

From Transactional Evaluation to Reflective Learning Practices: Postgraduate Student Feedback as a Catalyst for Sustainable Business Education

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Abstract

This study explores how business schools solicit feedback from postgraduate students on their course learning experiences. Traditionally, the feedback that students provide on a specific course has been framed within a client-service model that emphasises customer satisfaction over knowledge development as a contributor to national economic development. Often reducing complex learning experiences to simplistic transactional/satisfaction metrics. This study argues that this approach can lead to a misalignment between sustainable education goals and student expectations by undermining the true value of education derived by the student as an agent of change towards sustainable economic growth. Through a qualitative analysis of existing evaluation instruments that students are requested to complete, this study examines the quality of student feedback practices across multiple universities that offer business education. The commonly used feedback instruments are critiqued, suggesting alternatives that emphasise student growth, critical thinking for economic impact, professional development, and improvement of the course design and delivery for the future. Arguing for a shift of the structure and approach of course evaluation instruments from a transactional evaluation to a reflective practice, focused on learning as a catalyst of sustainable business education. Although the study acknowledges that feedback alone may not contribute to overall course progress, the findings underscore the need for business schools to adopt feedback mechanisms that recognise students as co-creators of knowledge and contributors to their learning communities for sustainable impact. As such, redesigning the structure and style of feedback forms is critical to ensure that students provide more effective course feedback.

Keywords: student feedback, course evaluation, business education, client-service model, SDGs, sustainable education

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Introduction

The landscape of higher education has undergone profound structural, ideological and pedagogical transformations over the past three decades, driven largely by globalisation, marketisation, performance accountability and the neoliberal repositioning of universities as competitive knowledge enterprises (Harvey & Williams, 2010). Within this evolving terrain, student feedback systems have become an institutionalised cornerstone of quality assurance, governance oversight and institutional reputation management. These systems, often in the form of standardised course evaluation surveys, are designed to capture student perceptions of teaching and learning for rankings, accreditation compliance, continuous improvement and managerial decision-making (Harvey & Williams, 2010).

In higher education, particularly business education at postgraduate level, student feedback is frequently framed as an evaluative measure of instructional service quality, reflecting a broader client-service discourse where students are treated as consumers or customers whose satisfaction signals institutional effectiveness (Mintzberg, 2004). However, this paradigm reduces education to a transactional exchange and sidelines the epistemic and developmental functions of feedback. Consequently, feedback becomes a mechanism for ratings and rankings rather than a pedagogical process for fostering critical reflection, intellectual growth and curriculum transformation.

Postgraduate business education is uniquely positioned within higher education due to its dual mandate of scholarly rigor and professional relevance. Programmes such as MBAs, postgraduate diplomas and executive education are expected to cultivate strategic thinking, leadership, ethical decision-making and problem-solving within complex organisational contexts (Mintzberg, 2004). Yet, prevailing feedback practices fail to interrogate whether such outcomes are meaningfully achieved, often prioritising surface-level indicators such as lecturer friendliness, organisation of slides and assessment turnaround time.

This study argues that the existing evaluative architecture is conceptually inconsistent with the pedagogical aspirations of business education. By drawing from theories of reflective practice, constructivist learning, transformative pedagogy and curriculum theory, the paper proposes a transition from transactional evaluation toward reflective feedback that emphasises learning depth, curriculum dialogue and value creation. In doing so, the study expands upon the conceptual foundation that offers a rigorous academic contribution suitable for academic improvement.

Why are business school curricula important for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? It is not just about focusing on SDG 4 on quality education, but a need to focus on the grand social, economic and environmental challenges facing current and future leaders in business sectors encompassing the private, public and NGO sectors. Businesses operate within a landscape informed and influenced by legislative frameworks that are increasingly focusing on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) in business, a set of responsible business practice standards for a company's operations that investors and stakeholders use to measure sustainability, ethical impact, and risk management (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, developing curricula that contributes to addressing SDG grand challenges is synonymous with addressing challenges and opportunities faced by businesses, thus critical in enhancing business school purpose and relevance (Alenezi & Alanazi, 2024; Wersun et al., 2020).

