Relevance of Students' Evaluation of Teacher Characteristics for Quality Teaching at Mountains of the Moon University.

David Katende[1*], Edith Namutebi[2]

[1]Lecturer Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Planning, and Management, Mountains of the Moon University

[2]Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Planning, and Management, Mountains of the Moon University

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to assess the impact of students' evaluation of the interpersonal characteristics of teachers for quality assurance in the teaching process at Mountains of the Moon University (MMU). The teacher characteristics basically studied in this paper include, teachers being highly interactive, respecting diverse students' talents, and communicating high expectations. This study employed a case study of Mountains of the Moon University with 170 undergraduate students in both second and third years and 13 postgraduate students at least in their second semester of study as the sample size. E-questionnaires using the Kobo toolbox were employed together with a documentary review. Analysis was conducted by the use of statistical packages for social science research (SPSS) and document analysis. Findings revealed that; teacher characteristics are key attributes for quality teaching. The study concluded that Attributes of teacher characteristics are unavoidable in the conception of quality teaching for Students' Evaluation of Teaching in Higher Education Institutions. Therefore, regulatory bodies should benchmark with the findings in this study as a basis for building candid evaluation of teaching guidelines for Higher Education Institutions.

Key Words: Students' Evaluation, teacher characteristics, Quality teaching and Quality Assurance

INTRODUCTION

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) is a widely used tool in higher education institutions to measure teaching effectiveness, provide feedback for faculty, and aid students in course selection (Chen, 2023). SET has been an integral part of academic quality control since the 1920s (Carpenter et al., 2020). Typically, SET surveys involve anonymous evaluations where students rate various aspects of their courses and instructors on a Likert scale and provide open-ended comments (Cook et al., 2022; Maslova et al., 2022). However, the use of SET has been criticized for several reasons. SET ratings can be significantly influenced by factors beyond the control of academics, such as student biases and external circumstances (Cook et al., 2022). There is evidence that SET scores are biased against certain demographic groups, particularly women and minority faculty members (Adams et al., 2022). Male students, in particular, have shown a significant bias in favor of male academics, resulting in higher SET scores for men (Heffernan, 2022). This bias calls into question the fairness and reliability of SET as a measure of teaching quality (Stroebe, 2020).

Furthermore, the pressure to achieve high SET ratings can lead to negative consequences, such as grade inflation, the oversimplification of course content, and the erosion of teaching standards (Carpenter et al., 2020; Lakeman et al., 2022). Academics who are strict in their grading practices may face punitive SET

scores and abusive comments from dissatisfied students (Stroebe, 2020; Lakeman et al., 2022).

The stress associated with SET feedback is a significant concern for academic staff, contributing to poor emotional wellbeing and mental health issues (Shen & Slater, 2021; Morrish, 2019). The anonymous nature of SET can exacerbate this stress, as non-constructive or abusive comments can harm an academic's career prospects and personal wellbeing (Cunningham et al., 2022; Lakeman et al., 2022). Despite these issues, SET remains a prevalent tool for evaluating teaching performance and making critical decisions regarding tenure and promotion (Bedggood & Donovan, 2012). While SET provides valuable feedback for improving the student experience and informing academic decisions, its implementation and the biases inherent in the process raise significant concerns about its impact on faculty, particularly those from underrepresented groups. Further research is necessary to fully understand and mitigate the negative effects of non-constructive student commentary on academic staff (Heffernan, 2022).

The global expansion of higher education has brought about more ambitious educational goals that require new approaches to curriculum, instruction, and learning (Kehm & Stansaker, 2009). This trend is no less apparent in Middle East and Africa where higher education institutions have joined the global race for higher quality and university rankings (Kehm & Stansaker, 2009). To this effect, due to the value attached to higher education, the growth and expansion of higher education institutions (HEIs) has over the years necessitated matched quality assurance systems to meet the standard of the national, regional, and international job markets (Ssentamu & Mawa, 2021). This is in consonance with Greatbatch and Holland (2016), who observes that due to changes in higher education, much attention to the wide range of matrices is currently being used for measuring teaching quality around the world.

