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Veronda R. Hutchinson

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Influence of Student Evaluations on College Instructors' Professional Practice

by

Veronda R. Hutchinson

MA, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2005

BS, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2003

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

October 2022

Abstract

Many post-secondary institutions make significant use of student evaluations of teachers (SETs) to evaluate teacher effectiveness and students' perceptions of their learning experiences in the course. However, it is unclear how teachers use SETs to inform their professional practice. Hence, the purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore how SETs influenced instructors' professional practice at a local community college from the perspective of the instructors, which the research question was centered on. The conceptual framework for the study was the cognitive dissonance theory, because it explains the changes in the individual's behavior through the need to reduce mental discomfort caused by a disruptor (i.e., SETs). Eleven community college instructors were recruited through purposeful sampling and provided insights to the research question through semi structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed that faculty members rarely used SETs to inform their courses and had concerns about the administrative use of the results derived from the SETs. The findings indicated that SET was not an optimally valid teacher evaluation method. For instance, a rigorous course attracted lower scores from the student and other non-academic factors, such as gender and race, influence the evaluation, which indicates that SETs were not a true reflection of the teachers' effectiveness. A 3-day professional development project was designed based on the findings to produce a SET that accurately reflected student feedback. Positive social change can be achieved through teachers' use of valid and reliable feedback from SETs to improve their instructional pedagogy, which reflects on higher job satisfaction and better instructional outcomes.

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Dedication

This project study is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who has made this process possible. I also dedicate this work to my husband and kids who were patient and encouraging through this entire process. Thank you for your love and support.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Student evaluations of teachers (SETs) is one of the main approaches to measuring teaching effectiveness and is often considered in combination with student achievement measures, on-the-job evaluations, performance measures, and the faculty portfolio (Husain & Khan, 2016). Most post-secondary administrators have used end of the semester SETs to gather data on students' perceptions of their experiences in courses and to assess instructors' teaching effectiveness (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Stark et al., 2016). However, the information collected from students' evaluations may be influenced by personal factors beyond the instructor's control such as lack of student preparation for the rigor of higher education (Stark et al., 2016). The SETs may not address new learning in the course and could be reflective of an assessment of students' past learning experiences (Otani et al., 2012; Stark et al., 2016).

Some researchers have also cautioned against the use of SETs scores to measure teaching effectiveness because variables such as the subject curriculum can influence the scores (Otani et al., 2012b; Stark et al., 2016). The pressure to obtain high scores on SETs may result in faculty making instructional changes to please the administration or to increase their standing as an effective teacher, but the changes may not benefit student learning (Tarun & Krueger, 2016a). National and local education authorities have depended on summative evaluations of teachers to determine student satisfaction (Elstad et al., 2017), but there is a gap in research related to how SETs influence teachers' professional practice.

Using SETs to evaluate teaching effectiveness is practiced at local institutions in North Carolina (Lawrence, 2018; Stark, 2013), but education stakeholders have faced challenges in determining the best way to evaluate teacher effectiveness (Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016). National trends in educational policy resulted in North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) usage of SETs as a method of assessing faculty effectiveness, which raised concerns among faculty (Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016). At the study site, faculty members expressed concern related to the use of SETs as an indicator of teaching effectiveness, suggesting it is not a reliable measure for determining teaching and learning. Instructors reported being judged unfairly by administrators and reprimanded for not receiving favorable results on student evaluations. In a professional development meeting for faculty, staff, and administrators, the administrators expressed their main resource for evaluating teacher effectiveness was through the information contained in SETs. Administrators are aware of faculty concerns but have not proposed alternate levels of evaluating teacher effectiveness. Instead, the Division of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE) and administrators offered to revisit the questions asked of students on evaluations with faculty to make them more centered around student learning. The SET questions asked students to assess indicators that may not be appropriate (see Appendix B).

According to the DIE at the college, programs were not required to disclose how instructors use SETs to inform their instructional development, and administrators did not document how instructors apply SETs scores to their teaching practices. Faculty were not required to document curriculum changes; therefore, DIE is not aware of any changes

made by instructors in response to SETs. There was a need to explore the gap in practice related to if and how teachers use SETs to influence their instructional practices. Although there was a plethora of research about SETs at the university, college, and grade school levels, there was little research that specifically focused on how community college teachers used SETs or how SETs influenced their teaching. Much of the current research addressed how college and grade school administrators used SETs in the decision-making process for promotion (Bunge, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016), but it did not address what, if any, actions faculty took based on student evaluations.

Results from this study will be used to inform stakeholders about how student evaluations influence faculty professional practice. The insight gleaned from participant interviews promotes positive social change through interventions aimed at how best to use SETs to evaluate and influence faculty's professional practice so that academic rigor is maintained, and students are satisfied with their educational instruction (see Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016). Interventions to promote positive social change include collaboration between faculty and administrators to address the study findings resulting in a workshop focused on how best to use SETs as a tool to improve student outcomes.

Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore what influence SETs have on teachers' professional practice at a local community college in the southern United States from the perspectives of teachers. National and local education authorities depend on summative evaluations of teachers to determine student satisfaction (Elstad et al., 2017; Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016). This study demonstrates how faculty used, or

did not use, the results of SETs by students to inform their instructional methods. New insight showed how much weight teachers give SETs in influencing their teaching pedagogy but also helped to fill the gap in practice related to what changes they made and how those changes influenced student learning outcomes (Elstad et al., 2017; Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016).

Definition of Terms

Academic rigor: The term describes instruction, schoolwork, and the student learning experience. It also describes educational experiences that are intellectually and academically challenging to the student (Edglossry, 2020).

Student evaluations of teachers (SETs): Instruments comprised of open- and close-ended questions that included intentional measures of both general instructor attributes and instructor behaviors (Iowa State University Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, 2019).

Teacher effectiveness: A set of behaviors that teachers incorporated into their daily professional and instructional practices that promote student learning (DePaul, 2020).

Significance of the Study

Administrators at colleges make decisions regarding instructor raises and promotions based on SETs, which may demonstrate student biases such as ageism or sexism (Bunge, 2018). This negatively influences students' preparation for professional practice. Student evaluations as a measure of teacher effectiveness were a local and national problem (Bunge, 2018), because institutions have adopted student evaluations as

the predominant evaluation tool that determines whether a teacher is effective (Lawrence, 2018). The practice of using SETs as a measure of teacher effectiveness has led to instructional content changes to influence higher evaluation scores (Lawrence, 2018). These instructional changes include awarding higher grades to students but decreasing the rigor in classroom curricula to please the students and increase evaluation scores (Tarun & Krueger, 2016).

The intent of SETs is clear. However, many colleges do not have valid methods of capturing teacher effectiveness in the classroom or providing constructive feedback for overall growth of the faculty or the institution (Dev & Qayyum, 2017). The type of questions used on evaluations made the tool susceptible to various biases. For these reasons, it is not fair to draw summative comparisons between faculty evaluations and ignore external factors that contribute to student responses such as student grade point averages (GPAs) or expected grades (Dev & Qayyum, 2017). This also reinforces the inaccuracies and invalidity of the data generated through SETs (Dev & Qayyum, 2017).

Student evaluations have the potential to positively influence teachers' instruction, but there was a gap in practice related to how teachers use SETs to inform their professional practice. Results from this study were used to inform stakeholders about how student evaluations influenced faculty professional practice. The insight gleaned from participant interviews promotes positive social change through interventions aimed at how best to use SETs to evaluate and influence faculty members' professional practice so that academic rigor is maintained, and students are satisfied with the educational instruction. Interventions to promote positive social change include

collaboration between faculty and administrators to address the study findings resulting in a professional development workshop focused on how best to use SETs as a tool to improve student learning outcomes.

Research Question

The research question that guided this basic qualitative study was "How do community college teachers describe the influence of SETS on their instructional practices?"

Review of the Literature

The literature review included databases from Walden University's library. Some sources were obtained through Google Scholar. The search was limited to peer reviewed articles during the dates of 2015–2022. However, there were some articles older than 5 years that were relevant to the research topic and were used in the review of the literature. The older research is supported by more recent articles to validate its relevance to the research. Some of the search terms used to perform research included: *influence of student evaluations on instruction*, *student evaluations and instruction*, *student evaluations and teaching*, *faculty responses to student evaluations*, *validity of student evaluations of teachers*, and *responses of students on faculty evaluations*.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the cognitive dissonance theory. This theory refers to situations involving conflicting attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs that cause mental discomfort that leads to changes in one's behavior, belief, or attitude to reduce the discomfort (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). The theory was first coined by Leon

Festinger during a participant observation study of a cult that believed the world would end by way of flood (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017).

Individuals with opposing beliefs or behaviors try to find ways to remove the discomfort by changing behaviors to align with the opposing beliefs (Festinger, 1957; Guerra & Wubbena, 2017; Rosen, 2018). This discomfort may be related to SETs, which prompts a response, negative or positive, from faculty. When faculty members receive information on teaching effectiveness from student perspectives, they reflect on the teaching practices and decide to either maintain the status quo or use the information to guide changes to the way they teach (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017; Rosen, 2018). The cognitive dissonance theory suggests that when a person learns new information that challenges their beliefs, it elucidates the length people will go to account for actions that clash (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017; Rosen, 2018). This study explored how teachers used, or did not use, the information from SETs to influence professional practices.

Historic Use of SETs

Although the use of SETs began in the 1920s (Boring, 2017; Otani et al., 2012), the increase in the use of SETs transpired because of the No Child Left Behind Act. A federal requirement was put in place for schools to show how they measure accountability and teacher effectiveness (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). The tool has been used to make many administrative decisions including tenure and promotion (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). Universities and colleges use the student evaluation to determine teacher effectiveness and administrators use SETs to determine how qualified faculty are to teach the subject matter, move into higher positions, and receive

promotions or raises within the institution (Boring, 2017; Paquette, Corbett, Frank, et al., 2015). Nineteen states have used SET to make professional advancement decisions, and 23 states considered them when dismissing faculty (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017).

Some benefits to SETs include improvement in instructional practices as SETs often reveal strengths and weaknesses of the instructor (Blair, 2014; Boring, 2017). Evaluation has become a process used worldwide to inform stakeholders and to improve the quality of teaching (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Husain & Khan, 2016; Rosen, 2018). A purpose for using SETs is to inform teacher's current teaching practices (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017), and to assist in encouraging students' autonomy with their learning experiences (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Rosen, 2018). Many teachers have used SETs to improve how they teach and what is taught in the classroom. There are some teachers who used the evaluations to take a reflective approach to the way instruction is delivered. Institutions should encourage teachers to use student evaluations to continue to improve instruction (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Golding & Adam, 2016; Rosen, 2018). Although there are several methods for evaluating teachers, student feedback was believed to be the most effective. Yet obtaining student feedback has also been one of the most controversial methods of providing an accurate report of teachers' effectiveness (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Husain & Khan, 2016; Rosen, 2018).

Questions of SET Validity

Much research has highlighted concern with validity in the use of SETs. For example, Lindquist (2014) performed national studies that revealed discrepancies with

quantitative data collection of teacher evaluations. Evaluations showed biases in performance evaluations that included ethnicity, gender, and other variables that influence students' assessment of faculty members (Whitehurst et al., 2014). Adams and Umbach (2012) and Hornstein (2017) indicated that students who showed little interest in class did not participate in the evaluations because it reminded them of their performance during the semester. Students are more likely to respond to evaluations in their chosen field of study. Institutions are working to encourage students to take teachers' evaluations seriously and not complete the task when they are tired or fatigued (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Hornstein, 2017).

Although there are many methods for evaluating teachers, the use of student feedback is the most controversial (Boring, 2017; Husain & Khan, 2016; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). SET scores are based on a wide variety of uncontrollable variables (Cho et al., 2014). There are four variables that influence teacher effectiveness including clear descriptions, use of class time, the environment, and course materials. SETs need a prioritized set of categories to provide reliable feedback for both instructor and administrative use (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Husain & Khan, 2016). Community college leadership relies on the use of SETs as a measure of effective instruction. Administrators rely on SETs to make decisions regarding employment and promotion (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). But undergraduate students do not have the ability or expertise to evaluate teacher ability or competency (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Hornstein, 2017). What faculty may consider important is not necessarily what a student deems as important. Faculty and administrators can rely on responses that influence

teacher effectiveness such as legible handwriting or instructor availability (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Hornstein, 2017). However, students are not qualified to evaluate how much content should be taught or selection of course pedagogy. SETs do not provide criterion as to what determines how knowledgeable or qualified an instructor is to teach a course (Hornstein, 2017). The criterion students receive through SETs has little to do with the actual teaching, instructor qualities, or learning. Since administrators have been adamant about continuing to use SETs to make important administrative decisions, many faculty resort to doing what is necessary to achieve high scores on student evaluations of teachers (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017; Hornstein, 2017).

SET Design

There are two different formats of student evaluation techniques, formative and summative (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Formative evaluations help administrators assess training and assessment practices, as well as the alignment of course objectives with academic activities. Summative evaluations provide a summary of an entire term or semester of student learning (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018b; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Administrators used SETS to monitor quality teaching.

According to Bibbens (2018), a key problem with student evaluations of teachers was that they do not meet the needs of teachers or students. SETs do not provide information about students' progress over the course of the term (Bibbens, n.d.; Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Although, SETs have been used for faculty development, most of them are not designed to pinpoint where the teachers can improve their teaching (Bibbens, 2018; Young, Joines, Standish, et al., 2019) or where faculty

excel (Bibbens, 2018). The measurements for SETs were mostly summative, which leaves little room for development. Tools that make room for development are usually formative (Bibbens, 2018; Young et al., 2019). The evaluations formerly used as a tool for faculty development and student learning has now become a political tool of promotion (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018b; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019).

The current models of SETs were created based on a consumer business model. In this case, the evaluations were focused more on perception and personal satisfaction of the students (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019). The response rates have become low, especially as colleges switch to online formats to save money and time. Online SETs have also created bias and a poor representation of the course and the class. Evaluations, both online and traditional format, only provide a snapshot of an entire semester (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019). Students with good grades responded with higher scores, and students with poor grades responded out of anger and with lower sores if they respond to the evaluation at all (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019).

The issues with SETs were basic level measurement concerns but are very problematic when it comes to making promotional decisions as SETs have been rendered useless as measurement tools for teacher effectiveness (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Most universities used SETs on paper and pencil or electronic forms to obtain data about teacher competencies. Most frequently students were asked to perform SETs based on the Likert scale, which focused more on

the instructor's behaviors instead of the teaching (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Administrators assessed the student responses within the college. The evaluation phrases students chose from usually range from "unacceptable" to "outstanding" with numbers ranging from one to five. The numbers on a scale of one to five are uninterpretable because there is no zero (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Another problem with numerical SETs was that administrators were not trained to interpret the data collected from SETs. Most automatically assume that scores above the mean are good and scores below the mean are bad (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019). In this case, administrators operated on the assumption that all faculty should score above average (Burke, 2014; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

Gender Bias

SETs were a tool used to obtain student feedback in hopes of constantly promoting faculty development and course improvement opportunities (Rosen, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Additionally, SETs were often associated with being a tool for measuring student satisfaction and indirectly measuring student learning (Rosen, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). As previously mentioned, they are also used by college administrators to determine promotion, institutional teaching awards, and for institutional reviews (Rosen, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). In this case, not only did SETs influence career growth, but also career promotion.

Although a controversial issue, SETs continued to have widespread use across the country in higher education. Gender bias appears in much of the data obtained by

university review programs (Flaherty, 2018; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). SETs have been a potential threat or barrier to the advancement of female instructors (Burke, 2014; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). What has been found in research is that females were often evaluated more stringently than males regardless of the quality of instruction. In SETs, it was determined that students demonstrated different expectations of faculty based on gender (Flaherty, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Boring (2017) discovered that male faculty scored significantly higher in overall satisfaction than female instructors. Males were praised for non-time-consuming activities in class such as leadership ability while females were scored on time consuming issues such as class preparedness (Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.).

Researchers suggested that students tend to value certain characteristics of males over that of females that usually fall under gender stereotypes such as female appearance and personality. Females are called “teacher” and males are identified as “professor” (Boring, 2017; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Female professors were also expected to display feminine character traits such as being warm and compassionate. As a result, females often received more favorable scores from students (Boring, 2017; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Female faculty received lower scores when they do not meet the gendered expectations and were more authoritative and knowledgeable than expected from male instructors (Boring, 2017; Burke, 2014; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Because some female instructors anticipated biases, they may begin to try and compensate by working extremely hard to develop their courses. They may even feel pressured to make

themselves more accessible prioritizing students over other work responsibilities (Boring, 2017; Burke, 2014; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). There were many institutions that acknowledged biases that arise within SETs, yet schools still hold on to them as a primary source of teaching evaluation assessment because SETs are easy for administrative use (Burke, 2014; Flaherty, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). It does not take exceedingly long to review quantitative scores of an instructor to determine if the teacher is weak or strong (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). The more extensive part of the process and most time-consuming part is visiting the classrooms, reading syllabi, and reading student feedback (Burke, 2014; Flaherty, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

SETs demonstrated biases held by students and are very unreliable sources of information. Much of the research illustrated that SETs were imperfect measures of the professor's ability or quality (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2020; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Yet, some still argued that a well-developed evaluation offers relevant insight into the student's learning experience. However, further analysis of student teacher ratings suggested that these scores have minimal correlation with student learning and best practices used by the instructor (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2020; Shreffler et al., n.d.). It also assumed that instructors obtained, or similar scores performed the same way and did not systematically discriminate or show biases (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2020). It also accepted that SETs did not systematically discriminate against instructors based on characteristics such as gender or course type (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2020; Shreffler et al., n.d.).

Faculty Response to SETs

Faculty responses to SETs showed up in a variety of ways. For example, the instructor's teaching style changed due to the response of students and the administrative weights associated with the evaluations. The instruction becomes more didactic and tutor-focused than instruction based (Burke, 2014; Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). As a result, there becomes less of a need for the teachers in the classroom and less concern for the classroom environment as teachers strive to meet the demands on evaluation (Burke, 2014; Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). SETs also revealed that there are certain traits students focus on when participating in evaluations such as cultural differences, ethnicity, and gender (Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Faculty, therefore, were penalized for variables they cannot control, which shifts their focus to obtaining good evaluation scores instead of instruction that spurs influence on learning (Bibbens, 2018). Some faculty have even decided not to use, or review responses collected from students because of the lack of valid responses or the lack of significance of the responses to teaching development (Bibbens, 2018; Young et al., 2019).

Research reported that responses from online evaluations provide lower scores and response rates than the paper evaluations distributed during class (Bibbens, 2018.; Young et al., 2019). Online SETs participation rates started high at 60% when this first became an option for students. Over time, the number of responses declined to an average of 30–40 percent (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Young et al., 2019). However, administrative data collection must also consider factors such as class size and if it was a class for the chosen major of the student (Bibbens, 2018; Young et al., 2019). Although

there may be some statistical significance with online SETs, faculty still had concerns that response rates do not represent responses indicative of the entire class (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Young et al., 2019). As a result, faculty were less motivated to make instructional changes or decisions about course development based on underrepresented feedback (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Young et al., 2019).

