What Makes an Effective Lecturer? Voices from Students and Implication for Policy Makers in Indonesia

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Abstract. No one has a bigger stake in education than students. Their views on teaching effectiveness are worth serious attention. This study examined students' perceptions of effective lecturers. Students' beliefs, opinions, and concerns about their lecturers were documented through open-ended questionnaires, students' narratives, and interviews. The students identified as many as 25 attributes of an effective lecturer, from which we concluded that students perceived an effective lecturer as one who could establish a good interpersonal relationship with students and had good communication skills. Much to our surprise, a lecturer's academic background, years of service, and mastery of instructional materials were not much of their concerns. This may imply and should be well noted by policy makers in Indonesia that qualified lecturers are not necessarily effective lecturers.

Keywords: students' perception, effective lecturer, teaching effectiveness.

1   Introduction

In Indonesia, a lecturer is required to hold a master's degree to teach in an undergraduate program and a doctoral degree to teach in a postgraduate program and to have a professional certification [1, 2]. Also, Indonesian lecturers must not exceed 65 in age, except for a professor. A professor can still be in service until they are 70 years old [3, 4]. These are some of the minimum requirements set up regulations for one to be qualified as a lecturer in Indonesia.

Apart from these regulations, we believe that there should be much more to lecturers than these official requirements. We believe that *teaching qualification* should not be considered the same as *teaching effectiveness* and that teaching effectiveness should be given more serious attention. As no one knows an effective learning environment better than students as they experience one, measuring the teaching effectiveness is then best done by students.

Student evaluations of teaching effectiveness (SETEs) have become a common practice in higher education since the 1920s [5]. Usually, at the end of the semester, students are asked to fill out surveys on faculty performance. However, SETEs have been flawed and heavily criticized by many researchers. The sources of the criticism are not in the evaluations per se, but in the instruments, they employed [6]. The instruments are normally Likert-scale questionnaires. The problem is that most of the time the questionnaire items cannot capture the real *voice* of the students—the students cannot freely express what they experience, feel, and believe. Also, faculty administrators, tasked with questionnaire data processing, generally have not received

proper training in interpreting quantitative data [7]. Furthermore, these sites did not measure teaching effectiveness, but student satisfaction [8]. Another problem is that these SETEs are also summative, which is against the original purpose of SETEs; i.e., formative measurements [9]. As things stand, in this study we asked students to measure the teaching effectiveness qualitatively. We believe that teaching effectiveness is a very complex concept. It is better described in words, instead of numbers.

2 Methods

2.1 Research site and participants

This study was conducted at a university in Indonesia. Two hundred seventy-eight senior university students aged 21-25 years voluntarily participated in the study after being informed of the nature of the study. Being in the final year of study, these students suited the purpose of this study because they had more experience of dealing with many lecturers with different characteristics than their juniors did and hence expected to provide multi-perspective data on students' perception about effective teaching.

2.2 Data collection

To comprehensively hear students' perceptions, which in this study refer to beliefs, opinions, and concerns, this study used multiple data inquiry methods consisting of open-ended questionnaires, students' narratives, and interviews. The questionnaires were developed concerning five categories of teaching effectiveness attributes proposed by a previous study [10]; namely, rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. Students' narratives were meant to document students' perceptions of effective lecturers based on personal experience that questionnaires could not accommodate. The participants wrote their narratives in their native language. The use of native language was to obtain rich data because English could prevent the students from writing what they wanted to if they had low English writing proficiency. Interviews were conducted to check the accuracy of data obtained through questionnaires and students' narratives. Sometimes, students' responses to the questionnaires were too brief and needed further clarification. Thus, it was quite possible for participants to get different interview questions, depending on their responses to questionnaires and their narratives. Their responses to the interview question even sometimes elicited other questions.

3 Results and discussion

The students collectively identified 25 attributes of an effective lecturer, seven of which belonged to the rapport category, 11 to the delivery category, three to the fairness category, two to the knowledge and credibility category, and the rest to the organization and preparation category. These attributes are summarized in Table 1 and will soon be discussed consecutively one category after another.