As a result, the issue of assessing teaching quality and using it to help students and employers make judgments about and compare different HEIs is, therefore, according to Blackmore et al (2016) an irresolvable 'wicked issue for the government, an aspect that might be linked to the low quality of teaching and learning. According to Omar & Kisige (2022), there have been concerns by stakeholders that many students are not obtaining a good higher education and are not competitive on the job, with higher education institutions being more concerned with making money than raising educational standards. In the Ugandan education system and in particular HEIs, despite the role played by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) as mandated by the Universities and other Tertiary Institutions Act (2001) as amended in 2003 and 2006, especially around teaching and learning as one of the core functions of universities, the said core functions have continuously remained low. This can be evident, for example, by the type of graduates produced by higher education institutions who face challenges of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, lack of creativity and innovativeness (Kisige & Neema-Abooki, 2021; Kisige, Ezati & Kagoda, 2021) and as consequence, students' educational needs to gain legitimate employment are not met." Their jobs may be available, but the quality of skills owned by students may not match the labour market. This study anticipated that students don't evaluate teacher characteristics, which may explain the low quality of teaching. Accordingly, the researchers streamlined that Mountains of the Moon University, being one of the universities in Uganda, can hardly be an exemption from the problem of low-quality teaching. Hence, this study on the relevance of students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching at Mountains of the Moon University.

1.1 Contextual perspective

MMU was first established as a private University in 2005, by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), in accordance with the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001, as amended (MMU Charter Document, 2017). In 2018, its transition from a private community university to public community university was kick-started by a presidential directive. In January 2022, MMU was taken over by Government of the Republic of Uganda and established as a Public University under Statutory Instrument, Number 2 of 2022 (MMU, Human Resource Manual, 2022). Even then, MMU maintained its commitment

to its original mission of being a center of excellence in teaching, research, and CE for sustainable development, through its six faculties (MMU, Strategic Plan, 2017/2018), and its philosophy of transforming minds to enhance CE (MMU Charter Document, 2018). The review of MMU's policies, programs, structures, human resources, and management, to align the university to a public university dispensation by June 30, 2022, introduced changes in its structure, policies, programmes, staffing, and governance (MMU, Transition Taskforce Report, 2022; Transition Taskforce and the Terms of Reference, 2018–2022).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) has undergone significant transitions since its establishment as a private university in 2005. Initially chartered by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) under the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act 2001, MMU transitioned from a private community university to a public institution by a presidential directive in 2018, culminating in its official establishment as a public university in January 2022 (MMU Charter Document, 2017; MMU Human Resource Manual, 2022). Despite these changes, MMU has maintained its mission of excellence in teaching, guided by its philosophy of transforming minds to enhance CE (MMU Charter Document, 2018). The university's strategic alignment to public university standards involved substantial revisions in policies, programs, structures, staffing, and governance (MMU Strategic Plan, 2017/2018; MMU Transition Taskforce Report, 2022).

However, the implications of these transitions on the quality of teaching, particularly in the context of student evaluations of teacher characteristics, remain underexplored. Existing literature highlights several concerns with student evaluations of teaching (SET), such as validity and reliability issues (Cook, Jones, & Al-Twal, 2022), biases based on gender and race (Adams et al., 2022; Heffernan, 2022), and the negative impact on faculty mental health (Lakeman et al., 2022; Morrish, 2019). Furthermore, the potential for SET to drive grade inflation and compromise teaching standards is well-documented (Stroebe, 2020; Carpenter, Witherby, & Tauber, 2020).

Given the unique context of MMU's recent transition and its ongoing commitment to educational excellence, it was imperative to investigate how SET functions within this new public university framework. This study aimed to fill the gap by examining the relevance of students' evaluations of teacher characteristics for quality teaching at MMU. By doing so, this research provides insights into how MMU can optimize SET processes to enhance teaching quality and support its mission amidst its structural and policy transformations.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of students' evaluation of the interpersonal characteristics of teachers for quality assurance in the teaching process at Mountains of the Moon University (MMU).

