

## **Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET): How do Students' Perspectives Matter to Teachers**

**Novi Rahayu Restuningrum, Wina Hartaty**

[novirahayu.restuningrum@gmail.com](mailto:novirahayu.restuningrum@gmail.com)

YARSI University

### **ABSTRACT**

End-semester program evaluation in our university implement questionnaire that students must fill out, containing questions about the learning materials, facilities, and teachers' performance. This research aims at exploring the significance of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) towards university lecturers.

Teachers are given the evaluation result before the start of the next semester. The review might be important as it could be used by the teachers to improve their instruction for the next semester. However, there has been no data showing its impacts on the teachers' performances.

The research will look at how teachers view the evaluation about themselves. The research questions are: a. How do teachers react towards students' evaluation result? b. Which area of evaluation matter the most? c. How do teachers use the evaluation result for their future teaching practices?

This research investigate on how teachers view some points from the student questionnaire results through interviews towards teachers in the institution. The questionnaire results serve as preliminary data on how students view their teachers' performance. Analysis towards the data is done through thematic coding and utilises professional development perspectives in English Language Teaching area.

The presentation is envisioned to be beneficial for in-service teachers and school management, broadening perspectives that will make change.

---

Keywords: Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET), teacher evaluation, student questionnaire, professional development

## INTRODUCTION

### I. Rationale, Literature Review and Research Context

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) has been considered important in education institutions. It is believed to be a valid instrument as an indicator of effective instruction (Stupans, 2015) and is done with the main purpose of improving the quality of services offered to students. In SET, students' feedback plays important role to "enable university teachers, planners, and leaders to monitor teaching processes" (La Rocca, 2017, p. 676).

Chen & Hoshower's (2003) notion of Student Evaluation of Teaching describes its two functions, which are formative and summative measurements of teaching. SET is said to have formative function when it makes teachers modify their teaching practices, and the summative function is shown when the evaluation provides information for administrative decisions.

This evaluation mechanism is among efforts that are done for the purpose of professional development. Harmer (2007), by summarizing several concepts from Tomlinson (2003), Templer (2004), Davis (1999) and Piai (2005), explained in his book that "teacher development means different things to different people" (p. 410). One principle given by Tomlinson is that teachers who are given new challenge will reflect, learn and think carefully how they are going to deliver a particular teaching material. Another principle given by Templer symbolizes "holding up mirrors" in teaching practices as a practice of reflection. An interesting view is given by a teacher in Piai's workshop, saying that a teacher develops herself/himself; not anyone else. A trainer might train and educate, but teacher development is in the hand of the teacher him/herself (Harmer, 2007).

A discussion on the effectiveness of teaching evaluation process by Pounder (2007) identifies aspects related teachers, students, and course in SET. Among the factors are students' academic level of maturity that suggests that higher level students generally give more favorable results of SET, class size (where smaller class size tends to give better score in SET), teachers' age (where older and experienced teachers receive more positive evaluation from their students), and teachers' influencing tactics including easing up course content, assignments and tests (Pounder, 2007). Another research investigating how teacher's

characteristics affect SET done by Johnson, et.al (2013) also shows that teacher's gender and academic rank affect SET.

Inspite of the many studies done to investigate the area of student evaluation of teaching, Chen & Hoshower (2003) noted that there has been lack in studies that analyze the "factors that influence students' attitude toward teaching evaluations" as well as examine the 'behavioral intention of students' participating in the evaluation of faculty teaching effectiveness" (p. 72). Although not from the perspective of the students, this area is seen in this research through the teachers' perspective. Concerns on how truthful the students are in giving their opinions in the evaluation sheet was explored.

SET and how it becomes an effective way of assessing the effectiveness of teaching in an institution have been done throughout the years. As a further step, the question about how SET gives impact towards teachers in any ways might be asked after each evaluation. The impact towards teachers is as important as its benefit for the institution who makes decision on future policy. The impact of the evaluation towards teachers can be seen through how teachers react or behave as a result of their knowing the evaluation result. So far, there is little that has been done in relation to the impact of the evaluation towards teachers. This research fills this gap. It investigated teachers' perspectives towards the student evaluation on their teaching aspects. The research explores how teachers view the evaluation result and what impacts the evaluation gives. The discussion is presented in the domain of teacher or professional development.