Issues of validity and reliability were constant concerns for many faculty members as most literature has supported inconclusive findings (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Faculty had reason to believe that the lack of evidence may stem from cultural and economic differences and responses found within SETS. It also included factors such as student values, economic situations, and various objectives found within the universities (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Also, there were a variety of evaluations, which indicated a lack of uniformity within university management systems (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Many faculties believed that administrators should spend more time focusing on the instrument's validity and how it can be used to benefit faculty performance. The current usage of SETs was more discouraging than encouraging to faculty as it was seen as punitive and a hinderance from promotion and professional growth. SETs employed the opinions of college administrators in addition to key stakeholders (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

A students' grades also influence scoring of faculty on SETs, especially when the student's grade does not reflect his or her expectations. When students were given challenging assignments and faculty begin distributing lower scores, results showed up

on SETs as dissatisfaction with the teacher (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Students who received higher grades often reveal satisfaction with the teacher, which is illustrated in higher scores on SETs (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Faculty workload must also be considered alongside grading. Student ratings were also influenced by faculty workload, which could hinder grade turn over. Faculty members that remain strict in their policies and procedures usually fall victim to low student ratings on SETs (Siddique & Butt, 2019). Therefore, many faculty members confessed to minimizing the importance of quality to receive higher scores on SETs. There was also less bias towards faculty with lighter workloads and grade leniency (Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

Faculty questioned students' ability to evaluate teaching. Teachers operate under the assumption that students do not have the knowledge to or understanding to evaluate teachers accurately, which was why many faculty do not receive valuable feedback on student evaluations (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Some educators think students lack the capability and the capacity to rigorously evaluate an instructor's performance in teaching. Students do not have the same pedagogical knowledge or up-to-date knowledge of the field taught to be able to rate a professor objectively (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). In addition to student inability to give accurate feedback, there was also concerns for student anonymity in SETs. When evaluations offer full disclosure of the student, students are more likely to score the instructor higher than they would if the evaluations were anonymous (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). To receive more accurate data, it was

important that evaluations remain completely anonymous so that students will not feel pressured to provide false scores (Bibbens, 2018; Rosen, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

Ethnicity and Cultural Differences

According to Feistauer and Richter (2017) and Gith (2020) SETs yield unique data about students of ethno-political nationality and the way they view professors of different cultural backgrounds. Their research findings support that there were challenges among the interaction between the ethnicity of faculty members and their students (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). One of the barriers that caused poor interactions between faculty and students of different backgrounds was the idea that students have preconceived notions or negative stereotypes which may have caused animosity early on towards the instructor (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). For example, Jewish and Arabic cultures have different points of view when they consider who has more power or who should have power in general (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). In this manner, SETs often reflected male superiority which would result in males receiving higher scores than females. Feistauer and Richter (2017) and Gith (2020) contend that Arabic individuals tend to respect those with higher socio-economic and social status than those with lower status. This culture also held elders and seniors in high regard, which could all influence the way faculty are scored on SETs (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019).

Arabic students often felt uncomfortable or intimidated by Jewish instructors because of the supposed belief of their power or status. The same is true for Jewish students towards Arabic instructors (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019).

Additionally, educational, and cultural backgrounds have caused Arabic students to perceive the evaluation process differently from Jewish students because SETs may be perceived as a form of judgment of which the culture is not accustomed (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Rosen, 2018). Arabic students also perceived the SETs process differently than that of American students, again, due to their educational and cultural upbringing (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Rosen, 2018). Arabic students were prone to score teachers higher based on what they perceived as higher wisdom and knowledge based on the background of the instructor as well (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Rosen, 2018).

SETs remain an important component of assessment of teaching for institutions of higher learning. However, there is still no sense of uniformity regarding using or developing a comprehensive or reliable tool to evaluate teacher effectiveness or teaching quality (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Observed mostly by faculty, students do not take the process of evaluating instructors seriously, nor do they believe in students' ability to accurately evaluate an instructor. Currently, there is no evidence to support that SETs have helped to improve teaching (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Additionally, data collected from students cannot be discussed with students as their role remains anonymous and there is no follow-up discussion about the comments provided (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

There is a concern about the type of questions asked on SETs and whether those questions facilitated best teaching practices that would lead to enhanced student learning

(Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). One suggested change is for administrators to change the conceptualizations of the use of rubrics. Like the reasons faculty use rubrics, SETs in rubric form were designed as indicators and quality of met criteria. Therefore, several institutions have done away with the holistic SETs or are shifting to a peer-review model (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Flaherty, 2018; Gith, 2019). The advantage of a rubric design is that it scores much like holistic grading which is helpful in generating useful data about teacher effectiveness and student learning (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Flaherty, 2018; Gith, 2019). Contrarily, the purpose of this type of assessment was to identify what both students and faculty are doing well. The primary purpose of assessment needs to be the identification of what a student is doing well, and what can be done to improve learning (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017).

The use of rubrics as a form of assessment for teaching and teachers requires more than a numerical overhaul for data collection. The goal of this type of assessment was to offer both the faculty member and their students' feedback that would be beneficial to both learning and teaching (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). To achieve this, the rubric would have to be positively framed as opposed to questions of relativity and cumulative evaluation. Former SETs only offer feedback on what to improve. There was no room for suggestions as to how faculty can improve (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). Newer SETs designs have been recreated to show a continuum of learning and teacher strategies used throughout the semester. The new rubrics were redesigned as an attempt to provide a continuum of strategies that might be

used to increase student learning and further develop teaching strategies (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). In a continuum model of a student evaluation of a teacher, the student must provide evidence (an example) of what they have obtained in the classroom experience and learning opportunities provided by the teacher (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). By doing this, the student not only reflects on the learning experiences but gives the instructor the feedback needed to further develop the course.

It is suggested that SETs reflect the same language used in the course. In this manner, the student evaluation captures the needs of the course and what the instructor needs to enhance or maintain student learning (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). Open-ended questions developed around course content help obtain written comments that could be beneficial to course development for the instructor. It also provides data points that can be identified with ease that could help the teacher improve teaching strategies (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). Another goal of SETs redesign is to express different expectations within the course, something current evaluations do not do (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017).

A redesign in SETs means that the information obtained could make the learning experiences more valuable for both the students and the instructor (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017). Changed SETs will adopt language that refocuses what students need in the classroom and provide insight into how instructors can meet those expectations (Bibbens, 2018.; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Rosen, 2018). Creating an evaluation that allows the ideas and thoughts of the students makes the SETs more valuable to the student by giving them the opportunity to provide insight to their overall

learning experiences. The instructor, therefore, receives valuable feedback to enhance their overall development as an instructor. These are the primary benefits of giving and receiving written responses ((Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Rosen, 2018). It is important that instructors receive not only feedback but feed forward if he or she intends to continue developing as a professor (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Rosen, 2018). Creating SETs that encourages growth for the faculty member creates a never-ending cycle of growth and development and evidence-based learning for instructors and the administration (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Rosen, 2018).

One of the most important practices used within schools is giving and receiving feedback. Most people in education argued that feedback has beneficial elements and can be helpful as a performance measurement tool (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). Feedback can help instructors grow, but it can also make them feel intimidated in the profession. That is the dichotomy many school administrators felt when giving feedback to those they supervise (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.).

One way to combat the dichotomy was to separate the feedback given from coaching (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). Student feedback provided on evaluations helped administrators make decisions regarding promotion and hiring (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). For a faculty member, student evaluations will not provide a sense of job security or an understanding of where the person is professionally (Lang and Stone, 2020).

Feedback from students also has the potential to assist the professor on how to proceed in the classroom. Feedback in the form of coaching helps instructors improve their teaching strategies (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.).

It was important to understand how coaching influenced feedback in that SETs overshadows coaching from administrators by drawing attention to the concern revealed in the evaluation, if any (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). If the two types of feedback were given at the same time, SETs drown out the ability of the administrator to provide successful coaching because the attention is all placed on the student evaluations. This was concerning because detected biases in SETs may alter the thinking of the administrative evaluator (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.) prohibiting useful coaching. What happens in schools is that administrators merge SETs with coaching which does not give the instructor a chance to develop pedagogical practice or gain a sense of strength or weakness in their teaching (Bibbens, 2018; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.).

Another approach to redesigning how faculty is evaluated is by recognizing that evaluations tend to undermine coaching by the administrator or whomever is responsible for the teacher evaluations (Bibbens,2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). Coaching and SETs are both important and excellent ways to receive feedback, but they cannot be used simultaneously since SETs have the power to override coaching (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). When the two kinds of feedback are provided at the same time, SETs hinder well-delivered

coaching because the focus shifts to the content on the evaluation, especially if the two forms happen at the same time by the same person (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.). The influence of coaching is lost when SETs feedback is presented at the same time because the commentary is presented before the coaching (Bibbens, 2018; Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Stone & David-Lang, n.d.).

Gaps in Research

Although much of the research describes the value of SETs at the university, and some for grades kindergarten through grade 12, there is little mentioned about how faculty within the community college setting perceive SETs and how it influences their teaching. Implications of this missing piece in the research suggests that community college faculty are an under-represented population, and the community college is not privy to a more intricate conversation on the use of SETs. This moves the research in the direction of exploring not only the perceptions of faculty at the community college, but how faculty use SETs in their teaching practices at the college. Overall, the research suggested that the use of SETs is more beneficial to administrations than it is to the faculty (Bibbens, 2018).

Implications

Current research suggested several implications, such as SETs may not be as valuable as originally given credit (Vasey & Carroll, 2016). Many SETs did not provide the types of questions needed to identify best teaching practices (Vasey & Carroll, 2016). Instead, SETs evaluations included questions that elicited student biases (Flaherty, 2018). SETs have been viewed as flawed data that present inconclusive evidence of teacher

effectiveness and data that cannot be used to prompt the use of best practices in the classroom (Flaherty, 2018). The best indicator of teacher effectiveness in the classroom stems from the result of student outcomes (Flaherty, 2018). The American Association of University Professors stated that student evaluations lost the value they used to have when originally developed (Flaherty, 2018). Many instructors complained of an inability to use SETs to inform instructional preparation and a lack of knowledge on how administrators are using the tool to make professional decisions (Flaherty, 2018).

There is no direct correlation between teacher effectiveness and student evaluations or evidence of instructional alignments to evaluations (Flaherty, 2018; Polikoff & Porter, 2014). Flaherty (2018) suggested that there was evidence of faculty making instructional changes based on the results of SETS, not always for the better. Although seemingly unusual, research and hiring practices at colleges maintain that college instructors usually have no formal teacher training or substantive knowledge of teaching best practices. Therefore, the use of SETs to determine best practices or if a teacher is a good teacher is not realistic (Burke, 2014; Flaherty, 2018).

Research supports that college administrators should consider concerns faculty members have with the use of SETs as a determinant of an effective teacher. There were identifiable biases that influence faculty scoring, which may hinder faculty promotion and opportunities for career growth. Revising the questions given to students on SETs and the process in which evaluations are given to focus on student learning instead of the traits of the professor could build faculty morale and open the door for more professional development and career growth opportunities for faculty.

Summary

The data obtained from SETs is used mostly by school administrators and, in some cases, faculty were not required to use the data provided. Much of the research supported that SETs are student biased, which challenges the validity of SETs usage. It was unclear how instructors are using the scores and commentary from the evaluation to inform their teaching, if at all. It appears faculty were presented with many challenges that influenced the courses and instructional preparations. This project study explored how instructors used SETs to develop instructional practices.

The following section discusses the research methodology and justifications for using this design. There is also a description of the population and the sampling sizes. This includes eligibility of participants and how the participants were selected. Instruments used and data collected, and a discussion of limitations and assumptions are also included in the next sections.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

Using a basic qualitative research method provided a rich approach to explore the research question. Although other research approaches, such as a historical or quantitative study were considered, none of them would provide the insight needed to address the research question. The qualitative research method was designed to help capture the experiences of the participants and correlate similarities of the experiences (Levitt et al., 2018). My intent was to explore how instructors use SETs, if at all, to inform their professional practice. I chose a qualitative study approach over a quantitative approach because it provided the opportunity to look beyond the numerical data typically provided through SETs to gain a better understanding of the data derived from how SETs influence a teacher's pedagogy (Williamson et al., 2019). Quantitative studies are designed to test hypotheses, they are not used to explore or understand phenomena. Therefore, for my research topic, a basic qualitative design was selected to frame the study.

Participants

The participants for my study were selected from a local community college in the southern United States using purposeful sampling which helps t(Levitt et al., 2018)he research narrow participant to those who have experience with the topic under evaluation . Because there was a low participation response, I requested to expand participant recruitment through Walden University's Institutional Research Board (IRB) to obtain participants via social media, specifically Facebook. Upon the board's approval, I used

purposeful sampling to recruit instructors that met the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included gender and years of experience in the profession. The gender criterion was chosen based on research that suggested women were more apt to incorporate feedback from students (Rosen, 2018). The time criterion was chosen to investigate if there was a difference in the usage of SETs based on years. The participant sample consisted of 11 community college instructors who currently taught at the community college level. A research sponsor assigned by the original site college's Division of Institutional Research provided emails and a list of potential participants based on the criteria provided to them. I recruited 6 participants from the college and the other 5 participants responded through social media via Facebook. This study excluded professors who were not teaching at the community college level because there was very little research surrounding how SETs influences the professional practice of community college instructors. This aided in guaranteeing the participants' experiences were specific to the research topic (Levitt et al., 2018)

After I received the list of names and faculty information from the internal sponsor, I needed to contact potential faculty participants from the college. After I was contacted by interested participants from both the college and on Facebook, I emailed each person a recruitment letter that explained the purpose and intent of the study and encouraged participants to contact me as needed for questions regarding their participation. This letter contained my contact information. I stated in the initial email and recruitment letter that all participants needed to email back with the phrase "I consent" prior to the interviews. If the potential participants did not respond within 1

week of contact, I re-sent the letter and email. In cases when a prospective participant did not reply after the second emailed notification, it was assumed that the individual did not want to participate in the study. This same information was posted as a flyer on Facebook to recruit participants. For those who agreed to participate, I followed up to schedule a mutually agreed upon time and date for the TEAM interview. About 48 hours before each scheduled interview, I sent a reminder to confirm the date and time of each interview with each participant.

To obtain relevant and accurate data, it was important to build rapport and trust with the participants joining the study (Levitt et al., 2018). I did this by asking questions such as "How is your semester going?" or "How has it been navigating teaching and COVID?" Intentionally identifying the purpose of the study and encouraging each participant to ask questions prior to participation also helped ease any anxiety the participants had prior to starting the interviews. The goal was to make all participants feel comfortable enough to be open and honest in sharing their experiences with SETs. It was also necessary that I expressed the interview procedure, assure confidentiality, ascertain the consent is signed, and stress that the participant may decline to participate at any time during the study without fear of reprisal (Levitt et al., 2018). The participants were not aware of my former employment as an instructor at another local community college. I had no personal relationship with any of the participants. Because the participants and I were not able to meet face-to-face due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they were asked to email me their consent statement.

No research was conducted until Walden University's IRB gave permission to do so. The study site did not require IRB approval through their school, but they did require an application to complete research at their institution. I completed the application required for the study site and was assigned an internal sponsor (Appendix C). Interviews did not begin until the participants emailed consent. The digital files are stored on a password encrypted USB and placed together with the hard copies in a locked file cabinet in my home office. The participants were assigned a number to maintain confidentiality. As per Walden University requirements, I will save all paper and electronic files for 5 years. After 5 years, all data will be discarded by means of secure deletion and paper files will be discarded via shredding.

Data Collection

Data collection was accomplished through semi structured interviews with open-ended questions to promote authentic conversation (Gormley, 2021). To maintain participant safety and to adhere to the Covid-19 pandemic guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), video and recording the interviews by phone program were the method used to conduct the interviews. As previously stated, the recordings were stored on my password-protected laptop computer. Once the interviews were completed, I transferred the audio files to a USB. The consent form included a statement about recording the interviews so that participants were aware in advance that the interviews would be recorded (Jones et al., 2018). I did not use participants' names in the study and assigned numbers to help ensure the protection of the participant. I took journal notes to document any questions or thoughts that arose as participants shared their responses.

After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed through a transcription software and sent to each participant for member checking (Jones et al., 2018). Participants were encouraged to make any changes desired to their transcript and were given a week to do so before returning them to me. When I did not receive a response from the faculty, I assumed the participant did not want to make any change to the transcript and that the information was correct. All the participants approved their transcripts except one. One participant made corrections to the transcript and emailed it back to me.

As the researcher, it was my responsibility to objectively collect data and protect the credibility of the study (Koç & Fidan, 2020). Several years ago, I was employed as an instructor at a local community college. Before accepting the position at the community college, I was a professor at a local university in the area. I was careful not to let the information I acquired from student evaluations influence the interviews. I did not interview any instructor whom I knew personally or had a personal relationship with.

Within my previous positions I have created and presented workshops that focused on teaching pedagogy and best practices in teaching. Although my personal experiences are important as they inspired the research question for the study, I recognized they could pose a potential bias within the study (Tarun & Krueger, 2016) as I am familiar with the SETs process and developed my own concerns about its usage. However, being aware of my own personal beliefs and practices, and acknowledging that I had certain preferences helped minimize the threat of bias within the study. A researcher journal was used to record observations and reflections and served as a check

to mitigate bias (Jones et al., 2018). All other documents were scanned and stored on the computer and on a flash drive with the files labeled as "confidential data." I used a traditional journal and recorded all interviews on my Samsung Note cell phone and transferred the conversations to my computer and the external flash drive. Using a traditional journal made it easier for me to determine relevant data gleaned during the interview process.

Data Analysis

Data management is important to conducting a successful qualitative study (Jones et al., 2018). This included data collection, proper coding, field notes, interview narratives, and any documentation used in the development of the study. Data management also included data logs and coding, transcription, and ensuring the confidentiality of the participants involved in the study (Jones et al., 2018). Upon completion of all interviews, I uploaded them to a professional transcriber's website. I created an account for the website, and all transcribed documents were returned to me within 3 days. Once I received the transcribed documents, I emailed them to the participants for their review to ensure the information transcribed was accurate. When I emailed the transcripts, I also emailed a deadline of a 1-week response time to report any errors or feedback. Member checking was essential to making sure the information was not misinterpreted (Levitt et al., 2018). I included a clause that specified that consent was assumed if there was no response or revisions to the transcript.

Upon completion of member checking, the transcripts were loaded into a file that was stored in my personal computer. I identified codes from the research to help me

classify major themes from the transcripts (Levitt et al., 2018). I extracted key words that appeared in the data to code themes and subthemes. I then identified common themes and trends within the research to develop a thematic plan for creating the analysis. I continued to review the transcripts to strengthen and refine the overall study produced by the analysis.

