Enhancing Academic Quality: Evaluation Practices in Higher Education

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Abstract

Objective: This paper critically examines current evaluation practices in higher education, with a focus on enhancing academic quality amidst globalisation, digital transformation, and equity-driven reforms.

Methodology: Drawing on recent literature and South African policy frameworks, it presents a model for triangulated evaluation—incorporating student feedback, peer review, and lecturer self-reflection—to support academic development. The methods of getting information from students regarding their perception of teaching are outlined through questionnaires (Revised Study Process Questionnaire, R-SPQ-2F of Biggs, Kember, and Leung, 2001) and self-reflection.

Results: The study finds that traditional evaluation instruments, such as student questionnaires, often lack validity and cultural sensitivity, while newer tools like learning analytics and teaching portfolios offer more context-responsive insights. Findings highlight that institutional constraints, including performative policy cultures and resource disparities, can hinder meaningful evaluation. To address these challenges, the paper advocates for hands-on, ethically grounded evaluation that reflect diversity and promote inclusive, evidence-informed teaching. Practical strategies for implementation include mid-semester feedback loops, local validation of instruments, and structured professional development.

Originality/Value: Ultimately, the study underscores the need for critically reflexive, systemic approaches to teaching evaluation that align quality assurance with transformation goals in higher education.

Keywords: evaluation practices, higher education, teaching quality, triangulated evaluation, student feedback, policy, globalisation, critical reflexivity

1. Introduction and Background

The landscape of higher education has undergone substantial transformation over the past decade, driven by globalization, rapid technological advancement, and growing demand for accountability in teaching and learning. These changes have heightened the need for robust quality assurance mechanisms, with evaluation practices emerging as a cornerstone of institutional effectiveness (Altbach et al., 2019). In this context, the assessment of academic quality, particularly through evidence-based evaluations of teaching and learning, has gained unprecedented importance. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a digital transformation in teaching and learning, leading to an increased reliance on online platforms and remote instruction. This shift introduced new challenges in maintaining academic standards and created a renewed urgency for adaptive, inclusive, and technology-enhanced evaluation methods (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Bao, 2020). Institutions now contend with questions of how best to measure and

ensure teaching quality in hybrid and online environments—a reality likely to persist in the post-pandemic era (UNESCO, 2021).

From a policy standpoint, national frameworks have increasingly emphasized continuous quality enhancement. In South Africa, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has played a pivotal role in establishing quality assurance protocols that reflect both global imperatives and local transformation agendas (CHE, 2016; 2020). These frameworks underscore the necessity of formative and summative evaluations that capture not only content mastery but also broader competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, and intercultural communication. Global trends shape the primary priorities in the work of lecturers, emphasizing the significance of skills that complement content learning, addressing systemic inequities within education systems, and recognizing the pivotal role of digital technology in the future of education (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Globalisation continues to shape higher education by promoting cross-border collaboration, standardising qualifications, and encouraging student and faculty mobility. These dynamics necessitate the alignment of academic standards across diverse contexts, reinforcing the demand for transparent and rigorous evaluation systems (Marginson, 2016). Institutions have been tasked with demonstrating not only the quality of instructional delivery but also its impact on student learning outcomes and employability (OECD, 2020). Recent research has also highlighted the evolving role of students as active participants in quality assurance. The growing adoption of student feedback tools, peer evaluations, and self-assessment mechanisms reflect a shift toward more democratic and reflective practices in evaluating teaching (Carvalho et al., 2019). Such methods align with current pedagogical principles that prioritize learner engagement, autonomy, and contextualized understanding.

Despite these advancements, concerns persist regarding the reliability, validity, and ethical implications of traditional student evaluations. Critics argue that evaluations often reduce complex teaching processes to simplistic metrics and are vulnerable to bias (Hornstein, 2017). Consequently, scholars have called for more nuanced, triangulated approaches that incorporate diverse data sources—including peer reviews, learning analytics, and lecturer self-reflections—to ensure a holistic assessment of teaching quality (Nieminen, 2022). Considering these developments, this paper seeks to explore how lecturers in higher education can systematically adopt innovative and reflective evaluation practices that are responsive to both global trends and local policy imperatives. By drawing on recent studies and institutional frameworks, it aims to present an integrated model for enhancing academic quality through evidence-informed teaching evaluations.

