Students' and Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding Student Evaluations of Teaching

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Abstract:

Students may not have sufficient expertise or qualifications to evaluate the teaching-learning process, yet their experience and immediate involvement in this process entitles them to this right. Therefore, student evaluations of teaching (SETs) have been widely used for several decades. However, several issues have historically resulted from SETs, as many universities have not properly made use of them until recently. Thus, this study aims to examine students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs. The study was conducted at Qassim University and included 278 subjects. Data were collected using online questionnaires and evaluated using qualitative and quantitative approaches. Results found a reasonable amount of awareness resulting from students' and teachers' practices and a willingness to embrace changes. The findings also showed the need to administer course-specific and mid-semester SETs. The study suggests that adopting the recommendations presented in this study may have a positive effect on educational contexts.

Keywords: SET, student evaluation of teaching, course evaluation, summative evaluation, formative evaluation, selection bias

Introduction

Evaluation has been known to play a fundamental role in improving and enhancing the performance or quality of companies, organizations, and product marketing as well as individuals worldwide (Grafton, Lillis, & Widener, 2010; Lourenço, 2016; Riley, Pina, & Bravo, 2013). The issue of evaluation in education has also received considerable critical attention in applied linguistics. A primary concern of evaluation in education is the concept of student evaluations of teaching (SETs) – also known as course evaluation – especially in higher education (McGowan, 2009; Thielsch, Brinkmöller, & Forthmann, 2018). Since the turn of the century, SETs and SET-related issues have been extensively studied. Most studies have dealt with the questions of how effective evaluations and their resulting feedback are (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) and which problems may appear with regard to timing instruments (McGowan, 2009) and manner of evaluation (Jones, 2009; Spooren, Brockx, & Mortelmans, 2013). However, although considerable attention has been devoted to SET-related issues, little research has tended to focus on holistically addressing these issues as a group in which each problematic issue affects the others. Moreover, in the literature, there seems to be no general agreement about issues with SETs. It would appear, therefore, that further and more focused investigations are needed. Thus, this study aims to examine students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs with respect to multiple relevant factors such as its timing (i.e., mid-semester evaluation or end-of-

semester evaluation), kind (i.e., formative or summative) and form (i.e., a paper-based or a web-based questionnaire).

To achieve this goal, survey research was conducted, with data gathered via questionnaires targeting the intended population. The researcher's personal experience in working with SETs at Qassim University has driven this research. The paper is structured in seven sections, including this introduction. The next section defines frequently used terms. The following section discusses the methodology. Then, the findings of the research are presented, followed by the discussion section, in which data, limitations and areas for further research are identified. Finally, the conclusion provides a brief summary of the findings along with some implications.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this research, understanding of the following frequently used terms (i.e., evaluation, formative evaluation, summative evaluation, student evaluations of teaching (SETs), and student feedback) is crucial. Thus, definitions are provided below:

Evaluation

One clear and general definition of evaluation is stated as follows: "To evaluate is to make a judgment based on a set of criteria. One of the ways evaluations can be classified is as formative and summative" (Jarocki, 2018, p. 3).

Formative evaluation

Mathison (2005) gives an informative definition of the formative evaluation, indicating its importance and aims:

> Evaluation is considered formative when it is conducted during the development or delivery of a program or product with the intention of providing feedback to improve the evaluand ... Formative evaluation typically focuses on determining whether a program is unfolding as planned, identifying obstacles or unexpected opportunities, and identifying midcourse corrections that will increase the likelihood of the program's success. It is a structured way to provide program staff with feedback ... Because many programs are never really complete, formative evaluation may be the primary mode of evaluation and can be critical to the development of information systems that provide continual feedback over time. (p. 160)

In this research, to avoid potential ambiguity or respondent confusion, the term 'specific-course evaluation' was used in the questionnaires instead of the more technical term of formative evaluation.

Summative evaluation

According to Mathison (2005), "A summative evaluation is one that is done at the end of or on completion of a program". Mathison (2005) also adds that "Michael Scriven, the originator of the

terms formative and summative evaluation, distinguishes summative evaluation's aim as reporting 'on' the program rather than 'to' the program" (pp. 402-403).

Similarly to the previous term, "general course evaluation" was also used in the questionnaires to avoid ambiguity that could have resulted from the use of the technical term of summative evaluation.

