.2	4.00	21.1		9.7
I am fair and accurate in my ratings of lecturers and give adequate thought and effort to the rating process.	59.4	3.20	29.3		11.4
I believe lecturers use students' evaluations to improve their courses and teaching.	57.7	3.60	26.0		16.3
When students give low evaluations, lecturers adjust to improve their teaching.	52.0	3.46	30.9		17.1
Overall, I think the lecturer and course evaluation process is effective.	50.4	3.45	30.9		18.7
Lecturers take my evaluations and comments seriously.	32.6	3.16	44.7		22.8
Lecturers change their behaviour at the end of semesters to get better evaluations.	35.8		30.9		33.4
I feel comfortable giving a negative evaluation for a bad teaching.	48.0	3.42	30.1		22.0
I tend to give more time to carefully evaluate the lecturers I like.	56.1	3.46	17.1		26.0
I tend to give lecturers I like higher ratings than lecturers I do not like.	45.6	3.18	26.0		28.4
I tend to take less time and seriousness in evaluating lecturers I do not like or if I do not get on well with them.	28.5		30.1	2.77	41.4
I rate lecturers based on their personality and enthusiasm and not on what I learned.	28.5		37.4	2.99	33.6
Average of respondents who expressed no opinion			28.8		

5 - Strongly Agree 4 - Agree 3 - Neutral/Undecided 2 - Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree % = percent

Nearly thirty-one (30.9) percent of respondents were undecided. Just over seventeen (17.1) percent of students did not believe low teacher ratings make teachers improve their teaching. Above fifty (50.4) percent of respondents believe that the lecturer and course evaluation process is effective. Close to fifty (49.6) percent of respondents either gave no opinion or disagreed that the evaluation process is effective.

It is interesting to note that forty-eight (48.0) percent of student respondents said that they felt comfortable in giving a negative evaluation for bad lecturing or teaching. Around twenty-two (22.0) percent of the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable in doing so, and thirty (30.0) percent stayed neutral. It is also interesting to note that over forty-five (45.6) percent of student respondents said that they tended to give lecturers they like higher ratings. Over twenty-eight (28.0) percent of respondents said they disagree and twenty-six (26.0) percent did not give their opinion. What is more interesting is that more than fifty-six (56.1) percent of respondents said they tend to take more time to carefully evaluate the lecturers they like. Twenty-six (26.0) percent of respondents indicated that they did not do this. Furthermore, over twenty-eight (28.5) percent of students said they tended to take less time and seriousness in evaluating lecturers they did not like or if they did not get on well with them. However, more than forty-one (41.4) percent of respondents did not agree, and over thirty (30.1) percent of students were undecided. Nearly thirty-six (35.8) percent of respondents said that lecturers tend to change their behaviour at the end of the semester to get better ratings from students. Almost equal numbers gave no opinion, or disagreed.

Table 6
Students' Views on Grades and Teacher Evaluation

	S Agree/Agree	Neutral/Undecided	Disagree/S Disagree	
	5/4	3	2/1	
	%	<u>mean</u> %	<u>mean</u>	%
The higher the grade that I expect to receive in a class, the more positive my evaluation of the class and the lecturer.	30.9	30.1	2.95	39.0
The grades I receive from tests during the semester influence my evaluations of the lecturers.	30.9	28.5	2.85	40.6
I give low evaluating ratings to lecturers who demand a lot from students.	29.2	30.1	2.87	40.6
Average			29.6	

5 - Strongly Agree 4 - Agree 3 - Neutral/Undecided 2 - Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree % = percent

The last item relates to personality and enthusiasm. More than twenty-eight (28.5) percent of students who responded to the questionnaire indicated that they rated lecturers based on their personality and enthusiasm. About 33.6 percent of students disagreed. Over one third of the respondents did not give an opinion.