1.1 Global Trends Informing the Lecturer

Globalisation continues to exert a profound influence on higher education, shaping curricula, pedagogy, and quality assurance mechanisms across institutions. This integration into a globally competitive educational economy has facilitated student mobility, promoted standardisation of qualifications, and spurred the internationalisation of research and teaching practices. However, while globalisation offers substantial benefits, its impact is not uniformly positive or neutral. One of the most pressing concerns is the deepening of inequalities within and between countries. Wealthier institutions often have greater access to technological infrastructure, enabling them to adopt cutting-edge innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) in teaching and learning. In contrast, under-resourced universities—particularly in the Global South—

face structural constraints that hinder the adoption of these technologies, exacerbating the digital divide (Morong, 2021; Czerniewicz et al., 2020). Artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR), when added to the classroom, allow a different dynamic to surround learning and outcomes and can become more fun, engaging, and experimental (Bujak, Radu, Catrambone, MacIntyre, Zheng, & Golubski, 2013). The integration of AI and AR also raises questions about the training and preparedness of educators, many of whom require ongoing professional development to meaningfully integrate these tools into their pedagogy (Selwyn, 2019). Lecturers must familiarise themselves with these ideas because they might be required to re-design their courses to respond to some of the global trends in higher education (Abrams, 2025). Moreover, the standardisation of academic practices under globalisation can relegate local epistemologies and contextual needs. Emphasising global rankings and performance metrics often undermines context-sensitive approaches to teaching and learning that are more responsive to community needs and cultural realities (Le Grange, 2016). This tension highlights the importance of engaging with globalisation critically—not merely as a driver of innovation but also as a process that risks imposing hegemonic educational models.

While digital technology enables broader access and more immediate feedback mechanisms, the use of student evaluations in globalised contexts must also be interrogated. Students in a globalised educational environment are exposed to diverse perspectives and teaching styles. This exposure encourages them to evaluate their learning experiences more critically and from a broader, more inclusive viewpoint. (Jackson, 2016). With the integration of technology in education, students often use digital tools to provide feedback on teaching and learning. Online surveys, feedback apps, and learning management systems facilitate more immediate and detailed evaluations (Souto-Otero, 2020). Students from different cultural backgrounds may interpret and respond to teaching practices in diverse ways. For instance, assertive classroom participation may be highly valued in some contexts and seen as disrespectful in others. Therefore, evaluations informed by global exposure may reflect aspiring benchmarks that are not universally shared or appropriate (Nieminen, 2022; Zhou, 2022). Recognizing and integrating these cultural nuances is essential to avoid superficial comparisons and inequitable assessments of teaching effectiveness Students are increasingly aware of the need to develop global competencies such as cross-cultural communication and critical thinking. They tend to evaluate their courses and instructors based on how well these skills are being taught and integrated into the curriculum (Zhou, 2022). Students often compare their educational experiences with those of peers in other countries. This benchmarking can influence their expectations and evaluations of teaching quality and learning outcomes (Yang, 2003). Participation in international exchange programs allows students to experience different educational systems firsthand. These experiences can shape their evaluations of their home institutions, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Therefore, the broader impact of globalisation on higher education pushes institutions to adapt and innovate in their assessment practices to meet the demands of a globalised world.

Recent literature also cautions against an over-reliance on prominent Western scholars in shaping evaluation discourse. John Biggs, an Australian educational psychologist, is well-known for his scholarship on constructive alignment in the design, teaching, and assessment process. In his article “The Reflective Institution: Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning (2001) the meaning of quality in teaching competes with other agendas to highlight that the meaning of quality is contested and understood differently among in higher education institutions. Behari-Leak & McKenna are well-known voices in the scholarship of teaching and learning. In their

article, Behari-Leak and McKenna (2017) conducted a critical discourse analysis of the policies and institutional documents that support awards in 13 South African higher education institutions. It shows empirically how the definition of excellence is enacted in practice. Their analysis shows that teaching excellence awards have a discourse in which the meaning of "excellent" teaching is "de-contextualized" and over-emphasizes lecturers' performativity. While figures such as Biggs have provided valuable frameworks—e.g., constructive alignment—critics argue that these models require adaptation to local contexts and should not be applied uncritically (Behari-Leak & McKenna, 2017). A more inclusive approach would involve dialoguing with diverse perspectives and considering a plurality of teaching philosophies and evaluation methods rooted in different educational traditions.

In summary, while globalisation has undeniably contributed to the transformation of higher education and the adoption of technology-enhanced teaching practices, it also presents a series of ethical, cultural, and practical challenges. Effective evaluation frameworks must therefore be context-sensitive, equitable, and critically reflective, ensuring that innovations do not inadvertently reinforce exclusionary practices or overlook the complexities of local teaching and learning environments.

