University of Oviedo
Vice-Chancellor's Office for Quality, Planning and Innovation

A BEST PRACTICE ANALYSIS OF TEACHING AMONGST UNIVERSITY LECTURERS

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Summary

The University of Oviedo's Vice-Chancellor's Office for Quality, Planning and Innovation has done a survey for several years now on basic facets of its staff's teaching and its students' learning. This study attempts to find out about teaching and social strategies used by the most highly rated teachers in the survey in an attempt to promote better teaching at the University and as a first step towards other complementary approaches to teaching analysis.

We drew up guidelines to interview the 17 teachers who topped the student-based ratings over the two previous academic years (2003/04 and 2004/05).

The main outcomes and conclusions of our work are as follows:

- The teaching staff who are given the highest ratings by our students do not slot into a precise, well-defined profile as far as teaching experience is concerned. They are neither teachers with few subjects to teach nor teachers who are new to the profession.
- They organise their teaching around practical objectives and basic content that is common to the whole degree course. Lecture-based teaching with question-answer session, master classes/conferences and student participation in debates and work groups are the most commonly applied teaching-learning strategies.
- Study time that these teachers consider necessary to get good marks in their subject is between half an hour and an hour per hour spent in lectures or other classes.
- Innovation-based projects are becoming increasingly popular in the classroom, particularly Virtual Spaces and Learning Objects. The overhead projector, articles and chapters from relevant texts, and on-line resources are the support facilities that are most used, but reflective learning continues to require erudition, dialogue and active understanding.
- Activities used by teachers to boost motivation basically fall into two categories: highlighting the importance for your future career of what is being learnt and having an attitude of understanding and empathy with students. Debates and group work are used not only as a teaching strategy but also as drivers of motivation.
- The teachers we consulted use initial, continuous and final assessments to grade their students' learning. Exams are seen as ongoing control mechanisms and reviewing and going over the exam and the mark has a didactic function: to avoid repeating the same mistakes.
- Highly rated teachers help their students to choose optional subjects by informing them of the requirements and demands related to each of the options. They also train freshmen in study techniques and skills and in group work.
- They use the results of the Education Survey to review their curriculum planning, and course and syllabus design is the ongoing training subject that most interests them.

Finally, our outstanding teaching stress the importance of student perception of their teachers, and particularly, of how their perception of teachers' attitudes is crucial (students perceive that the teacher expects them to deliver, that he or she is approachable and is prepared to invest in good relationships and harmony). They also underline the importance of the type of teaching offered (clear explanation, organised classes, interesting back-up material, knowing what is needed to pass the subject from the outset).

Introduction

The Spanish university system has been incorporating major strategy changes ever since the 1983 reform in an attempt to improve university teaching. Evaluating and assessing university lecturers according to student opinion is one of the fields in which most work has been carried out.

Asking both the student and teaching bodies alike to provide relevant information is intended to indicate the satisfaction levels of all the stakeholders as regards the process and outcomes of teaching and learning, and thereafter to lead to reflection and improvement. Consultation of this type used to come up against resistance from lecturers but is now accepted as necessary at least as far as collating information is concerned, although its value as an evaluation tool is still questioned (Ramsden, 1991).

The claim is made that opinion surveys often fail to achieve what they set out to do, i.e., pinpoint good teaching practice, because student evaluation is tainted by such factors as how difficult and interesting the subject is (whether it is a core subject or an optional one), the personal and social skills of the teacher, and examinations results and pass rates. It can also be argued that surveys fail to identify teaching aims, teaching strategies used by teachers in the classroom, curriculum planning, implementation in the daily classroom and evaluation methods.

