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Faculty Rewards and Education Portfolios: A Report on Faculty Perceptions

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Abstract

Many schools in the developed world have adopted portfolios in an attempt to address the scholarship of teaching. This is because of the atmosphere of “publish or perish” which pervades academia. Buying off teaching obligations with research dollars is an increasingly pervasive practice in many institutions and Faculty caught up in this system have generally gone along with it, focusing on the scholarship of discovery at the expense of the scholarship of integration, application, and teaching - little of which carries the financial consequence or peer recognition of sponsored research.¹ Add to this the fact that many medical schools world wide have adopted teacher- intensive, integrated hybrid PBL curricula and the result is frustrated teachers who undergo occupational burnout.

An ideal faculty reward system should support the priorities and mission of the institution e.g. if improving the quality of teaching and learning is a high priority, then the tenure, promotion, and merit pay system must support quality efforts to redesign the curriculum, improve courses, and increase the effectiveness of teaching.² Education Portfolios are not widely used in this part of the world, and few Faculty have even heard of the term “Education Scholarship”.

This study is a preliminary report on perception of the faculty rewards in place in their institution and their familiarity with the concept of education scholarship. A questionnaire was posted to Faculty of medical schools in Malaysia and also distributed to staff of the National University of Singapore, during an international conference. A total of 54 responses were collected from six institutions (14 were unidentified); representing a response rate of about twenty per cent. Thirty two were teaching in a hybrid curriculum; and 26 were clinical teachers. Thirty three had been in their respective institutions for more than three years.

References

1. Report of the University Wide Task Force on **Faculty Rewards** June 26, 1991. Office of the President University of California Oakland, California www.ucop.edu/acadadv/acadpers/pister.html
2. The **faculty reward** system: basic information for academic leaders. www.thenationalacademy.org/Resources/facreward.html

Introduction

Many University rewards systems place greater emphasis on research than on teaching. This inequity stems from the higher market value that is usually attached to research, as reflected in starting salaries and competitive offers. Teaching effectiveness may be undervalued simply because of the lack of agreement as to how it should be evaluated¹. As a consequence, Faculty in integrated, PBL-driven, teacher-intensive curricula experience occupational burnout and frustration at not being acknowledged. Medical schools in developed countries have started to adopt education portfolios in an attempt to rectify the imperfections in their Faculty rewards systems. This practice is not widely accepted in this part of the world, and the term “educational scholarship” is quite alien to many academics.

Objective

This study attempted to answer questions relating to whether Faculty are aware of the rewards systems in place, whether they are cognizant of the term “education scholarship”, whether they feel teaching is undervalued compared with research, and how they would like to improve on the rewards systems in their institutions.

Method

A three- part questionnaire was posted to medical schools in Malaysia. Some were distributed to NUS staff at an educational meet. A total of 54 responses were collected from six institutions (14 were unidentified); representing a response rate of about twenty per cent. Thirty two were teaching in a hybrid curriculum; and 26 were clinical teachers. Thirty three had been in their respective institutions for more than three years.

Table 1: Description of Respondents

	Years of Teaching in Present Institution (N = 54)			Total
	<1yr	1-2yrs	>3yrs	
<u>Institution</u>				
UNIMAS	0	1	5	6
UM	0	1	6	7
UKM	2	1	7	10
UiTM	0	1	0	1
Singapore	0	1	13	14
IMU	0	0	2	2
<u>Curriculum</u>				
Traditional	0	1	7	8
Integrated	2	4	26	32
<u>Delivery Mode</u>				
Student-centered	1	2	8	11
Teacher-centered	0	0	3	3
Hybrid	1	3	22	26
<u>Discipline</u>				
Basic sciences	2	2	10	14
Clinical	0	3	23	26
<u>Qualification</u>				
Medical	1	5	30	36
Non-medical	1	0	3	4
<u>Unidentified</u>	5	5	4	14

Note: None of the respondents has ticked 2-3 years of teaching.

Results and Discussion

Eight respondents were from a traditional curriculum, and the rest were from integrated curricula. Half were clinical and the rest were basic scientists. This report is limited purely to the first part of the questionnaire.

It is apparent that although most faculty are aware that Faculty Rewards systems are in place in their institutions, they are not very satisfied with them, and most are not aware of education scholarships or portfolios. Whilst Faculty members feel appreciated by their peers, they feel unappreciated by the “Management” (Table 2). They also state that teaching should be given equal weightage with research, regardless of years of teaching, discipline or type of curriculum (Table 3a – 3c). As shown in Figure 1, the suggested weightage* was 60% (19.4% of responses); 70% (36.1%); 80% (25%); 90 % (8.3%); 100 % (11.1%).

Teachers with more than three years also appear to feel the rewards system was inequitable with the workload. Dissatisfaction leads to unproductivity, and is detrimental to the institution in the long run. It is therefore essential that rewards systems support the priorities and mission of the institution. For example, if improving the quality of teaching and learning is a high priority, then the tenure, promotion, and merit pay system must support quality efforts to redesign the curriculum, improve courses, and increase the effectiveness of teaching.