1.2 Institutional Policies Informing the Lecturer

Institutional policies are foundational to shaping the practices and responsibilities of lecturers in higher education. These policies—ranging from national quality assurance frameworks to institutional teaching and assessment guidelines—are typically designed to promote transformation, accountability, and continuous improvement. However, while these documents articulate aspiring goals, there is often a disconnect between policy intentions and actual classroom practices, especially within systems marked by resource inequalities, bureaucratic rigidity, and complex institutional cultures. At a formal level, South Africa's higher education system is governed by several guiding policy frameworks. These include the RSA DoE White Paper (1997), which lays out the national transformation agenda; the Council on Higher Education (CHE) Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement (2014); and institutional policies on learning, teaching, and assessment. Each of these documents emphasizes quality assurance, access and success, and curriculum responsiveness as critical levers for transformation. For instance, the CHE's Quality Assurance Guidelines (2020) acknowledged the need for adaptive responses in emergency remote teaching. Similarly, institutional policies often highlight goals such as deepening online teaching capacity, enhancing assessment credibility, and improving student success analytics.

However, these policies often fail to translate seamlessly into practice, particularly in under-resourced or historically marginalised institutions. For many lecturers, the practical challenges of large class sizes, limited technological infrastructure, and insufficient professional development support hinder the alignment of their pedagogical strategies with policy expectations (Luckett, 2010; Boughey & McKenna, 2021). As Luckett (2010) critically observes, quality assurance frameworks can become performative rather than transformative, emphasizing compliance over authentic engagement with teaching and learning processes. This performativity often obscures the systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect students and lecturers in disadvantaged contexts. Moreover, policy language tends to be abstract and depoliticised, masking the socio-political realities of higher education. Institutional policies may rhetorically endorse transformation while simultaneously reinforcing existing hierarchies through rigid criteria

for ‘teaching excellence’ or performance-based funding models. Behari-Leak and McKenna (2017) caution against this technocratic framing, arguing that excellence is often defined in narrow terms that ignore contextual constraints and pedagogical diversity. The assumption that assessment policies can straightforwardly improve student learning outcomes also warrants scrutiny. While well-designed assessment policies emphasise validity, reliability, and alignment with learning outcomes, their implementation is often troubled with tensions between standardisation and contextual flexibility. Lecturers may be expected to implement assessment procedures that are misaligned with the lived realities of their students or that do not accommodate alternative epistemologies (Le Grange, 2016). For example, the ideal of “fitness for purpose” may be undermined when students from underserved backgrounds are held to universal standards without adequate support or adaptation.

Institutional annual reports, while meant to reflect progress, often focus on quantifiable indicators of success (e.g., graduation rates, throughput) and rarely capture the qualitative nuances of transformation. This emphasis on metrics can marginalise reflective, inclusive teaching practices that are harder to measure but deeply impactful. Additionally, the agency of lecturers is often underrepresented in policy discourses, despite their pivotal role in enacting change. Rather than viewing lecturers as mere implementers, policies should enable them to be critical practitioners who can adapt, resist, or reshape policy frameworks in the interest of educational justice. In conclusion, while institutional policies offer important frameworks for guiding teaching and evaluation practices, a critical engagement with their limitations, contradictions, and implementation gaps is essential. For meaningful transformation to occur, policy development and review must be participatory, context-sensitive, and rooted in the lived experiences of both lecturers and students. Only then can policies truly support the enhancement of teaching quality and equitable learning outcomes in higher education.

2. Literature review

2.1 Evaluation of Teaching

In recent years, the evaluation of teaching in higher education has evolved significantly, reflecting shifts toward student-centered, inclusive, and data-informed pedagogical practices. Evaluation of teaching might also be counter-productive if lecturers do not respond to the data in a meaningful manner. Stierer (2008) provides guidelines on three essential elements (criticality, reflexivity, and praxis) that everyone employed in academia is expected to demonstrate in their work and invites all academic staff who work with students and/or support other lecturers to interrogate how they do their work in the way that they do. In other words, criticality, reflexivity, and praxis encourage the engagement with practices and an identity -critical reflexive practitioner- that systematically enhance teaching and learning activities. While foundational concepts such as criticality, reflexivity, and praxis remain relevant, current teaching environments—shaped by digital transformation, growing student diversity, and global benchmarks—require more adaptive and multidimensional approaches to evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Current scholarship has increasingly questioned the over-reliance on student evaluations of teaching (SETs) as the primary measure of instructional quality. Although SETs can provide useful feedback, they are often criticised for issues of bias, validity, and misuse (Boring et al., 2016; Uttl et al., 2017). Research shows that SETs can be

influenced by factors unrelated to teaching quality, such as gender, race, course difficulty, and even instructor likability, which raises serious concerns about their use in high-stakes decisions such as promotions and tenure (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020). As a result, many scholars now advocate for triangulated evaluation models that integrate student feedback with peer observations, teaching portfolios, learning analytics, and self-assessment to create a more holistic and equitable evaluation system (Friedrich et al., 2022).

