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STRUCTURED FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS IN TUTORIAL TEACHING

Waris Qidwai

"Tutorial" is an intensive course given by a tutor or professor to one or several students, mostly on a specific topic.¹ Medical education should be based on tutorial teaching and be student-centered rather than traditional teacher-centered academic teaching.²

Students expect a tutor to be a skilled group facilitator who would guide them in their learning, while helping to maintain a positive group climate. They do not want the tutor to teach the content as they perceive the task of learning to be their responsibility.⁴

Medical school teaching is predicted to undergo major changes with emphasis no longer on the "teaching aspect" at the center of attention but on the "learning aspect."³ If tutorial teaching is to be student-centered then learner's feedback is important in teaching.⁵

Tutorial sessions are conducted for third year undergraduate medical students, in Family Medicine, at Aga Khan University, Karachi. On an average, 12 students attend weekly tutorials, facilitated by the author, who is a Family Medicine faculty. A topic is covered with the first group of students in the first week, and again with the second group in the second week. The cycle of two weeks is repeated for each of the four topics in eight weeks, with the same 25 to 30 students.

The topics covered included evaluation of a patient with chest pain, weight loss, dyspnoea and hematuria. All the sessions were facilitated by the author. A questionnaire was developed that incorporated ten salient tutorial feedback and evaluation questions. The students were required to rate them on scoring system with one being minimum and 5 being maximum score.

The students were requested to fill in the questionnaire at the end of the tutorial.

Student feedback was taken after the initial session in the first week. The feedback was incorporated into the tutorial session in the second week. Both the sessions evaluated by the students were compared to see whether feedback from the first session had any impact on the second session. Students attendance varied from 11 to 16 students per session.

A close look at the data showed improvement in the evaluation scores, after feedback from the first tutorial was incorporated into the second session. There was also a trend towards a gradual but steady improvement in scores as the sessions went by. This could be that the feedback with regard to most of the questions including those on tutorial objective, use of audio-visual aids, eye contact and time management were of a general nature and had an impact on later sessions. The findings are listed in Table I.

Since the same facilitator was taking the sessions and feedback from the students, a student bias towards a more favorable evaluation was anticipated. Such a bias acted uniformly throughout all the sessions and, therefore, the study objective was not adversely affected. An earlier study has found that in students' opinion, the main characteristics for a good tutorial, as far as tutors are concerned, consist of allowing enough time for discussion, accepting students as partners, refraining from interference and having expertise.⁶ It was found that the students rate clarity of tutorial objective, time management, and tutor's control during the session better than his interaction with the students, appropriate questioning and the use of audio-visual aids. Such information is useful for the tutor to make appropriate changes in the conduct of future tutorials.

Student feedback after a session can be very useful for the tutor and the students. The tutor not only tries to improve his

Table I: Feedback/ evaluation questions and results.

Feedback/evaluation question	Tutorial "A" Score		Tutorial "B" Score		Tutorial "C" Score		Tutorial "D" Score	
	Pre-Feedback	Post-Feedback	Pre-Feedback	Post-Feedback	Pre-Feedback	Post-Feedback	Pre-Feedback	Post-Feedback
Tutorial objectives were clear	4.3	4.6	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.1	4.7
Tutorial was interactive	3.4	4.1	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.4	3.6	4.2
Audio-visual aids were appropriately used	3.2	4.1	3.7	3.9	3.7	4.3	4.1	4.4
Tutor used appropriate questioning	3.7	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.0	4.3	3.9	4.2
Tutor appeared in control	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.7	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.5
Tutor generated interest	3.8	4.0	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.6
Appropriate eye contact was used	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.5	4.3
Time was appropriately utilized	4.3	4.8	4.5	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.6	4.7
Would recommend tutorial to other students	4.1	4.7	4.2	4.5	4.1	4.5	4.6	4.6
Overall quality of the tutorial	4.2	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.6	4.6	4.6
Number of students	12	16	11	12	12	14	11	12

(Minimum=1, Maximum =5)

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facilitation but also remains vigilant since his/her performance is under scrutiny. The student feels involved in the process of learning. It is strongly recommended and encouraged to use structured feedback from the students in conducting tutorial sessions on a regular basis. It is hoped that such an

Exercise will improve the mechanics of the tutorial session and tutoring skills.

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