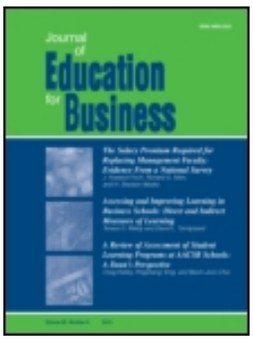

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What Are They Thinking? Students' Expectations and Self-Assessments

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ABSTRACT. Student teacher evaluations have been the subject of a great deal of research. In this study, the authors surveyed 750 freshmen in an Introduction to Business class. The authors found that students' actual perceptions often diverged from what they were assessing on teaching evaluations and that their expectations of the teacher and the class, as well as their self-assessments, were very related to how students rate classes and teachers. The authors suggest that caution should be exercised in the use of student evaluations.

At the end of every college semester, students are offered a chance to anonymously evaluate their instructors. Student assessments of such things as instructor preparedness, fairness of tests, instructor's liking of or enthusiasm for the subject matter, and the depth of the instructor's knowledge create a paper trail of the instructor's abilities and follow the instructor's entire career. The assumption, critical to this evaluation process, that students know what they need from their instructors led us to question whether student expectations concerning education are based on criteria that will really serve them or on other, possibly unnecessary things associated with education.

Over the decades, a number of researchers have endeavored to identify important teaching dimensions that students use to evaluate instructors (Bertsh & Peck, 1982; Braskamp, Ory, & Pepper, 1981; Feldman, 1997; Marsh & Dunkin, 1997; Murra, 1997; Perry, 1997; Rice, Stewart, & Hujber, 2000; Solomon, Rosenberg, & Bezdek, 1964; Wotruba & Wright, 1975). These researchers' data (see Appendix) show that faculty members can be held accountable for many things that are presumed to fall under the subject of teaching excellence. But what do students say? What are their expectations? How do they view instructors? Are their expectations and viewpoints consistent with what is assessed in teaching evaluation instruments? In this study, we sought to answer these questions.

Teaching Evaluation

Scrutiny of college professors has made teaching performance a priority for business school administrators (Frost & Fukami, 1997; Kelly, 1994; Sowell, 1994). Most business schools use teaching evaluations (Comm & Mathaisal, 1998; Magner, 1997). Research has demonstrated that evaluations of teaching are reasonably valued (Marsh & Roche, 1997; McKeachie, 1997) and reliable (Wilson, 1982). Further, research has correlated student teaching evaluations and learning (d'Appolonia & Abrami, 1997).

Findings related to teaching evaluations have been contradictory (Clayson, 1999). For example, results are mixed concerning "good" instructors and learning (see Table 1 for a summary). Langbein (1994) discussed the construct validity of teaching evaluation instruments and asserted that, if they are valid, student ratings should be associated with predictors of quality teaching. However, findings on construct validity seem to be related to context and method (Abrami, D'Appolonia, & Cohen, 1990). Many factors, ranging from instructor enthusiasm and subject knowledge (Kerin, Peterson, & Martin, 1975) to test frequency (Miller, 1987) and accessibility (Bergman & Dobie, 1999), have been found to relate to teaching evaluations, although faculty traits seem to have the largest impact (Langbein, 1994). Langbein (1994) concluded that what teaching evaluations really measure is unclear. They might be simply a popularity contest, or they might, indeed, be a measure of the overall quality of instruction. Clayson (1999) concluded that there has been a general misinterpretation of what teaching evaluation instruments measure. He called for teaching-related decisions to be made based on how students interpret and respond to the teaching evaluation instruments. This call, and many of the findings of prior research, requires that we answer the question, What do students look for in their education?

TABLE 1. Summary of Published Research Findings: Factors Determining Instructor Evaluation Scores

Authors and year	Factors considered in instructor evaluations scores
Painter & Granzin, 1972	Communication skills
Tauber, 1973	Perception of fair grading
Kerin, Peterson, & Martin, 1975	Enthusiasm and subject knowledge
Ross, 1977	Personality
Aleamoni, 1981	Class size, grades, grade expectations
Glass, McGaw, & Smith, 1981	Class size
Homan & Kremer, 1983	Student attitudes
Marsh, 1984	Class size, grades, grade expectations
Cardy & Dobbins, 1986	Instructor traits: Warmth, supportiveness, and personality
Miller, 1987	Test frequency
Scherr & Scherr, 1990	Expected grade
Goldberg & Callahan, 1991	Class standing
Langbein, 1994	Faculty traits, overall GPA, hours spent on class, times met with instructor
Tatro, 1995	Grade expectations
Greenwald, 1997	Class size, grades, grade expectations
McKeachie, 1997	Class size, grades, grade expectations
Williams & Ceci, 1997	Instructor traits: warmth, supportiveness, and personality
Bergman & Dobie, 1999	Accessibility
Clayson, 1999	Instructor traits: warmth, supportiveness, and personality