The research is done towards English teachers in a university in Jakarta. End-semester program evaluation in this university implements questionnaire that students must fill out, containing questions about the learning materials, facilities, and teachers' performance. At the end of the respective academic year, teachers are given the evaluation result. So far, there has been no data showing its impacts on the teachers' performances. This research looks at the aspect in relation to professional development.

## **II. Research Methodology**

### *Research Methods*

As a qualitative study, this research used data “to build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypothesis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15). It understands the phenomenon through understanding the perspectives of the participants because “meaning is embedded in people’s experiences and this meaning is mediated through an investigator’s own perceptions” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

The research explores three main aspects namely how teachers react towards students’ evaluation result, which area of evaluation matters the most and how teachers use the evaluation result for their future teaching practices. Researcher’s interpretation towards the data cannot be separated from their own background and knowledge because in qualitative study, researchers interpret what they see, hear and understand (Creswell, 2009).

The data was collected through a survey on google form exploring teachers’ perspective on Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) and how they perceive the result of the SET. The questionnaire should be finished within 10-15 minutes of working.

The questionnaire result can be seen in the google form in the form of individual and collective reports. The result was then coded manually, labelling themes was done using pens and colour markers. Analysis towards the data is done through thematic coding and utilises professional development perspectives in English Language Teaching (ELT) area.

#### *Participants Demography and Recruitment*

The research involved eleven teachers of a language center in a university in Jakarta. These eleven teachers are a number of teachers who responded to the invitation to participate in the research, out of fifteen who were invited. These teachers are male and female with some range of teaching experience. All invited teachers are those who have more than 2 classes at the language center, and teaching various levels of the university students.

Below is the demography of the participants:

No	Participant	Gender	Teaching Experience (years)

1	Ismi	Female	3-5
2	Fathur	Male	1-2
3	Mirna	Female	More than 6
4	Donny	Male	3-5
5	Hendra	Male	1-2
6	Dian	Female	3-5
7	Endah	Female	3-5
8	Tri	Female	More than 6
9	Antik	Female	More than 6
10	Yessy	Female	3-5
11	Henny	Female	1-2

**Fig. 1. Participants Demography**

The recruitment of participants was done through the direct invitation both orally or via text messages. Link to the google form was provided while inviting, so teachers can fill out the questionnaire as soon as possible. Interested participants replied to the message stating their interest and let researchers know when the questionnaire was done. From this process, recruitment of participants is simple and data is obtained quickly.

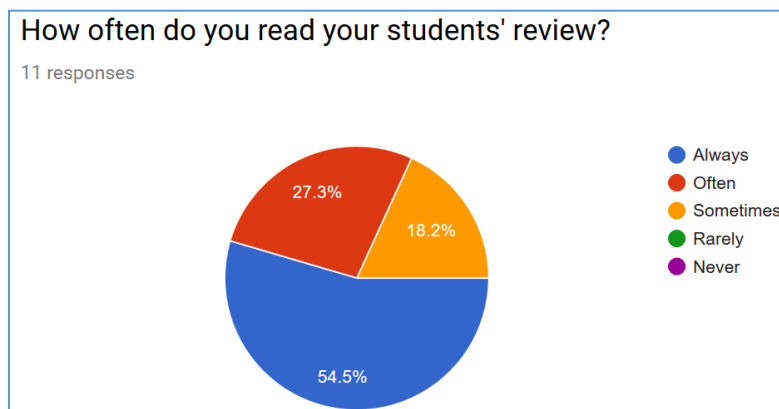
### **III. Findings**

In this research, the areas of investigation is as follows:

- Outfit (neat and decent, dress professionally)
- Attitude (fair attention, encourage English language use among students, enthusiast in teaching, making class a comfortable place to be, friendly and helpful)
- Time management (being on time, effective use of teaching time, on time class dismissal)

