Research Article

Factors Associated with Student Feedback to Teachers in Quality Assurance in Iraqi Kurdistan

Rukhsar Muhammad Omar/ Kindergarten Department, College of Basic Education, University of Raparin, Ranya, As Sulaimaniyah, Kurdistan Region - Iraq

Sarkawt Muhammad Qadir/ English Department, College of Education, University of Raparin, Ranya, As Sulaimaniyah, Kurdistan Region - Iraq

CORRESPONDENCE
Sarkawt Muhammad Qadir
sarkawt.en@uor.edu.krd

Abstract

Over the past few decades, the quality of education has emerged as a critical strategic concern in tertiary education institutions worldwide. University managers' daily tasks now include comparing educational outcomes and rankings, for which quality assurance is significant. Quality assurance incorporates three separate but interdependent elements including student feedback to teachers, teacher portfolios, and continuous academic development. Student feedback concerns the quality and effectiveness of teaching and teacher performance. University instructors often complain about the grades and feedback they gain from students and reckon that the grades are based on students' rate of success and teachers' intimacy with students, rather than on teachers' performances. Therefore, this study is devoted to investigating student feedback and the factors that determine the quality of feedback provided to instructors. To this intent, the study follows the principles of mixed methods in data collection and analysis; using self-reported questionnaires, instructor feedback scores in quality assurance, and student rates of success for each module as well as using IBM SPSS 25 and thematic analysis. The participants include university students and instructors selected from a public university in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The study assumes that three factors play a significant role in determining the level of feedback including the rate of success, instructors' intimacy and rapport with students, and the quantity of material provided to students. The study concludes with far-reaching implications for higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the quality of teaching and learning has emerged as a critical strategic concern in tertiary education institutions worldwide (Blömeke, 2016; Enders & Westerheijden, 2014; Saleh, 2016; Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020). In Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, the quality of teaching in higher education is solely measured through quality assurance (QA henceforth), whose efficiency and effectiveness have recently been accelerated and enhanced by the Bologna process. University managers' daily tasks now include comparing educational outcomes, rankings, and increased university autonomy and accountability (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020).

QA is an institution's planned and systematic review to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education are being met and enhanced. More importantly, it can differentiate between active and inactive teachers (Saleh, 2016). Even though the existence of external and internal QA is widely accepted nowadays, the debate is still pending, where scholars accuse QA of being an illegitimate interference from a central management – namely the university presidency – which holds too much managerial power to regulate academics (Ali, 2017; Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020). Similarly, the application of the QA process still remains a controversial issue among faculty members in higher education institutions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), with some faculty members accepting it while others opposing it (Saleh, 2016).

QA in relation to instructors at the university level in the KRI generally entails three major elements: continuous academic development, teacher portfolios, and student feedback. Among the elements of QA, student feedback, which is also called student evaluation of teaching or student rating in the literature (Vargas-Madriz & Nocente, 2023), is considered the most effective, reliable, and consistently administered tool to assess teaching performance and effectiveness in higher education institutions. It affects the instructors' careers and has the potential to shape the quality of instruction by allowing students to provide administrators with feedback about instructors' teaching and potential areas of improvement and to make personnel decisions about instructors' retention, promotion, tenure, and pay increments (al Khouri, 2016; Al Ansari et al., 2020; Saleh, 2016; Sojka et al., 2010; Vargas-Madriz & Nocente, 2023; Young et al., 2019). The feedback process allows the learners' views to be communicated to the teachers, especially in areas of degree of comprehension, and satisfaction with a module (Al Ansari et al., 2020; Saidi & Vu, 2021).

Several studies have reported the importance of student feedback. Relatedly, Kadir and Omar (2016) stressed the significance of student feedback and believed it positively impacts the teaching process. Al Ansari et al. (2020) examined the effect of student feedback on teaching quality among clinical teachers in Bahrain. His overall quantitative and qualitative results revealed that the majority of teacher participants confirmed the significance of student feedback in medical education. He also showed that teachers who received a summary of feedback reports given by students semi-annually demonstrated a substantial increase in teaching quality. Vargas-Madriz and Nocente (2023) used a mixed methods design to explore university students' willingness to provide feedback as part of the teaching evaluation process. They revealed students' positive views about the evaluation process. However, a few teachers were either neutral or negative concerning student feedback.

Student feedback continues to be extensively used in higher education institutions (Iqbal et al., 2016). Although there are other valid ways of evaluating teaching (Asassfeh et al., 2013), the widespread use of student feedback has been due to its simplicity when collecting data, as well as its simplicity when presenting and interpreting results (Spooren & Christiaens, 2016). Nevertheless, while some researchers indicate that student feedback is a valid and reliable tool for measuring and improving teaching quality (Al Ansari et al., 2020; Khong, 2014), other

researchers think that the disadvantages of student feedback might outweigh its advantages if not given properly and taken seriously (Al Ansari et al., 2020; Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020).

More precisely, student feedback might suffer from many drawbacks if not implemented properly. First, it is considered a routine practice by students and instructors in most higher education institutions and students do not take it seriously (Gaillard et al., 2006). Second, students may be reluctant to give direct and honest feedback, particularly in the Kurdish context (Al Ansari et al., 2020). Third, some students' feedback is subjective (Ali, 2017; Saleh, 2016; Saidi & Vu, 2021), that is, students might use it as revenge. Fourth, most instructors believe that students are not competent enough to evaluate course objectives, content, methods, and assessments (Ali, 2017; Saleh, 2016). According to a study (al Khouri, 2015) conducted on the higher education system of the Kurdistan region of Iraq, it was found that many academics were against giving students the right to provide feedback to participate in teacher evaluation and curricula. Fifth, the validity of teaching assessment through student feedback is threatened if students lack the motivation to provide feedback (Sojka et al., 2010), or if students do not see a connection between their feedback and outcomes (Spooren & Christiaens, 2016; Constantinou & Wijnen-Meijer, 2022), which is the case in the KRI. Sixth, student feedback in the KRI is mostly based on a grading scale in which students are required to assess instructors' teaching on grades rather than providing comments. Similar to other contexts (Gaillard et al., 2006), students rarely write comments as feedback for instructors; even if they write, instructors are not informed about them. Therefore, some participants in Saleh's (2016) study in the Kurdish context suggested that student feedback should be qualitative to reflect the actual performance of the staff. Seventh, evaluation results do not reliably and validly reflect teaching quality and can thus not be used as a basis for management decisions (Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020). Eighth, another concern is related to the time when student feedback should be given, whether it be given at the end of the course, before the exams, or after the exams as students' performance in exams might affect their assessment of teaching (Saleh, 2016).