Findings from a study conducted by Russo et al. (2023) indicated that business schools require broader institutional reform and support enabling academics to meaningfully integrate Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiatives into business curricula. Since university management tend to take student evaluations seriously, perhaps the inclusion of reflective learning practices relating to pro-social behaviours attitudes and beliefs in student evaluations could provide the impetus needed to trigger business school management to actively implement PRME initiatives to deliver on their obligations to address broader societal challenges.

Problem Statement

Despite the prevalence of student feedback mechanisms in postgraduate business education, these systems remain predominantly anchored in transactional logics that privilege student satisfaction over learning transformation. Most evaluation tools are structured as closed-ended Likert-type questionnaires that solicit judgments about teaching performance rather than insights into learning processes or professional development outcomes. This orientation not only dilutes the epistemological function of feedback but also perpetuates a consumerist ideology that undermines the academic purpose of higher education.

The fundamental problem lies in the conceptual misalignment between what postgraduate business education claims to achieve; namely critical thinking, leadership development and applied professional competence and what feedback instruments measure. Instead of interrogating whether students have developed strategic reasoning skills, ethical decision-making or industry-relevant capabilities, feedback often focuses on the academic delivery style and subjective student comfort levels.

Furthermore, institutional reliance on such evaluative tools for staff appraisal and programme reviews exacerbates the issue by incentivising performative teaching practices rather than reflective pedagogy. This environment restricts innovative curriculum design, reduces academic autonomy and instrumentalises student feedback as a managerial surveillance tool rather than a developmental resource. Thus, the core issue is the systemic reduction of feedback to a procedural ritual divorced from genuine learning enhancement, thereby weakening its contribution to curriculum improvement and sustainable pedagogical reform.

This study is guided by the following research objectives, each capable of independent scholarly investigations:

1. To critically interrogate the theoretical and ideological foundations of transactional student feedback practices in postgraduate business education.
2. To evaluate the influence of existing student feedback mechanisms on developing sustainable quality education (SDG 4 Quality Education).

Literature Review

Evolution of Student Feedback in Higher Education

The institutionalisation of student feedback emerged prominently within the quality assurance movement of the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with increased demands for accountability and transparency in higher education systems (Harvey & Williams, 2010). Feedback instruments were designed to measure teaching effectiveness, improve course delivery and support performance management. However, research indicates that these instruments often lack

construct validity and pedagogical depth (Spooren et al., 2013). Carless (2006) and Boud and Molloy (2013) argue that feedback has become ritualised and disconnected from authentic learning improvement processes. Moreover, the dominance of managerial rationality has reduced the student voice to quantifiable metrics rather than dialogical engagement. This trend reflects the broader influence of New Public Management, where universities adopt corporate logics emphasising efficiency, measurability, performance monitoring and audit culture. Within this environment, student feedback is increasingly operationalised through standardised surveys, numerical ratings and benchmark comparisons, transforming complex learning experiences into administratively convenient data points. As a result, student participation becomes instrumentalised, functioning less as an avenue for critical reflection and more as a mechanism for institutional control and accountability. These quantitative metrics prioritise ease of comparison and managerial decision-making while marginalising students' nuanced narratives, reflective insights and contextual interpretations of their learning journeys. Consequently, feedback loses its epistemological depth and becomes detached from the dialogical processes that underpin transformative learning.

Dialogical engagement, by contrast, situates feedback as an interactive and co-constructed process in which students and educators collaboratively interpret learning experiences, challenge assumptions and participate in knowledge creation (Nicol, 2010). The replacement of this dialogical model with metric-driven evaluation systems not only silences critical student perspectives but also reinforces hierarchical power structures that privilege institutional priorities over pedagogical responsiveness. This reductionist approach narrows the democratic potential of higher education, converting students from reflective agents into passive data producers whose voices are filtered through bureaucratic abstraction. Ultimately, the ascendancy of managerial rationality restructures student feedback describes as a regime of performativity, where numerical representation supersedes authentic educational dialogue. This undermines the transformative role of feedback in curriculum development and learning enhancement.

