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HOW TO ENCOURAGE STUDENT VOICE: OBTAINING EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK FROM LAW STUDENTS IN COURSE EVALUATION

VICCI Y J LAU*

I INTRODUCTION

Effective feedback allows teachers to review, reflect and improve their teaching practices. Fullan argues that it is only through reflection at the personal, group and organization levels that teachers will begin to question their own practices and think differently about classroom practice and teaching and learning.¹ Meaningful reflection is to ‘offer ways of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and encouraging one to see their practice through others’ eyes’², and critically reflective teaching occurs when teachers identify and scrutinize the assumptions that underpin their teaching and the way they work as teachers.³ Brookfield identifies three ways in which teachers can become reflective using alternative perspectives, and one of these is through the views of the teachers’ own students.⁴ Students’ feedback is key to teachers’ reflection as they are no doubt an important stakeholder in the teaching and learning community, and after all, they are closely connected with their teachers’ teaching practices and have the most experience with different teachers. Feedback from students, who are increasingly diverse, provides teachers with different perspectives in their teaching practices and can also cultivate student-centered learning. With more insights into how students learn and what they feel as good (or bad) classroom experiences, it provides a means for teachers to be self-critical and can even provide teachers with a moral aspect to their

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¹ Michael Fullan, *Change Forces: The Sequel* (The Falmer Press, 1999), cited in Garry Hoban and Geoff Hastings, ‘Developing Different Forms of Student Feedback to Promote Teacher Reflection: A 10-Year Collaboration’ (2006) 22(8) *Teaching and Teacher Education* 1006, 1007.

² J John Loughran, ‘Effective Reflective Practice: In Search of Meaning in Learning about Teaching’ (2002) 53(1) *Journal of Teacher Education* 33, 33.

³ Stephen Brookfield, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (Jossey-Bass, 1st ed, 1995), cited in Hoban and Hastings (n1) 1008.

⁴ Brookfield (n3).

self-reflection because it fosters their emotional commitment to teaching and improves their teaching practices.⁵

Several research studies show that feedback from students helps to alter teachers' behavior positively and can improve teaching performance.⁶ Therefore, students' feedback can provide the content for teachers' self-reflection, and that can have a positive effect on teachers' behavior and practices which in turn can enhance students' learning. In other words, students' effective feedback should be able to enhance both teaching and learning, in an ideal world. But what constitutes 'effective feedback' from the students? The effectiveness of students' feedback depends on their use and purpose. Rowley believes that gathering student feedback and opinions is a necessary part of the quality assurance process for teaching and learning if the feedback is 'relevant, representative and useful'.⁷ These qualities are equally important for student feedback to be effective in enabling teachers' self-reflection, so that teachers can see and understand their practices from a variety of viewpoints.⁸

With this in mind, how can teachers collect feedback from their students that is 'relevant, representative and useful'? The usefulness of any student feedback process is undermined if the response rate of students is insufficient to support its conclusions⁹ and if the students do not provide relevant and honest comments. Therefore, an important question is how to encourage and motivate students to participate in the feedback process by giving relevant, useful and honest feedback so that teachers can hear their voice. A study found that approximately one third of the students had indicated that they were dishonest and gave some false information or untrue comments in the end of term evaluations when they were anonymous.¹⁰ Some students cast doubt as to whether their comments and feedback will be taken seriously and are therefore often unsure about providing sincere evaluations, so the problem seems to be one of convincing students that their opinions do matter.¹¹

⁵ See Hoban and Hastings (n1) 1015.

⁶ See, eg, Roy C Bryan, 'Reactions to Teachers by Students, Parents, and Administrators' (Cooperative Research Project 668, United States Office of Education, Western Michigan University, 1963); Peter Cohen, 'Effectiveness of Student-Rating Feedback for Improving College Instruction: A Meta-Analysis of Findings' (1980) 13(4) *Research in Higher Education* 321; Judith Levinson-Rose and Robert J Menges, 'Improving College Teaching: A Critical Review of Research' (1981) 51(3) *Review of Educational Research* 403.

⁷ Jennifer Rowley, 'Student Feedback: A Shaky Foundation for Quality Assurance' (1995) 1(3) *Innovation and Learning in Education* 14, 19, cited in Janet Leckey and Neville Neill, 'Quantifying Quality: The Importance of Student Feedback' (2001) 7(1) *Quality in Higher Education* 19, 25.

⁸ Loughran (n2) 36.

⁹ See Sarah Watson, 'Closing the Feedback Loop: Ensuring Effective Action from Student Feedback' (2003) 9(2) *Tertiary Education and Management* 145, 150.

¹⁰ Dennis E Clayson and Debra A Haley, 'Are Students Telling Us the Truth? A Critical Look at the Student Evaluation of Teaching' (2011) 21(2) *Marketing Education Review* 101.

¹¹ Karin J Spencer and Liora Pedhazur Schmelkin, 'Student Perspectives on Teaching and Its Evaluation' (2002) 27(5) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 397, 406.

Student evaluations that are conducted at the end of each course or each term have been used extensively in many universities, in the form of standardized student evaluations on teaching and learning ('SETL').¹² There have been debates about the validity and usefulness of this kind of traditional form of student evaluations in serving a formative purpose of helping to improve teaching practices. Can they really measure teaching effectiveness since there is no single, widely accepted definition or criterion for measuring that?¹³ Langbein's study concludes that it is difficult to find out what the student ratings actually measure and what variables measure teaching effectiveness in student evaluations.¹⁴ If rating scales are used or an overall rating is used in SETL, does it actually provide information on specific behaviors of the teachers?¹⁵ Can student evaluations and ratings be affected by factors that have nothing to do with the teachers' teaching effectiveness or behavior, or factors that are outside of the control of the teachers?¹⁶ Do students provide relevant and honest feedback in their evaluations? Some students do not have strong incentive to provide feedback in the traditional end-of-term evaluations because they know that their comments will not benefit them before the relevant course finishes and that may have contributed partly to the low response rate. Rowley identifies one of the most significant limitations of traditional end-of-term evaluations as its retrospective and summative nature, where students from whom feedback has been obtained are not normally the beneficiaries of any subsequent improvements.¹⁷

¹² SETL is generally used to obtain students' responses and perceptions about the effectiveness of their course and their teachers using rating scales, and quite often with a few additional open-ended questions. SETL mainly serves two different purposes: it is formative when its purpose is to help teachers to improve and enhance their teaching practices and effectiveness; and it is summative when its purpose is to evaluate the overall quality of the course or the overall effectiveness of the teacher, particularly for administrative and personnel decisions. If the SETL results are made available to other students, it also serves to provide a means for the students to convey their opinions to other students in a more formalized manner: see Suzanne M Hobson and Donna M Talbot, 'Understanding Student Evaluations: What All Faculty Should Know' (2001) 49(1) *College Teaching* 26, 26–7; Spencer and Pedhazur Schmelkin (n11) 398. This article focuses on the formative purpose of student evaluations.

¹³ See, eg, Herbert W Marsh, 'Students' Evaluations of University Teaching: Dimensionality, Reliability, Validity, Potential Biases, and Utility' (1984) 76(5) *Journal of Educational Psychology* 707; Lawrence M Aleamoni, 'Typical Faculty Concerns About Student Evaluation of Teaching' (1987) 31 *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 25.

¹⁴ Laura I Langbein, 'The Validity of Student Evaluations of Teaching' (1994) 27(3) *PS: Political Science and Politics* 545.