Many factors might play a role in the category of feedback instructors receive from their students for their performance and the quality of their teaching. These might include, as observed, student success rate in the course, instructor intimacy, rapport, and empathy with students, and the quantity of material provided to students, among others. According to Kadir and Omar (2021), several factors can affect the category of feedback teachers receive from students, including age, experience, and department. This means older and more experienced instructors receive more positive feedback from students. Additionally, the scientific department instructors receive more positive feedback than those in the humanitarian departments.

Given the extant debate depicted above regarding the legitimacy of student feedback and its drawbacks in QA in higher education, evaluation of the attitudes of students and instructors regarding student feedback in general and the factors as well as effects of student feedback becomes an inescapable necessity, especially when the literature reveals those studies tackling student feedback are limited in the KRI. There is some literature on the effect of quality assurance on teaching quality in the KRI, but very few studies have examined student feedback to teachers. Student feedback is not transparent, that is, no data regarding student feedback is published on university websites, which is dissimilar to most universities worldwide. Therefore, publishing and sharing the status of feedback in KRI will be justifiable. Thus, it is justified to report on the level and quality of student feedback and the attitudes of students and instructors toward student feedback. It is also important to reveal the factors and the consequences that are associated with student feedback. To be more precise, the present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What factors are associated with student feedback to instructors in the Kurdistan region of Iraq?

2. Is there a correlation between the rate of success and student feedback?
3. What are the effects of student feedback on the education process?
4. How should student feedback be given and implemented at the university?

2. Methodology and Data Collection

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate student feedback as a pillar of QA in higher education and a tool for assessing teaching quality and efficacy, with a particular focus on the causes and effects of student feedback. To this end, the study employed three sorts of data: quantitative data were collected from 82 university faculty members and 207 university students through six close-ended questions self-designed by the researchers whose collected responses have been presented in the results section. The purpose of these data was to understand and identify the factors and consequences of student feedback as well as the overall impact of student feedback on the education process at the university. Additionally, qualitative data were collected from the same participants through an open-ended question asking the student and instructor participants, "How would you rate student feedback? Write any positive or negative comments you have regarding student feedback". The purpose of these data was to delve into the investigation of student feedback. In other words, the purpose was to tackle attitudes toward student feedback, the implementation of student feedback, and the factors associated with feedback. More importantly, the third category of data involved the collection of quantitative data (student feedback score and rate of success for each module) from the quality assurance department and five examination committees of five different colleges of a public university in the KRI (anonymity is preferred due to ethical considerations) to understand the overall level of feedback given to instructors by students and the correlation between feedback and the rate of success. The data were collected from five colleges including colleges of education, basic education, human sciences, science, nursing, and agricultural engineering sciences. In terms of validity, the questionnaires (student and instructor questionnaires) were checked for validity through face validity. In other words, the questionnaires were sent to two experts in the field and they confirmed that the questions can measure the topic under investigation and match the aims.

We chose university students and instructors because they are directly involved and stakeholders in the QA process. As for the instruments used in this study which were self-designed researcher questionnaires and data from the quality assurance department and the examination committees for the academic year 2022-2023, the present study adopted a holistic approach to the investigation of the topic, most of the questions were general questions that elicited general information from the participants. This sort of data was preferred to display a broad and holistic picture of the topic under investigation.

The participants were of both genders, males and females, and belonged to different age ranges. They were selected through convenience sampling. Being in Kurdish, the questions were prepared on a Google form and shared with students and instructors through different social media platforms (Facebook group for students, Viber and Telegram group for university instructors). The selection criteria for participation were the stipulation of an ongoing in-service status of university instructors and students.

The collected responses from university students and instructors were inserted into Excel and SPSS and analyzed. Two categories of statistical tools were used, namely, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations to understand the factors associated with student feedback and its consequences as well as the level of feedback and the rate of success; and inferential statistics including the One-Way ANOVA test to understand the rate of success and the level of feedback across different colleges and education levels and the Pearson correlation coefficient to account for the correlation between the rate of success and the level of student feedback. More importantly, the analysis of the

qualitative data was based on the thematic analysis considering the themes appearing from instructors' and students' responses. Overall, 15 instructor participants and 11 student participants responded to the open-ended question.

As for the ethical considerations, the researchers wrote a petition to the university to obtain data regarding the rate of success. The petition was later made a formal letter by the vice president of the university and was directed to all the examination committees of the university. Upon the receipt of the letter, five colleges granted permission to use the data. To obtain quality assurance grades, the researchers wrote another petition to the director of the research center. Then, the research center, after reviewing the content of the petition, granted permission through the university's ethical committee, provided that the university name was concealed. After obtaining the data from the university, the researchers deleted any sensitive information from the data such as course titles and the names of the lecturers. They also refined the data by removing some non-core university modules such as the academic debate module or the English language module taught as non-core modules.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Results
3.1.1 The quantitative data. This section yields results based on the responses obtained from university instructors and students in public universities, as well as data obtained from the quality assurance department and examination committees.

