

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS AS PERCEIVED BY STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Fareeda Ibad¹

Dr. Muhammad Yousuf Sharjeel²

Abstract

The study attempted to examine student perceptions regarding teachers' effectiveness in a higher education context with a view to finding out how the learning environment is impacted by teaching quality. The study also examined criteria of communication, attitude, pedagogy and expertise in teaching effectiveness and how they were viewed by undergraduate and graduate students. The questionnaire entitled Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher by Gurney and Wise (2004) was adapted with permission from the authors for the purpose of data collection. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analyses. The findings revealed that both groups of students had similar perceptions regarding teacher effectiveness, whereas the criteria of attitude and pedagogy showed a high level of significance but communication and expertise revealed no difference in the perception of both groups. Teacher's behavior in class matched with the researcher's expectations of business faculty to teach skills related to business so that students are

1 Associate Professor Institute of Business Management, Karachi

2 Associate Professor Hamdard University yousufsharjeel@hotmail.com

effective in their jobs when they enter the business world because both undergraduate and graduate students of a business school expect their faculty members to teach and train them on integral life skills in business-oriented teaching environments.

Keywords: student perceptions. Teachers' effectiveness, communication, attitude, pedagogy, expertise

Introduction

Among the research goals of higher education, teaching is viewed as an important factor contributing to establishing clear, consistent and logical goals which impact the quality of learning. This leads to academics striving for effectiveness in their teachers' teaching. The success or failure of this endeavor is reflected in student evaluations of teaching. The usefulness of student evaluations of teaching has several functions namely, formative feedback regarding teaching effectiveness, guide for students when selecting faculty and courses of study in future, enabling academic management to make value-added assessment of teacher performance, and providing a basis for new research on teaching and teaching effectiveness (Marsh, 1984). Such research provides insight into the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning environments with a view to enhancing the quality of teaching which contributes to teacher effectiveness.

In this regard, student achievement serves as proof of learning evident from examination scores which are linked to successful and effective teaching. According to Berliner (2005), teachers who may be considered effective or successful are those who enable students to gain a reasonable understanding of the subject and use this knowledge with an acceptable degree of proficiency. Fernstermacher and Richardson (2005) are of the view that student achievement is an indication of learning and the teacher may be termed successful and the teaching of high quality. Based on this research, student evaluations of teaching effectiveness have become a basis for enhancing the quality of teaching in higher education since they communicate the strengths and weaknesses evident in teaching. There is no indication that student evaluation is carried out prior to course completion. According to Gurney and Wise (2002), when student perceptions resulting from tool data are shared with faculty, they result in

better preparation by teachers. The student evaluation questionnaire is based on characteristics which constitute an effective teacher. Thus, the focus of this research is to engage students in their learning by contributing to an understanding of teaching and learning environments.

Statement of the problem

According to research (Marsh, 1982), there is a dire need to improve the quality of teaching and student involvement in the teaching and learning process is of great importance since student perceptions of the teaching and learning environment would improve the quality of student learning by adaptation of the teaching process as a result of feedback. In higher education, teacher qualification is seen as a key measure in teacher effectiveness and commonly observed during the hiring process. However, one problem in the hiring process is that classroom observation is rarely done considering the classroom effectiveness of the teacher is what is of utmost importance. This has widened the gap between the perceived effectiveness of faculty members as assumed by education managers and the real effectiveness of faculty members as perceived by students. This scenario led the investigator into probing further as to why teaching effectiveness has not been addressed by education planners with regard to classroom management and pedagogic skills.

Purpose of the study

The study investigated how students perceived teacher effectiveness and how the learning environment is impacted by teaching quality.

Research questions

1. What constitutes teacher effectiveness in higher education?

2. How do student evaluations measure teacher effectiveness?

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis of Gurney and Wise's (2002) questionnaire, namely the Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher and tested by this researcher:

R.H.1: Students' level of education affects their perception of teacher effectiveness.

R.H.2: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of communication as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

R.H.3: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of attitude as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

R.H.4: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of pedagogy as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

R.H.5: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of expertise as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

The findings attempted to measure teacher effectiveness and student perceptions of teaching.

