

1-1-2013

# The Quandary of Assessing Faculty Performance

K. Fatehi

*Kennesaw State University, kfatehi@kennesaw.edu*

M. Sharifi

*California State University*

J. Herbert

*Kennesaw State University, jherbert@kennesaw.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/facpubs>



Part of the [Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Fatehi, K., Sharifi, M., Herbert, J. (2013). The Quandary of Assessing Faculty Performance. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 13(3/4) 2013, 72-84.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu).

## **The Quandary of Assessing Faculty Performance**

**Kamal Fatehi**  
**Kennesaw State University**

**Mohsen Sharifi**  
**California State University, Fullerton**

**Jim Herbert**  
**Kennesaw State University**

*Many educators assert that the continued use of student ratings of teaching effectiveness does not improve learning in the long run. However, administrators continue to use student opinions regarding teaching effectiveness because of its convenience and the quantitative nature of the measurement. Reducing a very complex phenomenon to a very simple numeral has its appeal. In this paper we discuss a related aspect of teaching assessment, namely the variations of skills among instructors and the students' response to the same. In doing so, we suggest pragmatic guidelines to university administrators for evaluating various levels of skills and performance.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

At many universities, student evaluation of teaching is a significant part of faculty member's performance evaluation. Despite the continued use of students' ratings of teaching effectiveness there "... is no evidence that the use of teaching ratings improves learning in the long run" (Armstrong, 1988: 1223). Some scholars have considered students' ratings of teaching effectiveness a popularity contest more than anything else. Clayson, Frost & Sheffet (2006: 54) suggest that "students reward instructors who reward them and punish those who punish them." Some have claimed that there is a relationship between grades given to students and the evaluations given by students to instructors. "Students reward teachers who grade leniently with higher teacher and course evaluations" (Bacon & Novotny, 2002: 5). Often, students evaluate some instructors lower because of the nature and amount of work assigned and the grades students earn (Johnson, 2003, Bacon & Novotny, 2002; Goldberg and Callahan, 1991; Stapleton, 1990). Others suggest that students complete surveys in a perfunctory manner (McKeachie, 1997: 1223), and in mindless information processing way (Trout, 2000). According to Langer (2000), when people act in a mindless manner, information processing is limited, attention span is reduced, and cognition of reality is simplified. The questionable student evaluation as opposed to experts' evaluation was highlighted by Kim, Damewoord, and Hodge (2000: 458) who, compared peer evaluation system to student evaluations at their own institution, and observed that "a few professors who usually received lower student evaluations .... were evaluated highly by their peers in classroom teaching performance."

However, administrators continue to use student opinions regarding teaching effectiveness because of its convenience and the quantitative nature of the measurement. The quantitative aspect particularly is attractive to business schools administrators, because they often try to model the institution (business school) after economic organizations. The application of concrete information that can be statistically analyzed gives it an aura of respectability, legitimacy and reliability. Presumably, quantification allows for measuring continuous improvement a la business organizations. Reducing a very complex phenomenon to a very simple numeral has its appeal. This is analogous to the use of earnings per share (EPS) in financial statement analysis that is very popular among financial analysts. But its popularity does very little in explaining financial and operational complexity of the firm.

“Many colleges and universities rely heavily, if not solely, on student rating data .... to evaluate teaching (Seldin and Associates, 1999).” This assertion is corroborated by a survey of 40,000 department chairs that found 97% used student evaluations to assess teaching performance (U.S. Department of Education, 1991). The other sources of data used were department chair evaluation (84%), peer evaluation (53%), and dean evaluation (40%). Probably, these other sources are mostly the second hand use of student opinion.

Given its dubious reliability, the pervasive use of student ratings could lead to inappropriate outcomes. According to Seldin and Associates (1999: 26-27), to evaluate teaching, we need information in seven areas: subject matter mastery, curriculum development, course design, delivery of instruction, assessment of learning, availability to students, and administrative requirements. They assert that most students know next to nothing about the first three, and perhaps the last.

