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Evaluation of Faculty's Practices in Assessing Students' Academic Achievement

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the practices adopted by the faculty of Najran University in the assessment of students' academic achievement through surveying students about the extent of practices adopted by faculty members. To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire conducted and distributed to 345 male and female students from various colleges. The questionnaire consisted of 37 items distributed to five domains: Practice assessment within course description, philosophy of assessment, assessing of participation, assessment of assignments and test practices. The results showed moderate level of practices adopted by the faculty members at Najran University in assessment of students' academic achievement. The results also showed that there were statistically significant differences due to gender and the type of college.

Keywords: students' academic achievement, assessment practices, faculty, Najran University

1. Introduction

The faculty member has many roles, responsibilities and tasks. He acts as a researcher, an expert and consultant in his offering of scientific outcomes, to solve the problems of community. He has played multiple roles and has responsibilities in the university to participate in the development of courses and curricula and to supervise students' activities and teaching, exams and administrative processes, in addition to the great responsibilities taken over for teaching and other consequences. The most important issue is to evaluate students academically by a lot of criticism, both for the faculty member or evaluation tool being used(Campbell,2005). The process of academic achievement evaluation considered as a guide to the process of teaching, learning and curriculum and all other educational processes involved in student achievement, and as far as evaluation is objective, its results will be valid and effective in directing educational process and improving it(McMillan, 2004). Wilson and Scalise (2006) describes assessment process as one of the key components in the curriculum. While, Mikre (2010) describes it as the process of obtaining information in order to make decisions about the curriculum, students learning, program, and educational politics.

Many studies have confirmed the need to constantly train faculty members on how to evaluate students and to raise their competencies to play this role (Odah & Aldahery, 1992; Althbaity & Algarny, 1993; Swenson & Souter, 1995; Alomary, 1997; Alababneh, 1998; Waxman & Walberg, 1999; Shhateh,2001; Anderson, Aiken & David, 2003). Faculty differed in their use of these tools and have various methods as well as they differed in terms of competence and skills of the assessment and their philosophy for the assessment process. It is not expected that faculty member has studied them because of the diversity of disciplines and the uniqueness of each discipline and various methods. Alababneh (1998) defined the practices of academic achievement assessment of students as direct and indirect moral and materialistic behaviors that followed by the faculty's assessment of the academic achievement of the students and assess their grades. He identified these practices within several domains and summed them up as follows: practices within course description, faculty's philosophy of assessment, the practices of assessing participation and attendance, research and report assessment, and test practices which include preparation, application and marking.

One of the studies in the field of faculty member assessment to the students' academic achievement conducted by Gipps (1994) which showed a weakness in the assessment of students, also Talbot (1994) provided a guide for faculty members to improve their experiences, and also showed that faculty members focused on program objectives and they are not aware of the importance of preparation and application of the tests. Alababneh (1998) presented a study about students' assessment to the practices of faculty members in the evaluation of students' achievement. It showed that there are some of weaknesses and the need to raise awareness of the requirements of preparing, applying and making of tests. As well as Zhang which cited in (McMillan, 2004) aimed to examine the relationship between the practices of faculty members in the evaluation process and experience in teaching, and check their understanding of the practices of the evaluation and its relationship to the process of training them, as well as identifying the difficulties associated with the evaluation process

in order to direct the training process to the whole process of the evaluation. Results showed that faculty members who are teaching different topics differ in their use of the tests, their evaluation of performance and grading; and that training and experience has strengthened their understanding of the evaluation process, and the application of the tests, and performing the necessary analyses. Anderson et al (2003) provided a guide for faculty members focused on the effective practices in the evaluation of student performance includes ten axes. Qawasmeh (2007) study aimed at evaluating practices adopted by the faculty in assessing the academic achievement of their students. The results showed differences in the degree of these practices attributed to specialization and academic level, and type of college. Also Suleiman (2010) aimed at evaluating practices followed by the faculty members in assessing the academic achievement of their students through a questionnaire included five domains: practice assessment within course description, faculty's assessment philosophy, research and report assessment, practices of student participation assessment, and practices in the assessment of tests: preparation, application and marking. The results showed differences in the degree of these practices attributed to specialization and academic level and the study made a number of recommendations. Zakri and Qablan (2014) conducted a study showed that the faculty members at the University of Najran practice contemporary standards in students' evaluation in moderate average from their point of view.

