Abstract

This paper describes how undergraduate students in their junior and senior year seeking a bachelor's degree at a regionally accredited university perceive their professors' instructional attributes and behaviors. The examination concentrated on two critical zones of discernment concerning professors' instructional practices. Participants were asked what teaching attributes contributed to their academic success, and teaching attributes did not contribute to their academic success. The paper is derived from a study that sought to identify any obstacles faced by the participating undergraduate students and their faculty as indicators of how to mitigate such obstacles.

The study included a review of an extensive collection of research on student perspectives and how those perspectives may reflect on the evaluation of the adequacy of various teaching techniques and academic practices. The study found that the instructional attributes that participating students reported that they value include: agreeableness (concern and regard for students), accommodation (accessibility), and receptiveness to others' conclusions (support of class inquiries and exchange), yet all instructors do not exhibit each of these attributes.

The study identified the positive teaching characteristics of professors in one setting and how these professors interact with their students in a manner that captures students' attention and promotes teaching and learning in the classroom. It also suggests attributes that professors in this setting and discipline may wish to elevate to better connect with students in the classroom.

Introduction

In a perfect world, faculty would exhibit outstanding teaching attributes regardless of topic of instruction or student population. In reality, educators differ starting with one instructive foundation then on to the next. For instance, some universities and many colleges require that

faculty have acquired the minimum of a master's degree in their subject area, while others may require a terminal degree, such as doctoral degree. This typically changes as indicated by accreditation requirements. In more profession-driven higher education programs, there might also be some industry-specific stipulations. For instance, faculty may need at least 10 years of industry experience in addition to meeting degree requirements. While faculty qualifications are vetted, there are no guarantees that credentialed faculty are good teachers with instructional attributes and behaviors that resonate with students.

In view of research on college instruction and learning led by Chickering and Gamson (1987), a good teacher:

> (1) empowers contacts amongst undergraduate students and personnel; (2) creates correspondence and collaboration amongst undergraduate students; (3) utilizes dynamic learning procedures; (4) gives relevant criticism; (5) utilizes class time efficiently; (6) imparts elevated requirements; and (7) regards assorted abilities and methods for learning. (p. 43)

Suggestions of good educational approaches include: freshman courses on imperative subjects educated by senior faculty; learning gatherings of five to seven undergraduate students who meet routinely amid class to tackle issues set forth by the teacher; faculty knowledge, understanding, and utilization of organized activities, exchanges, group tasks, and autonomous investigation; and computer-aided approaches. Faculty in higher education may have broad teaching knowledge but may still lack high quality teaching skills depending on where, when, and how they were trained to teach, if they even were.

A "good teacher" is characterized as one that can hold undergraduate students' attention and convey the course material in a fascinating and connecting way, while meeting all course

goals and objectives. In his article "A Good Teacher," Drazen (2006) stated that he was lucky to have good teachers in secondary school, as well as in college and beyond. "In school, the moving figure was a teacher of an electrical building, who showed me to utilize my thinking capacity to take care of issues and how to utilize the answers for enhancing our comprehension of physical procedures" (Drazen, 2006, p. 13). This is an example of what a student saw as powerful and fundamental for their learning, and what the student could potentially take away from a class with a good educator. Further:

> I discovered that on the off chance that I didn't comprehend the issue, I couldn't locate a genuine answer for it. In medicinal school, I was sufficiently fortunate to examine with a teacher of physiology who showed me that the scan for truth implied amassing an understanding that would let one reason from perceptions to main drivers. Every one of these instructors was supporting in that they requested the best from us and would not make due with less; they had the blessing to propel their undergraduate students. (Drazen, 2006, p. 1,374)

Drazen (2006) made a strong case of how great instructors can impact their students. The way that Drazen (2006) made the association between inspiration and powerful instructing is.

