

Perceptions of lecturers of student evaluations of their teaching

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This descriptive study explored perceptions of lecturers of student evaluations of their teaching at the University of Malawi, Kamuzu College of Nursing. Data were collected from the entire population of lecturers (N=71). Descriptive statistics, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance were computed using SPSS to analyse the data. It was established that generally lecturers had a positive perception towards student evaluation of their teaching, and that their perception did not differ by age, sex, academic qualification, professional rank, or teaching experience. The study further revealed that lecturers' perceptions of student evaluations of their teaching was more positive when the purpose was formative. The study concluded that student evaluations of the lecturers' teaching was not a problem but the question to be answered was the purpose for which such evaluation should serve. It was, therefore, recommended that University of Malawi should harness the implementation of student evaluations of lecturers teaching while triangulating with other evaluation methods.

Keywords: quality assurance; teaching effectiveness, student evaluation, formative, summative

INTRODUCTION

The literature on student evaluations of lecturers' teaching suggests that whether a lecturers' teaching should be evaluated is not important; rather, what is important is who should do the evaluation, for what purpose, and by what means (Adeyemo, 2015; Iyam, & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005). Richardson (2005) noted that universities/colleges can evaluate lectures' teaching by: classroom observation, student ratings, student achievement, peer rating, self-rating, teacher interview, parents rating, competency tests, and indirect measures. However, of these approaches, student evaluation, though engrossed in controversy, has gained popularity globally as the primary source of assessing teaching in higher education (Atek, Salim, Halim, Jusoh, & Yusuf, 2015; Inko-Tariah, 2013).

Student evaluation of lecturers' teaching means that students, as consumers of instruction, are made to express their opinion and feelings concerning the effectiveness of the lecturers' teaching process and activities during the semester and the extent to which they benefited from the process (Idaka, Joshua, & Kritsonis, 2006). Barret (in Machingambi & Wadesanyo, 2011) noted that the formal student evaluations of their lecturers dates back to the 15th Century when students at the University of Bologna in Italy paid their lecturers according to their teaching abilities. Over time, universities in many developed countries, like the US and UK, and some developing countries, like Malaysia, have made

student evaluation mandatory and harnessed the practice at both undergraduate and postgraduate level to ensure quality of their educational systems (Alek et al., 2015; Igbojekwe & Ugo-Okoro, 2015). This seems to be concomitant with Remmer's conclusion (cited in Idaka, et al., 2006) that students' evaluations ought to be mandatory in every university/college because:

- a) Student judgement as a criterion of effective teaching can no longer be waved aside as invalid and irrelevant;
- b) Lecturers have no real choice as to whether they will be judged by those they teach, but the real choice any lecturer has is whether or not to use that knowledge in the teaching process;
- c) The way higher education is organized and operated, students are pretty much the only ones who observe and are in a position to judge the lecturers' teaching effectiveness; and
- d) No research has been published invalidating the use of student evaluations as one criterion of teachers' teaching effectiveness.

Iyam, and Aduwa-Oglebaen (2005) stress that student evaluation of lecturers' teaching can serve a range of purposes; both summative and formative. The formative function entails the improvement of classroom instructions, student learning, and fostering of professional growth of lecturers. The summative function includes use of results for administrative/personnel decisions, such as promotion, demotion, salary increase, dismissal, awards, and/or meeting public accountability demands. Thus, student evaluation of lecturers teaching can be regarded as a key step in the drive to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning and raise the standard of education offered by universities.

Studies conducted in different countries and universities within countries of student evaluation of lecturers' teaching, especially in Africa, reveal that the lecturers' perceptions of student evaluations are somewhat mixed: in Nigeria and South Africa a number of studies show that lecturers do not generally accept student evaluation of their teaching (Iyam & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005; Mwachingambi & Wadesango, 2011; Yusuf, Ajidagba, Ayorinde, & Olumoun, 2010); but other studies show that in Nigeria, and in Kenya and Malaysia, lecturers agree that student evaluations of lecturers' teaching is necessary—however, teachers' positive perceptions mainly apply if the purpose is formative (Adeyemo, 2015; Idaka et al., 2006; Inko-Tariah, 2013; Gichinga, Mukulu, & Mwachiro, 2014). It is not clear whether the less favourable attitude of lecturers towards student evaluations is because they are apprehensive about the potential academic and professional inadequacies that may be exposed by student evaluations, or whether the lecturers are not convinced that university students are competent enough to evaluate their teaching.