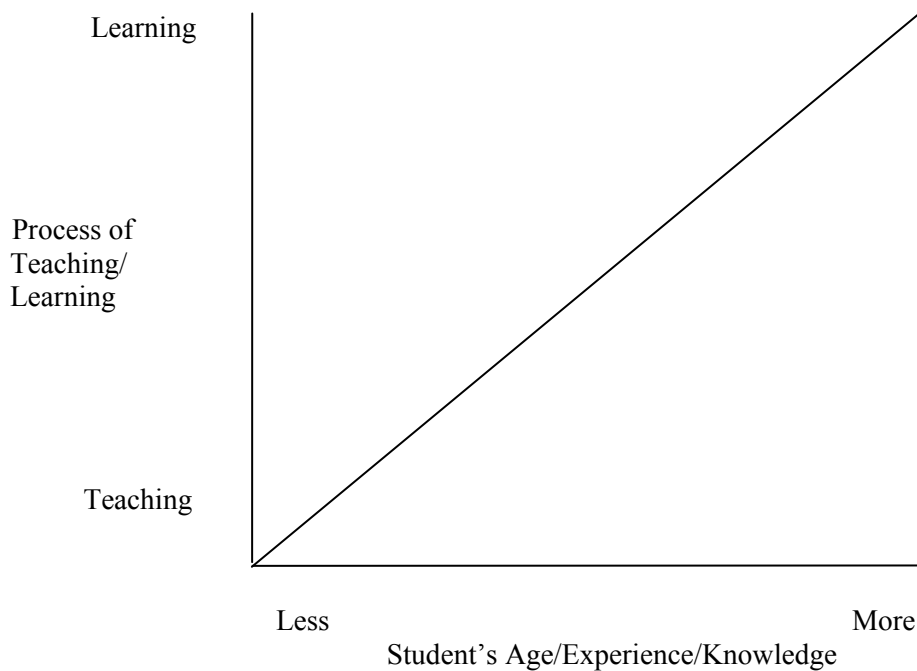
While the validity of students opinions regarding teaching effectiveness has been questioned (e.g. Bacon & Novotny, 2002; Clayson, Frost & Sheffet, 2006; Johnson, 2003, Goldberg and Callahan, 1991; Seldin and Associates, 1999), this has not resulted in changing the administrators’ affinity for its use in decision making. Totally abandoning student evaluation of teaching is not practical (Stapleton and Murkison, 2001), but using it in conjunction with other measurement would be more meaningful, particularly that teaching effectiveness is related to other aspects of faculty performance. Therefore, we make some suggestions for evaluation of various levels of skills and performance. It is hoped that the examination of another aspects of this phenomenon will advance our understating of the subject further.

This paper elaborates on assessing faculty performance by taking into account the variations of skills among instructors and the students’ response to the same. It suggests that by measuring teaching effectiveness through students’ opinion surveys we should acknowledge that the learning aspect and the responsibility for learning play a role in the whole process. In doing so, the paper elaborates on the relationship between teaching and learning, and the way teaching performance is perceived and measured at colleges and universities. Then, the role of research in the mastery of the subject, and interpersonal relationship between the instructor and the student, or the management of perception are described. Finally, suggestions are made for evaluation of faculty performance, and related administrative decisions.

## **Teaching and Learning**

Teaching and learning are intertwined. One cannot be effective without the other. It is a teacher’s role to narrow the gap between teaching and learning (Cross, et al, 1996). Assuming a difference in the level of experience and knowledge between the teacher and the student learner, the responsibility of knowledge dissemination/acquisition rests with the teacher at the earlier stages, when the student/learner is much less experienced and informed. As the level of experience, knowledge, and –perhaps- age of the learner increases, the location of responsibility for teaching/learning shifts more toward the student/learner and away from the teacher/knowledge disseminator. This distinction, as depicted in Graph 1 has important implications for assessing teaching effectiveness. This reality was not lost to some ancient civilizations, as it is evidenced in the form of the terms used to identify various stages of learning/ knowledge acquisition in the languages of those civilizations.

**GRAPH 1**  
**TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESS**  
**(KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION/ACQUISITION PROCESS)**



For example, Persian culture is among the earliest civilizations that put premium on learning and knowledge acquisition. The recorded history indicates that Achaemenids (around 600 B.C.) were strong supporters of the education and knowledge acquisition/dissemination. Other Persian dynasties and emperors followed in that tradition and established earliest learning centers and universities. Daaneshgaah e Gundi Shah Pur (Gundishahpur University) was among those universities. Founded by the Sassanid King Shapur I, the city of Gondeshapur was home to the world's oldest known (271 C.E.) teaching hospital (Azisi, 2008), which also comprised a library and a university. Gundishahpur University has been identified with extensive ruins south of Shahabad, a village 14 kilometers south-east of Dezful in the present-day province of Khuzestan, southwest Iran, near the Karun river which pours into the Persian Gulf. Gundishahpur offered training in medicine, philosophy, theology and science. The faculty members were versed not only in the Zoroastrian and Persian traditions, but in Greek and Indian learning as well (The Circle of Iranian Studies, 2008; Wikipedia, 2008).

