



Analysis of Questionnaires Applied in the Evaluation Process of Academicians in Higher Education Institutes*

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the questionnaires used to evaluate teaching performance in higher education institutes and called 'Instructor and Course Evaluation Questionnaires (ICEQ**)' in terms of questionnaire preparation techniques and components of curriculum. Obtaining at least one ICEQ belonging to any state and private universities in Turkey is the universe of the study. The sample of the study is 35 ICEQs from 32 universities. In this study, qualitative research methods are used and one of the data collection methods, document analysis method is applied and the documents/data are decoded by Content Analysis Method. The items of the questionnaires are analyzed in terms of curriculum components and questionnaire preparing techniques. The findings of the study indicate that the items included in the questionnaire are related mostly to the teaching-learning processes component of a curriculum. 52 % of all the questionnaires items are determined as related to benefits obtained from the courses by students and it is found out that 21% of the items are not appropriate for the criteria of preparing questionnaires. That the analyzed ICEQs are prepared in accordance with curriculum and questionnaire preparing techniques is vital because it contributes to validity and reliability of questionnaires. A qualified evaluation can be reached via findings obtained from reliable and valid data collection tools. It is a necessity to collect data through reliable and valid tools for summative and formative evaluations conducted for instructors and courses in higher education institutions.

Key Words

Higher Education, Instructor Evaluation Questionnaires, Teaching Performance, Teaching Quality.

One of important signs of quality university is the quality level of instructor and his/her course. The quality of instructor is the leading one among the factors affecting directly the quality of education and so evaluation of instructor performance is considered as the assurance of quality (Açan & Saydan, 2009, p. 227; Karamulloğlu, 2000, p. 34).

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Due to the fact that there has been a strong demand for higher education, universities in Turkey have no fear of not being able to find students to be enrolled to their programs. Because of this fact, a serious competition can not be seen among state universities of Turkey. These universities only compete for talented, academically high performing students (Türker, 2003). This result was valid for seven years ago when it was stated at that time, however by 2009-2010 academic year, some of the 103 state and 53 private, in sum, total of 156 universities (Yükseköğretim

** In this study, the term ICEQ is used for "Instructor and Course Evaluation Questionnaires" as a short notation. Name of each Instructor and Course Evaluation Questionnaire is different in each university where the questionnaire is used. For persons who are interested in this subject, being careful about keeping "concept unification" intact will increase understandability on "theory" and "application".

Kurulu [YÖK], 2010) in Turkey, are now facing problem of not being able to find enough students enrolled in their programs (Ölçme, Seçme ve Yerleştirme Merkezi [ÖSYM], 2010; Özmen, 2010). The idea of universities given by Malche (1932) is still very important as it was in the past for our moral future and our society's future. However, question of "what has been done for improving these important institutions?" has to be asked. To answer this question adequately, universities need to have an effective evaluation system. Göçmen (2004) stated that, nowadays, education related improvement concept contains both quantitative and qualitative improvement at the same time.

Without evaluation, it is hard to deal with quality related problems. Moreover, as Theall and Franklin (2000) indicate, evaluation should not be regarded as a punitive process, on the contrary it is emphasized that evaluation should contribute to development.

It is known that feedback from students and other sources have important functions and usages during evaluating and improving curricula of higher education institutions. As a result of this fact, European and American universities give great importance to the feedback based on evaluation made by students (Moore & Kuol, 2005). In Turkish literature, researches on ICEQs are very limited. This study is a pioneering one on the subject, this situation makes this study very important for the Turkish literature. Instructors and courses evaluation can be made by using various methods (Kalaycı, 2009; Tong & Bures, 1987).

Evaluation of teaching performance by students has been frequently used a method of evaluation since 1920 (Cashin, 1999; Seldin, 1999). Researchers are mostly in an agreement such that results of students' evaluation teaching questionnaires are influential and effective in improving the quality of teaching (Jackson et al., 1999; Marsh & Roche, 1997; Perry & Smart, 1997). However, discussions and arguments related to reliability and validity of questionnaires still continue among researchers (Barth, Charlston, & Carolina, 2008; Cashin, 1995; Centra, 1993; Hoyt & Palet, 1999; Kolitch & Dean, 1999; Marsh, 1984; Oliver, Tucker, Gupta, & Yeo, 2008; Theall, 2002).

It is known that, in higher education programs, the feedbacks which are obtained from students and other sources and which are used in curriculum evaluation and development, have an important usage (Devebakan, Koçdor, Musal, & Güner, 2003; Koç & Coşkuner, 2007). As it was

stated by Varış (1988), Curriculum Development is not a process of changing some parts of the curriculum or is not a process of adding or deleting some parts of the curriculum.

