

# Assessment of the Feedback Questionnaire from Students for a Weekend Lecture

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## Abstract

Competency Based Medical Education (CBME) and Curriculum Implementation Support Program (CISP) are gaining a lot of momentum in India. Lecture still remains as a very important large group teaching method. Attendance of the students was seen to be reduced in weekend lectures. The primary objective of this research work was to estimate the understanding of learning objectives of the previous weekend lecture; and to get the students' feedback on 'status of attendance', 'relevance of weekend lectures', 'acceptance as adult learners' and 'marking proxy attendance in lectures'. The secondary objective was to find the association of the answers with that of 'status of attendance'. The tertiary objective was to check if any association existed between students' responses of 'relevance of weekend lectures', 'marking of proxy attendance in lectures' and 'acceptance as adult learners'. A feedback questionnaire tool post validation was conducted unannounced following the weekend lecture and students voluntarily participated in the same – sample size was 82.

The students who had attended the lecture had given the maximum number of correct responses. The largest group of responses were 'not answered' and they belong to those who had not attended the lecture. All these interpretations of associations were found to be highly significant statistically -  $p < 0.001$ . There was an association between responses of 'acceptance as adult learners' with that of 'marking proxy attendance in lectures (as bad attitude)' -  $p < 0.049$ .

**Key words:** *Adult Learner, Attendance, CBME, Feedback, Interactive Lecture, Pedagogy*

## Introduction

Competency Based Medical Education (CBME) is right now booming in India, and the doctors are mandatorily being teacher trained for the same. The Board of Governors (BOGs) through the Academic Cell are now focussing on Curriculum Implementation Support Program (CISP) very seriously for all the colleges in India; i.e. practical real time implementation

of the new CBME curriculum. Nodal Centres and Medical Education Departments are responsible for carrying forward this vision of the BOGs.<sup>1</sup> In light of these recent developments in our country, while taking a look into the new curriculum; it was understood that CBME is actually a blend of traditional teaching methods along with the newer training methodologies. Under the section of Teaching-Learning (TL) Methods, in the new curriculum 'Lecture' was very much a part of the large group teaching methods. It is impossible to conflict the statement that Lecture has been the most common form of knowledge delivery TL method.<sup>2,3</sup> Small group teaching which is being now over-emphasized will be replacing most of the lecture hours; but even then there are earmarked lecture hours for each subject in the new CBME curriculum.

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MCI expects medical colleges to take advantage of newer TL methods because one single approach is unlikely to suit for all learners, in terms of learning styles and preferences. However when it comes to scrutiny of attendance for lectures, a work was done abroad by Mattick and associates regarding attendance of students for non-compulsory lectures. They found the reason for diminishing attendance of students; as and when they progress through academic years, is their increasing confidence in the subjects or because of their increasing confidence as a result of learning through other TL methods. The researchers also saw a higher attendance percentage in lectures scheduled at lunch time because the students are having either morning or afternoon classes, and hence are more likely to be there in the teaching campus.<sup>4</sup>

The education system cannot be reformed and polished unless the feedback from the stakeholders are utilised for the same. A learner's feedback can be reliable, valid and used genuinely in enhancing the quality of student learning and experience. Feedbacks can be questionnaires (which can be judgemental) or reflections (open ended). Even student diaries can be taken as one of the confidential reflections of a teaching learning environment.<sup>5</sup> More than for the system, feedback can influence (improve or worsen) the learning behaviour of students and the skill development. It is perhaps understood that action without feedback is completely unproductive for any learner and this is even more apparent when feedback happens without any subsequent changes in actions.<sup>6,7</sup>

The data collected from feedback of learners is often considered very divisive, political and sensitive in an education system; and there exists a 'tension' between stakeholders (administrators, teachers and students) and the very purposes of collecting the feedback. This is because the demands of improvement and accountability are in conflict. Hence a perfect system/method of collecting feedback would maintain peace among the stakeholders.<sup>8</sup>

In the current research work, the following objectives were considered: The primary objective of this research work was to estimate in students the understanding of learning objectives of the previous weekend lecture (as answers); and to get the students' responses/feedback on 'status of attendance', 'relevance of weekend lectures', 'acceptance as adult learners' and 'marking proxy attendance in lectures'. The secondary

objective was to find the association of the answers with that of 'status of attendance'. The tertiary objective was to check if any association existed between students' responses of 'relevance of weekend lectures', 'marking of proxy attendance in lectures' and 'acceptance as adult learners'.