Student evaluations of teaching (SETs)

Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) can be explained as follows:

> A subjective form which can be quantitative or qualitative in nature, sometimes a combination of the two, that students will independently and anonymously fill out, assessing their teachers' performance and effectiveness. Depending on the makeup of the SETs form, students will sometimes self-assess their own learning outcomes in the class on this evaluation. This form is most often completed at the end of a course, although there are instances where SETs are distributed at the midpoint of a semester, and again at the conclusion of the course. (Jezequel, 2006, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 18)

The reader should bear in mind that the SETs form officially used at Qassim University, from which the intended sample was drawn, is a summative evaluation completed at the end of a course.

Student feedback

Student feedback refers to students' comments on mid-semester or end-of-semester evaluations, in addition to their responses to online university surveys obtained at the end of the semester or those designed by some individual teachers.

Review of Literature

This section reviews the literature and research related to students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs. The relevant studies that support the context of this study can best be grouped under six headings: (a) importance of SETs, (b) timing of SETs, (c) summative and formative evaluation, (d) teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs, (e) students' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs, and (f) forms of SETs. Then, the significance of the study will be discussed, indicating the need for further research. Finally, the research questions that the current research attempts to answer will be presented.

The Importance of SETs

There is a large and growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of SETs in higher education. (Hofman, & Kremer, 1983; Jarocki, 2018; McGowan, 2009; Spooren et al., 2013; Thielsch et al., 2018). It has been assumed that "without feedback, faculty members may not improve their teaching, as they are relying on their own perception of their teaching successes and difficulties" (McGowan, 2009, pp. 132-133). Consequently, the number of universities worldwide adopting SETs is increasing due to their effectiveness and the potential of

technological developments to offer new modalities, such as transforming paper-and-pencil instruments into online surveys. Data from multiple sources have highlighted that SETs serve several purposes. One purpose that has attracted considerable scholarly attention is the formative evaluation, which helps to enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Algozzine et al., 2004; Elbow & Boice, 1992; Schmelkin et al., 1997; White, 1976, as cited in Jarocki, 2018). Another purpose is to "provide data for administrators and instructions in matters of promotion, merit, and tenure", known as the summative evaluation (Temple, 2016, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 26). However, research has also demonstrated several concerns regarding potential threats to the validity and, consequently, efficacy of SETs.

Timing of SETs

One important factor in the validity of SETs is their timing. Hofman and Kremer (1983) suggested obtaining evaluation reports for faculty relatively early in the course so that changes can be made before the end of the course. Similarly, it has been noted that "if [students] do not see these changes, they penalize the faculty member by providing lower ratings at the end of the course" (L'Hommedieu, Menges, and Brinko, 1990, as cited in McGowan, 2009, p. 20). Despite this potential, these studies did not imply that end-of-semester SETs are no longer valid. Rather, they theorized that different evaluations must serve different functions; for example, mid-semester evaluations provide formative evaluation for faculty members, while end-of-semester evaluations provide them with summative evaluation.

Accordingly, L'Hommedieu et al. (1990) further hypothesized that "scores from mid-course evaluations may not be generalizable to evaluations administered at the end of the course" because of their different purposes (as cited in McGowan, 2009, p. 20). Nonetheless, numerous studies on mid-semester evaluation have provided further support that "mid-course evaluation feedback can yield a ten percent increase in end-of-semester evaluation scores" (Cashin, 1995, as cited in McGowan, 2009, p. 20).

Since end-of-semester SETs may encounter threats to validity, studies are needed to understand students' perceptions of SET. A more recent study has examined students' perceptions of mid-course evaluations, with the following results:

> most of the participants (89%) felt faculty members should conduct mid-course evaluations because they believed these evaluations would improve instructor, as well as student performance. These students also felt that faculty members who conducted mid-course evaluations were devoted to their jobs, took responsibility for their teaching, and had a strong desire for their students to succeed. (Brown 2008, as cited in McGowan, 2009, p. 21)

Unfortunately, to date, there remains a clear gap between theory and practice regarding mid-semester evaluation. Despite the current limitations of this practice, were it applied properly, the quality of the teaching-learning process might be improved and critical issues regarding end-of-semester evaluation could be addressed.

Summative and Formative Evaluation

In most universities where both evaluations are officially used, formative evaluation aims to provide the feedback needed to improve the teaching-learning process, whereas summative evaluation is used for "administrative decision-making and institutional audits" (Arthur, 2009; Burden, 2008; Edström, 2008; Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2003, as cited in Spooren et al., 2013, p. 2). Research has shown that formative evaluation is one of the most effective SETs for students: "As a tool for informing teachers' understanding of their work, SETs containing a variety of questions targeting the multidimensional aspects of classroom activity appear to be preferred" (Jezequel, 2008; Thorne, 1980; Youngs, 2013, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 29). By contrast, "general or holistic questions do not provide specific details about what is being done poorly or well, or what the evaluator was looking for when conducting the evaluation" (Elbow & Boice, 1992, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 29). Despite this, formative evaluation is not as prevalent as it should be at either the practical or theoretical level.

Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding SETs

Nearly all studies in the field of SETs have provided evidence for the inaccuracy of students' evaluations (Ferguson, 2012; Little, Goe, & Bell, 2009; McKeachie & McKeachie, 1957; Towe, 2012; Youngs, 2013, as cited in Jarocki, 2018). Consequently, many teachers do not make use of the evaluations they receive and tend to ignore them (McGowan, 2009; Spooren et al., 2013). Along similar lines, teachers may view SETs as an unfair instrument for administrative decision-making. Some scholars have argued that "a single score cannot encompass all that comprises effective teaching" (Algozzine et al., 2004 as cited in Jarocki, 2018) and that the one-size-fits-all approach that has been asserted to be inapplicable to students must also apply to teachers.

Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Regarding SETs

Almost every paper that has been written on SETs has tackled issues concerning students' evaluation practices, including low response rate, arbitrary evaluation and invalidity (Jones, 2009; Spooren et al., 2013; Thielsch et al., 2018). An essential reason for the lack of meaningful student engagement with the process, appearing throughout the literature, is that most SET procedures do not interpret the evaluation results as soon as possible in the semester in which they are conducted, leading to delays and students feeling that the process is irrelevant. In other words, these procedures "allow little or no space for discussing, explaining, or negotiating the results with the students" (Johnson, 2000, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 3). By contrast, if students feel that they are actually being engaged in an evaluation process that is "thoughtful and reflective rather than just mechanical" (Elbow and Boice, 1992, as cited in Jarocki, 2018), Jarocki inferred that,

> teachers can become more receptive to experimenting with new ideas (Cook-Sather, 2006), and they can gain a better and more immediate understanding of the effects of these experiments on students and their learning (Worrell & Dey, 2008) ..., and students begin to see that their opinions can make a difference in how and what teachers teach. (2018, p. 47).

Forms of SETs

SET instruments have undergone a substantial shift throughout the years in attempts to solve problems of nonresponse, selection bias and many others. Two common forms of SETs are traditional paper-based and, more recently, web-based questionnaires. However, questions of which procedure is more valid are still under discussion. Goos and Salomons (2017) state that "we expect selection bias to be less of a problem in paper-based SETs since average response rates are significantly higher" (p. 258).

Conversely, Brandl, Mandel, and Winegarden (2017) suggested that "whereas paper or online student questionnaires provide one-way feedback, reciprocity requires negotiation, listening and responding" (p. 216). This kind of evaluation can be seen in class discussions, or by hosting student focus groups with representatives. Other studies have concluded that having a third-party facilitator or an instructional developer acquire feedback yields better results (McGowan, 2009; Wickramasinghe & Timpson, 2006).

In light of the studies discussed in this literature review, there seems to be no consensus on SETs and their issues. Moreover, previous studies tackling SETs in universities have generally included specific courses at a university or courses within a specific department. However, a change in population in addition to different courses and/or majors is needed to provide the opportunity to explore whether the existing findings are generalizable among all college student populations.

As a result, this research project focuses on addressing students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs at Qassim University, where end-of-semester evaluations are the only formal form of SET, in addition to the problems, if any, related to SETs at Qassim University. Acknowledging these problems will help the university under study and other similar educational populations to eliminate, reduce, or formulate alternative solutions or supporting approaches to these problems.

The study further aims to introduce the concept of the timing of SETs, and, in particular, how teachers and students at Qassim University conceive of ongoing SETs since teaching is a dynamic process rather than a teacher-centered one. As Hofman and Kremer (1983) argue, evaluation reports obtained early can enable teachers to make changes to the rest of the course based on student feedback.

More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers regarding SETs at Qassim University?
2. How do some students and teachers at Qassim University perceive mid-semester SETs as one approach to ongoing course evaluation?
3. How do some students and teachers at Qassim University perceive course-specific evaluations?

Methodology

Subjects

The targeted sample includes students and instructors currently studying or teaching at Qassim University. Importantly, Qassim University has more than 38 colleges, yet, the sample was not specified. To ensure external validity, the total sample consisted of 57 teachers (3 males and 54 females) and 221 students (192 females and 29 males). No specific inclusion or exclusion criteria were required; thus, both teachers and students were asked to provide some highly private demographic information to control for the potential impact of extraneous variables such as students' gender or level and instructors' gender, rank, or personality.