Moreover, the growing emphasis on inclusive pedagogy and technology-enhanced learning demands that evaluation frameworks consider how teaching responds to diverse student needs and digital modalities. For instance, the shift to hybrid and online learning post-COVID-19 has changed how students experience and evaluate instruction. Metrics now need to account for engagement in virtual platforms, digital accessibility, and instructor presence in online environments (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Henderson et al., 2021). In this context, traditional measures of teaching quality may fall short, necessitating more nuanced tools that assess instructional design, feedback loops, and the creation of inclusive learning environments. The principles of critical reflexivity remain vital but must now be situated within institutional cultures that support experimentation, dialogue, and iterative improvement. Brookfield (2017) emphasizes the value of engaging with students' critical incidents, collegial conversations, and scholarly teaching practice as key sites for reflection and transformation. This expanded view of reflexivity sees lecturers not only as content experts but also as facilitators of learning who must continuously assess and adapt their methods to meet evolving student needs and institutional demands. While older theories such as Bernstein's (1971, 1995) framing remain analytically useful, particularly in understanding classroom power dynamics and control over knowledge, they must be updated or augmented by current pedagogical models that emphasize agency, co-creation, and adaptive learning ecosystems. Modern approaches, such as constructivist and participatory models, emphasize shared responsibility between students and educators in shaping learning experiences and defining quality teaching (Henderson et al., 2015).

Finally, new technologies offer opportunities and challenges for evaluating teaching. Learning management systems (LMS), video analytics, AI-generated feedback tools, and digital portfolios can provide real-time data about student engagement, comprehension, and performance. However, these tools also raise ethical and pedagogical questions about surveillance, data ownership, and the interpretation of metrics (Selwyn, 2020). A critically reflexive educator must engage with these tools thoughtfully, ensuring that technological adoption supports rather than undermines pedagogical goals.

2.2 Ethics Regarding the Evaluation of Teaching and Courses

The ethics of evaluating teaching and courses in higher education requires more than procedural compliance; it demands an intentional and relational approach grounded in respect, fairness, and context sensitivity. One particularly relevant ethical framework is care ethics, which foregrounds relational interdependence, empathy, and the moral significance of attending to the needs and experiences of others (Tronto, 2013). This approach contrasts with more abstract or universalist ethical theories by emphasizing situated judgment and emotional intelligence—qualities especially pertinent in evaluative interactions that can affect academic careers and student-teacher relationships. In this

context, Ubuntu ethics, as articulated by Ujomudike (2015), aligns closely with care ethics. Ubuntu centres values such as reciprocity, human dignity, peaceful coexistence, and mutual respect, which parallel Tronto's (2013) care dimensions of attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. Applying these values to student evaluations of teaching encourages a shift from transactional and punitive models toward dialogic, developmental, and inclusive evaluation processes. For example, rather than relying solely on anonymous numerical scores—which can often reinforce bias and depersonalisation (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Uttl, White & Gonzalez, 2017)—a care ethics approach would promote evaluative practices that foster trust and dialogue. This could include structured, guided feedback opportunities that enable students to articulate their experiences thoughtfully, and that empower lecturers to reflect constructively. Mid-semester feedback loops, qualitative reflections, and facilitated feedback discussions are practices that reflect such ethical commitments. McCormack (2005) provides an early but still relevant framework for evaluating teaching ethics, particularly in online environments. As post-pandemic blended learning becomes the norm (Czerniewicz et al., 2020; Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2021), these concerns are amplified by new risks: digital surveillance, data misuse, and depersonalised communication. Care ethics requires institutions to address these risks by ensuring student evaluations are not only voluntary and confidential but also contextualised within broader efforts to support pedagogical growth rather than surveillance or disciplinary mechanisms.

Ultimately, ethical dilemmas in teaching evaluation—such as the potential misuse of feedback in performance reviews, or the cultural bias embedded in standardised survey instruments—can distort both the validity and reliability of the data collected (Nieminen, 2022). A care ethics lens demands institutions move beyond compliance-driven quality assurance to foster evaluative ecosystems built on relational trust, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. Lecturers and students must be seen not as data producers or recipients, but as co-constructors of meaning in the pursuit of equitable, transformative education. In sum, evaluating teaching in today's higher education landscape requires a multilayered, inclusive, and context-sensitive approach. Such evaluation must go beyond numeric scores or static frameworks to consider the complex, relational, and evolving nature of teaching and learning. When implemented thoughtfully, evaluation becomes not only a measure of performance but also a catalyst for professional growth, pedagogical innovation, and enhanced student learning.

