

Learning Experience And Expectations Of First MBBS Students: A Questionnaire Based Survey.

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Abstracts: Background: With educational shift, towards active, reflective, student led learning, the outcome of traditional, teacher centred and outcome oriented approach needs to be studied. Feedback questionnaire is a useful tool in this context. **Objectives:** This paper reports first year MBBS student's experiences and preferences regarding teaching, learning and assessment methods as well as the desirable qualities of a good teacher, with the objective of using these for effective teaching. **Method :** Structured validated questionnaire was administered to first year students (n=90) and pertained to the various aspects of teaching and evaluation in the Department of Physiology. **Results :** Medical student's favoured interactive lectures(80%), shorter duration (65%), self study (46%), and clinical orientation (54%). They appreciated audiovisual aids (90%), applied physiology (83%), frequent evaluation (46%), the preferred mode of assessment was Short questions(SAQ) and Multiple choice questions(MCQ) (74%). Qualities highly rated in a teacher were teaching skills, knowledge and approachability. Absenteeism was largely attributed to tiring schedule and priority to self study (56%). **Conclusion :** Short interactive sessions, use of multimedia, clinically oriented preclinical years, MCQs and SAQs are preferred by students. Hence optimum utilization of teaching hours with a learner oriented approach involving various strategies of teaching and evaluation can enhance its effectiveness. [Asia A NJIRM 2015; 5(1) : 116-120]

Key Words: Clinical Orientation, Feedback, Interaction, Qualities, Self Study.

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Introduction: The pace of change in medical education has increased dramatically driven by exponential knowledge and need to train a large group of learners using limited resources. There is a shift towards outcome based education which is paralleled with an increasing awareness that the process of learning is as important as the outcome. Medical curriculum is being revamped and restructured with teaching, learning approaches so designed as to ensure that students acquire appropriate clinical and scientific knowledge along with practical, procedural and communication skills. Yet, educators when faced with an uphill task of completion of a vast syllabus in a stipulated duration of less than a year for the first year of MBBS tend to follow traditional teaching. In this process the desired objective of 'student led learning' instead of 'outcome based learning' may be diluted¹. Therefore evaluation of the education process and evaluation based modification is a prime necessity. The most valuable source of information in any sort of evaluation is the learner's opinion. USET² (University student's expectations of teaching) was a feedback questionnaire developed for obtaining students preferences for teaching and carried out with UK Open University students in the field of medicine,

psychology, and business. Such questionnaires take students expectations and views into consideration, making the process of teaching-learning effective. Constructive feedback facilitates refinement and evolution of any teaching episode whether it is a specific lecture or whole curriculum. Having known these facts we tried to derive information from our own students in the first year of MBBS regarding their perception about the existing system of teaching-learning adopted in the Department of Physiology. 'Are our students really learning, are our students benefitted by our methodologies? 'We tried to get answers to these questions and find out if there is any difference in our presumptions and the reality. Hence our study was intended with the following objectives:

- 1) To explore experiences of students regarding teaching, learning practices and evaluation pattern.
- 2) To explore their expectations regarding teaching, learning and assessment.
- 3) To study reasons cited for their views/experiences.
- 4) To highlight the key suggestions.

Material and Methods: After obtaining approval from institutional ethical committee, the present study was conducted in the Department of

Physiology, Government Medical College; Akola. This was a cross sectional study based on an anonymous structured validated questionnaire.³ Students of 1st year of MBBS were administered a questionnaire covering two major aspects routinely followed i.e. teaching learning methods and evaluation pattern. The questions regarding the student's experiences in their tenure of 1st MBBS pertained to the learning methods, teaching methods, teaching aids, utility of applied physiology, evaluation pattern and absenteeism. Whereas the questions concerned with their expectations were based on time span of lecture, interaction, clinical orientation and evaluation system. It comprised of four type of questions namely alphabetical grading, selection of an appropriate option, assertive/non-assertive option and suggestions. The questionnaire was submitted at the end of completion of syllabus in Physiology. It was to be filled in a stipulated time of 45 minutes, with no undue pressure from any faculty member. Students were asked not to disclose their identities in any form in order to obtain a fair opinion. Confidentiality of students was assured so that they could answer the questions without any bias. The study was voluntary and confidential. Completed response sheets were statistically analyzed using SPSS15 software. Results were expressed as frequency percentages.

Result: The number of students who answered our questionnaire were 90 (n=90). Results were divided into four subsections i.e. teaching learning approach, reason for absenteeism qualities appreciated in a teacher and assessment.

Teaching-learning approach

The preferences for the learning methods namely selfstudy, lectures and lecture cum demonstration (LCD) are as highlighted in Table 1.