For the final report, I selected specific and vivid descriptions of participants' perceptions with the use of SETs (Levitt et al., 2018). I retrieved this information from the thematic data analysis and performed a final data analysis of selected pieces of the interviews conducted. The findings were aligned with the research question, conceptual framework, literature review, and assessed for any negative or discrepant information from the original data collected to avoid counterclaims within the research. Reviewing the data allowed me to find deeper meanings behind the content collected and go beyond surface level interpretations. It was important to align coding procedures to the research question.

Data Analysis Results

My study focused on SETs and how they influenced instructors' professional practice. The conceptual framework was based on Leon Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory that explains the theory as an uncomfortable tension a person experiences when they are presented with two incompatible cognitions (Barbaroux et al., 2022). Interview questions were intentional because each participant has different experiences that may not be easy to understand or relevant to the study (Williamson et al., 2019). After all interviews were transcribed, I read through each one several times

and assigned an appropriate numerical code for the interview questions. After completing the coding process, I noted four major codes, which I used to create four themes. Through manual coding, I highlighted keywords to identify words and phrases used by participants, which included (a) usage, (b) gender, (c) traits, (d) characteristics, (e) challenges, (f) qualified, (g) unprepared, (h) administrators, (i) reprimand, (j) negative, and (k) promotions. The themes were (a) implementation of SETs, (b) gender traits and biases, (c) race concerns, and (d) administrative use of SETs. Although other potential themes emerged with reading the transcripts, I decided to analyze the strongest themes that appeared most frequently in the transcripts.

Both the codes and themes identified linked directly to the cognitive dissonance theory as they presented issues that challenged the participants belief system and attitude toward the use of SETs (Festinger, 1957). The overarching results of the study revealed that instructors responded to discomforting statements from the students by not implementing the feedback into their professional practice at all. However, the instructors did make changes within their courses to obtain better scores on evaluations to appease the administration. The instructors needed information that would in inform iinstructional practices in a way that was practical, of good quality, and would allow new approaches for the administration for discussion (Barbaroux et al., 2022). When SETs did not meet these criteria, instructors responded in a manner that would ease dissonance and allow the teachers to maintain what they believed was best needed for their students.

Together the themes and keywords described the perception and experiences of faculty and the use of SETs in their professional practice. Table 1 shows the organization

of the thematic structure and sub-themes found in the data collected. The first column identifies the themes retrieved from the collected data. The second column explains subthemes that appeared during the interviews. Codes were identified by the reoccurring of significant words and ideas throughout the interviews. The frequency of code words used determined the chosen themes. Lastly, the participant (P1-P11) column demonstrates how the participants are identified within the study results and discussions.

Table 1

Summary of Data Analysis

Themes	Subthemes	Codes	Participants (P1-P11)
Implementation of SETs	Student ability to complete SETs	Negativity, qualified, beneficial, importance, credit, reviewed	Participants 1-11 (11/11)
Gender traits and biases	Instructor ability	Qualities, character, nurturing, smart, strict,	Participants 1,2,3,5,6, 9,10, 11 (8/11)
Race concerns	Cultural biases	Race, smart, traditional class, online, challenges	Participants 2,3, 4, 5,6,7,8,10, 11 (9/11)
Administrative use of SETs	Career advancement	Administration, reprimand, meetings, low scores, changes, promotion	Participants 3-11 (9/11)

In general, community college faculty emphasized not using student evaluations and explained some students were under prepared, while other students completed the evaluations based their final grade. If students were not prepared for the rigor of the course, or if students received a low grade for the course, they were more likely to provide negative feedback on the evaluations. Instructors also contended that if the course was not required for a student's major, the individual may respond negatively on the evaluation or fail to complete it. Therefore, the commentaries provided by students do

not provide beneficial feedback for the instructor. The instructors also expressed concern for students' ability to provide meaningful feedback to the instructor if the student was not immersed in the subject matter.

Another theme that surfaced was gender traits and expectations. Male faculty shared that the students often described the instructors as authoritative, firm, and even tempered. Male faculty were also revered as smart. Female instructors reported being described as nurturing, caring, very-detailed oriented, and creative. Females were also described as more personable and family oriented. Participants mentioned racial challenges evidenced in the evaluations, such as questioning the instructor's ability.

The last theme uncovered was the concern for administrators' use of SETs. For example, some participants highlighted how they were reprimanded for negative feedback from students on SETs. There was also a concern for career growth and the ability to advance in the profession due to responses received on the evaluations. Some faculty reported that curriculum changes were made in hopes of receiving higher marks on SETs to avoid administrative meetings to discuss student remarks. Of the themes identified in the research, there was very little mentioned about how instructors use SETs in professional practice. If faculty did make any adjustments after receiving SETs, it was mostly to obtain better ratings in the future and avoid administrative concerns. Otherwise, faculty reported not to use SETs in professional practice or to make curriculum changes because of feedback provided on SETs.

To assure validity of the research, I searched for possible discrepancies within the data collected. Discrepancies are best described as ideas that stand apart or do not fit the

study (Al Ghriwati et al., 2018). While interviewing with the participants and reviewing the transcripts, I observed that most of the participants had similar answers to the interview questions. The small differences in expressed perceptions did not lead to discrepancies in the themes.

Theme 1: Implementation of SETs

With consideration of the first interview question about encouraging students to complete the evaluation, participants shared "students only complete student evaluations if there is an incentive for them to do so" (P5). Although the participants discussed that they "reviewed the importance of the evaluations as motivation during classes," (P8) the individual added that "they were not advocates of offering incentives" (P8), such as extra credit, to encourage students to complete the evaluations. Participants believed it was "better to explain the intent of the student evaluations and express those evaluations were designed to improve instruction and ensure instructors are incorporating the type of instruction that will help students learn" (P5). However, sometimes this does not result in the desired action because students find out that the evaluations go to college administrators. Those who do complete the evaluations "use it as an opportunity to be mean or attack the instructor" (P2) with negative comments. To remove the discomfort of negative feedback received from students, participants suggested that he or she often responded to student evaluations with resistance. Instructors recognized that there was not much possibility to change what was inserted on the evaluations or administrative perceptions, so what would be the benefit of adjusting the instructional methods when

there is no solid feedback to consider. Instead of changing the courses, participants decided to try and consider how they processed the feedback given.

All 11 participants explained they "did not really use SETs to develop their courses or make any curriculum changes" (P1-P11). It was mentioned that an instructor can tell when a student has given "authentic feedback" (P11). Most of the time a student uses SETs to provide their dislikes with the course, instructor, or their grade. Many suggested that if the "course had more rigor than the student anticipated then he or she would most likely state negative comments on evaluations because they were underprepared to take the course" (P6). The participants also maintained that if the course taught was a general education course and was not required for the major, students usually responded negatively or with rude comments. Examples of negative comments included "This course was stupid" (P1) or "The instructor was making us do unnecessary work" (P2).

Additionally, participants did not think students "had the aptitude to provide feedback on a course or the instructor" (P3). One participant shared that the student is learning the content and "is not qualified to say what should or should not be taught in a class" (P3). If the student was "not interested in the course or did not have the tools to successfully complete the course", it was believed the "feedback will be negative or non-beneficial" (P3) to the instructor. Participants believed the only way students were qualified to give feedback was if "they have been taking courses within the major or have experience working in the field" (P4). Students were only qualified to provide feedback on likes and dislikes within the course.

Theme 2: Gender Traits and Biases

The male participants in the study said students usually described them as "strict, straightforward, flexible, and even-tempered" (P2). Female participants stated that students often referred to them as "nurturing, kind, or understanding" (P3). The adjectives identified are terms that are often gender specific. The character traits identified on SETs are usually specific to the ways a woman is traditionally expected to behave in her teaching role as opposed to the way men behave in their role as an instructor. It was expected that men were stricter and more authoritative, whereas females are supposed to be kinder and more compassionate. However, female participants expressed that "when a student's grade did not reflect what the student expected or when the instructor did not bend on certain assignments, students' descriptions of the instructor would change" (P3). One example included students who received multiple extensions on assignments. When no more extensions were allowed and their grade began to drop, the students' attitude changed. When the instructor received the formal evaluation results, students reported that the instructor was "mean, uncaring, and unforgiving" (P3) As most of the participants alluded to performing informal self-evaluations, the instructors reported that the "formal evaluations demonstrated a drastic description change in comparison to the informal evaluations they performed during midterm" (P11). Male participants reported similar instances but the response on student evaluations still identified the instructor as "strict or authoritative" (P2). For them there was not much change on an informal evaluation performed in class to the formal assessment provided by the college and the scores of the male participants remained high.

Male instructors that participated reported that “their evaluation scores were usually high” (P1; P5). Females stated their scores were “alright” (P6; P10) or average in most cases. Female instructors observed that they “received lower scores on objective aspects such as how promptly the instructor returned assignments” (P6). However, the type of course or discipline also weighed into how a student rated the instructor. All participants maintained that ratings were seemingly discipline specific. For example, if the course taught was specifically for the student’s major, the scores reflected if he or she thought the instructor was competent in teaching the course.

Study participants stated that they addressed student feedback by re-evaluating personal attitudes to find ways to help students become more comfortable and dispel myths associated with gender traits. Instructors seemingly positioned themselves as helpers, who wanted to assist the student and provide comfort and concern for their well-being. To ease the dissonance felt from SETs commentary, participants adopted strategies that were reflective of both genders. Professors strived to become more compassionate, authoritative, firm, caring, and empathetic. Although the attitude adjustments did not impact the way instructors taught, it helped knowing that they were demonstrating more concern for the student. Additionally, to reduce or remove discomfort, several participants conveyed an overall attitude change through Adjusting their internal beliefs and values and ensuing behavior towards SETs and instructional practices. the situation.

Theme 3: Race concerns

Leon Festinger (1957) defined cognitive dissonance as an uncomfortable tension a person experiences when they are presented with two incompatible cognitions

(Barbaroux et al., 2022). In this case, the two incompatible ideas are race and student perceptions demonstrated in some of the comments study participants received on the evaluations. Highlighted comments related to race were, “Smarter than I thought,” (P7) “smarter than they looked,” (P7), “way too strict for me” (P10)., and “the same attitude some students presented in class was often the same attitude or belief that appeared on the evaluations” (P10). Before the transition to online learning, due to the coronavirus pandemic, students were very vocal regarding expectations and their attitudes towards a given race. Several participants reported they “were scored harshly on the evaluations due to the knowledge of their race” (P7), and that “once students learned that an instructor’s supervisor may be reviewing SETs, students are more than likely to respond in a negative manner because of their race” (P7) Feedback from students often challenged the intelligence of the instructor and expressed a “disbelief that the instructor was qualified to teach the course” (P8). Participants also expressed that there was an expectancy to “give students leeway because they were of the same race” (P2), sharing students made comments on evaluations such as “they did not look out for me” (P2) or “I thought we were cool.” (P11). To the instructors this meant there was a certain expectancy from the student to give them good grades because they were of the same race or shared a cultural familiarity.

How the instructors have eliminated this discomfort is by agreeing to or learning to teach online. The current pandemic has caused many institutions to convert to online teaching which requires different approaches to instructional practices and removes the visibility of the instructor. Participants stated that “they have seen an improvement in

their scores because the students are not aware of their race. Students only know the gender of the instructor" (P11) unless there is a picture or avatar posted of the instructor. One participant explained, "Teaching online has been beneficial to people of color because the student cannot associate anticipated ability or qualifications to a race" (P11). Nine out of 11 of the participants, reported to have seen their evaluation scores go up since switching to the online platform. Unless they have video conferences with the student, the student is not aware of the race of the instructor. One participant expressed, "Online teaching has provided a sense of anonymity, which forces students to respond to SETs based on the instructor's ability and not their skin color" (P10). Instructors disclosed the expectation for instructors to be less stringent with students who were of the same race. Faculty experienced comments on evaluations such as "they could have been easier on me" (P8) and "I thought we were cool, but this instructor was mean" (P8. There is an expectancy for "faculty that have students of the same race to be more lenient with them than students of other races". When this did not happen, faculty evidenced the students' dissatisfaction in the student evaluation.

Theme 4: Administrative use of SETs

The participants contributed the administrative use of SETs as a form of reassurance of teaching effectiveness by their faculty regarding the knowledge of their discipline. Instructors also viewed this as a direct link to an opportunity for training and professional growth (Barbaroux et al., 2022) However, according to community college instructors participating in the study, administrators used SETs "to reprimand and judge faculty as a good or bad instructor." (P3). Faculty reported "they have been called into

meetings with their supervisors to discuss one or two negative comments instead of the positive feedback that students had provided" (P11). Positive comments were overshadowed by negative statements made by students. Faculty felt they had received "lower performance evaluation scores" (P3; P4) based on students' feedback. Institutions seem to have "adopted a more customer-satisfaction model than supporting their teaching staff" (P3.

Although participants stated they were not sure how the administrators used SETs to make administrative decisions, one participant (P11) expressed being overlooked multiple times when trying to advance in their career. Participants highlighted that "conversations had with the supervisors usually revolved around negative feedback" (P10) given on student evaluations. Even with only one or two negative comments, faculty reported to have "felt targeted or judged as a 'bad' teacher" (P9). It was believed that these types of meetings "influenced a person's professional growth and hindered instructional development by causing intimidation and fear" (P9) towards the instructors.

Participants expressed concern when SETs were given too much weight as a measure of how well instructors performed on the job, and in being unsure of how the administration uses student evaluations. Colleges "have lost good teachers due to bad evaluations and bad teachers are still teaching at the college because they have had good evaluations "(P5-P11). Participants maintained frustration with "making changes to their courses because of two or three negative comments on the evaluations that caused a stir with their director and dean" (P6).

According to P4, “when course changes were made, it was only to avoid administrative backlash and to appease the student.” As a result, the participants determined that there were few benefits to student evaluations as as related to their growth and development. One participant (P5) explained, “SETs do not influence professional practice because they do not often provide valuable feedback” for the instructor. Based on this belief, most participants reported that they made changes to their professional practice and course development to keep administrators satisfied with their scores and to maintain high rating on the performance evaluations. The need for both instructors and the administration is essential for professional growth but when used as a reprimanding or promotional monitoring tool, SETs challenge the instructor to make changes that are more suitable to the needs to maintain employment over the betterment of student learning (Barbaroux et al., 2022)

Evidence of Quality

Qualitative researchers utilize four criterions to ensure the research is trustworthy and valid. The four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility ensures the study accurately and precisely presents the data collected from the interviews to reinforce what is being investigated in the study. To establish credibility for my study, I worked with my doctoral committee professors to vet the interview questions and the overall process for collecting data. I performed practice interviews with academic professionals who were not affiliated with my study and were not research participants. This helped me determine the clarity and precision of the questions for the interview, verify that the questions were applicable to the research

questions, and allowed me to test the transcript software to monitor timeliness and accuracy of participant responses. Member checking was performed by emailing an electronic copy of the transcript to each participant with instructions to provide any changes or corrections desired and return the document to me within seven days of receipt. I only received one response for changes, which were made and returned by the participant. The others were determined accurate by the participants.

I ensured transferability by providing thorough descriptions of my study to include the setting, data collection practices, and data analysis procedures. By being transparent in how I conducted my study, other researchers will be able to review and determine whether the research process I used is applicable to their setting (Al Ghriwati et al., 2018). Care was taken to protect the identity and professional positions of all study participants. While all the study participants were instructors at a community college, they were employed in a variety of different departments. With the information provided by the participants and analyzed by me to determine key themes, other researchers should be able to obtain and/or create new and relevant knowledge from my study.

Dependability is established by creating a thorough account of all the research processes that took place during the development of the study. Doing so allows other researchers to create comparable studies to gain parallel results. The participants divulged rich ideals and descriptions of their experiences with SETs. I discussed processes used to develop my data analysis and complete the study. When the researcher removes his or her personal beliefs or biases to ensure the data collected accurately represents the responses of the study participants, confirmability is realized. I provided a plan of action regarding

how the interviews were conducted, the information provided, and how the study was implemented. During the research process, I took notes in a journal to record my personal experiences with the study. This allowed me to reflect on my thoughts and ideas related to the interviews so that I could present an unbiased data analysis. I used my notes as a guide to stay on task and worked to keep my personal biases from influencing the data collection and analysis.

The conceptual framework for this study was the cognitive dissonance theory, which refers to situations involving conflicting attitudes, behaviors, or beliefs that cause mental discomfort that leads to changes in one's behavior, belief, or attitude to reduce the discomfort (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Based on the findings from my research, faculty did not find value in SETs. The participants did not believe students were qualified to provide feedback to instructors because they were novice learners as pertained to the course content. Teachers reported reading the SETs, but only used information they deemed useful to inform their professional practice. Most participants did not change their pedagogy based only on SETs.

The findings from my study confirm the state of cognitive dissonance teachers report related to SETS. To restore themselves to a state of cognitive consistency, instructors over-looked or avoided acknowledging negative statements identified on SETs that deemed as not beneficial to advancing their professional practice. It was obvious that there was a tension regarding how instructors responded or used the SETs tool. The tension each instructor felt was evident in the word choice used to convey feelings towards student evaluations. They used terms such as "reprimand",

"administrative perceptions", and frequently questioned if they should change their courses if they felt student feedback was not valid for their courses or teaching practices. Clearly the participants believed there was no need to make significant changes to their professional practices based on student feedback. Instructors managed their discomfort with SETs responses by not taking the comments personally and continuing to do what he or she thought was best for the course. Participants suggested there were too many uncertainties regarding student feedback. Instructors that had state mandates from their programs expressed that there were not many changes that could be made regardless of what the students stated on the evaluations. At some point during the 11 interviews, each participant stated they rarely used the feedback from their student evaluations, if at all. This revealed that the strategy used to manage cognitive dissonance was to avoid or dismiss student responses unless they are reprimanded by their direct supervisor or the college administration.

Section 3: The Project

Description of the Project and Its Goals

The purpose of this project study was to investigate the influence of SETs on instructors' professional practice. The study also explored how school administrators used student assessments of teachers to make decisions on teacher effectiveness (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Stark et al., 2016). Although most institutions of higher learning use SETs to collect data on students' experiences in courses and to assess instructors' teaching effectiveness, my research showed that there may be biases in student responses that calls the validity and reliability of SETs into question.

