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## **VOICES IN UNISON: CRITERIA IMPORTANT TO HUMAN KINETICS STUDENTS IN THE EVALUATION OF THEIR TEACHERS**

**IGNATIUS E. UDUK**

*Faculty of Education, University of Uyo, P. M. B. 1017, Uyo, Nigeria*

### **WHAT DO HK STUDENTS EMPHASIZE IN THEIR EVALUATION OF TEACHERS?**

A cross sectional study was carried out among College of Education students who major in HK in the Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) programme. A factor analysis of responses to a larger set of statements, derived from prior research revealed that a major role was played in their evaluations by affective aspects related to learning situations - the affect-referral mode. Implications are highlighted, recommendations made and further research encouraged.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Frequently teachers are evaluated. Doing so provides feedback necessary to improve teaching and helps school administrators in decision-making. Most often, teachers are poorly evaluated by their employers. In this study, students are used in the evaluation. This makes sense because students represent the teachers most important constituency. The paper focuses on the most important dimension HK students emphasize in the evaluation of their teachers. This is germane because present knowledge of this area is modest, and it may have practical implications for improved teaching and teacher-student interactions, (Marsh, 1990).

This article is organized as follows: the thesis, (the teacher's role in education up to teacher-student relationships), the antithesis, (angling on the structure and matrix - the empirical part of the study), the synthesis, (interpretation of the findings and conclusions).

### **THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN EDUCATION**

Many educational activities take place in the classroom. The classroom is the learning environment (laboratory). It is a setting which should foster creativity, positive curiosity, personal growth and a drive to explore and acquire new insights, (Weinstein, 1991). However, the foregone are the expectations but a great discrepancy between the imagined and experienced learning environment often occurs. No one may doubt the fact that a good teacher is important, and that the quality of teaching is crucial for students learning. (Uduk, 1985 and Sandoval, 1995). Classroom experience, good or bad, are mostly attributed to the teacher, (Harvey and Weary, 1984).

### **EVALUATION OF TEACHERS**

All over the world, various aspects of the educational system including its teachers are often subject to systematic evaluations. The reasons are; serve as feedback for corrective actions and to improve performance in the classroom.

Evaluation of teachers may take many forms, including self-evaluations, evaluations by principals and "outsiders", (which are often made by universities in their evaluation of candidates for professorship).

Teachers are sometimes also evaluated by students. Students evaluations may serve as useful input, securing insights into students' thinking, perceived problems and expectations. The present study is on what HK students consider to be important in the evaluations of their teachers.

This is very significant because the scales employed in students' evaluations are self-anchored, i.e., from the students' point of view, which has a great potential in improving teaching practice. This may be particularly very important in the Nigerian education system where the students represent a "captive audience" with no modest influence over the choice of teachers.

### **ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The classroom setting is very important. Lewin, (1991) termed it the immediate situation or the context where relationships between students are learned and experienced. Due to the "substantial" period of time the teachers and the students stay together, the contact may be termed a relationship. The teacher and the students occupy different roles in their relationships. A social role can be conceived as the "bundle of socially defined attributes and expectations with a social position", (Abercombie, Hill and Turner, 1988), in this case, the positions as teacher and student respectively.

Relationships come in many forms, and may relate to the flow of transactions (as in business), power and influence, and communication. In teacher-student relationships, communication, directions and clarifications are usually considered central. Research has shown that teachers can play their role in different ways.

Fenstermacher & Soltis (1992), for example, distinguish between the executor role (that is, emphasizing bringing about learning), the therapist approach (that is, emphasizing that the teacher is an empathetic person who helps the students to achieve personal growth) and the liberationist role (that is, emphasizing freedom of mind). From this brief description, it can easily be seen that teaching activities and teacher's behaviour may vary dramatically according to the role being played.

### **THE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP**

Emphasis is placed a great deal on equity in the extant literature on relationships. Equity is assumed to be a prerequisite for an excellent discussion (Ring & Van de Ven, 1993). The teacher-student relationship, however, can hardly be said to be one of equity. This is particularly true in the lower levels of mandatory education. In such relationships, there is a rank ordering, with the student being the subordinate and the teacher being the student's superior.