Factors associated with student feedback given to university instructors
To be able to tackle the factors that affect student feedback, the perspectives of both university instructors and students are considered. First, frequencies and percentages are utilized to present the gathered data from instructors' perspectives, as shown in Figure 1.
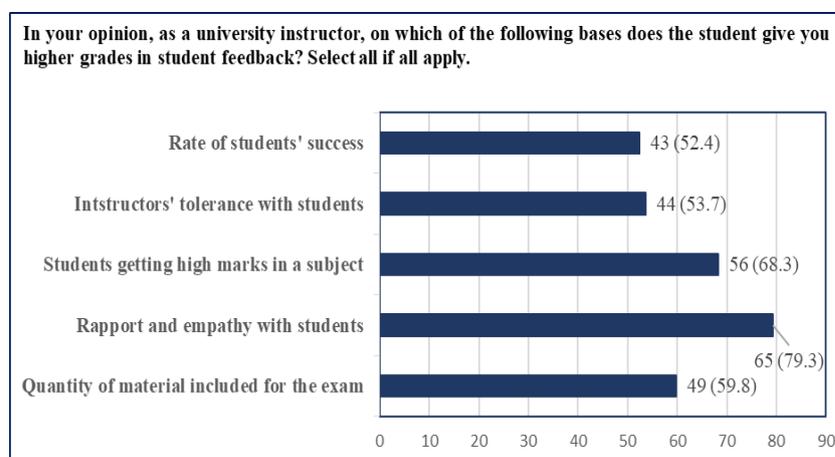

Figure 1. Factors affecting student feedback from university instructors' perspectives

As the figure shows, the most influential factor affecting student feedback from university instructors' perspectives is the instructors' rapport and empathy with students with a high frequency and percentage (*f= 65, pc= 79.3%*). The second most influential factor involves students getting high marks in a subject, yet recording a high frequency and percentage (*f= 56, pc= 68.3*), followed by the quantity of material taught, studied, and included in the exam (*f= 49, pc= 59.8*). Nevertheless, the other two factors, instructors' tolerance with students (*f= 44, pc= 53.7*) and students' rate of success (*f= 43, pc= 52.4*), despite being the least influential factors affecting student feedback, demonstrated a high frequency and percentage. The overall results indicate that all the five factors shown in the figure influence student evaluation of teaching.

To tackle the factors that affect student feedback, we also considered students' perspectives, and the results are displayed in Figure 2.
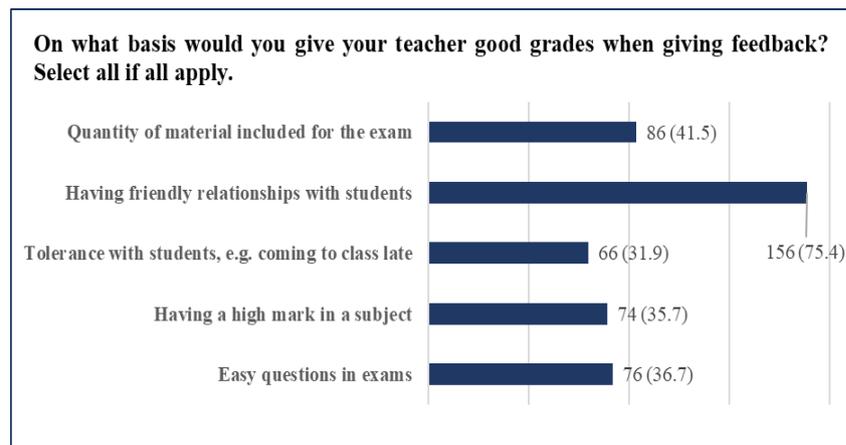

On what basis would you give your teacher good grades when giving feedback? Select all if all apply.

- Quantity of material included for the exam — 86 (41.5)
- Having friendly relationships with students — 156 (75.4)
- Tolerance with students, e.g. coming to class late — 66 (31.9)
- Having a high mark in a subject — 74 (35.7)
- Easy questions in exams — 76 (36.7)

Figure 2. Factors affecting student feedback from students' perspectives

Figure 2 shows the influential factors that affect student feedback in the form of grades given to university instructors in QA from students' perspectives. As shown, the most dominantly influential factor involves closeness and friendliness with students, recording a very high frequency and percentage (*f= 156, pc= 75.4*). However, the other factors recorded a rather similar figure. The quantity of material is also considered another factor that recorded a rather high frequency and percentage (*f= 86, pc= 41.5*), followed by easy questions in exams (*f= 76, pc= 36.7*). This was, in turn, followed by obtaining high marks in a subject (*f= 74, pc= 35.7*) and being tolerant with students (*f= 66, pc= 31. 9*). Again, all the above factors are considered as real factors affecting students' evaluation of teaching.

The participants (both instructors and students) were also inquired if one student's feedback affected another student to give instructors high or low marks, that is, whether there is prior agreement among students regarding student feedback. The responses from both participants are presented in Figure 3.

Do students give grades to instructors based on prior agreement? Do the other students' marking affect student feedback?

- Students Yes — 26 (12.57)
- Students No — 181 (87.43)
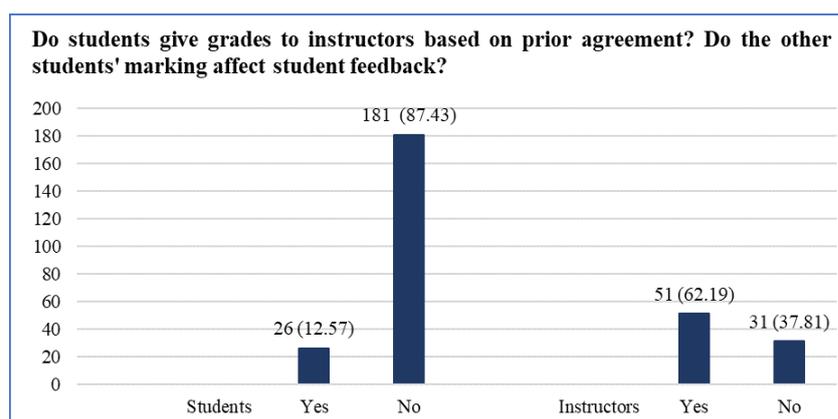- Instructors Yes — 51 (62.19)
- Instructors No — 31 (37.81)

Figure 3. The impact of other students' feedback and prior agreement on grading

Figure 3 shows the contradiction between students' and instructors' perspectives regarding the impact of other students' grades and prior agreement on grading in student feedback. Accordingly, the majority of students (*f= 181, pc= 87.43*) believed that the other students' grades and prior agreement among students do not affect their decision to give university instructors high or low grades. Nevertheless, the majority of instructors (*f= 51, pc= 62.19*) believed that other students' grades and prior agreement among students affect students' decisions on the grades given.

