



Title: An investigation of what students that did not fill in the course questionnaire think of the course

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Authors:

Hans Havtun¹ and Niclas Hjelm²

¹Energy Technology, KTH - ITM School

²Biomedical Engineering And Health Systems, KTH - CBH School

Abstract

Background and Purpose

Students' views of a course is one of the major inputs for assessing the quality of a course and a source of ideas for course development. One of many ways of giving the students a chance to voice their opinions of a course is through a course evaluation questionnaire. As more and more courses are collecting student feedback this way, students may have four or more questionnaires to fill in at a certain point in time. This often leads to a low response frequency.

The problem with low response frequency to questionnaires is well-known. The tendency is that paper-based questionnaires usually yield higher response frequencies quantitatively. From a qualitative viewpoint however, paper-based questionnaires tend to yield little or no answers to open questions, where ideas for course development often is given. If we add the extra workload with compiling answers, statistics and free text answers to open questions, teachers tend to steer away from paper-based questionnaires in favor of web-based formats. The obvious downside of web-based questionnaires are, as mentioned earlier, the response frequency. Some teachers even say they disregard the results of the course questionnaire based on the fact that the response frequency is too low, and therefore not representative of the student group.

Work in Progress

What does the evaluation data say if the response frequency is low? How representative is the data of the views of the entire student group? Can the data be used at all? These are questions we aim to investigate.

This type of study has been done at Lund University, Borell and Gudmundsson (2009). We replicate the investigation with a slightly different approach. In order to investigate what students that have not filled in the web-based questionnaire think of courses, we arrange an occasion where the entire student group are given an opportunity to give their feedback again in an identical paper-based questionnaire. This is done during the start of a subsequent course in the students' program. The method builds on the idea that the paper-based questionnaire will have a higher response frequency as compared to the web-based one. The outcomes of the two questionnaires can then be compared to see if the web-based questionnaire is representative of the entire student group.

In Borell and Gudmundsson (2009), some time prevailed between the conclusion of the web-based questionnaire and the paper-based follow-up. This may skew the results of the paper-based questionnaire as there are indications that students tend to see more favorable to a course once some time has elapsed between the course conclusion and the evaluation of it, Larsson (2014). We therefore include a control question to investigate this. In the paper-based questionnaire, the students are asked if they submitted the web-based questionnaire. With this information we can see if the general opinion about the course has changed between the web-based and paper-based investigations. We, of course, also can see if there are any significant differences of the views between the students that submitted the web-based questionnaire and those students who did not.

Results and Observations

We hope to be able to update the abstract once the investigation is concluded. We plan to collect the data during January and February of 2019. It is important that students are unaware of these plans!

Take-home Message

An estimate of how well web-based questionnaires in general and the LEQ in particular represent the entire student body will be presented at KTH SoTL 2019 .

References

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