The Client-Service Paradigm

The notion of students as consumers gained traction with the commodification of education, particularly in business schools competing for enrolments and tuition revenue (Molesworth et al., 2009). This paradigm transforms educational relationships into economic transactions, where satisfaction replaces scholarly growth as the benchmark of success. Marginson (2016) emphasises that such market logics erode the moral and intellectual foundations of higher education by subordinating academic integrity to branding and competition.

Reflective Practice and Transformative Learning

Reflective practice is rooted in Dewey's philosophy of experiential learning and Schön's theory of the reflective practitioner. Brock (2010) further developed transformative learning theory, highlighting critical reflection as essential to deep learning and perspective transformation. In business education, reflective practice fosters self-awareness, ethical reasoning and adaptive leadership (Raelin, 2009).

Feedback as Curriculum Intelligence

Effective feedback should inform curriculum design through continuous reflection and alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011). When structured appropriately, it contributes to constructive

alignment, where teaching activities, assessments and learning outcomes are coherently integrated. Research studies confirm that dialogical feedback fosters deeper engagement and improves critical thinking capacity among postgraduate students (Evans, 2013; Nicol, 2010).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Integration in Teaching and Learning Practices

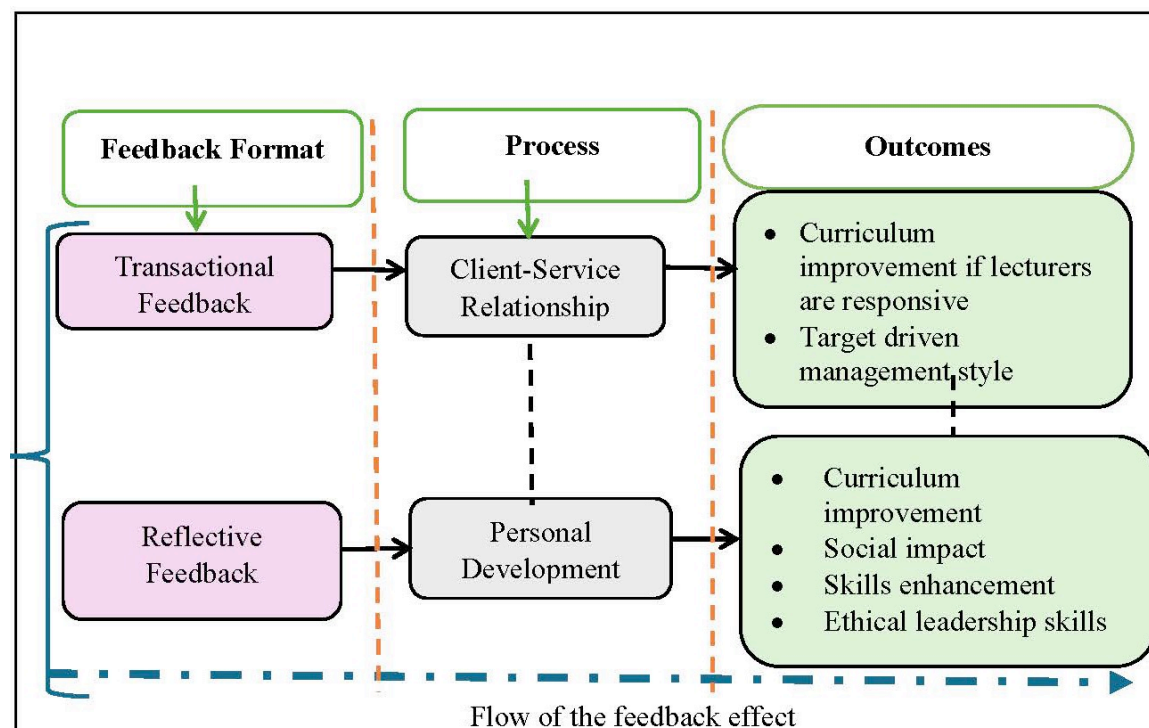
Recent studies indicate that business schools are slow to adopt SDGs as an issue that is central to business and business education (Weybrecht, 2022). Business schools are change agents for the achievement of sustainable education. Therefore, business schools are expected to adopt new teaching and learning methodologies that foster collaboration and interdisciplinarity with diverse stakeholders, broadening student participation in the co-creation of work integrated learning activities—enabling direct student engagement with civil society and non-profit organisations impacted by SDGs—in both their local and developing economy environments (Garcia-Feijoo et al, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) positions student feedback as part of a wider pedagogical process linking teaching practice, curriculum responsiveness, and broader educational and societal outcomes.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework Illustrating Feedback Format, Processes and Outcomes



