



SPEAQ

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PROJECT REPORT
SPEAQ YEAR 2 PARTNER PROJECTS

Institution: Copenhagen Business School

Institutional coordinator: Ole Helmersen

Title of project: Reengineering of course evaluation methodology (pilot project)

SUMMARY

Provide a short description of the project

Copenhagen Business School has operated a comprehensive quality assurance system for several years. When it comes to teaching this system includes systematic use of electronic questionnaire-based student evaluations of all courses; i.e. of curriculum, of teachers' performance, of how students benefit/learn from courses, etc. These evaluations are run by an Evaluation Unit dedicated to working with this and other quality issues at CBS. Results of evaluations are communicated to the teachers in questions and to the academic directors in charge of study programmes with a view to identifying problems and possibilities for improvement. However, it has been a common feeling, not least among students, that these evaluations have become increasingly unfit for purpose, because they tend to become 'too routine' without proper feedback and insufficient implementation of development/innovation opportunities.

The SPEAQ mini-project reported here engaged itself in that debate and change-agenda at CBS. It should be noted that due to CBS' rather well-developed quality culture, this mini-project did not 'invent' something new, but rather functioned as an additional catalyst in a process that was already taking place. Its contribution was thus rather to sharpen the existing debate and perhaps contribute to focusing it on the three quality circles.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Why was this project chosen for implementation (out of the potential projects initiatives identified by your institution in the SPEAQ first year activities)?

Because it was the one (among three proposals) which best integrated the three stakeholders in the quality circle (quality managers, students, academic staff) and the one which was seen (as a pilot project) to be manageable within the timeframe available. It was thus considered to be a project which could 'deliver' also in the short-term context of the overall project. In addition, this project could easily be identified as relevant to and as an integral part of a change process already taking place at CBS with regard to reconsidering and altering existing course-evaluation procedures and methodologies.

What immediate needs did the project answer?

The project contributed to an existing agenda about renewal of course evaluation design and procedures.

OBJECTIVES

Indicate aims (as bullets)

- To reconsider and possibly renew methods and procedures for the quality dialogue taking place among students, teachers and quality managers (in the Danish system primarily the study boards with 50% student and 50% teacher representation) responsible for the individual study programmes.
- To contribute to breaking a tendency towards evaluation-fatigue and stale routine by taking part in discussions about renewing existing procedures.
- To contribute to developing a renewed evaluation format.

Were the objectives set achieved? If not, why not?

If 'objectives achieved' is interpreted as meaning a delivery in the form of a finalized, new evaluation format, the answer is: No, not yet.

If, however, it means having been/still being part of an ongoing process towards the abovementioned renewal of existing procedures, the answer is yes. However, it has to be mentioned that the operationalization of the project was, and still is, dependent on numerous other stakeholders in a process outside the control of this SPEAQ mini-project. The SPEAQ mini-project is thus one, integrated element in a larger change process of the course evaluation system.

This has meant that the execution of the mini-project is still in process with the originally planned piloting of a revised format taking place on a large scale in the autumn term of 2013. The main contribution from the SPEAQ-project, in addition to the dialogue it contributed to during the data collection phase, has been participation in a large, internal seminar for all academic directors (quality managers), faculty members of study boards (academic staff) and student members of the same (students) – i.e. all three stakeholder groups in the quality circle. At this seminar problems, faults, etc. of the existing evaluation methodology were discussed seen from those three perspectives and necessary changes to it were identified and planned.

In that sense, SPEAQ has been present in the process and helped structuring discussions at the seminar around the elements in the quality model (copies of which were distributed to participants).

ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES

Describe the actions completed and provide photos from any of the activities, if available

This has partly been described above. However, to elaborate, this rapporteur participated in a two-day seminar for all members of all CBS' study boards (the three types of stakeholders mentioned above) in March, where accreditation and course evaluation were topics on the agenda. As part of the discussion of those items, the SPEAQ-project was briefly introduced and the quality model explained.

In the original description of the mini-project it was envisaged to identify a few of CBS' study boards in order to pilot a new/revised evaluation format on a selected number of courses. However, that intention was overridden by the larger move to change the format across all study boards at CBS, which formed part of the seminar, and which meant that the interest in participating in small pilot projects was limited – and became somewhat irrelevant.

Choose one activity and detail as an illustrative case study/example of the work carried out in the institution

As a result of the mentioned study board seminar dealing with accreditation and course evaluation, new procedures concerning student evaluation at CBS will be implemented as from May 2013. The overall purpose of this is to bring evaluation of courses into the class room, and not something that just takes place on-line and to establish a closer connection between course evaluation, teachers and students (i.e. basically the three types of stakeholders identified in the SPEAQ quality model). The changes may be summarized as follows: Section A with approved mandatory procedures, section B with two experiments and section C with a long term development initiative.