One conclusion drawn from studies of teaching evaluation instruments is that student expectations of the instructor play a significant role in those evaluations (Anderson & Miller, 1997). If the professor meets expectations, ratings are generally positive. However, if the instructor does not meet expectations, ratings will tend to be negative (Kierstead, d'Agostino, & Dill, 1988). For example, gender-based role beliefs play a key role in teaching evaluations (Anderson & Miller, 1997). Sidanius and Crane (1989) reported that female professors had lower overall teaching evaluations than their male counterparts. In general, findings such as these led Anderson and Miller (1997) to conclude that student expectations affect student reactions to male and female instructors.

Other student expectations have also been examined. Authors have examined student expectations in a variety of contexts including communication apprehension (Dobos, 1996), return to schooling (Dominitz & Manski, 1996), technology (Swanquist, 2000), internships (Cannon & Arnold, 1998), advising (Nadler & Nadler, 1999), grade inflation (Landrum, 1999), and the overall university experience (Licata & Maxham, 1999). Krallman and Holcomb (1997) examined the expectations of 1st-year students and concluded that many had unrealistic expectations about their college experiences, particularly with respect to grades, course content, and work difficulty. In summary, little is known about the expectations of incoming students regarding education.

However, we do know that faculty members are suspicious of the validity of teaching evaluations. For example, Wheeler and Guerts (1986) provided evidence for caution by reporting that, at best, student evaluations distinguish between the very best and the very worst and that any individual comparisons are suspect. Bodle (1994) asserted that some faculty members think that students purposely falsify their evaluations and that low evaluations are caused by student reactions such as feeling forced to change one's major because of the instructor or blaming one's own inadequacies on the instructor. Simpson and Siguaw (2000) noted the following list of reasons for faculty skepticism regarding teaching evaluations:

- Bureaucrats with no teaching experience use teaching evaluations.
- Teaching evaluations are too often the

only criterion used in evaluating teaching performance.

- Students who do not want to work hard penalize instructors who challenge them.
- Students use teaching evaluations to seek revenge on instructors.
- Students view the teaching evaluation process as a chore and do not take it seriously.
- Faculty members view teaching evaluations as little more than a popularity contest.
- Instructors feel that teaching evaluations are of little value in assessing teacher knowledge.
- Instructors feel that students do not have the knowledge base to provide an objective and accurate evaluation of teaching.

This last criticism is related to the assumption, stated earlier in this article, that students know and want what they need. That is, if students do not have an adequate knowledge base concerning the true purpose of teaching, how can they be expected to provide an evaluation of teaching performance? Students may, in fact, be in the position of evaluating x in the expectation of y. Such concerns have led authors such as Seldin (1980) to conclude, "We wish to emphasize that student ratings of undergraduate teaching fall far short of complete assessment of an instructor's teaching contribution" (p. 65).

Is the Customer Always Right?

Crader and Butler (1996) identified five dimensions of teaching effectiveness: (a) student development, (b) teacher task responsiveness, (c) teacher capability, (d) encouragement to students, and (e) respect for students. They reported that the Wimberly-Faulkner-Moxlet teaching evaluation questionnaire, examined in their research, had good external validity, but that student's expectations accounted for a great deal of the variation in the ratings. They also asserted that, because of students' varying expectations, teachers have less control over ratings than is commonly believed. Do students form expectations retroactively? Dillman (1978) asserted that people can recall cognition within a reasonable time frame and when the requirements for performance of the cognitive task are low. Because most semesters last about 15 weeks and (arguably) most students do not agonize over teaching evaluations, it is likely that expectations formed at the beginning of a class are retained and can be influential in teaching evaluations. Further, if those expectations are related to favorable ratings, then construct validity for the rating instrument is supported (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). And, if expectations are generated at the same time as perceptions of the performance of the teacher, concurrent validity is supported (Kerlinger, 1967). Despite this, we still know very little about how students formulate judgments about teaching effectiveness (Schroeder, 1997).

Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) emergent motivation theory may have implications for the understanding of student expectations and of how those expectations are reflected in student evaluations. One conclusion from the work on emergent motivation is that for a task such as a class to be optimally challenging, an individual's expectations about what can be accomplished in the class must be matched by his or her own capabilities (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathmunde, 1993). A positive emergent profile includes a sense of satisfaction that derives from the perception that expectations were fulfilled. But, if task challenges exceed one's self-appraised abilities, a nonrewarding pattern of emergent motivation is likely to occur, as expectations were not fulfilled.

Individuals have different levels of expectations for various types of interactions. These expectations shape and guide the experience and influence subsequent evaluations of expectations fulfillment (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993; Dobos, 1992). Students' pre-interaction expectations contribute to their perception of the challenge, which may or may not be below the teacher's expectation level. For example, consider the set of expectations that students have for a math class as opposed to a less technical class. The concept of optimal challenge suggests that expectations must be considered in conjunction with students' self-appraisal of skills. Dobos (1996) observed that students who felt that their expectations were fulfilled were those who viewed the learning activity as optimally challenging.

As is the case with most services, expectations play a key role in the evaluation of service. On entering college, students' expectations, most likely, are based on their high school experience and what they may have been able to derive via word-of-mouth from orientation sessions conducted on the college campus, students whom they meet, family who may have attended the college, and others. Occasionally, students sample a class or two on their visits to a campus. Expectations may be influenced by promises made during the recruiting process. Transfer students will have had additional experiential inputs from junior colleges and/or other colleges and universities in forming their expectations. With this as background, we sought to investigate what college students are saying about education.

Method

We surveyed 750 on-campus freshmen enrolled in an Introduction to Business class by asking them several questions about education. These students were in the 1st semester of their freshman year and had been on a college campus for about 8 weeks. The survey consisted of open-end and scaled questions that dealt with various aspects of education, including the meaning of education, expectations of professors, skills self-assessment, attitudes toward assignment types, areas of strength and areas in need of improvement, and how the university can better meet student needs.

Results

Students were first asked to respond to the open-ended question, "What does educational excellence mean to you?" Students had many answers (see Table 2). Three judges evaluated and coded all open-ended questions. About 30% of the students believed that excellence in education meant preparation for the future. Learning, getting the most out of education, and well-roundedness were the next three most frequent responses to the question.

We asked students to identify the most important thing that they expected of

TABLE 2. What Educational Excellence Means to Students

Educational excellence means:	Students saying this (%)
Preparation for my future	30.0
Learning	14.5
Getting the most from my education	14.4
Well-roundedness	12.1
Good teachers	7.6
Affordability	4.6
Competitiveness	4.2
Hard work	3.0
Attending a good school	2.2
Understanding people	1.3
Opportunities to excel in class	1.3
Other[a]	4.7

[a]Items include acquiring an education of which you can be proud, full understanding of a major, getting a degree in something you like, graduating, learning about people, learning advanced technologies, providing what I need, and class quality.

TABLE 3. What Students Expect of Professors

Student expectations	Students citing (%)
Interesting	11.9
Helps students	11.6
Communicates well	10.7
Easy to talk to	10.3
Good personality	7.9
Kind	6.0
Understanding	4.7
Interested in subject	4.0
Knowledgeable	3.4
Challenging	2.7
Enthusiastic	2.7
Fair	2.5
Loves to teach	1.9
Sense of humor	1.5
Wants students to learn	1.4
Easy-going teaching style	1.2
Experienced	1.1
Organized	1.1
Open-minded	1.1
Other[a]	8.7

[a]Items in the "other" category include making class fun, listening, admitting expenses, not belittling students, doesn't like to hear self talk, dynamic, easy, high energy, gives walks, intelligent, reliable, respectable, teaches at a reasonable pace, well-rounded, does not make things hard.

their professors (see Table 3). "Interesting" and "helps students" were the top two responses, followed by "communicates well" and "easy to talk to." When asked to rate themselves in selected skill areas (see Table 4), the largest percentage of students selected "values and ethical decision making." "Starting projects early" was the lowest ranked skill.

To investigate how well students believed that they performed on different types of assignments, we asked them to rate their own proficiency on various types of assignments. The data in Table 5 show that they felt that they performed best on team projects and worst on oral exams. We also asked students to identify areas in which they needed improvement (see Table 6). Time management was the response of the highest percentage of students, and somewhat smaller percentages cited study skills, procrastination, verbal skills, and written skills.

We reversed the previous question by asking the freshmen to identify their strength areas (see Table 7). Communication was the most frequently cited area of strength, followed by work ethic, time management, and math skills.

How can the university meet students' needs? We asked students to provide one thought on how the university could better meet their needs. Responses, presented in Table 8, show that "surveys of students" was the top response, followed by personal, academic, and professional counseling.

