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Analysis of Teacher Effectiveness at ATSU Pedagogical Faculty

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to find out if university teacher effectiveness is connected to the school-related experience. It also gives a brief overview of the related literature to the teacher effectiveness and tries to reveal the major qualities of effective teaching. Generally, teaching is a multidimensional process comprising a number of separable dimensions or instructor attributes, which sometimes are difficult to evaluate. The study was carried out to find out if university teacher effectiveness is connected to the school-related experience. We used primarily interviews, which were designed, as far as possible, to allow the students to talk freely about their University professors, using the terms and expressions of their own. Six university professors were selected; three of them did not have any school-related experience and three had experience of working at schools for different periods. The paper concludes that school-related experience is not a success factor in teacher effectiveness.

Keywords: teacher effectiveness, school-related experience, theoretical knowledge, practical teaching

Introduction

As Immanuel Kant suggests, “experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play.” We live in the world which is changing rapidly

and the knowledge base is expanding significantly. To be successful in this environment of the future, learners will need a rich base of content knowledge based on innovation and creativity, critical thinking and complex communication. Education systems and educators need to be transformed to meet the demands for the next generation learner.

Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University (ATSU) Pedagogical Faculty is fully committed to the belief that each student will learn at high levels, graduating prepared for career, college and citizenry. The single most important element in improving student learning and achievement is providing highly effective teachers for each ATSU student. The realization of this belief requires a commitment to support and foster a wide range of activities to reform and enhance education system.

In Georgia we are well aware of the fact, that a quality education is essential to a successful democracy, lifelong learning, and a vibrant economy. For ATSU Pedagogical Faculty to achieve the goal of providing quality education for each learner, new methods for teacher preparation must be implemented. To provide the innovative learning environment for future generations, educators must also engage in ongoing professional growth throughout the lifespan of their career. For these purposes we conducted a survey at ATSU Pedagogical Faculty. The aim was to identify the qualities of effective teaching and to see if school-related experience has a positive impact on teaching.

History

Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University was actually formed on the basis of Tbilisi State University. In 1918 under the direction of the great son of the Georgian nation Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University was founded. In July, 1930 the government abolished the Tbilisi State University and on its basis four independent higher education institutions were created. One of them was State Pedagogical Institute, which starting from that period to 1933 was functioning in Tbilisi. Under the resolution of January 8, 1933, the Tbilisi State University was restored. And the mentioned Pedagogical Institute moved to Kutaisi and continued functioning here from February 13 the same year. In 1933-1990 it existed under the name – Aleksandre Tsulukidze State Pedagogical Institute. The institute was accommodated in the city center, in the building were before a Real College was functioning. On the first academic year (1933) up to 700 students who had moved from Tbilisi to our town were studying in their first and second years at the Pedagogical Institute founded in Kutaisi. In 1990 the higher education institution was transformed to Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University, which was the logical conclusion of the great accomplishments done successfully by this institution during almost six decades of its existence.

The Research Method

The article gives the brief overview of the related literature to the teacher effectiveness and tries to reveal the major qualities of effective teaching, in order to develop the descriptive components and indicators which were used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to find out if university teacher effectiveness is connected to the school-related experience. The study depends primarily on interviews as they are a useful source of information. They provide researchers with detailed and in-depth accounts relating to participants' experiences, ideas, opinions, and personal feelings (Bryman 1988; Fontana and Frey 1994).¹ They also reveal seemingly ambiguous matters to researchers and help provide a better understanding of the actions observed through providing access to ideas only obtainable by establishing a dialogue with the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).² Interviews are useful techniques to access the personal experience of the academics at the university and to gain insights into and detailed information about how the academic respondents make sense of the formal culture of the their institute.

Interviews were designed, as far as possible, to allow the students, to talk freely about their University professors, using the terms and expressions of their own. Six university professors were selected; 3 of them did not have any school-related experience and 3 had experience of working at schools for different periods. We used semi-structured interviews, which gave us greater flexibility to establish a dialogue with the students by asking them open-ended questions. We interviewed 150 students and the interviews were conducted between October and the end of December 2016. Our analysis of the interview material was guided by the concern to understand how school-related experience can be beneficial for teacher effectiveness.

