Effective and Ineffective Lecturers:
University Students' Perspective in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT The study investigated university students' perspective on effective and ineffective lecturers. A qualitative survey design was used. A letter questionnaire was used to collect the data. Seventy- seven students participated in the study. Content analysis was used in analyzing the data. The study revealed that effective lecturers were well organized, competent, always involved students, friendly and readily available. The study found that effective lecturers were regarded as fair in their marking. The study also found that ineffective lecturers did not plan for their lectures, came late for lectures, were not knowledgeable, were not contributing to students' seminar presentations, were intimidating students, were not involving students, were boasting about their qualifications and family and were biased in their marking. It emerged that ineffective lecturers' marking did not highlight strengths and weaknesses of students. Recommendations were made to improve on the effectiveness of university lecturers.

INTRODUCTION

Effective lecturing/teaching is lecturing that creates an environment in which deep learning outcomes for students are made possible, where high quality student learning is promoted and where superficial approaches to learning are discouraged (Ramsden 1992). Similarly, Bastick (1995) views effective teaching as maximizing students' academic attainment and course satisfaction. Devlin (2003) states that effective lecturing is lecturing that is well organised and presented clearly and enthusiastically with variation and student involvement.

The effectiveness of teaching is affected by a number of factors. These include teacher, student and environmental factors (Leung and Wong 2005). A teacher, the leader of the learning environment should manipulate the student and the environment to make the learning effective.

Educational institutions are to directly serve students. They can only be responsive to students' needs and improve the effectiveness of student outcomes if they first establish what the students believe to be effective teaching (Barnes and Lock

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2010). Oregbeyen (2010) argues that students being at the receiving end of the teaching-learning process should have perceptions of effective teaching as well as an effective teacher or lecturer.

We have come across students' complaints about their teachers or lecturers being ineffective. Some of us as heads of departments, schools or faculties have received anonymous letters from students complaining about ineffective lecturers. Some cases of low throughput rate could possibly be attributed to these complaints of lecturer ineffectiveness by students.

Studies on characteristics of effective lecturers have been carried out in many countries. For example, in Australia (Ramsden 2003), in Asia (Lee et al. 2009), in UK (Brown 2004; Wright 2005), in America (Appleton-Knapp and Krentler 2006), in America and Bulgaria (Trice and Harris 2001), in Nigeria (Oregbeyen 2010), in South Korea (Barnes and Lock 2010), in China (Chen 2005) and in Malasiya (Mohidin et al. 2009). Findings from these studies point to the following as the usual characteristics of effective lecturers: friendliness, helpful, human, involving students, respecting students, preparedness, fairness, knowledgeable, good lesson delivery, motivating students and enjoying one's work.

Most of the characteristics of effective lecturers from the international literature are from students' perspective and there is need to establish if Zimbabwean students who are also the

primary consumers of the lecturing-learning process have similar perceptions. For example, Biggs (1993) and Mladenovic (2000) all cited by Mohidin et al. (2009) believe that students' perceptions are important to be examined since adopting learning approaches should be determined by the students' views. Similarly, Barnes and Lock (2010) believe that students' beliefs about effective lecturers may be used by existing practitioners and lecturers in training to guide instructional approaches. Hassal and Joyce (2001) cited by Mohidin et al. (2009) values the study of students' perceptions as it is these perceptions that determine how the students approach their learning. There is a new paradigmatic shift by which the student is transformed from a mere recipient of educational services to a partner in the educational enterprise (Chireshe et al. 2004). The issue of partnership works well when students contribute for example in articulating what an effective or ineffective lecturer is. However, there may also be biases in students' perceptions of lecturers.

Despite the importance of knowledge about students' perceptions as an informant to effective lecturing, there is dearth of literature in this area in Zimbabwe. The researcher is only aware of one related study in Zimbabwe (Chireshe et al. 2004) which looked at high school students' perceptions of good and bad teachers. It was therefore important for the researcher to identify the qualities of lecturers preferred by Zimbabwean university students which enhanced the students' learning outcomes.

Goals of the Study

The study aimed at establishing Zimbabwean university students' perceptions of effective and ineffective lecturers. The research question which guided this study was: Who is an effective and ineffective lecturer as perceived by university students?

METHODOLOGY

Design

A qualitative survey design was used in this study. Qualitative designs are normally appropriate for studies that seek to gain insight about the nature of a particular phenomenon (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). This study sought to estab-

lish characteristics of effective and in effective lecturers as perceived by university students.