A: Approved Mandatory Procedures

1. As of May 2013 all courses must allocate a time slot towards the end of the course in order to evaluate the course as a whole. Evaluation must take place as a dialogue between teacher and students *together* with written feedback via the electronic evaluation surveys. This means, that students are asked to fill out the written course evaluation survey online in the classroom (either using a PC, tablet or a smart phone). After filling out the forms, the teacher and the students will discuss the course and suggestions for enhancement. At least 20 minutes shall be set aside in one of the last lessons (or in a Q & A session, if one is arranged after the proper course) for this purpose. This in-class evaluation procedure will not affect the anonymity of the students in the online surveys and it will still be possible to fill in the surveys outside of class as well as in the class (for students not attending the specific class). The oral evaluation shall be seen as a supplement to the written surveys.

In case of courses with multiple parallel classes, evaluation will take place in each separate class. The purpose of the final evaluation, dialogue as well as written feedback, is to get feedback on the course and the teaching as a whole with regard to further development and improvement.

Each study board can decide on the specific implementation of the approved mandatory procedures as regards the processes and the extent of the oral evaluation.

2. The study board is responsible for ensuring feedback to the students and to inform them about the outcomes of the written part of the evaluation. The feedback has to be verbal and shall take place as quickly as possible after the final evaluation. The Study Board shall take this aspect into account when arranging the annual meetings. Each study board can organize the feedback to the students in different manners; however, it has to be a VIP who will be responsible for this task.

B: Experiments

1. Written summary of the oral end-of-course evaluation to the study board. In autumn 2013 an experiment will take place on making short written summaries of the oral end of course evaluation.

2. Mid-term evaluation as a recurring element of the courses. Preferably, this should be an evaluation between the teacher and the students (and possibly the course coordinator) in order to implement immediate adjustments in the remaining lessons.

C. Long term development initiative

In the longer term it is the ambition to integrate student evaluation surveys into CBS-Learn which is the natural electronic platform for communication between staff and students at CBS. This will make it easier for students and staff to access the surveys and teachers will have instant access to the results. On CBS-Learn, teachers can provide immediate feedback to the students on the results and make comments to the study board. All in all, CBS-Learn is a better distribution channel than e-mails. Some challenges have to be solved before course evaluation can take place on CBS-Learn. This especially regards the possibility of making overview reports of the results and the distribution of these reports; to study boards concerning all courses and teachers on a program and to department heads concerning all teachers employed at the department.

Did you cover all activities planned for? If not, why not and where are you at? Are there intentions to complete the activities not covered in the future?

Yes, but not in the exact way originally planned. However, the possibility to attach the mini-project to the larger agenda concerning changes to course evaluation procedures and methodologies should be seen as a clear advantage in that it made it possible to get a larger audience for the ideas developed in the SPEAQ-project.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the activities from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

I do not know if this is the correct place to relate the kinds of comments or feedback that were made in group work about course evaluation procedures, at the mentioned seminar, but here is a collated gist of the kinds of issues identified by the three stakeholder groups who took part (based on my notes and groups' feedback in plenum):

- *There are many challenges in the current evaluation system for instance timing and the questions formulated, and the information about the evaluations are scarce and not clear. Does everybody see everything?*
- *Students feel intimidated by the system....*
- *The challenge is that the study boards have difficulties working with the results of the evaluations (either too detailed or too aggregated). There is also a huge difference between 'small' (few courses) programs and larger (a lot of courses) – a lot of data/information.*
- *Some study boards have difficulties in finding out or defining how they can act upon problems identified.*
- *How to get the constructive feedback from students to the study boards? And learn from the good teachers and courses that work well. Appreciation should also get in focus.*
- *The consequences: courses are not developed/changed, the study boards do not have good basis to act upon – to create a good study environment.*
- *How to organize processes or ways of talking together in order to catch problems before they blow up either in evaluations, face-book or becoming complaints.*
- *Answering percentage: Sometimes not enough students have answered in order to present an overall opinion. The evaluations are supposed to represent everyone in the room, the general view; however that is not the case.*
- *Administrative problems are reflected in the overall evaluations even though there are no questions regarding the administration of courses.*
- *It is difficult to make a decision based on an evaluation when you do not know the previous history of a course – e.g. prior evaluations, has the course had bad evaluations many times, teacher problems etc.*