Source: Authors' illustration (2026)

In Figure 1, teaching practice initiates the learning encounter, while the format of feedback mediates how students interpret and communicate their experience of that encounter. Where feedback is structured transactionally, the process tends to privilege service appraisal, lecturer performance, access, organisation, and satisfaction, producing outcomes that are often managerial, target-driven, and sometimes punitive or incentive-based outcomes. By contrast,

where feedback is structured reflectively, students are invited to articulate learning, challenge, growth, capability development, and future improvement, thereby producing outcomes such as curriculum improvement, personal development, ethical leadership, skills enhancement, and broader social impact. The framework therefore reflects the paper's core conceptualisation: feedback format is not merely a technical design issue, but a determinant of whether the student voice is reduced to administrative judgement or elevated into curriculum intelligence capable of informing sustainable business education. In this sense, the diagram visually synthesises the study's argument that movement from transactional to reflective evaluation is necessary if feedback is to support pedagogical transformation and quality education in a substantive rather than procedural sense.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, review-based methodology anchored in systematic literature synthesis and critical interpretive analysis. The approach is consistent with contemporary review methodologies that prioritise conceptual integration, epistemic critique and thematic coherence over statistical aggregation. The intention is not merely to summarise existing literature but to interrogate dominant paradigms of student feedback within postgraduate business education and examine their implications for curriculum reform and pedagogical transformation.

Review Design and Search Strategy

The review followed a structured process involving the identification, screening, selection and thematic synthesis of relevant scholarly sources. The following electronic databases were utilised: Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, ProQuest, Google Scholar and SABINET (for African-focused education literature). Keywords included: "postgraduate student feedback", "business education evaluation", "reflective practice in higher education", "curriculum transformation", "African higher education quality", "student voice in university governance" business program student evaluation and "Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness (SETEs)". Publications between 2005 and 2026 will be prioritised to ensure academic currency, with exceptions made for seminal theoretical contributions.

Data Collection

This study draws on a purposive qualitative sample of student evaluation instruments collected from eight higher education institutions located across different world regions, thereby capturing evaluation instrument design in both developed and developing country contexts. The sampled tools were selected to capture variation in the design, orientation, and evaluative logic of feedback instruments used in postgraduate and related higher education settings. This sampling approach is consistent with the paper's qualitative and interpretive methodology, which is concerned less with statistical generalisation than with identifying conceptual patterns, institutional tendencies, and pedagogical implications across a diverse set of evaluation practices. As shown in Table 2, the cross-institutional spread was sufficient to reveal recurring global patterns, particularly the persistence of transactional question formats even in settings where more reflective elements are beginning to emerge.

Data Analysis Approach

A thematic content analysis approach was employed using inductive coding procedures. Codes were generated around four dominant themes: transactional feedback, reflective learning, curriculum responsiveness and pedagogical transformation. These themes were subsequently synthesised into conceptual categories informing the proposed framework. The methodological robustness was enhanced through theoretical triangulation, comparing findings across global and African scholarship to ensure contextual relevance and epistemic balance. This paper employed a qualitative review-based approach grounded in systematic literature synthesis. Thematic coding is guided by dominant patterns: transactional feedback dominance, reflective feedback emergence, curriculum responsiveness and educational transformation.