¹⁵ See, eg, Peter Cohen, 'Comment on a Selective Review of the Validity of Student Ratings of Teaching' (1983) 54(4) *Journal of Higher Education* 448; Patricia A Cranton and Ronald A Smith 'A New Look at the Effect of Course Characteristics on Student Ratings of Instruction' (1986) 23(1) *American Educational Research Journal* 117; Wilbert J McKeachie, 'Student Ratings: The Validity of Use' (1997) 52(11) *American Psychologist* 1218.

¹⁶ See, eg, John E Hofman and Liya Kremer, 'Attitudes Toward Higher Education and Course Evaluation' (1980) 72(5) *Journal of Educational Psychology* 610; Mark Shevlin et al, 'The Validity of Student Evaluation of Teaching in Higher Education: Love Me, Love My Lectures?' (2000) 25(4) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 397.

¹⁷ Rowley (n7), cited in Leckey and Neill (n7) 28.

In order for students' feedback to foster teachers' critical self-reflection, it is crucial to establish an appropriate opportunity and method to motivate students to give their voice by participating in this whole evaluation process. There have been very few, if any, empirical studies on such method. This article, through an empirical study of survey data of law students at The University of Hong Kong ('HKU'),¹⁸ argues that students must be motivated, either intrinsically or extrinsically, to provide effective feedback to their teachers. Students who believe that their feedback will improve teaching or the course or both should be more motivated to provide their feedback,¹⁹ but there must also be some 'tangible immediacy to the results' of their feedback for students to feel that they are connected to the faculty and their teacher.²⁰ Based on the results of empirical analysis, this article also proposes a 'motivation-driven student evaluation cycle' which provides a more comprehensive model in setting out the crucial and ideal steps in a student evaluation process to achieve enhancement in students' learning and teachers' teaching effectiveness.

A *Mid-term Student Evaluations*

Mid-term student evaluations ('MTSE') have been used by some universities and teachers in addition to the traditional end-of-term evaluations in an attempt to remedy the problem of a lack of students' motivation to give feedback that only benefits students of future academic years.²¹ With the use of MTSE, teachers can make changes and address specific concerns of current students who are still studying the course.²² Keutzer argues that the major benefits of MTSE in obtaining information on the teacher's current teaching effectiveness and the climate of the classroom include '(a) the information can be used to make changes during the current course; (b) students feel empowered to help design their own educational process.'²³

¹⁸ Research was undertaken pursuant to The University of Hong Kong Human Research Ethics Committee approval number EA1803007.

¹⁹ Yining Chen and Leon B Hoshower, 'Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness: An Assessment of Student Perception and Motivation' (2003) 28(1) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 71, 84.

²⁰ Spencer and Pedhazur Schmelkin (n11) 406.

²¹ See above Part I.

²² See, eg, JU Overall and Herbert W Marsh, 'Midterm Feedback from Students: Its Relationship to Instructional Improvement and Students' Cognitive and Affective Outcomes' (1979) 71(6) *Journal of Educational Psychology* 856; Hobson and Talbot (n12).

²³ Carolin S Keutzer, 'Midterm Evaluation of Teaching Provides Helpful Feedback to Instructors' (1993) 20(4) *Teaching of Psychology* 238.

MTSE are usually conducted on an anonymous basis and can either be in a standardized format²⁴ or in a rather informal²⁵ or unofficial format. There has been an increasing use of informal MTSE among teachers in different universities, and quite often, out of their own initiatives. Regardless of the format of the MTSE, just a mere collection of students' feedback does not in itself lead to any improvement in the quality of teaching,²⁶ and it is of little use if their feedback is not addressed appropriately.²⁷ MTSE are therefore usually supported by a follow-up discussion session with the students which is held shortly after the evaluation to share the results. Teachers generally go through and discuss with the students both the positive feedback and also areas that students would like to see improvement on in the follow-up discussion session. For areas that can be addressed by the teachers, they may suggest how certain aspects of the course or the instructional strategies can be modified. However, in practice, teachers may not be able to address all of the students' concerns or improve their teaching practices accordingly, eg due to the short time span of a semester, so for areas that are unlikely to be changed, teachers may explain the reasons why that is the case. Previous research finds that MTSE benefit the faculty and the teachers as they will have the opportunity to identify and address potential problems,²⁸ and also benefit the students as they will have the chance to express their views and see possible changes during the remainder of the term or the course.²⁹

B Purpose of Study

It appears from previous research that MTSE can benefit both the teachers and the students if it is implemented 'successfully'. Motivation of the students to actively participate in the evaluation process by providing effective feedback is critical to the success of a student evaluation system for teaching effectiveness, and students' motivation

²⁴ Some drawbacks of having standardized MTSE are that they tend to be lengthy, costly and lack the turnaround time which is needed for them to be useful for the remainder of the relevant term or course: see Janis Warner and Aneika Simmons, 'Giving Voice to Students: A Preliminary Analysis of Informal Mid-Term Evaluations & Procedural Justice' (2015) 19(1) *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal* 71, 71.

²⁵ Informal MTSE can take different formats as determined by the teacher conducting them, but they tend to include more open-ended questions gauging on students' feedback on the particular teacher's delivery of classes and instructional strategies, class activities, course work or anything which the students would like to communicate with the teacher about his or her teaching and the course up to the middle of the term or the course.

²⁶ See David Kember, Doris YP Leung and KP Kwan, 'Does the Use of Student Feedback Questionnaires Improve the Overall Quality of Teaching?' (2002) 27(5) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 411.

²⁷ See Leckey and Neill (n7) 29.

²⁸ See, eg, Overall and Marsh (n22); Tamara Baldwin and Nancy Blattner, 'Guarding Against Potential Bias in Student Evaluations: What Every Faculty Member Needs to Know' (2003) 51(1) *College Teaching* 27.

²⁹ See, eg, Spencer and Pedhazur Schmelkin (n11).

to actively take part in MTSE is closely connected with their perceptions and attitudes towards it.³⁰

On the other hand, motivation of the teachers in making improvements after receiving students' feedback is equally important for student evaluations to serve its formative purpose of enhancing teaching effectiveness. Centra argues that evaluations only serve a formative purpose if the teachers (i) learn something new from them; (ii) value the new information; (iii) understand how to make improvements; and (iv) are motivated to make the improvements, either intrinsically or extrinsically.³¹ The more readily a teacher accepts that student evaluations serve a formative purpose, is committed to the evaluation process and acts upon the evaluations in ways that result in improvements in teaching, the more likely that the teacher will view the evaluations as instrumental to their teaching and improving student learning.³²

There are relatively few studies that examine students' perceptions of MTSE in enhancing their learning.³³ There are also very few studies that look at the different factors which may influence students' motivation in participating in the evaluation process by providing their teachers with feedback in MTSE or student evaluations more generally. Some of the earlier studies were conducted in the context of different higher education courses and disciplines, including management,³⁴ psychology,³⁵ public administration and education courses,³⁶ but very few were conducted in the context of legal education. The discipline of law can be seen as different from other disciplines in that it is one of the subjects which is most competitive for university acceptance and also for jobs in the legal profession and elsewhere after graduation.³⁷ In some countries, like Hong Kong, law graduates will also need to compete for limited places in the postgraduate certificate in laws ('PCLL') program in order to be eligible for professional legal training.