1.4 Key Question

The key question addressed in this study was: What is the relevance of students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching at Mountains of the Moon University?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its focus on the importance of teacher characteristics in ensuring quality teaching at higher education institutions. The study aimed to provide empirical evidence on the attributes of teacher characteristics that are crucial for quality teaching, as evaluated by students. The findings of this

study can serve as a basis for regulatory bodies to develop guidelines for the candid evaluation of teaching in higher education institutions, thereby contributing to the enhancement of quality assurance in the teaching process.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In an investigation of relevant literature, I begin with an overview of students' assessment of quality, followed by a discussion of the quality of teaching and teacher characteristics, paying close attention to how academics have been consistent with the aspects of quality teaching.

2.1 Students' Assessment of Quality

Higher Education Institutions are increasingly positioned as key players in an international 'Knowledge economy' (OECD, 2015). According to the same source, transparency and accountability have also become key principle for QA and has interacted with accountability. As a current global trend, QA is always geared toward improvement, even if it also functions for accountability. It is therefore indubitable that the most important mechanism of student assessment of quality is their rating, which performs a significant function in driving improvement in pedagogical practices in higher education. However, the role and functional purpose of this method has become increasingly confused and contested due to the rise of market-based models in higher education (Darwin, 2016). Similarly, students' appraisal of the quality of higher education and critical reflections on it have been quite limited in developing world (Tennant &Tashmin, 2017). Further, Existing literature evidently indicates that a number of evaluation studies of teaching quality in higher education have majorly focused on the general relevance of students' evaluation of teaching and thus impose a tool that probably is a product with limited user (students') input hence bringing into spotlight the need to probe its level of relevance before users (students) (Tennant &Tashmin, 2017).

2.2 Quality of Teaching

The global expansion of higher education has brought about more ambitious educational goals that require new approaches to curriculum, instruction, and learning (Kehm & Stansaker, 2009). This trend is no less apparent in East Asia where higher education institutions have joined the global race for higher quality and university rankings (Kehm & Stansaker, 2009). Quite interestingly, a large part of the expansion of higher education in the world (particularly after the post-liberalization period) has been because of the growth of engineering and technical education (Pradeep, K. C, et al., 2019). These dramatic economic, political, and social changes over the past few decades have led to significant changes in higher education in terms of expansion, massification, competition, innovation, deregulation, and commercialization attributing to reductions in public funds. To this effect, universities are now required to be accountable and transparent to stakeholders in terms of the quality of teaching and learning (Costes et al., 2010), which one would call a requirement for regular quality assurance (QA) (French, 2017). The implication hereby is that the reduced funding has led universities to be more autonomous, which requires them to be more accountable to society (Coste*s et al*., 2010).

2.3 Teacher Characteristics

Academic work has changed significantly in recent decades, as universities worldwide respond to globalization, the massification of higher education (HE), and the increasing demands placed upon them by their national governments. New public management and neoliberalism have become powerful political drivers of a quality culture in HE across the world (Behari-Leak, 2017). Excellence 'is an emotive, if familiar, the word in HE, but its pursuit is permeated by sociocultural characteristics such as gender and ethnicity (Deem, 2015). The author further argues that, female academics, for instance, have voiced concerns that selection processes for senior posts tend to focus on rather narrow sets of achievements, such

as awards received and papers written, whereas the teaching, administration, and outreach work in which many women excel are not sufficiently valued. More development to address the perceived status of teaching excellence compared to research excellence, and to build a quality culture around teaching has been established (Fung et al., 2017).

Besides personality issues, gender plays an important role in evaluating teachers' characteristics. For example, Boring *et al.* (2016) observe that SETs in many cases are statistically biased against female faculty and that such biases can cause effective teachers to get lower SET ratings. Meanwhile, Gregory (2018) stresses that SETs are frequently used to collect information on effective teaching, so it is important for higher education institutions to establish what kinds of SETs are effective. However, given the complex factors involved and the various antecedents of SETs, it appears that no one perfect tool exists to accurately measure what happens in the classroom. Though they particularly attach a high value to fair and objective evaluation and useful feedback, as these two are the key features of a valid and useful assessment. Indeed, Pradeep, et al., (2019) espouse that the concept of teachers' character in quality teaching is increasingly prioritized in higher education as it helps students to succeed in their studies and to get gainful employment.

