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How to Motivate Students to Take Part in Course Evaluation Surveys?

DANTE PROJECT GUIDELINES



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1 Introduction: Roadmap of the guidelines

In the DANTE project, we were brainstorming on the solutions that may potentially enhance students' motivation to take part in course evaluation surveys, if digital education is concerned. To develop our guidelines within them, we have applied various methodologies. We have revised the situation at partner Universities to learn on how the course evaluations systems are organized and what are their major weaknesses (mostly – low response rate and the extent of covered problems). We have also revised the existing literature that addresses the problem of course evaluation design and efficiency. Based on this, we develop the set of guidelines to help universities and teachers to run efficient course evaluation in digital education. We also develop some guidelines on how to motivate students to participate in course evaluation surveys.

Roadmap of the guidelines



Course evaluation surveys

Videos



Motivating Students to Take Part in
Course Evaluation

Infographics

GUIDELINES

useful tips on how to design the course evaluation to
enhance students' participation

DANTE proposal of course evaluation sheet

DIAGNOSIS

Identifying
cornerstones of
effective course
evaluation survey

(desk research)

Case studies analysis:

*How the course evaluation
survey is organized at partner
Unis?*

Survey at partner Unis:

*What motivates and
demotivates students to take
part in course evaluation
surveys?*

2 How to design and run the course evaluation to enhance students' participation

Timeline

- run short surveys periodically (e.g. by the end of each lecture/meeting).
- then, provide immediate feedback to the students – show them the response rate, say “thank you!” for their commitment, briefly summarize the results.

Length

- Keep the survey short but informative – design the survey as short as possible, use only a few questions, use simple and intuitive scale for assessment (e.g. 5-point scale).

Incentives

- Show the students that their voice counts!
- Explain how you changed the content and/or methods.
- Give the examples of what was changed as a result of course evaluation survey.
- At the beginning of the lecture briefly refer once again to the results of the former survey and explain how this motivated you to change something; in particular – highlight what they found as the weak points and what you have changed in response .

Remember that evaluation is beneficial for both sides:
students have a feeling that their voice counts,
the teacher learn about their limitations and what can improve the quality of their teaching.

Empowerment

- While discussing the results of evaluation, ask the students about how the weak points could be improved – maybe you will learn about some innovations implemented by other teachers, or will discover new possibilities that will inspire you to improve content/methods?
- By empowering the students with a right to suggest improvements, you increase their feeling that their voice counts!

Confidentiality

- Ensure the confidentiality of the evaluation: inform students that their feedback is anonymous, highlight this also while demonstrating and discussing the results
- Confidentiality is helpful for getting feedback on the most problematic weaknesses

Compatibility

- While designing the content of the survey, try to select the questions that are already used in the official course evaluation surveys at your University (as a part of the activities lead by the Quality and Assurance Departments)
- By doing so, you may enhance the involvement of your students in taking part in the official surveys and you will already be aware of their opinion about your commitment

3 Course evaluation survey

In the DANTE project we prepared a proposal of short course evaluation survey that could be used at the end of each on-line lecture.

How much did you liked the topic we discussed today:



How much did you liked my commitment/ attitude during the presentations:



How much did you liked the teaching methods I used today:



Was the topic clear for you?



What was the best ? (one example)

.....

What was the worst? (one example)

.....

Useful tools

To design your course evaluation survey you may apply the existing useful on-line assessment tools:

- [Socrative](#) - quizzes and questions with real-time grading.
- [Google Forms](#) - easy to use and COPPA/FERPA compliant.
- [Mentimeter](#) - pre-built education templates.
- [Poll Everywhere](#) - used by 300,000 teachers.
- [Kahoot!](#) - game-based assessment tool.