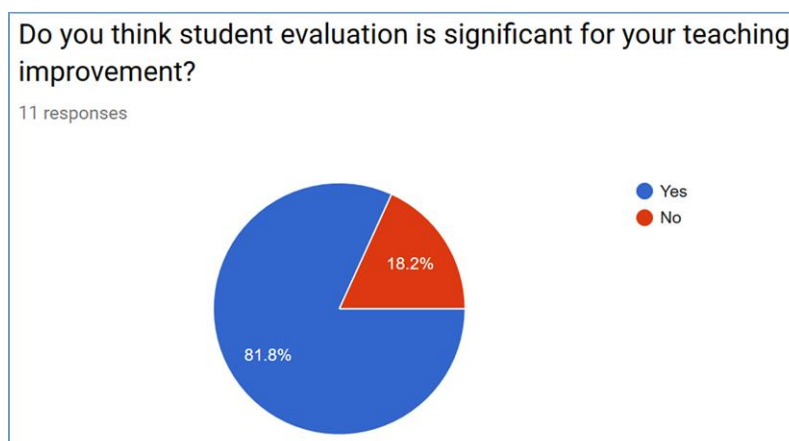
- Teaching (systematically explain materials, give clear instruction, speak in intelligible English, giving students chance to speak their mind)
- Feedback (giving constructive feedback)
- Overall performance (being professional)
- Student comments

Most teachers always read the evaluation result, however, there are two teachers read it only sometimes, as seen from the chart below.



**Fig. 2. Frequency of teachers reading the SET result**

Most teachers consider SET significant for them to improve their teaching practices.



**Fig. 3. Significance of SET to Teachers**

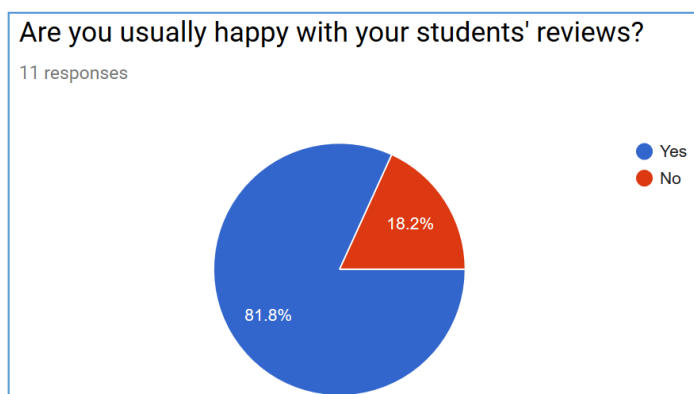
Teachers show various opinion in describing how SET is significant for them. Although two of the participants said it was not significant because the evaluation is considered not reliable and the students' answers are not truthful, most of the participants mentioned that

they want to change after reading the evaluation result, to suit students' needs or expectations. "If the students feel uncomfortable, I would try to improve my teaching" (Endah) or "I can see the responses of the students and what they really need and expect to have in the study process" (Yessy) are two of the quotes that show the teachers' will to modify their behavior based on the students' expectations. Other teachers stated that SET is significant in many ways including the teachers' modification in attitude to have better teacher-student interaction and better learning process. Teachers can also know their strength and weaknesses through SET; they obtained information on what areas they are still lacking. More reflective views are also seen from a teacher saying "As a reflection for the betterment of our way of teaching" (Hendra).

Thus, SET impacts teachers in many ways in relation to the practices of their teaching. Some of the actions that teachers take reflect the impact that is given by the SET. Below are quotes from the teachers which show some of the teachers' effort to change after reading the evaluation result.

- I try to improve, find more teaching techniques in literatures or workshops, and share ideas with other teachers.
- I put an effort to adapt with the demands which are related to the students' need.
- Have a much better teaching plan.
- I use it to reflect on what's lacking in my teachin and try to improve them.
- I'm trying to provide more engaging activity in the class.
- I keep in mind things I really need to improve and make sure I make necessary changes.
- I read it and make some notes of how I can make my teaching better in the future.

Most of the participants are happy with the result of the evaluation.