Methods

Effective teaching practices tested by research has included estimations of students' inclinations for classroom atmosphere and encounters, as well as student objectives, inspiration, confidence, and efficacy. Some research has focused on educator experience, yet not many have considered instructional adequacy entirely from the students' viewpoint. Springer, Morganfield, and Diffily (2007) researched the constructivist teaching practices of 11 instructors in Texas given the education models created by the Texas State Board of Educator Certification and 254

post-secondary students that belonged to one classroom of each of the 11 instructors. Researchers used a 2 x 2 ANOVA to investigate three inquiries: 1) What likenesses existed between students' and instructors' inclinations for classroom atmospheres given state-characterized instructor guidelines? 2) How extraordinary are the inclinations in classroom situations amongst students and educators? 3) How are students' inclinations and classroom encounters affected by the level of study, sexual orientation, and financial status? The outcomes showed that the educators and students varied extensively as far as adherence to state measures: 1) students and instructors both felt that the teaching practice did not intersect their aspirations and inclinations, 2) female students exhibited an inclination toward compelling teaching practices more than male students, and 3) older male students aspired for higher grades than the female students.

These discoveries bring up the contrasts amongst instructors and student observations and also a distinction in inclinations amongst male and female students. Male and female students often have contradicting perspectives of their confidence and self-esteem. Male students tend to overstate their capacities, while females tend to think little of their scholarly abilities, which can impact test scores and other measures of achievement (Brooks, 1982). Contrast in students' views of teaching are not restricted to gender. Students hailing from differing ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status have different convictions and assumptions about learning and their involvement in the classroom.

Results

While discussing the philosophies of and reasons for adult education, Beder (1989) focused on five core principles as the foundation of the field: improvement of society; lifelong learning; encouraging students to prosper in various areas of life; dignity and respect for students

and instructors; quality instruction and student engagement. Similarly, characteristics of a good teacher can also be categorized under five common themes as derived from this research study: relationship skills, emotional state, generativity, self-awareness, and competence. Among these, the first four characteristics are non-cognitive, whereas the last one is cognitive (see Table 5).

Research on the characteristics of a good teacher is needed for the educational system and may play a large role in improving a system. Such research may permit educators become familiar with the characteristics that can make them better teachers and help improve student learning. Based on the five characteristics of a good teacher, the researcher developed the following graphic organizer to show the five characteristics of a good teacher (see Figure 2). Good teachers fall into these five categories according to the findings from this study, and the categories all relate to quality teaching attributes as identified by the researcher according to the findings from the sample.

According to Drazen (2006), students see ideal teachers in three ways: the way they handle scholarship, students, and expertise in academics; the way they deliver the lectures and make everything clear to students; and the way they interact with students. According to Musgrove and Taylor (2012), students see ideal teachers in five different ways: having a fitting personality, being able to maintain discipline, having effective teaching techniques, employing good behavior in the classroom, and being able to maintain order in the classroom. Blishen (1969) described the quality of a good teacher as a person who gives his full attention to the students, is modest and polite, participates fully in classroom activities, has a good relationship with students, conducts lectures on time, views the student as an important and valuable member of the education system, does not impose extreme burdens on students, and understands that the students are not always ready to study.

Students do not categorize the ideal characteristics of their teachers in a one-dimensional way. Rather, they divide them into two essential categories: professional knowledge and personality traits. Professional knowledge includes both disciplinary as well as didactic knowledge. For students, an ideal teacher is one who possesses both of these characteristics. This finding is supported in the literature by Fraser and Walberg (2005). The researcher identified and developed five characteristics of a good teacher as illustrated in Table 5. Next, the researcher categorized the positive student responses in correlation with the five characteristics of a good teacher. This is where the data meets the outcome. The outcome is the development of the five characteristics of a good teacher, and Table 6 lists positive responses collected from the student participants in this study organized by the five teaching characteristics developed by the researcher.