Results and Discussions

During the analysis, it was observed that the evaluation questionnaires are designed around a standard agreement scale that asks students to rate the lecturer, module organisation, access, support and overall satisfaction. The dominant logic is therefore one of service appraisal, delivery quality, and administrative capabilities, not reflective interrogation of learning, capability development, curriculum relevance, or transformation. The evaluation questions ask students to indicate agreement or disagreement with preset statements and ends with open-ended prompts. An example of the questions and the analysis thereof, are presented in Table 1. It must be noted that these questions are not exhaustive, but rather an indication of the trends in the evaluation instruments.

Table 1

Analysis of Evaluation Questions From Various Tools

Evaluation Statement	Dominant Orientation	Evaluative Interpretation	Limitation For Curriculum Improvement
The lecturer is good at explaining things	Transactional	Measures clarity of delivery and lecturer performance	Does not show what or how students learned
The lecturer is enthusiastic about what they are teaching	Transactional	Captures presentation style and affective delivery	Does not reveal educational value or developmental effect
The lecturer is well prepared	Transactional	Useful for quality assurance and staff appraisal	Says little about higher-order capability development
The module content is interesting	Transactional	Indicates interest or preference	Does not assess relevance, transformation, or competence development
I have received sufficient support with my studies	Transactional	Captures support provision	Does not reveal how support influenced developmental learning
I have been able to contact the lecturer when I needed to	Transactional	Measures access and responsiveness	Reflects service availability rather than learning

Evaluation Statement	Dominant Orientation	Evaluative Interpretation	Limitation For Curriculum Improvement
An appropriate reading list was made available	Transactional	Captures resource provision	Does not assess critical engagement with readings
I have had appropriate access to books/journals/e-resources	Transactional	Measures infrastructural access	Does not show whether access translated into learning
Blackboard has been used effectively to support the module	Transactional	Assesses platform use and delivery support	Operationally useful, but weak pedagogically
Overall, I am satisfied with this module	Transactional	Captures overall satisfaction	Reinforces a consumerist rather than developmental logic
The lecturer encourages participation in class	Mixed	Points toward pedagogy and engagement	Does not ask how participation shaped understanding
The module is intellectually challenging	Mixed	Signals cognitive demand	Does not explain the nature or value of the challenge
The learning outcomes for the module have been made clear	Mixed	Relates to constructive alignment	Does not show whether outcomes were achieved or valued
I feel I have learned a lot on this module	Reflective	Directly references learning	Too broad and non-diagnostic without follow-up
The course assignments (readings, assigned problems, laboratory experiments, videos, etc.) facilitated my learning.	Reflective	Enquiry linked to the student's learning	Missed opportunity to be structured as an open-ended question to find out HOW this facilitated the student's learning
Did you try anything new in this work and how did it go? [Open-ended]	Reflective	Encourages experiential student learning.	None.

Transactional Dominance in Student Feedback Instruments

Using the thematic coding approach described in the methodology, the spreadsheet dataset classified a total of 132 instrument items into three broad categories: transactional, reflective, and mixed (Table 2). Of these, 63 items were coded as transactional, 45 as reflective, and 24 as mixed. This means that almost half of all reviewed items were concerned primarily with lecturer behaviour, course organisation, access, support, resource provision, platform effectiveness, and general student satisfaction rather than with the substance of learning or the developmental significance of the student experience. This overall pattern strongly confirms the study's methodological proposition that student feedback instruments can be productively

analysed through the thematic lenses of transactional feedback, reflective learning, curriculum responsiveness, and pedagogical transformation.

An analysis of the sampled student evaluation instruments and the detailed interrogation of the module evaluation forms reveal a consistent and conceptually important pattern: student feedback practices in postgraduate business education remain predominantly anchored in transactional evaluative logics rather than reflective learning-oriented inquiry. This finding supports the central concern raised in the problem statement that prevailing feedback systems prioritise student satisfaction, lecturer appraisal, and administrative performance over the deeper pedagogical purposes of postgraduate business education, such as critical thinking, leadership formation, professional competence, and curriculum transformation.