In the Persian language, the term referring to a “student”, and the meaning it implies, varies depending on the stages of the student’s learning process. The term is different for the earlier stages of knowledge acquisition from those of the later stages. The student, prior to the college and university level, is called “*daanesh aamooz*” meaning the one who learns knowledge (*daanesh* means *knowledge*, and *aamooz* means *learner/learning*). The term “*daanesh joo*” is referred to the student at the college and university levels, meaning the one who pursues or seeks knowledge (*joo*, a suffix, means *seeker/persuer/persuing*). The meaning of each term indicates where the responsibility for knowledge acquisition should rest. At the earlier stage (*daanesh aamooz*), when the student is a “learner”, it is the teacher who is charged with the responsibility of making sure the student learns. Also, at this stage, the student totally depends on the teacher for knowledge acquisition. The teacher has to tailor the method of imparting and disseminating knowledge to the student’s level and ability to absorb the information. At the

later stages (*daanesh joo*), when the student is a “seeker/pursuer” of knowledge, the responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher to the student. The teacher becomes the source of information and a mentor who provides guidance in the process of knowledge acquisition. The teacher is expected to be mainly an expert/mentor and have the ability to direct the process of learning. Here, interpersonal relationship has an impact on the student’s perception of teaching effectiveness. A good interpersonal relationship can positively influence the learning process. Among other things, by encouraging the student in the pursuit of knowledge, and by affecting his/her self image in the process, the teacher is able to influence the learning process positively.

Similarly, in the Arabic language, the word "Telmeeze" (plural "Talameez") is used to refer to the student prior to entering the university. Telmeeze means to learn under someone’s guidance. This implies that at this stage, the teacher will provide the information and teach the pupil everything needed to learn, and the pupil’s role is to follow. This word could be considered very close to the English word "disciple". The word "Taleb" (plural "Talabah") is used to refer to a person at the higher levels of learning, at the university. It means someone who is asking for, or seeking for the knowledge, implying that the responsibility of learning rests with the student.

### **Interaction Between Teaching and Learning**

Education entails both teaching and learning phases. The earlier phase would mostly rely on the teacher successfully imparting knowledge to the pupil. The later involves mostly the student, and depends on the interests and the efforts of the student to learn. During the lifetime, at first, the knowledge dissemination/acquisition should be the responsibility of the teacher and gradually shift to the student when he/she enters the university. Students at the university level should mostly undertake independent learning with the assistance of instructors. Not too long ago in the past, often students were told that for every hour of classroom instruction, they should allocate three hours of study time outside the classroom. The study time could include a review of the classroom lecture material, or independent learning about the subject by using library resources. Today, it seems that this requirement is not taken seriously.

We are, or should be, life-time students/learners, and as we advance in our lives, we should assume a more active role in our knowledge acquisition by emphasizing the learning aspect. Therefore, at the lower levels, the teacher has a very active role and provides not only the content of what is to be learned, but the way (how) to learn it. This means a determination of how to make it possible and easier for the student to learn. At this stage, the pupil has a passive role and is the recipient of knowledge. As the person advances through time and life, progressively assumes a more active role in knowledge acquisition through personal inquiries. In our example of the Persian terminology, the passive role of “*daanesh aamooz*” (the learner of knowledge) gives way to the active role of “*daanesh joo*” (the seeker/pursuer of knowledge).

At the earlier stages of the knowledge acquisition we expect the teacher to have a prominent role of “*teaching*” the student. Therefore, the teacher’s performance could be assessed by how much he/she has “*taught*” the student. This means that knowledge acquisition by the student could be rightfully considered the responsibility of the teacher. Therefore, it is reasonable for an administrator to measure the teacher’s performance at the lower levels of teaching partly by how much the students have learned. At the higher levels, the effectiveness of teacher’s performance is best measured first, by his/her mastery of the subject and second, by how student consider his/her methods successful and relevant. At this level, reliance on the students’ opinion for assessing teaching effectiveness ignores that the responsibility for learning should, at least in part, rest with the students. Without active participation of the students in the learning process, very little meaningful learning could take place. In this context, learning results in deeper understanding and appreciation for the knowledge that already exist, in some forms, in the mind of the learner. Learning is a dynamic and evolving process and not merely an accumulation of knowledge (Cross, 1996, p 10).

This is especially true for business students who have to apply their theoretical knowledge of managing organizations to the reality of their day-to-day operations. To transfer classroom learning to actual management of operations is very difficult unless students take the process of knowledge acquisition in their own hands and actively participate in the learning/knowledge acquisition.