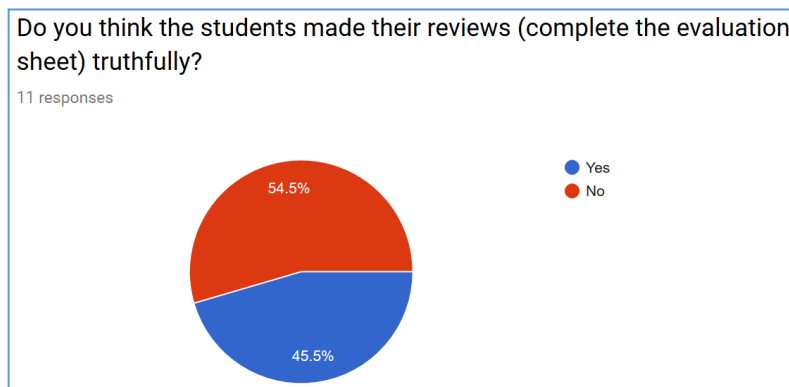


**Fig. 4. Teachers are usually happy with the SET result**

How teachers are happy getting information from the student evaluation is seen from the following. They feel happy because getting more response from the students means that the students paid attention to them, and because the review can improve their professionalism. Some reviews are said to be “quite an eye opener” (Tri). A teacher is being positive getting bad reviews and said that bad reviews “help me to reflect on my practice so I can ‘fix’ it and do better in the next semester”(Dian), while to her, good reviews give her encouragement and make her feel loved and respected by students. This feeling is believed to lead her to have more spirits and excitement in teaching.

However, there are always negative comments or reviews, which make teachers unhappy. Bad reviews are considered subjective and often exploit weaknesses in exaggeration while ‘hide’ the teachers’ strengths. This type of review is said to be destructive instead of constructive.

Many teachers consider that the students did not give their reviews truthfully. The chart below shows that only 45.5% of the teachers believe that the students are truthful, while the majority consider the reviews untruthful.



**Fig. 5. Teachers’ opinion on students’ truthfulness**

According to them, students are not truthful because of the following reasons:

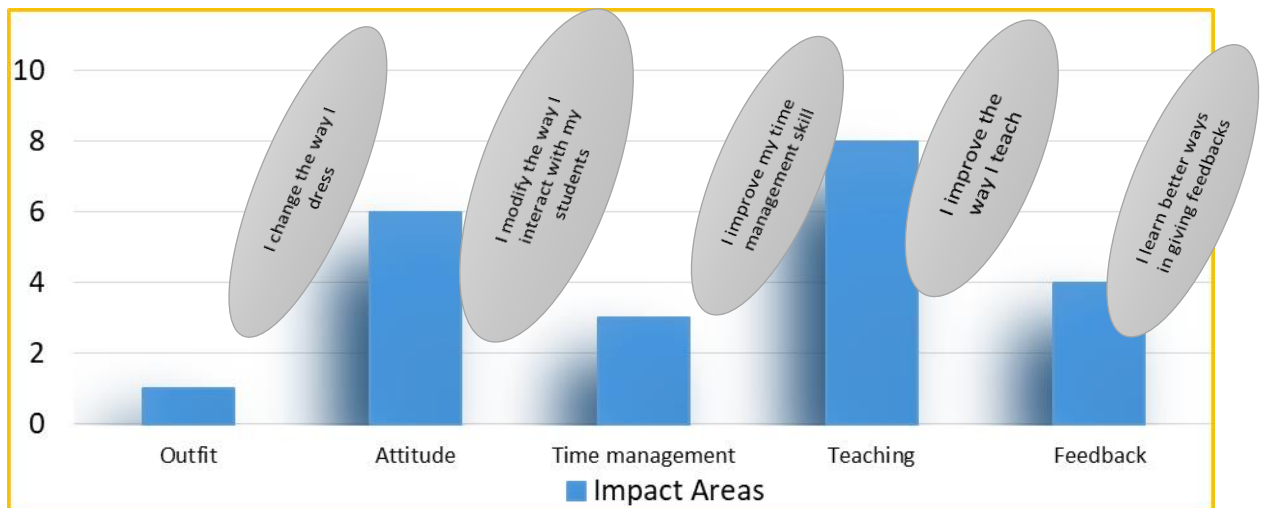
- The evaluation is not important for the students
- Students do not want to think about the answers; they copy friends’ answers
- The anonymity ensures the students to freely say anything without being worried of getting bad impact in return of their negative reviews



Some of the students are still believed to be truthful in answering the evaluation questions, because “they are in university level, they know that the reviews are important for the improvement of everybody involved in the teaching-studying activity” (Yessy).