Analysis of Results

Our results show interesting patterns concerning student expectations. We analyzed these by theme as well as by question and examined the impact that they have on our profession. Finally, we examined the relationship of the findings to the notion of emergent motivation mentioned earlier in this article, to create an agenda for future research.

Student educational excellence. Though 30% of the freshmen related educational excellence to their preparation for the future, few could really articulate what they meant by preparation and those that did tended to emphasize their first job after graduation. Interestingly, only 14.5% of the students equated educational excellence with learning. Learning is preparation for the future. Those students who wanted to be prepared for the future did not view that preparation as synonymous with learning. We compiled the following list of statements for instructors to use in examining how much students really are concerned about learning as opposed to grades:

- Learning represents what you know and what you can do.
- You will find yourself involved in education throughout your entire life.
- The more you can learn early in your life, the better prepared for future learning you will be.
- You may not know what your future holds. Further, you may question the value of what you are learning today. You may be able to change some of your future circumstances. The more you learn today, the better able you will be to do that.

Student expectations of the professor. Though it might be argued that all of the qualities described in Table 3 now are desirable for professors, several interesting factors are missing. Few students (1.4%) cited "wants students to learn" as an expectation. Few students (2.7%) cited "challenging," and only a few more (3.4%) cited "knowledgeable" as desirable qualities. These are three qualities characteristic of the passionate teacher, the kind of teacher from which students should want to learn. The 10 highest ranked expectations of professors, shown in Table 3, were cited by about 78% of the students. These top 10 expectations are certainly good ones to have, but at best they only facilitate learning. Other than helping students, which too many students equated with "doing my home-

TABLE 4. Students' Self-Assessed Competency in Various Skill Areas

Rank	Skill area	*M*[a]
1	Values, ethical decision making	4.74
2	People sensitivity	4.60
3	Leadership	4.49
4	Team participation	4.46
5	Thinking in the long term	4.42
6	Creativity	4.38
7	Listening	4.31
7	Decision making	4.31
9	Taking initiative	4.26
10	Applying the general to the specific	4.15
11	Relating the specific to the general	4.13
12	Critical thinking	4.12
13	Learning to learn	4.11
14	Risk taking	4.10
15	Verbal skills	4.06
16	Writing skills	3.97
17	Time management	3.88
18	Tolerance for ambiguity	3.85
19	Presentation skills	3.72
20	Asking questions	3.70
21	Computer skills	3.50
21	Quantitative skills	3.50
23	Global/cultural awareness	3.43
24	Starting projects early	3.28

[a]Responses were on a 6-point scale ranging through: 1 (*much improvement needed*), 2 (*some improvement needed*), 3 (*slight improvement needed*), 4 (*my skills are adequate in this area*), 5 (*I am stronger than many in this area*), and 6 (*I am stronger than most in this area*).

TABLE 5. Students' Self-Assessed Competency in Various Assignments[a]

Rank[b]	Type of assignment	*M*
1	Team projects	2.30
2	Multiple-choice tests	2.31
3	Short papers	2.39
4	Term papers	2.40
5	Essay tests	2.61
6	Verbal presentations	2.71
7	Cases	2.77
8	True-and-false tests	2.90
9	Oral exam	2.93

[a]Responses were on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*I tend to do my best*) to 5 (*I tend to do my worst*).
[b]Team projects were assessed as the kind of assignment in which students do their best work.

work for me" and "giving me a break," those 10 items fit into a class of characteristics that, though they make the student feel comfortable, may be less effective in encouraging the learning process than are the qualities of a passionate teacher.

Though it has been reported that students value fairness (Houston & Bettencourt, 1999), only 2.5% of our students mentioned this as a quality that they expected in professors. Fairness correlates with effort (Rodabaugh & Kravitz, 1994), the quality of the student-professor relationship (Walsh & Maffei, 1994), and learning (Marsh & Overall, 1980. The student's failure to achieve his or her expectations at the end of a class could mean that the student's fairness expectations have not been met.

Only 2.7% of the students in our sample expected enthusiasm from professors. Interestingly, Williams and Ceci (1997) found that students with enthusiastic instruction scored as well on final exams as students without enthusiastic instruction. Yet perceptions of instructor enthusiasm have been found to be related to teaching effectiveness scores (Kerin, Peterson, & Martin, 1975).

Skills assessment. It is interesting to note, especially in light of Brownfield's (1998) previous findings, that the skill respondents believed that they had in greatest measures was values and ethical decision making. In a survey of college students, Brownfield found that 70% had cheated on a test at least once, 87% had cheated on some form of written work, and 52% had outright copied from someone.