3. Methods

3.1 Evaluative Practices in Current Higher Education

Effective evaluation of teaching and learning in higher education has become increasingly complex in the context of shifting educational paradigms, technological change, and demands for inclusivity and accountability. Traditional evaluation frameworks—such as Boughey's (2001) distinction between the Policing Model and Learning Model, or Biggs's (2001) reflective practitioner approach—offer valuable historical insight, but must now be recontextualized to meet the demands of today's diverse, digitally mediated, and student-centered learning environments. Recent literature reflects a broad consensus that evaluation practices must be holistic, multi-dimensional, and context-responsive. Rather than emphasizing compliance or surveillance (as in the Policing Model), the focus has shifted to evaluation for development, where feedback informs continuous improvement, curriculum

responsiveness, and institutional transformation (Fitzgerald et al., 2022). While Boughey's Learning Model foregrounds collaborative reflection, its application today is often embedded in communities of practice, learning analytics, and design-based research methodologies that involve both staff and students in co-constructing criteria for effective teaching (Laurillard, 2018). Biggs's (2001) concept of the reflective practitioner remains useful but needs to be extended to account for digital fluency, pedagogical agility, and ethical reflexivity in the face of AI, remote learning, and datafication. Modern reflective practitioners are increasingly expected to engage with feedback not only from students and peers but also from digital trace data, such as LMS usage patterns, time-on-task analytics, and real-time engagement dashboards (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020). The notion of "alignment" in constructive alignment is now being reinterpreted to include alignment with inclusive pedagogy, decolonial curriculum principles, and student wellbeing (Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

The call by Behari-Leak & McKenna (2017) to view excellent teaching as inseparable from excellent learning environments is especially relevant in post-pandemic higher education. However, assessing these environments remains a challenge. New tools such as student learning experience surveys, reflective teaching portfolios, and peer-led teaching circles have emerged to better capture the multi-layered conditions under which effective teaching occurs (Ashwin et al., 2020). Importantly, these tools emphasize collaboration, transparency, and transformation rather than individual performance metrics.

A major advancement in the evaluation of teaching is the use of triangulated data. While triangulation—combining feedback from students, peers, and self-reflection—has long been advocated (Rule & John, 2011), recent studies underscore its value in capturing equity concerns, mitigating bias, and improving trustworthiness (Nieminen, 2022). However, challenges persist. Triangulation requires institutional support, training in data interpretation, and a culture of critical engagement. It is also limited by time constraints, inconsistent participation rates, and the interpretive nature of qualitative feedback. Nevertheless, when supported by thoughtful policies and inclusive practices, triangulated evaluation fosters a culture of evidence-based, reflective teaching. Current best practices in evaluative design increasingly reflect participatory evaluation frameworks. These invite students and lecturers to co-develop evaluation tools, creating a shared understanding of "quality" in specific learning contexts. This approach recognizes that what constitutes "good teaching" is not universal but shaped by disciplinary norms, institutional cultures, and sociopolitical histories (Stewart et al., 2021). In particular, for institutions contending with structural inequalities, evaluations must interrogate not just pedagogical competence, but also the institutional conditions that enable or constrain equitable learning opportunities.

In conclusion, the evaluation of teaching in higher education must go beyond static models or outdated metrics. It must embrace contextual complexity, technological affordances, ethical sensitivity, and student agency. Institutions must commit to building robust evaluative ecosystems that are not only rigorous but also formative, inclusive, and action-oriented—ensuring that evaluation leads to meaningful pedagogical transformation rather than superficial accountability.

3.2 Evaluation Instruments

The selection and application of evaluation instruments play a central role in shaping how teaching effectiveness is assessed and improved in higher education. In an era of

digital transformation and pedagogical innovation, traditional evaluation tools must be critically re-evaluated and, where appropriate, augmented or replaced with context-sensitive, technology-enabled, and student-responsive methods. Earlier approaches—such as the use of photo language (Bessell et al., 2007) or focus groups versus written evaluations (Nestell, 2002)—offered valuable insights into student experiences but present several limitations in current settings.