To better understand how instructors and administrators use SET results and to discuss plans for positive changes, it is recommended that key stakeholders collaborate during professional development (PD) training (Ganapati & Ritchie, 2021). The proposed 3-dayPD series, titled Getting the Most Out of SETs, focuses on ways to adapt SETs that minimize student biases and better assess teacher effectiveness so that positive changes to pedagogy are facilitated (Jones et al., 2018; Stark et al., 2016). Appendix A outlines the agenda and lesson plans for the 3-day professional training. The goal of this three-day training is to modify the college's current SETs to help faculty better utilize the feedback received for course development and to provide administrators with an accurate depiction of the instructor's performance. The college instructional administration and faculty will consider the following:

- Perceptions of the validity of SETs informed by my research
- Biases related to SETs

- Administrative use of SETs
- Suggestions for modifications of SETs

Participating in this professional development session will address a local and national concern for faculty to receive valuable feedback from students regarding their professional practice (Ganapati & Ritchie, 2021). The newly designed SET will also enable students to express their overall learning experience.

Rationale

My research findings revealed little to no usage of SETs by instructors because of concerns related to race and gender biases and an uncertainty of how administrators use SETs in the decision-making processes. The 3-day PD training program can provide both faculty and the administration with an opportunity to modify the evaluations to focus on teaching and learning (Queens, 2021). This training is intended to help faculty maintain their focus on student learning and professional growth and to use meaningful student feedback to positively influence their professional practice. PD trainings are designed to nurture the talents and expertise of faculty, and these trainings will benefit key stakeholders by focusing on how best to capture student feedback on effective teaching and learning (Queens, 2021). Implementing PD for enhancing SETs has benefits for teachers, the academic administration, and students. It fosters instructors to become better educators in their areas of expertise (Queens, 2021). Through the development of an assessment tool that captures a vivid description of teacher effectiveness, colleges will be able to mitigate biases that often trend in SETs (Queens, 2021). The goal is that SETs

will accurately reflect students' learning experiences and new knowledge acquired during a course.

Review of the Literature

The literature review research was conducted through the Walden University Library via their online database. Academic Search Complete was the database of choice. The search terms used were *professional development*, *benefits on professional development*, *linking SETs to the instructor*, *professional development and instructors*, *professional development and teachers*, *professional development in education*, and *professional development benefits in higher education*. Most of the research reviewed was centered around K-12 instruction.

The cognitive dissonance theory highlights a person's desire to remove dissonance or an uncomfortable feeling and restore a state of homeostasis (Barbaroux et al., 2022). The findings of my study demonstrated that teachers dismiss feedback from students if it is not constructive or meaningful. Because learning is a continuous process, and PD facilitates the instructors and the administrators to improve their skills and realize career proficiency (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Queens, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019). PD facilitates professional growth, enhances learning outcomes for students, and informs administrators of areas in need of improvement (Goe et al., 2012; Laustsen et al., 2021; Maričić et al., 2019; Queens, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021).

Linking SETs to Professional Development

PD trainings provide a means for stakeholder collaborations to develop student evaluations that will lead to higher levels of instructional practice and student learning (Coler et al., 2021; Fenwick, 2020; Goe et al., 2012). This type of training is based on a belief that data acquired to enhance the instructor's performance can be used to refocus the teacher's intent on student learning, specifically for faculty not meeting expectations in areas of classroom performance or students' learning (Coler et al., 2021; Fenwick, 2020; Ganapati & Ritchie, 2021; Goe et al., 2012; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Understanding the feedback received on their evaluations is critical to guarantee that instructors benefit from evidence-supported conversations, which results in the successful use of SET feedback to positively inform professional practice (Coler et al., 2021; Fenwick, 2020; Goe et al., 2012; Smillie et al., 2015).

Because there is a wide variation in what, how, and who instructors teach, it is important to connect the evaluations to an expected standard or quality of teaching to effectively measure teaching effectiveness and identify growth opportunities. Evaluations should emphasize items such as subject content and classroom pedagogy that informs needed professional development training (Coler et al., 2021; Elstad et al., 2017; Fenwick, 2020; Schachter et al., 2019; Siddique & Butt, 2019). PD trainings are based on classroom best practices, subject matter content, pedagogy, and student learning. Researchers maintain that when instructors develop professionally, institutions see an increase in instructional quality as evidenced by improved student learning outcomes

(Coler et al., 2021; Fenwick, 2020; Goe et al., 2012; Schachter et al., 2019; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

Student Learning

Data collected from SETs demonstrate that student feedback can be used to inform instructional teaching practice. Researchers contend that something should be learned from every teacher evaluation and the information gained should be helpful in instructional growth and development (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Coler et al., 2021; Fenwick, 2020; Lejonberg et al., 2018; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). The goal is for teachers to use student feedback to improve instruction and inform course development. But there is a lack of literature on how instructors use student feedback (Elstad et al., 2017; McChesney & Aldridge, 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Warren & Ward, 2019). Without professional development guidance on how to improve practice and student learning outcomes, positive changes do not take place (Coler et al., 2021; Goe et al., 2012; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021).

Studies have been conducted to discover characteristics in teaching that lead to higher SET scores and response rates (Goe et al., 2012; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Young et al., 2019). Several studies argued that students who develop rapport within the class and felt engaged by the instructor are likely to respond to SETs, particularly online SETs, more positively and to include beneficial feedback (Deng & Benckendorff, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019). Faculty who utilized formative mid-semester evaluations to change their pedagogy often saw increases in student responses

and the quality of the feedback given at the end of the course (Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019; Young et al., 2019). Incorporating PD opportunities to strengthen techniques for developing both mid-semester and end-of-semester course evaluations may improve student ratings of instructors because the evaluations are focused on the student learning experience. Students who are more engaged with the course are better able to evaluate instructors (Goe et al., 2012; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Young et al., 2019), and making changes to professional practice demonstrates to students that the instructor is interested in their learning and values a multiple evaluation method (Fenwick, 2020; Goe et al., 2012; Mlambo et al., 2021; Young et al., 2019).

Reminders sent to students from faculty to complete evaluations, such as emails and discussion board posts, better engage the students in the learning and the evaluation process and communicate to students that their opinions are meaningful and inform pedagogy improvement (Laustsen et al., 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Young et al., 2019). Grade incentives, such as a quarter-point increase, showed the greatest and most substantial influence on student responses (Laustsen et al., 2021; Polikoff & Porter, 2014; Schachter et al., 2019; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Warren & Ward, 2019; Young et al., 2019). The PD project for my study will focus on the effective use of SETs to increase response rates while prompting students to reflect on what they learned throughout the semester.

Professional Development and Continued Learning

Continued learning through PD renews and updates the skills of professionals in any discipline (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Laustsen et al., 2021; Schachter et al., 2019; Segarra & Gentry, 2021; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019), and is mandatory in many fields. The key is to ensure the trainings are relevant to the practice. Continued PD must be relevant to the professional and focuses on maintaining proficiency and increase specialized competence and expertise (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Goe et al., 2012; Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021). This type of training often refers to a learning framework comprised of formal and informal professional development activities that emphasize professional effectiveness and competency (Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021). PD activities aid in the acquisition of knowledge and skills that should transfer into profession practice. Participants of the training can utilize multiple approaches to learning new material dependent on the circumstances and context of the professional training (Goe et al., 2012; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021).

To be successful in providing a comprehensive learning experience for students, faculty must utilize the best information available to them. This involves different types of learning and knowledge attainment and implementation (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021) offered through PD and formal learning, workshops, workplace informal learning, and self-reflection opportunities. Informal learning is often initiated by individuals desiring to expand knowledge and abilities (Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Schachter et

al., 2019; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). Amorphous and unintentional learning is frequently obtained during encounters with colleagues. One of the many advantages of on-site learning, either formal or informal, is that teachers can use the skills available. When a PD workshop is on-site, the learning process begins driven by the facilitator who designates time and space for learning activities to occur (Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021).

Informal and on-site learning is a process informed from daily experience. However, the lack of trained instructors is the main instructional barrier to informal learning in the workplace (Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021). Some educators find informal learning approaches like team meetings or mentoring to be just as significant as formal training (Batten et al., n.d.; Goe et al., 2012; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). Regardless of the delivery method used, either formal or informal, PD should expand the professionals' pedagogy and career growth (Batten et al., n.d.; Goe et al., 2012; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019; Segarra & Gentry, 2021).

Offering professional development activities as a mixed approach of both formal and informal methods offers more opportunities for faculty to grow professionally (Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Schachter et al., 2019). Formal activities include publishing papers, taking formal courses, and attending conferences. Informal activities consist of networking, personal research, and group discussions. Evidence showed that most institutions participated in conventional activities such as

workshops or conferences to aid in career and professional growth (Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021).

Driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, higher education organizations around the world are being challenged to offer more online programs and to teach remotely (Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). Research revealed that it is imperative for professors to keep their skill set updated to meet the current needs of both the institution and the student population and identified the best way to do this is through continued professional development (Laustsen et al., 2021; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). This provides opportunities for faculty to widen the spectrum of professional activities in institutes as their instructional staff and student service employees obtain new competency sets. Offering professional development sessions also aids in professionals' ability to acquire an understanding of new topics from within their field (Abacioglu et al., 2020; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021; Segarra & Gentry, 2021). Researchers maintain that academic employees that participated in professional development activities are more likely to perform their roles effectively and more easily (Coler et al., 2021; Golding & Adam, 2016; Mlambo et al., 2021; Mooko & Oladokun, 2021).

Needed Resources and Potential Barriers

To successfully deliver the three-day PD, the Director of the Institutional Effectiveness and Research department will secure the college's training facilities or auditorium. The location of the training will need to be large enough to accommodate key stakeholders of the college. Extension cords will be needed for participants to charge

their computers or devices. Faculty participants will be asked to bring at least one of their evaluations for personal reference. It will be optional for participants to bring notepads or personal computers, but each person will need to participate in both written and verbal communication. Posters and markers will be provided. A request will be made to provide access to the college's online learning management system, to load the notes and presentations for participants. The facilitator will distribute handouts to all participants. To implement the training, a computer with PowerPoint and projection capabilities along with a projection screen, microphone, and a wireless internet connection will be needed.

Although training participants will have all the material needed to complete the training, this does not preclude the possibility of potential barriers such as people not being willing to actively participate in the training. Although there are multiple ways instructors can participate in PD, such as through webinars and attending conferences, there are still concerns regarding the overall comprehensiveness of development training (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). If the facilitator does not demonstrate how progression occurs from the beginning of the training to the end, there may not be buy-in from the participants causing the goals of the training to not be realized (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). My hope is that the professional development training I designed will result in ways to influence or inform both administrators and teachers.

Another barrier is the understanding of contextual factors and how they influence active participation in professional development. For example, if there are no positive outcomes at the end of the training that result in changing SETs questions or the way SETs are used administratively, some instructors may be less willing to participate in

future trainings. Training facilitators need to be knowledgeable about the group's contextual factors to determine where the most help or influence is needed and how to exert the influence (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). It is recommended to decrease barriers that professional development facilitators utilize a framework that merges an understanding of both teacher and administrator professional learning goals for efficient professional development (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021).

Although the hope is to offer professional development at the beginning and end of each semester, some institutions may offer PD throughout the year. Instructors have reported that sometimes they cannot participate because the training is only offered when they are teaching (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). Additionally, there may be a concern with the physical location of the training, or the training may only be for one division of the college. This hinders access to participation by limiting time and availability. In some cases, instructors cannot participate due to scheduling conflicts, or the individual may have been too tired or busy with other responsibilities to participate (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021).

A final barrier to consider is cognitive access and acceptance which involves the participants' ability to understand and develop meaning from the idea and various approaches encountered during professional development (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). Cognitive access barriers specifically affect teachers of different backgrounds and cultures. which may create a gap between the instructor's existing beliefs, practices, and current knowledge and the beliefs of some of the stakeholders. Teachers trained in westernized teaching philosophies find it easier to adapt to new pedagogical approaches

being presented, whereas professors from other cultures may find it overwhelming to adapt to new approaches (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021).

To manage the previously mentioned barriers of active participation, institutional factors, and cognitive access, it is recommended that institutions create and establish training sessions that meet the needs of each discipline (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). The focus on SETs may be more productive if the participants are a homogenous group. This eliminates the concern that PD seminars are not directly aligned to the discipline (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). Providing more discipline-specific PD options during feasible times and reachable locations encourages active participation and cognitive access and buy-in to the trainings (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). With all participants able to understand new strategies for measuring student learning and teacher effectiveness in homogenous groups, participants may find more value in their ability to understand and work within the area of expertise (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021).

Proposal for Implementation

For the local and national two and four-year public institutions to implement the three-day PD training, the feedback of all stakeholders will need to guide the learning objectives. The Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness must give final approval for the three-day seminar. After obtaining the final approval of this study from Walden University, I will request a meeting with key stakeholders to present my plan for the training. Appendix A shows the proposed timetable and notes for implementation.

The three-day-long introduction to the Getting the Most Out of SETs will begin in August or the week prior to the start of school. These days are usually determined by the

college administrators and their Board of Trustees and are created to conduct training for all teachers and administrators within the college. The instructional administration and the department of Institutional Effectiveness and Research will be responsible for establishing the time and place of the training, which will permit a larger group of training participants to access the training. Wireless internet access and electrical outlets will be needed for participants to plug in their electronic devices. The Institutional Research and Effectiveness Director and the instruction administration will be responsible for coordinating and scheduling future professional development events on this topic should expanded offerings be requested.

At the end of each semester, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness will collect SETs scores and feedback through their electronic evaluation system. This data will be compared to the previous term in aggregate form before the PD session to determine if what was utilized from the seminar and the changes made on SETs influenced scores and/or instructors' professional practice. The seminar will be interactive, providing all participants and stakeholders more insight into the use and potential benefits of SETs. All PD participants will receive a detailed information on ways to obtain SETs participation, biases revealed in SETs, ways to avoid receiving biased feedback and, instead, receive valuable feedback instructors can use for course development and instruction. Stakeholders will be briefed on the roles as group facilitators, educators, and learners. Please refer to Appendix A for program documents.

It is important that the first day of training is motivational, encouraging, and worthwhile for everyone involved. Organized and well-delivered workshops both

encourage the participant to buy into new ideas and motivates them to share input and suggestions (McChesney & Aldridge, 2021). When the training starts, the coordinator will introduce all involved parties and departments, explain expectations and procedures, highlight the three-day agenda, and briefly describe the results of the project study. At the conclusion of each day, participants will be required to complete an end-of-day evaluation and a reflection survey that will be discussed on days two and three of the professional development training.

The second day of the PD training will include reviewing personal SETs that the faculty brought as samples for group discussion. It will also include the review of the reflection evaluations and what was obtained the previous day. On day two, all stakeholders will be encouraged to ask additional questions that arose from reflection of day one presentations and activities. Also, academic dean and directors of institutional research will share their experiences with SETs and what actions they take based on SETs. Finally, participants will rejoin their assigned groups from the previous day to begin developing SETs questions that they consider useful to their professional practice. Appendix A provides the agenda for day two.

The third day of professional development will begin with a discussion of the previous day, and participants will once again break into their cohorts to prepare for their final presentations on what instructors identify as useful or beneficial SETs. After each presentation there will be a question-and-answer segment for each group. Day three will include time to finish work and presentations in their assigned groups. The goal is to facilitate a useful learning experience and initiate idea exchange amongst colleagues.

Each group will present their ideas and developments from the break-out sessions focused on creating SETs useful to their instructional practice and the needs of the administration. Previously used SETs will be assessed to identify potential barriers in the implementation of a new assessment of teachers at the institutions to seek solutions to those potential concerns. By allowing administrators and faculty to collaborate helps to guarantee that all participants and stakeholders involved will be held at the same level of expectation and standards. Participants will finish the final day with an open discussion and reflection on the overall professional development training. During the final evaluation, participants will discuss their ability to affect positive social change for institutions of higher learning. Appendix A outlines the agenda and activities for the last day of the training.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

This professional development program was established because of the findings of my research, where community college faculty expressed their concerns with SETs to include how the administration acted on the results. Faculty expressed a belief in potential biases from the students on their evaluations. The goal is to provide instructors with ideas on ways to implement feedback from student evaluations into their curriculum and instruction, and to create an assessment tool that decreases the possibility of biases but elicits the data instructors and the administrators need to be. This also better prepares faculty to address the identified learning needs of their students (Ganapati & Ritchie, 2021). Implementing the seminar may have a positive effect not only on the instructor

and the academic administrators, but on the students as well because of improved pedagogy based on SETs feedback.

My role in the seminar is to serve as the program coordinator. I will also serve as one of the facilitators as designated by the college's administration and institutional research director. The role of the participant stakeholders is to be active listeners and learners that observe the requirement to participate in a variety of activities such as at-large and small group discussions. They will also be the creators and presenters of a new potential SET for the college. Participants will need to complete all activities provided through the professional development and the daily reflection surveys at the end of each day.

Project Development Evaluation

The most suitable evaluation measure for this project is the outcomes-based evaluation. This assessment type grants the coordinator, the faculty, the instructional administration, and other universities and colleges to determine how effective the professional development session was on the behaviors and attitudes of the targeted population. The data provided from the evaluations will inform strength and weakness, so that modifications can be made. This will ensure that future professional development on this topic meets the needs of all stakeholders and improves the value of SETs for both teachers and the administration.

Outcome-Based Evaluation and Goals

Upon the completion of a three-day PD, all participants and stakeholders will complete an online reflection survey discussing the influence of the three-day PD session

and elicit if they received the information and support needed to begin to modify or make changes on their SETs. The goal of an outcome-based evaluation is focused on collecting data to determine if the program was: 1) relevant, 2) significant, 3) well-timed, 4) organized 5) and led by a knowledgeable facilitator (Bunge, 2018). The overarching goal is to evaluate if the PD training had a positive influence on curriculum development, teaching strategies, collaboration between the faculty and the administration, and if the seminar needs additional changes, materials, and information.

The annual assessment review will focus on the outcomes of faculty and staff usage and the development of ideas derived from the professional development sessions. Both the facilitator and the college coordinators will review the data from participant evaluations of the training. This will ensure that the goals of both the faculty and the administration are met. Depending on the outcomes of the collected data from the completed evaluations about the program, the training may need modifications.

Justification for Outcome-Based Evaluation

Outcome-based evaluation is suggested for gauging the caliber of the implementation of a new program (Lawton et al., 2017). This kind of assessment informs the program coordinator if the training was successful in obtaining its objectives (Lawton et al., 2017). Outcome-based evaluations also give the type of feedback needed to help the program coordinator contemplate various approaches to facilitate an evaluation training between teachers and the administration in hopes of enhancing training activities that support instruction and curriculum development (Lawton et al., 2017; Saderholm et al., 2017). Additionally, outcome-based evaluations help determine if the learning

activities increased the professional growth of the instructors and administrators' knowledge by providing tools to transform obtained information into practice (Lawton et al., 2017; Saderholm et al., 2017).

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders include community college faculty members and the instructional administration. Stakeholders also include the department of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, college provosts, and the program coordinators. The motivation for developing the PD is to align SETs' techniques and teaching strategies as well as to set achievable goals between the instructional administration, institutional research, faculty, and even local colleges. Instructors and administrators alike will be exposed to high expectations in both teaching and learning.