The detailed analysis of the evaluation forms reinforces this broader pattern. The questionnaires design focus in on a standard agreement scale requiring students to evaluate lecturer articulation, enthusiasm, preparation, support, access to resources, Blackboard use, and overall satisfaction. The dominant logic of the instrument is therefore one of service appraisal, delivery quality, and administrative functionality, rather than reflective interrogation of learning, capability development, curriculum relevance, or transformation. Questions such as “The lecturer is good at explaining things,” “The lecturer is well prepared,” “I have been able to contact the lecturer when I needed to,” and “Overall, I am satisfied with this module” are useful in a narrow quality assurance sense, but they tell us very little about whether students developed strategic reasoning, critical judgement, professional agency, or transformative understanding. This distinction is central to the argument of this study. Transactional feedback captures the student’s judgement of the delivery of teaching as a service, whereas reflective feedback should illuminate the student’s experience of learning as an intellectual, professional, and developmental process. The current evidence shows that most instruments remain substantially weighted toward the former. In this respect, the findings support the study’s critique that the epistemological function of feedback has been diluted by a consumerist and managerial orientation that reduces the student voice to a set of quantifiable performance judgements.

Analysis of the Reflective Evaluation Questions and Responses

An important finding is that even items classified as reflective often remain weakly reflective in design. That is, they gesture toward learning, challenge, or developmental value, but do so in a broad and non-diagnostic manner. The evaluation shows this in items such as “The module is intellectually challenging,” “The learning outcomes for the module have been made clear,” “I feel I have learned a lot on this module,” and “I have received helpful feedback on my work.” These items are more pedagogically meaningful than those focused only on lecturer enthusiasm or access to materials, yet they still rely mainly on Likert-style agreement statements that do not ask students to explain what they learned, how they learned it, which aspects of the curriculum enabled that learning, or how the learning may shape future professional practice. This is a critical insight for this study as it demonstrates that the issue is not merely the presence of overtly transactional questions, rather, the more substantive problem is that many instruments contain only surface-level proxies for reflection. A statement such as “I feel I have learned a lot on this module” may appear reflective because it invokes learning, but it remains analytically weak if it does not provide the student an opportunity to articulate what and how they learnt, enabling applied competence, ethical reasoning, professional identity formation, or transformative shifts in thinking. Similarly, a question on whether the module was intellectually challenging may capture cognitive demand, but it does not reveal whether that challenge was professionally relevant, or developmentally significant. In this sense, the

instruments that were analysed measured the perception of learning without adequately probing the process, depth, or consequences of learning. There is considerable literature which supports this interpretation. For instance, Sadler (1989) found that conventional quantitative course evaluations, although efficient and widely used, often offer limited pedagogical depth and fail to generate sufficiently rich insights for course development. Their study showed that more qualitative and student-centred approaches produced a fuller picture of the teaching and learning experience and yielded findings that were more directly relevant to improving course design and delivery. They further argue that richer feedback can be elicited through more structured open-ended prompts that invite students to comment on specific dimensions of the learning experience rather than merely rate general statements.

The analysis also found some mixed response questions which represent an incomplete attempt to move from service evaluation toward learning-centred inquiry. These questions show that some academic institutions are beginning to recognise the importance of learning, challenge, and feedback processes, hence an attempt to redesign their instruments, although not in a manner that elicits fully support reflective responses.

Cross-Institutional Patterns From the Analysed Feedback Instruments

The analysis of the type of questions and possible responses from the tools reveals important cross-institutional variation as illustrated in Table 2. This variation does not fundamentally alter the overall pattern of transactional dominance. Some institutions, such as Uni_UK3 include more clearly reflective open-ended prompts, while others, such as Uni_AUS 2 and Uni_EU1, include a greater number of questions that refer to learning, growth, or professional competence. However, even in these cases, reflective intent is often constrained by rating-scale formats or by the lack of explanatory follow-up prompts. By contrast, instruments associated with Uni_UD4, Uni_TT5 and the sampled Uni_AU1 forms are more heavily weighted toward lecturer performance, organisation, support access, and administrative clarity.