Owing to the above, stakeholder feedback holds a central role in teaching; students as the core stakeholders provide very useful information as direct participants and beneficiaries of the activity. Although many academicians hold divergent views regarding the role of students in assessing the quality of teaching and learning, scholars argue that students have a multifaceted understanding of quality in higher education and that involving students in quality assurance initiatives is transparency, meaning all participants see the outcomes and subsequent changes (Elassy, 2013). Involving students in quality assurance processes is an important issue and educational leaders ought to consider how best to include students in their quality assurance systems. Students 'evaluation of the academic programs is a significant assessment instrument used for stimulating quality enhancement in a university (Stukalina, 2014).

2.4 Relevance of students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching, according to recent studies

In higher education institutions, students' evaluations of teaching (SET) play a critical role in assessing and enhancing the quality of education. This practice, which has been utilized since the 1920s, remains one of the most widely applied measures of teaching effectiveness (Carpenter, Witherby, & Tauber, 2020). SET is intended to provide formative feedback to faculty, serve as a summary measure for promotion and tenure decisions, and inform students about course and teacher selections (Chen, 2023; Kember et al., 2002). However, the validity and fairness of SET as a performance measure have been called into question. Cook, Jones, and Al-Twal (2022) highlight concerns about the reliability of SET, noting that these evaluations are influenced by many factors outside the control of academics, yet they continue to offer significant information about student experience. These evaluations are scrutinized during performance reviews, potentially increasing workplace stress for academics (Heffernan, 2022).

Several scholars have noted the impact of non-constructive and abusive comments on the well-being and career prospects of academics. Cunningham et al. (2022) emphasize the harm that abusive feedback can cause, while Lakeman et al. (2022) identify stress, distress, and other mental health issues linked to anonymous non-constructive SET commentary. Moreover, there is a growing body of research indicating that SET is biased against women and minority groups. Adams et al. (2022) argue that gender bias in SET results in disproportionately negative evaluations for women, particularly when they do not conform to traditional gender roles. Similarly, Fan et al. (2019) and Boring et al. (2016) found significant biases favoring male academics, with male students expressing a notable preference for male instructors. Heffernan (2022) further concludes that white, able-bodied, heterosexual men are the least affected by bias in SET scores and may even benefit from the practice.

The reliance on SET for decisions regarding tenure and promotion can lead to adverse educational practices.

Stroebe (2020) and Carpenter, Witherby, and Tauber (2020) suggest that pressure to maintain high SET ratings can result in grade inflation and the erosion of teaching standards. Academics may "play the SET game" by altering their teaching practices to ensure positive evaluations, which undermines the quality of education (Lakeman et al., 2022). Additionally, the increasing use of SET through anonymous online surveys has raised concerns about its disproportionate harm to academics. Heffernan (2022) stresses the importance of understanding the nuanced impact of SET, as anonymous commentary can negatively affect workplace relationships and overall job satisfaction (Lakeman et al., 2022a; Lee et al., 2022).

Basing on the arguments from a plethora of scholars and recent studies highlighted above, SET remains a significant tool for measuring teaching effectiveness. However, the application of SET is fraught with challenges such as; biases against women and minority groups, the potential for non-constructive feedback to harm academic staff, and the pressures to achieve high ratings (Chen, 2023; Heffernan, 2022; Lakeman et al., 2022)

2.5 Gap Analysis

A number of gaps are cited from the above recent studies and these include validity and reliability gaps of SET. For example, Cook, Jones, and Al-Twal (2022) raised concerns about the validity and fairness of using SET as a primary performance measure, noting that it is influenced by many factors beyond the control of academics. Carpenter, Witherby, and Tauber (2020) highlight the long-standing use of SET but point out issues related to students' misjudgments of teaching effectiveness. These findings suggest a need for further investigation into how these factors play out in other contexts, for example in the specific context of MMU. To find out how reliable and valid are the SETs used at this institution. Hence prompting this study.

Regarding the impact of non-constructive feedback, Cunningham et al. (2022) and Lakeman et al. (2022) discussed the negative effects of non-constructive and abusive feedback on academics' well-being and career prospects. While this research highlights the broader impact of such feedback, there is a gap in understanding how non-constructive feedback on teacher characteristics specifically affects faculty at MMU, and the effectiveness of mechanisms put in place to mitigate such effects. Furthermore, bias in SET is cited, as Adams et al. (2022) and Heffernan (2022) identify significant gender and racial biases in SET, with women and minority groups disproportionately receiving negative evaluations. Fan et al. (2019) and Boring et al. (2016) provide empirical evidence of these biases, particularly favoring male academics. This gap analysis reveals a need to examine the presence and extent of such biases in the SET practices at MMU.