During the process of determining important points which are related to preparation of ICEQs, related literature has been considered carefully (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu, & Yıldırım, 2004; Arıkan 2007; Arseven, 2004; Balcı, 2009; Baş, 2008; Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2009; Cashin, 1995; Chen & Hashower, 2003; Ergün, Duman, Kincal, & Arıbaş, 1999; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Heltterbran, 2008; Kalaycı, 2008a; Kolitch & Dean, 1999; Marsh & Roche, 1997; Millan & Schumacher, 2001; Özoğlu, 1992; Pamuk, 2005; Sarı, 2004; Tagomori & Bishop, 1995; Varış, 1998, p. 6; Voss, Gruber & Szmigin, 2007) and these important points were gathered under four main title: Items in ICEQs have to be compatible with curriculum, Expectations of students from education have to be known, ICEQ has to be valid and reliable, ICEQ has to be in accordance with questionnaire preparation and item wording principles.

With this point of view, ICEWs which are used in Turkish Higher Education System have to be in accordance with questionnaire itself with questionnaire preparation principles. There is no strict principles list saying how to design and prepare an ICEQ and also saying which type of items to be included in an ICEQ. Usage of ICEQs is advised by Higher Education Academic Evaluation and Quality Improvement Commission (YÖDEK, 2007). These questionnaires are prepared and put into practice by Academic Evaluation Quality Improvement Commission (AEQIC) of each university. Related to this ICEQ preparation and application process, some faculties in few universities are conducting this process independently. During the ICEQ preparation process; questionnaire preparation principles, dimensions of the curriculum, reliability and validity calculations have to be considered very careful. In general, following sections can be found in ICEQs: a section related to the teaching performance of an instructor (communication, class management, evaluation etc.), a section related to the evaluation of the course (course content, goals and objectives of the course, being hard course, complexity, course usefulness etc.), a section related to evaluation of students' self-performance during the course.

When the ICEQ related literature is considered carefully, there is no research study which analyze the ICEQs based on the dimensions of curri-

Table 1.
The Distribution of ICEQs' Items Evaluating Instructors Teaching Performance according to Components of Curriculum

Curriculum Components	Sub Categories	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)	Percent (%)
Objectives	-	33	6	6
	Sources	27	5	
Content	Qualification of instructors	25	4	12
	Subject (Content)	14	3	
Teaching-Learning Process	Teaching process (conveying the course)	157	28	
	Communication	113	20	
	Time management	54	9	68
	Course preparation	41	7	
	Teaching materials	24	4	
Assessment	Measurement	43	8	14
	Evaluation	39	6	
Total		570	100	100

process), communication skills (the component of teaching learning process), instructors field expertise (the component of content) etc. used in courses by instructors. Colins (2002) finds out that the questionnaires through which students evaluate teachers are inadequate in terms of content and structure and advises that the questionnaires be corrected and re-prepared.

When the total 716 items are analyzed according to questionnaire preparing techniques and strategies, 21% of the items (152 items) are not in line with these techniques and strategies. Of all the items, 10 % are not written in line with the criteria stated as 'With an item, only one subject should be asked.' In other words, 10% of the questionnaire items are written in such a way that these items are trying to evaluate more than one thing in one item. This situation is completely against the questionnaire preparation principles.

Some of the important studies related to wording of items of questionnaires, design of the questionnaires, and constructing a scale are conducted by Low (1988, 1991, 1999) and also both Alderson (1992) and Low (1996) indicated that studies related to these variables are not adequate. In our country, Turkey, universities, which are conducting studies, related to ICEQs, have to focus on two types of studies in general: the first one is to prepare valid and reliable ICEQs and the second one is to increase the number of studies related to ICEQs.

The study of Colins (2002) states that in questionnaires, with which students evaluate their instructors, there are some contradictory statements (items) and states that statements or wording of items have to be more open and more understandable. The findings of this pre-

sent study are in agreement with the findings of the studies of Coffey and Gibbs (2001), Husband (1996), and Kolitch and Dean (1999).

Discussion

The findings of this study show that, in Turkish universities, preparation of questionnaires' items is not based on any systems or any techniques. As long as people preparing the questionnaires do not acquire or follow a specific system and techniques, the data collected through these questionnaires will not be reliable and valid. This situation brings out ineffective evaluation and the questionnaires will be used only as to perform a routine.

In this study, when the items of ICEQs are analyzed in terms of questionnaire preparation techniques, 716 items collected from 35 questionnaires are analyzed and of all the items 152 of them are determined as not appropriate to questionnaire preparation techniques.

The finding indicates the questionnaires have problems regarding validity and reliability. The questionnaires with reliability and validity problems will affect the summative and formative evaluation process negatively.

At that point, Kalaycı's suggestion (2008b) related to establishing centers with the aim of increasing the education quality at universities is very important. Kalaycı (2008b) claims that whatever its name such kind of centers should be established and especially they are vital for education quality. At universities with academic success and quality, curriculum development studies function as curriculum development circle at such centers. At the same centers, there are experts varying from measurement and evaluati-

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