TEACHER QUALITIES THAT ENHANCE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the perception of college students on the level of influence of various teacher qualities or characteristics on their academic performance. Respondents were 45 students of Bachelor of Science in Applied Statistics and Bachelor of Science in Information Technology at Benguet State University. A questionnaire based on the Student Evaluation of Faculty (SEF) instrument was used for data collection during 2nd semester 2007-2008. Statistical treatment of data involved weighted means, averages, ranking and t-test. Results indicate that all the 24 qualities listed in the instrument had a great influence in enhancing student academic performance, confirming local and overseas literature. Moreover, of the four categorizations of qualities posed by the SEF, the one involving mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter had the highest rank, corroborating claims that the professional expertise of the teacher has the greatest influence in the academic performance of students. Two conclusions that can be drawn are: a) students desired that their teachers be multi-functional, and b) the perceived qualities of effective teachers can cut across cultural and political boundaries. Recommendations are offered in relation to the professional development of teachers. Directions for further studies are indicated.

INTRODUCTION

The teacher is possibly the greatest influence inside the four walls of a classroom (Lardizabal, *et al.*, 1991). In this place, the teacher transforms a neutral setting into a situation where the achievement of desired learning outcomes can be facilitated (Garcia, 1989). In short, the

teacher creates a situation where learning can take place (Hurd, 1997).

However, there could be varying degrees of this creation depending on the characteristics or qualities of the teacher. Ultimately, the degree aspired for is the one where the academic performance of students is enhanced the greatest (Salandanan, 2008). Thus, it seems necessary to identify teacher qualities that can bring out the best in students. Specifically, if teacher qualities that have a positive influence on academic performance can be identified, teachers can be encouraged to cultivate these qualities and to deliberately use or show them during their classroom interactions with students.

Current literature abounds with ideas about the qualities or characteristics of an effective teacher, or a teacher who can effect high performance in their students. The qualities can be categorized into four broad areas: (a) mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter, b) communication and teaching skills, c) classroom management, and d) personal qualities, punctuality and attendance. It is this categorization that can be found in the Student Evaluation Faculty Instrument that had been used at Benguet State University in La Trinidad, Benguet.

Some of the literature on effective teacher qualities are based on observations of teachers themselves (e.g., Lacang, 2007; Tagle, 2006; McGee, 2006; Azer, 2005; Trowbridge, *et al*., 2000), or by other stakeholders such as administrators (e.g., Lacang 2007 & McGee 2006). Other ideas are listed in publications such as books (e.g., Stronge, 2006; Clarke, 2004; and Epanchin *et al.*, 1994).

However, the best source appears to be the student, the most important stakeholder in, and the center of, the teaching-learning process. An indirect way to obtain this information is to correlate teacher qualities with students' grades, as done by Travis (1987). The more direct approach involves asking students the question: "What qualities of your teacher will enhance your academic performance?", which was considered by various researchers (e.g., Bawang, 2007; Esteban, 2005; Lacang, 2007; Tagle, 2006; and Trowbridge, *et al*., 2000).

In contrast, the question can be: "What teacher qualities led to your getting a failing grade?", as done by Esteban (2005) and Malipe (2006). It is on this direct-question perspective that the present study is based. However, it involves college students, where there appears to be a dearth of local research involving this topic, unlike the studies of Bawang, Esteban, Lacang, Malipe, Tagle, all of which involved high school

students.

The main goal of the study therefore was to investigate the perception of college students regarding the influence of teacher qualities on their academic performance. Specifically, it aimed to identify the level of influence of various teacher qualities in enhancing students' academic performance, as perceived by the students themselves. The expected outputs of the study were: a) the perceived level of influence of various teacher qualities in enhancing student academic performance; and, b) a ranking of these qualities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted at Benguet State University (BSU) during the period February-May 2008. Data were obtained through a questionnaire that elicited Likert-type responses (i.e., very great, great, moderate, less moderate, and none) from students about the perceived influence of teacher qualities in enhancing their academic performance.

The questionnaire was composed of 24 teacher qualities or characteristics (See Appendix A) derived from the Student Evaluation of Faculty (SEF) instrument of BSU. Seventeen of these teacher qualities were as listed in the SEF, while seven were modified following the recommendations of Lubrica and Lubrica (2007).

There were 45 students involved in the study. Of this number, 24 were first year students of the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) degree program and 21 third year students of the Bachelor of Science in Applied Statistics (BSAS). All were enrolled during the 2nd semester of schoolyear 2007-2008. These students were selected through cluster sampling.