Summary

It could be concluded that the intent of section 3 was to outline the actual 3-day PD project as it was informed by the data collected through the interviews with study participants. This section also provided the goals and rationale for the development of the training additionally providing a literature review of what other scholars have learned about PDs that may influence how effective the training might be. This combination of ideas is what have led to the reflections and conclusion s in section 4.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

I conducted a basic qualitative study to identify the influence of SETs on instructors' professional practice. The objective of this project study was to use the results from the research to create a 3-day professional development (PD) training for college instructors and educators. The intent is to create a student assessment that prompts students to provide valuable feedback that instructors can use to enhance instruction and their overall professional practices.

Because this project focuses on the impact of SETs on instructional practice, I used Leon Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory as the conceptual framework. This theory addresses situations involving conflicting attitudes or beliefs that cause mental discomfort that led to changes in one's behavior or attitude in hopes of reducing the discomfort (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Festinger's theory indicates that humans have an inner motivator that keeps their attitudes and actions in agreement to avoid dissonance (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). This is explained as cognitive consistency. When there is inconsistency, dissonance exists (Guerra & Wubbena, 2017). Based on how the person feels about the feedback given, this would prompt an instructor to respond in either a negative or positive way to student evaluations.

My study was conducted at a local community college and extended, through social media, to include additional participants who taught at local community colleges in the state of North Carolina. The results of my study confirmed that there are concerns with the use of SETs among faculty members. The results also revealed that SETs may

require revisions to obtain feedback from students that with enhance instructional practices and curriculum development.

In this section, I describe the strengths and limitations of the Getting the Most Out of SETs Professional Development training with the option of continual training. I also reflect on what I discovered about my own strengths and weaknesses as a researcher going through this process. Lastly, I will discuss associations, possibility for social change, and recommendations for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Even though continued learning is promoted for students at the college, professional development and continued learning opportunities for faculty and staff are sparse (Mooko & Oladokun, 2021). One of the strengths in providing a professional development training created around the use of SETs at the college is that it allows the educational staff to come together to participate in conversations about the topic and learn from each other. As the responsibilities of faculty and staff become more hectic with increasing workloads and the challenges around a world-wide Covid-19 pandemic, it is important to give employees, especially those who can benefit from the use of SETs, the opportunity to meet and learn from one another.

Another strength of the study and performing a PD session is that there is significant value in informal conversations among faculty and staff when given the opportunity (Gormley, 2021). When instructors learn together, they are prone to exchanging practical ideas and quick fixes in informal discussions with colleagues (Gormley, 2921). In this manner, PD is a strong agent for learning as the faculty and

administrative academic staff converse on how SETs have been used and what they hope to achieve by using SETs feedback. By offering the opportunity to promote positive social change facilitated by an exchange of ideas and teaching strategies, a PD session aligns to the tenets of cognitive dissonance theory. When college teachers have more personal discussions about teaching practices and student learning with trusted colleagues, they are encouraged to make significant changes to curriculum development and instruction (Gormley, 2021).

In addition to the strength of rich conversations among colleagues, another strength of PD seminars is colleagues' ability to interact with people who share similar beliefs about teaching. When subject matter experts are added to the training, the chance of exposure to hearing viewpoints can be both affirming and challenging to participants' current teaching approach (Gormley, 2021). For example, it would have been beneficial to have all the humanities instructors in the study come together in a focus group to discuss their experiences with SETs. Having a platform to hear multiple perspectives has a positive effect on teaching staff as it provides a sense of comradery. Being able to hear and compare different strategies for managing student responses from SETs encourages self-reflection that makes change more desired. The sharing of new ideas and experiences challenges the participants to critically think about their approaches to instruction (Gormley, 2021).

One limitation is that although SETs have been used in education for decades and institutions have offered PD that assists in helping teaching staff obtain student responses on evaluations, there is still no way to guarantee students will participate in the

evaluation process or that they will give substantial, and beneficial feedback. Usually, student evaluations are administered at the end of the semester with the goal of discovering what students learn in the course (Nederhand et al., 2022). This was a concern of the participants in my study and a part of the reason instructors offered incentives to get students to complete the evaluations. The hope is that students will provide essential information for instructors to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the course. However, students are aware that SETs have purposes other than curriculum development, such as performance evaluations, which may influence students' decisions in how or if to respond (Nederhand et al., 2022). Despite the use of SETs and its implications for institutional and instructional improvements, issues with student responses and participation in filling out SETs are still a major concern among colleges. Evaluation validity or significant feedback is also an issue with student responses (Nederhand et al., 2022). Despite encouragement to complete the evaluation, low response rates amongst students persist (Nederhand et al., 2022).

Because universities and colleges rely on SETs to measure teaching effectiveness, it is important to address why some students dismiss or overlook their importance for both them and the institution. Students have little trust in the idea that student evaluations and their feedback are taken seriously resulting in low response rates (Nederhand et al., 2022). Therefore, students may not feel like active participants in their education and as a result, the student becomes the 'active consumer' (Nederhand et al., 2022). When students do not see changes based on their responses to evaluations, students are reluctant to complete SETs leaving instructors with little feedback on which to act (Nederhand et

al., 2022). The participants in the study maintained the concept of not using the feedback from their students. As students continue to see the same strategies taking place, they may be less likely to complete SETs.

The deliverable for this project study includes the teaching staff to be able to create an evaluation that produces the desired outcome. Developing an evaluation that prompts a discussion on student learning helps the instructor in multiple ways: (a) professional growth and instruction, (b) a strong measurement of teacher effectiveness, and (c) institutional accountability. At the end of the 3-day PD training, faculty will have the tools needed to develop an effective evaluation tool that will help them gauge what students have learned throughout the semester by asking for not only ratings but an overall description of their experiences as a learner in the course.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Though PD was the intended approach for this project study, there are alternative methods to address the local problem. One would be the development of uniform courses with the same goals, assignments, and learning outcomes specific to the curriculum requirements in each discipline. This would support that teachers are teaching the same concepts. Curriculum development for students within a specific discipline helps departments and divisions of the college meet the requirements and needs of a field of study (Nederhand et al., 2022). Before implementing a new curriculum plan, educators need to participate in multiple trainings to obtain a clear understanding of pertinent learning models. They also need to choose the models and learning theories that best apply to the disciplines and the students. Whatever is chosen, instructors must remember

to choose and develop curriculum plans that still allow academic freedom to not limit instructional autonomy.

A second alternative could be a policy recommendation designed to align with division objectives and states needed requirements by certain departments. For example, nursing and engineering feels may the need to address certain criteria within state regulations. This will help identify areas that need further enhancements and development in the course. This also helps to ensure that the teachers are teaching and exposing students to the material. Any policy or procedural changes could be presented to the academic administration and key stakeholders before changes are implemented.

A final alternative for both SETs and PD would be the use of faculty portfolios to measure teacher effectiveness. The portfolio criteria would have to be aligned with the college's mission statement, the division's learning objectives, and the department's learning outcomes. To avoid student biases, a portfolio-based evaluation may be more suitable for measuring teacher effectiveness as it documents what has taken place in the classroom aligned to the professor's instruction (Bibbens, 2018). Participants would still have to attend a PD that explains and explores the portfolio process so that instructors know all the components of portfolio development and will follow the design for their program. The results may not only increase faculty performance ratings, but it may provide a more vivid description of a teacher's strengths and weaknesses. It may also increase faculty morale by eliminating student biases. This project could be modified to exclude SETs altogether, eliminating invalid or inconsistent data obtained from the students. Eliminating SETs removes pressure on faculty to modify their instruction in a

way that will earn higher scores for administrative approval. The downfall of this alternative is that it may limit what the student learns in the classroom, which may hinder transferability of skills into other classes.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Educators have the responsibility to create significant learning opportunities that will transform student learning (Bernstein, 2018). Instructors are required to stay abreast of current teaching trends and strategies that help maintain a student-centered atmosphere in the classroom and promotes student learning. Additionally, instructors are obligated by law and by institutional requirements to be effective teachers so that students are exposed to a transformative learning experience (Bernstein, 2018)). The scholarship of an instructor is multifaceted and includes creating future scholars and professionals. Scholarship for teachers involves research, instruction, knowledge in the field, and the use of sound pedagogical practices (Karm et al., 2022).

The process to completing this project study required my participation in every aspect of scholarship and research. I was a community college instructor who started working towards a doctoral degree in education. Before postponing my career to pursue the degree, the periods of time spent with my students from a variety of disciplines, cultural backgrounds, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and professional backgrounds forced me to constantly find new teaching approaches and strategies to address the learning needs of my students. The knowledge I attempted to obtain was not only to promote transformative student-centered learning experiences but to maintain being an effective teacher as well. Because the college maintains

accreditation under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), it is important that the institution and its instructors provide evidence of accountability, participate in hours of professional developments, find ways to actively engage students in the learning process through instruction, and review SETs each semester. These activities are completed throughout the semester in hopes of obtaining information to assist in course development.

To support the research question for this study, I performed two extensive literature reviews. The first was designed to learn various viewpoints on the use of SETs and how instructors utilized given feedback to help in course development and instructional practices. The second literature review was focused on the findings in my study and how to provide positive social change with the use and perceptions of SETs. Through the completion of this project study and by assessing the recent data associated with my research topic and its findings, I found gaps in the use of SETs in professional practice and in the literature regarding the use of SETs at the community college. Most of the research was either created for grade schoolteachers or university professors, which confirmed the need for more research at the community college level.

During my research journey, I have grown as an academic scholar -practitioner. I never wanted to attempt a quantitative project study because I understood this was not a strong skill for me. Additionally, I was not interested in the amount of time a quantitative study may save. Instead, I wanted to gather as close to a full depiction of what qualitative research could provide along with a proper data analysis. I value the rich and detailed data I obtained in the interview process with the study participants. Through teaching and

personal learning and observations about SETs, I now appreciate my experiences as a former college instructor and my current experiences as a researcher and the connection between the two roles.

My personal experiences as an instructor have made me more empathetic to college faculty upon the realization that the desire for a quick, timesaving SETs process needed by the administration is not what is beneficial to the faculty. Quick, summative data collection only provides a snapshot of what the instructor has taught in the classroom and what the students have learned. I believe the rich descriptions obtained through qualitative research will make me a more knowledgeable and understanding instructor as I prepare to go back into the classroom and potentially serve in an administrative role.

Reflections on the Importance of the Work

I believe my study is important as it serves to advocate for strong instructors misrepresented by student evaluations. Institutions may be losing good teachers due to biased comments made by students and reviewed by administrations who believe they have an assessment tool that meets the needs of professional growth and the needs of accountability for accrediting bodies. I understand the need for institutions to save time and money using quantitative evaluations. The convenience of completing SETs is a part of what has led to the increase in the use of SETS at colleges and universities. However, the use of quantitative data and scoring, again, only provides a quick view into what makes a teacher ineffective or effective in the classroom. The qualitative view offers more insight into student learning and their learning experiences while in the classroom (Karm et al., 2022).

As a future administrator, I have learned that although there is value in the summative view of teacher assessments, it is also important to realize the larger picture. The larger picture is captured through the experiences shared by the student. To obtain this experience, it is important to create questions on SETs that will not only allow students to communicate what they have learned and how they have learned it but will also reveal what is needed to assist the instructor in continued course development, curriculum planning, and professional practice. SETs should not be developed in a way that prompts students to discuss what he or she did not like about the instructor. Instead, SETs would be more effective if they were discipline specific and focused on what the student learned through instruction from the teachers.

As a former faculty member, I am challenged by the idea that administrators may be basing teacher effectiveness and promotional decisions solely on student feedback and their responses. As a result, colleges may lose solid teachers because the student did not like the rigor of the course or the way the person dressed. Conversely, schools may keep the poor teachers based primarily on non-academic metrics. The evaluation process is not only about the character of the teacher, but also their ability as an instructor and what the student has learned in the class.

My project study and its results will promote positive leadership in education and have a positive impact on social change within institutional effectiveness departments and disciplinary units for colleges. Through the alignment of SETs with discipline specific student evaluations feedback from students will be focused on their learning experiences. This study also positively impacts the way instructors view and utilize the

feedback they receive from students. The use of valid student feedback will aide instructors in enhancing course and curriculum development plans as well as instructional delivery. As a former instructor, I have been in many leadership roles, including Writing Center Director, Southern Association of Colleges, and Schools (SACs) committees, a conference organizer, and new faculty mentor, all of which afforded me leadership opportunities that required the use of assessment tools for the role. For roles in which I was the lead person, I had to teach my students and my staff the importance of obtaining feedback that would help with constant improvement of the course or our program. Specifically, as a Writing Center Director, the students employed through the center were trained to be leaders and taught that constructive criticisms obtained through evaluations were beneficial to the success of the individual in any given field and for any program. I also offered trainings that would refresh their skills or provide knowledge of new skill sets. This, in turn, motivated them to desire to see and embrace changes at the college for the better. I noticed that in leading the change by example, I can encourage others to want to do the same. This process gave me a different perspective on the significance of qualitative research and my role in leadership as a catalyst for change.

Before starting the doctoral program, I completed the Education Specialist degree and was teaching full-time at the community college. This was accomplished while being a wife, mom of one (and pregnant with number two) and living with multiple sclerosis. I knew that taking on the challenge of obtaining an advanced degree would be difficult but worth it. Still, I really wanted to dedicate myself to research and this research topic in the hope of making a difference with SETs for faculty at various institutions. As I began to

review studies and articles on the use of SETs and instructional practice, I noticed that there was a plethora of research on the use of SETs and faculty for grades K-12 and senior institutions, but there was very little research on the way community college instructors used SETs in curriculum development and instructional practice. As I completed this project study, I recognized that instructors' perception on the use of SETs was not very positive. Many of the participants within the study provided vivid details and descriptions of negative experiences with student feedback and the way their administration responded to the comments from students. Reading previous studies, seeing gaps in the research, and hearing from my study's participants confirmed my concerns with the use of SETs and how they impacted instructional practice.

As a former community college instructor, working as a member of the SACs accreditation team, I knew there was a level of expected accountability that instructors were to maintain. However, I was not familiar with how accountability and teacher effectiveness was measured within other disciplines and units. In addition to what the college required, certain programs had to meet state mandates. For example, the nursing program must meet certain standards and curriculum requirements to maintain licensure. I found this to be very stressful when added to the expectations identified on SETs, teaching six to seven classes per semester, performance evaluations, classroom observation, and follow-up meetings with the department chair and deans. It was very clear that my research was needed to help in the development of SETs and provide a reminder or insight to the original purpose of SETs.

Now I will be able to offer research informed suggestions and support to academic departments and divisions of institutional effectiveness (IE) that will support the use of SETs in departments and create new versions of assessments that will provide relevant feedback from students about course development and instruction. Doing so will also assist in maintaining a student-centered approach to learning for the college and the classroom experience. In the next year, I hope to present my research at several professional development trainings at colleges and universities. I would also like to shift careers into an area that develops SETs for the college to strengthen or revise student evaluations in ways that will benefit instruction through valuable feedback for the instructor.

I have not been able to work in an area of institutional effectiveness, but I hope to find a position in higher education that will allow me to apply the knowledge I have obtained to help institutions develop discipline specific SETs that will help the institution gather the data needed to enhance not only departments, but academic divisions and the overall institution. I no longer want to be in the classroom but would rather be in a leadership position that works to help teachers enjoy what they do more and gather the tools they need for continued professional growth and curriculum transformation. The knowledge I gained throughout performing my research and the completion of this project study will have a significant impact on my future professional experiences and my desire to continue my quest to become an administrator at a school. My goal as a practitioner in higher education is to transition to a position that allows me to assist in the

development of processes that measure teacher effectiveness, such as SETs, to ensure that faculty have what they need to continue to grow professionally.

The findings of this project study prompted the development of the Getting the Most Out of SETs, a three-day professional development training. I expected the results would require college instructors to reflect on how they used SETs to develop their course. I was not anticipating that the results would render the idea of redeveloping the SETs tool to ensure the questions encouraged feedback solely on the learning experience in the classroom. I plan to implement PD trainings that focus on developing student evaluations that eliminate room for student biases. SETs will be focused on student-centered learning experiences with the intent of instructors receiving student feedback valuable to instructors in developing their courses and professional practices. My project study gave me confidence that I would be able to impact social change at colleges and universities in a positive manner. Initially, there were moments that I thought I would not be able to complete this project study, but I was encouraged by the possibility of being an advocate for change and transformation as a project developer.

Implications, Applications and Directions for Future Research

The Getting the Most Out of SETs professional development training was created in response to the data collected from study participant responses acquired during the interview process. If executed correctly, not only will this project have a positive impact on instructors' professional practice but on the value and validity of student feedback, potential changes in SETs questions, and the way administrators measure teacher effectiveness. In turn, revamping evaluation questions to obtain substantial student

responses will assist teachers in course development and curriculum planning. The administration will be able to better assess teacher effectiveness and academic disciplines will be able to enhance their programs by addressing the needs of their students. Additionally, students will regain trust in the SETs process as they recognize that their sincere feedback is being valued by the instructors.

The project has the potential to enhance college programs and departments by utilizing suggestions made by students to address their needs as a learner. Faculty will be able to share what they do in the classroom with their colleagues to better address the needs of the students, which will also promote continued learning and professional growth (Husain & Khan, 2016; Schachter et al., 2019). A successfully implemented program can be transferred to other institutions to demonstrate a positive impact on social change. The PD can have a national and global impact to promote change as well. This study will address the concerns of faculty to receive valuable feedback from students that can be used in course development while also shedding light on student learning needs. This study was created to learn more about the concerns faculty participants at the community college shared about SETs. Many of the participants suggested there should be a connection to the evaluations and student learning. If the content questioned on evaluations were clearer as to what and how the students learned, it would better inform the type of instructional methods teachers used in the classrooms. However, the evaluations seemingly focus directly on the characteristics of the teacher rather than the student learning experience. The Getting the Most Out of SETs training has the potential to enhance instructors ‘professional competences and improve student learning. By

improving student learning, the college is bound to see growth in other areas such as student retention and academic achievement.

It is expected that PD participants will engage in discussion and review of previous data in developing an assessment tool based on their findings and newly obtained knowledge. It may be beneficial to educators at the college and to instructors to continue PD online each semester to share ideas on teaching strategies and practice to promote reflection and re-evaluation of their approach to curriculum development. All stakeholders involved must understand that the alignment of SETs to student learning and instruction provide both a service to the learning community and the instructor.

This PD program offers different possibilities for future research. One option is a qualitative approach to developing SETs and obtaining more vivid descriptions of student learning to better assess teacher effectiveness. Another option would be to use data collected to compare quantitative data to qualitative data to determine which method provides a more accurate description of teacher effectiveness. The Division of Institutional Effectiveness (DIE) could also consider revising their current SETs to be more focused on the student learning experience and monitor potential overall grade increases and academic achievement. The division could also note how instructors adopt or make changes based on suggestions obtained using SETs. Additional research could focus on the implementation of the use of a revised SETs in specific disciplines to compare to other disciplines that have not made any discipline specific changes on SETs. Researchers at the college could also compare teacher effectiveness to student proficiency through the course of the semester.