The last part of the evaluation on teachers is descriptive comments from the students, which mostly make teachers happy to read and to know. A teacher “read it, analyze it, and think about how I can meet what students wish to have or not to have in my classroom” (Yessy). Mirna, one of the teacher, stated that despite positive comments the students gave, negative ones made her wonder and evaluate herself.

There are some areas that give impact to the teachers. An area that gives most impact to the teachers is the “Teaching” area, which evaluates teachers on how they systematically explain materials, give clear instruction, speak in intelligible English and give students chance to speak their mind. Second place in by the “Attitude” area, which evaluates teachers on their fair attention, encouragement for English language use among students, enthusiast in teaching, making class a comfortable place to be and being friendly and helpful. The following chart explains more.



**Fig. 6 Areas that impact teachers the most**

The most impact-giving aspects make teachers want to change in the purpose of the betterment of their teaching practice.

#### **IV. Discussion**

Referring to Tomlinson (2003 in Harmer, 2007), teachers' reflective behavior after reading the result of SET suggests that professional development takes place. Teachers' efforts to modify their teaching technique, the way they approach or interact with their students and willingness to learn more on aspects they are lacking in, are among actions that are taken in the purpose of improving themselves professionally. These teachers are intentionally reflect on the "mirrors" (Harmer, 2007, p. 410) to get an idea of how they are doing so far and explore aspects they can improve.

The motivation to fulfil students' expectation through exploring what students hope from their teachers has made teachers explore the aspects that their students had expected. Mostly in the area of "attitude" in the student evaluation, modification on what teachers do as an impact towards the teachers. Referring to figure 6, teachers would fulfil the demands through improving the way they teach, modify the way they interact with their students, improve time management skill and learn better ways in giving feedbacks.

The area that has impacted teachers the most, the "Teaching" area, evaluates how systematic teachers' explanations are, how clear their instructions are, how intelligible their English is and how much teachers give students chance to speak. In the capacity of pedagogy, when this area is improved, it is when professional development is enhanced, and teachers get better qualification as teachers. This confirms the enactment of the core of professional development as an important part of teaching practice and institution service.

It is never enough to say that students' qualification in English is improving along with teachers' improvement in teaching. In relation to it, teachers' development benefits not only the students and the institutions but also goes back to the teachers themselves because they will be able to maintain the job.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Professional development and better service offered to students mark the importance of Student Evaluation of Teaching. “Change” is the key to improvement resulted from teachers’ reflective behavior. To most teachers, “Teaching” is the most impact-giving area in their professional development mechanism; thus, major change will happen in this zone.

A further research will need to be conducted for the institution to look at students’ perspective towards student evaluation of teaching to see the students’ view on how student evaluation benefits them in any ways.

## **VI. References**

- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of language teaching*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Johnson, et.al. (2013). Effects of course and instructor characteristics on student evaluation of teaching across a college of engineering. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 2(2), 289-318.
- Pounder, J.S. (2007). Is student evaluation of teaching worthwhile? An analytical framework for answering the question. *Quality Assurance in Education*. (15)2: 178-191.
- Chen, Y. & Hoshower, L.B. (2003). Student Evaluation of Teaching effectiveness: an assessment of student perception and motivation. *Assessment of Evaluation in Higher Education*. (28)1: 71-88. DOI: 10.1080/0260293032000033071.
- Stupans, I, et.al. (2016). Student evaluation of teaching: a study exploring student rating instrument free-form text comments. *Innov High Educ*. (41): 33-42. DOI: 10.1007/s10755-015-9328-5.
- La Rocca, M, et.al. (2017). An integrated strategy for the analysis of student evaluation of teaching: from descriptive measures to explanatory models. *Qual Quant*. (31): 675-691. DOI: 10.1007/s1135-106-0432-0.
- Huybers, T. (2014). Student evaluation of teaching: the use of best-worst scaling. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. (39):4: 496-513. DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2013.851782.