- *There should be a difference in the evaluation of the courses' content and the teacher. Those two factors often get mixed up.*
- *Feedback: Students don't see why they should evaluate, since they don't get the benefit of the feedback. Reintroduce midterm evaluations, where feedback can be implemented in the current cause. CBS has too much focus on evaluations at the end of the course.*
- *Introduce interview groups, quality evaluations. But do these evaluations live up to the institutional accreditation.*
- *Evaluations should be an item in the yearly Program Director report to the Dean of Education. Collect the different answers and share the knowledge. Publish result of each Program Directors report.*
- *Quality Assessment by quality boards set up by the study board.*
- *Study board representatives/ quality boards are a good source of information in regards to evaluation.*
- *The point of view is essential: is the problem regarding better learning or simply accreditation?*
- *Who is responsible for the evaluation procedure? The dean or the programme directors? Responsibility of the area must be more clear as well as the role of the different actors.*
- *When the teacher receives the evaluation - it is important to know how the screening of results and comments has taken place. Did you as a teacher receive all the relevant information?*
- *Why are the supervisors of bachelor projects and master thesis not evaluated systematically?*
- *We strongly believe the new evaluation procedures will help boost the number of quantitative evaluation returns. We find that questions on the questionnaires need to be re-thought: Less focus on the "showmanship" of the teachers and more focus on the actual learning and development students' experience.*
- *We question whether the in-class discussion form will give truthful and in-depth feedback - rather we suggest using moderated focus-group style feedback (outside of class). This form would be relevant both early on and at the end of the course. Using a moderator who is not the professor/teacher would perhaps facilitate a more honest feedback.*
- *Make a task force – there is mixed interests and views. Now it is on the side on everything else. Bring it in the center, make it important, bring admin, students and academics together and develop the system.*

Concluding comment: The above provides a quite extensive exemplification of the types of comments, problems and possible solutions identified when representatives from the three stakeholder groups worked with in SPEAQ are brought together to discuss course evaluation. Although the seminar was not arranged by the SPEAQ mini-project, it is felt by this rapporteur that the SPEAQ outlook on quality played a constructive role in focusing discussions.

DELIVERABLES

Describe the deliverables produced, i.e. podcasts, worksheets, blogs, wikis, interactive quizzes etc. (and provide as annex)

Include the list of deliverables you are annexing

The main deliverable of this mini-project has been described above: Engagement into an important institutional change process regarding course evaluation. In the context of the quality culture that has been in operation for several years at a business school like CBS, it frankly does not make much sense to disseminate or awareness-raise through podcasts, wikis or interactive quizzes.

Were the deliverables anticipated achieved? If not, why not.

This has been covered elsewhere in this report.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the deliverables from the stakeholders participating in your partner project.

This has been covered above.

IMPACT

Describe the impact the project has had.

The SPEAQ mini-project has had an impact on the discussions of renewal and redesign of course evaluation procedures and methodologies. It is not possible to quantify this or to state that the change process described above would not have happened without a push from SPEAQ; it would, but it is felt that SPEAQ's quality model increased the push.

Did the project have the impact envisaged? If not, why not.

This has been covered elsewhere in this report.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the impact from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

This has been covered above.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Describe ways you evaluated the activities and the outcomes

How did the project address the quality assurance agenda of your institution?

As will hopefully have become clear in what has been written in the sections above, quite constructively.

How did the project connect the three quality circles and with what effect?

As I hope will have emerged above, especially in the reporting of the seminar and the examples of comments, the three quality circles were quite clearly connected in discussions of course evaluations taking place there.

What were the major difficulties encountered?

One major difficulty was that it turned out to be difficult to do the mini-project the way it was originally planned, because it clashed with the described larger agenda running at CBS. That, however, turned out to be an advantage because it (and SPEAQ) thereby got a larger audience at CBS and probably got additional impact.

Another difficulty was that a main collaborator at CBS, Ole Stenvinkel Nilsson, was moved internally to other tasks shortly after commencement of the mini-project, and therefore wasn't able to contribute. The mini-project thus became rather a 'one-man' project.

A third difficulty was quality-discussion fatigue. CBS, as a business school, is part of a system of quality benchmarking with other business schools, and has been through several very large scale international, evaluation and accreditation exercises during the past few years. This meant that it was quite difficult to excite faculty and students about one more round of quality assurance and enhancement discussions. This should have been foreseen, but, alas, wasn't.

What kinds of constraints or impositions affected the implementation, if any?

None, other than the ones already mentioned.

DISSEMINATION

Describe dissemination methods applied/envisaged and provide photos from any dissemination events, if available

This is not strictly dissemination but under this link https://e-campus.dk/om-cbs/studyboards/seminar-2013?_mode=16 – if one goes down a bit till after the links to documents, one will find some testimonials from students, faculty and quality managers that reflect the discussions about quality that took place at the seminar, and on a continuous basis at CBS.

Please provide a summary of the feedback regarding the dissemination from the stakeholders participating in your partner project

Nothing new to add.

CONTINUATION/MULTIPLICATION/EXPLOITATION

Describe continuation/multiplication/exploitation plan, if appropriate.

The SPEAQ mini-project at CBS has no concrete continuation/multiplication/exploitation plan – other than following the process set in motion with regard to the revised methodologies regarding course evaluation.