Similarly, findings of studies of the influence of lecturers' characteristics on their perceptions of student evaluation of teaching vary. While in Nigeria, Idaka et al., (2006) found that the lecturers' perceptions towards student evaluation of teaching were significantly influenced by lecturers' academic discipline, professional status, and academic qualification. Adeyemo (2015), in the same country, found no significant difference in the perception of lecturers across gender, age, professional status, and work experience. A study that explored the lecturers' gender and their valuation of student evaluation of teaching in six public universities in Malaysia also found that there was no significant difference in terms of gender, although lecturers of both genders found student

evaluation of teaching more useful only for formative rather than summative functions (Atek et al., 2015). These variations in lecturers' perceptions towards student evaluation of teaching suggest that it is not possible to generalize the findings of studies from one university/country to the other.

In Malawi, concerns about quality of higher education in both public and private higher education institutions have compelled stakeholders to consider various tools and provisions for assuring quality, including the greater use of student evaluations of lecturers' teaching. Stakeholders have realized that, while universities/colleges periodically review their curriculums to offer relevant and competitive programs, such efforts are not enough to produce competent graduates because it neglects the effect of classroom interaction.

Currently, the general criteria for evaluating academic staff of universities/colleges is in three broad areas: teaching, research, and community engagements. However, the evaluation of lecturers in public universities in Malawi has, for a long time, given low priority to teaching, placing much emphasis on research publications. Igbojekwe and Ugo-Okoro, (2015) argue that the use of research publications and paper presentation at conferences as the main performance indicators for lecturers while neglecting their teaching effectiveness does little to promote excellence in teaching. It is no secret that the "publish or perish syndrome" sometimes result in some lecturers in public universities in Malawi compromising their primary responsibility of teaching. Consequently, teaching suffers, yet grades are awarded whether or not students are taught or guided to learn, raising concerns appropriately captured by Iyam and Aduwa-Oglebaen (2005) that "most undergraduate students may be merely certificated and not truly educated". Thus, monitoring the effectiveness of lecturers' teaching is a necessary part of any university/college that is interested in maintaining standards, because a lack of interest in what transpires in the classroom could be a serious factor in the quality of the graduates produced (Abdulrahman, Ayoride, & Olubode, 2010).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Senate of the University of Malawi approved a new criterion for the promotion and merit increment of its staff in 2011 which incorporated the lecturers' teaching responsibilities and effectiveness. Data for the criteria would be collected, in part, from student evaluations of the teaching performance of lecturers (University of Malawi, 2011). However, a review of relevant literature shows that no study has been conducted to determine how lecturers feel about the use of student evaluations of their teaching as one way of determining their promotion and assuring the quality of their teaching in Malawi. Given the mixed results from previous studies on teacher evaluations, as discussed above, it is not possible to simply assume positive or negative feelings. The study reported upon in this paper explores the perceptions of lecturers to student evaluation of their teaching effectiveness in the Malawian context.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of lectures towards student evaluations of their teaching effectiveness at the University of Malawi, Kamuzu College of Nursing. To achieve the purpose, the study sought to answer five questions:

1. What is the perception of lecturers to student evaluation of their teaching effectiveness?
2. Do the lecturers' perceptions differ significantly based on age, gender, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience?
3. What formative functions should the results of student evaluations of teaching serve?
4. What summative functions should the results of the student evaluations of teaching serve?
5. To what extent does the purpose/use of evaluation results influence the perception of lecturers towards student evaluation of their teaching?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study will contribute towards strengthening the country's initiatives towards assuring the quality of higher education in Malawi. Understanding the feelings and attitudes of lecturers to student evaluation of their teaching effectiveness is likely to trigger further discussions about issues of improving teaching and learning in higher education. The lecturers' voice and active consideration of such issues would contribute towards the acceptance of results from student evaluation and improve implementation of student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching. Generally, it is only when lecturers themselves understand the value of students' evaluations of their teaching, that such processes can be meaningfully implemented.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative, descriptive survey design, which sought to collect information on respondent's knowledge, opinions, attitudes, and values; this information was then examined to detect patterns of association relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2008). Specifically, the study investigated the phenomenon of student evaluation of their lecturers' teaching by obtaining the opinions or perceptions of lectures, and determining the associations between their perception and a range of variables.