### Various Aptitude and Skill Levels

Generally, three factors are considered in faculty performance evaluation. The three factors are teaching, research and service. While teaching effectiveness is an integral part of faculty performance, research, besides having its own merit, is a very important aspect that can enrich teaching. For parsimony, the service aspect is not discussed here. While we suggest that students should actively participate in the learning process, we also acknowledge that instructors have various aptitudes and skills. Based on this acknowledgement we categorize the university level instructors into four types as described in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**TYOLOGY OF INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS' RESPONSE**

Instructor Type	Students' Response
Star (Best) Instructor. Involved in research. Imparts new knowledge (research-based knowledge, own or others'), possesses good interpersonal skills (very good researcher-teacher)	Very good graduate and undergraduate students' opinion, especially graduate students.
Competent (Very Good) Instructor. Involved in research. Imparts new knowledge (research-based knowledge, own or others'), possesses average interpersonal skills (researcher-teacher)	Good graduate students' feedback, average undergraduate students' opinion.
Effective (Good) Instructor. Not involved in research. Rehashes old knowledge well. Possesses good interpersonal skills.	Good undergraduate students' opinion, Very seldom assigned to teach graduate level courses. In those rare cases, average graduate students' opinion.
Ordinary (Acceptable) Instructor. Not involved in research. Familiar with the classics in the field and old knowledge. Possesses average interpersonal skills.	Average undergraduate students' opinions, (Do not teach at the graduate level).

There are other variables that could be considered in a categorization of instructors. For example, Kim, Damewood, and Hodge (2000:459) asserted that “... communication skills, enthusiasm, fairness, flexibility, and encouragement of student are identified as strongly related to teaching effectiveness.” However, in our categorization, we use two of the three factors that are generally considered to be very important at almost all colleges and universities. As mentioned before, the two factors are teaching and research.

1. **Star Instructor** – Star Instructors are known as the “best” and are very active in research and possess good interpersonal and teaching skills. They follow a research agenda and enthusiastically share their gained knowledge with their own students, and colleagues. Particularly, this is the case in business schools where research forms the basis for managing organizations. The best managed firms remain informed about the latest developments in the field. Because these instructors possess good interpersonal and teaching skills, are able to relate to

the students in a positive manner. By possessing research-based, first-hand knowledge, good interpersonal relationships and teaching skills, the instructors can positively influence knowledge acquisition by the students.

2. **Competent Instructor.** Competent or “Very Good” Instructors are active in research and share the results of their own research or others’ research with their students and colleagues. Their interpersonal and teaching skills are not very strong. Therefore, besides imparting new knowledge, they may not positively influence the learning process. In this case, the students gain knowledge based on their exposure to new knowledge. The learning process is not heavily influenced by interpersonal relationships with the instructor. In effect, the learning process takes place despite the lack of strong interpersonal skills by the instructor, and as the result of exposure to new knowledge. In this case, students may take more active role in the learning process.
3. **Effective or “Good” Instructor.** These instructors are not very much involved in the research. Therefore, they have very limited exposure to the new knowledge. However, they are good in teaching and rehashing old knowledge. They maintain some familiarity with the popular research topics of the day. Their interpersonal skills are good and are normally classified as effective. The good rapport and interpersonal relationship between the students and the instructor, positively influences the students’ learning process. Most business schools do not assign this group to teach graduate level courses. Temporarily, exceptions could be made in smaller programs where for a short period there are no other options.
4. **Ordinary (Acceptable) Instructor.** This group is able, on a limited basis, to rehash the old knowledge, and engage in an acceptable level of teaching. This implies that they have no interest in conducting research but are familiar with the so called classics, the proven and accepted knowledge in the field. However, they do not benefit from strong interpersonal skills. They are average teachers. This group is not assigned to teach graduate level courses.

Each of the four types described above involves two facets: how well do instructors impart knowledge; and how strong are their interpersonal skills? The earlier is related to the mastery of the subject and the later involves interpersonal relationship or managing perception. The two facets are discussed in the following pages.

### **Research and the Mastery of the Subject**

Imparting knowledge requires mastery of the subject and the ability to make the knowledge comprehensible to the audience. Without the mastery of the subject it is impossible to impart knowledge. However, it is possible to have the mastery of the subject but have difficulty to make it comprehensible to the audience. Experience has a great role in the ability to make the knowledge comprehensible to the audience. The more experienced persons learn the nuances of bringing a difficult subject to the level of the audience. Also, imparting the essence of a deep understanding and a clear and unambiguous knowledge requires less effort than otherwise would be possible. Often, the richness of the subject is enhanced when an instructor undertakes consulting assignments in organizations. These assignments provide the instructor with the opportunity to apply research findings to day-to-day management of the organizations or to find theoretical constructs for managerial practices observed.

The mastery of the subject could be accomplished in two ways. First, engaging in scientific research enables a person to learn about the most recent discoveries, and also personally add to the storehouse of knowledge. Second, one can keep up-to-date by reading the results of scientific research discoveries that are conducted by others. Of course, the first alternative is superior. In the same vein, the highest educational degree, a Ph.D. degree, is granted only to those who successfully demonstrate that they can be independent researchers, by successfully completing their doctoral dissertation. This is often a prerequisite for getting a teaching job. A researcher has to learn about the area under investigation and be

familiar with the research results conducted in the field. Without such knowledge, one runs the risk of re-inventing the wheel. There is a direct relationship between scientific research and knowledge creation (e.g. Koike and Takagi, 2007: 51-65). Conducting scientific research results in generating new knowledge. Successful research is built on the comprehensive knowledge of the area under investigation. In short, meaningful mastery of the subject is mostly dependent on research practice.