Stroebe (2020) and Carpenter, Witherby, and Tauber (2020) argue that the pressure to achieve high SET ratings can lead to grade inflation and the erosion of teaching standards. Lakeman et al. (2022) describe this as "playing the SET game." The relevance of these consequences needs to be explored within the specific academic culture and policies at MMU. On the contrary, Lakeman et al. (2022) and Heffernan (2022) link SET feedback to increased stress and mental health issues among academics. Morrish (2019) and Shen and Slater (2021) further highlight the broader mental health crisis in academia. However, there is limited research on how SET feedback specifically impacts the mental health of faculty at MMU. Therefore, this warrants an investigation to tell the support systems put in place to address the mental health impacts of SET.

Chen (2023) notes that SET provides important information about the student experience, despite its flaws. The author attributes its flaws to student perception and experience, highlighting a gap in understanding how students perceive and engage with SET. This necessitated an investigation on students' evaluation of teacher characteristics at MMU to understand how students reflect their learning experiences, and how these perceptions align with the intended outcomes of SET.

In summary, while the existing literature provides a broad understanding of the challenges and implications

of SET, a significant gap in context-specific research at MMU was identified. Addressing these gaps through targeted research was found to provide a clearer understanding of the relevance and impact of student evaluation of teacher characteristics for teaching quality at MMU. This study therefore, sought to find the relevance of students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching at MMU.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional survey design. It was cross-sectional where the researchers' visited respondents at once during the data collecting process implying studying a phenomenon incisively and cheaply in a short time (Creswell, 2012). The cross-sectional survey was appropriate as it is friendly in both time and cost and as the study involved a big number of respondents (Kisige & Neema-Abooki, 2017). The study was descriptive as it described the situation of quality teaching in institutions of higher learning. Data collection was approached quantitatively where variables were measured using numbers. Data were collected from 517 students both undergraduates and postgraduates. Due to the large population, 215 students

(response rate= 73%) were selected using Krejci and Morgan's (1975) sample size determination table. The questionnaire was disseminated to students that were nominated randomly and purposively and were requested to rate themselves following a five-point Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Data collected quantitatively from the closed-ended questionnaire was processed and the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) was used in the analysis. The Program helped in data processing involving coding, editing, and entry of quantitative responses. Further, it helped in data analysis through the generation of frequency tables, means, and standard deviations to generate meaningful knowledge from the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Main objective: To investigate the relevance of students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching at Mountain of the Moon University. Students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching were operationalized into eight quantitative items. Using the eight quantitative items, students were requested to do their self-rating basing on a Likert scale ranging from: "strongly disagree", "disagree", "neutral", "agree", and "strongly agree". Table 1 depicts the results therefrom.

Table 1: Students' evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching

No	Question Theme	SD		D		NS		A		SA		Mean	Std. Dev	Interp. Scale
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Encourage Contact	4	2.2	12	6.6	1	.5	91	49.7	75	41	4.21	.914	A
2	Provide the opportunity for collaboration	4	2.2	7	3.8	6	3.3	92	50.3	74	40.4	4.23	.859	A
3	Encourage active learning	3	1.6	6	3.3	9	4.9	80	43.7	85	46.4	4.30	.840	SA
4	Prompt feedback	2	1.1	13	7.1	3	1.6	78	42.6	86	47.0	4.28	.894	SA
5	Tracks attendance	25	13.7	27	14.8	25	13.7	69	37.7	37	20.2	3.36	1.326	A
6	Attends to all lectures	21	11.5	27	14.8	22	12.0	70	38.3	43	23.5	3.48	1.309	A
7	Teaches with clear examples	20	10.9	42	23.0	21	11.5	57	31.1	43	23.5	3.33	1.348	NS
8	Audibility and effective communication	19	10.4	43	23.5	18	9.8	69	37.7	34	18.6	3.31	1.298	NS