The study was conducted at Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN), a constituent college of the University of Malawi. The University of Malawi has four constituent colleges; apart from the KCN, there are Chancellor College, College of Medicine, and The Polytechnic. The selection of KCN was determined by logistical and financial constraints. The total number of lecturers at KCN, according to the college registrar's records, is 71. Because this population was manageable, all lecturers were included in the study.

The research instrument "Lecturer Response to Students Evaluations of Teaching (LRSET)" questionnaire, developed by Iyam and Aduwa-Oglebaen (2005) with a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.917, was administered to generate data for the study. This questionnaire has also been used by a number of studies in Nigeria and Benin (Idaka et al., 2006; Iyam & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005), South Africa (Machigambi & Wadesango, 2011), and Malaysia (Sulong & Hajazi, 2016). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items scored on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree, and weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The items 1-10 covered the general need for student evaluation; items 11-15 elicited information on the formative purposes; and items 16-20 focused on the summative purposes of student evaluation.

The questionnaire was self-administered, and it was physically delivered as well as sent electronically to all the lecturers at KCN (N=71). Fifty-two lecturers completed and returned the questionnaires, representing a response rate of 73.2%.

The data for the study were entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 22.0). Descriptive statistics, particularly percentages, were used to analyse data relevant to research questions 1, 3, and 4. To analyse data relevant to research question 2, data from items 1–10 on the questionnaire were used to compute the mean score for the need for student’s evaluation of lecturers teaching. Thereafter, an independent t-test was run to ascertain whether the lecturers’ perceptions differed significantly based on gender (male/female) and academic qualification (Master’s Degree/Doctoral Degree). The F-test (one-way analysis of variance) was also computed to test whether the lecturers’ perceptions differed significantly based on age (<40 year, 40-49 year, and >50 years), professional rank (associate professor, senior lecturer and lecturer) teaching experience (<5years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and >14 years); bachelor’s degree and associate lecturer were excluded from the analysis because there was only one case. The study also computed the mean score on formative and summative function of students evaluations of lecturers’ teaching, which was used to run the dependent (paired sample) t-test statistical technique to answer research question number 5.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Demographic profile of respondents

Descriptive statistics were generated to capture the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1: Demographics of respondents

	Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Male	14	26.9
	Female	38	73.1
Age	< 40 years	9	17
	40 – 49 years	23	43.4
	>= 50 years	20	37.7
Academic qualifications	Doctoral Degree (PhD)	18	34.6
	Master’s Degree	33	63.5
	Bachelor’s Degree	1	1.9
Professional status/rank	Professor	0	-
	Associate professor	5	9.6
	Senior Lecturer	19	36.5
	Lecturer	27	51.9
	Associate lecturer	1	1.9
Work experience	< 5 years	10	18.9
	5 – 9 Years	15	28.3
	10 – 14 years	7	13.5
	>15 years	20	38.5

As shown in Table 1: 73.1% of respondents were female; out of 52 respondents, 17% were below the age of 40, 43.4% were within the range of 40-49 years, and 37.7% were 50 years and above; 34.6% were holders of a doctoral degree, 63.5% had masters degrees, and 1.9% possessed a Bachelor’s degree. Those holding only a first degree were assistant lecturers involved in offering tutorials since university policy is that lecturers must hold

a masters level degree; however, they were included in the study because they are also involved in teaching. Among the respondents, 9.6% were associate professors, 36.5% senior lecturers, 51.9% lecturers and 1.9% associate/assistant lecturers. There were no professors (i.e. the college has only one professor). In terms of work experience: 18.9% of the respondents had worked for less than five years; 28.3%, 5–9 years; 13.5% 10–14 years; and 38.5% had 15 and more years of experience.