Literature Review

The development of human capital in education is of paramount importance in higher education. Adeniyi (1993) contributed to this view by stating that the quantity of well-qualified or effective teachers was the major contributor to any country's human resource development. This is where the issue of professionalism in teaching arises since effective learning comes about with outstanding pedagogical skills. Okebukola (as

cited in Ngada, 2008) claimed that teacher shortcomings were reflected in their lack of teaching experience, inability to manage and control a class, inadequate knowledge of the subject matter and professional incompetence. To substantiate this view, Ajayi (2009) identified the professional qualities of a teacher to include knowledge of the subject matter, ability to express ideas imaginatively, thereby motivating students, managing learning through student participation in the teaching and learning process, evaluating students through feedback, and summative and formative assessment. Marsh and Roche (1993) examined students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness as a means to improved teaching in higher education. They believed that specific strategies were required to enhance the quality of instruction.

According to Nonis and Hudson (2004), student perceptions of teaching effectiveness are one measure of gauging teacher effectiveness. Other contributors to evaluate teaching effectiveness include evaluation by peers and examination of teaching portfolios which are the work of professional bodies. Although what really constitutes teacher effectiveness as evident in teaching is debatable, several researchers have consensus on the characteristics that are hallmarks of good teaching. These hallmarks are expressed in the form of nine clear dimensions, namely interaction, rapport, extent of knowledge, clarity of expression, enthusiasm, learning, fair examination practices, manageable workload and meaningful assignments (Marsh, 1984, 1991). Gurney and Wise (2002) have included similar characteristics in their study which is the basis for this research.

Ryan and Harrison (1995) conducted experiments in three diverse contexts to measure the nine factors and concluded that the quantity of learning was the most important factor in teacher effectiveness while course difficulty was the least important. All other factor ratings were similar in all three contexts. Another perspective on good teaching was the awareness resulting from experiences shared and undertaken by teachers

and learners together. Teachers shape experiences in order for learning to take place, through modeling of the learner's experience of what is to be learned (Morton & Booth, 1997).

Researchers' views on criteria for teacher effectiveness varied. Tollefson (1995) focused on humanistic factors such as enthusiasm while teaching, tolerance, mutual respect and flexibility. Ralph (2003) identified five criteria for effective teachers: knowledge of the subject, ability to organize and manage the environment, commitment to students, motivation to improve, and work in collaboration with colleagues. Such teaching is evident and measurable. These criteria lead to some concerns for researchers. Nonis and Hudson (2004) questioned the ability of students to evaluate certain criteria such as instructor's knowledge of the subject content, whether the skills tested are fitting, and the number and quality of assignments adequate or overburdening.

Jenkins and Bausdell (as cited in Gurney & Wise, 2002) identified criteria of teacher effectiveness which they categorized as factors of -product, process and presage. These factors were evaluated not only by students, but also by teachers and administrators. The findings revealed that teachers and administrators ranked process factors above others while students ranked components of process factors such as teacher flexibility lower than knowledge of the subject and teaching style or pedagogies. However, in terms of outcome, both teachers and students ranked teaching methodology as more important than the amount of student learning.

On another perspective of how students perceive effective teaching exceed the means of delivery and time. In this regard Axelrod (2008) has identified what contemporary students consider to be characteristics of effective teachers. These characteristics have been derived from research on the subject and possess universality in terms of when, where, what and how of teaching. These attributes numbering seven include sense of fair play, being accessible, receptiveness to new ideas, zeal, having knowledge

of subject and pedagogy, ability to see the lighter side, and inspire through teaching of the subject. These qualities are seen as relevant to the research mission of universities and require plausible ways of measurement (Ralph, 2003). He was of the view that noteworthy teaching is recognizable and the factors contributing to it are measurable.

Clark (1995) examined teaching effectiveness from the perspective of goals which he categorized as cognitive which included knowledge of the subject, lesson planning, presentation quality and clear explanation. For the second category which he labeled as affective, included student interest, motivation to participate and accept diverse points of view, friendly and congenial learning environment, and effective communication regarding assessment and feedback.