The author's study examines whether the perceptions and attitudes towards MTSE of law students are different from those of students from other disciplines according to the findings of previous studies. While

³⁰ See Chen and Hoshower (n19).

³¹ John A Centra, *Reflective Faculty Evaluation: Enhancing Teaching and Determining Faculty Effectiveness* (Jossey-Bass, 1st ed, 1993).

³² See Timothy J Gallagher, 'Embracing Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Case Study' (2000) 28(2) *Teaching Sociology* 140.

³³ Some studies find the implementation of MTSE leading to improvements in students' self-evaluations of course performance and understanding of the course expectations, and improvements in students' perceptions of instructional effectiveness and on the cognitive and affective outcomes they attain: see, eg, GLA Harris and Dannelle D Stevens, 'The Value of Midterm Student Feedback in Cross-Disciplinary Graduate Programs' (2013) 19(3) *Journal of Public Affairs Education* 537; Overall and Marsh (n22).

³⁴ See, eg, Jack Friedlander, 'Student Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Midterm Feedback to Modify College Instruction' (1978) 71(3) *The Journal of Educational Research* 140.

³⁵ See, eg, Keutzer (n23); Michael J Brown, 'Student Perceptions of Teaching Evaluations' (2008) 35(2) *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 177.

³⁶ See, eg, Harris and Stevens (n33).

³⁷ See Graeme Broadbent, 'Student Evaluation and the Quality of Legal Education' (2007) 5(1) *Journal of Commonwealth Law and Legal Education* 3.

the majority of the earlier studies on MTSE examine students' perceptions of it, there is also a paucity of studies looking at teachers' perceptions of MTSE in helping them to improve their teaching effectiveness.³⁸

Filling the above gap left by previous research, the purpose of the author's study is to investigate whether MTSE provides a potentially better alternative or additional opportunity in obtaining effective student feedback by examining both the students' and the teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of MTSE in enhancing teaching and learning, as compared with traditional end-of-term evaluation. It also examines the factors that could be at play in motivating the students in providing effective feedback to their teachers in MTSE and in motivating the teachers in utilizing MTSE as a tool for improving their teaching practices. The author's study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

Perceptions of students:

- (1) Do students think that MTSE has improved their learning in the course for the rest of the term?
- (2) Are students satisfied with MTSE as a tool to help with their learning, as compared with end-of-term evaluation?
- (3) What are the key factors which affect students' willingness to provide honest feedback in MTSE?
- (4) What are the key factors which affect students' satisfaction with MTSE as a tool to help with their learning?

Perceptions of teachers:

- (1) Do teachers think that MTSE has helped them with understanding students' concerns?
- (2) Do teachers think that MTSE has provided them with student feedback that helps them improve their teaching in the course?
- (3) Are teachers satisfied with MTSE as a tool to help with their teaching, as compared with end-of-term evaluation?
- (4) What are the key factors which affect teachers' satisfaction with MTSE as a tool to help with their teaching?

³⁸ There are some studies that examine teachers' perceptions of student evaluations more generally and their motivation in processing student feedback. Gaertner looks at some of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of teachers in processing student feedback data to improve their teaching practices in his study and finds that both types of motivation create changes in the classroom: Holger Gaertner, 'Effects of Student Feedback as a Method of Self-Evaluating the Quality of Teaching' (2014) 42 *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 91. Some other studies find that external factors and incentives can affect whether feedback data will be used effectively by the teachers, including incentives in the form of explicit reward by the faculty, the perceived importance attached to teaching as compared with research by the institution and the evaluation culture of the institution: see, eg, Kember, Leung and Kwan (n26) 420–1, 423; John TE Richardson, 'Instruments for Obtaining Student Feedback: A Review of the Literature' (2005) 30(4) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 387, 407–8; Gaertner (n38).

The next section of this article will set out the methodology and measures of the author's study, followed by a discussion on the study results and analysis in Section III. Section IV will further discuss the implications of the findings and limitations of the author's study, and it concludes this article with the way forward.

II METHODOLOGY

The author's study was conducted in the full-time PCLL program at the faculty of law of HKU. The PCLL program is a one-year post-graduate program which students (either graduated in Hong Kong or overseas) need to complete before they can start their professional legal training in Hong Kong. There is a total of around 270–330 students enrolled in the PCLL program on a full-time basis at HKU each year. The majority of the courses in the PCLL program at HKU are divided into large group lectures and small group tutorials with a class size of around 10–12 students. The informal MTSE conducted in the author's study all took place in the small group tutorials. Students are put into different tutorial groups by the faculty's administrative staff.

A Perceptions of Students

The student participants of the study were full-time students who were enrolled in the author's small group tutorials in three different courses, namely corporate and commercial transactions, listed companies, and drafting commercial agreements, between the first semester of academic year 2017–18 and the first semester of academic year 2018–19. These three PCLL courses focus on the legal practical skills and knowledge in the context of corporate-related transactions. One of these three courses, corporate and commercial transactions, is a required course for the PCLL program that is taught in the first semester, while the other two courses are electives that are taught in the second semester.

There was a total of 79 students who were enrolled in the author's seven different tutorial classes of these three courses during the research period in which the author conducted informal MTSE. Some of these students were enrolled in more than one of the three courses, but the number of participants was counted on a per course basis, instead of a per headcount basis, to take into account of the possibility that the students might have different experience in MTSE in different courses and hence affecting their perceptions.

In the middle of the semester, which was around mid-way through the relevant courses, the author conducted an informal MTSE during class time by asking students to write down their comments and feedback on the delivery of the class by the teacher and on the course, including areas that they liked and areas that they would like to see improvements on, freely on a piece of paper on anonymous basis ('student feedback paper'). The author went through students' feedback and discussed them with the students in the following class,

highlighting students' suggestions for improvements and also some of their positive feedback. The author also discussed modifications or changes in instructional strategies that could be implemented to address students' feedback in the remaining classes of the course, while mentioning certain suggestions or feedback that could not be addressed and explaining why that is the case.

In the last class of the courses (before the final examination was held), students of the seven tutorial classes, who were present that day, were invited to complete a survey on a voluntary and anonymous basis, and a total of 73 students completed the student survey. The student survey includes seven items for examining students' perceptions measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 being 'strongly disagree' to 5 being 'strongly agree'); two multiple choice questions asking the student participants to choose the top two factors that influenced their decision as to whether to provide honest comments in the MTSE and their answer in whether they perceived themselves to be more satisfied with the MTSE as a tool to improve their learning as compared with the traditional end-of-term evaluations; and two open-ended questions gauging students' views of what they like most and like least about the informal MTSE. A few demographic questions, including gender and the relevant course that the student was enrolled in, are also included in the survey as possible variables which may affect the results of the survey.

B Perceptions of Teachers

The teacher participants of the study were part-time tutors who taught small group tutorial classes in two different courses, namely listed companies, and drafting commercial agreements, between the first and second semester of academic year 2017–18. These part-time tutors were all qualified legal practitioners with at least two years of post-qualification work experience who were either still in legal practice or had retired from practice. All the tutors (excluding the author) teaching these two courses during the research period (with five tutors teaching the drafting commercial agreements course and seven tutors teaching the listed companies course) were invited to conduct a trial informal MTSE in their tutorial classes on a voluntary basis. In the end, nine out of the 12 part-time tutors chose to conduct the informal MTSE in their tutorial classes. Two out of these nine teacher participants taught both courses, but for the purpose of the study, the number of teacher participants was counted on a per course basis, instead of a per headcount basis, to take into account of the possibility that the teachers might have different experience in conducting MTSE in different courses and hence affecting their perceptions. The teacher participants were asked to conduct the MTSE mid-way through the relevant courses, and they were provided with the same piece of student feedback paper (as used by the author) for distribution to their own students in class. The teacher participants were also suggested to go through students' comments in class in a similar way as what the author had done as described above. Other than these instructions and

suggestions, the teacher participants were left to conduct their own MTSE in their tutorial classes without further intervention.