This has led to frequent attempts to flesh out the information gleaned from surveys on student opinion with other more objective approaches or with attempts to complement and compare student opinion. Some universities include written commentaries (Cots, J., Villar, J., Díaz, J, 2002); others combine questionnaires and student and staff interviews to "triangulate expert opinion" (Fernández Sierra, 1999). Semi-structured interviews of academics at the University of Israel (Hativa, N., Barak, R. Y Simhi, E. (2001), observation of actual classes as they are taught at the University of Seville (Álvarez, García and Gil, 1999) and the University of Salamanca's assessment of teaching-related tasks such as class and course planning, methodology and interest in innovation and improvement activities are all examples of alternative methods that have sought to provide greater insight and added value compared to the traditional opinion poll method. These new approaches to collecting information from students have been boosted by the onset of the European Space for Higher Education, founded upon two basic principles: transparency of educational processes and exchange of learning across the different university systems (Royal Decree 1125/2003, Royal Decree. 55/2005). This calls for a new understanding of academic training, which should target student learning and allow the teacher to play the role of facilitator of more personalised learning. If this is to happen, university teachers must not only be able, motivated and trained in teaching methodologies and new technologies but must also be equipped with the social skills needed for tutorial work, monitoring and encouragement of students (Michavila, F., 2005; Rodríguez, R., 2004; Roselló, G., 2006; Suarez, B., 2005; Zabalza, A. 2004).

The efficacy monitoring that a number of sociological and economic factors have imposed upon universities, by means of indicators as the ability to keep their students, number of graduates and pass rates are all further reasons explaining why pedagogical facets of university teaching are coming increasingly to the fore. These and other performance yardsticks are seen as being closely tied in with student satisfaction with the teaching they receive (Fernández et al. 2003).

The aim and Methodology of this Study

The University of Oviedo's Vice-Chancellor's Office for Quality, Planning and Innovation has been running a survey on key facets of its stakeholders teaching and learning for a number of years now. As advanced towards other ancillary teaching analysis methods was to research the teaching strategies and personal skills employed by the teachers who were mostly highly rated in these surveys in an attempt to disseminate such skills and improve teaching levels at the university.

There are a plethora of references to research aimed at pinpointing the key skills of the good lecturer, but two will suffice as examples. One is the reflection on the Doctor Fox Experiments of Kaplan (1974), which propounded a conceptual model based upon the answers of new teachers to the question of what teaching consisted of for them. The author of the study bases his analysis on four theories. Two of them are straightforward: merchandise transfer from one recipient to another, and modelling, whereby students are moulded to a given pattern. The other two are based on elaborate metaphors: the journey, i.e., teaching is a virgin land to be explored, a mountain to be climbed, and the student is accompanied on the trip by the teacher, and the belief or deep theory, which stresses the emotional development of the student.

The second example is a more recent study that has also had a major impact, possibly because of the particular interest that the European Space arouses: Bain's 2005 work on 'what the best university lecturers do' has helped to highlight the fact that good teaching is not only a question of having an excellent knowledge of one's subject and seeing classes as an intellectual challenge and a source of critical learning but also involves painstaking preparation. The best teachers even engage in 'pre-emptive planning', i.e., they reflect upon what they expect their students to achieve.

For the research described in this paper, we designed guidelines to interview the 17 lecturers who were highest rated in student evaluations for the two previous academic years (2003/04 and 2004/05). The interview first delved into the issue of class planning. It then went on to cover other issues relating to teaching-learning strategies, activities to arouse student interest in the subject, teaching resources and realia used to facilitate learning, types of student assessment, whether they investigate students pre-course background knowledge, strategies used to resolve learning difficulties amongst students, self-analysis strategies and finally, the facets of their teaching they believe most affect the ratings they were given by their students. The lecturers to take part in the study were identified, sent a copy of the interview guidelines (c.f. Appendix 1), and asked to participate. Interviews of no more than one hour duration were organised with members of the Quality Unit.

Results.

The subjects that the highest rated teachers taught, the number of subjects they taught, their teaching experience and teachers' answers to each of the questions posed (in order of response frequency) are all documented below.