Instruments

In consideration of the research questions, two questionnaires were designed, one for students and the other for teachers at Qassim University. To enhance the validity and reliability of the results, the questionnaires were translated into Arabic, which is the native language of most participants, using simple and clear language. Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, some technical terms were replaced in the questionnaires with clearer, layman-friendly expressions. Nevertheless, both versions were distributed to justify the applicability of the questionnaire to a wide range of participants.

Questionnaire items were conceptually coded, with a brief description whenever needed, according to aspects provided in the research questions and discussed in the literature review. Most of these items were shared questions, although very few were added to each questionnaire.

The questionnaires included closed questions using the five-point Likert scale to measure importance, agreement, and frequency, as well as some single-answer multiple choice questions (i.e., fixed-answer options). They also consisted of some open-ended questions to allow participants to express their opinions, attitudes, or perceptions.

Procedure

The targeted sample was almost entirely reachable via the internet. That is, online surveys were distributed through Google Forms among participants via email and social media apps such as Twitter and WhatsApp.

To maintain research ethics, participants were provided with the following information at the beginning of each survey: (a) a brief introduction about the research project and its objectives, (b) the right to participate or withdraw, (c), the confidentiality of their responses, and (d) the estimated time needed to complete the survey. At the end, participants were also given the researcher's email for whatever questions or information they might require about this research.

Findings

To determine the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers at Qassim University, two questionnaires were conducted that included closed and open-ended questions. As mentioned earlier, questionnaire items (questions and statements) were coded according to the research questions to facilitate data analysis and to help participants keep track of what they were attempting to answer. The given codes were listed hierarchically from general to specific as follows: (a) student evaluations of teaching, (b) course-general evaluation, (c) timing, (d) course-specific evaluation (see Tables 1 and 2). Results from the quantitative data from the questionnaires is presented first, based on the given codes, followed by a review of results from the qualitative data elicited from the open-ended questions and classified into themes.

Table: 1

Response rate of Qassim University teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs

Statements/ Questions	Response (%)				
A)					
	Extremely important	**Moderately important**	**Neutral**	**Slightly important**	**Not important**
1. The importance of SETs.	47.36%	17.54%	12.28%	5.26%	1.75%
B)					
	Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**	**Never**
1. Reminding students of the importance of their feedback.	19.29%	21.05%	35.08%	5.26%	19.29%
2. Making sense of students' feedback.	35.08%	35.08%	21.05%	1.75%	7.01%
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
3. My students evaluate honestly and accurately.	5.26%	31.57%	22.80%	7.54%	22.80%
4. Easiest courses receive the highest scores.	28.07%	36.84%	17.54%	12.28%	5.26%
5. SETs can be used to evaluate courses and teachers.	3.50%	28.07%	21.05%	28.07%	19.29%
C)					
1. Asking students for feedback.	**Always**	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**	**Never**
	15.78%	21.05%	31.57%	19.29%	12.28%

	Always	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**	**Never**	**I do not ask for their feedback**
2. Reminding them of the importance of their feedback.	28.07%	38.59%	15.78%	12.28%	5.26%
3. Making sense of students' feedback.	50.87%	29.82%	7.01%	5.26%	7.01%
4. Form of feedback.	**In-class discussion**	**Written comments**	**A structured questionnaire**	**I do not ask for their feedback**	**Other**
	56.14%	15.78%	8.77%	15.78%	3.50% - e.g., "Often, I receive emails. Sometimes [anonymous] emails!"
5. The need for official mid-semester SETs.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
	31.57%	42.10%	12.28%	7.01%	7.01%
D)					
1. The need for course-specific SETs.	**Designed by administrators based on the course specifications**	**I would prefer to design my own form**	**Neutral**	**Strongly disagree**	**Other**
	45.61%	38.59%	12.28%	3.50%	0%
2. The suggested timing for course-specific SETs.	**Replacing the end-of-semester SETs**	**Early in the semester**	**There is no need for course-specific SETs**	**Neutral**	**Other**
	40.35%	42.10%	7.01%	10.52%	0%

Note. Some questions and statements listed here were abbreviated.