Consequences of student feedback
Some of the factors influencing student feedback, as shown above, can also be consequences of student feedback. Put another way, student feedback might have repercussions on setting easier questions, giving students higher marks, and behaving more appropriately with students. The results, based on university instructors' perspectives, are reported in Figure 4.
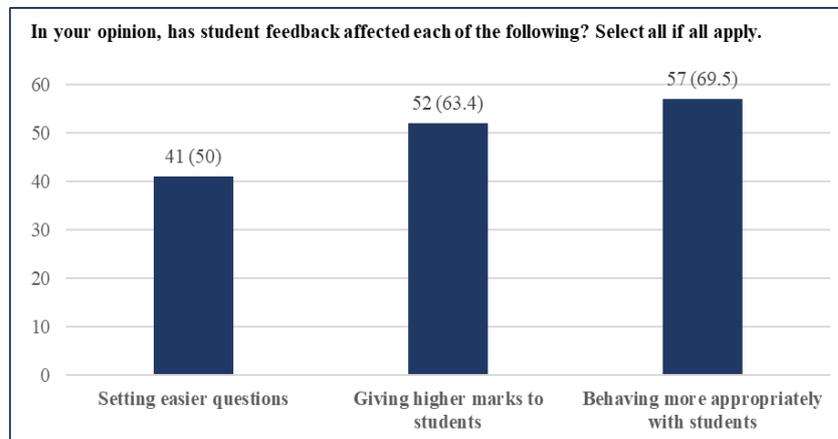

Figure 4. Consequences of student feedback from instructors' perspectives

As the figure demonstrates, student feedback can influence all three variables including setting easier questions, giving students higher marks, and behaving more appropriately with students because more than half of the instructors thought student feedback could determine each of the variables with the following frequencies respectively (*41, 52, 57*). However, behaving more appropriately with students recorded the highest number and percentage (*f= 57, pc= 69.5*). Students' perspectives were also considered concerning the impact of student feedback on setting easier questions (*f= 92, pc= 44.44*), giving students higher marks (*f= 112, pc= 54.10*), and behaving more appropriately with students (*f= 185, pc= 89.37*). As the reported figures indicate, fairly similar results were reported, as shown in Figure 5.
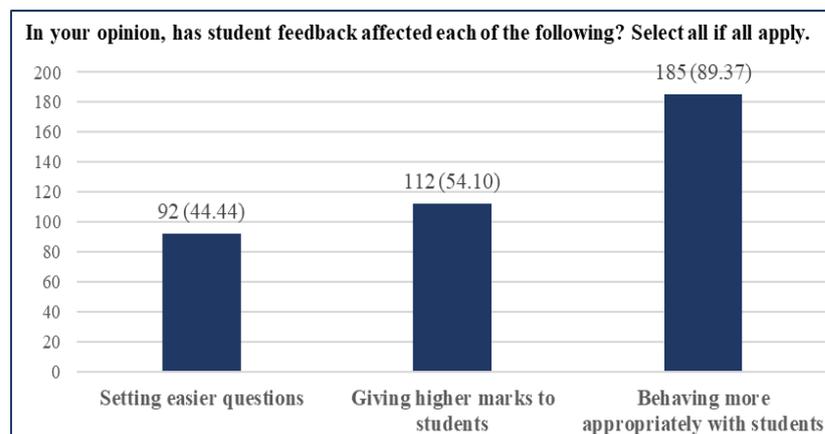

Figure 5. Consequences of student feedback from students' perspectives

The impact of student feedback on improving education at university
    The present study's aim was also to understand the effect of student feedback on education at university. For this purpose, university instructors' and students' perspectives were considered. The results are presented in Figure 6.

How would you rate student feedback in general? Do you think it has had a positive impact on the education process in universities?
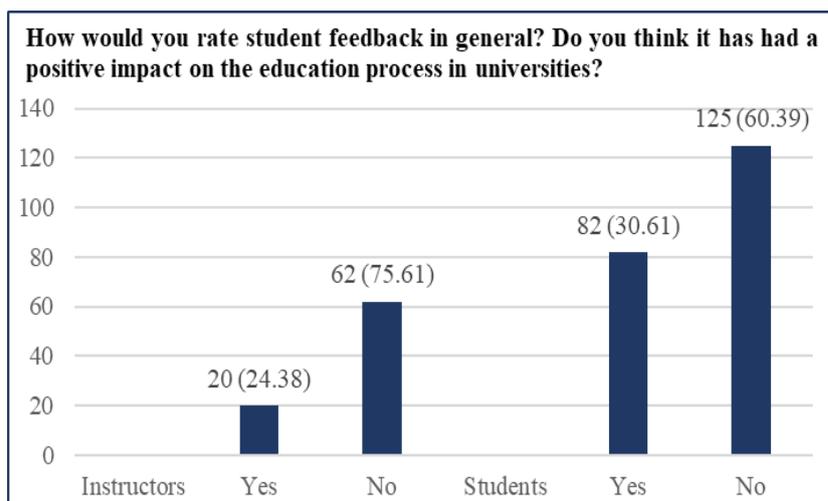

Figure 6. The impact of student feedback on education at universities

The frequency and percentages in the figure clearly demonstrate that university instructors and students alike do not rate student feedback positively. In other words, the majority of instructor (*f= 62, pc= 75.61*) as well as student (*f= 125, pc= 60.39*) participants thought that student feedback has not had a positive effect on the quality of education at universities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

The correlation between the rate of success and student feedback

In this section, the correlation between these two major variables of the study is shown based on the rates of success obtained for each module and the feedback students have given to instructors in each module. The rate of success is considered to be a factor associated with student feedback. However, before tackling the correlation, the level of feedback and the rate of success across different colleges is significant to be revealed. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The level of feedback and the rate of success across different colleges

V	College	N	Feedback	SD	F	Sig
Student Feedback	Human Sciences	59	3.81	0.55	1.57	0.16
	Basic Education	35	3.81	0.56		
	Science	46	3.80	0.46		
	Education	77	4.01	0.54		
	Agricultural Engineering Sciences	16	3.94	0.51		
	Nursing	27	3.77	0.58		
	Total	260	3.87	0.54		
Rate of success	Human Sciences	59	90.87	9.01	7.78	0.00
	Basic Education	35	84.74	13.41		
	Science	46	86.82	16.89		
	Education	77	93.56	6.75		
	Agricultural Engineering Sciences	16	83.87	13.47		
	Nursing	27	97.78	4.26		
	Total	260	90.41	11.62		

As the table demonstrates, the application of the One-Way ANOVA test did not reveal any statistically significant differences regarding the level of student feedback across different colleges because the p-value (p= 0.167) is greater than the significance level 0.05 and the means are rather similar except for the college of education that shows a high mean (M= 4.01) compared to the other colleges. As for the rate of success, it is highly statistically significant

because the p-value is less than 0.05, with the college of nursing recording the highest mean (M= 97.78%) while the college of agricultural engineering sciences recording the lowest mean (M= 83.87%).