1. Main subject and teaching experience

The hallmarks of most highly rated teachers are:

Scientific Fields

The teachers in the survey work in the following areas:

Scientific field	***Humanities***	***Social and Legal Sciences***	***Health Sciences***	***Experimental Sciences***	***Technical Sciences***
Teachers	4	6	3	1	3

Table 1: Distribution of teaching staff across different fields of knowledge.

Subjects taught in 2004/05:

Number of subjects	***one***	***two***	***three***	***four***
Teachers	6	3	3	5

Table 2: Number of subjects taught by teachers in the study group

Years of teaching experience:

The average teaching experience of the study group is 16.82 years:

Years of teaching experience	**[1-10]**	**[11-15]**	**[16-20]**	**[21-25]**	**[26-30]**	**[+30]**
Teachers	5	5	2	2	1	2

Table 3: Distribution of teaching experience across the group

As the tables highlights, the most highly rated teachers do not conform to any particular profile as far as teaching experience or number of subjects taught is concerned.

2. Planning and programming classes:

This section relates to the teachers' ability to design and organise his or her classes and other teaching modes.

Question: In your opinion, how should teachers plan and organise their teaching, and in what terms should the targets set for students be expressed?

Teaching activities
1. Teaching is based on minimum, practical objectives to provide basic knowledge that is common to the whole course
2. The subject to be taught is planned and organised according to the type of students, assessment of their prior knowledge (measured by tests, observation, etc.)
3. The studentship is provided with information about the subject programme, programming of topics, exercises on the whiteboard, field studies, laboratory work, evaluation methods, marks, exam dates, etc.
4. Logical staging of content and moving towards competence-based objectives

Table 4. Activities used by teachers for class and course planning

The most highly rated teachers plan their teaching according to practical, operative objectives around basic content that is common to the degree course as a whole. Their teaching is also tailored to the degree of knowledge students have at the beginning of the course, i.e., the teachers assess the knowledge their students bring into the classroom. They also establish precise, explicit goals and requirements, as well as clearly defining how students will be assessed and marked. The ability to tailor teaching to students' course-initiation knowledge levels is also highlighted by Bain (2005:45). This 'pre-emptive planning' means linking the learning outcomes demanded of students to the skills and knowledge they have at the beginning of the course. Another particularly interesting facet of class planning is making student commit to a work methodology. This might involve regular attendance at class, obligatory reading and reflection. Only by doing this can they give a fair and balanced opinion about how the degree programme should be taught.

3. Teaching – Learning Strategies:

Out top-rated teaching staff were asked about the teaching methods they thought to be most appropriate in helping students to achieve learning objectives.

Question: What do you think are the best teaching strategies? What percentage of time should be allotted to each of these teaching strategies?

Teaching strategy
1. Lecture-based classes with pauses for questions, opportunities for thought and reflection, use of audiovisual materials
2. Master class/conference
3. Student participation in talks, debates, work groups
4. Photocopied material, guided reading
5. tutorials : laboratory work, practicals, individual work on a topic
6. Videos and other realia
7. Contributions from experts or former students
8. Teaching Notes
9. Internet
10. Student viva voce presentations

Table 5. Best teaching strategies according to top-rated teaching staff

The best teachers tend to combine a number of different strategies depending on the content to be taught. Generally speaking, lectures with question-and-answer sessions, master classes/conferences, and student participation in debates and work groups are the teaching-learning strategies that are most exploited in the university classroom. Bain calls this strategy mix a "community of learning" and sees teaching as participative research and learning for both teacher and student alike. The spin-off, she claims, is a climate of personal and academic enhancement and development.

Question: How should the practicals and practical content of teaching be organised?

Activities implemented
1. Relate practical to theoretical content
2. Through debates, work groups, i.e. by using techniques that encourage student participation
3. Practical content should be taught after the theory
4. Practical content should be taught in conjunction with the theory
5. Help students to see the practical side of what is being taught; foster the skills that the student will need in their future careers.
6. Individual work, ranging from text commentary to written work on a topic that is then presented in class, etc.
7. Others

Table 6. The organisation of practical content in teaching.