The Influence of Grades

Three items in the survey relate to the influence of grades on faculty evaluation. Respondents were asked to respond to statements about influence of grades on their evaluation of teachers. As shown in Table 6, nearly thirty-one (30.9) percent of respondents said that the higher the grade they expected to receive, the more positive their evaluation of the class and the teacher. Thirty-nine (39.0) percent did not believe grades would influence their teacher and course evaluation. Over 30 percent (30.9) of students indicated that the grades they received from tests during the semester influenced their evaluations of their teachers. More than forty (40.6) percent of respondents said that their evaluation of teachers and course was not influenced by the grades they received during the semester. The remaining 28.5 percent gave no opinion at all. Concerning giving low ratings to lecturers who demand a lot from students, over twenty-nine (29.2) percent agree, more than forty (40.6) percent disagree and over thirty (30.1) percent remain neutral.

Conclusion and Discussion

What conclusion can be drawn from the results presented? Overall, the results seem to be divided into three categories. There is no consensus relating to students' views on course evaluation, the evaluation instrument and teacher/lecturer evaluation. An average of twenty-six and a half (26.5) percent of respondents remained undecided, had no opinion or did not care. The remaining respondents are divided

between agree and disagree. The mean scores range from 2.58 to 4.00 (See Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6). Only one item received a mean score of 4.00 (That item is: *Overall, I think the lecturer and course evaluation is important*).

There is also no overwhelming agreement on the evaluation of courses. As shown in Table 3, there is an average of over twenty-four (24.4) percent of respondents who did not give an opinion one way or the other. The remaining percentage is divided between agree or disagree with a greater percentage of respondents agreeing with the statements. A large percentage of students admitted that they tend to give more time and seriousness in evaluating their major courses and courses they like, 44.8 percent and 52.0 percent of respondents respectively. The results seem to suggest that a large number of students are biased in the process and do not always take equal care and time in the evaluation of courses. Almost thirty-six (35.8) percent of students clearly indicated that they spend less time and seriousness in evaluating courses they do not like. What is more disturbing is that over thirty-three (33.3) percent of respondents said that the grades they received from tests during the semester influenced their evaluation of the courses they took. It seems, for this group of respondents, low grades will lead to negative course evaluation, higher grades will lead to more positive evaluation of courses. This is consistent with the findings of prior research (Chacko, 1983, Vasta and Sarmiento, 1979, Powell, 1978) done elsewhere. The result suggests that the use of student evaluations for administrative decisions is fundamentally undermined. This issue is far from being settled.

Most respondents agreed that course evaluation is important and the process is effective, the mean scores are 4.0 and 3.45 respectively. Only 9.7, and 18.7 percent of respondents, respectively, disagree, which means a high percent of students either agree or do not have an opinion but they are not negative about course evaluation. The average mean score for these two items is 3.75, indicating a direction toward agreement (Table 3).

Concerning the evaluation instrument, sixty-two (62.03) percent of respondents are positive about its user friendliness, and relevancy for evaluating the course and the lecturer/teacher. The average mean score is 3.69, suggesting an opinion closer to agreement than disagreement. Again, over twenty-two (22.7) percent of respondents expressed no opinion of the same. On average, about 15 percent of respondents were negative about the user friendliness, clearness and relevancy of the evaluation instrument (Table 4).

The figures show that no clear conclusion can be drawn about students' evaluation of faculty. The responses are divided. Most respondents are either positive or express no opinion. Most of the mean scores are above 3.00, but below 3.50, suggesting a view between neutral and agreement regarding the items relating to the evaluation of lecturers (Table 5). The higher mean scores of 4.00 and 3.86 are related to items that deal with whether the respondents take lecturer evaluation seriously and whether they think lecturer evaluation is important.