What emerges from this comparison is not a simple binary distinction between “good” reflective instruments and “bad” transactional ones. Instead, the evidence points to a continuum of evaluation design, ranging from purely service-oriented questionnaires to more developmentally oriented but still incomplete forms. This is an important conceptual contribution because it allows the study to argue that student feedback instruments may contain elements of reflective practice without functioning as genuinely reflective tools. Such a position is more analytically nuanced than treating all conventional instruments as equally deficient.

Table 2
Analysis Summary of Evaluation Tools From Eight Institutions

Institution Code	Total Items Reviewed	Transactional	Reflective	Mixed	Overall Interpretation
Uni_EU1	13	6	4	3	Balanced but still reliant on rating-scale proxies for reflection
Uni_AUS 2	41	11	21	9	Stronger learning orientation, though many items remain non-diagnostic
Uni_AU 1	11	9	1	1	Dominated by lecturer-performance and service-delivery logic
Uni_UK3	6	0	6	0	Most explicitly reflective due to open-ended prompts
Uni_UD4	21	17	0	4	Strongly transactional and administratively oriented
Uni_TT5	14	10	1	3	Predominantly transactional with limited reflective depth
Uni_BC6	18	6	8	4	Balanced, though mixed in design logic
Sch_AM7	7	3	4	0	Moderately reflective, but still structured through indirect measures

Source: Authors' illustration (2026)

The findings also suggest that many institutions continue to treat student evaluations as generic quality assurance tools rather than as strategically designed pedagogical tools. This is consistent with the literature's long-standing critique of student evaluations of teaching effectiveness. In business education, student rating systems have often been used to judge lecturer effectiveness, despite persistent concerns about construct validity, rating bias, and the weak relationship between student satisfaction and actual student learning. The problem, therefore, is not only technical; it is ideological and institutional. Feedback is too often designed to support managerial oversight, staff appraisal, and administrative reporting rather than to function as curriculum intelligence for pedagogical improvement.

Implications for Responsible Management Education and Sustainable Curriculum Reform

The present findings acquire further significance when viewed against the broader aims of postgraduate business education. As articulated in the abstract, conceptual framework, and problem statement, business schools do not merely exist to deliver content efficiently; they are expected to cultivate reflective practitioners, ethical leaders, socially responsive decision-

makers, and professionals capable of navigating complex organisational and societal challenges, in alignment with ESG practices (Alenezi & Alanazi, 2024). This study's conceptual framework positions teaching practice as initiating the learning encounter, reflective student feedback as capturing cognitive and experiential insight, and curriculum adaptation as the mechanism through which responsive pedagogy generates enhanced learning and broader societal impact.

From this perspective, the dominance of transactional feedback is not a minor methodological inconvenience. It is a substantive weakness that undermines the developmental purpose of the curriculum itself. If student feedback instruments ask mainly whether the lecturer was prepared, accessible, enthusiastic, and clear, they are unlikely to generate insight into whether students have developed leadership judgement, critical reflexivity, interdisciplinary understanding, ethical awareness, or the capacity to apply knowledge in uncertain real-world contexts. This is particularly problematic in postgraduate business education, where applied competence and reflective judgement are not peripheral outcomes but central educational purposes.

The assurance-of-learning literature helps sharpen this point. Martell (2007) argues that meaningful assessment in business schools requires moving beyond indirect and impressionistic measures toward more diagnostic evidence that can be used to improve curricula. In her view, curriculum alignment and student self-report data are not enough on their own; the key question is what the institution has learned about student learning that can be used to refine educational design. This insight is directly relevant to the present study. Even reflective-seeming survey items remain largely indirect if they do not reveal what students have actually achieved or where the curriculum is falling short. Student feedback, therefore, should not be treated as a substitute for assurance of learning, but it can become more useful if redesigned to capture richer evidence on learning processes, developmental outcomes, and curriculum relevance.