The teachers in our study say that they tie practical content into theory and use debate and group work not only as a teaching strategy but also as a motivational tool.

Question: How should teachers guide student work and other learning activities?

Activities implemented
1. Give clear guidelines of everything expected of students: state objectives, give instruction, inform of assessment criteria; written guidelines of the most important content (starting points and development towards end-points); provide bibliographies
2. Students should receive course guidance from the teacher and student-teacher links should be established; the teacher should monitor, assess, coordinate, etc.
3. Attend tutorials; use tutorials to guide and direct students' work and activities
4. Individually or in very small groups
5. Motivate students by stressing the practical use and importance of the subjects as well as the importance of participation
6. Group discussion to assess and evaluate student contributions
7. Continuous assessment
8. Resolve doubts in as simple a way as possible
9. Ensure that as teachers we are always within Vigotsky's 'zone of proximal development'
10. Students somehow feel self-sufficient and individualised in their studies.
11. Highlight the major importance of practical classes
12. Organise work into hierarchies: general, individual and group work
13. Groups work on a subject which they then present to the class
14. Respeting student initiative even when outcomes are the wrong ones

Table 7: Activities implemented to guide student work and learning activities

Methods are wide-ranging indeed. However, there is a common thread to them: clear guidelines as to what is expected of students, dissemination of assessment criteria and monitoring and evaluation exercises. Guiding students' work and learning activities is seen as part of the scope of teaching.

Question: ¿How much time do you estimate that students need to spend on learning?

Time students should spend learning and studying for each hour of class taught by the teacher.
1. Between ½ hour and 1 hour
2. An hour and a half
3. 2 hours

Table 8. Time that students should spend outside of class hours studying and learning their subject

Based on the assumption that students usually go to class and take part in practicals, teachers consider that between half an hour and an hour of study and learning is needed for each class hour to get good marks.

Question: Should teaching-learning activities be organised in conjunction with other members of the university department. If so, when and how?

Approach
1. It is extremely complicated and difficult to liaise with other teachers
2. Coordination of teachers in the department is important in avoiding overlap and omission of parts of the curriculum
3. Coordination with other teachers in the same department or field of knowledge to organise symposiums, debates, etc., on teaching methodology, and collaboration in actual teaching if the other teacher is an expert on a particular topic on the curriculum
4. It is not necessary; it is difficult in some types of subject; it is not essential
5. Coordination with teachers from other departments for shared topic areas
6. It is viewed positively as it provides students with greater multidisciplinary knowledge

Table 9. Teaching-learning activities that are coordinated or shared with other teachers

Question: What type of innovative projects in teaching do you feel are most important in modern university teaching?

Innovation projects
1. New technologies: audiovisual, virtual, simulators, etc.
2. Teaching programmes, better teaching, enhanced efficiency, written guide books
3. Projects that provide a balance between traditional teaching methodologies and new methodologies and technologies
4. Internet
5. Bringing national higher education systems into line with European Higher Education
6. Projects that foster students' abilities to be self-reliant, self-motivated and self-driven
7. Student/teacher mobility, contacts with other universities are important for interdisciplinary training
8. Seek answers to social problems
9. Blogs as learning and teaching tools

Table 10. The best-considered projects on teaching innovation

Projects on innovation are increasingly used in the classroom. Virtual spaces and learning objects, teaching units and topics that combine a range of interactive information sources all figure outstandingly amongst the innovative presentation methods being used. However, new technologies are used as a teaching tool to take some of the weight off theoretical classes and to stimulate interest by either enabling or requiring interaction with the medium being used.

4. Motivation:

Motivation concerns the actions undertaken by teachers to enhance students' desire to learn.

Question: Do you think that students are motivated?

Motivation is crucial to any learning process. Teachers were first asked if they considered their students to be motivated, and then what teachers should do to enhance motivation. Half of the interviewees think that students are motivated; the other half thinks they are not.