Summarizing the above discussion we could argue that effective teaching at the college level involves the possession of two types of knowledge, (a) the new knowledge that is generated as a person engages in scientific research; and (b) learning about the new developments in the field that is the product of other researchers' work.

There are well-established methods for measuring both aspects of this dimension. Traditionally, faculty members' research outputs, and involvement in different aspects of professional/intellectual inquiry, are used to measure this dimension. However, the form and nuances vary by institutions. We assume that no elaboration on these nuances is necessary.

#### Interpersonal Relationship or Managing Perception

The second facet, the interpersonal relationship can facilitate learning. The ability to motivate others to exert efforts to learn is an aspect of interpersonal skill. We learn more from those we like more. "... the ability to motivate students is generally considered a trait of a "good teacher" (Clayson, Forst & Sheffet, 2006: 54). Students can learn more from a teacher who possesses good interpersonal skills. The liking of the teacher by the students can have a positive impact on the students' learning. Interpersonal relationship is very closely related to managing perception.

We know that perception is selectively organized and directly influences our beliefs and opinions (e.g. Luthons, 1977: 255-279). We also know that perception can be influenced/managed/manipulated (e.g. De Meuse, 1987). For example, smiling, acting friendly, and pretending to care for others could have a positive effect on the opinion of others about us. In particular, young and impressionable persons are more easily affected by the appearance of friendliness and care. They are less likely to detect a fake behavior and more likely to accept the pretention or acting out a behavior as the genuine and true action.

A teacher can manage the opinion of the students in certain ways (Greenwald and Gilmore, 1997) including to appear to care for the students and behave in a friendly manner toward them. This type of behavior if maintained throughout a semester could result in a favorable students' opinion about the instruction and the teacher. We also know about the "halo" effect, the spill-over effect of one positive aspect of a phenomenon to the other aspect of the same phenomenon. The positive opinion of the students about a teacher, as a person, may influence their perception of his/her teaching effectiveness. This implies that a teacher may positively influence the students' opinion and receive a favorable rating by them (Kim, Damewood & Hodge, 2000: 466). Of course, the reverse could be true and the process could go in the other direction. Unknowingly, a teacher's behavior could negatively influence the students' opinion regarding teaching effectiveness irrespective of the teacher's ability to impart knowledge.

A teacher could use one or a combination of three facets: (a) simplifying explanation of knowledge and making it comprehensible, (b) creating rapport with the audience, and (c) entertaining and joking. Based on these facets, the relationship between interpersonal skills and student opinion could be summarized as follows.

- a. Converting and simplifying knowledge to the level of the audience. Recognizing the capacity of the audience and the ability to speak at the audience level. Asking relevant questions, vetting the appetite of the audience for learning. Consequently, the audience can more easily understand and learn the presentation of knowledge. They will respond favorably.
- b. Creating a rapport with the audience, a sense of liking in the audience members. This behavior is reciprocal. If the audience sense you like them, they like you back. Of course, it is possible to fake this. One can connect with the audience by, among other factors, using personal examples. This also will result in a favorable response by the audience. While manipulation of perception could not be considered a noble act, any technique/trick that facilitates learning is useful toward that end.



- c. Entertaining, joking, the use of humor and interesting examples could generate interest in the audience about the speaker and the subject. Familiarity with popular culture, or the lack thereof, could play a role in the teaching process. The instructors who are knowledgeable in popular culture could perhaps establish a more positive connection with the audience. Here, the cynical view is that some instructors, by establishing positive rapport with their students, are also able to shift the paradigm from rigor to “fun,” as perceived by young students. Without delving into merits of learning through entertainment, supporters of this approach claim that the end result of learning -- if it does take place-- could outweigh the criticism of unsophisticated conversation. They claim that, notwithstanding the approach, enticing students to learn is a worthwhile undertaking. This sometimes may result in “dumbing down” the materials imparted and ultimately a holistic degradation of the educational process. In this setting, the “tough and challenging” instructors are perhaps replaced by “cool” instructors.

Of course, (b) and (c) overlap.