The evaluation process takes a great deal within the various processes in the educational system by focusing on improving teaching and learning process(McKee & Tew, 2013). In addition, the evaluation process is considered main factor that encourages the staff in the educational institution to improve their performance and educational outcomes (Stes, Coertjens & Petegem, 2013). Most of these studies and researches have focused on the different competencies of teaching and evaluation and always recommended that the faculty members should enroll in workshops and training courses and briefed on updates in their specialization and their teaching and evaluation methods. It is expected to find some variation in actual practice of faculty members in terms of quantity and quality. Therefore, the assessment skills are classified into five domains: Assessment practices within course description, philosophy of assessment, assessing of participation, assessment of assignments and test practices(Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003; Mikre, 2010; Alababneh,1998).

Hence this study came to focus on the importance of the reality of evaluation practices for faculty members at the University of Najran which used in the academic achievement of their students, from the perspective of students, in order to develop and improve the teaching and learning process by enhancing their strengths and training them for improving their weaknesses.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive analytical method was used in this study.

2.2 Participants

The population of the study composed of all undergraduate students enrolled at Najran University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the academic year 2014-2015. However, the sample of the study consisted of (345) male and female students selected randomly from Scientific and Humanities College.

2.3 Instrument

To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire was conducted. However, the first draft of the questionnaire was modified by experts from Ccollege of Education at Najran University, KSA. However, the final draft of the questionnaire consisted of (37) items, which distributed to five domains: assessment practices within course description, style and philosophy of assessment, assessing of participation, assessment of assignments and test practices: preparation, application and marking. To examine the internal reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. This technique revealed a highly reliability coefficient (r = 0.95). In addition, Five-Point Likert Scale was used. For the purpose of analysing the results of the study, the questionnaire has been classified into three levels (low, moderate, and high). The three levels become as follows: 1-2.33 (low level), 2.34-3.67 (moderate level), and 3.68-5 (high level).

3. Results

3.1 Results related to the first question: What is the level of faculty members practices related to the assessment of the academic achievement of their students"?. For this question, means and standard deviations calculated as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations according to domains of study

Domain	M	SD	Level
Course description	3.81	0.79	High
Assessment of assignments	3.69	0.83	High
Test practices	3.62	0.82	Moderate
Assessing of participation	3.50	0.92	Moderate
Philosophy of assessment	3.32	0.91	Moderate

Table (1) shows the means between (3.81 and 3.32), where the practices within course description comes in the first rank (M=3.81), while the philosophy of assessment comes in the last rank (M=3.32). The two domains (Course assessment and Assessment of assignments) ranked high with means (3.81 & 3.69) respectively, where the three other domains (Test practices, Assessment of participation and Philosophy of assessment) ranked moderate with means (3.62, 3.50 & 3.32) respectively.

3.2 Results related to the second question: "Are there any statistically significant differences among students' responses to the faculty practices in the assessment of students' academic achievement attributed to the gender"?. For this question, means, standard deviations and t-test were calculated as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and t-test according to gender

Domain	Gender	N	M	SD	T	P.
Course description	Male	124	3.89	.69	1.48	.032*
	Female	221	3.76	.84		
Assessment of assignments	Male	124	3.70	.84	.1.36	0.461
	Female	221	3.69	.87		
Test practices	Male	124	3.70	.78	1.37	0.565
	Female	221	3.57	.85		
Assessing of participation	Male	124	3.56	.86	1.03	0.774
	Female	221	3.46	.93		
Philosophy of assessment	Male	124	3.51	.79	2.83	.046*
	Female	221	3.22	.97		

* $p \leq .05$

Table (2) shows that there are statistically significant differences in the assessment of students' academic achievement in the domains of course description and philosophy of assessment with significance level = (.032*) and (.046*) respectively in favour of males ($p \leq .05$). There are no statistically significant differences in assessment of assignments, test practices and assessing of participation due to gender.