Table 2: Respondents’ Rating Preferences on Q1-Q23

Questions	Rating Preferences (% , n=54)		
	Yes	No	Don't Know*
Q1 Is there a definite structure for reward/ recognition of teachers in place in your institution?	57.4	28.3	14.3
Q2 Are these rewards monetary?	38.9	41.5	19.6
Q3 Are they performance-based?	55.6	13.2	31.2
Q4 Is Faculty's performance assessed by Heads?	64.8	15.1	20.1
Q5 Is Faculty's performance assessed by peers?	14.8	60.4	24.8
Q6 Is Faculty's performance assessed by students?	42.6	30.2	27.2
Q7 Should performance be tied to bonus?	53.7	32.1	14.2
Q8 Do you feel your input into teaching is appreciated by peers?	53.7	30.2	16.1
Q9 Do you feel your input into teaching is appreciated by the management?	35.2	45.3	19.5
Q10 Do you feel adequately rewarded for your input in your institution?	35.2	56.6	8.2
Q11 Have you heard of the term “Scholarship” for teachers?	40.7	50.9	8.4
Q12 Have you heard of the term “Scholarship for teaching”?	31.5	60.4	8.1
Q13 Have you heard of the term “Educational Portfolios”?	40.7	50.9	8.4
Q14 Do you have “Educational Portfolios” in your institution?	29.6	13.2	57.2
Q15 Do you feel that “Educational Portfolios” are useful in assessing quality of a teacher's input?	37.0	1.9	61.1
Q16 Do you think your institution should adopt educational portfolios?	37.0	3.8	59.2
Q17 Do you feel too much priority is given to research in your institution?	44.4	49.1	6.5
Q18 Do you think equal weightage (50:50) should be given to teaching and research in considering for promotions?	64.8	30.2	5.0
Q19 Are they given equal weightage in your institution?	14.8	67.9	17.3
Q20 Do you think more weightage should be given to teaching?	68.5	28.3	3.2
Q21 Does your institution offer “protected time” to academic staff to carry out research?	53.7	34.0	12.3
Q22 Are you able to use your “protected time” effectively?	33.3	32.1	34.6
Q23 Are the promotion criteria compatible with your workload?	15.8	71.0	13.2

* Questions that were not being answered are considered as 'don't know'.

Figure 1: Proposed Weightage to be given to Teaching (of those who selected 'Yes' for Q20)

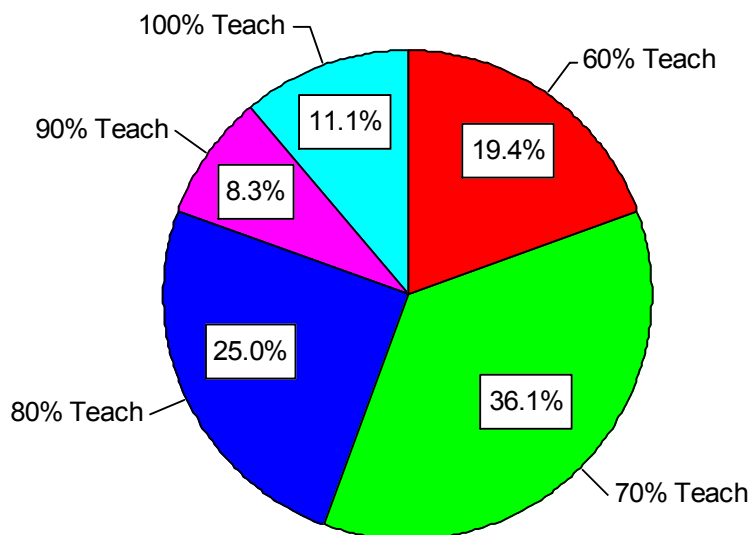


Table 3a: Hypothesis Testing of Rating Preferences by Years of Teaching and Discipline

Q18	Years of Teaching in Present Institution (%)			Hypothesis Test
	<1yr	1-2yrs	>3yrs	
Basic Science				
NO	-	7.1	21.4	$\chi^2 = 1.26$ (P=0.533)
YES	14.3	7.1	50.0	
Clinical				
NO	-	-	28.0	$\chi^2 = 1.33$ (P=0.25)
YES	-	12.0	60.0	

Table 3b: Hypothesis Testing of Rating Preferences by Years of Teaching and Delivery Mode

Q20	Years of Teaching in Present Institution (%)			Hypothesis Test
	<1yr	1-2yrs	>3yrs	
Student-centered				
NO	9.1	-	18.2	$\chi^2 = 3.93$ (P=0.416)
YES	-	18.2	45.5	
Hybrid				
NO	3.8	11.5	15.4	$\chi^2 = 10.64$ (P=0.031)
YES	-	-	65.4	

Table 3c: Hypothesis Testing of Rating Preferences by Years of Teaching

Q23	Years of Teaching in Present Institution (%)			Hypothesis Test
	<1yr	1-2yrs	>3yrs	
NO	-	-	71.1	$\chi^2 = 33.88$ (P<0.001)
YES	-	10.5	5.3	
DON'T KNOW	5.3	2.6	5.3	

Conclusions

Medical faculty members in the Region are not entirely satisfied with the Rewards Systems in place, and feel that more weightage should be given to teaching. It is indeed ironic that Faculty are drawn to academia because of their love of teaching, but ultimately lose their passion and sacrifice the scholarship of teaching for the more rewarding scholarship of discovery (research). Universities and Colleges should give priority to explore ways of recognizing and rewarding outstanding teaching and mentoring of students.