Measuring this dimension is more problematic than measuring the mastery of the subject. At the present time, as it was presented in the previous pages, students’ perception is the dominant form of measuring this dimension. We have discussed problems associated with students’ opinion for measuring teaching effectiveness. Our discussion, however, does not preclude the use of it providing that sufficient safeguards are employed. It is not our aim here to offer a list of such safeguards. A rich literature exists on the subject for the interested reader (e.g. Kim, Damewood & Hodge, 2000; Stapleton & Murkison, 2001). However, we suggest that alternatives are available that could enhance the value of measuring this dimension. Peer evaluation that includes classroom visits, dossiers that highlight teaching instruments employed by the instructors, and similar tools could augment students rating. Extreme caution should be taken not to fall prey to quantification on this dimension. Most institutions have various ways of measuring this dimension, but the simplicity of students’ opinion surveys compels them to favor it over others.

A combination of knowledge type or mastery of the field, and interpersonal relations creates four categories, as illustrated in Figure 1 (see next page).

### **Implication for Administrative Decision Making**

All institutions of higher education, annually review their teaching staff. Usually, the result of the review process culminates in administrative decisions regarding pay raises, and as a separate step involves tenure and promotion decisions. In business schools, there is an increasing tendency toward quantification of evaluation process. Tenure and promotion issues are not discussed here, because both entail the departmental faculty members’ involvement. Nevertheless, in both cases, teaching effectiveness is an integral part of the process. Also, in both cases, teaching effectiveness is an important component in determining the outcome of the decision-making process. Often, teaching effectiveness is measured by using students’ ratings of instructors. Given the concerns regarding the validity of students’ rating of instructions, augmenting it with other measures seems reasonable.

There are some differences between the larger and smaller institution and between the private and public ones. The mere issue of teaching effectiveness is regarded much higher in small and or private colleges and universities. Receiving low student rating for teaching performance is much more consequential in the future appointment, even retention or tenure of a faculty member, in smaller / private colleges and universities. In this environment taking a marketing perspective, the students are viewed as the ultimate “customers” of the institutions. The assumption of direct customer-supplier relationship between students and instructors, in small colleges and universities, would perhaps require consideration of the phrase “the customer is always right.” Thus the customers (students) must be attended, even when the customers’ requests or demands are unreasonable.

**FIGURE 1**  
**MASTERY OF THE FIELD, AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP MATRIX**

Mastery of the Field	Very Much	Competent (Very Good)	Star (Best)
	Some	Ordinary (Acceptable)	Effective (Good)
		Average	Very Good
		Interpersonal Relationship (Perception Management)	

This situation may lead to a dysfunctional behavior by some instructors in a form of imparting a lower level of knowledge to students through a very entertaining and smooth lecture. When the students are tested on this very basic level of knowledge by means of unchallenging exams, they will naturally score high. Consequently, students who feel good about their performances, perceive that the instructor is an effective instructor and they in fact have “learned a lot” in the course.

The type of material taught in a class also has serious implication in student perception of teaching effectiveness. Instructors seemingly receive a higher students rating in the courses involved in more structured/concrete materials, such as statistics, as compared to instructors teaching less structured/abstract materials such as organization and system theories. Learning abstract concepts and unstructured material necessitates a more active participation of students in the learning process. Some believe that defining the goals in more structured and concrete form would not lead the learners to realize their full potentials (Takeuchi, Osono and Shimizu, 2008). Learning of abstract concepts and unstructured materials necessitates additional efforts by the learners. Therefore, some students may not appreciate the demand of expending time and efforts needed in such a learning situation. This may lead to a negative perception about the learning/teaching process. In this setting the learners (students), seemingly, lack tolerance for ambiguity and respond better to more structured/concrete materials. Furthermore, the instructor’s rating seems to be lower when the course is taught for the first time. As the instructor gains more competence in teaching the course, the rating tends to rise.

The above factors should be taken into consideration when administrators are evaluating the teaching effectiveness of an instructor. Each administrator may develop norms similar to the one presented below

for the purpose of evaluating teaching effectiveness. The suggestions here are not foolproof and should be used when an administrator feels comfortable with them. However, these suggestions should be shared with the faculty members at the time of hiring.

Administrators should be cautioned about the possibility of manipulation of the system through certain practices. For example, one of the authors served as a member of the Personnel Committee who visited a class performance of a newly hired instructor, as required by the Tenure/Promotion Document of the university. A crisp and well organized lecture was presented in this session. The observer turned in a positive rating of the instructors to the Personnel Committee. A few months later one of the students attending that session informed the observer that the lecture presented on that day was not the lecture they were supposed to have been taught. The student shared this information prior to the graduation, when there was no fear of retribution.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS**

The preceding discussion identifies skill variations and the mastery of the subject among instructors. We should not expect that all instructors be Star Instructors, nor should we expect that the students always respond favorably to demanding and challenging instructors and rate their teaching accordingly. It is reasonable to suggest that this variation should be taken into account during annual performance evaluation. Therefore, in the following, we take this reasoning to its logical conclusion and make certain suggestions for administrative decisions as summarized in Table 2. These suggestions are based on a combination of two dimensions of mastery of the subject and interpersonal relations that were presented earlier.