Question: What should the teaching staff do to enhance motivation?

Activities implemented
1. Stress how important what is being taught is for their future careers and daily life; the teacher strives to be a link with the 'real world' (referring in classes to practical experiences, case studies, social issues surrounding their future jobs, etc.)
2. Teachers try to establish rapport with their student by fostering empathy, stimulating their emotional intelligence, learning students' names, trying to learn what drives each student in order to stimulate work on the subject; if possible and necessary teachers vary their motivational strategies
3. Efforts made by students in the subject are appreciated; the work ethic is encouraged in our studentship
4. Demonstrates interest to students in his behaviour: punctual, responsible, shows enthusiasm and interest in what is taught
5. Makes students think by posing the relevant questions, making them participate and trying to surprise them
6. Provide students with (learning) experiences that have successful outcomes
7. Presents the subject as a basis to an understanding of other subjects in later courses
8. Uses tutorials to motivate
9. Keeps students informed of the results of their work and provides them with subjects for initial research work
10. uses blogs to make the teaching task easier

Table 12. Activities used by teachers to motivate their students

Question: ¿Do you think students are aware of the relevance and usefulness of what the learn?

Motivation-raising activities basically fall into two types: those that highlight the importance of what is being learnt for the student's future career and those that generate understanding and empathy with students. Teachers confirmed that in all cases their relationship with their students is one of trust, high expectations and mutual commitment.

5. Teaching resources and realia:

This refers to the means used by the teacher to facilitate student learning.

Question: What teaching resources, in your opinion, should the University use most?

Teaching Resources
1. Audiovisual methods
2. Bibliography, European Documentation Centre
3. ITC resources
4. Blackboard/whiteboard
5. Laboratories, workshops, hands-on experiences
6. New technologies
7. Trips
8. Transmitting values, personalised attention
9. Simulation equipment
10. Any teaching resource can work in any type of study

Table 14. Teaching resources that the University should most exploit

The major teaching resources are audiovisual methods and bibliographies; students appreciate teachers having specific training in how to make teaching materials.

Question: What teaching aids should be used in the classroom?

Teaching aids
1. OHP (overhead slide projectors)
2. Bibliography, specific documents, press, etc.
3. Video
4. Blackboard/whiteboard
5. Projector
6. Notes
7. Computer programmes
8. Laboratory material and microscope

Table 15. Teaching aids that should be used in the classroom

The most useful teaching aids are the overhead projector, specific documents and internet resources.

Question: How should new technologies be applied to teaching, in your opinion?

Assessment
1. As a teaching aid
2. With care, so that students are not attracted by the format to the detriment of course content
3. As required
4. I do not know, but NOT as an aid to Master classes and conferences
5. As a way to involve teachers and students in participation, but not as a substitute

Table 16. Teachers' opinions about how new technologies should fit into teaching

Question: What about Internet-based resources?

Assessment
1. As an aid for tutorials
2. As a way to involve teacher and student alike
3. With care
4. As a teaching aid
5. When required

Table 17. Teachers' opinions about Internet-based resources

Technical tools are seen as a teaching aid and as a means of motivating students. However, learning still requires erudition, dialogue and active understanding. As Bain points out, the class is a challenge to one's knowledge, where a question to be solved should maintain attention and promote solution testing, modification of approaches and new attempts to find viable solutions.

6. Evaluation

Questions: What type or types of assessment of learning outcomes should the University use and what preparations are required? Do you think that the knowledge students bring with them to the classroom at the beginning of the course should be contemplated before starting a subject?

Type of assessment
1. Continuous assessment: observation, contribution of students to the class, oral presentations, using a range of different monitoring tools: written work, partials, practicals
2. Final assessment
3. Initial Assessment of previous knowledge

Table 18. Types of zassessment that teachers use

Teachers in the survey use initial, continuous and final assessment to evaluate learning outcomes and they assess student attendance and participation in practicals.

Question: How should student work be assessed and evaluated?