SOURCE: Primary Data 2020

The evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching was scrutinized using the above listed items. Several issues were discovered. First, it can be noted from Table 1 that lecturers have a great amount of responsibility when it comes to teaching and learning activities. Second, most of the teaching and learning activities rotate around the lecturer. Thirdly, the work of a lecturer takes different forms like planning, scheming, and assessing among others. In particular, according to the pattern of the responses, most of the participants asserted and agreed that they were involved in the evaluation of teacher characteristics for quality teaching. For example, in support of the foregoing, a tangible number (60.7%) of the participants in the study agreed that teachers encourage contact between Students during the teaching and learning process which is an attribute of quality teaching. Such contacts were made through group discussions, coursework presentations, and field trips among others. This in one way helps in creating a cordial relationship and two-way communication between students and their teachers in a joint effort to improve quality teaching. This strengthened the subscription that the development of constructivist learning in higher education has brought about a shift in the delivery methods from a focus on the teacher to a focus on the student (Kisige et al. 2021) aimed at imparting generic skills (critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, good communication, cooperation, and self-directed learning and ICT skills) relevant to demands and needs of the society.

In the same vein, 90.7% of the students further agreed that they were provided opportunities to collaborate with other students during the teaching and learning process. Engaging with such provided opportunities brought so-called meaningful learning. For example, most of the students maintained that they were at liberty to evaluate their teachers' characteristics geared toward quality learning. The foregoing truism regards the item relevant in evaluating teacher characteristics strongly resonant well with the work of Kisige et al. (2021) on the teachers' use of delivery methods where the authors stated that there are methods in the teaching and learning process that learning to make learning decisions and teaching that brings understanding other than cramming. Similarly, due to such, teachers are able to think of delivery methods that enable students to do or touch and remember, in addition to equipping the student with a variety of approaches, methods, strategies, and skills that enable them to enforce change in society. Kehm and Stansaker (2009) could also be in agreement by arguing that the global expansion of higher education has brought about more ambitious educational goals that require new approaches to curriculum, instruction, and learning

In view of these findings, it is stimulating to note that the academic staff at Mountain of the Moon University engaged and involved their students in an active kind of learning (active learning) by ensuring participation and providing opportunities for group work and discussions among learners as an attribute of quality teaching. This was revealed when the majority of students (90.1%) with a mean value of (4.30) ascertained that by the use of a variety of teaching methods by their lecturers, several advantages were enjoyed among which included getting directly and actively involved in the teaching and learning activities. The findings further render credence to one of the earlier studies such (Kisige et al., 2021) which concluded that above and beyond teaching, teachers use a variety of delivery methods, numerous advantages including equipping the student with a variety of learning skills, as well as, providing transformative learning that integrates all the required individual knowledge is acquired by the learners. However, these innovations in teaching and learning processes are also a manifestation of the more developments in higher education geared towards addressing the perceived status of teaching excellence to build a quality culture around teaching (Fung et al., 2017). In this way, the findings of the study further rhyme with Costes et al. (2010), who, while probing the quality of teaching and learning in Higher Education, surmised that universities are now required to be accountable and transparent to stakeholders in terms of the quality of teaching and learning (Costes et al., 2010), which one would call a requirement for regular quality assurance (QA) (French, 2017). More succinct to the foregoing rationale is Pradeep, et al., (2019), as they observe that as a result of the stakeholder's accountability in teaching and learning activities, the concept of teachers'

character in quality teaching is increasingly prioritized in higher education as it helps students to succeed in their studies and to get gainful employment.

The rest of the items in the table that are not discussed here, all scored "Agree"; implying that students evaluated teachers' characteristics for the purposes of quality teaching at MMU.

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS: STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS FOR TEACHING QUALITY AT MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON UNIVERSITY

5.1 Introduction

Mountains of the Moon University (MMU) has emphasized quality assurance in teaching and learning as part of its strategic initiatives to enhance educational outcomes. The following analysis draws from key university documents to understand the relevance and impact of students' evaluations of teacher characteristics on teaching quality at MMU.