*3.3 Results related to the third question: "*Are there any statistically significant differences among students for the faculty members' practices in the assessment of their academic achievement attributed to type of college (scientific & humanities)?'. For this question, means, standard deviations and t-test were calculated as shown in table 3.

Table (3) shows that there are statistically significant differences in the assessment of students' academic achievement in the domains of course description, test practices and assessing of participation with significance level (.000, .021 and .025) respectively due to the type of college in favour of the humanities colleges ($p \leq .05$).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations and t-test according to type of college

Domain	College	N	M	SD	t	P
Course description	Scientific	109	3.68	.78	-4.6	.000*
	Humanities	236	4.09	.72		
Assessment of assignments	Scientific	109	3.69	.82	-0.1	0.931
	Humanities	236	3.70	.94		
Test practices	Scientific	109	3.55	.83	-2.3	.021*
	Humanities	236	3.76	.79		
Assessing of participation	Scientific	109	3.42	.94	-2.3	.025*
	Humanities	236	3.66	.82		
Philosophy of assessment	Scientific	109	3.27	.90	-1.5	0.124
	Humanities	236	3.43	.94		

* $P \leq .05$

4. Discussion

The study aimed to evaluate faculty's practices used in assessing of students' achievement in Najran University members from the perspective of students, this part discusses the results with which the study concluded.

4.1 Faculty's practices of assessing students

Results, from student perspective, have shown that the skill level of assessing achievement among faculty was moderate, while it was high only for the two domains (course description and assignments) and moderate for the rest of domains. This result is in consistent with Gipps (1994), Alababneh (1998), and Qawasmeh (2007). Zekri and Qublan (2014) also showed these practices moderately and that there are some weaknesses/drops and it is needed to raise awareness for the skills of assessment and requirements of test preparation, application and marking. This may be due to lack of interest for faculty in attending training programs and workshops that focus on the development of the skills of assessing academic achievement; and the university's efforts in holding programs and workshops may be insufficient, and it is likely that student evaluation for these practices is not objective, especially it is related to the assessment of their academic achievement.

4.2 Relationship between practices' level of assessing students and gender

The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the two domains (course description and philosophy of assessment) and are much available from a male point of view. This result may be due to the diversity of experience and opportunities of the university to hire qualified male faculty, while choice opportunities for females are less and that some of these practices associated with instructions and courses description, so faculty is keen on them and present them in a direct way for male students while presented to female students through televised network.

4.3 Relationship between practices' level of assessing students and type of college

The results showed statistically significant differences in the instrument as a whole, and for the domains (course description, participation and test practices), the degree of these practices is higher among humanity colleges than scientific colleges, and this result is consistent with the study of Qawasmeh (2007) and Suleiman (2010) showed differences in these practices in favor of humanity and educational colleges, and this means that faculty of humanity colleges give attention to the assessment skills more than those of scientific colleges. This may be due to the sufficient experience they have in the various aspects of the process of assessing the academic achievement because there are a large proportion of educational courses in humanities colleges, and the differences may be due to the nature of the courses taught in scientific colleges, which rely more heavily on essay tests that have weaknesses in terms of formulating, wording, answer method and objective marking, while specific answer tests widely used in humanities colleges, which take into account the objectivity and faculty are largely aware of the rules and skills of the assessment process as a result of workshops and sessions held in humanity colleges that delivered by members of the College of Education.

5. Conclusion

In light of the current study's results, the author made some recommendations and proposals in order that the University of Najran makes use of them to develop and improve the skills of faculty in the process of assessing the students' academic achievement shown as follows:

1. Developing a set of evaluating standards and practices approved by the faculty in the process of assessing students' academic achievement.
2. Spreading the culture of quality among faculty and make them aware of the importance of training workshops and sessions in the field of academic achievement assessment among faculty.
3. Holding training courses for developing the academic achievement assessment among faculty at the university associated with the planning process for assessment, the philosophy of assessment, assessment of participation and research, and test skills in terms of (construction, application and marking).
4. To introduce students to the importance and objectives of the assessment to the practices of the faculty to provide objectivity and to consider seriously the process of assessment by the students, and that is reflected positively on the decisions made based on the results of the assessment process.
5. Studying the factors affecting students' process of evaluation of these practices adopted by faculty, regarding the process of assessing the students' academic achievement.

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