

Survey of Medical Students to find out their Choice of Paper Types for Examination

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Abstract

Introduction: Researchers have paid little attention to evaluating examination methodologies. Both subjective and objective questionnaires are needed to assess overall knowledge and skill of students. To make the papers student friendly, a survey on students' choice for question papers is of utmost importance. **Subjects and Methods:** 122 students were provided with five question paper types having equal marks and given equal time to solve them. At the end of the examination they were asked to grade the paper as per their choice which were tabulated and analyzed. **Results:** Majority of the students gave the first preference to question paper type V (MCQs). As far as the choice of second best paper type was considered, there was discrepancy among good and mediocre students. The former considered paper type I (long essay type) while the latter selected type IV (write in brief) as the best paper type. **Conclusion:** To make the examination process, student friendly, paper having three question paper type i.e. MCQs, long essay type and write in brief should be coined.

Keywords: Medical students, paper type, questionnaire, survey, paper choice.

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Introduction

Scientific exploration of medical education is a continuous phenomenon for its betterment. No method can be idealized and process seems to be dynamic in terms of time, need and circumstances. Teaching, training and examination is the basic process to produce medical professionals. Enormous literature is available on teaching methodologies.^[1-5] Unfortunately, researchers have paid little attention to evaluating methodologies. Theory examination is based on papers having questionnaire of two varieties i.e. subjective and objective. The later is preferred due to two reasons. First is the marking which can be easily done with great speed by using machines. Secondly, since there is no involvement of human evaluation there is no chance of discrepancy. At the same time subjective assessment is also of great importance to judge the skill and power of decision making by the students. Unfortunately, students are not involved in setting the papers although the best way to assess the requirements of students and their view point is by receiving their feedback at regular intervals.^[6-8] Questionnaire forms a basis on which an objective evaluation of our teaching methodologies can be obtained.^[9] The aim of the present study is to find out the students' choice of paper types for examining their knowledge of medical subject. Anatomy was the subject chosen for present study as it gets maximum teaching hours in first year MBBS course and holds a very important place in the medical curriculum.^[10]

Subjects and Methods

Study sample was formed by MBBS first professional students of 2017-18 batch. Students were explained about the purpose of examination with the promise not to disclose the marks. Their enthusiasm was established by the fact that all the 122 students present on that day actively participated in the survey. Students were provided with five different question paper types, each were allotted equal marks and time. [Table 1]. After examination they were asked to mention their choice of question paper on priority basis. Students were divided into five groups on the basis of their grades – A, B, C, D and E [Table 2]. The students were further categorized on the basis of the best choice of question paper [Table 3].

Results

72 out of 122 (59.02%) students considered paper type V (MCQs) as the best choice and only 5 (4.1%) selected paper type II (short answer type) as the best choice. 22 (18.03%) students preferred type IV (write in brief) as the best choice [Table 3]. Students were sub-divided further into two groups i.e. group I comprising of good students (grade A and B combined) and group II of mediocre students (grade C, D and E combined), and their choice of papers were tabulated separately [Table 2]. 17 (13.93%) good students of group I selected paper type V as the best choice and only 2 (1.64%) of them selected paper II as their first choice. 45 (45.09%)

mediocre students of group II mentioned paper type V as the best choice and only 3 (2.46%) preferred paper type II as the best choice. 5 (4.1%) of good students selected paper type I as the best choice, while 19 (15.57%) mediocre students liked paper type IV as the best choice [Table 3].

Table 1: Paper Types And Their Format Used For Survey

Paper Type	Format	No. Of Questions	Distribution Of Marks	
			Marks / Question	Total Marks
I	Long Easy Type	1	10	10
II	Short Answer Type	2	5	10
III	Short Notes	3	3+3+4	10
IV	Write In Brief	10	1	10
V	Mcqs	20	0.5	10

Table 2: Grading The Students According To Their Performance In All Five Types Of Papers

Grades	Percentile
A	>80
B	70-79
C	60-69
D	50-59
F	<50

Table 3: Best Choice Of Students For Question Types

Paper	Number of students-		Grade wise number	
	Total	Per cent	Grade-A,B	Grade-C,D,F
I	13	(10.66%)	0+5 (4.1%)	4+1+3 (6.56%)
II	5	(4.1%)	0+2 (1.64%)	2+0+1 (2.46%)
III	10	(8.19%)	1+2 (2.46%)	4+1+2 (5.73%)
IV	22	(18.03%)	0+3 (2.46%)	7+6+6 (15.57%)
V	72	(59.02%)	1+16 (13.93%)	19+10+26 (45.09%)
Total	122			

Discussion

Invariably, paper type V (MCQs) was considered the paper of best choice by highest number of students both good and mediocre. The paper type IV (write in brief) was selected as the second best by majority of students all combined. Surprisingly, good students of group I selected paper type I (long essay type) as their second best choice. While mediocre students of group II considered the paper type IV as their second best choice. In a similar study students choose to prefer write in brief (Type IV) and MCQ (Type V) questions.^[11] McCoubrie P in his paper showed that matching questions are the fairest format and MCQs should be combined with practical assessment.^[12]

Maximum score in MCQ as compared to other format is a topic of concern as this demonstrates learning of association and superficial understanding to clear exam, rather than acquiring knowledge so as to bring it into practice.^[13] In contrast, to answer write in brief (Type IV), the students

require to approach it without any cues or prompting based on the knowledge they have. Survey regarding evaluation process for medical students has received little attention in the past.^[14] Reports showing involvement of students in selection of papers for evaluation as per their choice are lacking in literature. That way present survey seems to be unique and student friendly.

Conclusion

Three question paper types MCQs, Write in Brief and Long Essay Type, all combined are the best choice for evaluating exams for first professional MBBS students in anatomy.

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