Reciprocal Course Evaluations

As the semester comes to an end, many of us will soon be turning to review our student course evaluations, perhaps with some trepidation. Indeed, though commonplace in higher education, these evaluations have been hotly debated (e.g., in NPR or Chronicle Vitae), with concerns about their validity, reliability, as well as the weight they have often been singularly given in promotion and tenure decisions.

Yet reviews of the research, by scholars such as Stephen L. Benton and William E. Cashin (2010) and Michael Theall (2003), reveal that students do make consistent judgments about their course experiences and that student feedback can help instructors to improve their teaching.

To continue to reap benefit from student course evaluations, Susanna Calkins and Marina Micari (2010) suggest turning our focus to their design. In a recent issue of The Teaching Professor, Perry Shaw, a faculty member from Beruit, Lebanon, shared his institution's attempt to redesign evaluations by making them more "reciprocal." That is, Shaw explained, "students are asked not only to evaluate the course and the instructor, but also to rate their own engagement with and commitment to the course."

These reciprocal questions (full list attached) were set up for Likert-style responses and include:

- I contributed extensively to class discussion
- When I didn't understand I kept my concerns to myself
- I worked extremely hard in this course
- I prepared drafts of my assignments and asked the instructor for feedback

As Shaw reflected, "The usual design of [student course evaluations] gives students the opportunity to focus on the shortcomings of the course and the instructor, without any acknowledgement of their own role in the learning process. However, course outcomes, for individuals and the class as a whole, are the result of what both teachers and students contribute to the endeavor" (my emphasis).

While we may not be able to modify the design for this semester's course evaluations, we can always ask our students to engage in similar processes of self-reflection and reciprocal evaluation, at the end of the semester or, indeed, at any other time. We may discover that they offer us, and themselves, valuable information.

This will be the final short-form email of the spring semester. Have a wonderful summer!

-Emily

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Reciprocal Student Evaluation of Self and Faculty at ABTS

It is very important for us to hear your reflections on classes at ABTS – your perspective on the course itself, the instructor, and your own role in learning. To help us as we seek excellence in leadership formation we ask you to complete the following analysis as honestly as possible. It is helpful to us if you place your name on the evaluation but this is not compulsory.

Name (optional):

**Part A:**
Each of the following pairs of statements represents opposite ends of a spectrum. Consider each pair and make an evaluation by placing a mark at an appropriate position on the spectrum line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mark Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was unsure in the beginning what the course objectives and expectations were.</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt that the course objectives were achieved well</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course focused on developing complex thinking skills where I was expected to analyze material and develop my own opinions and judgments</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course methodology was primarily through lecture with opportunities for question and answer</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rarely spoke in class</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The instructor used visual aids</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The course was primarily practice</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class sessions seemed very well organized to me</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it difficult to understand what the instructor was trying to say</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I didn’t understand I asked the instructor</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The class mood was not inviting to student contribution and participation</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was too much work in this course</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found I didn’t need to work very hard in this course</td>
<td>3 2 1 0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part A:

The criteria for assessment was known and understood 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I saw no need to consult with the instructor in the completion of the required assignments 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I helped other students in this class to understand the material 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I found the readings and assignments to be simply a hurdle to cross so as to pass the course 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I did extensive preparation for every class session 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I received no feedback on my work from the instructor, or the feedback from the instructor was largely meaningless 3 2 1 0 1 2 3
I took time to evaluate what I had or had not learnt in order to grow in my learning 3 2 1 0 1 2 3

Part B:
If you were in the place of the instructor in this course:
• What would you keep and what would you change in the course content?
• What methods would you introduce that you believe would improve student learning?