4 Diagnosis

4.1 Identifying the cornerstones of effective course evaluation system

The feedback of the students on education could incite the relevant force of change. This is particularly relevant in digital education, as we need to know how to organise online lectures more effectively to attract the attention of students. However, it is common knowledge that students are not eager to participate in course evaluation surveys, which is confirmed by very low response rates. In addition, there is strong evidence that shifting to online evaluation improves the reduction of this rate (Plante et al., 2022). Thus, we need to know on how to motivate students in digital education, to take part in course evaluation surveys and provide a valuable feedback to their teachers.

Overall, the literature suggests that there are three primary methods to improve response rates on end-of-course evaluations:

1. Make the evaluation a part of the course;
2. Send reminder notices;
3. Offer small incentives.

- **Make Evaluation Part of the Course**

This is the most effective method if we wish to maintain high response rates. It is recommended to implement the evaluation in the middle of the course, or even more frequently, to improve the response rate at the end of the semester. It can help avoid the frequent reason for missing motivation to fill out the course evaluation – students do not benefit from improvements made after the survey as they are done at the end of the term (Chapman & Joines, 2017). The same approach recommends also University of Copenhagen (2022) in their Guidelines. This system helps to avoid the prime complaint of the students, namely that none takes care of their evaluation. Numerous surveys (e.g., Kadhila & Nyathi, 2015; Harvey, 2011; Spencer & Schmelkin, 2002) have confirmed that students have a low degree of trust and confidence that the university administration pays attention to the results of the evaluation, and then implement activities to improve the teaching quality. When they become cynical about how the information is considered,



their willingness to complete the survey is rapidly falling (Kadhila & Nyathi, 2015). Thus, it is important to show the students that their voice counts and during the course some activities are corrected to meet their recommendations.

An explanation of how to do that brings Chaudhury and Jenkins (2021), where the teaching staff considers and responds to the feedback obtained from students during term module evaluation in a simple table. The table is posted at the top of the course's Moodle page so that students can see how their comments were used. Many authors agree that the willingness of students to be cooperative within the evaluation can be supported by informing them how their responses will be used within the university/faculty/course (according to the purpose of the survey) (Chaudhury and Jenkins, 2021; Goodman et al., 2015; Chapman and Joines, 2017).

According to Terzić & Aščić (2018) the number of students who take part in the questionnaire research increases if the participants receive clear information on the purpose of the research and instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire accurately. If their feedback is appreciated, then the students are more likely to participate in the official course evaluation at the end of the semester. Based on their research Chapman & Joines (2017) concluded, that showing students the importance of their input is mutually important to educator and student. Students make connections with and within their environment and they want to feel valued partners in the processes (Adams & Umbach, 2012). As DeFranzo (2022) mentioned, it is necessary to ensure and remind students that the evaluation is designed to be completely anonymous; their responses will be unidentifiable, and aggregate reports will be available only after final grades have been submitted.

- **Sending reminder notices**

The second suggestion is to send reminder notices to students when basic information about the survey has been sent by e-mail. There is a possibility to do that via banner ads on online student portals, ads in online and print student publications, and daily notifications via social media: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. (Berkeley, 2022). Reminder notices could also be sent by e-mail, or the teachers could be involved to remind about



the evaluation, its purposes, and its organisation. They can take a few moments of class time to show students how to find and use the Course Evaluation system. Although there were instructions for finding, entering, and filling out the survey out in the e-mail students already received, not everyone can navigate these instructions easily. A quick, visual tutorial (link is external) in class can make a difference (Berkeley, 2022). Based on the experiment results Chaudhury & Jenkins (2021) concluded that a nudge or prompt raises response rates in student evaluations – both online and in-class.

- **Offering Incentives**

The third suggestion is to offer some incentives. In the literature, there is evidence that small incentives may boost the response rates (e.g., Crews & Curtis, 2011, Goodman et al., 2015) and the examples cover a bonus in the final assessment or offering material prizes. Alvero et al. (2019) showed significantly higher response rates in that class who received a bonus point as an incentive than in that class with the educator motivation speech only. If the number of bonus points is small, the impact of the incentive points on student grades is very small. This fact may indicate that regardless of the impact on the student's grade, those points are likely perceived by students as a strong enough benefit to encourage them to respond in the end-of-course evaluation.