In the last class of the courses (before the final examination was held), all of the teacher participants were invited to complete a survey on a voluntary basis, and all of them (with a total of nine tutors) completed the teacher survey. The teacher survey includes seven items for examining teachers' perceptions measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 being 'strongly disagree' to 5 being 'strongly agree'); one multiple choice question asking the teacher participants to choose their top two factors that influenced their decision as to whether they perceived themselves to be more satisfied with the MTSE as a tool to help with their teaching as compared with the traditional end-of-term evaluations; and two open-ended questions gauging teachers' views of what they like most and like least about the informal MTSE. A few demographic questions, including gender, years of teaching experience and the relevant course that the tutor taught, are also included in the survey as possible variables which may affect the results of the survey.

The students who were enrolled in the teacher participants' tutorial classes were not invited to participate in the author's study because of the sensitivity and possibility of that being seen as a means of evaluating the part-time tutors' teaching performance in addition to the end-of-term SETL, and may thereby affect these tutors' willingness to participate in the study. The teacher participants were not asked to pass any student feedback which they had received from the MTSE to anyone, including the author. They could keep the student feedback for their own reference.

III RESULTS

A Results of Student Participants

Overall, student participants had positive perceptions of the MTSE. Table 1 shows the frequencies and descriptive statistics of the responses to the seven perception items on the five-point Likert scale in the student survey. The Cronbach's Alpha³⁹ of the seven perception items in the student survey is .763, indicating a statistically acceptable level of internal reliability. Most student participants agreed that they had provided honest comments in the MTSE (*median* = 5, *mean* = 4.52, *agree/strongly agree* = 97.3 per cent) and believed that their comments were addressed by their teacher in the remaining tutorial classes of the course (*median* = 4, *mean* = 4.37, *agree/strongly agree* = 94.6 per cent). Although not as many student participants agreed that the MTSE had improved their learning in the course (*median* = 4, *mean* = 3.90, *agree/strongly agree* = 72.6 per cent), most of them were more satisfied

³⁹ Cronbach's Alpha, for which a cut-off of 0.70 or above can be regarded as an acceptable value of the coefficient. Higher Cronbach's Alpha indicates an increasing reliability of the instrument or measurement to which it is applied: Lee J Cronbach and Richard J Shavelson, 'My Current Thoughts on Coefficient Alpha and Successor Procedures' (2004) 64(3) *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 391.

with the MTSE as a tool to help with their learning as compared with the end-of-term evaluations (*median* = 4, *mean* = 4.22, *agree/strongly agree* = 95.9 per cent). Most of the student participants were in consensus with their positive perceptions of the MTSE as indicated by a small inter-quartile range⁴⁰ (*IQR* = 1) in six out of the seven perception items in the student survey, except that their perceptions on whether they are more willing to provide honest feedback in the MTSE than in the traditional end-of-term student evaluations seems to be slightly dispersed (*IQR* = 2, *median* = 4, *mean* = 3.99, *agree/strongly agree* = 74 per cent, *neutral* = 20.5 per cent, *disagree/strongly disagree* = 5.4 per cent).

In order to investigate if there is any correlation between a particular perception of the student participants on MTSE and their satisfaction with it as a tool to help with their learning as compared with the end-of-term evaluations, Kendall's Tau-b correlation analysis was performed and the results are summarized in Table 2. Student participants' belief that their comments were addressed by their teacher in the remaining tutorial classes ($\tau_b = .558$, $p < .000$), that the MTSE has improved their learning in the course ($\tau_b = .513$, $p < .000$) and helped them achieve the learning outcomes of the course ($\tau_b = .500$, $p < .000$) were all found to be strongly and positively correlated to their satisfaction with the MTSE as compared with the end-of-term evaluations. This implies that students' belief that their teacher actually addresses their comments before the end of the course and that the MTSE has benefit to their own learning are important to their positive perception on MTSE.

⁴⁰ IQR is the inter-quartile range of a response item which measures the dispersion or variability of the responses of participants, indicating whether the responses are clustered together or scattered across the range of possible responses.

Table 1
Students' Perceptions of MTSE (n=73)

	Likert Scale					Mean	Median	IQR
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %			
I provided my honest comment and feedback about the course/my tutor in the mid-term student evaluation	--	--	2.7	42.5	54.8	4.52	5	1
I feel that my comments and feedback provided in the mid-term student evaluations are addressed by the tutor in the remaining tutorials of the course	--	--	5.5	52.1	42.5	4.37	4	1
The mid-term student evaluations should be conducted in more courses	--	1.4	12.3	45.2	41.1	4.26	4	1
Overall, I am satisfied with the mid-term student evaluation as a tool to help with my learning in the course, as compared to the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	--	--	4.1	69.9	26	4.22	4	1
I am more willing to provide honest comments and feedback to my tutor in the mid-term student evaluations, than in the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	2.7	2.7	20.5	41.1	32.9	3.99	4	2
The mid-term student evaluation has improved my learning in the course	--	--	27.4	54.8	17.8	3.90	4	1
The mid-term student evaluation has helped me achieve the learning outcomes of the course	--	--	28.8	52.1	19.2	3.90	4	1

Note: n = sample size; IQR = inter-quartile range; % = percentage of sample size; Likert Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 2
Correlation Test Results of Students’ Perceptions of MTSE (n=73)

	Overall, I am satisfied with the mid-term student evaluation as a tool to help with my learning in the course, as compared to the traditional end-of-term student evaluations
	Correlation Coefficient (τ_b)
I provided my honest comment and feedback about the course/my tutor in the mid-term student evaluations.	.413***
I feel that my comments and feedback provided in the mid-term student evaluations are addressed by the tutor in the remaining tutorials of the course.	.558***
The mid-term student evaluation has improved my learning in the course.	.513***
The mid-term student evaluation has helped me achieve the learning outcomes of the course.	.500***
The mid-term student evaluations should be conducted in more courses.	.410***

Note: (1) Correlation between a particular perception of the student participants on MTSE and their satisfaction with it as a tool to help with their learning as compared with the end-of-term evaluation was tested by calculating the Kendall’s Tau-b correlation coefficient (τ_b), which measures the strength and direction of linear relationships between pairs of non-parametric variables.

Note: (2) Correlation coefficients (τ_b) significant at the 0.001 level are identified with three asterisks: ***p<0.001.

Student participants were asked to choose the two most important factors out of six different choices which had affected their willingness to provide honest feedback in MTSE as compared with end-of-term evaluations. Table 3A summarizes the results which indicate that the student participants find it important to them that their teacher cares about their feedback and comments, the MTSE has potential benefit to themselves and is in an informal format. This is consistent with the summary results showing the top three combinations of the two most important factors chosen by the student participants as set out in Table 3B.