Table 1. Attributes of an effective lecturer as perceived by the students

Category	Attribute
	An effective lecturer:
Rapport	1. motivates his students
	2. is easy-going
	3. is humorist
	4. is humble
	5. is respectful to his students
	6. is accessible
	7. is attentive to his students
Delivery	1. is interactive
	2. informs students textbooks to be used as the reference for the whole semester
	3. follows the course outline consistently
	4. is passionate about teaching
	5. provides a clear instruction when giving assignments
	6. should not be seated all the time
	7. should not talk too much about personal and avoid talking about political matters
	8. provides feedbacks without necessarily risking students' self-respect
	9. encourages student participation
	10. should not play with his gadget in the classroom
	11. uses variety of instructional media
Fairness	1. provides a clear and transparent grading system
	2. returns graded examination sheets to the students
	3. treats students impartially
Knowledge & Credibility	1. can solve complex problems
	2. has sound knowledge about educational psychology
Organization & Preparation	1. is well prepared before every lecture
	2. is punctual

3.1 Rapport

From responses in this category, we noted that students emphasized the importance of reducing students' anxiety, fear of failures, and fear of making mistakes and the importance of valuing students. This finding is in line with that of a previous study [11]. Lecturers are expected to be motivating and encouraging. Students' responses also were associated with their perceptions of how lecturers should establish their relationships with the students. They believed that lecturers and students could and should establish a *friend-to-friend* relationship. It does not mean that students stop seeing their lecturers as authority figures. Rather, they did not think that there should be a huge social distance between them. Mutual respects could be easily earned without necessarily *telling apart* lecturers from students. The students felt that they were mature enough to know who they were and who their lecturers were. Easy-going, humble, and humorist lecturers are favourable. They also suggested that lecturers attentively listen to their students and be easier to reach both in person and by phone.

3.2 Delivery

Delivery is one of the most frequently talked about by the students when asked to describe effective lecturers. In brief, the students highlighted lecturers' communication skills, course contents, teaching methodology, and some personal specific attributes as important elements of teaching effectiveness. To the students, to be effective, lecturers should strive to make their lesson interactive. They suggested that the use of instructional media could help achieve this purpose. It is also deemed important for lecturers to inform their students what they are about to learn at the beginning of the course, what book to be used as the main reference, and deliver weekly topics by the course outline.

It comes as no surprise that all-the-time seated lecturers are not students' favourites. The students expected their lecturers to exhibit passion and enthusiasm for teaching and encourage participation. They also asserted that lecturers should put away their addiction to their cellphones. The students also warned their lecturers not to get carried away in their material delivery. Being serious all the time is a no-no, but talking too much about personal life could turn off their interests. Lecturers also should avoid talking about political matters.

When it comes to assignments, lecturers are expected to provide the students with clear instructions. Feedbacks about their works are needed but should be done rightly in such a way that they do not risk students' self-respect. The students care about what their friends think of them [12]; improperly given feedbacks could be seen as academic shaming.

3.3 Fairness

The fairness aspect is associated with the grading system and transparency and the lecturer's equal treatments to all students. The students expected their lecturers to inform them how their works were graded and return their answer sheets. This is to avoid students' distrust to the lecturers. The students also demanded that their lecturer avoid favouritism towards any of the students regardless of their academic performance. Some students confessed that they envied one of their classmates whom they saw as the teacher's pet for being given more attention to by the lecturer. They expected their lecturers not to let any particular student dominate the classroom. Some students felt that they were left out. They somehow could feel that sometimes the lecturer has different emotions for different children even though he transmits the same knowledge. A previous study even suggested that lecturers maintain eye contact with all students [11].

3.4 Knowledge and credibility

We are quite surprised that the students in our study did not seem to care about from where their lecturers earned their degrees. No one talked about lecturers' academic background. Also, it does not seem that they care enough about the lecturer's mastery of instructional materials. If anything, they expected their lecturers to demonstrate problem-solving ability and be knowledgeable about educational psychology.

3.5 Organization and preparation

There is nothing much to elaborate on this aspect. Generally, the students mentioned that the lecturers should prepare a course syllabus and instructional materials and be punctual. Lecturers without syllabus are seen to not have instructional objectives.

4   Conclusion

While it is required for one to hold at least a master's degree and professional teaching certification to be qualified as a lecturer in Indonesia, our findings do not seem to confirm that these requirements are what the students expect of their lecturers. Also, the age limit does not much concern the students either. Instead of teaching qualification, the students seem to care much more about teaching effectiveness that they perceived can be achieved provided that the lecturer can establish a good interpersonal relationship with the students and exhibits good communication skills. Our conclusion does not negate the importance of certification. It is certainly a good starting point for a lecturer to hold at least a master's degree and to certified in the subjects they teach, but these indicators cannot sufficiently prove that a lecturer can be effective. It should be well noted by Indonesian policy makers that teaching effectiveness is essentially characterized by a complex set of attributes such as ones identified by the students involved in this study.

Acknowledgement

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