The findings of the study have direct implications for SDG 4, particularly the commitment to inclusive, equitable, and quality education that promotes relevant knowledge, higher-order skills, and lifelong learning. The evidence from the eight sampled institutions shows that current evaluation systems remain heavily weighted toward lecturer appraisal, service efficiency, and satisfaction metrics, with only partial movement toward reflective and developmental forms of feedback. This matters for SDG 4 because quality education cannot be reduced to efficient delivery, student comfort, or well-managed administrative systems. Rather, it requires educational processes that foster critical thinking, ethical judgement, problem-solving, reflexivity, and meaningful capability development.

When evaluation instruments fail to ask whether students developed these forms of learning, institutions are left with weak evidence on whether they are actually delivering quality education in the true "spirit" of the SDGs. The findings therefore suggest that redesigning student evaluation tools is not a peripheral quality assurance exercise, but part of strengthening the educational architecture through which business schools can demonstrate, monitor, and improve their contribution to SDG 4. This point is reinforced by the wider business school literature, which shows that although many schools now reference the SDGs, engagement is often superficial, weakly embedded, and rarely translated into core educational redesign. Weybrecht (2022) shows that SDG engagement in business schools has grown, but remains slow, inconsistent, and too often disconnected from fundamental changes in how schools operate and what students experience. The study also suggests that student feedback

instruments can serve as a practical lever for strengthening SDG-oriented curriculum reform in business schools. If evaluation tools continue to privilege narrow service questions, then institutions will keep generating evidence about operational efficiency rather than whether curricula are cultivating socially responsive, sustainability-literate, and ethically grounded graduates.

Limitations

Data was collected from secondary documentation, thus the likelihood of interpretation bias. However, it must be noted that the review of student evaluation instruments is in alignment with existing student evaluation literature.

Conclusions and Recommendation

The findings have implications beyond immediate teaching practice. The study situates its argument within debates on responsible management education, SDG-oriented curriculum reform, and the broader relevance of business schools to social, economic, and environmental challenges. If business schools are serious about preparing graduates who can respond to ESG pressures, sustainability challenges, and complex public-private governance environments, then feedback instruments must also evolve to capture whether curricula are enabling such outcomes.

Student evaluations that focus narrowly on comfort, clarity, and service efficiency are unlikely to surface whether modules deepen ethical reasoning, broaden societal awareness, develop systems thinking, or equip students to respond to the grand challenges that responsible management education seeks to address. Reflective feedback instruments, by contrast, can help generate evidence about whether the curriculum is cultivating exactly these forms of higher-order capability. In this way, redesigning student feedback is not simply a matter of improving questionnaires; it is part of a broader effort to align evaluation practice with the transformative.

The study shows that student feedback practices in postgraduate business education remain predominantly transactional, even though the broader educational mandate of business schools increasingly requires reflective, developmental, and socially responsive forms of evaluation. The persistence of lecturer-rating, service-quality, and satisfaction-driven items means that many institutions are still gathering weak evidence on whether their curricula are contributing meaningfully to critical learning, professional competence, ethical leadership, and the wider aspirations associated with SDG 4.

At the same time, the study does not assume that transactional evaluation can or should disappear entirely. Given the contemporary realities of business schools, including their strong emphasis on enrolment, student retention, institutional reputation, and revenue generation, some form of transactional evaluation is likely to remain structurally embedded in their quality assurance systems. Business schools operate within competitive and monetised environments in which students are, at least partly, positioned as fee-paying clients, and institutions therefore continue to require feedback on service delivery, responsiveness, organisation, and overall experience. The key implication is not the total elimination of transactional evaluation, which may be unrealistic, but its repositioning as only one limited component of a broader and more educationally meaningful feedback architecture. A more sustainable way forward is to retain a narrow set of transactional indicators for operational monitoring while significantly expanding reflective, open, and developmental prompts that allow student feedback to contribute to

curriculum reform, responsible management education, and the deeper achievement of quality education outcomes in line with the SDGs.

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