According to Bessell et al., 2007, photo language is a method that can be used in a variety of situations to help gather data. It uses black-and-white photographs to elicit responses from individuals and is particularly useful in situations where the respondents may give restricted or only minimal data. Converse et al., 2008 examined response rates for mixed-mode survey implementation involving mail and e-mail/Web components by using Dillman's Tailored Design Method. The results indicated that these mixed-mode procedures produce moderately high response rates. However, the mail survey tended to be more effective than the e-mail/Web survey, when serving either as the initial contact or as the follow-up contact. In the study of Nestell (2002), two different evaluation methods were used concerning students' experiences and expectations of an introductory module. A focus group approach to evaluation is compared with a written format concerning the time, quality, and nature of feedback obtained from participants. The focus group required significantly less student and faculty time than the written evaluation approach. The focus group also yielded specific and therefore useful information in terms of module development compared with the written valuations even though the overall impression of the student's experiences of the module as reflected in the written evaluations was more positive. Photo language, while useful for eliciting narrative responses, can suffer from interpretive ambiguity, cultural insensitivity, and limited scalability. Similarly, focus groups may foster groupthink, social desirability bias, or skewed feedback based on power dynamics or dominant voices in the room (Morgan, 2018). These issues highlight the importance of facilitation quality, group diversity, and triangulation when interpreting qualitative data from group settings.

Technological advances have significantly diversified the evaluation landscape. Today, digital surveys, mobile apps, embedded LMS feedback tools, and learning analytics dashboards enable the collection of real-time and large-scale feedback on both student experiences and learning outcomes (Ifenthaler & Schumacher, 2016). These instruments can be used formatively, enabling mid-semester adjustments, or summatively, contributing to long-term curriculum and course design. However, their use requires a critical awareness of data privacy, student consent, and the risk of reducing complex learning interactions to numerical indicators (Selwyn, 2020). The Revised Two-Factor Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F) developed by Biggs, Kember, and Leung (2001) remains a widely used tool to assess students' deep and surface learning approaches. While the instrument is concise and has been validated in multiple contexts, its generalizability across culturally diverse student populations remains contested. Researchers such as Lizzio and Wilson (2010) have pointed out that interpretations of "deep learning" can differ across disciplines and cultures, necessitating localized validation and careful interpretation. Furthermore, the binary nature of the tool may obscure more nuanced learning strategies or hybrid approaches that students adopt in flexible, blended, or flipped learning environments.

The inclusion of lecturer self-reflection alongside student evaluations is an important and increasingly recommended practice. However, self-reflection should not be anecdotal or informal—it must be systematic, structured, and iterative. Tools such as teaching journals, critical incident logs, and guided reflection frameworks (e.g., Brookfield's four lenses) allow educators to analyze their teaching from multiple

perspectives: their own, their students', their colleagues', and the scholarship of teaching and learning (Brookfield, 2017). Integrating self-reflection into teaching portfolios, performance reviews, and professional development planning reinforces the view of teaching as an evolving, research-informed practice. Recent scholarship also highlights the utility of multimodal evaluation frameworks that combine quantitative data (e.g., survey results) with qualitative insights (e.g., student narratives, peer observations) and automated indicators (e.g., LMS logins, submission timestamps). These layered approaches promote methodological triangulation and help reduce reliance on any single data point, thereby producing more credible and equitable evaluations (Nieminen, 2022).

In sum, evaluating teaching effectiveness in modern higher education requires adaptive, inclusive, and critically engaged instrumentation. Effective evaluation practices must take into account technological affordances, student diversity, and the ethical and practical complexities of gathering, interpreting, and acting on feedback. Institutions and lecturers alike must be committed to developing evaluation ecosystems that are transparent, dialogic, and oriented toward transformation rather than compliance.

3.3 Student Questionnaires

Student questionnaires remain one of the most widely used instruments for evaluating teaching and course effectiveness, but their utility depends heavily on thoughtful design, contextual adaptation, and critical interpretation. While concerns about the reliability and validity of student evaluations persist (Uttl et al., 2017; Boring et al., 2016), recent research offers guidance on how to enhance their effectiveness and mitigate common pitfalls. A frequent criticism is that poorly designed questionnaires often yield superficial or misleading data, particularly when questions are vague, overly general, or lack alignment with specific learning outcomes. To address this, current best practices recommend using constructively aligned, behaviorally anchored, and open-ended prompts that encourage students to reflect on both their learning processes and the teaching practices they experience (Spooren, Brockx & Mortelmans, 2013). Instead of asking "Was the teaching effective?", more precise prompts such as "How did the teaching strategies support your understanding of complex concepts?" promote reflection grounded in actual learning experiences.