Assessment
1. It should count towards the final exam
2. By assessing effort and initiative
3. Continuous assessment
4. Assessing knowledge of course content
5. Objectively and in a constructive way

Table 19. Assessment of student work.

Question: How can you assess practicals?

Type of assessment
1. Attending and participating means that you pass
2. Continuous assessment
3. Assessed in the same way as content
4. According to predefined criteria
5. They are a percentage of the final mark
6. Depending on the results of the practicals
7. Students do a piece of work instead of an examination

Table 20. Ways to assess practicals

Question: What do you think is the aim of reviewing and going over exams?

Criteria
1. It stops mistakes from being repeated, providing feedback, helping to achieve a pass in the re-sit, i.e. didactic aims.
2. It avoids misunderstandings about the mark given and allows student self-assessment
3. Errors can be corrected
4. Teachers can do self-assessment
5. It should not be an attempt to get a mark changed to a higher one

Table 21. The aims of reviewing and revising exams

Assessment covers both learning outcomes and efforts made. According to Bain (op.cit.,pág. 65), good teachers value reasoned argument above rote learning and base their assessment and marks on a variety of evidence. Examinations are seen as ongoing control mechanisms and reviewing marks and exams has a didactic function in that it helps to avoid repeating a mistake.

7. Tutorials and Guidance:

This deals with the teacher's role as a learning guide and supervisor when students face learning difficulties.

Question: In your opinion, what difficulties do teachers confront when they try to teach through tutorials?

Difficulties
1. Student resistance to this kind of teaching; they are reticent
2. Number of students
3. Poor student participation: lack of motivation, busy timetables, etc.
4. Teacher holds teaching in low esteem (teaching takes time away from research)
5 Teacher finds this difficult because of time restraints
6. Space-related and other difficulties; shares room with other lecturer
7. It depends on the degree course
8. Students do not have a clear understanding of the figure of the tutor
9. Timetable problems because he/she is an associate part-time lecturer
10. Teacher experiences difficulties equating with his or her students.

Table 22. The difficulties of teaching by tutorial

It will be clear by now to all and sundry that neither learning nor teaching are devoid of difficulties; it is equally clear that good teachers are prepared so that this truism does not engender lack of motivation and interest. Teaching by tutorial is seen by teachers in the sample as being difficult to organise. However, overcoming learning-teaching problems requires changes in how classes are given and in how students go about their work, and the tutorial is just about the only option as far as reinforcing learning is concerned. We believe that coordination amongst teachers on the same course (horizontal coordination) and teachers in the same field or area of knowledge (vertical coordination) should be seriously considered as an alternative that would eliminate both overlaps and gaps in what is taught on the curriculum.

Question: What type of guidance do you think undergraduates need and who should be responsible for providing it?

Type of guidance
1. Academic guidance: Open days, subject choice, library visits, how to study and organise yourself, information about the degree course, group work, courses, grants, intellectual development of the student so that he can hone his thinking skills
2. Professional guidance: Courses, grants, job visits, the job market, job exchanges, State examinations for civil servants
3. Administrative relationships in the centre
4. Guidance when problems with other teachers arise
5. Guidance of a psychological nature.
6. Specific subject guidance

Table 23. Types of guidance that teachers thing university undergraduates need

Question: who should provide the guidance?

Guidance providers:
1. A specially trained tutor
2. Teachers
3. Faculty/ Centre
4. A tutor from the university
5. Department
6. Vice-Chancellor's Office/ Office for Student Affairs
7. Peer tutoring
8. Working professionals

Table 24. Teachers' opinions about which person or organisation should be responsible for guidance provision

The teachers in the survey deem that student guidance relating to choice of optional subjects, knowledge of what a course of studies entails, training in study skills and techniques for freshmen, group work and open-door sessions are just some of the activities that specialised university tutors should be involved in providing. Final year students should receive careers advice.

Question: How should students with learning difficulties caused by a disability or sociocultural problems be helped?