We also analysed the variation in student feedback and rate of success according to the education level and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. The rate of success and the level of feedback across different education levels

V	Education Level	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
Student Feedback	First Year	75	4.06	0.53	3.69	0.006
	Second Year	79	3.76	0.52		
	Third Year	49	3.84	0.47		
	Fourth Year	51	3.79	0.60		
	Fifth Year	6	3.99	0.46		
	Total	260	3.87	0.54		
Rate of success	First Year	75	86.03	14.77	11.37	0.000
	Second Year	79	87.43	8.93		
	Third Year	49	94.45	11.06		
	Fourth Year	51	96.89	5.04		
	Fifth Year	6	96.48	5.46		
	Total	260	90.41	11.62		

The table shows highly statistically significant differences across different education levels for student feedback (sig= 0.006<0.05)) and the rate of success (sig= 0.000<0.05). The results indicate that first-year students provide the highest feedback (M= 4.06) while fourth-year students provide the lowest (M= 3.79). The results further indicate that the rate of success becomes higher in higher grade levels, with the first year recording a mean of (M= 86.03) and the fifth year recording a mean of (M= 96.48).

We also aimed to show the correlation between the rate of success and the level of student feedback and the results are presented in Table 3.

***Table 3.** The correlation between student feedback and the rate of success*

Variable		Rate of success
Student feedback	Pearson Correlation	0.12
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.04
	N	260

The table shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between student feedback and the rate of success because the correlation value is (r=0.04), which is lower than the significance level (sig= 0.05).

3.1.2 The qualitative data

This section presents the qualitative data obtained from both university students and instructors based on one open-ended question, inquiring the participants to express their opinions regarding student feedback, and writing any positive or negative comments. The analysis of this portion of data is based on thematic analysis, i.e., themes appearing from the data and supporting the quantitative results.

Responses from instructors

Attitudes of instructors toward student feedback

The instructor participants confirmed the quantitative results that student feedback does not enhance the quality of higher education in its current form and application and its disadvantages outweigh its advantages. Some instructors view it as devaluing the important role a teacher has, assuming that students take feedback as revenge and are not competent

enough to assess university instructors, as reflected in the following comments (*note.* C= comment, …= means part of the comment has been quoted):

C1: "Unfortunately, our people and our students do not consider teachers' efforts and hard work and this feedback does not serve the progress of teachers. How can a teacher be evaluated by the opinion of a student? I think a person who evaluates another person should have a higher scientific and cognitive level than the teacher! …"

C2: "Unfortunately, students now view feedback as revenge rather than an opportunity to identify the teacher's strengths and weaknesses. …"

C3: "It is very meaningless to allow students to evaluate teachers. Why shouldn't the scientific committee of the department carry out the process and assume this responsibility?"

C4: "The devaluation of the sacred profession of teaching began when teacher evaluation was handed to students."

Other instructors think the process of providing feedback is not academic and is based on students' emotions and feelings.

C5: "… When a student cheats or uses his mobile phone in the exam and the teacher reveals the cheating or the mobile phone, the student might only consider this situation and disregard all the efforts made by that teacher."

C6: "The process is not academic and works more based on emotion. Many talented teachers are evaluated badly because they work according to the rules and regulations and do not do everything to the students' liking and satisfaction. …"

Yet, other instructor participants went further than this and believe that the process of quality assurance as a whole does not serve any purpose in the Kurdish context and needs to be eliminated, as reflected in the following comments:

C7: "Hopefully, student feedback will be eliminated or changed as soon as possible, and teacher evaluation will be based on the student's performance."

C8: "The process of quality assurance as a whole is unnecessary because it has had no positive impact on the education process. As I have observed, the worst teachers receive letters of appreciation from the university presidency every year."

How should feedback be given?

Some of the instructor participants accepted student feedback. Nevertheless, they reckoned that the method of providing feedback should be changed. They believed that students need to be fully informed and be given instructions on how to give feedback so that they will fill in the forms accurately and take it seriously. They further opined that feedback should not only be quantitative but also qualitative focusing on students' comments.

C9: "Student feedback is a very invaluable educational task if handled sensitively and properly. I will make two points: 1. The way feedback is given should be changed and students should be made aware that this is not revenge and should not be given as a reaction to lecturers. They should be informed that they will contribute to improving the quality of instruction if they honestly and conscientiously express their opinions about the teacher's weaknesses. …"

C10: "… students should be taught to evaluate their teachers objectively rather than making decisions based on their feelings and emotions."

C11: "Student feedback to the teacher is a good thing if the teacher's weaknesses are identified and the teacher is notified to improve. …"

C11: "Several seminars should be organized annually before student feedback is given by the Quality Assurance Department to teach students the major purpose and aim of feedback."

C12: "Feedback should include explanations and comments on why a teacher is being given a low mark or a full mark. So, it should be qualitative, not only quantitative."

C13: "Feedback should be given before final exams."

Consideration and implementation of feedback

The participants suggested the feedback collected by the quality assurance departments be considered in terms of reward and punishment. They also complained about position holders who are usually exempted from quality assurance or their scores sometimes being changed to reach the passing grade. They confirmed that heads of departments and deans are also responsible for improving the quality of instruction.

C14: "… The feedback needs to be implemented by the administrators. We have not seen any reaction against any teacher, especially those with positions or strong ties with the position holders."

C15: "Students have not yet developed a sense of certainty that their feedback will be effective and changes will be made based on their assessment of their teachers. Therefore, I think it should be proved first that feedback and quality assurance will have an impact and be considered by the authorities at the universities. …"

C16: "Students' comments, whether it be positive or negative, need to be seriously considered and actions should be taken in accordance with the feedback given. If a teacher makes a major change, the dean and the university should grant the teacher a letter of appreciation to encourage him to do better. Nevertheless, if the teacher does not make a change, follow-up procedures should be taken to ensure the truthfulness of the negative comments that were rewritten. If necessary, legal action should be taken against this teacher who does not improve his teaching methodology."