While conducting the study, we took into consideration that there is a debate on the issue surrounding the study of the students' evaluations to measure the teaching effectiveness.

Teaching is a multidimensional process comprising a number of separable dimensions or instructor attributes, which sometimes are difficult to evaluate in a quantitative way (Arreola, 1995; Centra, 1993; Boex, 2000). An instructor's overall reaching effectiveness, that is an aspect of teaching, is influenced by a combination of teacher characteristics (such as clarity, capacity to motivate the students and to help them in the study of his topic, ability to organize the lesson also with exercises and handouts, for example but also gender, age, previous experiences), physical aspects of the classroom or laboratory (too crowded or with an insufficient number of computers) and class characteristics (such as students'

¹ Fontana, Andrea and James Frey. 1994. "The Art of Science." Pp. 361-76 in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. a. Y. L. Denzin. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

² Hammersley, Martyn & Atkinson, Paul (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

characteristics: gender, age, high-school of origin, mark obtained at the end of compulsory or high school, faculty attended by the student, or class size).¹

Proponents of the multidimensional view of education process argue that, because of the multidimensional nature of teaching, instruction can not be captured by one single measure such as a global effectiveness rating (Marsh, 1987).² Using factor analysis Marsh identified nine separate dimensions of teaching (learning, enthusiasm, organization, group interaction, individual rapport, breadth of coverage, examination/grading, assignments and workload/difficulty). He concluded that each of these dimensions are important and each of them has to be examined to evaluate the instructors.

However Abrami (1989)³ recognized that the nature of effective teaching could vary across instructors, courses, students and settings. He recommended using global evaluation items whenever summative judgments about teaching effectiveness are called for.

For our study, we have selected questions, which could better reveal qualities of the effective teacher from students' point of view. We were mostly interested in those qualities which imply using theoretical knowledge in practice.

What is Teacher Effectiveness?

There is no single definition of teaching effectiveness. One recent comprehensive definition of effective teaching characteristics forwarded from researchers from the National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality (NCCTQ) was based upon a review of policy documents, professional literature, and research. This five-point definition included the following characteristics:

- (1) Effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn, as measured by value-added or other test-based growth measures, or by alternative measures.
- (2) Effective teachers contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for students such as regular attendance, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy, and cooperative behavior.
- (3) Effective teachers use diverse resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress formatively, adapting instruction as needed; and evaluate learning using multiple sources of evidence.

¹ Laura Pagani and Chiara Seghieri A Statistical Analysis of Teaching Effectiveness from Students' Point of View <http://mrvar2.fdv.uni-lj.si/pub/mz/mz17/pagani.pdf>

² Marsh, H.W. (1987): Student's evaluations of university teaching: Research findings, methodological issues, and directions for future research. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11

³ Abrami, P.C. (1989): How should we use student rating to evaluate teaching? *Research in Higher Education*, 30

- (4) Effective teachers contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness.
- (5) Effective teachers collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success, particular the success of students with special needs and those at high risk for failure.¹
- (6) Through analysis, Curran C. M. ² selected five essential spheres of teaching effectiveness. These five spheres represent major domains of teacher qualities and skills related to effective teaching. These spheres of teaching effectiveness include:
 - a) Dispositions, Self-Awareness, and Self-Efficacy;
 - b) Developmental and Contextual Knowledge of Learners
 - c) (3) Content Knowledge Domains (Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Academic and Multiple Literacies)
 - d) Responsive Pedagogy and Effective Instruction (Learner-Centered Instruction; Teaching for Understanding; Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum; Formative and Balanced Assessment; Differentiated Instruction for Learner Differences; Organized, Well-Designed Learning)
 - e) Collaboration, Leadership, and Advocacy.