Teacher activities
1. Ask the student about the implications of his or her disability
2. Alter the methodology and assessment system but not the objectives or course content. Adapt the material used as far as this is possible
3. The same as everybody else
4. Personalised monitoring, special treatment
5. Work with experts, request technical help if necessary
6. Let the disabled person know that the teacher is prepared to confront this difficulty
7. Eliminate architectural barriers
8. Try to integrate, motivate, etc

Table 25. How to help students with learning difficulties

Helping these students boils down to modifying the methodology and the assessment system. Material can also be adapted, and technical support can be called upon in the case of disabled students when necessary

8. Attitudes towards teaching

This deals with a teacher's ability to reflect and his or her intention to improve his teaching.

Question: How can a teacher self-assess his or her own teaching and what should change insofar as how that person teaches?

The final section of the interview deals with the teachers' ability to extrapolate from experiences and their intentions to improve. The aim is to find out which strategies teachers use to do self-assessment.

Initiatives
1. Using continuous assessment, from students and from course results (pass rates)
2. Observation in the classroom
3. Self-assessment and reflection on now the teaching has gone
4. Teaching Survey
5. Student participation and motivation
6. Class attendance levels
7. Asking the students, survey
8. The degree of attention paid and understanding shown by students
9. Evaluating previous knowledge
10. Assessing teaching methodologies through student participation, evaluating the extent to which they 'know the subject'

Table 26. How teachers assess their own teaching

Answers are as diverse as they are interesting. Some teachers apply the results of the Teaching Survey to revise their work plans, whereas others prefer to evaluate performance personally. Most teachers confess to relying on different sources of information.

Question: What aspects of teaching should university lecturers be trained in?

Facets of teaching
1. Teaching methodologies, course and syllabus design
2. Postgraduate Teacher Training Courses are interesting
3. Group dynamics
4. New technologies
5. Pedagogical and psychological training
6. Internet
7. Communication techniques
8. Non-verbal communication
9. Assessment criteria
10. Tutoring within the framework of the European Space of Higher Education
11. Transference of credits to the European System

12. Teaching techniques for the disabled
13. Specific knowledge of the subject being taught
14 Public speaking
15. In everything you can

Table 27. Teacher's opinions on the aspects of teaching they should be trained in.

Question: What training courses would be most useful in helping teachers to teach?

Course subjects
1. Teaching methodologies, course and syllabus design
2. How to use new technologies
3. Postgraduate Teacher Training Course
4. Languages
5. Communication techniques
6. Tutoring within the framework of the European Space of Higher Education
7. Transference of credits to the European System
8. Everything you can
9. Purely practice-based, non-theoretical courses
10. Re-training Courses, seminars on specialised subjects

Table 28. Training courses that most interest teachers

As the table shows, teachers in the survey are most interested in course and syllabus design.

9. Most influential factors.

Question: To finish this interview, what aspects of your teaching style do you thing led students to score you so highly?

Replies

A. Students are aware of the teachers' attitude towards them:

. The students realize the teacher expects something of them
. The teacher has rapport with young people, he prizes his relationship with students, he is available for them, he tries to establish good relations and harmony.
. The teacher is enthusiastic, enjoys giving class, shows interest
. The teacher works alongside the students in class
. He or she has a responsible, honest attitude
. The teacher always tries to help in times of difficulties so that no student has the feeling of wanting to have learnt more but not being able to
. the teacher is very involved in tutorials
. The teacher finds out about knowledge the student brings into the classroom
. The teacher has teaching experience

. The teacher is able to motivate

B. Students see the usefulness of what they are learning

. Students understand the usefulness of the curriculum, particularly if the teacher has experience in industry of business.

C. *Students appreciate the teaching they are offered when:*
. Classes taught by the teacher are understandable and clear and are illustrated with images; the teacher tries to be clear rather than brilliant.
. The classes are very dynamic.
. The classes are very organised and well-structured
. The teacher explains the teaching aims well, as he or she also explains the importance of reaching these aims.
. Students know from the outset what they have to do to pass the subject.
. Students realise that they can get good marks if they make the effort.
. The teacher uses back-up material that interests the students.