Author's Quality Teaching Attributes (QTA) Model

The researcher created the five categories based on the outcome from the data with the exception of one category: Generativity. Generativity is a term coined by psychologist Erik Erikson in 1950 and has to do with transferability of knowledge and experience to the next generation. According to McLeod (2013):

> During middle adulthood (ages 40 to 65), we establish our careers, settle down within a relationship, begin our own families and develop a sense of being a part of the bigger picture. We give back to society through raising our children, being productive at work, and becoming involved in community activities and organizations. By failing to achieve these objectives, we become stagnant and feel unproductive. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of care. (p. 4)

The researcher created Figure 3 to illustrate the quality teaching attributes of good professors in accordance to the student perceptions in this study. The researcher coded the categories of the quality teaching in the following manner: (R) Relationship Skills, (E) Emotional State, (G) Generativity (Erikson, 1950), (S) Self-awareness, (C) Competence.

The study can be applied to various educational sectors and may be useful for improving broader higher education functions and practices. Students are able to learn more efficiently when their teachers fulfill their expectations, and teachers will also feel more satisfied upon seeing their students working hard and being dedicated to their learning. This will have an overall positive impact on students and teachers in a variety of disciplines across higher education. It may also influence other institutions to carry out similar research.

This research was carried out as a mean to identify student expectations and needs of their professors. The questions asked in this study were open-ended in order to achieve honest and accurate results. The results, though obtained from a small sample, are transferable to the broader population. Previous research has demonstrated that students recognize almost immediately whether their instructor qualifies for their attention, has the capacity to be in charge of and engage the class, motivate them to study, and in the end, be a role model for those who would like to become educators or future industry professionals. The qualities identified from earlier research speak of classroom and behavioral control in certain situations and the abilities to: clarify different perspective to enhance student comprehension, inspire the best residing within each student, captivate students and encourage freedom of thought and discussion, and finally, help students bridge the gap between theoretical material and real-world application. Students seek out high quality, that is effective and “good” instructors when they are able to, given they are not simply assigned certain courses in their academic programs, which sometimes

they are. The teacher is given a chance to deliver. If the high-performance delivery does not occur in the classroom, students' attitude toward that teacher will change. This may also influence student behavior in the classroom, as students may develop less serious behavior toward the subject as well as toward the instructor.

Discussion

Research conducted by Stronge, Ward, Tucker, and Hindman (2007) of dynamic teaching practices and instructor behaviors in relation to student learning, examined four levels of viability (high to low) within four areas: guideline, student appraisal, classroom administration, and individual attributes. Data from 1,936 students in 85 classrooms were used to survey improvements in student achievement. Actual achievement was compared with expected achievement utilizing ordinary least squares and hierarchical linear modeling. Stronge et al. (2007) found that compelling educators who had more prominent authoritative abilities, held higher expectation of students, higher regard and decency for students, and asked more complicated questions were asked. Further, nuisance behaviors by students were insignificant in contrast with less effective teachers' classrooms.

The advantage of Stronge et al.'s (2007) analysis is identification of instructional attributes and practices that were associated with improvements in student learning. They found that successful educators are aware that a single approach does not foster effective student learning. Thus, it is believed that effective educators, while considering students' accomplishments, have a set of qualities that result in deep and strong teacher-student connections and, as a result, student performance. Research by Sanders et al. (1997), Mendro (1998), Darling-Hammond (2000), Nye et al. (2000), and Stronge et al. (2007) support these findings.

Analysis of instructor efficacy has also incorporated the investigation of educators' convictions about education and learning. Work by Tomlinson et al. (2003) found that educators' demeanor affected their enthusiasm to undergo professional growth and execute new concepts learned through professional development opportunities. The convictions instructors have about learning are frequently hard to alter; many enter education with assumptions about what is, and is not, a successful teaching technique. Earlier, Tobin and Fraser (1990) found that instructor demeanor significantly affected the techniques used to actualize educational modules, in turn affecting student learning including the motivation to learn and participation in classroom activities.