Sample

Seventy- seven (36 Bachelor of Arts, 41 Bachelor of Sciences) students participated in the study. The sample was conveniently selected from faculties where the researcher had contact persons for easy data collection.

Instrumentation

A letter questionnaire which asked participants to write a letter to a friend informing him/her about: a) what an 'effective' lecturer should be like and should do and b) what an 'ineffective' lecturer is like. The participants were also asked to list 3 characteristics which they: a) liked most about the 'effective' lecturer and b) least liked about the 'in effective' lecturer.

The letter questionnaire has been successfully used in related studies. For example, Chireshe et al. (2004) among high school students in Zimbabwe, Wright (2005) asked students in UK to write an essay about aspects of a good lecturer while Barnes and Lock (2010) used a free writing instrument asking students to write about attributes of effective lecturers in South Korea.

Procedure

Two lecturers one from the Faculty of Social Sciences and the other from the Faculty of Arts of a university in Zimbabwe administered the letter questionnaires to students in their respective faculties at the end of some lectures or tutorials in June 2010. Each of the two lecturers explained the purpose of the study to the groups of students they were administering the questionnaires to. Participants were free to withdraw from the study or not to respond to particular issues on the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in data analysis. Responses were first analysed by listing all the attributes identified by the participants. Participants' responses were then put into attribute categories adopted from Faranda and Clarke's (2004) attribute category headings and presented in the tables.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows a number of rapport attributes reflecting an 'effective' or 'ineffective' lecturer that the respondents identified.

Table 1: Rapport attributes

Effective lecturer	Ineffective lecturer
·Friendly	·Not readily available
·Always willing to help	·Selfish
·Readily available	
·Patient	·Unfriendly
·Helpful	·Demotivates students
·Tolerant	·Short tempered
·Approachable	·Impatient
·Students comfortable with him/her	·Feared by students
	·Moody
·Not underestimating students	
·Sensitive to students' needs	·Threatening students
·Charismatic	·Not tolerant
·Understanding students' problems	·Insensitive
	·Not human
·Humble	
·Gender sensitive	·Harsh
·Sociable	·Boring
·Considers students' level of understanding	

Table 2: Delivery attributes

Effective lecturer	Ineffective lecturer
·Encourages group work	·Poor voice projection
·Leads group discussions	·Not explaining notes
·Gives every student chance to participate	·Spoon feeds students
·Gives students time to ask questions and answers the questions well	·No group discussions
·Good voice projection	·Avoids student questions
·Gives and explains course outline	
·Explains issues/ materials/notes well	·Repetitive
·Gives out handouts and extra materials	·Not giving notes
·Involves students in class presentations	·Use meaningless big words
·Simple explanation/ expression of ideas	·Does not involve students
·Demystifies issues	·Lectures as if in high school
·Fluent in English	·Late feedback
·Uses learning aids	·No provision of course outlines
·Give essay writing guidelines	·Use primitive ways of teaching

The delivery attributes reflected by the respondents included communication, methodology, content and personalstyle (Table 2).

The category in Table 3 relates to issues of marking assignments and examinations and equity.

Table 3: Fairness attributes

Effective lecturer	Ineffective lecturer
Marks content not names / handwriting/ past record	·Favouritism
·Impartiality	·Discrimination
·Unbiased	·Biased marking
·Constructive criticism	·Subjective marking
·Considers creativity	·No comments but just a mark
·Mark reflects content of assignment	·Putting ticks without a mark
·Provides clear marking scheme	·Giving marks without reading the work
·Good students get better marks	·Students marking their own work
·Assignments have comments on weaknesses and strengths	·Marks based on connections
·Gives expectations in assignments	·No clear marking schemes
·There is objectivity	·Giving high marks to girl friends/ relative
·Marks on time	·Gender biased·Delayed assignment feedback
	·Failing because sexual advances were denied

This category is inclusive of attributes relating to lecturer skills (Table 4).