However, this type of incentive remains questionable in ethical terms, and thus shall be applied as an element of wider university-level (no single teacher level) strategy. However, facing the fact that students expect that their feedback will count, a strong incentive to participate in an evaluation survey at the individual course level could be a smartly designed system of continuous improvement of the teacher, guided by the feedback of students.



- **Other suggestions**

Qualtrics (2022) that is a specialist on surveys in companies, also suggests other ways how to increase survey response rates that could be adjusted to the needs of course evaluation surveys. These suggestions are to:

- **use cognitive dissonance**

it means by carefully crafting a questionnaire and cover letter asking for participation, you can appeal to a person's values in a way that makes them more likely to respond;

- **keep it short and focused**

the questionnaire should not be longer than 12 minutes, and the questions should be clear;

- **tell your respondents upfront how long the survey is going to take ;**

- **use self-perception theory**

according to this theory people infer attitudes and knowledge about themselves through interpretations made about the causes of their behaviour;

- **create labels**

(i.e., helpful, kind, generous) to use in your communications, as labelling helps respondents to classify themselves based on their behaviour so that they will act in a manner consistent with the characterization;

- **personalize your survey;**

- **send a gentle reminder**

when you haven't heard from a respondent, send between one and three reminders, using refreshed language each time so you're not simply repeating the original.

However, based on the results of their study, Cox, Rickard and Lowery (2022) pointed out that when students feel like customers, they may be more likely to provide false information in evaluations.



4.2 Case studies analysis: how the course evaluation survey is organized at partner Unis?

To revise the system of evaluation of the teaching in the partner universities, we have prepared the internal reports, guided by the major questions and goals in focus, namely:

- What ways students can evaluate teaching and how many students participate in this evaluation out of the total number of students?
- How the results of their evaluation are now being worked on and whether their recommendations are being considered?
- How the evaluation is now carried out, whether electronically, personally or in a combination of several ways?
- How is the anonymity of student technologically ensured in the case of anonymous evaluation?

Based on these data, we compared the systems implemented on university-level, to learn about similarities and differences of the course evaluation systems.

The first conclusion based on the obtained information is that the partner universities have implemented similar solutions in their approaches and system-level solutions aimed at teaching evaluation. This is understandable, given the need to follow some law-regulation based requirements, as well as the ISO recommendations within. The practices of TUKE were outlined in a synthetic way, while UE Kat, VSB-TUO and IP Santarem have provided a wider description of the implemented sophisticated mechanisms, serviced by the dedicated platforms and followed by further actions targeted at implementing the suggestions provided by the students. Therefore, we first provide a detailed explanation of the systems implemented in the partner Universities. These systems are also treated as a canvas for studying the survey results on the motivation and demotivation of the participation of students in the evaluation of the course.



Guided by the extensive information on the organization of course evaluation systems in partner Universities, we highlight the most important features of each system, that need to be considered while designing the digital course evaluation surveys:

- The evaluation system should be adjustable to the internal procedures and the related regulations, including the design of the digital platforms that support the process of evaluation;
- The evaluation is voluntary and anonymous, thus the motivation system is critical to enhance the feedback obtained for students and ensure the objective results of the evaluation, that could enhance the quality of digital learning and teaching;
- The information on how the results of the evaluation results will be further proceeded is critical both for students and teachers, which should confirm the core of the activities on the university-level units (quality and assurance departments).
- The TUKE ongoing system of evaluation is worthwhile to build more dynamic system of course evaluation to serve digital learning and teaching.