The students in our survey needed much development. Even in the areas of values and ethical decision making, the average score was 4.7 on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*much improvement needed*) to 6 (*I am stronger than most*). Students probably exaggerated their assessment of their skills; however, most students recognized that they needed work in all these skill areas. In particular, starting with the skill ranked 15th (verbal skills), average scores for the lower ranking 10 skills were less than 4.0, indicating that the students believed that they needed considerable improvement in those areas. The recognition of need is often the key to improving. The question is, Do students know what to do to improve?

Performance on assignments. Not surprisingly, students believed that they performed best on objective tests. This perception is likely a result of the prevalence of this type of testing. Students also thought they did well on group projects, term projects, and short papers. They were weakest on essay tests, verbal presentations, oral exams, and case-type situations. These latter types of assignments generally require "on-the-spot" critical thinking, the ability to generalize from specific situations, the ability to apply general materials to specific situations, tolerance for ambiguity, and responding to questions extempora-

TABLE 6. Areas That Students Felt That They Needed to Improve

Area in need of improvement	Students citing (%)
Time management	16.6
Study habits	16.2
Procrastination	13.1
Verbal skills	13.0
Written skills	8.7
Math skills	5.5
Computer skills	5.2
Test taking skills	4.3
Learning/comprehension	3.9
Attention/listening	3.9
Motivation	2.4
Team participation	2.1
Patience	1.3
Asking questions	1.3
Confidence	1.0
Organization	0.9
Other[a]	0.8

[a]Other areas needing improvement included long-term goals, world events, maintaining intensity, foreign languages, risk taking, self-control, boredom, and tolerance.

TABLE 7. Students' Self-Assessed Strength Areas

Strength area	Students citing (%)
Communications	16.8
Work ethic	14.3
Time management	9.1
Math skills	7.1
Listening	5.6
Organization	4.9
Leadership	4.7
Desire to learn	4.7
Determination	4.3
Reading	4.3
Creativity	3.8
Analytical	3.4
Team participation	2.8
Self-confidence	2.8
Critical thinking	2.8
Computer skills	2.3
Memory	1.6
Other[a]	4.9

[a]Other strength areas included ability to apply book materials, ability to make good grades, commitment to excellence, honesty, patience, perfectionism, presentation of self, and seeing the big picture.

TABLE 8. How Universities Can Meet Students' Needs

Meet student needs by	% responding
Conducting surveys of students	17.7
Counseling, personal	15.0
Counseling, academic	13.8
Counseling, professional	13.8
Good as is	10.0
Don't know	8.4
Teach skills	4.7
Teachers get closer to students	4.2
Increase number of classes that help major choice	2.5
More class variety	1.7
Smaller core classes	1.7
Increase financial aid	1.6
Miscellaneous[a]	6.8

[a]Miscellaneous responses included add an advertising degree, allow more credits to transfer, decrease cost of introductory classes, decrease number of required courses, don't try to talk students out of taking junior college classes, drop remote registration, give better grades, help with electives for double majors, hold teachers accountable, increase internship opportunities, increase the number of excellent professors, increase number of tutors, less bureaucracy, lower book prices, mentors, more group participation, more hands-on training, more personal/committed professors, push students to excel, and reduce tuition.

neously. Students rated themselves lower on many of these kinds of skills, so it is not surprising that they felt less comfortable with assignments that demand these skills. We would expect to find that the use of preferred assignments and tests would lead to higher teacher ratings, though there have been no previous studies focusing on testing methodology and teacher ratings.

Areas needing improvement. Time management, study habits, and procrastination, all related, represented the top three areas in need of improvement and were cited by almost one half of the students. Verbal and written skills were also cited. About two thirds of the freshmen cited one of these five skill areas. Suffice it to say that poor communication skills, combined with poor study habits and time use, greatly reduce the ability to learn.

Strength areas. Though communications was the most cited strength area, only one of six students cited it, so the result is not contradictory to those presented on student weaknesses. All the strength areas in Table 7 are good ones for students to have. Clearly, no student will excel in all of these, but do our curricula lend themselves to development of these skills? How do students who feel that they are skilled (or need improvement) in one area evaluate teachers who (a) do not emphasize that skill area in class or (b) emphasize it but teach a class that performs poorly? If students expect a class to be useful as they strive for improvement in skill areas, even those in which they feel they are weak, what happens on student evaluations when a class does not meet expectations?