Table: 2

Response rate of Qassim University students' perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs

Statements/ Questions	Response (%)				
A)					
1. The importance of SETs.	**Extremely important**	**Moderately important**	**Neutral**	**Slightly important**	**Not important**
	19.7%	11.3%	22.5%	23.9%	22.5%
B)					
	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
1. Teachers value our feedback.	9.5%	23.5%	24.4%	23.1%	19.5%
2. We evaluate honestly and accurately.	40.7%	26.7%	10.9%	12.7%	9%
C)					
1. Teachers ask for our feedback.	**All of them**	**Most of them**	**Few of them**	**Very few of them**	**Never**
	5%	16.4%	28.9%	5.7%	44%
	Always	**Sometimes**	**Seldom**	**Never**	**They do not ask for our feedback**
2. Teachers remind us of the importance of our feedback.	4.5%	17.2%	25.8%	11.8%	40.7%
3. Teachers make sense of our feedback.	5.4%	19%	22.6%	19%	33.9%
4. Preferred form of feedback.	**In-class discussion**	**Written comments**	**A structured questionnaire**	**They do not ask for our feedback**	**Other**
	17.2%	19%	23.1%	36.7%	4% e.g., - Talking to the dean. - Whatever suits the teachers.
5. The need for official mid-semester SETs.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
	42.1%	29.9%	19.9%	5.4%	2.7%
D)					

1. The need for course-specific SETs.	**Strongly agree**	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
	40.3%	38.9%	15.4%	3.6%	1.8%
2. The suggested timing for course-specific SETs.	**Replacing end-of-semester SETs**	**Early in the semester**	**There is no need for course-specific SETs**	**Neutral**	**Other**
	39.4%	38.5%	8.6%	11.3%	2.2% e.g., - After receiving grades. - Twice, at the end and in the middle of semester.

Note. Some questions and statements listed here were abbreviated.

In the quantitative data from both questionnaires, the first introductory question was intended to identify the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the importance of SETs. A total of 64.9% of teachers agreed on the importance of SETs, among whom 47.36% found them "extremely important." Unfortunately, the same question in the student questionnaire was unintentionally left optional, resulting in only 71 complete responses of 221. One more striking observation to emerge from this data is that the majority of respondents (46.4%) found SETs either slightly or not important (Tables 1 and 2).

In contrast to the first code, items under the second code concerned the form of SETs applied to date at Qassim University. In terms of frequency, more than 75% of teachers responded that they always, often, or sometimes expressed their regular practices of reminding students of the importance of their feedback, and 91.21% of them, in the same range, attempted to make sense of student feedback. In terms of agreement, only 36.83% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their students' evaluations are honest and valid. Accordingly, less than a third of teachers (31.57%) think it is fair to use SETs to evaluate courses and teachers. Moreover, almost 65% believed that the easiest courses receive the highest scores (Table 1).

In contrast to teachers' perceptions, more than half (67.4%) of the participating students expressed their honesty in the evaluation process. Unfortunately, however, only 33% of students believed that their teachers value their feedback (Table 2).

Regarding the timing of SETs, teachers were asked whether they invite students to provide feedback in the middle of the semester, and 68.4% percent of their responses comprised always, often, and sometimes (see Table 1 for details). Interestingly, students were asked a similar question, i.e., whether their teachers invite them to provide feedback in the middle of the semester, to which 44% responded 'never'. Approximately 52.5% of students claimed that teachers neither remind them of the importance of their feedback in the middle of the semester nor make use of this feedback; conversely, teachers' positive responses in the same context ranged between 60%-80% (see Tables 1 and 2). Concerning the preferred form of mid-semester evaluation, students claimed that teachers do not ask them for their feedback (36.7%), while the

rest preferred to provide their feedback through a structured questionnaire, written comments, or in-class discussion (see Table 2 for details). Only 4% provided two alternative modes, represented in Table 2. However, according to the response rate, most teachers (56.14%) expressed that they employed with the mode least preferred by students. Generally, the overall response among both teachers and students (approximately 72%) either agreed or strongly agreed on the need to administer official mid-semester SETs (Tables 1 and 2).

Turning now to the last aspect of the quantitative data, it is apparent that most teachers and students strongly agreed with the majority of teachers in suggesting that SETs be designed by administrators based on the course specifications. Furthermore, Table 1 shows that most responding teachers preferred to apply course-specific SETs early in the semester (42.10%) or replace them with end-of-semester SETs, whereas Table 2 shows that students suggested the opposite, with a slight difference between these options (0.9%). However, some students also commented on the need to have a course-specific SET at both points in the semester and emphasized the importance of mid-semester SETs.

To gain further insight into the perceptions and attitudes of the targeted populations, the questionnaires included two open-ended questions. Each question will be presented in this section along with the major emerging themes elicited from the qualitative data.

In response to the first question, about whether the respondent had comments on the advantages, disadvantages, or suggestions about SETs at Qassim University, 24 of the 57 participating teachers provided answers to these questions that reflected the following themes, arranged based on their frequency:

Advantages:
Positive effects on the quality of teachers and courses.

Disadvantages:
Students' arbitrary selection and bias.
Unhelpful timing.
Not making sense of SETs.
Long and unclear statements in the questionnaires.