In addition, student participants were asked to choose the two most important factors out of five different choices which had affected their satisfaction of MTSE as a tool to help with their learning as compared with end-of-term evaluations. Table 4A summarizes the results and indicates that the student participants also find it important to them that their teacher cares about their feedback and comments and the MTSE has benefit to themselves. Whether the student participants believed that their feedback had been taken into consideration and addressed by their teacher in the remaining classes were also important to them, as

indicated in Table 4B which sets out the top three combinations of the two most important factors chosen by the student participants.

These results imply that students' perception of a teacher who cares about their feedback and that MTSE has benefit to themselves are very important to the students, leading to their positive perceptions of MTSE as a tool to help with their learning and motivation in providing input in MTSE which is key to the usefulness and success of a student evaluation system.

Table 3A
Choices of Students on 2 Most Important Factors Affecting their Willingness to Provide Honest Feedback, as Compared with End-of-term Evaluations (n=73)

	Frequency
1) My tutor cares about my feedback and comments	68
2) The potential benefit of the mid-term student evaluation to myself	48
3) The paper format of the mid-term student evaluation (instead of electronic format)	8
4) The informal format of the mid-term student evaluation	16
5) The time designated in class for students to complete the mid-term student evaluations	5
6) The number of questions asked in the mid-term student evaluation as compared to that in the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	1

Note: n = sample size

Table 3B
Top 3 Combinations of the 2 Most Important Factors (n=73)

Combination of 2 choices	Percentage
1 + 2	61.6%
1 + 4	19.2%
1 + 3	6.8%

Note: n = sample size

Table 4A
Choices of Students on 2 Most Important Factors Affecting their Satisfaction with MTSE as a Tool to Improve Learning, as Compared with End-of-term Evaluations (n=73)

	Frequency
1) My tutor cares about my feedback and comments	46
2) The actual benefit of the mid-term student evaluation to myself	30
3) Whether the feedback and comments I provided had been taken into consideration by the tutor	30
4) Whether the feedback and comments I provided had been addressed in the remaining tutorials of the course	23
5) The chance to provide my feedback and comments before the examination	16

Note: n = sample size

Table 4B
Top 3 Combinations of the 2 Most Important Factors (n=73)

Combination of 2 choices	Percentage
1 + 2	26.0%
1 + 3	15.1%
3 + 4	13.7%

Note: n = sample size

In the open-ended questions gauging students' views of what they like most and like least about the informal MTSE, most of the students participants considered that their teacher cares about their comments and feedback, there is benefit to themselves as the teacher can address their concerns promptly 'before it's too late' and the informal format being the things that they like most about informal MTSE. Again, these are consistent with other findings on students' perceptions discussed above. On the other hand, there were not as many responses from the student participants on things that they like least about the informal MTSE, but some participants indicated that there was not enough time to provide their feedback during the class time and a few noted that the structure and format of the course might change after the middle of the term and hence queried if that's the best time in collecting their feedback.

To test whether the demographic variables of the student participants might have affected their perceptions of MTSE, *ANOVA*⁴¹ with each of the gender and the course enrolled by the student participants as between-group variables was performed on each of the

⁴¹ ANOVA is the Analysis of Variance which is a statistical technique to test equality among several means by comparing variance among groups relative to variance within groups (random error): Martin G Larson, 'Analysis of Variance' (2008) 117(1) *Circulation* 115.

seven perception items in Table 1 above. The results of *ANOVA* did not show any significant effect of the two demographic variables on the student participants’ perceptions of MTSE, indicating that neither the gender of the student participants nor the course in which the student participants were enrolled in affect their perceptions of MTSE. A breakdown of the student participants in the different demographic variable groups are set out in Table 5.

Table 5
Breakdown of Student Participants in Different Gender and Enrolled Courses (n=73)

	Gender		Enrolled Course		
	Female	Male	CCT	LC	DCA
Number of student participants	45	28	38	24	11

Note: n = sample size; CCT = Corporate and Commercial Transactions course; LC = Listed Companies course; DCA = Drafting Commercial Agreements course.

B Results of Teacher Participants

The sample size of the teacher participants is relatively small because only part-time tutors who taught the small group tutorials of two different courses were invited to participate in the author’s study, and nine out of the 12 part-time tutors who taught these two courses chose to participate on a voluntary basis. Regardless, the results should provide a preliminary indication of the inclination of teachers’ perceptions of the MTSE.

Table 6 shows the frequencies and descriptive statistics of the responses to the seven perception items on five-point Likert scale in the teacher survey. The Cronbach’s Alpha of the seven perception items in the teacher survey is .905, indicating a statistically good level of internal reliability. Overall, teacher participants’ perceptions of the MTSE were not as positive as the student participants’. While the teacher participants believed that the students had provided them with generally constructive comments and feedback in the MTSE (*median* = 4, *mean* = 4.11, *agree/strongly agree* = 88.9 per cent), but they did not quite agree that MTSE has helped them with their teaching (*median* = 3, *mean* = 3.22, *agree/strongly agree* = 44.4 per cent) nor were they entirely satisfied with the MTSE as a tool to help with their teaching as compared with the end-of-term evaluations (*median* = 4, *mean* = 3.56, *agree/strongly agree* = 55.5 per cent). The teacher participants seemed to have varying perceptions in most of the items in the teacher survey as indicated by an inter-quartile range of two or above in five out of the seven perception items in the teacher survey, in particular, as to whether the MTSE has helped them understand students’ concerns relating to the course (*IQR* = 3, *median* = 4, *mean* = 3.89, *agree/strongly agree* = 77.7 per cent, *neutral* = 0 per cent, *disagree/strongly disagree* = 22.2 per cent) and their satisfaction with MTSE as a tool to help with their

teaching as compared with the traditional end-of-term students evaluations ($IQR = 3$, $median = 4$, $mean = 3.56$, $agree/strongly agree = 55.5$ per cent, $neutral = 22.2$ per cent, $disagree/strongly disagree = 22.2$ per cent).

The teacher participants only slightly agreed that they had taken students' comments and feedback into consideration in conducting the remaining tutorial classes ($median = 4$, $mean = 3.78$, $agree/strongly agree = 66.7$ per cent), or had addressed or discussed some of the students' comments in the remaining tutorial classes ($median = 4$, $mean = 3.78$, $agree/strongly agree = 46.62$ per cent). It is worth noting that only five of the nine teacher participants responded to the question as to whether they believed that their students provided more written comments in the MTSE than in the end-of-term evaluations, and a few of the participants who did not respond to this question noted in the survey that they had never received nor seen any written comments of their students in the end-of-term evaluations, and that might have explained for the few missing responses for this particular question.

In order to investigate if there is any correlation between a particular perception of the teacher participants on MTSE and their satisfaction with it as a tool to help with their teaching as compared with the end-of-term evaluations, Kendall's Tau-b correlation analysis was performed and the results are summarized in Table 7. Teacher participants' belief that they have addressed or discussed with their students some of the feedback received from the MTSE in the remaining tutorials of the course ($\tau_b = .849$, $p < .01$) and that the MTSE has helped them to understand their students' concerns and issues relating to the course ($\tau_b = .599$, $p < .05$) were found to be strongly and positively correlated to their satisfaction with the MTSE as compared with the end-of-term evaluations. This suggests that teachers' perceptions that they can actually understand and address students' feedback and concerns is important to their positive perception on MTSE.