4.3 Survey: Are course evaluation surveys relevant at partner Universities in DANTE consortium

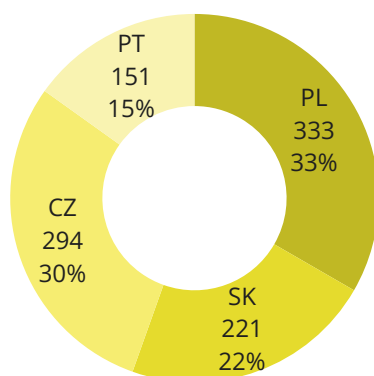
The field research has demonstrated that some of the partner Universities adopt relatively extensive procedures within the course evaluation courses, to enhance the quality of education via the feedback obtained directly from the students. These systems are also treated as a canvas for studying the survey results on the motivation and demotivation of the participation of students in the evaluation of the course. We have also gathered the opinions of students on what motivates and demotivates them to take part in the course evaluation surveys at their home universities. The results are briefly reported below.

Survey invitation was forwarded only to the students of third year of bachelor education or second year of master education, to ensure that this target group has experienced both pre-pandemic education, as well as the pains of the first lock down and the related requirement of distance learning implementation.

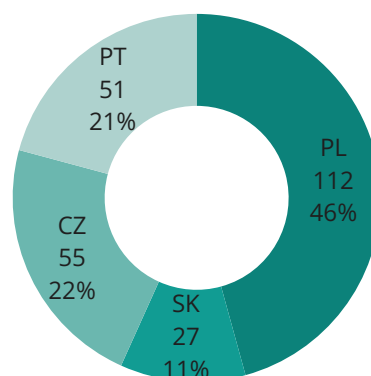
The survey was conducted in November 2022.

Figure 1: Number of the respondents by countries (partner Universities)

Panel A. Students (N=999)



Panel B. Teachers (N=245)



Notes: PL – Poland (UEKat); SK – Slovakia (TUKE); CZ – Czech Republic (VSB-TUO); PT – Portugal (IP Santarem)

- **Benefits of course evaluation surveys**

The respondents have been asked to evaluate the benefits of course evaluation surveys before and at the beginning of the pandemic, as well as currently. These evaluations were provided on 5-point Likert scale. Overall, the data indicate that in the group of students, the course evaluation surveys were perceived almost as equally relevant in each time-point of our interest, with the highest mean values for Poland. Teachers' perspective differs slightly, with the highest relevance for Slovakia, and the lowest for Czechia.

Figure 2: Do you consider course evaluation survey at the end of the semester beneficial? Students' perspective:

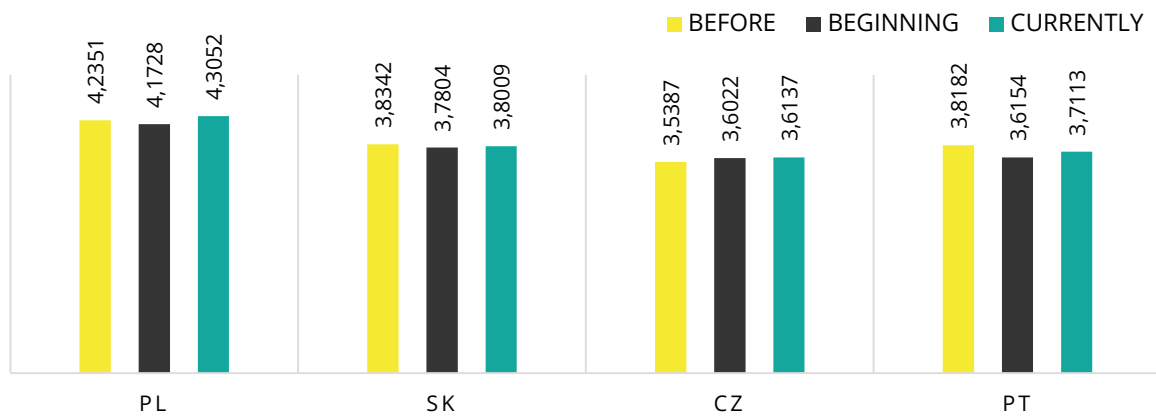
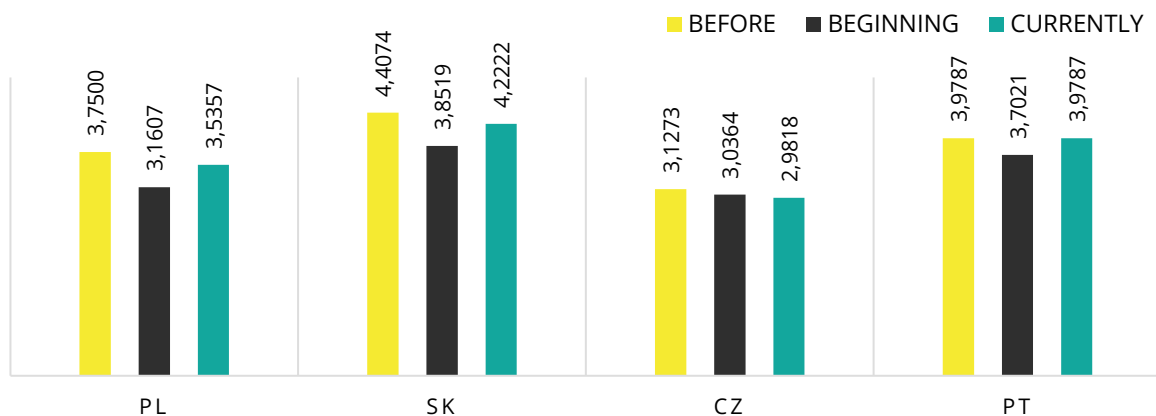


Figure 3: Do you consider course evaluation survey at the end of the semester beneficial? Teachers' perspective