Factors associated with student feedback

The instructor participants also expressed their views about the factors that might influence the provision of feedback such as granting permission to students, postponing exams for students when they request it, the rate of student's success and the grades they achieve in a course, the quantity of material included in exams, accepting students' requests, and gaining student satisfaction.

C17: "I am now a teacher and head of the department because I run the department and most of the students' work is with me; granting permission, postponing exams, and not satisfying students all affect the results of feedback."

C18: "The feedback given in its current form and application is influenced by many factors, particularly the points you have mentioned in the first question including rapport with students, behaving more appropriately with students, quantity of material included in the exam, giving students higher marks, and the rate of success."

C19: "In my opinion, the above points (the rate of success; the quantity of material included in exams; rapport, and empathy with students; easy questions, and giving students higher marks) are all influential factors behind high or low student feedback. And, students often evaluate instructors according to their moods. If the student achieved higher marks, he would give more positive feedback and vice-versa. So, the whole process is unfair."

Yet, other participants confirmed in their qualitative comments that there is agreement among students to provide a teacher with negative feedback.

C20: "If they do not want the teacher to be evaluated properly, several students agree to encourage other students to provide a specific teacher with negative feedback."

Responses from students

Out of 207 student participants, only 11 students responded to the open-ended question, asking them to express their views regarding student feedback. As a result of these comments, three major themes appeared from their comments that will be detailed below.

Fear of possible consequences in providing feedback

A few students expressed the idea that instructors should accept the comments and feedback given to them. However, they also did not conceal their fear of the feedback in the form of comments and they feared revealing their names to the instructors when providing feedback.

C21: "I hope the names of students are not revealed so that students can write their opinions clearly and directly, including positive and negative comments. I think the negative comments make teachers hate students. Therefore, I believe the comments that are sent back to them be anonymized. To make a difference and help teachers improve their quality of instruction, I think the feedback itself must be in the form of comments."

C22: "Of course, none of us are without shortcomings and it is normal for students to complain about certain things to help teachers improve and make changes in themselves. However, I do not want my name to appear to my instructors when providing feedback."

Consideration and implementation of feedback

Other students confirmed that the student feedback should be implemented and applied and not only be a routine. Additionally, students should be encouraged to provide feedback fairly and not based on their moods and liking.

C23: "The feedback that is sent back to the teacher should be worked on to develop the scientific aspect of his students, not be ignored, and not just be a routine. Students should be encouraged to fill in feedback fairly and according to their scientific and cognitive benefit from the teacher, and put aside all other aspects."

C24: "Students' opinions should be considered. Providing feedback without implementing it can be discouraging for students to even fill it in."

Factors associated with student feedback

One of the important factors that might influence whether students provide positive or negative feedback, according to students' comments, is instructors' tolerance of students including satisfying students and tolerating their misbehaviours such as cheating during exams.

C23: "First of all, I hope they don't leave any room for cheating next year. It's seriously unreasonable for students to sit in a line in the back. One student tries and studies, and the others quote everything. Or, the issue of opening Google Classroom during exams; everyone sits in the back and opens Classroom and copies. So, how can the teacher not be aware of these things that are being done? If this is the case in the new university year and the teachers do nothing, we will have to talk to the presidency."

C24: "Reduce cheating, please! This year, all the low-level students have got higher ranks, just by cheating! They have also learned they go to the back rows to open Classroom and copy everything."

3.2 Discussion

Student evaluation of teaching is significant for university instructors to enhance their instruction quality and often, secure their tenure and promotion (al Khouri, 2016; Al Ansari et al., 2020; Saleh, 2016; Vargas-Madriz & Nocente, 2023; Young et al., 2019). It is also important for students through which they can contribute to the enhancement of instruction quality (Saleh, 2016). University instructors' and students' perspectives regarding higher educators' performance matter since the ultimate goal of teaching is quality and student satisfaction (Saidi & Vu, 2021). The current literature supports student feedback (Vargas-Madriz & Nocente, 2023) and, in some parts of the world such as the United States, there is a website called 'ratemyprofessors.com' in which students are free to evaluate their professors' instruction quality (Saidi & Vu, 2021). However, student feedback does not yield fruitful results if not properly planned and given and students are not willing to provide it (Al Ansari et al., 2020; Seyfried & Pohlenz, 2020; Vargas-Madriz & Nocente, 2023). In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, most lecturers do not like student feedback due to the poor quality of student feedback and the basis on which students rate teacher performance (Ali, 2017). Furthermore, most students are not competent enough and are not serious about providing feedback (Ali, 2017; Saleh, 2016) as they think that their feedback will not be considered (Spooren &

Christiaens, 2016). Yet, the prevalence of student feedback has been a step forward during the past 15 years.

The present study provided insight into the QA process in general and student feedback in particular revealing the level of feedback given to university instructors in a public university in the KRI. The study showed that the level of feedback is satisfactory being high, but not very high. Although student feedback is positive, both quantitative results and qualitative findings indicate that student feedback has not had a positive impact on the quality of education in higher education in the KRI; this is consistent with Vargas-Madriz and Nocente (2023). This might be associated with several reasons including the negative attitudes of instructors and students toward student feedback (Ali, 2017), with instructors assuming that students use student feedback as revenge (Al Ansari et al., 2020). More importantly, instructors think that students are not competent enough and at a level to assess instructors in terms of teaching methodology, course content, and methods of assessment (Ali, 2017; Saleh, 2016). Instructors believe that students base their decisions on their moods and emotions, and instructors' tolerance with them. Therefore, the feedback given will be subjective (Ali, 2017; Saleh, 2016; Saidi & Vu, 2021). This belief might be sourced from the fact most often certain incompetent instructors achieve high marks in student feedback receiving letters of appreciation and vice-versa. Therefore, instructors believe that student feedback is unnecessary and needs to be eliminated if its method of implementation is not changed. However, they accept it provided that students take it seriously, and do not provide it as a reaction to the commitment of instructors to certain class and exam procedures.