Perception of lecturers towards students' evaluations of their teaching

Items 1-10 on the questionnaire were used to examine the perception of lecturers towards student's evaluation of their teaching. The results are presented in Table 2. Noticeably, most of the items (7 out of 10) were rated positively. This means that the respondents had a generally positive perception concerning student evaluation of their teaching. The analysis also revealed that there were some reservations on items 5, 8, and 10 that focused on punctuality, commitment, and discipline.

Table 2: Examining perception of Lecturers to Student Evaluation of Teaching

No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1	The idea of students evaluating their lecturer is acceptable.	31 (59.6%)	21 (40.4%)	0	0
2	University students are responsible enough to evaluate their lecturers.	22 (42.3%)	22 (42.3%)	8 (15.4%)	0
3	Student possess good value-judgements to evaluate their lecturers.	13 (25.0%)	25 (48.1%)	14 (26.9%)	0
4	Lecturers will be more prepared for their teaching if evaluated by students.	28 (53.8%)	16 (30.8%)	8 (15.4%)	0
5	Lecturers will be more punctual to class if they know that their students will evaluate them.	21 (40.4%)	13 (25%)	18 (34.6%)	0
6	Lecturers will be more transparent to students if they know that they will be evaluated by students.	21 (40.4%)	16 (30.8%)	15 (28.8%)	0
7	Student evaluation of lecturers help to improve lecturer-student relationship.	9 (17.3%)	33 (63.5%)	10 (19.2%)	0
8	Student evaluation of lecturers help lecturers to be more committed to their Job.	11 (21.2%)	23 (44.2%)	18 (34.6%)	0
9	Lecturers will be more innovative in their teaching if they are evaluated by their students.	17 (32.7%)	20 (38.5%)	15 (28.8%)	0
10	Lecturers will be more disciplined generally if they know that their student will evaluate them.	9 (17.3%)	23 (44.2%)	19 (36.5%)	1 (1.9%)

With regard to the acceptability of students evaluating their lecturers, all respondents affirmed the idea that students evaluating their lecturers was acceptable (40.4% Agree and 56.6% Strongly Agree). Students were viewed as responsible enough to evaluate their lecturers by the majority of respondents (84.6: 42.3% Agree and 42.3% Strongly Agree). On whether students possess good value judgement to evaluate their lecturers, most respondents were fairly positive as they agreed with the statement (48.1%), while 25% were very positive, as they Strongly Agreed, but 26% of the respondents Disagreed. The results further revealed that 89.6% of the respondents, comprising 58.8% and 30.8% who Strongly agreed, and Agreed respectively, were of the opinion that lecturers would be more prepared for their teaching if evaluated by students. Similarly, 40.4% and 30.8% of the respondents Strongly Agreed and just Agreed, respectively, to the statement that lecturers would be more transparent to students if they knew that they would be evaluated by them. This culminates into the total to 71.2% who were positive and 28.8% of the respondents who were negative to the statement. There was also agreement among respondents (80.8%) that student evaluation of lecturers would help to improve the lecturer-student relationship. Of these, 63.5% Agreed with the statement while 17.3% Strongly Agreed. In addition, 71.2% of the respondents, comprising 38.5% and 32.7% who just Agreed and Strongly Agreed with the statement, respectively, were of the opinion that the student evaluation of lecturers teaching would make lecturers more innovative in their teaching, although some respondents (28.8%) did not agree.

Items that indicated that student evaluation of lecturers teaching would make lecturers punctual for class, more committed to their job, and more disciplined had, relatively, the lowest positive perception: 65.4%, 65.4% and 61.5%, respectively. Although, 40.4% Strongly Agreed and 25% Agreed with the statement that lecturers would be more punctual to class if they knew that their students would evaluate them, the respondents that were negative about the statement were also substantial (34.6%). Similarly, 34.6% of the respondents poorly rated the view that lecturers would be more committed to their job if they were evaluated by students; however (65.4: 21.2% Strongly Agree and 44.2% Agree) with the statement. A sizable number of respondents (36.5%) were also negative to the statement that lecturers would be more disciplined generally if they knew that their student would evaluate them, although the majority of the respondents felt this was true (,17.3% Strongly Agree and 44.2% Agree).