5.2 Review of Key Documents

1. Vice Chancellor's Task Force Report (2019)

This report highlights the strategic realignment and governance restructuring at MMU to enhance academic standards and operational efficiency. It underscores the need for robust quality assurance mechanisms, including student evaluations, to monitor and improve teaching quality.

2. Reviewed Operational Plan (2017/2018)

The operational plan emphasizes the implementation of comprehensive evaluation systems to gather student feedback on teaching effectiveness. It aligns with MMU's mission to foster a culture of continuous improvement in academic practices (MMU, 2017).

3. Quality Assurance Reports on Teaching and Learning (2016 and 2017)

These reports provide detailed insights into students' perspectives on teaching quality. They indicate that student evaluations are critical for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in teaching methods, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of educational quality (MMU, 2017).

4. Charter Document (2018)

The charter document reaffirms MMU's commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement. It sets out the university's framework for evaluating teaching practices, which includes regular student feedback as a core component (MMU, 2018).

5. Reviewed Quality Assurance Policy (2018)

This policy outlines the procedures for collecting and analyzing student evaluations. It emphasizes the importance of using these evaluations to inform professional development and instructional strategies, ensuring alignment with MMU's quality assurance standards (MMU, 2018).

6. Students' Enrolment Report (2019/2020)

The enrolment report provides demographic data that helps contextualize the feedback from student evaluations. Understanding the student population aids in interpreting the evaluations and tailoring

interventions to diverse student needs (MMU, 2020).

5.3. Analysis

The documents collectively highlight MMU's structured approach to utilizing student evaluations as a vital tool for quality assurance in teaching. The university's policies and reports emphasize a systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and responding to student feedback to drive continuous improvement in teaching practices.

Graphical Representation

Table 2: Timeline of Key Documents and Policies

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020
Document Name	Operational Plan, Quality Assurance Reports	Charter Document, Quality Assurance Reports	Task Force Report	Enrolment Report

Key Insights from reviewed documents

1. **Strategic Alignment**: The documents reveal that MMU's strategic alignment emphasizes the integration of student evaluations into the quality assurance framework. This alignment supports the university's mission of continuous improvement and excellence in teaching.

2. **Feedback Utilization**: The emphasis on student perspectives in the QA reports and policy documents highlights the importance of using feedback to inform teaching practices. This approach ensures that teacher evaluations are not merely procedural but are integral to professional development and instructional refinement.

3. **Comprehensive Evaluation System**: The structured and detailed approach outlined in the QA policy and operational plans suggests that MMU values a comprehensive evaluation system. This system is designed to capture a wide range of student feedback, providing a holistic view of teaching effectiveness.

In summary, MMU has established a robust framework for quality assurance in teaching, with student evaluations playing a pivotal role. The university's commitment to leveraging student feedback to enhance teaching quality is evident across multiple documents, underscoring the importance of continuous improvement and alignment with educational excellence standards. This documentary analysis reveals a coherent strategy aimed at achieving high teaching standards through systematic and constructive use of student evaluations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Going by the behavioral theory of Bandura which this study employed, University teachers/lecturers ought to focus on the behavioral attributes (teacher characteristics) highlighted by this study. These should be developed by the individual teachers, as quality teaching behavioral best practices for career growth and improvement.

Mountains of the Moon University and other Universities (MMU) should create buy-in strategies to attract more students to participate fully and positively in responding, by filling the SET tool for comprehensive feedback for improvement.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study justify that; Attributes of teacher characteristics (teacher encouraging contact between students, providing collaborative opportunities to students, encouraging interactive/active learning, giving prompt feedback, tracking students' attendance, attending to all scheduled lectures, sharing relevant examples and experiences during teaching and effective communication) are key preconditions for quality teaching. Therefore, they are unavoidable in the conception of quality teaching for SETs in Higher Education Institutions.

The second insight here is that; the above highlighted attributes of teacher characteristics predominantly inform relevant themes that guide the development of SET tools. While institutions focus on generic attributes of a teacher and treat them as general in nature, this study has revealed that customizing of such attributes is important, but within the highlighted themes for teacher characteristics. Customizing is important because this appropriates compliancy in line with both dispensational and disciplinary divergences. Therefore, curriculum developers, lecturers and assessors of quality should look at those themes with a critical eye, for purposes of relevancy.

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