Long-term, there could be a follow-up to my study, which would focus on faculty perceptions of the impact of SETs on professional practice. All the suggestions for continued research support the implementation of the Getting the Most Out of SETs PD program and encourages continued, in-depth qualitative research that would generate rich data that shows both positive and negative features of the project as well. It could also reveal potential suggestions for research that was not mentioned in my study such as low response rates on SETs. Finally, a mixed-method study approach to this project could be developed around students' perception of instructional changes made because of SETs such as new activities or an increase or decrease in course rigor because of the implementation of this project. All prospective future research should provide insight into the effectiveness of this PD seminar and improving the use of SETs for professional growth amongst instructors.

Conclusion

The strengths and weaknesses of this professional development using SETs amongst faculty included being able to share ideas amongst colleagues and learn from each other. The research investigated instructors' perspectives on how they utilize student feedback received from evaluations to inform instructional practice. This basic qualitative study identified four themes implying the reasons for the lack of use of student feedback in curriculum development: (1) implementation of SETs, (2) gender traits and biases, (3) race concerns, and (4) administrative use of SETs. A 3-day professional development training for college professors and the academic administration provides an opportunity for both parties to unite to positively influence teachers' instructional approach to

teaching strategies, offer data collection and assessment, inspire more rigorous curriculum provisions, and promote positive social change. The success of Getting the Most Out of SETs professional development training will impact the enhancement of professional practice amongst instructors to improve the overall learning experience for students while providing substantial student responses that encourage their use in instructional practice.

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Appendix A: 3-Day Professional Development Training and Notes

The Getting the Most Out of SETs training was created in response to the findings of the project study I conducted regarding the impact of SETs on instructors' teaching practice. After interviewing eleven community college instructors and completing the data analysis process, four themes emerged that included the use of SETs by the instructor, gender biases, racial concerns, and the administrative use of student evaluations of teachers (SETs). These themes emerged as reasons why instructors did not consider SETs for curriculum development and instructional practices. Therefore, feedback to improve and develop the course was the motivation for the creation of this project. This study is focused on creating and implementing a professional development (PD) training for instructors that will help teachers enhance and strengthen their courses. The execution and evaluation of the 3-day PD program are outlined and detailed in this appendix.

Goal: The goal of the Getting the Most Out of SETs training is to revise SETs so they prompt valid feedback from students so instructors can enhance and strengthen their courses.

Purpose: The purpose of the project is to provide instructors and educators with the tools and activities needed to use feedback given by students to develop and improve instruction. The training will guide instructors and the administration to create an assessment of teachers that captures the learning experiences of students in a way that better determines teacher effectiveness. Activities include sharing experiences with colleagues, participant discussions, creating questions foe student evaluations, and improving SETs. Additionally, college educators will share their product with other participants and the administration to revise their current evaluations to promote actionable instructional improvement informed by the student evaluations.

Participants:

- Getting the Most Out of SETs Coordinator and Facilitator
- Full-time instructors from various disciplines
- Chief academic administrators
- Local colleges and universities interested in participating in the training
- Each training is designed for no more than 30 participants (six groups of five participants)

Training Duration:

Getting the Most Out of SETs will be a 3-day PD training followed by optional semesterly departmental PD sessions via Zoom or Microsoft Teams conferencing.

Resources Needed:

- Access to the college's Blackboard
- Overhead projector or smart TVs access
- Educators' individual laptops
- Wi-fi availability
- Notepads and writing utensils
- Instructor's must bring old copies of their most recent SETs

Learning Objectives:

1. Participants will verbalize an understanding of the historical background and use of SETs.
2. Participants will learn to develop questions for SETs that encourage insightful feedback that instructors can use to inform their professional practice.
3. Participants will determine which categories of SETs will best benefit the needs of their course and discipline to enhance course curriculum and teaching practice.
4. Educators will recognize biases demonstrated through SETs.
5. Participants will review samples of formative and summative evaluations to identify strengths and weaknesses of their most recent student evaluations.
6. Educators will describe strategies for developing an evaluation that will benefit instructional practice and curriculum development

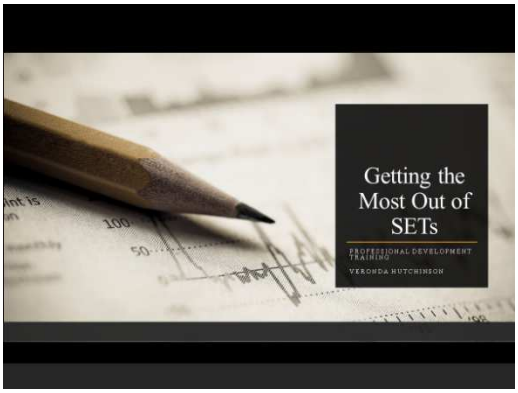
3-Day Agenda Professional Development Agenda

Day One: Introduction and Overview	
Time	Topic
9:00am – 10:00am	Outcomes: By the end of day-1 participants will be able to identify 3 historical reasons for the use of SETs Opening Session - Introduction of PD's Facilitator/Coordinator - Review of the history of SETs - Overview of project's purpose, goals, learning objectives and outcomes Icebreaker activity - Groups of 5 will separate to discuss the questions identified and prepare for a full group discussion. Each group should choose a spokesperson to represent their group.
10:05am – 10:35am	Workgroup Breakout Session - What has been your experiences with student evaluations? - Have you ever felt as though the feedback was biased? Why or why not? Provide examples. - How have you responded to the feedback from students? - How have administrators responded to the feedback you received once they reviewed it? - Have you found student responses to be valid? Why or why not? What makes a student's responses valid? - Do you have any concerns about SETs or the use of the tool? If so, what are those concerns? - What are the strengths and weaknesses to receiving student feedback? - Choose at least one spokesperson to speak on behalf of your group
10:35am – 10:45am	Break
10:45am – 11:30am	Joint Session - Workgroup Summation (Spokespersons)
11:30am – 12:00pm	Purpose and intention of SETs - How do you explain SETs to students? - What information would be beneficial to instructors for course development and instruction? - What would you like to learn from your evaluations?
12:00pm – 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm – 2:45pm	Plenary Session - Evaluations: What the research shows
2:45pm – 3:15pm	Q&A
3:15pm – 3:30pm	Closing Session - Final Thoughts - Daily Takeaway: How have you used evaluations from students in the past? What was/was not useful? - Complete a professional development evaluation and leave it on the table upon the conclusion of today's training

Day Two: Development Day	
Time	Topic
9:00am – 9:10am	Objective: By the end of day-2, participants will be able to 1) identify 4 categories used to develop SETs questions 2) design an evaluation utilizing at least 4 SETs categories with a minimum of 10 questions Opening Session - Welcome (10 min) - Residual questions/expectations from Day 1
9:10am – 10:35am	Group Discussion (20-minute discussion.30 minutes report out) - How have you used evaluations in the past? - What feedback did you find useful? - What information was not useful? - What would you change?
10:35am – 10:45am	Break
10:45am – 11:45am	Plenary Session - How to Develop and Formulate Evaluation
11:45am – 12:00pm	Project Expectations - Develop an evaluation in workgroups - Consider what you want to learn from the evaluations - Explain how you would use outcomes for continuous course development and improvement *Each group should be prepared to do a 25-minute presentation with an additional 5 to 10 minutes for Q&A on the final day
12:00pm – 3:15pm	Lunch & Developing Evaluation Working Session and Presentation Preparation
3:15pm –5:00pm	Closing Session - Final Thoughts - Review of the agenda for day 3 - Daily Takeaway: Be prepared to go directly into workgroups in the morning to finalize presentations - Continue working as needed - Complete a professional development evaluation and leave it on the table upon the conclusion of today's training

Day Three:	
Time	Topic
9:00am – 10:00am	Workgroup presentation finalization
10:00am – 12:00pm	Objective: Participants will be able to analyze and identify strategies to improve SETs in a way that will help minimize bias in student responses Groups 1 – 3 Presentation and Discussions each group will be allotted: - 30 minutes for presentation and testing - 5 minutes for Q&A - 5 minutes break/transition - This estimates at approximately 1.2 hours (40 minutes per group) but additional time has been allotted for extended discussions or question and answer, and evaluation and critique of the presentations..
12:00pm – 1:15pm	Lunch
1:15pm – 4:15pm	Groups 4 –6 Presentation and Discussions each group will be allotted: - 30 minutes for presentation and testing - 5 minutes for Q&A - 5 minutes break/transition - This estimates at approximately 1.2 hours (40 minutes per group) but additional time has been allotted for extended discussions or question and answer, and evaluation and critique of the presentations..
4:15pm – 5:00pm	Closing Session - Final Thoughts - Review of Resources - Next Steps - Opportunities for future trainings - Complete a professional development evaluation and leave it on the table upon the conclusion of today's training

Slide 1



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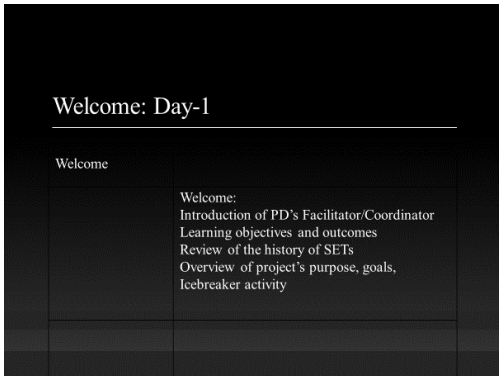

Welcome to Getting the most out of SETs. Over the next 3 days we will be discussing student evaluations of teachers, (SETs), what the research says about SETs, and ways to develop SETs so faculty can get the most out of the feedback received from evaluations. Before we get started, I would like to introduce our special guest. They will be presenting information about their experiences with SETs and how they have developed SETs to assist in course development.

Ice breaker and workgroup division: Over the next 3 days the persons sitting at your table will be your work group. This means all your activities and brainstorming, and development will take place with this group. If by chance a session is missed, all the information and presentations will be loaded in daily modules in the school's online learning system (Blackboard). To get us started, introduce yourself to the persons at the table if this has not been done already., especially if you do not know them. Then discuss experiences with SETs amongst the group. Choose a group spokesperson to share the group's discussion with everyone.

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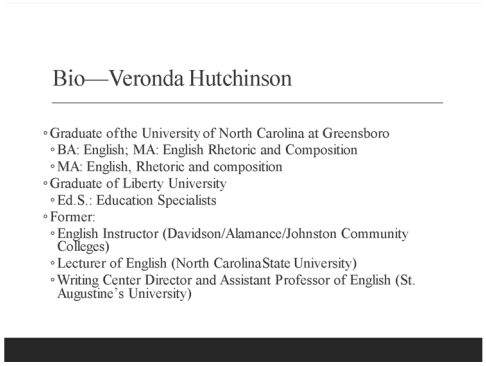

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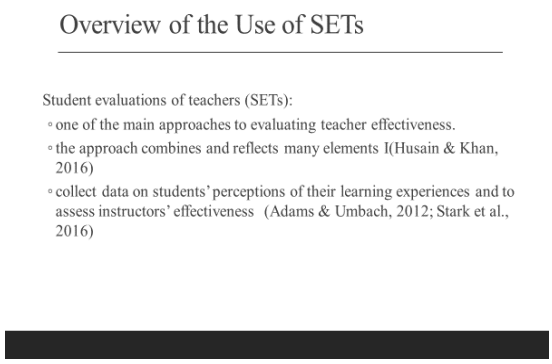

Over the years, student evaluations of teachers (SETs) have become one of the main approaches to the way education administrators measure teaching effectiveness. The approach combines and reflects many elements including student achievement, on-the-job evaluations, performance measures, and the faculty portfolio (Husain & Khan, 2016). Most post-secondary administrators have used end of the semester evaluations to collect data on students' perceptions of their learning experiences in the classroom and to assess instructors' effectiveness as a teacher (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Stark et al., 2016).The concern is that student evaluations may be based on personal factors and biases beyond the instructor's control such as gender or a lack of student preparation for the rigor of a course (Stark et al., 2016). There was also a concern that SETs may not ask questions that address student learning in the course (Otani et al., 2012a; Stark et al., 2016

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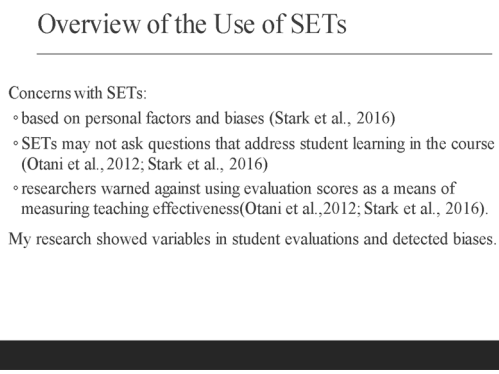

Researchers have warned against using student evaluation scores as a means of measuring teaching effectiveness because different variables such as major course requirements that have the potential to influence the scores (Otani et al., 2012b; Stark et al., 2016). My research showed that there were some variables that showed up in student evaluations that may or may not influence instructional practice.

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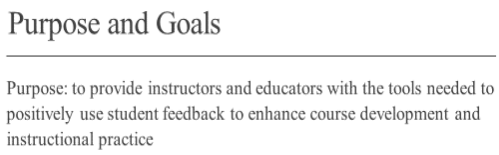

The purpose of the project is to provide instructors and educators. with the tools and activities needed to positively use feedback given by students in their course development and instruction. The training will also help both instructors and the administration create an assessment of teachers that captures the learning experiences of students in a way that that better determines teacher effectiveness. Activities include sharing experiences with colleagues, participant discussions, creating questions foe student evaluations, and presenting alternatives to SETs. Additionally, college educators will share their evaluation creations with other participants and the administration in hopes of being able to revise their current evaluations to encourage usable student feedback for the instructors and the academic administration.

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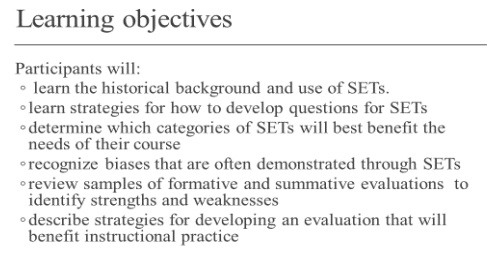

1. Participants will learn the historical background and use of SETs.
2. Participants will learn strategies for how to develop questions for SETs that will encourage students to provide insightful feedback the instructor can use to enhance their professional practice.
3. Participants will determine which categories of SETs will best benefit the needs of their course and discipline to enhance course curriculum and teaching practice.
4. Educators will recognize biases that are often demonstrated through SETs.
5. Participants will review sample of formative and summative evaluations to identify strengths and weaknesses of their most recent student evaluations.

6. Educators will describe strategies for developing an evaluation that will benefit instructional practice and curriculum development

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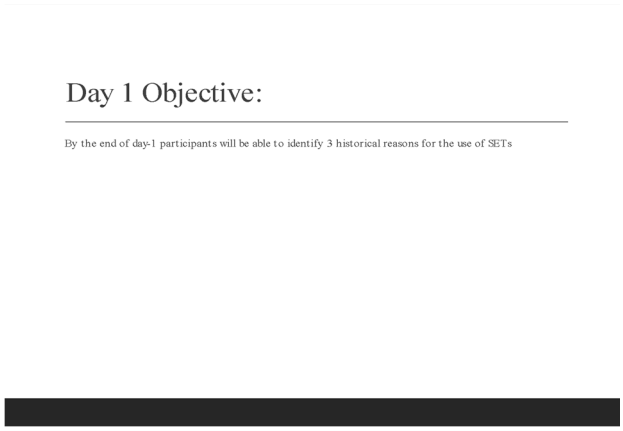

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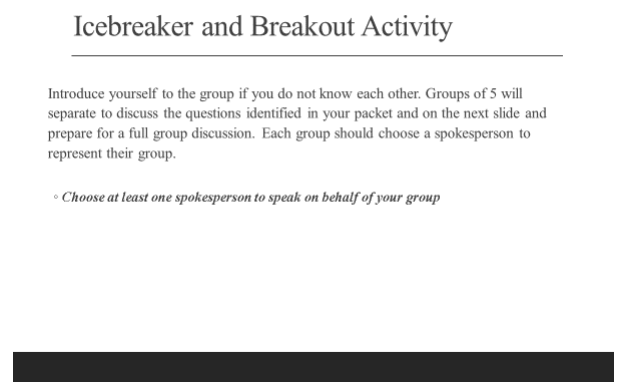

During the breakout session, each group will discuss their experiences with SETs and select a representative from the group to report out to the rest of the participants in the group. There will be a short break before reconvening as a full group.

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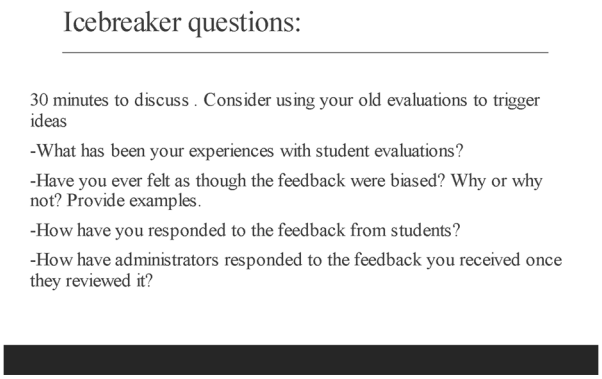

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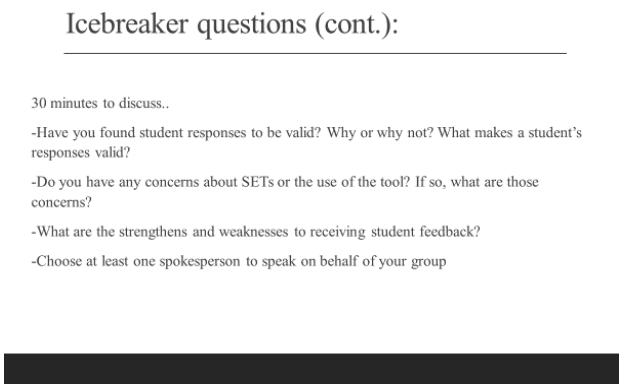


Slide 12

Icebreaker questions (cont.):

30 minutes to discuss..

-Have you found student responses to be valid? Why or why not? What makes a student's responses valid?

-Do you have any concerns about SETs or the use of the tool? If so, what are those concerns?

-What are the strengths and weaknesses to receiving student feedback?