D. Students are motivated by the nature of the subjects:

. Students are very interested because of the nature of the subject.

Replies illustrate how important the students' perception of the teacher is, and in particular how important attitude is (students are aware that the teacher expects something of them, that it is achievable, and that good relationships and harmony are sought).The type of teaching is also a key factor (clear explanations, well organised classes, interesting back-up material, knowing from the start what is needed to pass the subject).

As was pointed out in the introduction, we can now reject any claims of bias in student assessments. Subject difficulty, whether it is an obligatory or optional subject, personal and social skills, and exam result considerations should not be seen by teaching staff as issues in which students are incapable of having unbiased opinions and in which neutrality is a chimera but instead as factors that help students to form a responsible opinion of teachers. This obliges teachers to consider changes in their teaching performance to improve such opinions.

The information provided by the teachers we consulted confirms the claim made by Bains that students' perceptions of a good teacher depend not so much on how difficult the subject is as on the teacher having high academic authority, prestige based upon knowledge and success in science achieved on the back of ongoing hard work, who is "approachable" in the sense that he is "human" rather than "a God to be worshipped" and who shares his doubts and thoughts.

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Appendix 1.

ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICE IN TEACHING

Name:

Department:

Subjects taught 2004/05:

Years of teaching experience:

The aim of this interview is to learn about the **teaching methods and techniques** that are considered to be the best by the teachers who were most highly rated on the General Survey on Education, in order to ***encourage better teaching at the University.***

Course and syllabus planning:

- In your opinion, how should teachers **plan and organise** their teaching and in what terms should the objectives to be achieved by students be described?

Teaching-learning strategies:

We would like to hear your opinion on the **teaching methods** you think best help students to reach their learning goals.

- What **teaching strategies** do you think are best? Approximately what percentage of the time available should teachers spend on each of these strategies?

- ¿How should **practical content** be organised?

- How should teachers **guide** their students work? **How long** do you think students should spend on **learning activities** (outside of class time)?

- Should **learning and teaching** be shared with other members of the department, course or field of knowledge? In what **subject areas** and how?

- What type of **innovative teaching projects** do you consider to be most important in modern university teaching?

Motivation:

This refers to teachers' **actions to boost student interest in learning**.

- Do you think that **students are motivated?** What should teachers do to **boost motivation**? Do you feel that students **perceive the relevance and usefulness of what they lear**n? How do you get them to realise this?

Teaching resources and realia:

This refers to **things the teacher uses to facilitate student learning.**

- In your opinion, what should be the most frequently used teaching resources in the University?
- What **teaching materials** should be used in class?
- In your opinion, how should **new technologies** be used in teaching? What about internet-based resources?

Assessment:

- What **type or types of assessment should the University use** and how should we prepare to use it? Do you think we need to know **knowledge brought into the classroom by student before the course begins**?
- How should **students' work** be evaluated?
- How can **practicals** be assessed?
- What is the aim of **reviewing and going over exams**?

Tutorials and Guidance:

This refers to the teacher's role as **learning guide, knowledge facilitator and support provider** when students face **learning difficulties**.

- In your opinion, what **difficulties** do teachers face as far as **teaching through tutorials** is concerned?

- What **type of guidance** do you think undergraduates need and who should provide it?

- How should students with learning difficulties caused by **disability** or sociocultural problems **be helped**?

Attitudes towards teaching.

This relates to teachers' **ability to reflect** and their **desire to improve on their teaching performance**.

- How can teachers **assess their teaching** and what elements of their teaching to change?

- What **aspects of teaching** should university lecturers be trained in?

- What **training courses** would most help teachers in their teaching work?

CONCLUSION

What do you think are the **facets of your teaching work that earned you a good rating from your students?**