How universities can serve student needs. Not surprisingly, students most frequently identified surveys as a tool through which universities could better serve student needs. Students wanted to have their thoughts and opinions heard and acted upon. The next three areas, in rank order, were personal, academic, and professional counseling. Some form of counseling was identified by 42.6% of the students as a way in which the university could better serve their needs.

Discussion

What else can be done? Unfortunately, instruction does not seem to share the respect accorded research. At the organization level, accredited business schools are reluctant to change (McKenna, Cotton, & Van Auken, 1995; Cotton, McKenna, Van Auken, & Yerden, 1993). Nonaccredited business schools, on the other hand, generally undertake programs that increase research emphasis in order to achieve accreditation. Business schools do vary in their emphasis on teaching, but most business schools only purport to place a high weight on teaching vis-à-vis research and service.

The emphasis of a university education should be on the provision of what the student needs to learn. Goals set high challenge good students, whereas poorer students can be helped and encouraged to

improve rather than passed through. Students, as we have demonstrated, arrive with very fuzzy and idiosyncratic expectations of college. Thus, during the recruitment phase and throughout the students' undergraduate careers, instructors should set expectations that are consistent with what should be delivered.

In *Dumbing Down Our Kids*, Charles Sykes quoted an administrator who asserted that schools are making our young people feel more comfortable in the classroom by placing less emphasis on knowledge. Our finding that students desire comfort-inducing activities that do not necessarily make them learn more seems to support this statement. Are we sacrificing elements such as tests, grades, homework, rigor, challenge, fact-based learning, and competition so that our students can enjoy college? Too many students appear to desire to do as little work as possible to earn an acceptable grade, without considering learning. In other words, learning has been subordinated to the grade. Unfortunately, quantitative teaching evaluations may play right into the hands of students who wish to be entertained. How much truth is there in the statement, "the less rigor, the higher the evaluation"? More important, how much truth is there to the statement, "the less the rigor, the more we hurt our students' futures"? Naturally, those two questions go to the heart of one critical element of faculty life—tenure and promotion—which rests, to some extent, on the quality of evaluations. But what happens after tenure?

Suggestions for Improving Teaching Evaluations

The data in the Appendix might lead one to the conclusion that asking faculty members to be so many things is, indeed, a burden. When students are treated as customers, faculty members must concern themselves with customer complaints. Education, like most service industries, should focus on what the customer has to say. However, as faculty members are increasingly subjected to performance appraisals that include the comments of students, several questions are pertinent:

- What can be done to ensure that administrators do not select a few "poor teaching" comments from students and pigeonhole faculty members as poor teachers?
- Why do administrators let "poor teachers" submit samples of their evaluations?
- In a world in which "education is the only service ... that people want less of for their money," how can administrators expect that students be objective in their evaluations? How can administrators morally hold faculty accountable for all the items listed in the Appendix?
- What steps can be taken to prevent a faculty member's career from being derailed by students who do not wish to work?

Currently, faculty members are employed in a world in which the standards for teaching are increasing, but student evaluations are often the only input into the quality of that teaching. We, like others, have some suggestions for improving the teaching evaluation process.

Being liked by students. Faculty members should not strive to be liked by students, in spite of some of the evidence that teaching evaluations are related to student liking. No one can please all of the students all of the time, but we fear that some faculty members attempt to do the impossible. This is tantamount to teaching to the lowest common denominator, doing everything one can to make sure that "everything is beautiful" in the classroom. Instead, faculty should strive to earn respect by their knowledge, behavior, fairness, and concern for students.

Challenging work. Faculty members should be encouraged to assign challenging work, recognizing that students do take other courses. Faculty members who "make life easy" for students are undermining their colleagues' efforts. Further, they are avoiding the charge of helping students build a foundation for life-long learning. New learning, as we know, is often based on what is already known. Therefore, it is incumbent on faculty to do what they can to expand the base of knowledge that students have.

Attitude adjustment. Too many faculty members believe that students are incompetent. This attitude permeates their classes and can result in poor teaching evaluations. Students would not be at the university if they were competent in the subject matter that we teach. One of the tasks of a great teacher is to increase student competency.

Propaganda or data. Classes that are dominated by instructors' subjective opinions probably are worthy of poor student evaluations. Certainly, the opinion of faculty can be valuable. However, the class is not a forum for our opinions. The class is a forum in which faculty are charged with the responsibility of facilitating student learning by providing educational opportunities that will enhance the students' knowledge and skills foundation.