To conclude this review it may be said that effective teaching combined both cognitive and affective elements. The former include knowledge of content, lesson planning, presentation quality and clear expression while the latter include student involvement, student interest, interpersonal association and sense of fair play, and being open to new ideas (Delaney, Johnson, Johnson & Treslan, 2008). Research on student perceptions of teacher effectiveness is negligible in the case of higher education in Pakistan while research elsewhere is abundant and has resulted in the formulation of established characteristics of teacher effectiveness.

Research Methodology

Research design

The study employed a quantitative research method to ascertain students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness through the chosen sample. The research design was survey based using Likert scale ordinal data. Thus, survey research yielded the conceptions of effective teachers. In addition, an observational approach in the form of peer observations was

also used to reinforce the findings from the tool data. Peer observations were used in which the questionnaire items matched the items in the questions used for the qualitative evaluation.

Research participants

The research participants $n = 240$ were taken from an HEC recognized business school in Karachi. $n = 120$ participants were from the BBA program and $n = 120$ were from the MBA program. Randomly convenient sampling was used in which equal numbers of students from four disciplines were approached. These disciplines were management, marketing, finance and communication. This was done for the purpose of ensuring data pertaining to effectiveness of teachers across the board. The peer observation was also done in all four disciplines, that is, a total of four observations were done.

Research tools/data collection instruments

The objectives of the study were gained through two processes. First, the questionnaire produced by Gurney and Wise (2002) from the University of Central Florida, College of Education was used with adaptations keeping in view the local demographic characteristics. Permission to use the instrument was sought from the authors. The objective was to find out student perceptions regarding bases for judging an effective teacher. The title of the questionnaire was Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher.

The second action was the peer observation comprising faculty from management, marketing, finance and communication which was conducted with a view to test the fitness of the instrument in the Pakistani context. This cross validation was meant for item validation of the questionnaire items. A qualitative evaluation of the questionnaire items achieved this purpose.

Procedures

To achieve the research objectives, the authors of the questionnaire were contacted through email and requested to grant permission for its use. Then the participants were informed about the purpose of the research and requested to participate which they did willingly since the subject was of great interest to them. The questionnaire data was analyzed using independent samples t-test via Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The questionnaire comprised 40 items and was personally administered to the students of each discipline in both BBA and MBA classes. The researcher used personal observation expressed a qualitative review to demonstrate validation of the questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher used BERA (British Educational Research Association) guidelines found in the British Educational Research Association document (2011) for ethical standards in research in the field of education. Due consideration is given to quality of research and respect for participants. This is done by making participation voluntary, explaining the purpose of the research, assuring them of confidentiality of data and non-disclosure of the identity of the participants. The participants were given verbal instructions regarding the filling out of the questionnaire, and confidentiality of participants and information.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Demographic Information		
Undergraduate	n=120	50%
Graduate	n=120	50%
Total for all		240
Age		
Undergraduate	18-22 years	n=120
Graduate	23-28 years	n=120
Years of study		
Undergraduate	12-16 years	
Graduate	16-18 years	

Table 2

R.H.1: Students' level of education affects their perception of teacher effectiveness.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Perception Score	Equal variances assumed	.071	.790	.586	238	.558	1.95000	3.32485	-4.59989	8.49989
	Equal variances not assumed			.586	233.662	.558	1.95000	3.32485	-4.60051	8.50051

With $n=240$ (undergraduate 120 and graduate 120), df 238 and 0.05 level of significance, the two tailed hypothesis is $0.558 > p > 0.05$. We conclude that the undergraduate and graduate students have no significant difference in terms of their perceptions about teachers' effectiveness in formal, teaching and learning situations.

Table 3

R.H.2: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of communication as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Correlations

		Undergraduate Communication	Graduate Communication
Undergraduate Communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.927
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.073
	N	120	120
	Pearson Correlation	.927	1
Graduate Communication	Sig. (2-tailed)	.073	
	N	120	120

With $n=240$ (undergraduate 120 and graduate 120), df 238 and 0.05 level of significance, the two tailed hypothesis is $.073 > p$ 0.05. We conclude that the undergraduate and graduate students have no significant difference in terms of their perception about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of communication.