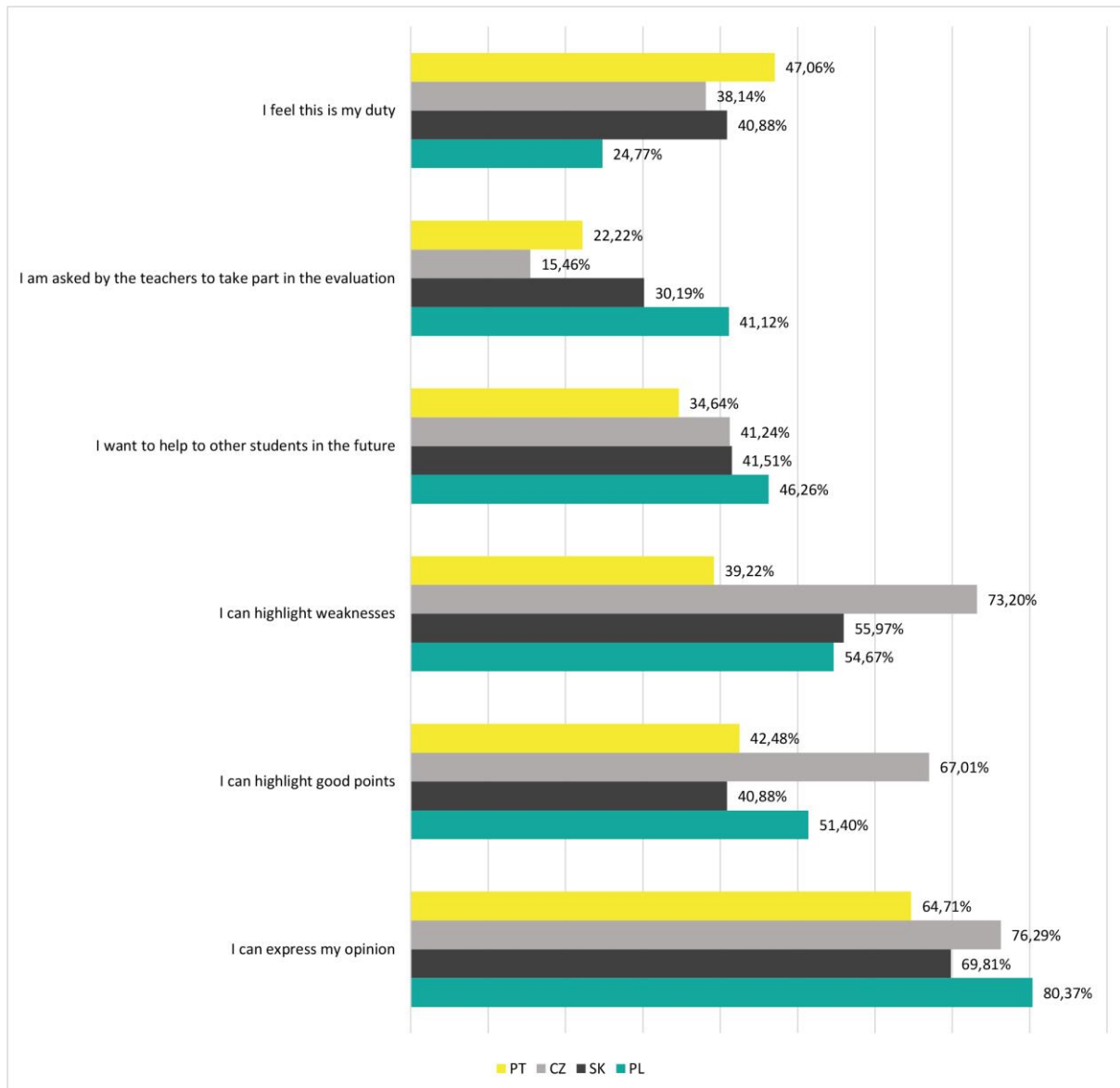


What motivates and demotivates students to take part in course evaluation surveys?

Motivators

As a part of the diagnosis of the existing situation, below we refer to the voice stemming directly from the students and teachers in the partner Universities.

Figure 4: What motivates you to take part in course evaluation surveys at the end of the semester?





In Figure 4 we provide the factors that were listed as the most important drivers for course evaluation survey. We asked the students on what motivates them to take part in course evaluation surveys. The distribution of answers indicates that the students are mostly motivated by the fact that they can express their opinions, then highlight the weaknesses and the good points. Noticeably, many students are motivated by the possibility to help the students in the future, or the feeling of their duty. The fact that their teachers asked them to participate in the evaluation was highlighted less frequently (except from Polish students), suggesting that the power of reminders by teachers is somehow limited.