90% students found combination of white board and power point helpful, 9%whiteboard only, 1%powerpoint only.

Interactive lectures were desired by 80%, whereas 10% wanted didactic lectures.

Applied Physiology got a good response with 83% students opting for it, only 17% found it less useful.54%wanted that clinical orientation should begin in 1st year, 46% did not prefer it.

A 45 minute lecture was preferred by 65%students, 27% wanted a 60 minute lecture and only 9% wanted it to be of 30 minutes.

Reason for absenteeism : Long duration was the cause of absenteeism most of the times for 30% students, 56% cited self study, 27% cited teachers lack of motivation, 56% opined that tiring schedule led to absenteeism frequently.

Assessment-Terminal and preliminary examinations comprising of MCQs, Short answer questions and long answer questions were appreciated.65% felt these to be very helpful,54% found part completion tests at the end of completion of each system having a similar pattern as terminal exams helpful.Multilple choice question (MCQ) was appreciated as a method of evaluation by 37% students, short answer questions (SAQ) was liked by 37% ,while 20% felt long answer questions (LAQ) better.

Results of the question on what helped in achieving better results are highlighted in 2.

Qualities appreciated in a teacher : The qualities most sought after were a teacher who had good teaching skills (37%), was knowledgeable (32%), approachable (33%).Other qualities like enthusiasm, organization and punctuality had lower ranks amongst the most desirable qualities of a good teacher.

Some of the useful suggestions were problem solving at the end of every lecture session (25%), MCQ practice sessions (8%), clear, simple, language of presentation (44%) and counselling for weaker students (6%).

Table 1 : Learning Methods (N=90)

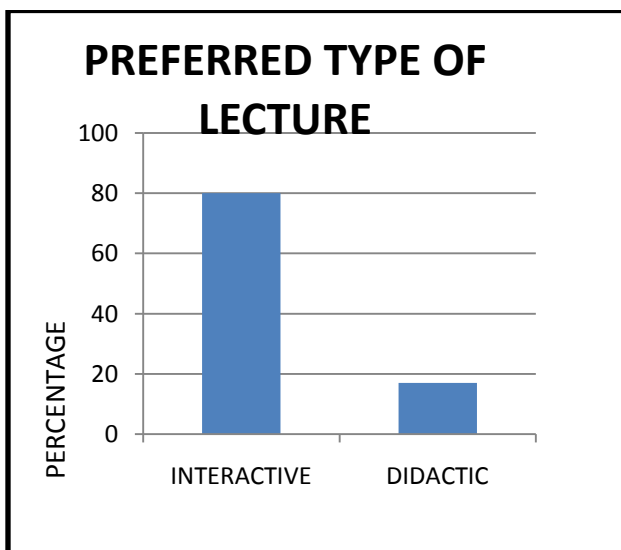
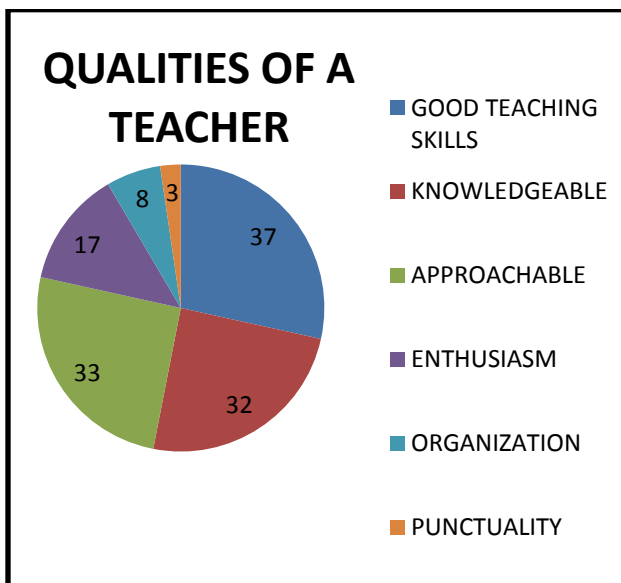
Method	Very Helpful %(No.)	Less Helpful %(No.)	Not Helpful %(No.)
Self Study	46(42)	43(39)	9(8)
Lecture	18(16)	58(52)	23(20)
LCD	26(24)	26(24)	37(33)

Discussion: 1st MBBS is a transit state wherein students shift from the 10+2 pattern of learning which is predominantly exam oriented, self study to institutional teaching. This could be the reason

for not adopting teaching methodologies of the professional college completely resulting in preference to self study as seen in our study.