## Materials & Method

It was decided to take an unannounced feedback of an interactive lecture that was conducted on a Saturday. Usually the attendance on such weekend lectures were found to be dropping low and there were few incidents of marking proxies too for the same. Following the Saturday 3-4pm lecture the same topic was further continued on Monday 1-2pm. The Monday session began for the same batch of students with a structured closed end feedback questionnaire that was completed in 10 minutes. The questionnaire was validated by the faculty members of the same subject and was modified accordingly post validation. The feedback questionnaire contained 15 points. Anonymity was ensured and students were given the freedom to opt out of the questionnaire completely. In the questionnaire six aspects were pertaining to the topic that was covered in the previous Saturday session and three were focussing on their attitudes and opinions (responses) of 'relevance of weekend lectures', 'marking of proxy attendance in lectures' and 'acceptance as adult learners'. The other pointers were for recording their attendance of the Saturday session-with reason for absence, feedback of the feedback questionnaire, sex, age and signature.

The class had an attendance of 82 students. This batch of students was chosen since they had attended the Saturday lecture. Hence it was purposive sampling as far as the batch was considered. The study was prospective in nature. All the students who had attended the Monday interactive lecture had taken part in the study; there were no exclusions/omissions. The sample size was all the 82 students. The study was a pilot work since there was no exactly similar research work in the existing literature. The statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS 20.0. For all the continuous variables, the results are given in Mean  $\pm$  SD and for categorical variables as percentage. To find out the association between two categorical variables, *chi-square test* was applied. A P-value  $< 0.05$  was considered as statistically significant.

## Results

In total, 64.6% of the students were having an

age above 20 years (mean was  $19.82 \pm 0.818$ ) and 53 (64.6%) students were females. The name of the topic that was taken on Saturday was correctly answered by 33 (40.2%) students. The mnemonic (for muscarinic effects of A/C poisoning with organophosphates) was answered correctly by 30 (36.6%) students. The antidote/s was correctly listed by 25 (30.5%) students. The requisite of an end-point in antidote administration was answered rightly by 33 (40.2%) students, and as to how this end-point needs to be clinically confirmed was correctly written by 15 (18.3%) students. As the last pointer, 18 (22%) students wrote the correct expansion of High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC).

It was seen that 46 (56.1%) students had attended the lecture session on Saturday. The reasons for 'not attending' as given by the remaining students were grouped into three categories – Went home, Unwell and Other appointments. Of these three, 'Unwell' category constituted the highest percentage. The response from students for 'relevance of Saturday (weekend 3-4pm) lectures' were grouped into three categories: Lectures are - Boring, Not Sure and Essential. The highest number of responses was for the group 'Essential' (38 students - 46.3%). The students were asked as to whether they were adult learners and 36.6% (30 students) of them said that they believe in same (andragogy). The next pointer was as to the reasons they feel they are adult learners or not; and the highest group of responses supporting

andragogy was the fact that these students believe in concept of self-learning. At the same time, the maximum number of reasons supporting pedagogy was the fact that they 'require teacher input'. The students were asked for their opinion in giving proxy attendance during such lecture hours and their responses were grouped into three categories – Bad attitude, Neutral and Good attitude. The highest response was in support for 'proxy attendance being a bad attitude' – 69.5% (57 students). A feedback of the feedback questionnaire was taken and 38 (46.3%) students had chosen the response – 'interesting feedback questionnaire'. Miscellaneous comments were sought from the students as to in-general how they are finding the lectures and 27 (32.9%) students gave their comments. Out of these nine students - 11% (highest category of response) said that the interactive lectures are 'interesting and good'.