Table 6
Teachers' Perceptions of MTSE (n=9)

	Likert Scale					Mean	Median	IQR
	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %			
I feel that the comments and feedback provided by students in the mid-term student evaluations are generally constructive	--	--	11.1	66.7	22.2	4.11	4	1
The mid-term student evaluation has helped me understand my students' concerns and issues relating to the course	--	22.2	--	44.4	33.3	3.89	4	3
I have taken the comments and feedback received from the mid-term student evaluations into consideration when conducting the remaining tutorials of the course	--	--	33.3	55.6	11.1	3.78	4	1
I have addressed or discussed some of the comments and feedback received from the mid-term student evaluations in the remaining tutorials of the course	--	11.1	22.2	44.4	22.2	3.78	4	2
Overall, I am satisfied with the mid-term student evaluation as a tool to help with my teaching in the course, as compared to the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	11.1	11.1	22.2	22.2	33.3	3.56	4	3
The mid-term student evaluation has improved my teaching in the course	--	22.2	33.3	44.4	--	3.22	3	2
I received more written comments and feedback from students in the mid-term student evaluations, than in the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	11.1	--	22.2	22.2	--	3.00	3	2

Note: n = sample size; IQR = inter-quartile range; % = percentage of sample size; Likert Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

Table 7
Correlation Test Results of Teachers' Perceptions of MTSE (n=9)

	Overall, I am satisfied with the mid-term student evaluation as a tool to help with my teaching in the course, as compared to the traditional end-of-term student evaluations
	Correlation Coefficient (τ_b)
I feel that the comments and feedback provided by students in the mid-term student evaluations are generally constructive	-0.08
I have taken the comments and feedback received from the mid-term student evaluations into consideration when conducting the remaining tutorials of the course	.337
I have addressed or discussed some of the comments and feedback received from the mid-term student evaluations in the remaining tutorials of the course	.849**
The mid-term student evaluation has helped me understand my students' concerns and issues relating to the course	.599*
The mid-term student evaluation has improved my teaching in the course	.387
I received more written comments and feedback from students in the mid-term student evaluations, than in the traditional end-of-term student evaluations	.224

Note: (1) Correlation between a particular perception of the teacher participants on MTSE and their satisfaction with it as a tool to help with their teaching as compared with the end-of-term evaluations was tested by calculating the Kendall's Tau-b correlation coefficient (τ_b), which measures the strength and direction of linear relationships between pairs of non-parametric variables.

Note: (2) Correlation coefficients (τ_b) significant at the 0.01 level are identified with two asterisks: ** $p < 0.01$.

Note: (3) Correlation coefficients (τ_b) significant at the 0.05 level are identified with one asterisk: * $p < 0.05$.

Teacher participants were asked to choose the two most important factors out of six different choices which had affected their satisfaction of MTSE as a tool to help with their teaching as compared with end-of-term evaluations. Table 8A summarizes the results and indicates that the teacher participants found it important to them as to whether the MTSE is effective in improving their teaching, the time and efforts spent on addressing students' comments in the remaining tutorial

classes and that it is in an informal format. However, it cannot be determined from the results whether the time and efforts spent on addressing students' comments had positively or negatively affected the teacher participants' perception of their satisfaction with MTSE. Given that the teacher participants only slightly agreed that they had taken students' feedback into consideration or had addressed or discussed their comments in the remaining tutorial classes, it can be speculated that the time and efforts which the participants considered they had to spend on addressing students' comments in the remaining classes might have negatively affected their satisfaction with MTSE. Table 8B sets out the top three combinations of the two most important factors chosen by the teacher participants.

Table 8A
Choices of Teachers on 2 Most Important Factors Affecting their Satisfaction with Mid-term Evaluation as a Tool to Improve Teaching, as Compared with End-of-term Evaluations (n=9)

	Frequency
1) Whether my students appreciate my efforts	1
2) Effectiveness of the mid-term student evaluations to improve my teaching	7
3) Informal format of the mid-term student evaluation	4
4) Ease of conducting the mid-term student evaluations	1
5) Time spent on conducting the mid-term student evaluations in class	0
6) Time and efforts spent on addressing students' comments and feedback in the remaining tutorials of the course	5

Note: n = sample size

Table 8B
Top 3 Combinations of the 2 Most Important Factors (n=9)

Combination of 2 choices	Percentage
2 + 6	44.4%
2 + 3	33.3%
1 + 6	11.1%
3 + 4	11.1%

Note: n = sample size

In the open-ended questions gauging teachers' views of what they like most and like least about the informal MTSE, most of the teacher participants considered that the timing of receiving student feedback before the end of term and the informal format which had encouraged

more responses being the things that they like most about informal MTSE. Regarding the things that the teacher participants like least about informal MTSE, some participants indicated that they had received comments about the course to which they as tutors were unable to make any changes and a few other participants found the questions asked in the student evaluations not too structured. These results, together with the findings on teacher’ perceptions on MTSE, imply that the teacher participants might have received comments mainly about the course which the participants were not able to address as a tutor, which might have contributed to the varying responses on whether the teacher participants had addressed or discussed students’ comments in the remaining tutorial classes.

To test whether the demographic variables of the teacher participants might have affected their perceptions of MTSE, *ANOVA* with each of the gender, the course taught by the participants and their year of teaching experience (0–2, 3–5, 6–8, more than eight years) as between-group variables was performed on each of the seven perception variables in Table 6 above. The results of *ANOVA* did not show any significant effect of the three demographic variables on the participants’ perceptions of MTSE, indicating that none of the gender of the teacher participants, the course in which they taught nor their years of teaching experience affect their perceptions of MTSE. However, the results show that although the participants did not quite agree that MTSE helped to improve their teaching as compared with end-of-term evaluations (*mean* = 3.56), interestingly, those teacher participants with over eight years of teaching experience (33.3 per cent) strongly agreed so (*mean* = 5.00). A breakdown of the teacher participants in the different demographic variable groups are set out in Table 9.

Table 9
Breakdown of Teacher Participants in Different Gender, Taught Courses and Years of Teaching Experience (n=9)

	Gender		Taught Course		Years of Teaching Experience			
	F	M	LC	DCA	0-2	3-5	6-8	>8
Number of teacher participants	6	3	5	4	3	2	1	3

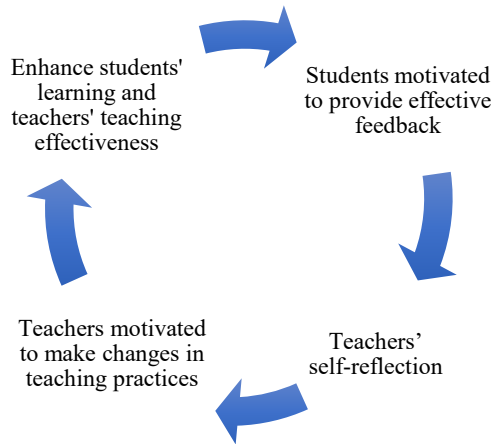
Note: n = sample size; LC = Listed Companies course; DCA = Drafting Commercial Agreements course.

IV DISCUSSION

Students’ intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to provide relevant, useful and honest feedback in MTSE, and teachers’ intrinsic or extrinsic motivation to use the student feedback data obtained from MTSE are key to whether MTSE will provide a useful opportunity for teachers to hear student voice to foster critical self-reflection, and ultimately to

enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. It is argued in this article that there is a strong inter-relationship between students' motivation in providing effective feedback, teachers' self-reflection, teachers' motivation in making changes in their teaching practices and any resulting enhancement in students' learning and teachers' teaching effectiveness. The inter-relationship of all these elements can be formulated as a 'motivation-driven student evaluation cycle' model for enhancing teaching and learning, which is illustrated in Figure 1, and each of the elements in the student evaluation cycle is a prerequisite for the next.