Therefore, it was concluded that the overall perception of the respondents to student's evaluation of the lecturers teaching effectiveness was generally positive, although there were some reservation with other aspects of the student evaluation.

Determining whether the lecturers' perception differed significantly based on age, gender, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience

Data from items 1-10 on the questionnaire were used to conduct an independent t-test for ascertaining whether lecturers' perception differed significantly based on gender and academic qualification. The study also computed an F-test (one-way analysis of variance) to test whether lecturers' perceptions differed significantly based on age (<40 years, 40-49 years, and >50 years old), professional rank (associate professor, senior lecturer and lecturer), and teaching experience (<5 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and >14 years). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Determining whether the lecturers' perception differ significantly based on age, sex, academic qualification, professional rank and teaching experience

Selected characteristics	Mean and SD	N	Statistic	Df	P-value	
Age	< 40 years	80.3 ± 10.1	9	$F = 1.126$	2	0.333
	40 – 49 years	74.6 ± 17.4	23			
	>= 50 years	80.6 ± 10.9	20			
Gender	Male	80.8 ± 14.5	14	$t = 0.890$	50	0.378
	Female	78.8 ± 14.0	38			
Academic qualification	Doctoral Degree (PhD)	76.6 ± 15.3	18	$t = 0.389$	49	0.699
	Master's Degree	78.2 ± 13.7	33			
Professional rank	Associate professor	78.4 ± 17.9	5	$F = 0.407$	2	0.668
	Senior Lecturer	79.8 ± 14.2	19			
	Lecturer	76.0 ± 13.8	27			
Work experience	< 5 years	79.6 ± 12.4	10	$F = 0.647$	3	0.589
	5 – 9 Years	77.9 ± 14.5	15			
	10 – 14 years	71.1 ± 17.1	7			
	>15 years	79.5 ± 14.1	20			

As shown in Table 3, the mean and standard deviation for each category on age was 80.3 ± 10.1 , 74.6 ± 17.4 , and 80.6 ± 10.9 , respectively, and the statistical results was $F = 1.126$, $p > 0.05$. This means that there was no difference in the perception of the lecturers to student evaluation of their teaching in terms of age. The mean and standard deviation for males was 80.8 ± 14.5 , and females was 78.8 ± 14.0 and $t(50) = 0.890$, $p > 0.05$, denoting that gender of respondents did not influence their perception towards student evaluation. Similarly, there was no difference in the respondents' perceptions in terms of academic qualification. The mean and standard deviation was: doctoral degree 76.6 ± 15.3 ; masters degree 78.4 ± 13.7 and $t(49) = 0.699$, $p > 0.05$. The perception of respondents to student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching across the professional ranks was also the same ($F = 0.407$, $p > 0.05$) and no significant difference was found in terms of work experience ($F = 0.647$, $p > 0.05$). It was concluded that age, gender, academic qualification, professional rank, and work experience of the respondents did not have an influence on their perception towards student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching.

Formative function of Student Evaluation of the Lecturers Teaching

Items 11-15 from the questionnaire were used to capture the perceptions of lecturers on the formative function that student evaluation of the lecture's teaching should serve, shown by Table 4.

Clearly respondents positively perceived that results of student evaluations of lecturers' teaching should serve formative purposes because all the five items that sought their opinion of the formative functions of the students' evaluation were highly positively rated. The respondents attested that student evaluation of lecturers' teaching should help lecturers to improve their teaching (100%), improve classroom instruction (84.3%), improve student learning (100%), and assess the needs of learners (84.6%) as well as self-evaluation of the lecturers (100%).