Suggestions:
The need to administer alternative and more reliable methods.
The need to make sense of SETs.
The need to conduct mid-semester SETs.
The need to raise students' awareness.

Further, 105 of the 221 participating students shared some of the given themes and added the following: (a) SET is not course-specific (negative) and (b) the need to make SETs optional (suggestion) (see Tables 3 and 4 for more details).

Table: 3

Summary of the main comments provided by teachers (n = 25) regarding the advantages, disadvantages, or suggestions about SETs at Qassim University

Major Themes	Examples[a]	Total Teacher Comments (%) (n = 25)
A. Advantages		
1. Positive effects on the quality of teachers and courses.	"[It is good to have students evaluate faculty members and the courses]"	2 (8%)
B. Disadvantages		
1. Students' arbitrary selection and bias.	"[... Students evaluate carelessly and without credibility. Most of the answers are arbitrary]"; "[How easy the course is and the flexibility of teachers govern the evaluation process]"; "Most students evaluate their teachers based on the grades they get, which negatively affects the authenticity of the evaluation"	6 (24%)
2. Unhelpful timing.	"[...The time is not right]"	3 (12%)
3. Not making sense of SETs.	"[Teachers do not make use of SETs because the university does not make improvements based on the evaluation results..., all that is done is to statistically present these results without making plans to handle weaknesses and enhance the strengths]"	1 (4%)
4. Long and unclear statements in the questionnaires.	"Statements are a bit long, perhaps they should be shorter and simpler in terms of wording. Plus, I do not think that students may understand them all"	1 (4%)
C. Suggestions		
1. The need to administer alternative and more reliable methods.	"Accept evaluation of only serious students with GPA above 4.5... Other sources should also be employed to assess the teaching standard: the course report submitted by the teacher is a reliable source for assessing the teaching process and the course itself"; "Most students evaluate their teachers based on the grades they get, which negatively affects the authenticity of the evaluation. I suggest that more reliable methods be used to avoid such an issue"	(12%)
2. The need to make sense of SETs.	"I'd suggest that whoever is in charge should pay more attention to the students' evaluation!"; "[Giving the evaluation more concern than before and provide teachers with its outputs] "	2 (8%)
3. The need to conduct mid-	"[It must be conducted in the middle of the semester]"	(4%)

semester SETs.		
4. The need to raise students' awareness.	"[Students must be encouraged to evaluate honestly and reminded of the importance of the questionnaire]"	1 (4%)
D. Other	"[Nothing]"; "No comment"	5 (20%)

Note. The number of comments within each theme is shown along with the percentage of the total comments.
[a] Examples given between brackets are translated statements.

Table: 4

Summary of the main comments provided by students (n = 105) regarding the advantages, disadvantages, or suggestions about SETs in Qassim University

Major Themes	Examples[a]	Total Student Comments (%) (n = 105)
A. Advantages		
1. Positive effects on the quality of teachers and courses.	"[Generally, SETs improve teachers' performances...]"	6 (5.71%)
B. Disadvantages		
1. Not making sense of SETs.	"[The university is not serious about it]"; "[we see nothing even though I evaluate very very very honestly]"; "[No one cares about it]"; "[There are not any resulting changes or improvements]"; "[There is not any progress, neither for teachers nor the courses, my evaluation is not taken into consideration]"	51 (48.57%)
2. Long and unclear statements in the questionnaires.	"[SET questions are long...]";"[... The given questions are unclear...] ";"[That SET is long..] ";	8 (7.61%)
3. It is not course-specific.	"[It is not right to apply the same questions to all the courses, because each course has some different aspects...]";"[There are not specific questions concerning teachers and courses]"	6 (5.71%)
C. Suggestions		
1. The need to make sense of SETs.	"[I wish that SETs would be considered]...";"[...it would be better to consider our evaluations and work on improving teachers and courses]"	10 (9.52%)
2. The need to make SETs optional.	"[It should not be obligatory]"; "[... We do it just to access our results]"; "[...Students do not want to evaluate, thus, they do it carelessly because their results are based on this]"	5 (4.76%)
3. Other	"[Students should have access to teachers' ratings]"; "[Only qualified students should evaluate]"; "[...to have a discussion meeting	3 (2.85%)

	group...]"	
D. Other	"[Nothing]"	16 (15.23%)

Note. The number of comments within each theme is shown along with the percentage of the total comments.
[a] Examples given between brackets are translated statements

The major themes emerging from teachers' comments about mid-semester SETs in the other question are listed according to their frequency as follows: (a) helpful and important, (b) other (e.g., "[The need for credibility and honesty] "; "No comment"), (c) too early and not fair, (d) must be conducted twice, (e) need to be conducted by a third party, and (f) the need to make sense of SETs (Table 5). Students' comments regarding mid-semester SETs reflected the following themes, which are listed according to their frequency: (a) the need to make sense of SETs (b) other (e.g., "[Nothing]";"[There will not be any change]"), (c), fear of teachers' reaction, (d) helpful and important, (e) too early and not fair, (f) must be conducted twice, and (g) need to have course-specific SETs (Table 6).