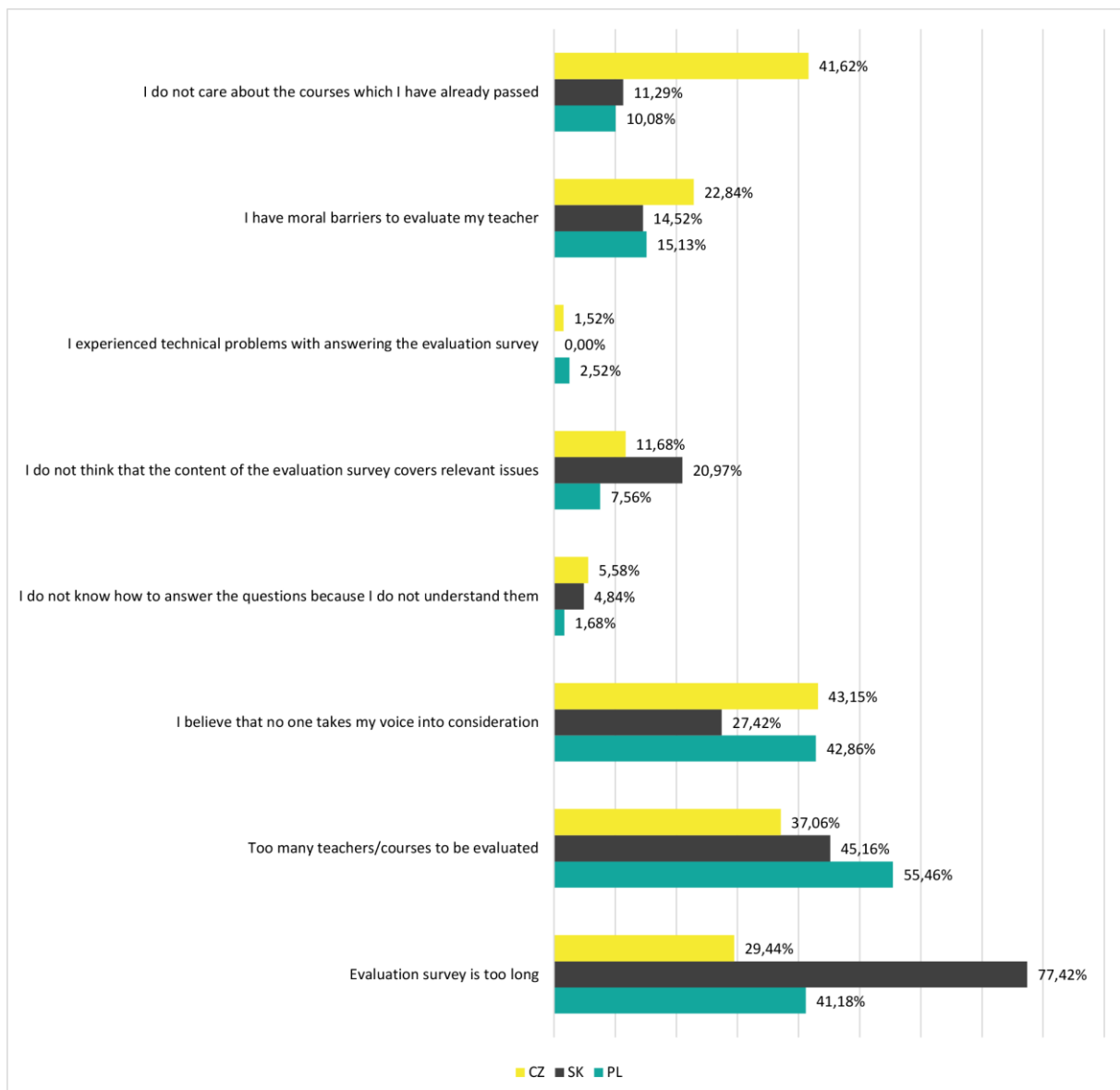


Demotivators

As a part of the diagnosis of the existing situation, below we refer to the voice stemming directly from the students and teachers in the partner Universities.

In Figure 5 we present student's opinions on what demotivates them to take part in course evaluation surveys at the end of the semester.

Figure 5: What demotivates you from taking part in course evaluation surveys at the end of the semester?



Notes: PT did not gather answers to this question



The three major concerns are the length of the course evaluation surveys, then the extension of this process given the number of teachers and courses to be evaluated. The third major problem is that students' believe that no one takes their voice into account (and thus they find the course evaluation surveys useless).

Interestingly, there is also a relatively large group of students that are of the opinion that the evaluation survey is wrongly designed (covers irrelevant issues), or that there is not point to evaluate the courses that are completed. However, relatively large group of students has some moral barriers to evaluate their teachers. The technical problems or some confusion on how to answer the questions was not important among the demotivating factors.

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Useful links:

<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/student/teachingevaluationstudents#doel> - find one of the useable ways how to explain the use of survey results to students

<https://humber.ca/innovativelearning/online-teaching-learning/> - find information about course feedback from learners and more

<https://uddannelseskvalitet.ku.dk/quality-assurance-of-study-programmes/university-guidelines/programme-evaluations/> - let us inspire in guidelines for programme evaluations prepared by the University of Copenhagen



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