Table: 2: Utility Of The Following For Better Results. (n=90)

Methodology	%	NUMBER
Better Lectures	37	33
Regular Tests	46	42
Better Practical	8	7
Small Group Teaching	8	7



Trevena ⁴ reported that self directed learning in basic and clinical sciences is more effective than traditional teaching. The least popular teaching

approach was self study⁵; while it was student presentation and role play ⁶in some. A lengthy monotonous, teacher centred large group learning is always less interesting with little perception by students but the fact prevails that a good quality lecture can encourage self study as it is both motivating and exciting .

Preference for a combination of whiteboard and power point was observed. The use of both audiovisual aids and chalk board together being helpful is reported by other studies ⁷. Banerjee et al ⁸ reports of preference to chalkboard. Students preference for power point with white board is justified as use of technology in medicine improves the learning experience provided it is well planned and complements traditional teaching rather than displacing it. Modern technology is a powerful tool, imbibing this trend can facilitate our teaching, maximize its potential benefits and help us improve as medical educators. Visual impression is equivalent to a thousand words hence use of power point is practical, self explanatory rather than abstract imagination.

Interaction with teachers received an overwhelming response. Similar findings preferring interactive lecture sessions are reported ⁹ Students value the opportunity to discuss the content rather than sit back and listen. Interactive lectures are preferred where information is provided and an opportunity is given for discussion. A typical didactic lecture is passive and monotonous. Two way communication assists learning process and aids retention, through interaction high level of cognitive learning is achieved so are communication skill.

Applied physiology was maximally appreciated. Applied and clinical aspects have been well received by students in the past ^{3, 10}. Although we do cover this aspect, the topics are brief and limited. The impact can be substantial if applied aspects are taught on a regular basis.

Clinical orientation was well received .Mc Millan¹¹ reported of better attendance on introducing clinically oriented topics .Students want their preclinical years of training to be more clinically oriented .Early clinical contact is handled well by

students who see the relevance and value of what they are learning. In fact in the developing countries there is a major emphasis on communication skills, ethics and history. In Australia, a symbiotic curriculum is followed which has an integrated 'immersion' approach where students learn primarily in a clinical context.¹²

45 minute duration for a lecture was preferred; this highlights the fact that concentrating on a passive teaching session for 1 hour duration is tiresome resulting in growing apathy towards lectures in recent times. Similar findings were noted in other studies.^{3,9} Normally our attention span is of 15 minutes, it falls if the subject matter is too complex. Interaction, complementing with quiz and illustration seems the way out.

Most common reasons cited for absenteeism were priority to self study and tiring schedule, once again highlighting the fact that students are yet to cope with institutional teaching methods. Trevena⁴ in his survey, noted that students found self directed learning in basic and clinical sciences more effective than traditional lectures, Noreen R² in her study got multiple responses for absenteeism, most common being long duration of lectures, self study being more effective. Another study cites lecture topic, teacher and lengthy lectures as reasons.¹³

MCQs as a method of assessment was preferred followed by SAQs. Oyebola et al¹⁴ found that students rated MCQs as preferred mode of assessment. Students are used to this mode of evaluation; at the same it helps them prepare for their post graduate entrance exams.

Regular assessment in form of part completion tests was found to be helpful. Nooren H⁹ reported that revision classes helped students prepare for their exams. Studies by Sawyer¹⁵ found supplemental lectures helpful. Our students are used to a continuous evaluation system; as it improves their reproducibility. Frequent formative evaluation in place of stereotyped evaluation pattern is more effective. Regular tests were equally appreciated by students for achieving better results, whereas some found better lectures necessary for improving results.

The top three qualities selected for a good teacher were possessing good teaching skills, being knowledgeable and approachable. Students appreciate well structured sessions with consistency in teaching. Stella W⁵ cited these qualities which were highly rated by students. Students wanted a teacher with the required content expertise, good facilitation skills and enthusiasm for teaching. BMJ¹ cites qualities of a good teacher as approachable, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, logical, reliable, role model, learner, and mentor. Becoming an effective teacher is a process of continual refinement and not a one-time task.

Conclusion: To summarize, shorter lectures, multimedia, interaction and clinical orientation were preferred. Optimum utilization of teaching hours with shift from being teacher centred to learner oriented has become necessary. This can be made possible by inculcating variety of learning activities like Integrated teaching, small group teaching, Problem based learning and interaction. These can make students 'think' rather than just 'perform'. Clinical orientation, if included in the syllabus, can reinforce student's basic knowledge of basic sciences.

Such frequent feedback helps in synchronizing teaching and evaluation strategies in accordance with student requirements. It can be the beginning of involvement of students in the learning process and undoubtedly renew interest in basic sciences as it is these preclinical years which shape future physicians.

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