Deception. Too many faculty members are not prepared for class. They tell "war stories" for a large portion of the class. They try to conduct their class as a dialogue when students do not have the prior knowledge to engage in meaningful inquiry. To deal with the difficulties inherent in the teaching evaluation process, the instructor could address the following questions:

- How much deception occurs in the classroom?
- To what degree are faculty members telling students what they want to hear?
- How much inflation of students' success, in the form of high grades, occurs so that faculty members can receive good evaluations?
- How much teaching is little more than flattery?
- How many faculty members cater to the common wisdom that submitting to rigorous learning risks low teaching evaluations?
- How many faculty members teach with rigor and challenge to the students willing to learn but then cater to those unwilling to learn?

Job abandonment. Many faculty members engage in behaviors that are tantamount to not doing one's job—giving walks, setting up "work" days but not overseeing them, not providing course syllabi, not providing reasonable feedback or graded materials, being chroni-

cally late for class, or converting the class to one in which class contact time is minimized under the guise of innovative teaching.

Emergent motivation and expectations. The professor, from the first time a student enters a class, shapes student expectations. Perhaps long before actually taking the class, those expectations have been influenced by what the student has heard from former students. Expectations are not fixed but are adjusted based on experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

At the same time, students' perceptions of the professor's performance are influenced by whether the professor lived up to those expectations (Anderson & Miller, 1997). A fruitful area for research would be the process through which those expectations are shaped and performance evaluations are made. Research has focused on characteristics of performance; perhaps it is time to move to a focus on process.

In addition, emergent motivation has been shown to be influenced by an interaction of expectations and teaching method (Dobos, 1996). One possible outcome of this research is to pretest expectations and then influence teaching evaluations by using methodology with which students are familiar or comfortable. The problem is, of course, that the familiar is not always the best learning method; therefore, researchers should consider how emergent motivation can be positively influenced, even when the student is unfamiliar with the learning method.

Recently, we were dismayed by Leeds, Stull, and Westbrook's (1998) finding that no active learning technique had more significant impact on student evaluations than the lecture. Further, they reported that student evaluations seem to be most related to unchangeable aspects of the professor such as gender, or situational factors such as workload and whether the class is taught during the day or the evening. However, research concerning emergent motivation indicates that those findings could be explained by the relationship of expectations to teaching method.

Similarly, emergent motivation may be an acculturation or socialization process in which the first few classes of a student's undergraduate experience set a tone that is difficult to overcome. If the professor sets a tone of high expectations early, perhaps the resulting high self-motivation of the student cannot be watered down later; similarly, if the professor's initial expectations are low, active learning may become impossible. These are statements that require additional research.

Conclusion

At the very least, in this article we have highlighted the wide variance of expectations with which students come to college. More important, however, our findings raise questions concerning the relationship between such expectations and student evaluations of instructor performance. We offer several conclusions based on these findings, other research, and our own experiences.

First, we must overcome the drawbacks that occur when we treat students as customers. Such treatment has led many students to believe that they are entitled to success, which undermines the values of hard work and effort. Expectations that revolve around feelings of entitlement are dangerous and certainly not in the long-term interests of the students. Students who define success as a grade take a very short-term perspective. Good grades are assumed to indicate that something has been learned; however, learning refers to either knowledge of facts repeated on objective testing or understanding of materials as illustrated through papers or projects that require synthesis and analysis. Good grades without learning will undermine long-term success, in spite of the students' expectations that good grades will help them become gainfully employed.

Second, we must endeavor to make sure that good teaching never falls to the level of doing only what the student prefers so that he or she will give a good instructor evaluation. Teachers should teach with passion. Passion does not mean cheerleading, artificial enthusiasm, or creating excitement for excitement sake. A passionate teacher is one who encourages and convinces students to use their imagination and creativity to explore, research, and inquire. They care about what they communicate to students and strive to make a real difference in their lives. In other words, passionate teachers make students work. They challenge students to learn and to learn to like learning.

When a student feels forced (or is forced because of situational circumstances) to take a less-favored teacher, how does that affect that student's expectations, learning experience, performance, and evaluation of the course and teacher? Under these circumstances, the student may be more likely to attribute any personal performance deficiencies to the teacher rather than to him- or herself. In such a case the evaluations will not necessarily reflect actual learning and technical quality of the experience. Those who have been in the teaching profession at the college and university level learned very quickly that students are exposed to extensive word-of-mouth information about courses and specific features of those courses. Some courses fill rapidly. However, in courses with multiple sections taught by different faculty members, it is easy to see that some teachers will be preferred over others even if the reasons for those preferences are not always clear.