Figure 1:
Motivation-Driven Student Evaluation Cycle Model



Gaertner examines how teachers perceive and interpret student feedback in his study⁴² by applying a model⁴³ which describes the ideal steps that can be taken by the teachers in processing student feedback information. Gaertner argues that the quality of this process depends on both the individual characteristics of the teacher (eg motivation, self-efficacy, self-reflection) and other organizational factors (eg evaluation culture at school, school leadership, support in dealing with student feedback).⁴⁴ Powney and Hall's study finds that students are usually not informed about the consequences or any subsequent action resulting from student feedback after they are collected and thus argue that the feedback loop is not closed, which in turn can contribute to the

⁴² Gaertner (n38) 92–3.

⁴³ Gaertner applies a 'model for data use for instructional development' which sets out the ideal steps that can be taken by the teachers in processing student feedback information: starting with teachers' perception and understanding of the student feedback, interpretation of the feedback results by identifying any explanations for them, conducting measures to optimize teaching, and ending with a re-evaluation of the measures taken which will then be the starting point of a new cycle: Andreas Helmke and Ingmar Hosenfeld, 'Standardbezogene Unterrichts evaluation' [Standard-Based Evaluation of Teaching] in Gerold Brägger, Beat Bucher and Norbert Landwehr (eds), *Schlüsselfragen zur externen Schulevaluation* (Hep Verlag, 2005) 127.

⁴⁴ Gaertner (n38).

difficulty of getting students to engage in the feedback process.⁴⁵ How teachers perceive, interpret and process student feedback and how they inform the students of any actions resulting from this feedback are certainly important, but these alone are not sufficient to lead to an effective student evaluation process. How the teachers are motivated to take these steps and how the students are motivated to participate in the feedback process are equally important. Therefore, it is argued in this article that the ‘motivation-driven student evaluation cycle’ provides a more comprehensive model in setting out the crucial and ideal steps in a student evaluation process to achieve enhancement in students’ learning and teachers’ teaching effectiveness.

If both the students and the teachers have more motivation to participate in this evaluation cycle through MTSE, then MTSE will be instrumental in enhancing teaching and learning and can become a student-centered tool in itself.⁴⁶ Therefore, this study reviews the students’ and the teachers’ perceptions of MTSE, as compared with the traditional end-of-term evaluation, in enhancing their learning and teaching effectiveness, respectively, in law courses and also explores the factors which may influence the students’ motivation in providing effective feedback and the teachers’ motivation in making changes in their teaching practices through the use of MTSE.

A Analysis and Implications

The results of this study on students’ perceptions of MTSE in legal education are consistent with the findings of similar studies conducted in the past in other disciplines which were generally positive, including resulting in positive impact on student satisfaction and students’ impressions about their teachers⁴⁷ and students’ perceptions of instructional effectiveness.⁴⁸

This study finds that the students are willing to provide honest comments and are satisfied with MTSE as a tool to help with their learning mainly because they believe that MTSE can benefit them and they perceive that their teacher cares about their feedback. One of the important implications of these findings, therefore, is that a key factor in students’ satisfaction with MTSE is the perceived benefit to the students themselves. The student participants of the study were all enrolled in the author’s small group tutorials in order to avoid the results being affected by the different teachers’ style and manner in conducting MTSE including discussion on the feedback results. In this study, the author went through the students’ feedback and discussed them with the

⁴⁵ Janet Powney and Stuart Hall, ‘Closing the Loop: The Impact of Student Feedback on Students’ Subsequent Learning’ (Research Report No. 90, Scottish Council for Research in Education SCORE, December 1998) 17.

⁴⁶ See Harris and Stevens (n33).

⁴⁷ See, eg, Brown (n35) who finds in his study that students ascribe a number of favorable characteristics to those teachers who conduct MTSE, including that they are committed to teaching, are fulfilling their responsibilities and have a desire to see students succeed.

⁴⁸ See, eg, Overall and Marsh (n22).

students in the class following the MTSE, and she proposed some changes in her teaching to address certain feedback, while explaining why changes could not be made to address some other feedback. However, if a teacher does not or cannot make changes to address some of the students' feedback in the remaining classes after MTSE is conducted, will that affect students' perceived benefit from MTSE? If the MTSE is accompanied by a constructive discussion of students' feedback, it is argued in some earlier studies that even if the teacher chooses not to change the course or teaching practices, it will still provide an opportunity to address students' concerns⁴⁹ and allow student input to foster mutual respect and a collaborative learning environment,⁵⁰ resulting in students' more positive perceptions of and motivation to participate in the MTSE.⁵¹

Another important implication of the findings of the study in terms of students' perceptions of MTSE is that a caring relationship and environment has positive impact on students' learning experience and motivation in providing constructive input in the MTSE. McCroskey advances the concept of 'perceived caring', which occurs when a student, despite the many facets that influence the decision, perceives that a teacher cares for them.⁵² He suggests that it is best if a teacher really cares about a student, but that this fact is secondary to the idea that a student perceives that the teacher cares about them. McCroskey summarizes this by stating that it is very important for a teacher to learn how to communicate in such a manner that students will perceive that he or she cares about them; if the student does not have the perception that the teacher cares, he or she might as well not care at all.⁵³ When teachers are perceived as caring, it is more likely to generate student perceptions of teacher trustworthiness, competence and credibility.⁵⁴ Teachers who are perceived as caring by the students are found to have been evaluated more positively by the students in teacher evaluations and also in terms of affective class ratings (affective learning of the course content) and student perceptions of cognitive learning (how

⁴⁹ Jane Sojka, Ashok K Gupta and Dawn R Deeter-Schmelz, 'Student and Faculty Perceptions of Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Study of Similarities and Differences' (2002) 50(2) *College Teaching* 44, 48.

⁵⁰ MJ Coxwell, 'Paying Attention: Showing Respect for Student Opinion' (1995) 61 *The Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 49, cited in Sojka, Gupta and Deeter-Schmelz (n49).

⁵¹ It was found in a study that there was a strong relationship between the extent of teachers' discussion of the comments and suggestions made by the students in MTSE, and the students' perceptions of change in instruction in their course: Friedlander (n34).

⁵² James C McCroskey, *An Introduction to Communication in the Classroom* (Burgess International Group, 1992), cited in Andrew Shane Larsen, 'Who Cares? Developing a Pedagogy of Caring in Higher Education' (PhD Thesis, Utah State University, 2015).

⁵³ McCroskey (n52).