Only about fifty-eight (57.7) percent of respondents (mean 3.60) believed that lecturers use their evaluation to improve their teaching. Fifty-two (52.0) percent (mean 3.46) of students believed that lecturers take notice of their low evaluations. As shown in table 5, the message coming from the analysis of the survey is mixed. The mean scores suggest that there is no strong agreement or strong disagreement among respondents. Overall, the responses are not overly positive. One concern here is that over forty-four (44.7) percent of respondents were undecided/neutral about whether lecturers take their evaluations and comments seriously. This may suggest that many students are not sure whether they are seeing any impact of teachers' evaluation on teaching practices. The percent of respondents giving neutral responses to above mentioned items seems to support such a suggestion. When asked '*I believe lecturers use students' evaluation to improve their courses and teaching*', twenty-six (26.0) percent of respondents did not express an opinion. With regard to the statement '*I think the lecturer and course evaluation process is effective*', over thirty percent (30.9) did not express an opinion. The same percent of students did not give an opinion when they were asked, '*When students give low evaluations, lecturers adjust to improve their teaching*'. From these responses and the others discussed above, it appears that many respondents believe that the evaluation of courses and faculty is important but they are not sure about their effectiveness. Marsh (1987) pointed out that the use of student evaluations by instructors to make improvement in teaching was dimly infrequent. As mentioned in the review of prior research, only twenty-three (23.00) percent of teachers made changes to their teaching based on student evaluations. These changes were only superficial changes (Spencer and Flyr, 1992, cited in Senior, 2000). From this revelation, and the students' perception of the impact of their evaluations on instructional quality, it is not surprising that many students are

undecided about the relationship between their evaluations and improvements in classroom instructions.

Many students admitted that their evaluation of courses and lecturers are influenced by grades, their like or dislike of teachers, and the personality and enthusiasm of teachers. These results are consistent with prior research findings in other places. With regard to the influence of grades on students' evaluation of lecturers, close to one third of the respondents (30.9 percent) agreed that they were influenced and more than a third said that they were not influenced by grades they received (Table 6). Over fifty-six (56.1) percent of respondents indicated that they tend to give more time to carefully evaluate lecturers they like (mean equal 3.46). Almost forty-six (45.6) percent of students said they tend to give lecturers they like higher ratings than lecturers they do not like. Over twenty-eight (28.5) percent said they tend to take less time and seriousness in evaluating lecturers they do not like or they do not get on well with (Table 5). Still some others indicated that their evaluation of teachers was influenced by the personality, enthusiasm (Dr. Fox Effect, Watchel, 1998) and the demand of teachers (Table 6). What is the outcome of all these results? Similar to the findings in other countries, Asian students are not very different in the way they go about the evaluation of courses and their teachers, even in an environment where students and faculty live on the same campus. They hold certain views about the evaluation of courses and teachers and the instrument being used for the evaluation. Against a traditional background of respect for teachers, they appear to voice their opinions when the situation is anonymous, something they would not do in the presence of their teachers.

A majority of respondents agree that course and faculty evaluations are important but differ in their opinions about their effectiveness. Their responses also suggest that their ratings of courses and faculty are influenced by factors such as grades, likes and dislikes of teachers and courses, including faculty personality and enthusiasm. In spite of the biases and other concerns, the results show that evaluations can provide insights into what Asian students feel and think about the courses and faculty.

The results from the survey of Asian students' views of courses and faculty are far from reaching any consensus. No clear cut conclusion can be drawn from this study of students' views. Consistent with previous studies done elsewhere, there are both positives and negatives. The results must be used with care, if they are used for formative and summative applications (Senior, 2000). Both have the potential to be helpful or hurtful. Careful consideration must be taken when evaluations are used for either purpose. To ensure that the assessment of instructors' performance in the classroom are seen to be fair, unbiased, valid and reliable, other forms of evaluation beside student evaluations must be taken into account, e.g. peer evaluation, supervisors' reports, etc. As evidenced by the research findings of Jacobs (1987), Follman (1983, cited in Senior, 2000), and Greenwald (1997), which were mentioned earlier, the whole issue of student evaluation of teachers is a complex and divisive one, and it may be impossible to reach consensus.

Limitations and Questions

This study only surveyed the views of Asian students. No statistical tests were conducted. It simply presents the views of students in a small international university environment located in an Asian setting. A few questions coming out of this study are as follows: One of the influences of student evaluations of instructors is their like and dislike of faculty. What criteria do students use to decide whether they like or dislike a teacher? Maybe the reason students dislike a teacher is because his/her teaching is ineffective. It may be due to personality differences. How can students' feelings about the teacher and about the course be separated?

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