Third, we must endeavor to make sure that good teaching is focused on what the student needs, even if the student is unaware of those needs. Because students arrive at college with ill-formed and unclear expectations (and our findings suggest that these expectations vary widely), the first courses taken are likely to set the level of "adequate" service and basic expectations levels for future classes. Unfortunately, younger (less experienced or inexperienced) teachers teach many freshman-level classes in large sections that often contain little interaction between the student and the primary instructor. Class size and other responsibilities compel the teacher to employ easily graded objective exams that do little to examine much of anything beyond the student's ability to know facts at the time of the exam. Such courses are bound to influence students' expectations regarding future courses, as will as their future employment and preparation for it.

Fourth, universities must strive to change the students' expectation that good grades and a diploma are guarantees of a job and career success. As with many services, teaching is low on search qualities, high on experience qualities, and high on credence qualities (Darby & Karni, 1973; Nelson, 1970). In other words, students base most of their evaluation of a class on the "process." Because it is difficult for the student to evaluate the actual outcomes (high credence qualities), the grade received in the class is likely to play a disproportionate role in the students' evaluation of the course.

Fifth, universities must create a work environment in which serving students is not equated with mollycoddling them. If colleges and universities are lowering student expectations with regard to courses, teachers, and expected amount of work, are we creating greater potential for dissatisfaction in later, more rigorous courses? If freshman level courses do, in fact, set a benchmark for student expectations of themselves and their future courses and teachers, it would seem that colleges and universities would be providing a great service by adding rigor, requiring significant student effort, and emphasizing the foundation for future learning. A question that has been debated revolves around having some of the "best" teachers teach at this level.

Sixth, we must strive to learn what methodologies really constitute effective teaching and create an effective learning environment. The goal of education is to provide students with opportunities to develop higher order skills for thinking independently about the problems that they will eventually encounter. Students with such skills will be problem solvers who have learned how to learn. A common method for teaching higher order skills is discovery learning, in which students solve problems and make their own decisions. Such learning is in contrast to the traditional college "factory" approach, which entails large classes and grading based on how well students do on multiple-choice or true-false exams.

Our final conclusion is that expectations cannot be ignored. Rather, we have the opportunity to shape expectations within and across courses and the obligation to fulfill the expectations we try to set.

APPENDIX. Teaching Dimensions Used to Evaluate Instruction

stimulation of interest in course
enthusiasm
intellectual expansiveness
preparation of the course
organization of the course
clarity
nature of course material
value of course material
nature of supplementary material
value of supplementary material
encouragement of questions
encouragement of discussion
openness to others' opinions
intellectual challenge
concern for students
availability
high performance requirements
encouragement of self-initiated learning
pleasantness of classroom atmosphere
individualization of teaching
understands the working world
displays a wide intellectual range
logical sequence of thought
efficient in administrative detail
use of good quality examples
clarity on how each topic fit course
explained why he/she did things
stressed important material
distracting mannerisms
speech adequate for teaching
imaginative
cheerful
emotionally stable
enjoys self
clear standards for grading
gave lower grades than deserved
praises students when deserved
appreciative of student effort
poised
stimulation of interest in subject matter
knowledge of subject matter
understandableness
elocutionary skills
concern for student progress
clarity of course objectives
clarity of course requirements
perceived outcome of instruction
fairness in evaluation
impartiality in evaluation
nature of feedback
quality of feedback
frequency of feedback
encouragement of independent thought
respect for students
helpfulness
ability to motivate students
productivity in research
difficulty of course workload
classroom management
pursuit and attainment of course objectives
gets along well with student
directs attention to outside reading
always has answers
answered questions satisfactorily
test results are adequate measure of knowledge
willing to help students
ability to command
smooth control of class
allows silent "think" time
taught effectively
lectures are relevant to course
uses new books and authors
speaks distinctly
avoids monotone
looks at students while talking
smiles
thought provoking
led to discussion outside of class
questions demand thinking
encouraged team approach
let class set own goals
motivated effort
admired by students
student understands advanced material on subject
familiarity with terms
remembered relevant information
learned much
can analyze new material on subject
contribution to general education
ability to arrive at reasoned judgment
ability to evaluate judgments of others
ability to organize complex problems
distinguish between good and poor arguments
recommend course to friends
overall course quality
skillful in observing student reactions
knew when students did not know material
challenged students' beliefs
irritating mannerisms
inspired confidence in his/her knowledge
returned graded material promptly
announced exams in advance
tested what students could reasonably be expected to know
polished
sense of humor
warm
self-confident

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