Table 4: Knowledge and creativity attributes

Effective lecturer	Ineffective lecturer
·Competent	·Ignorant
·Knowledgeable	·Incompetent
·Expert	·Not innovative
·Good mastery of content	·Unresourceful
·Analytical	·Not creative
·Creative/ innovative	·Narrow minded
·Resourceful	
·Well read	

Table 5 shows organisation and preparation attributes reflecting an 'effective ' or 'ineffective' lecturer identified by the participants.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish university students' perceptions of effective and ineffective

Table 5: Organisation and preparation attributes

Effective lecturer	Ineffective lecturer
·Well prepared for lectures	·Absenteeism
·Punctual	·Coming late
·Time conscious	·Clumsy
·Hardworking	·Not organised
·Focused	·Provides no course outline
·Organised	·Does not finish course outline
·Sticks to course outline	·Poor time management
·Identifies important issues	·Not prepared for lectures
	·Focuses on his/her personal life

lecturers. The study revealed a number of attributes reflecting students' perceptions of 'effective' and 'ineffective' lecturers. Generally, the attributes confirm those documented in literature.

There were a number of personality characteristics that made the lecturer effective or ineffective which were highlighted by the students. Punctuality was one of the most popular personality characteristic of effective lecturers among the students. Effectiveness was also reflected through being well organised. This confirms Chireshe et al.'s (2004) finding that Zimbabwean high school students viewed personality of the teacher as a mark of either a good or bad teacher. Some of these personality characteristics were also found by Mohidin et al. (2009) and Oregbeyen (2010). As Wright (2005) put it, students view effective lecturing as personality driven. If the person is right, the lecturing is right resulting in good learning experience. An effective lecturer's personality should involve attributes that promote rapport. Rapport affects class atmosphere which in turn affects motivation and learning. Rapport reduces fear, makes students feel valued, promotes learning and make students feel understood (Barnes and Lock 2010). Zimbabwean high school students preferred a total human teacher and not a teaching machine (Chireshe et al. 2004).

The students also pointed out attributes to do with how the lectures were conducted in describing effective and ineffective lecturers. For example, effective lecturers were seen as those who: delivered their lectures well, give clear explanations, give handouts and use teaching aids. Similar findings were reported by Wright (2005) and Barnes and Lock (2010). A related finding

was established by Malikow (2005-2006) who found out that students viewed effective lecturers as those who employed a variety of methods of instruction.

Effective lecturers were also viewed as those who actively engaged students. The students wanted to be involved in class discussions. They wanted to be given time to ask questions and to make class presentations. This confirms earlier findings by Wright (2005), Barnes and Lock (2010) and Oregbeyen (2010).

It also emerged from the study that fairness, especially with regards to grading and examination was a key attribute in identifying effective and ineffective lecturers. Students preferred lecturers who were impartial. Similar findings were established by Barnes and Lock (2010). Ineffective lecturers were accused of just giving marks or ticks without any comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment. They were also accused of favouritism. The finding on favouritism in the allocation of marks confirms Chireshe and Chireshe's (2010) finding that teachers' college students accused some lecturers of awarding high marks to their girl friends. Chireshe et al. (2004) also established that Zimbabwean high school students expected good teachers to mark their work fairly and accurately. The finding also confirms Walls et al. (2000).

How knowledgeable the lecturer is also came out as one of the attributes students use in identifying effective and ineffective lecturers. The students viewed an effective lecturer as one who is competent in the subject area. This finding confirms earlier findings by Oregbeyen (2010), Barnes and Lock (2010), Mohidin et al. (2009), Lee et al. (2009) and Voss and Gruber (2006) who had similar findings. Students however, do not want teachers who use their knowledge simply to show that students are ignorant (Chireshe et al. 2004).

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the categories of attributes of effective and ineffective lecturers reveals that students' perceptions pointed to what an effective/ineffective lecturer is, what an effective/ineffective lecturer does and what an effective/ineffective lecturer gets students to do. An effective lecturer is one who is perceived as one who: is knowledgeable in the subject area, has personality attributes that promote rapport with stu-

dents, is organised, punctual, delivers well prepared lectures, gives clear explanations, gives out handouts and extra reading materials, is fair and actively engages students in the learning process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made: Lecturers should use the findings of this study as a yardstick to better understand themselves and the students' needs for the betterment of the learning process. In addition, new lecturers should be inducted into students' perceptions of effective and ineffective lecturers so as to prepare themselves for the needs of students who are the primary consumers of the learning process. Since this study covered only students from two faculties (Social Sciences and Arts), the results may not be representative of the wider Zimbabwean University student population. A further study should cover the remaining faculties and probably more universities in Zimbabwe.

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