**TABLE 2**  
**SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS**

Instructor Type	Administrative Decisions
Star (Best)	Very good merit rewards as identified by their institution.
Competent (Very Good)	Good merit rewards.
Effective (Good)	Some merit rewards.
Ordinary (Acceptable)	Very little merit rewards. Probably, this type should be encouraged to seek alternative opportunities.

1. The Star (Best) Instructors have both the mastery of the subject and strong interpersonal skills. This combination of skills enables them to motivate students to acquire knowledge from an informed and knowledgeable instructor. These instructors are able to create a positive rapport with the students, and challenge them to apply the best of their abilities. This not only avoids creating resentment, but causes the students to appreciate the learning thus involved. Therefore, these instructors may receive the highest student rating. The involvement of these instructors in research provides them with the first hand knowledge in their area of specialization. Also, because research is valued by most institutions, and these instructors are engaged in research, there are good reasons for an administrator to assign them the highest merit rewards. Rewards could be anything that is valued by the faculty members, including pay.

2. The Competent (Very Good) Instructors have the mastery of the subject, and are engaged in research very much similar to the Star Instructors. However, they lack the skills to relate to students at the personal level. Even though they impart pertinent information and disseminate knowledge on the most recent discovery and development in the field, they may not receive very good student evaluations.

These instructors -with the mastery of the subject- are a necessary part of the universities. Thus they should be encouraged to improve their interpersonal skills and join the ranks of the Stars. For example, they may be asked to observe the teaching methods of the best teachers and emulate such effective styles. Similarly, they could attend teaching/learning seminars, and may request a classroom visitation by other colleagues who are known to be good teachers. These visitations could provide the Competent Instructors with feedback as how to better engage the student in the learning process. While this group may not engage the students on a more personal level, they should receive a good merit rewards.

3. Effective (Good) Instructors. Due to their good interpersonal skills, this group can comfortably relate to the students and motivate them to learn. While not involved in research, they are able to rehash existing knowledge to the students. The university would benefit from their teaching ability, albeit they may disseminate no new knowledge and information.

Similar to the above category but in a different manner, this group should be encouraged to improve and become Star Instructors. The research seminars that are regularly conducted by scholarly/professional associations would be very useful to this group. They should be provided with opportunities to upgrade their research skills by taking courses that specially are offered by some educational institution that cater to this group of instructors. With their shortcoming in research, we suggest that they should receive some merit rewards.

4. Ordinary (Acceptable) Instructors. While these instructors can rehash the existing knowledge, but because they do not possess strong interpersonal skills, they are less in a position to motivate the students to learn. They may receive very little rewards. Unless these instructors improve their teaching and research skills, they are encouraged to seek alternative opportunities.

The above suggestions are based on two factors. First, the mastery of the subject is mostly related to the research output of the faculty member which is readily measurable by the quantity and quality of publications. In business schools, quality of publication, generally, is based on the type of publication, e.g. academic versus trade journals, their acceptance rates and impact factors. Some departments have developed a more detailed list of journals classified into A, B, or C ratings to reflect the quality of the publications that takes into account the above factors. Second, the interpersonal relationship or perception management of faculty could be based on the students' opinion surveys. Additionally, to assess interpersonal factors, a classroom visitation, either by other colleagues, the administrator, or both could be employed. Other material, such as the portfolio of teaching material used in the class, and other supporting documents would be useful. All these factors – research and interpersonal relationships – must be taken into account given the impact of both on learning and teaching.

In the preceding section we discussed the facet of administrative function relating to faculty members' evaluation, the determination of merit rewards, and indirectly, the retention. However, an even more important administrative function is full commitment to faculty members' development. This is where administrators can demonstrate their true leadership roles by assisting their faculty members to continuously improve and achieve the highest level of academic stature. This aspect of administrative function starts with hiring the right faculty member, and making sure that each day the faculty member accomplishes something rewarding to themselves and ultimately for the school.

The effective administrator could use Figure 1 – Mastery of the Field and Interpersonal Relationship Matrix, as a road map. The goal is to assist the faculty member to move to the quadrant “Best” in Figure 1. The experienced and effective leader attracts the best faculty member with the potential of ending up in the “Best” quadrant. This goal may be idealistic and perhaps economically not feasible for some departments. However, by employing continuous improvement process, it may be possible to help the

faculty member to move from “Acceptable” quadrant to “Good” and “Very Good” quadrants, and eventually into the “Best” quadrant.