Close relationships often result in psychological contracts between the parties involved. Turner (1987) suggests that such contracts are unwritten and consist of largely non-verbalized convergent expectations and assumptions, which are held about each other, regulating the parties' mutual behaviours. Psychological contracts may develop between teachers and one

or more of their students. There is however, almost no way that teachers can develop binding psychological contracts with all their students. Students vary greatly in motivation, skills and so forth, making it almost impossible to adapt and adjust to the extent required for the establishment of such contracts. But is it possible for a teacher to give equal attention and apprehension to all the students?

Teachers and students evaluate each other. A key aspect in a teacher's evaluation of students is students' academic performance through asking questions and conducting written tests. Other aspects may include affective and psychomotor skills. But how do students evaluate their teachers? What influences students' perceived dis/satisfaction with their teacher? Our insights in this respect are rather limited, though multiple rules of thumb for "good teaching" exist. For example, teachers should know their subject, to be able to explain new and complex phenomena, have enthusiasm for teaching and love of "children".

### RESEARCH CRITERIA

Much effort has been devoted to improving teaching. For instance, the traditional teacher-role and method of teaching (teacher-centred) has been questioned and "experimentation" in modes of teaching (learner-centred) are encouraged (Flatoy & Gonhaug, 1992).

In Norway, unlike Nigeria, official criteria (guidelines) exist for "good teaching" that are approved by the Royal Norwegian Ministry, of Church, Education and Research (1993).

The criteria listed include:

- The ability to communicate with the students in class,
- The ability to differentiate teaching methods,
- The ability to adapt teaching to the students, and
- The ability to guide the students and to judge what factors promote students' learning.

Inspection of these criteria shows that students' learning is emphasized, and that the ability of teachers to communicate with their students is believed to be important. The criteria are considered important in Nigeria because they reflect purpose (learning) and strongly held beliefs about what factors facilitate learning.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology underlying the present research is reported below under the rubrics, research setting, research design, the sample and the data-collection procedure.

### SETTING

The actual research setting were the students in the satellite centers of Akwa Ibom College of Education, Afaha Nsit in Nigeria. It offers a 3-year certificate programme in teacher education for the award of the NCE. Though the college offers a variety of teacher education programmes (languages, natural sciences, social sciences and others) the students used in this study were only bona fide HK students.

## **DESIGN**

Primary research was embarked because of the dearth of data on teacher-centred evaluation in Nigeria. A survey research design was therefore considered necessary.

## **SAMPLE**

The student evaluators were from AKS College of Education, Afaha Nsit – Satellite Study Centres. Their specialization was HK. The principle of random selection was violated because of the paucity of the population. This underlies the idea of theoretical sampling which Glaser & Strauss (1974), described as “categorical” representative.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

Researcher constructed peers validated questionnaire was used to gather data. A set of statements (26 items) which covered some aspects of teaching derived from the literature and the criteria of “good teaching” listed above were generated to cover various aspects of the evaluation of teachers. Considerable efforts were made to develop adequate items; this included discussions with experts, pretesting and a survey of the literature. Examples of items are; “it was easy to ask the teacher questions” and “the teacher was always prepared for class”.

Table I. The responses were given on a seven-point scales with the end points “very much disagree” (1) and “very much agree”. (7). The questionnaire was distributed after the teacher had finished teaching. The completed questionnaire was handed back in a sealed envelope; there was no information which would allow individual respondents to be identified. A total of 560 properly completed questionnaires were used for data analysis.

## **RESULTS**

This section is presented the results and findings. The first is the dimensions in the students’ evaluations, which were identified by factor analysis. From the findings, scales were designed to represent the dimensions.

### **DIMENSIONS IN STUDENTS’ EVALUATION**

To facilitate this procedure, unrotated and then rotated factor analyses were used. Varimax rotation was chosen because a prior knowledge about the dimensions used by the students in their evaluation was considered not robust. Again, Varimax rotation simplifies the interpretation of the columns in the factor matrix. The analysis extracted four factors whose eigenvalues were greater than or equal to unity, amounting to almost 55% of the total item – variance. The four factors solution technically agrees with the scree-test criterion, (Hair, 1995). The findings from the factor analysis are shown in Table I: that is, the means (the standard deviations in parenthesis), the communalities and the factor loadings. Loadings equal to or greater than 0.5 are indicated purely for convenience and to make the pattern lucid.

