Analyzing Midsemester Feedback

Collecting feedback from students can serve multiple purposes. It helps the instructor to gain insight as to what and how students are learning, receive feedback on your teaching, and provide students with a bridge to communicate with the instructor. Among all types of feedback collections along the semester, midsemester student feedback has additional benefits of allowing you to hear your students' concerns after enough teaching time while there is still time during the rest of the semester to make appropriate changes.

In order to analyzing this particular midsemester feedback for course CHEM 457 (Physical Chemistry Lab), paper-based Students' Evaluation of Educational Quality (SEEQ) from Penn State Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence is used to collect students' feedback. SEEQ divides questions into nine different categories and another series of questions about student and course characteristics. Table 1 is results summary from three different sections of students based on those categories. When looking at those results, I want to focus on the more general picture, which means I won't care too much about one or two isolated negative responses and do lots of changes on my course. On the other hand, I also want to pay attention to some particular responses so that I can improve my course during the rest of semester.

In general, the rating averaged over all categories from all students is 3.7 out of 5.0, which means the instructor is doing an overall good but not excellent job. Now focusing on each category, we can see that all students from three different sections give higher ratings on three categories: Enthusiasm, Group Interactions and Individual Rapport. This is kind of what I expected because from the beginning of this semester I already told the student as the instructor my role is not "sage on the stage" but "guide on the side". I tried to establish very relaxed while interactive atmosphere which suits this course well because of the lab and experimental nature of this course. I found the responses on one particular question surprise me most which is the lack of discussion about current developments in field. Actually this is a good reminding that students are always curious about current developments and applications of what they are learning and adding more contents about those topics might increase students' interests and motivation for this course.

The Student and Course Characteristics section from SEEQ prides a good general picture about the students and course. Most of my students are senior students who have decent GPA and choose this course because of major requirement. Good things are the course pace is about right and students are confident about grade expectation. But they also think this course is hard and the workload is very heavy (9hrs/week). All these are valuable information to think about changes during rest of this semester and later when teaching same course again.

There are much more information you can get from mid-semester feedback, but one most important thing is to respond this feedback to your students. Not responding to the feedback is worse than collecting none at all. So I will spend some time during class and respond the feedback about what changes I might incorporate (e.g. more discussions about current development in field) and what I will continue to use (e.g. "guide on the side" teaching style). There is some additional feedback I would like to get from my students. One limitation of this SEEQ is that those questions can only be answered by multiple choices. One thing I might try next time is a one-minute paper which records students' responses to some open questions such as suggestions to the course.

Table 1 SEEQ Results Summary

Section Number	1	2	3
Number of Students	8	14	13
Learning	3.7	3.3	3.9
Enthusiasm	4.2	3.4	3.9
Organization	3.5	2.9	3.7
Group Interaction	4.0	3.8	4.1
Individual Rapport	4.6	4.4	4.5
Breadth	3.6	3.1	3.7
Examination	3.5	3.2	3.8
Assignment	3.7	3.3	3.9
Overall	3.3	3.1	3.6
Average	**3.8**	**3.4**	**3.9**
Difficulty	Medium	Hard	Hard
Workload	Heavy	Very Heavy	Heavy
Pace	Right	Right	Right
Hours/week	8	10	9
Interest	Low	Medium	Medium
Overall GPA	3.2	3.1	3.1
Expected Grade	A-	B	B
Reason	Major	Major	Major
Year in School	J/S	J/S	J/S/G