From students' perspectives, student feedback has not had a positive impact on the quality of education. Again, this is probably attributed to the negative attitudes of students (different from Ali, 2017) toward student feedback, fearing that their names might appear to their instructors, and if they give their instructors poor feedback, their instructors probably set difficult questions in exams and give them low marks. The fact that students have fear of their names being revealed to their instructors indicates that teachers might punish students when they receive negative comments from them. More importantly, students, like instructors, believe that feedback is not only quantitative in the form of grades but qualitative, too (Gaillard et al., 2006). Another reason is that the authorities should consider student feedback, and not only be a routine because it will be discouraging for students (Constantinou & Wijnen-Meijer, 2022). Students also have negative attitudes toward student feedback because they believe instructors tolerate students' misbehaviors, and cheating, and accept most of their even ineligible requests.

As expected, the correlation between the feedback level and the success rate was statistically significant. That is, the higher the rate of success in each module, the higher the instructors' student feedback. The explanation for this correlation is that students believe that if they provide positive feedback to instructors, they will get high marks. In the same way, instructors believe that if they set easy questions and fewer students fail in their courses, students will give them higher grades. According to Constantinou and Wijnen-Meijer (2022), students reward teachers whose courses are easier and grade leniently with positive student feedback. Therefore, the success rate can be considered a factor influencing student feedback. Similarly, according to Saidi and Vu (2021), student achievement on standardized tests can be effective in student rating.

Other factors associated with student feedback from students' and instructors' perspectives involved rapport, empathy, being caring and respectful, and friendliness with students; quantity of material included for the exam; achieving high marks in a subject, consistent with Saidi and Vu (2021); and setting easy questions in exams. Although these results reflect the status quo of the Kurdish context, the factors might only serve the mutual interest of students and instructors: and not contribute to the development of higher education in the KRI. Yet, other factors appeared from the qualitative data including granting permission to students,

letting students postpone exams, satisfying students, and gaining student satisfaction. Different from the present study, Saidi and Vu (2021) found other effective characteristics affecting student rating including good feedback from teachers to students, being hilarious, being accessible outside classrooms, and clear grading criteria. Additionally, Constantinou and Wijnen-Meijer (2022) revealed other factors including low attention, lack of time, course difficulty and grade expectation, gender bias and attractiveness, and low response rates influencing student evaluation of teaching.

Nevertheless, one paradoxical result that was obtained in this study involved the prior agreement of students when providing feedback. From students' perspectives, there is no prior agreement among students when providing a certain grade to university instructors. This means that the grade a student gives to a university instructor does not affect another student's grading. Oppositely, the majority of university instructors thought that students provide feedback on prior agreement and one student's grade influences another student's grading. This result is both plausible and logical because certain cases of prior agreement cannot be generalized to all students and classes of students.

Student feedback can also have consequences. From students' and instructors' perspectives, student feedback can cause university instructors to behave more appropriately, gently, and kindly with students; give students higher marks in exams; and set easier questions for students. Although behaving more appropriately with students as a consequence of student feedback might be positive, giving students higher marks and setting easier questions in exams might not always be positive. If giving students higher marks and setting easier questions encourages students to study more, they might be fruitful. However, if they encourage students to reward instructors with higher student feedback, it will negatively affect the education process at the university.

4. Conclusions

This paper has reported on one of the significant but serious issues that is related to the quality of instruction in the KRI through the experiences of instructors and students. This study is one of the few that covers the issue of student evaluation of teaching in the KRI. Findings from our study revealed that the level of student feedback is satisfactory, being positive based on the grades given to university instructors. Nevertheless, the qualitative responses, particularly from university instructors show that instructors and students hold negative attitudes toward student feedback. These contradictory results suggest that feedback is not provided by students seriously, carefully, and closely, is not properly administered by quality assurance heads, and is not well received by university instructors. Therefore, several factors, from students' and instructors' perspectives, influenced students to provide positive or negative feedback including rapport and empathy with students, the quantity of material included in exams, and setting easier questions. More importantly, since the correlation between the rate of success and the student feedback scores was found statistically significant, the success rate can also be considered another factor influencing student feedback.

In light of the results reached and the conclusions drawn from the present study, several recommendations can be made. First, it is recommended that student feedback persists but the way student feedback is implemented and applied be changed and improved and there should be an outcome for student feedback (Constantinou & Wijnen-Meijer, 2022). Furthermore, other methods of teacher performance should be developed and used. Second, both students and instructors need to know that the whole process of quality assurance is essentially for the development and improvement of the quality of education in the higher education sector rather than providing low student feedback scores to instructors or giving low marks in exams to students. Third, since only student feedback raw scores are forwarded to instructors, our study, consistent with prior studies, confirms both types of feedback: scores and students' comments. Comments from students might help instructors identify their areas of weaknesses

and strengths. Fourth, knowledge and awareness of both students and instructors be raised regarding not only student feedback but also the entire process of quality assurance. This is significant as it helps the stakeholders be on the correct path, not using marks in retaliation. Having knowledge and awareness, neither the teachers use marks as revenge nor the students use student feedback scores to devalue the teacher's sacred role in the education process. Fifth, the criteria on which university instructors are assessed are significant. However, an overall score is not sufficient to be returned to instructors. In the researchers' opinions, the criteria on which instructors score low should be returned.

Although the present study tackled student evaluation of teaching considering two types of data, future studies should include more participants from different universities in the KRI using questionnaires that include more questions delving more deeply into the topic. Studies should also include perspectives of administrators such as heads of departments, heads of quality assurance, and other stakeholders who are aware of the quality assurance process. Future studies can also compare private and public universities as the researchers believe that student satisfaction is focused in private universities while this is quite the opposite for public universities where instructors are less likely to consider student satisfaction..