Table: 5
Summary of the main comments provided by students (n = 53) regarding mid-semester SETs

Major Themes	Examples[a]	Total Teacher Comments (%) (n = 17)
1. Helpful and important.	"It is more helpful than the final evaluation"; "This will be greatly helpful"; "It's extremely important, cuz [sic] when the teacher got it in the mid s/he can solve the problem that faced by the students at that time, Not after passing it"	7 (41.17%)
2. Too early and not fair.	"It's too early to conduct the teacher evaluation in the middle of the term"; "[It is not suitable, because the course is still in progress]"	2 (11.76%)
3. Must be conducted twice.	"[There must be two evaluations, one at the beginning of semester and the other at end of semester]"	1 (5.88%)
4. The necessity to be conducted by a third party.	"The evaluation should be done by a third party (anyone but the teacher) to guarantee the reliability of the data"	1 (5.88%)
5. The necessity to make sense of SETs.	"[The evaluation must be taken into account...]"	1 (5.88%)
6. Other	"[The need for credibility and honesty] "; "No comment"	4 (23.52%)

Note. The number of comments within each theme is shown along with the percentage of the total comments.
[a] Examples given between brackets are translated statements.

Table: 6
Summary of the main comments provided by students (n = 53) regarding mid-semester SETs

Major Themes	Examples[a]	Total Student Comments (%) (n = 53)
1. The need to	"[The evaluation ought to be seriously taken	33 (62.26%)

make sense of SETs.	into account] "; "[It is not a matter of evaluation, rather how to make use of it]"	
2. The fear of teachers' reaction.	"[It is good to evaluate throughout the semester for the sake of development, however, some teachers take revenge while giving grades]"; "[Students must be guaranteed safety]"	5 (9.43%)
3.Helpful and important.	"[I think it is perfect]"	2 (3.77%)
4. Too early and not fair.	"[It is the end that matters]"; "[It would be better administered at the end so that teachers will not end up angry due to receiving honest constructive comments in the mid-semester evaluation]"	2 (3.77%)
5. Must be conducted twice.	"[It is better to be conducted at the beginning of semester and at its end]"	2 (3.77%)
6. The need to have course-specific SETs.	"[I want to evaluate in detail instead of evaluating the course in general]"	2 (3.77%)
7. Other	"[Nothing]";"[There will not be any change]"	7 (13.20%)

Note. The number of comments within each theme is shown along with the percentage of the total comments.
[a] Examples given between brackets are translated statements.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the perceptions and attitudes of students and teachers at Qassim University regarding SETs in relation to some aspects. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect the data presented in the previous section. In this section, the results will be discussed by reviewing the research questions within the context of previous research along with some theoretical considerations.

Research Findings

What are the perceptions and attitudes held by teachers and students regarding SETs at Qassim University? The findings of this research extend the existing literature emphasizing the importance of SETs. One unanticipated finding was that less than half the participating students responded that SETs are either slightly important or not important. One possible explanation for this unusual result is that students may have not noticed that the question was asking about their overall perceptions of SETs and thus may have confused it with the SETs applied at Qassim University, as other findings revealed their dissatisfaction. In short, the overall findings showed that both teachers and students had a clear awareness of the importance of SETs despite their dissatisfaction with their timing, kind, or form, which is in consistent with a large body of literature (Hofman & Kremer, 1983; Jarocki, 2018; McGowan, 2009).

Interestingly, previous findings (McGowan, 2009; Spooren et al., 2013) have shown a negative correlation between students' arbitrary selection or bias and teachers' making sense of feedback. In contrast, our findings were the exact opposite, showing contradictions between the findings for student and teacher questionnaires. This result may be explained by Johnson (2000),

who stated that teachers often "allow little or no space for discussing, explaining, or negotiating the results with the students" (as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 3), or, even if they do provide such space, students feel that it comes too late. In our qualitative study, both students and teachers felt the need to engage students in the actual process of evaluation by valuing their feedback and translating this feedback into improvements in a timely manner. Generally, the findings regarding students' and teachers' perceptions in both the qualitative and quantitative data revealed that students' selection bias and teachers' making sense of feedback are negatively correlated. In other words, when teachers and university administrators value students' feedback, students will almost certainly avoid common selection issues, and vice versa, which again clearly reflects their awareness of the importance of SETs.

