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## WHO IS AN EFFECTIVE LECTURER?

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All tertiary institutions conduct an annual review of their faculty staff for the purpose of determining incremental benefits, promotion, tenure or renewal of contract. Though there are variations in the mode of the review, students' feedback forms a very significant component of the evaluation of the faculty's effectiveness.

Students' feedback is usually given in a prepared rating scale with the criteria indicated in the survey form. Here are three versions of Students' Evaluation Forms on Lecturers' Effectiveness taken from three tertiary institutions located in Singapore, the US and Canada respectively.

From the Evaluation Forms, it is not difficult to tell that the focus is on knowledge, preparation and presentation as essential characteristics of an effective lecturer. An exception is seen in the Canadian Students' Evaluation Form where the students' benefit from lectures and lecturer-student interactions are given due consideration. It is noteworthy that lecturers from the US and Canadian universities are allowed to include items which are relevant to their particular courses in the Evaluation Forms. Nevertheless, there is little stress on the affective characteristics of the lecturers inside or outside the lecture halls. According to Prof Sergio Piccinin, the five traits of effective teachers are Enthusiasm, Preparation/Organisation, Clarity, Stimulating Presentation and Knowledge. The findings of the 1993 Excellence in Teaching Convention held at the Singapore Polytechnic indicated that Knowledge, Clarity in Communication, Organization, Ability to make subjects relevant, Sensitivity to feedback and Rapport are important aspects of effective teaching.

Do tertiary students share the views of the administrators on the essential characteristics of an Effective Lecturer?

Let us look at some of the comments made by students on their lecturers who have won the Master awards in Singapore.

"Empathy with students" was cited as an impressive trait of one popular science lecturer. "Sense of humour" and "generosity" were also attributes which have won the hearts of students [Straits Times, 5 Nov. 1992, pp 19]. "Being approachable" won another lecturer the gratitude and appreciation of his students. One of his students had this to say of him, "Mr X does not wait for the students to approach him with their problems because he knows we are shy. Instead, he comes up to us to make sure we have understood him". Another student commented on another award-winning lecturer, "He takes the effort even to sort out problems we encounter in our jobs when he is not obliged to do so". (Straits Times, 19 May 1993, pp 19) There are many more examples of students who would immediately speak highly of the out-of-class behaviour of their favourite lecturers indicating their interest and concern for them. "He was one of the most approachable lecturers and that made us more willing to discuss our problems with him ....". "When we were rushing to complete the academic exercises and working late nights on campus, she would stay back to keep us company and to help us in anyway she could. Occasionally if she had to step out of campus, she would even return with snacks for us .....". (Straits Times, 13 July 1993, pp 20).

From our local students' point of view, lecturers' affective characteristics outside the lecture hall situations are just as significant as influences on their evaluation of the lecturers'

effectiveness. Can we generalize the comments of a few students to the general tertiary student population? Does maturity make a difference to students' perceptions of their lecturers' effectiveness?

Overseas research studies on students' evaluations on faculty effectiveness and course satisfaction highlighted students' concern for an enthusiastic and articulate lecturer in the lecture hall and a friendly and approachable mentor outside the lecture hall (Gadzella et al., 1992; Heichenger, 1991; Light, 1990; Smith and Carney, 1990).

A simple survey was carried out on 363 pre-service teacher trainees at the National Institute of Education on their perceptions of the characteristics of an effective lecturer.

As the subjects were drawn from four different programmes for both graduates and non-graduates, it is also the objective of this survey to ascertain whether maturity makes a difference to students' expectations of their lecturers.

### METHODOLOGY

#### SAMPLE

The four pre-service programmes involved in the study were: Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Secondary), Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary), Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science with Diploma in Education and Diploma in Education Programmes. The Postgraduate Diploma in Education is a one-year programme for graduates and hence the trainees are older than the Bachelor and Diploma trainees who are 'A' Level holders. The Bachelor trainees who are undergoing a 4-year programme have better 'A' Level results than the Diploma trainees. Generally, the average age of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary) trainees is older than those in the Secondary Programme. Many of the trainees in this programme are taking up teaching as their second career.

#### Instrumentation

Participants were requested to list FIVE or more characteristics of an effective lecturer. Most respondents took less than 15 minutes to complete their list of characteristics.

### RESULTS

The responses were classified into FOUR main categories of criteria:

1. Presentation
2. Knowledge
3. Affective characteristics
4. Interaction

after a scan through all the responses. Subcategories were created for Presentation and Affective Characteristics. Under Presentation, there were 3 subcategories, namely

1. Clarity
2. Content
3. Audio Visual Aids

There were two subcategories for Affective Characteristics. For easy coding, behaviours relating to lecturers in the classroom were coded as Academic while outside classroom behaviours were coded as Non-academic.

The data were first analyzed and categorized according to the frequency and percentage of respondents who had listed the characteristics. As each respondent was given the freedom to list 5 or more traits, he/she might have more than one response under any one criterion. The data were further analyzed according to the frequency of responses. The criteria were ranked in the order of frequency of occurrence to reflect students' concern.