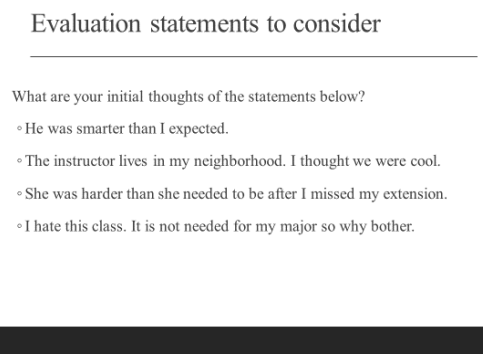
-Choose at least one spokesperson to speak on behalf of your group

Slide 13

Slide 14

Discussion..

Slide 15



In the full body discussion, each group will have the spokesperson present key ideas and experiences from their group's discussion. As the leader of the training, I will attempt to connect or address the experiences of participants to current research discussing SETs. The floor will be open for discussion amongst the entire group as well.

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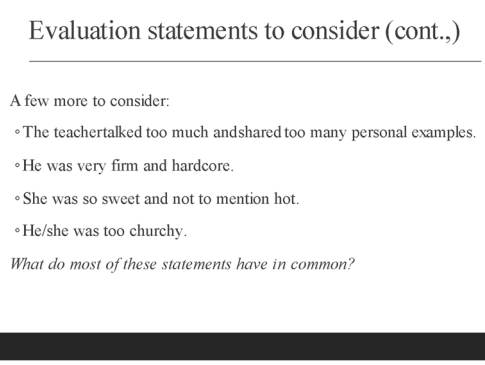

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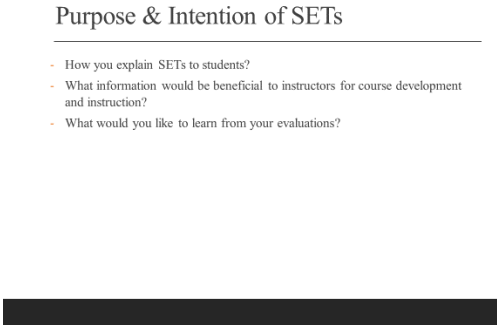

Using SETs to evaluate teaching effectiveness is practiced at local institutions in North Carolina (Lawrence, 2018; Stark, 2013), but education stakeholders have faced challenges in determining the best way to evaluate teacher effectiveness (Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016b). One way is to obtain feedback from students. This is another issue faculty have had problems with (Lawrence, 2018; Tarun & Krueger, 2016). When encouraging students to complete evaluations, it is so important that instructors explain the value in SETs. Explain how it helps not only the college and the instructor, but them as well as it provides rich insight into course development and teaching strategies. Providing sincere feedback helps the instructor know what is working well in the course and what may need to be tweaked.

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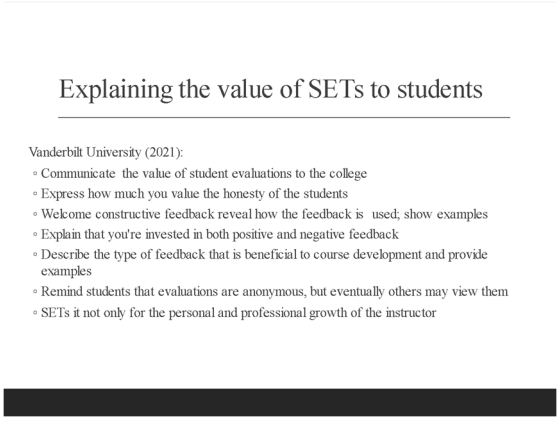

Tips for how to explain SETs to students: Vanderbilt University (2021) suggested instructors tell the value of student evaluations for the college, the instructor, and student learning. Instructors should express how much they value the honesty of the students and welcome constructive feedback. Instructors should also reveal how the feedback is used to improve their overall learning experience in the course (Vanderbilt, 2021). Show examples of what constructive feedback should sound like in addition to examples of how it influences changes made to the curriculum or instructional practices.

Students need to know that the instructor is invested in both positive and negative feedback given (Vanderbilt, 2021). For this reason, it is important to describe the type of feedback that is beneficial to course development and how the instructor manages the course, such as specific feedback with examples. It is also important to remind students that the evaluations are anonymous, and the instructor will not be able to see their response until after final grades have been submitted because many students are not aware of this (Vanderbilt, 2021). Students should also know that they are the central audience for the evaluation, but eventually other members of the college may view them. This includes department chairs and other college administrators. The reason for others reading SETs it not only for the personal and professional growth of the instructor but also for curriculum planning (Vanderbilt, 2021). This encourages students to focus on their learning experiences through the entire semester and not just a few days out of the semester.

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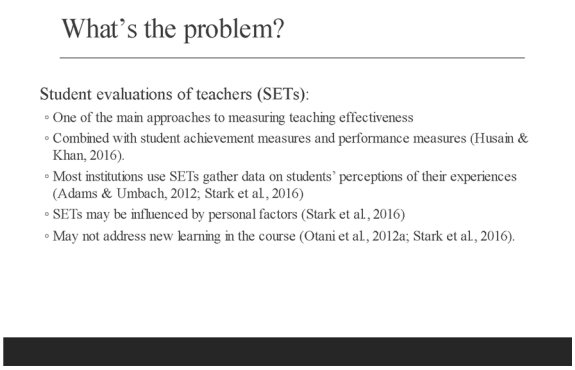

Student evaluations of teachers (SET) has been one of the main approaches to measuring teaching effectiveness and is often considered in combination with student achievement measures, on-the-job evaluations, performance measures, and the faculty portfolio (Husain & Khan, 2016). Most post-secondary administrators have used end of the semester student evaluations of teachers (SETs) to gather data on students' perceptions of their experiences in courses and to assess instructors' teaching effectiveness (Adams & Umbach, 2012; Stark et al., 2016). However, the information collected from students' evaluations may be influenced by personal factors beyond the instructor's control such as lack of student preparation for the rigor of higher education (Stark et al., 2016). The SETs may not address new learning in the course and could be reflective of an assessment of students' past learning experiences (Otani et al., 2012a; Stark et al., 2016).

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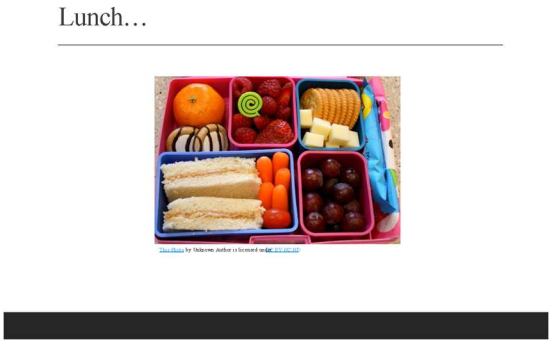

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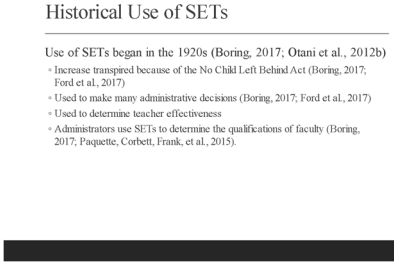

Although the use of SETs began in the 1920s (Boring, 2017; Otani et al., 2012b), the increase in the use of SETs transpired because of the No Child Left Behind Act. A federal requirement was put in place for schools to show how they measure accountability and teacher effectiveness (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). The tool has been used to make many administrative decisions including decisions on tenure and promotion (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). Now, universities and colleges use the student evaluation to determine teacher effectiveness and administrators use SETs to determine how qualified faculty are to teach their subject matter, move into higher positions, and receive promotions or raises within the institution (Boring, 2017; Paquette, Corbett, Frank, et al., 2015).

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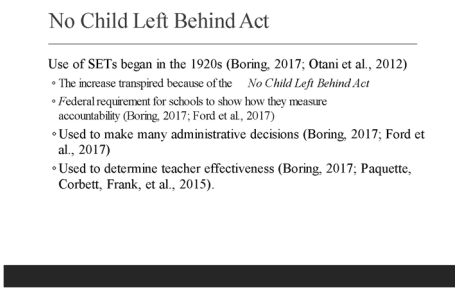

Just as a refresher before we move on, the No Child Left Behind Act has these few key takeaways. Although the use of SETs began in the 1920s (Boring, 2017; Otani et al., 2012b), the increase in the use of SETs transpired because of the No Child Left Behind Act. A federal requirement was put in place for schools to show how they measure accountability and teacher effectiveness (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). The tool has been used to make many administrative decisions including decisions on tenure and promotion (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). Universities and colleges use the student evaluation to determine teacher effectiveness and administrators use SETs to determine how qualified faculty are to teach their subject matter, move into higher positions, and receive promotions or raises within the institution (Boring, 2017; Paquette, Corbett, Frank, et al., 2015).

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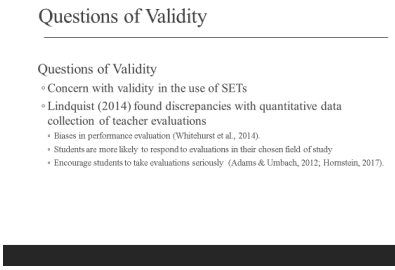

There are questions about the validity of student responses on SETs. Researchers have found discrepancies in student feedback, especially in quantitative data collection where the numerical scores did not match the descriptive responses.

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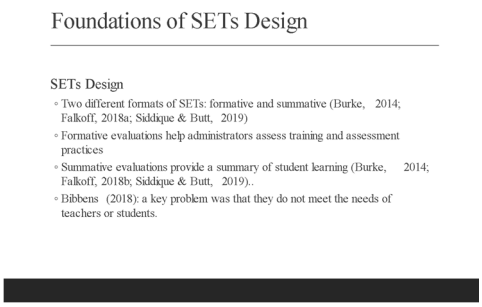

There are two different formats of student evaluation techniques, formative and summative (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Formative evaluations help administrators assess training and assessment practices, as well as the alignment of course objectives with academic activities. Summative evaluations provide a summary of an entire term or semester of student learning (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018b; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Administrators used SETS to monitor quality teaching.

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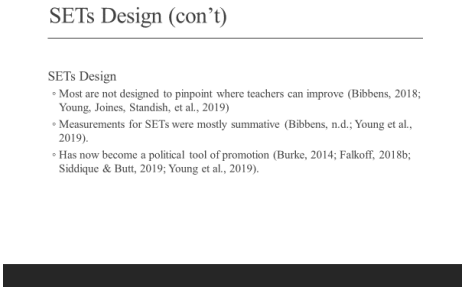

According to Bibbens (2018), a key problem with student evaluations of teachers was that they do not meet the needs of teachers or students. SETs do not provide information about students' progress over the course of the term (Bibbens, 2018.; Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018b; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Although, SETs have been used for faculty development, most of them are not designed to pinpoint where the teachers can improve their teaching (Bibbens, 2018; Young, Joines, Standish, et al., 2019) or where faculty excel (Bibbens, 2018). The measurements for SETs were mostly summative, which leaves little room for instructional development. Tools that make room for development are usually formative (Bibbens, 2018.; Young et al., 2019). The evaluations formerly used as a tool for faculty development and student learning has now become a political tool of promotion (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019; Young et al., 2019).

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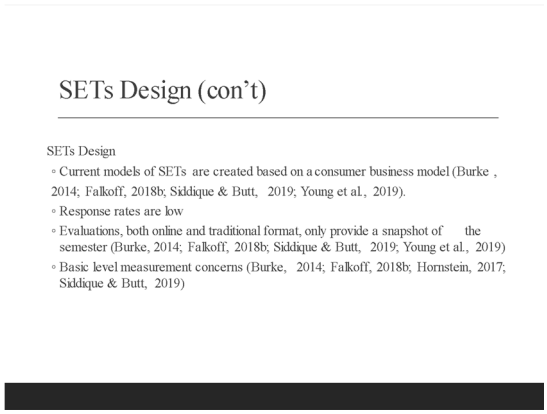

The issues with SETs were basic level measurement concerns but are very problematic when it comes to making promotional decisions as SETs have been rendered useless as measurement tools for teacher effectiveness (Burke, 2014; Falkoff, 2018b; Hornstein, 2017; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

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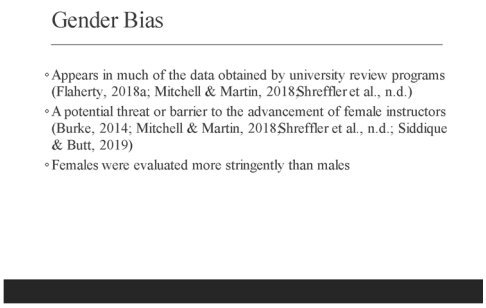

Gender bias appears in much of the data obtained by university review programs (Flaherty, 2018a; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). SETs have been a potential threat or barrier to the advancement of female instructors (Burke, 2014; Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). What has been found in research is that females were often evaluated more stringently than males regardless of the quality of instruction. In SETs, it was determined that students demonstrated different expectations of faculty based on gender (Flaherty, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Boring (2017) discovered that male faculty scored significantly higher in overall satisfaction than female instructors. Males were praised for non-time-consuming activities in class such as leadership ability while females were scored on time consuming issues such as class preparedness and grade turn-over (Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.).

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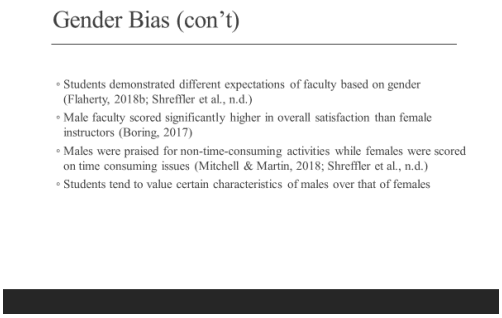

In SETs, it was determined that students demonstrated different expectations of faculty based on gender (Flaherty, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Boring (2017) discovered that male faculty scored significantly higher in overall satisfaction than female instructors. Males were praised for non-time-consuming activities in class such as leadership ability while females were scored on time consuming issues such as class preparedness and grade turn-over (Mitchell & Martin, 2018; Shreffler et al., n.d.).

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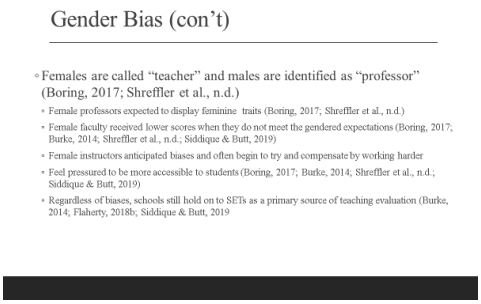

Researchers suggested that students tend to value certain characteristics of males over that of females that usually fall under gender stereotypes such as female appearance and personality. Females are called "teacher" and males are identified as "professor" (Boring, 2017; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Female professors were also expected to display feminine character traits such as being warm and compassionate. If a female portrayed these characteristics, they often received more favorable scores from students (Boring, 2017; Shreffler et al., n.d.). Female faculty received lower scores when they do not meet the gendered expectations and are more authoritative and knowledgeable as they expect from male instructors (Boring, 2017; Burke, 2014; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Because some female instructors anticipate biases, they may begin to try and compensate by working extremely hard to develop their courses. They may even feel pressured to make themselves more accessible prioritizing students over other work responsibilities (Boring, 2017; Burke, 2014; Shreffler et al., n.d.; Siddique & Butt, 2019). There were many institutions that acknowledged biases that arise within SETs, yet schools still hold on to them as a primary source of teaching evaluation assessment because SETs are easy for administrative use (Burke, 2014; Flaherty, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). It does not take exceedingly long to review quantitative scores of an instructor to determine if the teacher is weak or strong (Boring, 2017; Flaherty, 2018b; Shreffler et al., n.d.). The more extensive part of the process and most time-consuming part is visiting the classrooms, reading syllabi, and reading student feedback (Burke, 2014; Flaherty, 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019).

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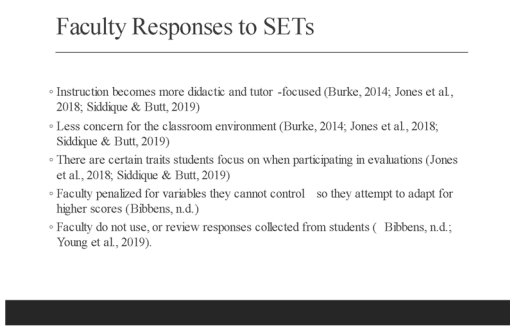

Faculty responses to SETs showed up in a variety of ways. For example, the instructor's teaching style changed due to the response of students and the administrative weights associated with the evaluations. The instruction becomes more didactic and tutor-focused than instruction based (Burke, 2014; Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). As a result, there becomes less of a need for the teachers in the classroom and less concern for the classroom environment as teachers strive to meet the demands on evaluation (Burke, 2014; Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). SETs also revealed that there are certain traits students focus on when participating in evaluations such as cultural differences, ethnicity, and gender (Jones et al., 2018; Siddique & Butt, 2019). Faculty, therefore, were penalized for variables they cannot control, which shifts their focus to obtaining good evaluation scores instead of instruction that

spurs influence on learning (Bibbens, n.d.). Some faculty have even decided not to use, or review responses collected from students because of the lack of valid responses or the lack of significance of the responses to their teaching development (Bibbens, n.d.; Young et al., 2019).

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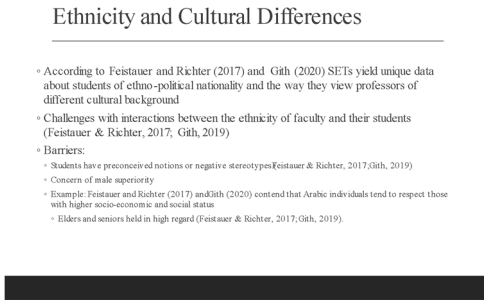

According to Feistauer and Richter (2017) and Gith (2020) SETs yield unique data about students of ethno-political nationality and the way they view professors of different cultural backgrounds. Their research findings support that there were challenges among the interaction between the ethnicity of faculty members and their students (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). One of the barriers that caused poor interactions between faculty and students of different backgrounds was the idea that students have preconceived notions or negative stereotypes which may have caused animosity early on towards the instructor (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). For example, Jewish and Arabic cultures have different points of view when they consider who has more power or who should have power in general (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019). In this manner, SETs often reflected male superiority which would result in males receiving higher scores than females. Feistauer and Richter (2017) and Gith (2020) contend that Arabic individuals tend to respect those with higher socio-economic and social status than those with lower status. They also held elders and seniors in high regard, which could all influence the way faculty are scored on SETs (Feistauer & Richter, 2017; Gith, 2019).