Effective and influential educators are those ready to consider new concepts and techniques that are likely to enhance their experience. Gentry, Steenbergen-Hu, and Choi (2011) directed an investigation to recognize top quality instructors based on student evaluations of teaching. Utilizing two tools, My Class Activities (MCA) (Gentry, Rizza, & Gable, 2001) and Student Perceptions of Classroom Quality (SPOCQ) (Gentry & Owen, 2004), the researchers included 49 schools from urban, suburban, and rural areas with varying student demographics. Information from the MCA was acquired from 23 schools and included 3,744 students from seven states. There were 7,411 students' reports from the SPOCQ test, also including students from seven states. Information gathered from the students was spread over a vast range of instructors, not only those distinguished as effective. The students were given MCA and the SPOCQ. The SPOCQ surveyed students' knowledge in light of challenge, decision, progress, seriousness, and self-adequacy. Students' scores were ranked according to their scores to recognize instructors in the top 5-10% of the sample. Scores that showed standard deviations of

over .75 were utilized to assign rank and for some instructors, this was 1.04 standard deviations higher than for other educators. Four findings emerged:

1. These educators know and demonstrate an individual enthusiasm for their students.
2. These instructors set elevated standards for themselves and their students.
3. These educators make content learning significant and pertinent to the future regarding students' decisions.
4. These instructors reserve reasonable energy for their students, teaching, and for their subject. (Gentry & Owen, 2004, pp. 147-148)

This examination provided proof of how educators can identify with their students and construct more strengthened teacher-student connections. The students in the study perceived quality via instructional techniques and educators' enthusiasm and devotion to teaching. A critical finding in this examination worthy of future study is that "not the greater part of the administrators accepted or remembered them as commendable instructors" (Gentry & Owen, 2004, p. 150). Two essential issues that hiring and training administrators should consider is how to identify characteristics of effective educators in order to improve skills of all instructors and in what ways could administrators recognize educators who are enthusiastic and dedicated in order to retain them.

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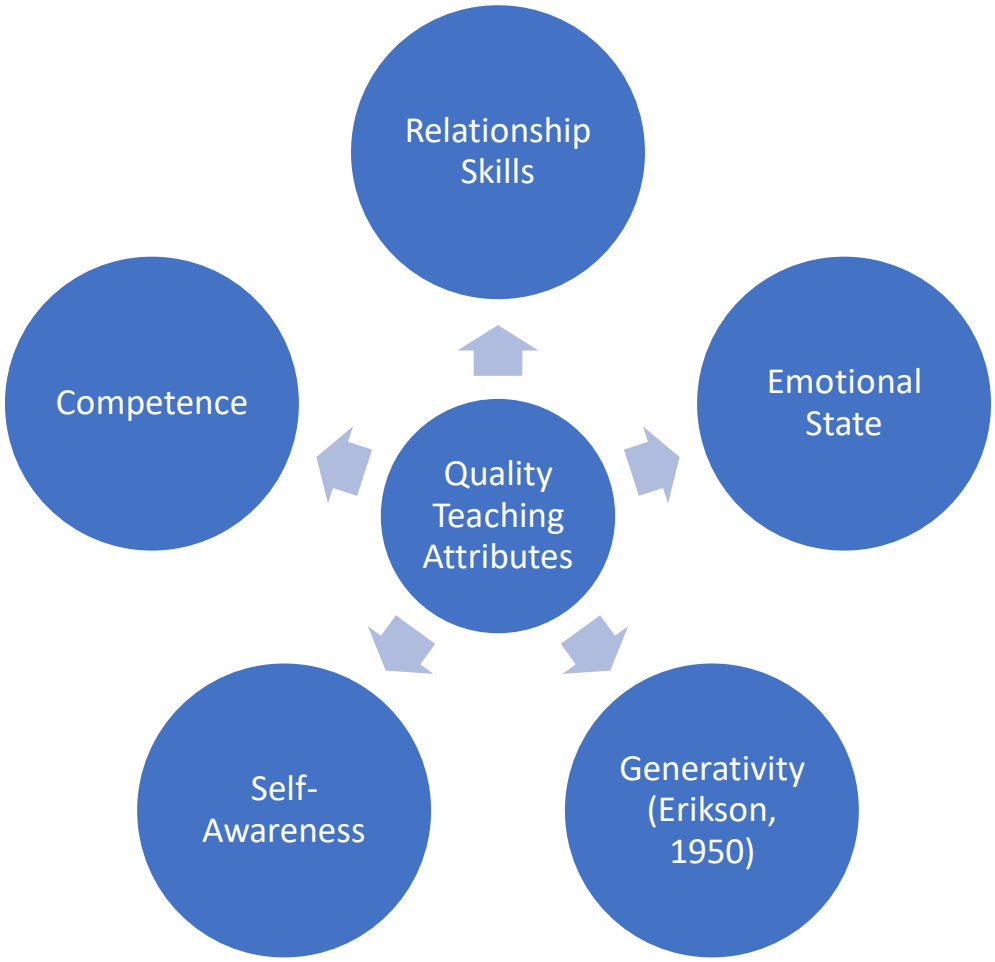