This would be possible by encouraging the faculty member to accept the idea that the “Best” quadrant is the best place for them to be in. Once the faculty member bought into the idea, then realistic goals for them--over a reasonable time--could be established with a measurable outcome. For instance, the faculty members in Acceptable quadrant could be placed on a development plan to update their research and teaching skills by sending them to various academic conferences and workshops. This would help them to improve in both teaching and research areas. First, by attending professional/scholarly conferences and seminars, these instructors can find out about the contemporary research topics in their discipline. They can start working on those areas, individually or with the help of competent mentors and researchers. Second, they can achieve similar improvement in teaching.

In a similar manner, the faculty members in Effective quadrant who already possess an adequate interpersonal skill, could improve their research skills and move to the Best quadrant. In the case of Competent (Very Good) faculty members, participating in various oral communication workshop, which are organized by the development centers of most universities, could help them to achieve a higher level of interpersonal skill.

Of course, hiring the best faculty members, who are or could become both good teachers and good researchers, is the best strategy. This, perhaps, could be a good solution for many of the administrators’ personnel related issues, such as faculty evaluation and merit rewards. However, not too many administrators have such a luxury. Among other factors, institutional limitations could prevent such an accomplishment. This is not only due to economic factors, but due to the involvement of others in hiring decisions. In the absence of an option of hiring the best, a carefully crafted faculty development strategy could go a long way toward accomplishing goal.

## REFERENCES

- Armstrong, J. S. (1988). Are Student Ratings of Instruction Useful? *American Psychologist*, 53: 431-441.
- Azizi, M.H. (2008). Gundishahpur School of Medicine: The Most Important Medical Center in Antiquity, *Arch Iranian Med* 2008, 11 (1):116 – 119.
- Bacon, D. R. & Novotny, J. 2002. Exploring Achievement Striving as a Moderator of the Grading Leniency Effect. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 24: 1-14.
- Clayson, D. E., Frost, T. F. & Sheffet, M. J. (2006). Grades and the Student Evaluation of Instruction: A Test of the Reciprocity Effect. *Academy of Management & Education*, 5 (1): 52-65.
- Cross, K. Patricia and Mimi Harris Steadman (1996). *Classroom Research—Implementing the Scholarship of Teaching*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco.
- De Meuse, K. P. (1987). A View of the Effect of Nonverbal Cues on the Performance Appraisal Process. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 60: 207-226.
- Dunegan, K. J., and Hrivnak, M. W. (2003). Characteristics of Mindless Teaching Evaluations and the Moderating Effects of Image Compatibility. *Journal of Management Education*, 27 (3), 280-303.
- Goldberg, G. & Callahan, J. (1991). Objectivity of Student Evaluations of Instructors. *Journal of Education for Business*, (July/August): 377-378.
- Greenwald, A. G., & Gillmore, G. M. (1997). Grading Leniency is a Removable Contaminant of Student Ratings. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1209-1216.

- Johnson, V. E. (2003). *Grade Inflation: A Crisis in College Education*. New York: Springer.
- Koike, A. and Takagi, T. (2007). Knowledge Discovery Based on Implicit Conceptual Network. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58 (1), 51-65.
- Kim, C., Damewood, E., and Hodge N. (2000). Professor Attitude: It's Effect on Teaching Evaluations. *Journal of Management Education*, 24 (4), 458-473.
- McKeachie, W. (1997). The Validity of Use. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1218-1225.
- Langer, E.J. (2000). Mindful Learning. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 220-223.
- Luthons, F. (1977). *Organizational Behavior*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Orsinin, J. L. 1986. Halo Effects in Student Evaluations of Faculty: A Case Application. *Journal of Management Education*, 10 (2), 38-45.
- Seldin, P. & Associates. (1999). *Changing Practices in Evaluating Teaching*. Bolton, Mass.: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Stapleton, R. J. (1990). Academic Entrepreneurship: Using the Case Method to Simulate Competitive Business Markets. *The Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, 14 (4), 88-104
- Stapleton, R. J. and Murkison, G. (2001). Optimizing the Fairness of Student Evaluations: A Study of Correlations Between Instructor Excellence, Study Production, Learning Production, and Expected Grades. *Journal of Management Education*, 25 (3), 269-291.
- Takeuchi, H., Osono, E. and Shimizu, N. 2008. The Contradictions that Drives Toyota's Success. *Harvard Business Review*, June, 1-8.
- The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (formerly affiliated with the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London: [http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/about\\_cais.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/about_cais.htm), accessed December 27, 2008.
- U.S. Department of Education. (1991), Winter. Assessing Teaching Performance. *The Department Chair: A Newsletter for Academic Administrators*, 2 (3), 2.
- Weber, C. (1988). Evaluation of Marketing Professors: A Comparison of Student, Peer, and Self-Evaluations. *Journal of Management Education*, 12 (1), 11-17.
- Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gundeshapur>. Accessed December 17, 2008.