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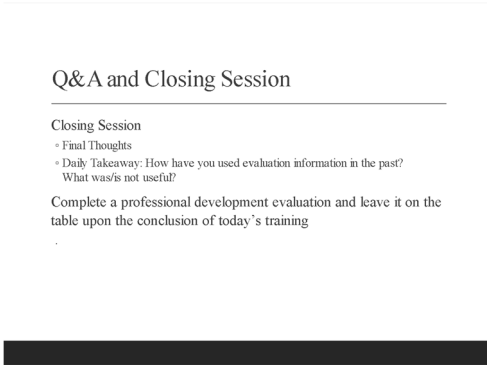

SETs are universal. It was seen as the most used democratic approach to evaluating teacher effectiveness in western higher education as a guarantee to quality assurance (Boggs & Howson, 2019). Research showed that nineteen states used student evaluations to make career advancement decisions while 23 states used them to determine continued employment for faculty (Boring, 2017; Ford et al., 2017). Yet there has been a great deal of concern with the use and validity of SETs. My current study and other researchers suggested that many faculty do not use SETs in their professional practice for many reasons. One of them being that the questions are generic questions that only see to determine if the student liked or disliked the course (Maričić et al., 2019). SETs provide great information for the administration and supports data needed for accreditation purposes. High scores are also beneficial to career advancement. However, the (often numerical) responses from students provides little insight beneficial to instructors and course development (Maričić et al., 2019). Also, questions remain about students' competency and ability to assess teachers and their ability to instruct a course. With no expertise student's evaluations have no validity (Maričić et al., 2019). Therefore, the main concerns of with SETs are

related to the structure and questions on the evaluation and the validity of student responses. Student responses also lend to susceptible factors and biases in the assessment (Maričić et al., 2019).

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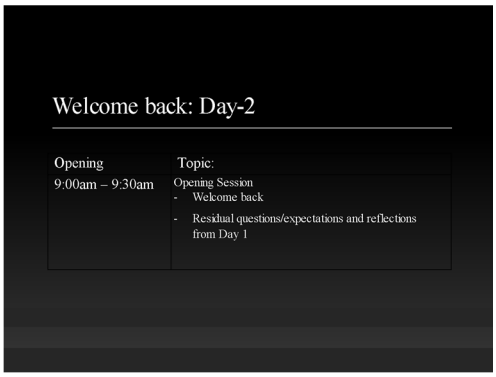

On yesterday we talked about some of the concerns surrounding the use of SETs as a measure of teacher effectiveness. With consideration of various factors that influence SETs result, gender is one of the most common. Students affiliated gender with biased expectations of what a man represents versus how a female represents what they do as an instructor (Maričić et al., 2019). Research showed that males received higher scores on the evaluations based on teaching dimensions that were not time consuming such as presentation skills whereas females were scored on more time-consuming skills such as class preparation and student feedback (Maričić et al., 2019). Research shows that there is a double standard with female and male scoring on student evaluations. Females have been identified as incompetent and males are considered "qualified" to teach a course (Maričić et al., 2019). SETs scores consistently show higher for male instructors as the experts while female instructors score lower but with greater expectancy to grade higher and provide more feedback for the students (Maričić et al., 2019).

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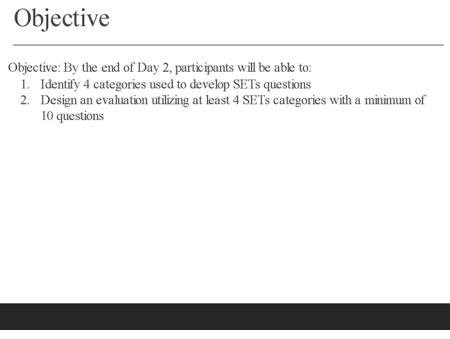

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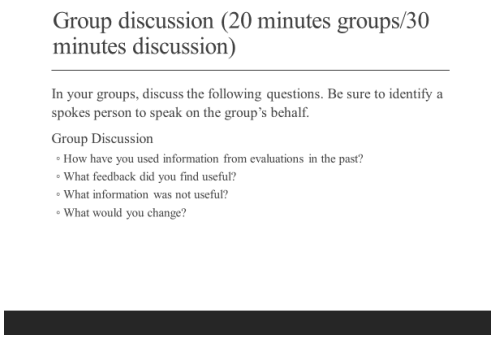

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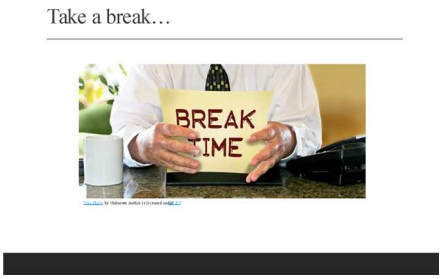

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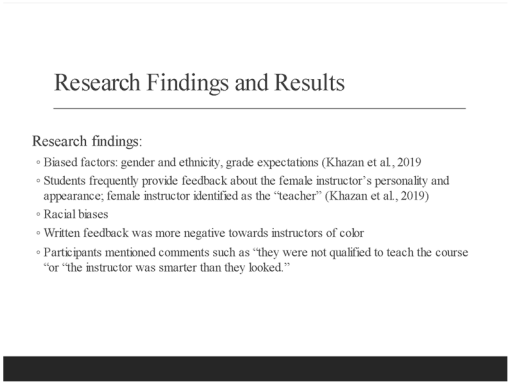

In congruence with my study, research showed that there are many biases that weigh into how a student scores on student evaluations. Some of these factors included the instructor's gender and ethnicity, the students' gender, and their grade expectations as measures of teaching effectiveness and student learning (Khazan et al., 2019). Students frequently provide feedback about the female instructor's personality and appearance in the classroom and will identify the female instructor as the "teacher" instead of the instructor or professor. Males were most frequently referred to as "professor" and described as intelligent (Khazan et al., 2019).

Racial biases presented another concerning theme for research. Initially students responded positively to the numerically scored questions about the instructor. When students provided written feedback, comments became more negative towards instructors of color. Responses such as "the instructor was not suitable for the course" or the instructor "was not suitable for the topic" (Hoorens et al., 2021) were disclosed on the evaluations. The participants in my study mentioned similar comments such as "they were not qualified to teach the course "or "the instructor was smarter than they looked." Studies have shown that students associated their feedback on SETs to the gender or race of the instructor (Hoorens et al., 2021).

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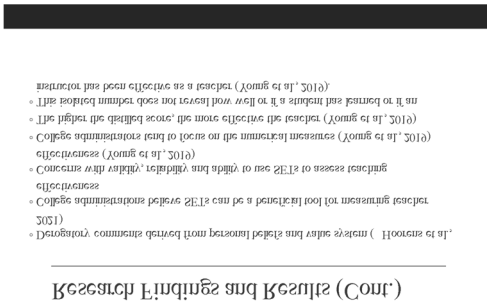

It was believed that derogatory comments such as the statements previously mentioned derived from a person's personal beliefs and value system. These types of beliefs extend research that conveys an issue with either the race, ethnicity, or gender of an instructor (Hoorens et al., 2021). There was a significant amount of research about biases in SETs that involved ethnicity, gender, and culture but little research that explicitly addressed race.

Lastly, it is important to discuss how college administrations use SETs. Research has shown that SETs can be a beneficial tool for measuring teacher effectiveness and improving instruction. While individual instructors had concerns with validity, reliability, and ability to use SETs to assess teaching effectiveness, college administrators often use SETs to determine faculty promotion and tenure (Young et al., 2019). College administrators tend to focus on the numerical measures of student responses and feedback on SETs which become averaged down to a single number that is compared to the administrators Likert scale (Young et al., 2019). The higher the distilled score, the more effective the teacher. The lower the score the less effective the instructor (Young et al., 2019). Yet, this isolated number does not reveal how well or of a student has learned or if an instructor has been effective as a teacher (Young et al., 2019).

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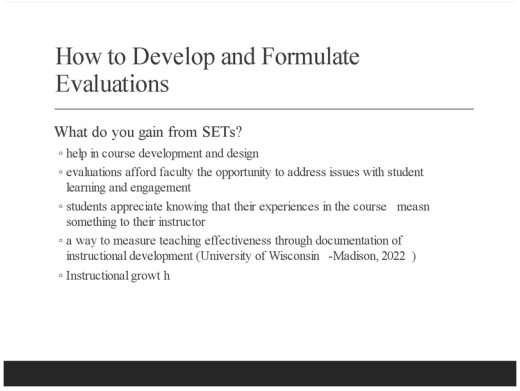

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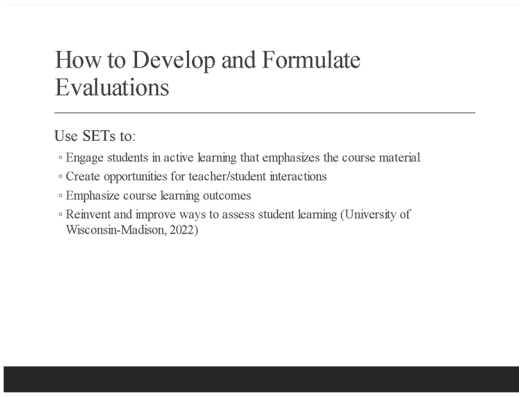
How to Develop and Formulate Evaluations
Use SETs to:
▫ Engage students in active learning that emphasizes the course material
▫ Create opportunities for teacher/student interactions
▫ Emphasize course learning outcomes
▫ Reinvent and improve ways to assess student learning (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2022)

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Professional Development Evaluation Day-1

Getting the Most Out of SETs

Date: _____ Institution: _____

Upon completion of the Getting the Most Out of SETs training, please complete the following evaluation. The purpose for the evaluation is to measure the caliber of this PD and promote continuous professional growth. Please circle the number below that best corresponds with your answer:

1 = No 2 = Somewhat 3 = Yes

If you answer "no" or "somewhat" to any question, please provide an explanation to support your answer.

Training Content

1. Did the training provide learning objectives that were clear? 1 2 3

   Comments/suggestions:

2. Were the learning objectives discussed? 1 2 3

   Comments/suggestions:

3. Was the topic beneficial to your role at the college? 1 2 3

   Comments/suggestions:

4. Was the training well-organized? 1 2 3

   Comments/suggestions:

5. Was there enough time allocated to allotted for each activity? 1 2 3

   Comments:/suggestions

6. Were the break-out sessions beneficial? 1 2 3

Comments/suggestions:

Professional Development Evaluation Day-2

Getting the Most Out of SETs

Date: _____ Institution: _____

Upon completion of the Getting the Most Out of SETs training, please complete the following evaluation. The purpose for the evaluation is to measure the caliber of this PD and promote continuous professional growth. Please circle the number below that best corresponds with your answer:

1 = No 2 = Somewhat 3 = Yes

Content Knowledge

1. Was the facilitator's appearance and language professional? 1 2 3

Comments:/suggestions

2. Did the facilitator demonstrate expert content knowledge of the topic? 1 2 3
Comments/suggestions:

3. Did the facilitator make good use of the allotted time? 1 2 3
Comments/suggestions

Professional Development Evaluation Day-3

Getting the Most Out of SETs

Date: _____ Institution: _____

Upon completion of the Getting the Most Out of SETs training, please complete the following evaluation. The purpose for the evaluation is to measure the caliber of this PD and promote continuous professional growth. Please circle the number below that best corresponds with your answer:

1 = No 2 = Somewhat 3 = Yes

Overall PD Seminar

1. Was the PD agenda well planned and organized? 1 2 3

   Comments/Suggestions:

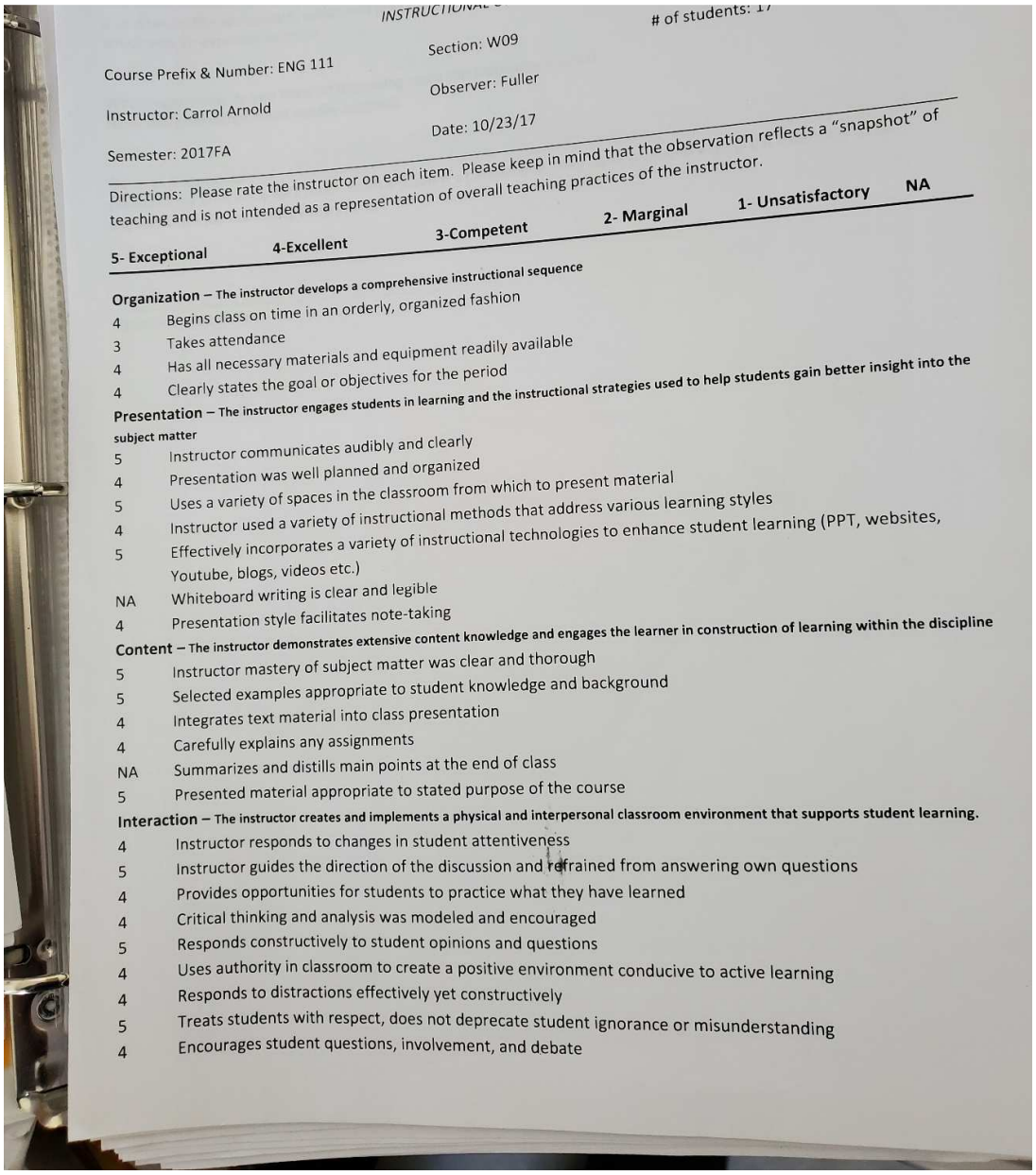
2. Will you be able to utilize what you have learned during this training? 1 2 3

   Comments/suggestions:

3) Would you recommend this training to others? Why or why not?

Thank you to everyone for participating in Getting the Most out of SETs. Thank you to the institution and your administrators for allowing me to share this research as your facilitator. What were the most beneficial activities for you during this training?

Appendix B: Student Evaluation of Teacher Example



INSTRUCTIONAL

# of students: 17

Course Prefix & Number: ENG 111 Section: W09

Instructor: Carrol Arnold Observer: Fuller

Semester: 2017FA Date: 10/23/17

Directions: Please rate the instructor on each item. Please keep in mind that the observation reflects a "snapshot" of teaching and is not intended as a representation of overall teaching practices of the instructor.

5- Exceptional 4-Excellent 3-Competent 2- Marginal 1- Unsatisfactory NA

Organization – The instructor develops a comprehensive instructional sequence

4 Begins class on time in an orderly, organized fashion
3 Takes attendance
4 Has all necessary materials and equipment readily available
4 Clearly states the goal or objectives for the period

Presentation – The instructor engages students in learning and the instructional strategies used to help students gain better insight into the subject matter

5 Instructor communicates audibly and clearly
4 Presentation was well planned and organized
5 Uses a variety of spaces in the classroom from which to present material
4 Instructor used a variety of instructional methods that address various learning styles
5 Effectively incorporates a variety of instructional technologies to enhance student learning (PPT, websites, Youtube, blogs, videos etc.)
NA Whiteboard writing is clear and legible
4 Presentation style facilitates note-taking

Content – The instructor demonstrates extensive content knowledge and engages the learner in construction of learning within the discipline

5 Instructor mastery of subject matter was clear and thorough
5 Selected examples appropriate to student knowledge and background
4 Integrates text material into class presentation
4 Carefully explains any assignments
NA Summarizes and distills main points at the end of class
5 Presented material appropriate to stated purpose of the course

Interaction – The instructor creates and implements a physical and interpersonal classroom environment that supports student learning.

4 Instructor responds to changes in student attentiveness
5 Instructor guides the direction of the discussion and refrained from answering own questions
4 Provides opportunities for students to practice what they have learned
4 Critical thinking and analysis was modeled and encouraged
5 Responds constructively to student opinions and questions
4 Uses authority in classroom to create a positive environment conducive to active learning
4 Responds to distractions effectively yet constructively
5 Treats students with respect, does not deprecate student ignorance or misunderstanding
4 Encourages student questions, involvement, and debate

Appendix C: Participant Interview Questions

Over the years, student evaluations of teachers have increased in usage across campuses, but much of the research findings question how these evaluations are used by instructors. The following questions are designed to gather your perceptions on the use and validity of student evaluations by instructors.

1. Tell me about your thoughts on encouraging students to evaluate teachers?

Prompt: What information is meaningful from the SETs?

Prompt: Give me an example of insight you gained from a SET.

2. What makes students qualified to provide feedback on student evaluations?

   Prompt: Can you give an example of a student qualified to provide feedback to a teacher?

3. What type of comments have you received on your evaluations?

   Prompt: What feedback has been the most beneficial to your course development?

4.. Explain how your evaluations reflected on your character and your teaching ability?

   Prompt: Give examples of the types of comments you have received from students?

4. What influence do you think demographics have on the way students respond on evaluations?

   Prompt: What examples do you have of demographic influence on student evaluation?

5. What are some of the factors that influence how a student responds to the evaluation?

Prompt: What evidence do you have that there were outside factors that influenced a way a student responded on the evaluations?

6. Has race/socioeconomic backgrounds had any influence on student responses on evaluations?

Prompt: How do you know?

7. How do the student evaluations demonstrate that a student has learned in your class?

Prompt: Can you provide examples that proved a student has learned?

8. How do you feel your administration views your evaluations?

Prompt: How have administrators used your scores in your faculty review process?

9. How do student evaluations influence your professional practice?

Prompt: How do you weigh SETs in your professional development?

10. How do you suggest structuring and using the evaluation process in higher education?

Prompt: Have you had an opportunity to offer suggestions for the use of SETs to your administration?