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هۆکارەکانی پەیوەست بە فیدباکی خوێندکاران بۆ مامۆستایان لە دڵنیایی جۆری لە زانکۆیەکی حکومی لە کوردستانی عێراق

سەرکەوت محمد قادر

بەشی ئینگلیزی، کۆلێژی پەروەردە

زانکۆی ڕاپەڕین – ڕانیه

sarkawt.en@uor.edu.krd

روخسار محمد عمر

بەشی باخچەی منداڵان، کۆلێژی پەروەردەی بنەڕەت،

زانکۆی ڕاپەڕین -ڕانیه

rukhsar.muhammad@uor.edu.krd

پوخته

لە چەند دەیەی ڕابردوودا، کوالیتی پەروەردە بووەتە جێگەی گرنگ پێدانێکی زۆر لەلایەن دامەزراوەکانی خوێندنی باڵا لە سەرانسەری جیهاندا. لە ئێستادا ئەرکی ڕۆژانەی بەڕێوەبەرانی زانکۆ بریتین لە بەراوردکردنی دەسکەوتە پەروەردەییەکان و ڕیزبەندیی زانکۆکان، کە بۆ ئەم مەبەستەش دڵنیایی جۆری ڕۆڵی گرنگ دەگێڕێت. دڵنیایی جۆری سێ بەش جیاواز بەڵام پەیوەندیدار بە یەکتر لەخۆدەگرێت، لەوانه فیدباکی خوێندکاران بۆ مامۆستایان، هەگبەی مامۆستایان و زانستخوازی بەردەوام. فیدباکی خوێندکاران پەیوەندی بە کوالیتی و کاریگەری وانەوتنەوە و ئەدای مامۆستایانەوە هەیه. زۆرجار مامۆستایانی زانکۆ گلەیی لەو نمرانە دەکەن کە وەکو فیدباک پێیان دەدرێت لەلایەن خوێندکاران پێیان وایه کە نمرەکان لەسەر بنمای ڕێژەی سەرکەوتی خوێندکاران و نزیک مامۆستایان لەگەڵ خوێندکاران دادەنرێن، نەک لەسەر بنمای ئەدای وانەووتنەوەی مامۆستایان. بۆیه ئەم توێژینەوەیه هەوڵێکه بۆ لێکۆڵینەوە لەو فیدباکەی خوێندکاران دەیدەن بە مامۆستایان، وە ئەو هۆکارانەی کە کاردەکەنە سەر فیدباکی خوێندکاران بۆ مامۆستایان. بۆ ئەم مەبەستەیه ئەم توێژینەوەیه لە کۆکردنەوە و شیکردنەوەی زانیارییەکاندا هەردوو ڕێگای جۆری و چەندی پەیڕەو دەکات. توێژینەوەکه هەوڵی داوه پرسیارنامەیەک و، نمرەی فیدباکی مامۆستایان لە دڵنیایی جۆری و، ڕێژەی دەرچوونی خوێندکاران بۆ هەر مۆدیولێک، هەموو ئەمانەی بەکارهێناوه بۆ کۆکردنەوەی داتا. هەروەها IBM SPSS 25 ی بەکارهێناوه بۆ شیکردنەوەی داتەکه. بەشداربووان بریتین لە خوێندکارانی زانکۆ و مامۆستایان کە لە زانکۆیەکی حکومی لە هەرێمی کوردستانی عێراق هەڵبژێردراون. توێژینەوەکه پێی وایه که سێ هۆکار ڕۆڵ بەرچاو دەگێڕن لە دیاریکردنی ئاستی فیدباک، لەوانه ڕێژەی دەرچوونی خوێندکاران، نزیکی مامۆستایان لە خوێندکاران، و بری ئەو ماددەیەی کە داخڵه لەتاقیکردنەوەکان بۆ خوێندکاران. توێژینەوەکه بە چەند ڕاسپاردەیەکی دوورمەودا بۆ دامەزراوەکانی خوێندنی باڵا لە هەرێمی کوردستان کۆتایی دێت.

ووشه سەرەکییەکان: دڵنیایی جۆری، کوردستانی عێراق، فیدباکی خوێندکار، ڕێژەی دەرچونی خوێندکار.

العوامل المرتبطة بتغذية راجعة الطلاب للمدرسين في مجال ضمان الجودة في إحدى الجامعات الحكومية في كردستان العراق

سەرکەوت محمد قادر

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية التربية

جامعة ڕاپەڕين -ڕانيه

sarkawt.en@uor.edu.krd

روخسار محمد عمر

قسم رياض الاطفال، كلية التربية الاساسية،

جامعة ڕاپەڕين -ڕانيه

rukhsar.muhammad@uor.edu.krd

ملخص

على مدى العقود القليلة الماضية، برزت جودة التعليم باعتبارها اهتمامًا استراتيجيًا بالغ الأهمية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي في جميع أنحاء العالم. وتشمل المهام اليومية لمديري الجامعات الآن مقارنة النتائج والتصنيفات التعليمية، الأمر الذي يشكل ضمان الجودة أهمية كبيرة بالنسبة له. يشتمل ضمان الجودة على ثلاثة عناصر منفصلة ولكن مترابطة، بما في ذلك تعليقات الطلاب على المعلمين، وملفات المعلمين، والتطوير الأكاديمي المستمر. تتعلق تعليقات الطلاب بجودة وفعالية التدريس وأداء المعلم. غالبًا ما يشتكي معلمو الجامعات من الدرجات والتعليقات التي يتلقونها من الطلاب، ويعتقدون أن الدرجات تعتمد على عوامل مثل معدل نجاح الطلاب وعلاقة المعلمين بالطلاب، وليس على أداء المعلمين. ولذلك، فقد تم تخصيص هذه الدراسة لدراسة التغذية الراجعة للطلاب والعوامل التي تحدد مستوى التغذية الراجعة المقدمة للمعلمين. ولهذا الغرض، تتبع الدراسة مبادئ الأساليب المختلطة في جمع البيانات وتحليلها؛ باستخدام الاستبيانات التي يُبْلَغ عنها ذاتيًا، ونتائج تعليقات المدرسين في ضمان الجودة، ومعدلات نجاح الطلاب في كل وحدة، بالإضافة إلى استخدام IBM SPSS 25 والتحليل الموضوعي. ويضم المشاركون طلاباً جامعيين وأساتذة أُخْتِيرُوا من إحدى الجامعات الحكومية في إقليم كردستان العراق. تفترض الدراسة أن هناك ثلاثة عوامل تؤدي دورًا مهمًا في تحديد مستوى التغذية الراجعة بما في ذلك معدل النجاح، وعلاقة المعلمين الحميمية والعلاقة مع الطلاب، وكمية المواد المقدمة للطلاب. وتخلص الدراسة إلى آثار بعيدة المدى على مؤسسات التعليم العالي في إقليم كردستان العراق.

الكلمات المفتاحية تحليل الخطاب، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الأيديولوجية، أدب الأطفال.