Table one and two - the 'answers from students' were compared to their 'status of attendance'; those who had attended the Saturday session had given the maximum number of right responses. The largest group of responses are 'not answered' and for all the six questions they are coming under the category of students who had not attended the lecture on Saturday. All these interpretations of associations were found to be highly significant statistically.

**Table 1: Association of 1<sup>st</sup> three sets of answers with that of attendance (N.A. – Not Answered)**

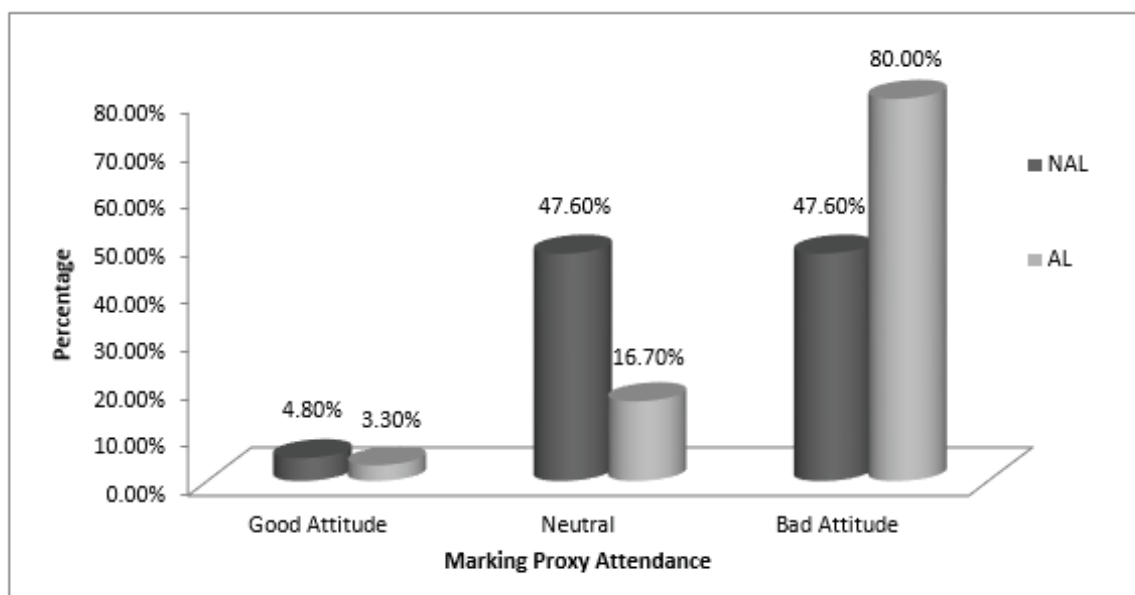
Attendance	Name of Topic			Mnemonic			Antidotes		
	Right	Wrong	N.A.	Right	Wrong	N.A.	Right	Wrong	N.A.
Yes	26 (56.5%)	7 (15.2%)	13 (28.3)	26 (56.5%)	1 (2.2%)	19 (41.3%)	20 (43.5%)	2 (4.3%)	24 (52.2%)
No	7 (20%)	3 (8.6%)	25 (71.4%)	4 (11.4%)	3 (8.6%)	28 (80%)	5 (14.3%)	0	30 (85.7%)
P value	< 0.001			< 0.001			0.006		

**Table 2: Association of 2<sup>nd</sup> three sets of answers with that of attendance (N.A. – Not Answered)**

Attendance	End-Point			Clinical confirmation of End-Point			HPLC		
	Right	Wrong	N.A.	Right	Wrong	N.A.	Right	Wrong	N.A.
Yes	28 (60.9%)	3 (6.5%)	15 (32.6%)	14 (30.4%)	5 (10.9%)	27 (58.7%)	18 (39.1%)	5 (10.9%)	23 (50%)
No	5 (14.3%)	0	30 (85.7)	1 (2.9%)	3 (8.6%)	31 (88.6%)	0	1 (2.9%)	34 (97.1%)
P value	< 0.001			0.005			< 0.001		

Responses of the ‘relevance of weekend lectures (boring/not sure/essential)’ were compared with that of ‘marking of proxy attendance in lectures (bad attitude/neutral/good attitude)’ and it was seen that responses of marking proxy as being a bad attitude was associated with that of weekend lectures being considered as essential; but this was not statistically significant. Similar an association was seen in the ‘not sure’ and ‘neutral’ categories respectively (statistically not significant).