The two student questionnaires proposed in this study serve complementary functions. The first focuses on students' perceptions of their engagement and learning behaviors, drawing conceptually from the Revised Study Process Questionnaire (R-SPQ-2F). Although originally developed by Biggs et al. (2001), recent critiques suggest the need to adapt or supplement this tool to reflect the blended and digital learning modalities now common in higher education (Lizzio & Wilson, 2010). Consequently, any implementation of R-SPQ-2F should involve pilot testing and local validation to ensure cultural and contextual relevance. The second questionnaire focuses on students' perceptions of teaching contributions to their learning. This includes items related to instructor clarity, responsiveness, inclusiveness, and the alignment between learning outcomes, teaching methods, and assessment tasks. To improve quality and depth of responses, both questionnaires should incorporate Likert-scale items, short-answer prompts, and optionally anonymous narrative sections where students can elaborate. Anonymity in student feedback is often framed as essential to promoting honesty, but studies show that it can also result in less thoughtful responses or decreased accountability, especially in online surveys (Figueiredo et al., 2017). One mitigation strategy is to frame feedback as a collaborative dialogue, emphasizing how student input

directly informs course development and instructor reflection. This framing can increase student motivation to provide meaningful feedback, especially when reinforced by "closing the loop" practices where lecturers report back to students on how their feedback was used (Darwin, 2017). Timing also plays a critical role in the validity and fairness of student responses. Administering questionnaires six weeks into the semester, as proposed, allows students enough time to engage meaningfully with course materials and teaching strategies. However, if significant assessments or course activities occur after this point, early evaluations may fail to capture the full learning experience. Therefore, best practice suggests multiple checkpoints for feedback—one formative (mid-semester) and one summative (end of semester)—to balance responsiveness with comprehensiveness (Berk, 2013).

Beyond traditional surveys, institutions are increasingly exploring interactive and digital feedback tools, including real-time polling (e.g., Mentimeter), in-app LMS feedback modules, and mobile push surveys. These methods can be used for low-stakes, formative feedback, enabling instructors to adapt their teaching in real time. However, such tools must be used with care, ensuring students understand their purpose and that data collection complies with ethical standards around informed consent and privacy. In summary, well-designed student questionnaires—grounded in learning theory, tailored to local contexts, and interpreted alongside other evaluative data—can provide powerful insights into teaching effectiveness. To maximize their value, they must be part of a broader culture of feedback and reflection, supported by transparent processes and an ethos of mutual learning between students and lecturers.

4. Discussion

The integration of self-reflection and triangulation into teaching evaluation is increasingly recognized as essential to effective, evidence-informed pedagogy. As higher education institutions shift toward more inclusive, responsive, and data-driven practices, lecturers are called not only to collect feedback but also to critically interpret and act on it. However, this process is often challenging due to time constraints, cultural norms around critique, and institutional pressures.

4.1 Self-Reflection as Systematic Practice

Self-reflection remains a cornerstone of professional development in higher education, but it must go beyond informal journaling to become a systematic and intentional component of teaching practice. Brookfield's (2017) Four Lenses Framework—which encourages educators to reflect through the lenses of (1) their own experience, (2) students' eyes, (3) colleagues' perspectives, and (4) relevant literature—offers a structured approach to deep reflection. This model helps lecturers uncover blind spots, test assumptions, and refine their pedagogical choices in line with actual student needs. Technological tools have also made reflective practice more accessible and organized. Digital teaching portfolios, audio reflections, and structured reflection prompts embedded within course management systems (e.g. Moodle, Canvas) allow educators to log insights, track changes, and link reflections to specific teaching episodes or student feedback (Stefani, Mason & Pegler, 2021). Embedding these practices into routine activities such as lesson planning, post-class reviews, or assessment moderation can reduce the burden of reflection and increase its pedagogical impact.

4.2 Triangulation: Benefits and Practical Challenges

Triangulating multiple sources of feedback—such as student evaluations, peer observations, and self-reflection—is widely regarded as a best practice for ensuring data credibility and improving teaching quality (Nieminen, 2022). However, implementing triangulation is not without its challenges. Time constraints, especially in high-teaching-load environments, often limit the ability of lecturers to collect and analyze data from multiple sources. Furthermore, conflicting feedback—e.g. students valuing group work while peers critique its structure—can leave lecturers uncertain about how to proceed. To address these challenges, institutions can offer support structures, such as teaching enhancement workshops, peer review networks, or evaluation mentors, to assist lecturers in interpreting and integrating diverse feedback. Encouraging the use of evaluation matrices or feedback synthesis templates can also help educators organize and compare feedback data systematically. Tools like the “Feedback Compass” (Henderson et al., 2019) guide lecturers in classifying feedback according to alignment, actionability, and priority—transforming complexity into clarity.