⁵⁴ Jason J Teven, 'Teacher Caring and Classroom Behavior: Relationships with Student Affect and Perceptions of Teacher Competence and Trustworthiness' (2007) 55(4) *Communication Quarterly* 433.

much they feel they have learned in the class).⁵⁵ Three factors have been advanced as likely to lead students to perceive a teacher as caring about their welfare: empathy, understanding and responsiveness.⁵⁶ This article argues that MTSE advances perceived caring of the teachers by showing that the teachers are empathetic, understand and respect students' views, and are responsive and react to student needs when they listen to what the students say. The sharing and discussion of feedback results with the students through MTSE conveys the impression that the teacher reads and cares about the students' feedback and takes them seriously, so that students will feel that they are respected and can participate in their own educational process.⁵⁷

The results of this study suggest, however, that the teachers did not perceive the MTSE as positively as the students. While the teacher participants believed that they had received generally constructive feedback from their students through MTSE, the results found that the teacher participants might have received many comments about the course to which they could not make any changes as a tutor.⁵⁸ Given that the teacher participants had full discretion in conducting the MTSE in their own tutorial classes, the style and manner in which they conducted it could be different and could not be controlled. The teacher participants might not have managed the students' expectations on the objectives of the MTSE and the kind of comments that the teachers could realistically or practically address in the remaining tutorial classes, which could in turn have affected the kind of comments received by the teachers and also the teachers' perceptions of the MTSE.

The results of the study also show that the teacher participants did not indicate positively that they had taken students' feedback into consideration, or had addressed or discussed their feedback in the remaining tutorial classes, but it cannot be determined from the study results whether that was due to the kind of comments received which the teachers did not feel that they could address, or whether that was due to the time and efforts that the teachers felt that they had to spend on addressing those student feedback. Therefore, whether the teacher participants actually discussed students' feedback in subsequent class, or, if they did, the way how and when they did so, was not clear and could not be controlled either. Future studies can include interviews with the teacher participants to find out more on these issues. Watson argues that the emphasis of collecting student feedback should be on responding to students' expectations rather than meeting them directly, hence even if expectations cannot be met, it is still necessary to discuss with the students following a consideration of their comments and

⁵⁵ Jason J Teven and James C McCroskey, 'The Relationship of Perceived Teacher Caring with Student Learning and Teacher Evaluation' (1997) 46(1) *Communication Education* 1.

⁵⁶ See McCroskey (n52).

⁵⁷ Keutzer (n23).

⁵⁸ At HKU, the course coordinators instead of the tutors of the different courses which are subject to the author's study are responsible for the design of the course curriculum and materials.

views.⁵⁹ Even if the teachers feel that they are unable to address or make changes relating to some of the students' feedback, are they willing or motivated to still spend some time to address or discuss these feedback with the students in class? It is argued in this article that it is important to the students that they perceive their teacher as having addressed their feedback in the remaining classes and that their teacher cares about their feedback. Therefore, students can still be motivated to participate in the MTSE actively by providing quality input even if their teacher might not be able to make changes to address all of their comments or meet their expectations. On the other hand, teachers may also have additional motivation to improve their teaching after a constructive discussion of the feedback results with their students.⁶⁰

Another interesting observation from the results of this study on teachers' perceptions is that those participants who had more teaching experience (with over eight years of teaching experience, comprising 33.3 per cent of the teacher participants) strongly agreed that MTSE had helped to improve their teaching as compared with end-of-term evaluations, while the other teacher participants did not indicate as much agreement. Teachers with more teaching experience have seen more end-of-term evaluation results over the years and may also have more experience in exploring different ways to improve their teaching practices, and that would have provided them with more information and basis in making a comparison of the usefulness between MTSE and end-of-term evaluations in helping with their teaching. On the other hand, teachers who have less teaching experience or have just started teaching will lack similar experiences and information in making similar comparison. The perceptions of teachers with different teaching experiences on MTSE and their motivation in utilizing MTSE as a tool for improving their teaching practices are some issues that can be looked into and analyzed further in future studies.

B Limitations and Future Directions

This study provides important and useful findings on the students' and the teachers' perceptions of MTSE, but there are certain limitations of the study. First, the sample is not randomized. The student participants all belonged to the tutorial groups taught by the author, in order to take into account of the possibility that students' perceptions of MTSE might be influenced by the teacher who conducted it.

Second, there is no control group used in the study due to the relatively small sample size. It is simply the students' and the teachers' perceptions of MTSE as compared with end-of-term evaluations which are examined. It will be interesting to find out the perceptions of the students who were enrolled in the teacher participants' tutorials to see if they are different from the perceptions of the student participants in the study who were students enrolled in the author's tutorials. The students who were enrolled in the teacher participants' tutorials were

⁵⁹ Watson (n9) 148.

⁶⁰ Gaertner (n38).

not invited to participate in the author's study because of the sensitivity and possibility of that being seen as a means of evaluating the part-time tutors' teaching performance in addition to the end-of-term SETL, and may thereby affect these part-time tutors' willingness to participate in the study. In the future, studies can be carried out with the collaboration of different teachers in legal education, which can examine and compare the perceptions of teachers and students who are enrolled in different teachers' classes. In addition, with a bigger sample size, control groups can also be included in future collaborative studies.

Third, the sample size of the teacher participants is relatively small as discussed in Section IIIB above, but the results provide a useful preliminary indication of teachers' perceptions of MTSE. Again, future collaborative studies can increase the sample size significantly.

Fourth, there are certain inherent institutional constraints in universities in accommodating mid-term changes in different aspects of a course,⁶¹ hence this study is conducted within these constraints, particularly where the student feedback relates to the course rather than teaching practices. However, the effect of these constraints can be largely reduced for future studies if the teachers manage the students' expectations on the objectives and limitations of the MTSE appropriately before it is conducted. In addition, as some teacher participants indicated that they had received comments about the course to which they were unable to make any changes as discussed in Section IIIB above, future studies on MTSE can include an additional mechanism in the methodology where any course-related feedback will be forwarded by the tutors to the course coordinator so that these feedback can be considered by the appropriate person, and the students will be informed about this. But of course, this course-related feedback will still be subject to any relevant institutional constraints discussed above and a further mechanism will also need to be put in place where the course coordinator will discuss with the students or inform them of the consequences resulting from these course-related feedback.

Fifth, teacher participants of the study were all part-time tutors who were experienced legal practitioners. The student evaluations and ratings do not have significant administrative or personnel implication to these part-time tutors' continued appointment, hence there does not seem to be any apparent extrinsic incentives or motivation (though there may still be intrinsic motivation) for them to address students' feedback and improve their teaching. Even if the part-time tutors have such motivation, they generally lack relevant educational knowledge or teaching experience to address students' feedback or improve their teaching practices, which might have affected their perceptions of MTSE. Future research can solicit input from both full-time and part-time teachers on their extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to improve their teaching upon receiving student feedback as that will be crucial to the usefulness of MTSE as illustrated in the 'motivation-drive student

⁶¹ For example, in some universities, there are restrictions on making changes to the assessment format and activities of any course, which may be subject to prior approval procedures before the course has started.

evaluation cycle' model. In addition, qualitative data can also be collected from the participants by conducting interviews or focus groups to find out more about the reasons underlying some of their perceptions relating to MTSE.⁶²

Another interesting observation of this study is that all of the student participants provided some written comments and feedback through the informal MTSE resulting in a very high response rate. Student participants indicated that they had provided honest comments in the MTSE, and some of them indicated that they liked the informal format of the MTSE. However, it is not clear from the findings of the study as to whether the high response rate was due to the informal format or paper format or both of the MTSE. Regardless, informal MTSE can be used as a supplementary tool for the teachers to hear student voice and to enhance teaching and learning if all the elements within the 'motivation-driven student evaluation cycle' model are observed, addressed and achieved. The 'motivation-driven student evaluation cycle' model formulated by the author can be used as a basis for generating further research in student evaluations and legal education in the future.

⁶² See above Part IVA.