The responses of ‘acceptance as adult learners’ was also compared with that of ‘marking proxy attendance in lectures’. There was a good association between being considering them self as an adult learner with that of considering marking proxy attendance in classes as a bad attitude (24 students – 80%); and it was significant statistically ( $p < 0.049$ ). The non adult learners were similarly associated with the ‘neutral’ attitude to marking proxy attendance, with same statistical significance (Fig 1).



**Fig 1: Association of ‘adult learners’ with ‘marking proxy attendance’ (AL – Adult Learner, NAL – Non-Adult learner)**

Last but not the least; ‘acceptance as adult learners’ responses was compared with responses of ‘relevance of weekend lectures’. There was no obvious or strong association, and there was no statistical significance also for the same.

### Discussion & Conclusion

The students have taken part with an open mind set and genuine interest to improve the system. So the teachers have their own share of responsibility by being transparent to identify the actions that need to be taken. In other words the educators are meant to take an active role rather than a passive receiver of feedback. When comparing the different methods in literature, this study was that of a rapid feedback method, and hence is less stressful and not too demanding from the students.<sup>5</sup> It was also a closed end type of feedback session, thereby convenient for statistical summation, but on the other hand being a quantitative study and not a qualitative one (without focussed group discussions); the educator often will struggle to make sound reforms in the TL process.

The ‘name of the topic’ and the ‘importance of end-point’ were answered as higher percentages because the teacher had stressed on these two points in the previous class. But the ‘clinical confirmation of end-point’ was remembered the least among the take home messages, which could be because the students had not understood the relevance of the same; and this needs to be taken care in subsequent lectures. Out of the reasons that were sought for not attending the lecture, since ‘unwell’ was top scoring, the educators have to seriously take into consideration as to why the students are falling ill – whether it is to do with the poor food habits or unhealthy lifestyle prevailing at their residence/hostel.

It is to be taken with a positive stroke that the majority of them are considering themselves as ‘adult learners’, since this is the crux of the SPICES<sup>9</sup> model of modern education system. Even the majority have opined that marking proxy attendance is a matter of shame and bad attitude. This category of students was also supporting the concept of self-learning. The importance of self-learning was already studied by the author in another research work involving only faculty members<sup>10</sup>, and now when the results of that work is read together with the students’ response in this work, everything is pointing in the direction of andragogy through self directed learning. The non-adult learners need to be encouraged by the educators to slowly

start taking responsibilities on their own for their own benefits. The modus operandi of taking the attendance will be tightened up in the future lecture sessions.

Statistically all the answers for the six subject/lecture pointers were compared to the presence and absence status of the Saturday lecture. The largest category of the ‘unattended/not answered’ was coinciding with their absence in the previous lecture. Similarly the right answers were highest in students who had taken part in the Saturday Lecture. Being statistically significant this shows beyond any reasonable doubts that the students who had attended got definitely benefitted from the interactive lecture session on this particular topic. This also strengthens the fact that we cannot do away with lectures permanently. The responses for ‘relevance of weekend lectures’ with that of ‘marking of proxy attendance’ in class though had an association, cannot be affirmed for its veracity because of non-significant statistical interpretation. However the association of the responses of ‘acceptance as adult learners’ with that of ‘marking of proxy attendance’ was statistically significant and this shows the importance of adult learners being responsible for shouldering their learning responsibilities and also having the right attitude in a lecture session; including to not to mark proxy attendance.

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