From Tables 1 and 2, it can be seen that the student sample placed emphasis on lecturers'

1. Non-academic affective characteristics (82.4%)
2. Clarity in presentation (71.1%)
3. Academic affective characteristics (70.8%)
4. Content organization (60.1%)
5. Knowledge of subject (57.3%)
6. Use of AVA (20.9%)
7. Interaction (15.7%)

in the above order of importance. {

Table 1  
**DISTRIBUTION OF CRITERIA  
FOR EACH PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO RESPONDENT NUMBER**  
(percentage in brackets)

Criterion Prog	V1A	V1B	V1C	V2	V3A	V3B	V4
PGDE(P) n=75	49 (65.33)	56 (74.67)	16 (21.33)	47 (62.67)	48 (64.00)	53 (70.67)	7 (9.33)
PGDE(S) N=106	70 (66.04)	56 (55.66)	17 (16.04)	57 (53.77)	72 (67.92)	91 (85.85)	26 (24.53)
BA/BSC with Dip Ed N=88	75 (85.23)	55 (62.50)	23 (26.14)	51 (57.95)	67 (76.14)	68 (77.27)	11 (12.50)
Dip Ed N=94	64 (68.69)	48 (51.06)	20 (21.28)	53 (56.38)	70 (74.47)	87 (92.55)	13 (13.83)
<b>TOTAL =363</b>	<b>258 (71.1)</b>	<b>218 (60.1)</b>	<b>76 (20.9)</b>	<b>208 (57.3)</b>	<b>257 (70.8)</b>	<b>299 (82.4)</b>	<b>57 (15.7)</b>

**LEGEND:**  
V1 = Presentation  
A = Clarity  
B = Content  
C = Audio-Visual Aids

V2 = Knowledge

V3 = Affective Characteristics  
A = Academic  
B = Non-Academic  
V4 = Interaction

Table 2  
**RANKING OF CRITERIA  
FOR EACH PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO RESPONDENT NUMBER**

Criterion Prog	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PGDE(P)	V1B	V3B	V1A	V3A	V2	V1C	V4
PGDE(S)	V3B	V3A	V1A	V1B	V2	V4	V1C
BA/BSC with Dip Ed	V1A	V3B	V3A	V1B	V2	V1C	V4
Dip Ed	V3B	V3A	V1A	V2	V1B	V1C	V4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>V3B</b>	<b>V1A</b>	<b>V3A</b>	<b>V1B</b>	<b>V2</b>	<b>V1C</b>	<b>V4</b>

When the frequency of responses under each criterion was analyzed (Table 3), there was no drastic change in the ranking order of the criteria except for the exchange in the placing of Clarity in Presentation and Academic Affective Characteristics. In the earlier ranking, the difference between the two criteria was only one respondent. In the second ranking, a wider margin was perceivable. There was a difference of 46 responses.

Table 3  
**FREQUENCY AND (RANKING) OF CRITERIA  
FOR EACH PROGRAMME ACCORDING TO RESPONSES**

Criterion Prog	V1A	V1B	V1C	V2	V3A	V3B	V4
PGDE(P) n=75	72 (4)	105 (2)	17 (6)	62 (5)	84 (3)	111 (1)	7 (7)
PGDE(S) N=106	97 (3)	77 (4)	17 (7)	71 (5)	120 (2)	194 (1)	27 (6)
BA/BSC with Dip Ed N=88	127 (1)	85 (4)	29 (6)	65 (5)	103 (3)	116 (2)	11 (6)
Dip Ed N=94	91 (3)	69 (5)	21 (6)	72 (4)	126 (2)	180 (1)	15 (7)
<b>TOTAL =363</b>	<b>387 (3)</b>	<b>336 (4)</b>	<b>84 (6)</b>	<b>270 (5)</b>	<b>433 (2)</b>	<b>601 (1)</b>	<b>60 (7)</b>

From the above analysis, we can see that our local tertiary students were very concerned with their lecturers' abilities to relate to them both inside and outside the classroom.

They wanted caring and concerned mentors and not just content-oriented instructors. An unnamed student once commented that the students would rate a lecturer highly on any criterion if they liked him or her. One may question the low rating on Interaction. Many of the characteristics listed under Non-Academic Affective Characteristics are related to Interaction. Hence, there is a poor showing for Interaction as many responses could have been subsumed under the other criterion.

Though the use of AVA is stressed in some Students' Evaluation Forms, students did not seem to pay too much attention to this criterion. Similarly Knowledge of Subject was paid scant attention. Probably all lecturers have proven to be experts in their own fields.

Does level of maturity make a difference in students' perceptions of an affective lecturer? If we were to examine Table 4, the ranking of the criteria for the four programmes does not show strong disparity between programmes despite age and educational level differences. However it is worthwhile to note that to the Bachelor Programme trainees, Clarity in Presentation was their greatest concern, followed by the Affective characteristics. To the PGDE(P) subjects, Organization of Lecture Content scored an important second in terms of response frequency. As a matter of fact, 74.67% of the respondents in the PGDE(P) considered Lecture Content as the most important criterion.

### IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate a mismatch in the expectations of administrators and students for an Effective Lecturer. While most students hope to find a humane and understanding mentor in an "Effective Lecturer", the administration is more concerned with the technical aspects of instruction. There is no denial that clarity and good organization of lecture materials are key features in good teaching and learning. A plethora of research studies can give support to their importance. Nevertheless, the face-to-face human contact can be a very strong motivator for the arousal and maintenance of students' interest in a course. Of the three sets of students evaluation forms, only the Canadian set focuses on students gains from the lectures and their relationships with faculty.

From the findings of this study and the much publicized comments made by students on their master teachers, we may need to re-think the criteria of evaluating an effective lecturer.

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