Figure 2. Quality teaching attributes.

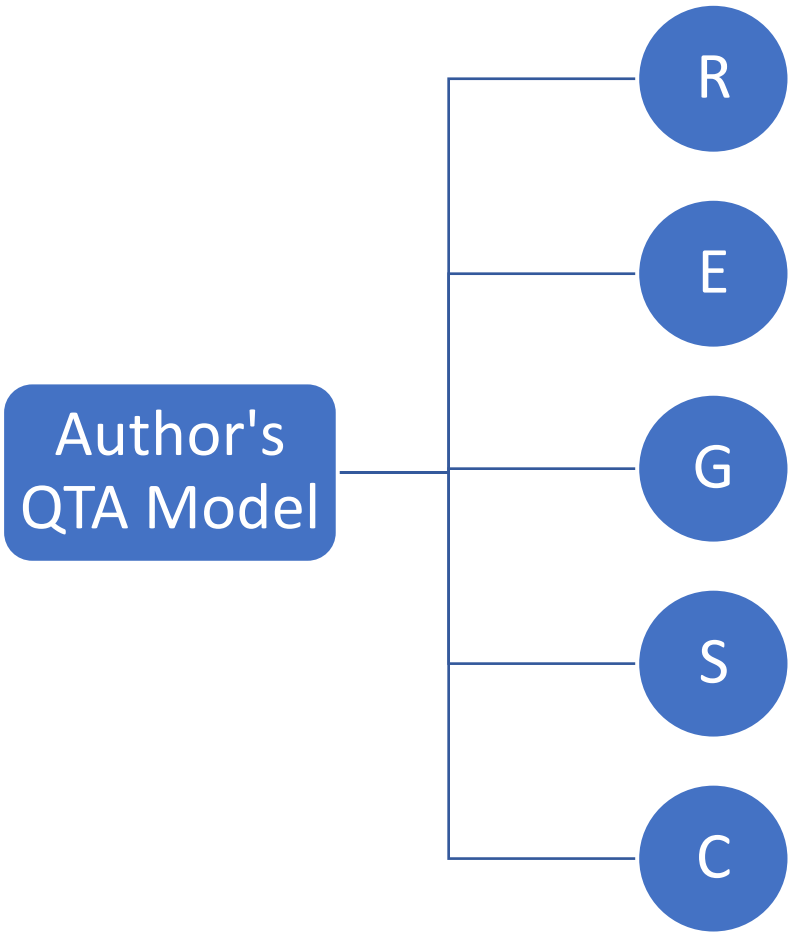


Figure 3. Author's quality teaching attributes (QTA) model.