Table 4

R.H.3: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of attitude as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Correlations

		Undergraduate Attitude	Graduate Attitude
Undergraduate	Pearson Correlation	1	.905**

Attitude	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	120	120
	Pearson Correlation	.905**	1
Graduate Attitude	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	120	

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

With $n=240$ (undergraduate 120 and graduate 120), df 238 and 0.05 level of significance, the two tailed hypothesis is $.001 < p < 0.05$. We conclude that the undergraduate and graduate students have a highly significant difference in terms of their perception about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of attitude.

Table 5

R.H.4: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of pedagogy as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Correlations

		Undergraduate Pedagogy	Graduate Pedagogy
Undergraduate Pedagogy	Pearson Correlation	1	.858**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	
Graduate Pedagogy	Pearson Correlation	.858**	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	120	
	N		

****Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

With $n=240$ (undergraduate 120 and graduate 120), df 238 and 0.05 level of significance, the two tailed hypothesis is $.000 < p < 0.05$. We conclude that

the undergraduate and graduate students have a highly significant difference in terms of their perception about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of pedagogy.

Table 6

R.H.5: There is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of expertise as a measure of teacher effectiveness.

Correlations		Undergraduate Expertise	Graduate Expertise
Undergraduate Expertise	Pearson Correlation	Undergraduate Expertise	Graduate Expertise
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	
	N	120	-.319
	Pearson Correlation	-.319	.441
Graduate Expertise	Sig. (2-tailed)	441	
	N	120	120

With $n=240$ (undergraduate 120 and graduate 120), df 238 and 0.05 level of significance, the two tailed hypothesis is $.441 > p > 0.05$. We conclude that the undergraduate and graduate students have no difference in terms of their perception about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of expertise.

Reliability

In this research, Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistics (Table 7) for the 40 items of the questionnaire Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher was 0.931, which suggests that the items have a high internal consistency. Therefore, the 'Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher Questionnaire' is a reliable measure of student perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

Table 7
Cronbach Alpha Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.931	40

Discussion

The study fundamentally attempted to examine the criteria for determining teacher effectiveness according to student perceptions with a view to improving student learning through adaptation of the teaching pedagogies. In the context of higher education teacher effectiveness is an important factor impacting student learning. In addition, linear regression analysis examined the key elements of communication, attitude, pedagogy, and expertise in terms of their importance.

According to the results of the first hypothesis i.e. students' level of education affects their perception of teacher effectiveness, Independent Samples Test was performed. The findings revealed that the two categories of students, namely undergraduate and graduate, have no significant difference in their perceptions about teachers' effectiveness in formal learning situations. With significance at 0.558 (see Table 2), the first hypothesis was disproved. The findings supported the views of other researchers that students' level of education does not affect their perception of teacher effectiveness.

Nonis and Hudson (2004) considered participants from freshman to seniors and found that dimensions contributing to effectiveness of teaching yielded similar outcomes from all students participating in the study. Delaney, Johnson, Johnson and Treslan (2010) used both undergraduate and graduate students in their research and found no

distinctions in their responses. Student perceptions regarding effective teaching showed no differences in their viewpoints. The reasons for the outcome could possibly be that student expectations from teachers in higher education are similar due to their level of maturity and sense of responsibility for their education. They are adults and expect teacher behavior which views them as such.

The results of the second hypothesis i.e. there is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of communication as a measure of teacher effectiveness, Linear Regression analysis was performed. According to the findings, student perceptions, both undergraduate and graduate, regarding teacher effectiveness on the basis of communication as a characteristic of teacher effectiveness are not statistically significant (the two tailed hypothesis is $.073 > p 0.05$, Table 3). Thus, it is proved that there is no significant difference between the two groups in regard to their perceptions regarding teacher effectiveness in terms of communication. According to Delaney et al. (2010), communication was the fifth most noted characteristic of an effective teacher in their repertoire of nine characteristics of teacher effectiveness (Marsh, 1982). However, their research reveals no significant difference in student perceptions among groups. To conclude it may be said that the characteristic though important shows no significant difference between groups because it is possible that in the Pakistani context students rank factors other than communication as important in how they view teacher performance.