Table 4: Formative Function of the Student Evaluation of the Lecturers' Teaching

No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD	SA+A
11	Feedback on student's evaluation helps lecturers to improve their teaching.	37 71.2%	15 28.8%	0	0	100%
12	Results of student evaluation are needed to improve classroom instruction.	29 55.8%	20 28.5%	2 3.8%	1 1.9%	84.3%
13	Results of student evaluation can be used to improve student learning.	32 61.5%	20 38.5%	0	0	100%
14	Results of student evaluation can be used to assess needs of lecturers.	27 51.9%	17 32.7%	7 13.5%	1 1.95	84.6%
15	Student evaluation report can help lecturers to evaluate themselves.	33 63.5%	19 36.5%	0	0	100%

Summative functions of student evaluation of the lecturers teaching

Data from items 16-20 on the questionnaire were used to capture the perception of respondents on the summative functions of student evaluations of lecturers' teaching; responses are summarized by Table 5.

Table 5: Summative functions of the student evaluation of the lecturers teaching

No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD
16	Results of student evaluation are needed for administrative decisions.	15 (28.8%)	30 (57.7%)	3 (5.8%)	4 (7.7%)
17	Student evaluation results should be used for promotion of lecturers.	9 (17.3%)	25 (48.1%)	14 (26.9%)	4 (7.7%)
18	Student evaluation results are needed for salary increase for lecturers.	4 (7.7%)	17 (32.7%)	26 (50%)	5 (9.6%)
19	Student evaluation results are needed to select the best lecturers for award in the faculty.	24 (46.2%)	9 (17.3%)	12 (23.1%)	7 (13.5%)
20	There is a need for student evaluation of lecturers yearly.	25 (48.1%)	24 (46.2%)	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.8%)

As shown in Table 5, the respondents had a mixed perception to the use of student evaluation results for summative purposes. They were highly positive (86.5%) on the first item, which sought to ascertain whether results of student evaluation should be used for administrative decision, with 28.8% and 57.7% Strongly Agreeing and Agreeing, respectively, and only 13.5% who felt it was unacceptable. However, the strength of their perception declined on the subsequent items that focused on particular administrative decisions. A fairly positive perception (65.4%) was revealed on whether student evaluation results should be used for promotion of lecturers. This comprised 17.3% and 48.1% of the respondents who Strongly Agreed and Agreed with the statement. Fewer respondents (40.4%) supported the view that student evaluation results should be used for salary increase for lecturers: 69.6% of the respondents rejected the idea. On whether student evaluation results should be used to select the best lecturer for award in the

faculty, 46.2% Strongly Agreed and 17.3% Agreed, culminating in 63.5% of the respondents that were positive. The idea was rejected by 36.5% of the respondents. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents (94.3%) were of the view that student evaluation of lectures' teaching ought to be a yearly exercise

Influence of purpose of evaluation on lecturers' perceptions of student evaluations of teaching

The study computed the dependent t-test to determine the extent to which purpose of evaluation influenced the perception of lecturers to student evaluation of their teaching. The analysis tested whether the mean score for the perception of lecturers to student evaluation when the purpose was formative was not significantly different from the mean score of the same lecturers when the purpose was summative. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Paired Sample t-test of Perception of Lecturers to Student Evaluation under Formative and Summative Purposes

Purpose of evaluation	Mean	SD	SE	Df	t-value	p-value
Formative	88.94	11.896	1.650	51	6.901	.000
Summative	72.79	17.247	2.392			

*Significant at .05 level, (Critical t-value = 1.68) $n = 52$, $df = 51$.

The results in Table 6, show that the calculated t-value, 6.901, was greater than the critical t-value, 1.68, for the two-tailed test, denoting that the two mean scores were different. This means that lecturers' perceptions of student evaluations of their teaching effectiveness was more positive when the purpose was formative ($M = 88.94$, $SE = 1.650$) than when the purpose was summative ($M = 72.79$, $SE = 2.392$), $t(51) = 6.901$, $p < .05$, $r = .69$.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that lecturers at the University of Malawi, KCN have a generally positive perception towards student evaluations of their teaching effectiveness. This is different from findings of some studies (Iyam & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005; Machingambi & Wadesango, 2011; Yusuf et al., 2010) but supports the findings of Idaka et al. (2006), Inko-Tariah (2013) and Adeyemo's (2015), who found that lecturers in Nigeria had a very positive disposition to student evaluation of their teaching effectiveness. This finding has important implications because it suggests that the University of Malawi quality assurance initiative to implementing the student evaluation of the lecturers teaching will experience little resistance among lecturers at KCN.