4.3 Navigating Feedback: From Defense to Development

A critical barrier to engaging with feedback is the emotional response it can provoke. Lecturers may feel defensive, especially if feedback seems inconsistent or personally critical. Research suggests that adopting a growth mindset, normalizing iterative improvement, and reframing feedback as a learning opportunity can buffer against defensive reactions (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Practical strategies include: 1. Delaying response: Allow a “cooling off” period before reacting to emotionally charged feedback. 2. Looking for patterns: Focus on recurring themes rather than isolated comments. 3. Using guided reflection prompts: e.g., “What surprised me? What challenged me? What will I change?” 4. Engaging with peers: Sharing feedback in trusted communities of practice can support interpretation and reduce isolation. 5. Embedding feedback discussions into annual review processes or teaching development plans can further institutionalize a constructive feedback culture.

4.4 Disciplinary Variation and Evaluation Complexity

The earlier reference to weak disciplinary foundations requires clarification. Research by Neumann et al. (2002) and Brew (2006) shows that disciplines vary significantly in their epistemological structures and pedagogical norms. For example, teaching evaluation in practice-based disciplines (e.g. Education, Design) may emphasize applied skills, while theoretical disciplines (e.g. Mathematics, Philosophy) prioritize conceptual understanding. Lecturers in emergent or interdisciplinary fields may lack cohesive teaching standards or communities of practice, complicating both peer evaluation and self-assessment. Therefore, evaluation models must be sensitive to disciplinary context, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. Developing discipline-specific rubrics, involving academic developers familiar with the field, and tailoring peer review processes accordingly can help align evaluation practices with the nuanced goals of different subject areas (Ashwin et al., 2020). In conclusion, creating a reflective, evidence-informed teaching culture requires more than tools—it requires time, institutional support, and a commitment to collaborative improvement. By embedding systematic self-reflection, supporting thoughtful triangulation, and fostering constructive

responses to feedback, higher education institutions can enable lecturers to develop teaching practices that are both effective and contextually responsive.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how evaluative practices can enhance teaching quality in higher education, particularly in the context of globalization, digital transformation, and the push for inclusive, learner-centered pedagogies. It emphasized the value of triangulated approaches—including student questionnaires, peer feedback, and self-reflection—as tools for developing critically reflective teaching practices. While globalization has helped foster shared conversations around quality assurance and mobility in higher education, its influence is neither neutral nor uniformly positive. For instance, efforts to promote common teaching standards often risk privileging Western pedagogical norms and ignoring local epistemologies or resource disparities. Institutions in the Global South, for example, may struggle to implement technologically intensive evaluation practices due to infrastructural or funding limitations—challenges that are too often overlooked in policy discourse.

The study also highlighted instruments like the Revised Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs et al., 2001), which provide useful insights into learning strategies. However, as critics have noted, such tools may not fully capture the complexity of diverse learning environments, particularly in digitally blended or culturally varied classrooms. Their limitations underscore the need for localized validation, contextual adaptation, and the use of complementary methods to interpret teaching effectiveness more holistically. Moreover, while systematic evaluative practices are frequently linked to continuous improvement, their success is far from guaranteed. Lecturers often face institutional constraints, including time pressures, unclear policy guidance, or limited training in interpreting feedback. Without ongoing support, collaborative frameworks, and reflective cultures, even the most rigorous evaluation processes may fail to result in meaningful change. Therefore, it is crucial that evaluation not be treated as an endpoint or compliance requirement, but rather as a dialogic, iterative process—one that invites lecturers, students, and academic leaders to co-construct understandings of quality and engage with feedback as an opportunity for growth. Institutions must invest in building evaluative ecosystems that are ethically sound, contextually responsive, and pedagogically enriching.

Implications for Policy and Future Research

This study suggests several directions for higher education policy and research. Institutions should move beyond technocratic definitions of quality and support context-sensitive, inclusive evaluation models that reflect disciplinary diversity and teaching realities. Structured support should be provided to educators to build feedback literacy and to interpret and act on evaluation data constructively. Further empirical studies are needed to examine the effectiveness of triangulated evaluation practices across varied institutional contexts, with attention to equity, power dynamics, and cultural responsiveness. Ultimately, enhancing academic quality through evaluation requires more than instruments—it demands an institutional ethos of transparency, trust, and continual learning, aligned with the complex realities of today's higher education landscape.

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