Which factors contribute to teacher effectiveness? Fortunately, there has been a convergence of the available research data pertaining to this question over the past 15 years (Brophy 2001; Creemers 1999; Hay McBer 200; Scheerens 2003). Some of these factors fall under the general heading of “teacher characteristics”. Teacher characteristics are relatively stable traits that are related to, and influence, the way teachers practice their profession. Hay McBer³ (2000) identifies 12 teacher characteristics based on a large-scale study conducted in the United Kingdom. These characteristics are organized into four “clusters”:

1. Professionalism – Commitment, Confidence, Trustworthiness, Respect
2. Thinking/reasoning – Analytical thinking, Conceptual Thinking
3. Expectations – Drive for improvements, Information seeking, Initiative

¹ Goe, L., Bell, C., & Little, O. (2008). Approaches to evaluating teacher effectiveness: A research synthesis. Washington, DC: National Comprehensive Center on Teaching Quality Retrieved from http://www.tqsource.org/publications/Evaluating_Teacher_Effectiveness


² Curran, C.M. (n.d.). From reform to renewal: Five spheres of teaching effectiveness to foster learning and teaching success.

³ Hay McBer. 2000 Research into Teacher Effectiveness: A model of teacher effectiveness (Research report, No. 2016). Norwich

4. Leadership – Accountability, Passion for learning

Research Findings

Interviews included 10 questions. Students were asked the same questions about two professors, one of them had a school-related experience, though they were not informed about it. Students eagerly gave their feedbacks. They are very experienced in it, as at the end of each term, Pedagogical Faculty Quality Insurance Department conducts “Faculty Teacher Evaluation by Students”. The results are displayed in the tables:

University Professor without school-related  **experience**

University Professor with school-related experience 

Table 1

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher motivate you to think about the subject?

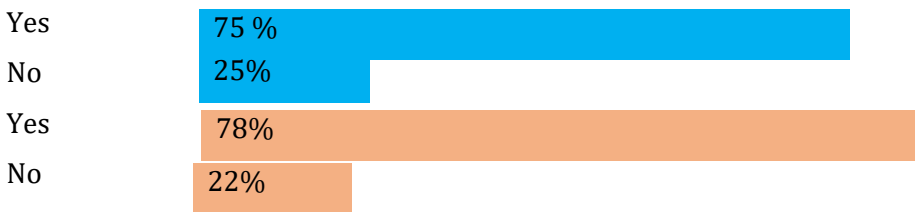


Table 2

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher appear to be interested in assisting you to learn better?



Table 3

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher listen and understand your point of view; he/she may not agree, but you feel understood and respected?



No 19%

Table 4

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher organise learning activities for effective and efficient use of time?



Table 5

Percentage of respondents to the question: Was the feedback on assignments marked by this teacher helpful?

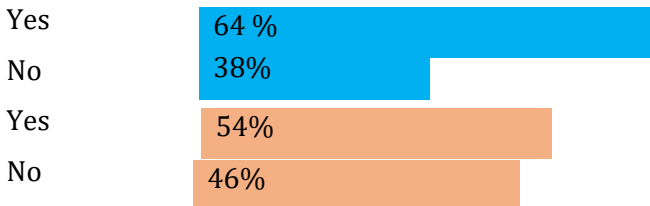


Table 6

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher explain material clearly and Indicate important points to remember?



Table 7

Percentage of respondents to the question: Does the teacher inspire you to be a teacher?



Table 8

Percentage of respondents to the question: Is the teacher professional on his/her major but he/she can't teach according to students' level.



Questions 9 and 10 were: What is one thing that your teacher does well? And what is one thing that you can suggest to help this teacher improve? These open questions gave possibility to students to speak freely about their professors and portray their ideal teacher. The answers to the first question were mostly positive and students thought that their teachers or course content did not need any change. They pointed that the course content and explanations were clear; teachers were motivating and used various interesting methods to stimulate learning. The answers to the second question were really surprising for us. It showed that professors with school-related experience devote some lecture time to discussing personal life and family experience which students find rather uninteresting for them.

Conclusions

The article presents finding of effective teacher assessment from students' point of view, analyzing the questionnaires given to the students of ATSU Pedagogical Faculty. We wanted to look at the problem of teacher effective using theoretical knowledge in practice and to check if school-related experience contributes at lot in teacher effectiveness. In fact we found little or no differences in these two categories of professors.

University professors with theoretical knowledge and good qualifications perform as well as professors with school-related experience. Thus, we came into conclusion that school-related experience is not a success factor in teacher effectiveness. Professors with good theoretical knowledge and university teaching background are as effective in using their theoretical knowledge in practice and explaining material as school-related teachers. We intend to pursue the issue of revealing effective teaching qualities in future studies to achieve the goal of providing quality education for our students.

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