TABLE I. Items/Dimensions in Students Evaluation

S/No.	Items	Mean (SD)	h <sup>2</sup>	Factors			
				1	2	3	4
1.	Motivates me	4.42 (1.38)	0.57	0.71			
2.	Listens to me	5.48 (1.15)	0.47	0.55			
3.	Is Caring	4.40 (1.24)	0.55	0.73			
4.	Encourages questioning	4.39 (1.45)	0.57	0.71			
5.	Interested in me	5.68 (1.16)	0.58	0.61			
6.	Understands me	4.91 (1.38)	0.58	0.64			
7.	Punctual to class	5.77 (1.49)	0.36		0.57		
8.	Uses Chalkboard well	5.48 (1.46)	0.47			0.50	
9.	Fond of big words	5.20 (1.40)	0.44			0.52	
10.	Prepares lessons	5.65 (1.08)	0.63		0.69		
11.	Offers help always	5.81 (1.09)	0.54	0.67			
12.	Interested in the subject	6.05 (1.04)	0.75	0.81			
13.	Answers questions well	5.19 (1.34)	0.57	0.64			
14.	Appreciates success	4.75 (1.55)	0.42				0.59
15.	Teaches to make learning easy	5.04 (1.43)	0.64	0.64			
16.	I feel secure in class	4.64 (1.29)	0.62	0.70			
17.	Not negative to questioning	5.44 (1.18)	0.54	0.63			
18.	Cordial with students	4.83 (1.31)	0.59	0.74			
19.	Knows the subject	5.31 (1.38)	0.62	0.59			
20.	Classes very friendly	5.09 (1.39)	0.61			0.72	
21.	Spices lesson with the textbook	5.46 (1.16)	0.60				0.2
			Eigenvalue	9.21	1.84	1.42	1.24
			Trace %	67.1	13.4	10.4	9.1

An inspection of Table I reveals that most of the mean scores are relatively high, being generally above the scale mean of 3.5. Similarly, most of the standard deviations are large which indicates that the students differed in their evaluations. Curiously, when evaluating such an "objective" issue as punctuality to class (item 7), the students held different views. Inspection of the communalities showed that they varied in size, and also that none of the items were completely captured by the factors.

Inspection of the percentage of the trace (that is the percentage of the variance extracted) shows that the first factor is dominant, accounting for 67% of the extracted variance. Most of the items load on more than one factor can be seen by squaring the factor loadings. The loadings account for a substantial portion of the item variance extracted. By the inspection of item 7, the loading on the second factor accounts for  $(0.57)^2 \cdot 0.36 = 0.903$ , that is more than 90% of the item variance extracted.

Inspection of the first factor shows that it merely reflects emotions and feelings related to the student-teacher relationships, such as security (item 6), empathy (items 1, 2 and 14).

The second factor captures expectations of professional teaching behaviour, knows the subject (item 9), prepares lessons (item 10) and complements classes with textbook, (item 21). The third factor relates to the "mechanics" of teaching, good use of chalkboard (item 8) and encourages questioning (item 4). The fourth factor is "mixed" and relates to appreciation of students and the use of words that are readily understood, (item 14 and 9 respectively).

## CONCLUSION

The prime purpose of the study was to capture criteria important to HK students in the evaluation of their teachers. The findings reveal that feelings and emotional aspects are related to the climate of learning, where the feeling of acceptance and being secure play a major role in how physical education majors evaluate teachers. Students' evaluation are apparently made in affect-referral mode, indicating that evaluation go beyond "drab / insipid cognition".

The findings agree with such studies as Bandura, (1986) and Lazarus, (1993), who showed that the affective and emotional aspects are important to people. By the teachers showing an attitude of security, acceptance and well-being to their students will positively influence their learning. There is little doubt that the affective and emotional stability are important and relevant to effective learning.

More research is needed in an effort to clarify and conceptualize the phenomenon systematically. It is valid to suggest that the pursuit of a theory-driven approach to gain insights will be useful since it would enhance our understanding of students' evaluative process in general.

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