However, it is not clear whether this could predict the lecturers' utilization of students' evaluation feedback. As Beran and Rokosh (2009) caution, lecturers' positive perception towards student evaluations does not often correlate with the actual usage of student evaluation results for improving teaching. Concomitant with Adeyemo's (2015) study of the Nigerian situation and Atek et al.'s (2015) study set in Malaysia, this study found no significant difference in the perception of lecturers towards student evaluation of their teaching based on gender. That is, there was uniformity between male and female lecturers because they both perceived student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching positively. This is promising since the majority of lecturers at KCN are female (73.1%). Studies conducted in other countries found that gender influenced lecturers' perceptions,

with female lecturers being more sensitive to student evaluations than their male counterparts (Inko-Tariah, 2013; Gichinga et al., 2014). In addition, although it is generally argued that junior and less experienced lecturers are likely to have a more negative attitude to student evaluation of the lecturers teaching effectiveness than senior academics/professors because of their educational and professional inadequacies (Iyam & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005; Machingambi & Wadesango, 2011), the findings of this study did not show any significant difference in the perception of lecturers because of age, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience. This also contradicts findings of studies which demonstrated that the attitude of lecturers towards student evaluation of their teaching significantly differed in terms of age and teaching experience (Inko-Tariah, 2013), academic qualification, and professional rank (Idaka et al, 2006).

The study further revealed that lecturers at KCN were somewhat dissatisfied with the use of student evaluations of their teaching for summative purposes but were significantly positive that such results should be used for formative purpose. This conformed to findings of studies conducted in other countries (Adeyemo, 2015; Atek et al., 2015; Gichinga et al., 2014; Idaka et al., 2006), suggesting that it would be naïve to think that lecturers are ignorant of the value of student evaluations of their teaching. Rather, the critical and unresolved issue revolves around the purpose for which the student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching should serve. By approving student evaluation of the lecturers' teaching for formative functions, KCN lecturers invariably recognized the unique contribution that students as stakeholders in the education system could make towards fostering professional growth of lecturers and improving classroom instruction and student learning (Iyam & Aduwa-Oglebaen, 2005).

It is not clear what led to discomfort with the use of student evaluations for summative purposes, particularly promotion and salary increment. Generally, one would think that, if lecturers know that their advancement depended in part on student evaluations, the chances are high that they would seriously consider rendering effective teaching. Idaka et al. (2006) provides one explanation; that is, that lecturers are simply more sensitive to the harm such practices could inflict on their career because of their tendency towards self-preservation. More cogent, though, is the argument that centres on the validity and reliability of student evaluations. Some critics argue that lecturers tend to question the practice of deciding issues of promotion, dismissal, salary, and tenure on the basis of anonymous students who complete a few items at the end of the semester which may not accurately measure the complexity and multidimensionality of effective teaching (Machingambi & Wadesango, 2011). This argument cannot just be dispelled, as there is currently no consensus on what constitutes effective teaching in higher education. As such, institutions need to seriously consider using a variety of evaluation methods to control for the potential bias in the student evaluation process in order to effectively assess the lecturers' teaching.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that implementing student evaluations of lecturers' teaching effectiveness in the monitoring of quality teaching at the University of Malawi, KCN, is likely to face little resistance. Just as with their counterparts in countries where student evaluations of lecturers teaching has taken root, the majority of lecturers in this study, regardless of gender, age, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience, highly supported the initiative, although they were of the

view that if the results of the student evaluation of the lecturers teaching are used for formative and summative purposes, they should not be linked to promotion and salary increase. Therefore, it is important that the University of Malawi should tread carefully in implementing student evaluations of lecturers' teaching effectiveness if it is to serve both formative and summative purposes. Particularly, where results are to be used for summative purposes, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that students understand the value of evaluating the lecturers' teaching on the quality of education; and that lecturers do not water down the course's task demands, difficulty level, and grading propensity to please students in order to get higher scores on student evaluations instead of concentrating on providing valuable learning experiences. The study recommends that student evaluations of lecturers' teaching should be triangulated with other evaluation approaches when making administrative decisions such as promotion, demotion, dismissal, salary increase, and awards.

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