The results of the third hypothesis i.e., there is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of attitude as a measure of teacher effectiveness revealed an outcome of positive significance. The graduate and undergraduate students have a

highly significant difference in perception about teachers' effectiveness in terms of attitude the two tailed hypothesis shows $.001 < p < 0.05$, see Table 4). The fact that both groups of students' perceptions differed could be that teachers showing a lack of compassion and understanding, and given to impatience tend to disrupt the learning process. Approachability and empathy are important characteristics in teachers' attitude and contribute to their effectiveness. Buddin and Zamarro (2009), in their research revealed that teacher quality affected student achievement far more than teacher qualifications. Hamachek's (1969 as cited in Doyle, 1985) research is consistent with this view that teacher attitudes are important and contribute to teacher effectiveness. Delaney et al. (2010) are supportive of the findings of previous research mentioned and categorize attitude as a personal rather than pedagogical behavior and of greater significance than other characteristics of teachers' effectiveness.

Upon analysis of the fourth hypothesis, there is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of expertise as a measure of teacher effectiveness, it showed that the correlation is significant (the two tailed hypothesis is $.000 < p < 0.05$, See Table 5). Both undergraduate and graduate students showed a highly significant difference in terms of their perceptions about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of pedagogy. The difference in perception could be based on the learning experiences of both groups. Entwistle, Skinner, Entwistle and Orr (2000) expressed good teaching as based on the experiences teachers and learners undergo in order to bring about learning. Pedagogy is dependent on meetings which bring about awareness when teachers mould experiences for their students. It appears that effective pedagogy is experiential in nature. Clark (1995) expressed these as the affective and cognitive goals of learning where factual knowledge is

imparted through the development of reasoning skills by stimulating student interest. It appears undergraduate students require this more than graduate students, hence the difference.

As regards the fifth hypothesis, there is no significant relationship between undergraduate and graduate students' scores on the basis of expertise as a measure of teacher effectiveness, the correlation (the two tailed hypothesis $.441 > p 0.05$, see Table 6) showed no difference in terms of their perception about teachers' effectiveness on the basis of expertise. According to Delaney et al. (2010), the research findings revealed that learners expect teachers to have knowledge of the subject they teach. This knowledge should be active and current arising out of research and is delivered in an engaging manner. Students learned better when the knowledge imparted is a result of inquiry. Thus, this perception applies to all groups of students.

Finally, regarding the reliability of the instrument used, namely Criteria for Evaluating the Effective Teacher, it was .750 according to Cronbach's Alpha reliability statistics using SPSS version 17.0 (See Table 7). Therefore, the questionnaire used is a reliable measure evaluating the effective teacher.

This researcher also used an observational approach to reinforce the findings of the statistical analyses. Peer observations numbering 4 were conducted in both undergraduate and graduate classes of all four disciplines with a view to testing the fitness of the instrument and to cross validate the observer's findings with students' perceptions findings. During the observation, the focus was the performance of the teacher. Out of the results of the observations, 59.3 percent observations supported the views of undergraduate and graduate students who found teaching strategy

to match student perceptions of adequately important, 23.1 percent were viewed as extremely important, and 17.5 percent as fairly important.

It may thus be concluded that teachers' behavior in class matched substantially with the researcher's expectations. And this is probably because the reason to prove the hypothesis that both undergraduate and graduate students of a business school expect their faculty members to teach and train them on integral life skills in business-oriented classrooms if they show teacher effectiveness characteristics.

Limitations and Way Forward

1. The data was gleaned from only one private business school in Karachi; however, several other business schools flourish in the same region and should be included for generalization of the outcomes.
2. Participants were selected from a tertiary level institution when selection from other levels in both private and public sectors would add to the value of the research.
3. Interviews could be included to triangulate the data, thereby leading to authenticity of the findings.
4. The number of participants could be increased substantially for the effort to be converted to a large scale dimension examining the phenomena from a country wide perspective.

Conclusion

The empirical outcomes validated the findings of earlier researchers (Delaney et al., 2010; Entwistle et al., 2000; Marsh, 1982; Gurney & Wise, 2002) regarding student perceptions of teachers' effectiveness. However, there is a clear need to include a larger number of participants from a diversity of academic disciplines in higher education

so that the findings could be a turning point in teacher training and development in Pakistan where a plethora of teachers adopt teaching strategies that thwart learning and possess attitudes counterproductive to teacher student relationships. Additionally, a qualitative component in the form of interviews may be included to provide prolific insight into what students consider to be the hallmarks of effective teaching.

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