In answering the question of how some students and teachers at Qassim University perceive mid-semester SETs as one approach to ongoing course evaluation, the discussion related to the first research question allows us to infer the importance of timing in SET. More specifically, regarding mid-semester SETs, one teacher commented: "It's extremely important, cuz [because] when the teacher got it in the mid s/he [she/he] can solve the problem that faced by the students at that time, Not after passing it". This comment and similar ones, along with the statistical data, provide a clear justification of the problems students and teachers face with the current end-of-semester feedback. If the feedback provided is not "thoughtful and reflective," it is likely useless and therefore "just mechanical" (Elbow & Boice, 1992, as cited in Jarocki, 2018, p. 48).

However, some students showed their concerns about potential retaliation from teachers, on the one hand, and questioned the timing and fairness of SETs on the other. Mid-semester SETs have been in use by several universities for many years. For example, Cashin (1995) concluded that "mid-course evaluation feedback can yield a ten percent increase in end-of-semester evaluation scores" (as cited in McGowan, 2009, p. 20). One implication of this is the possibility that Qassim University could benefit from previous findings similar to Cashin's. Consequently, not only would the problems associated with end-of-semester SETs be eradicated, but also, the implementation of a more contemporary approach, which has been supported by the literature and is well perceived by the core of the teaching-learning process in this study, is likely to provide a better educational environment.

As for the question, "How do some students and teachers at Qassim University perceive course-specific evaluation?" the results of the current study showed that one problem emerging from the existing SETs conducted at Qassim University is their misapplication. In other words, the findings led further support to previous studies that have found end-of-semester SETs are essentially not used by administrators to evaluate teachers or courses (Spooren et al., 2013). Teacher and student comments, such as "[It is not right to apply the same questions on all the courses, because each course has some different aspects...]" and "[There are not specific questions concerning teachers and courses]", evidenced the need to apply another or alternative criteria in SETs that have been designed according to the specifications of each course.

Demographic Information

Commenting on SETs, Jarocki (2018) stated that:

[They] are affected by various extraneous factors including course characteristics (e.g., class size, subject matter, level of course, whether it is a required course or not, time of day, if a first-time course is being taught, if innovations are introduced), instructor characteristics (e.g., sex, rank, grading pattern, personality), and student characteristics (e.g., age, sex, student level, major/nonmajor, interest in course). (p. 576).

Therefore, the subjects were asked to provide some common demographic information to be tested as variables that may unexpectedly control our findings. However, these variables did not predict any reported result. Thus, further research is necessary with a larger and more varied population and different variables.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine teacher and student perceptions and attitudes regarding SETs in relation to timing and execution. The analyses found that there is a reasonable amount of awareness resulting from teachers and students' practices and willingness to change, regardless of certain issues, such as their dissatisfaction with the SETs applied at Qassim University (end-of-semester SETs). Further, students and teachers confirmed the importance of the timing of SETs. In particular, they question the validity of the end-of-semester SETs applied at Qassim University in the absence of mid-semester SETs. They also believe that SETs, regardless of timing, would be more effective had they been course-specific evaluations.

We live in a world of rapid learning shifts, in which students and teachers will probably not grasp new changes or strategies without acknowledging the current situation and trying to fix whatever problems it may currently have. For this reason, the results of this study should help encourage teachers, students and administrators at Qassim University and other universities to embrace the new findings and suggestions produced by the analysis for the sake of a continuously improving educational environment.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The present study has some limitations. One is that data were only collected using a single method, questionnaires; thus, a single error could possibly affect all results. Another limitation is that the questionnaires used to collect data were distributed by the researcher, who is working and studying at the targeted university. As a result, social desirability bias may have affected results. Since findings showed that different aspects of SETs may be correlated and have either negative or positive effects, the current study focused on common major issues but did not consider others. Finally, as mentioned previously, the variables used in the study did not show a significant influence, which may be because the gender of the population, major, department as well as other variables were very similar.

Because these limitations may not ensure reliable and consistent results, further research is needed to replicate this study with multiple methods, such as interviews, meeting groups or experimental studies.

Among the major findings of this study were the issues of students' selection bias and teachers' tendency not to make use of feedback to improve their courses. Thus, conducting theoretical research to address solutions to these issues, or a practical study to test the given suggestions, may be a great contribution in the field of education, particularly SETs. In addition, similar research on other aspects of SETs as well as other relative variables that were not tackled in this research is recommended.

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