Weighted means, averaging, and ranking were used in the data analysis. Qualitative interpretations were based on the following scale:

Rating	Range	Description
5	4.50-5.00	Very great influence
4	3.50-4.49	Great influence
3	2.50-3.49	Moderate influence
2	1.50-2.49	Less moderate influence
1	1.00-1.49	No influence

The one-sample t-test was used to compare the weighted mean of each quality to the rating of 3 (moderate influence). That is, each weighted mean was compared to the test value of 3 in order to test the assumption that the influence of each quality is significantly different from 'moderate influence'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Results

As in the SEF, the qualities can be categorized into four general areas: a) mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter, b) communication and teaching skills, c) classroom management, and d) personal qualities, punctuality and attendance. Results for this categorization are shown in Table 1, indicating that the one involving mastery has the highest rank in enhancing academic performance of students, and the communication category with the lowest rank. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that all categories are still considered by students as having a 'great influence' in enhancing their academic performance.

Table 1. Four categories of teacher qualities

CATEGORY	AVERAGE	INFLUENCE	RANK
Mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter	4.08	Great influence	1
Classroom management	4.05	Great influence	2
Personal qualities, punctuality and attendance	3.96	Great influence	3
Communication and teaching skills	3.93	Great influence	4

The result that all categories of qualities are perceived by students as having a great influence in enhancing their academic performance is a confirmation of the idea of Lardizabal, *et al*, (1997) that a teacher's role is complex and multi-functional. It also confirms the ideas of various authors, both local (Bawang, 2007; Lacang, 2007; and Malipe, 2006), and overseas (McGee, 2006; Stronge, 2006; Azer 2005; Clarke, 2004; Trowbridge *et al.*, 2000, and Epachin, *et al.*, 1994), about the qualities or characteristics of effective teachers.

Specific Results

The qualities or characteristics comprising each category are shown in Tables 2-5. For each table, the qualities are arranged from high-

est ranking (or rank 1) to lowest ranking. The one-sample t-test results (Appendix C) indicate that each quality has a weighted mean that is significantly different (at the 0.05 level) from the test value of 3 (moderate influence), indicating that each can be considered conclusively as having a great influence in enhancing the academic performance of students.

Table 2 shows results for the category involving mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter. This category is composed of 5 qualities.

Table 2. Mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter

TEACHER QUALITY	WEIGHTED MEAN	INFLUENCE
Shows mastery of subject matter	4.47	Great influence*
Has adequate preparation of subject matter	4.24	Great influence*
Presents subject matter logically and clearly	4.13	Great influence*
Gives relevant and up-to-date information	3.87	Great influence*
Cites real-life applications of concepts, whenever possible	3.66	Great influence*
AVERAGE	**4.08**	**Great influence**

*each is significantly different (at 0.05 level) from 'moderate influence'

The highest-ranking quality in Table 2 is "Shows mastery of the subject matter". Indeed, among all the 24 qualities listed in the instrument, it is the one with the highest rank. This implies that, for students, the professional knowledge of the teacher has the greatest influence in enhancing academic performance, confirming the finding of some studies (e.g., Bawang, 2007; Lacang, 2007; and Tagle, 2007) that effective teachers must possess professional competence.

Perhaps, it can be said that this assertion (that students will perform better if their teachers have mastery of subject matter) is only based on the perception of students. However, Bua-ay (2006) did discover that there was in reality a direct relationship between student and teacher competencies, after comparing the performance of students and teachers in parallel examinations.

Table 3 shows results for the category involving classroom management. This category is composed of 7 qualities.

Table 3. Classroom management

TEACHER QUALITY	WEIGHTED MEAN	INFLUENCE*
Gives examinations and assignments adequately reflecting course objectives	4.40	Great influence
Encourages and motivates students to raise questions, ask for clarifications, and express ideas freely	4.22	Great influence
Encourages student participation in class discussion	4.02	Great influence
Returns corrected test papers and exercises within a week	3.93	Great influence
Explains the course objectives clearly	3.98	Great influence
Creates classroom environment conducive to learning	3.89	Great influence
Instills and maintains proper discipline of the class	3.91	Great influence
AVERAGE	**4.05**	**Great influence**

*each is significantly different (at 0.05 level) from 'moderate influence'

The one with the highest rank involves the giving of examinations and assignments that adequately reflect course objectives. Coupled with the great influence of 'returning of corrected test papers and exercise within a week,' the implication is that students desired that their teachers will provide the necessary feedback so that their academic performance will be enhanced. This appears to be true, in line with the claim of Lardizabal *et al.* (1991) that students need to know their progress so that they can make the necessary adjustments, possibly in their study habits, among other things, in order to perform better.

The other components of the classroom management category involve teacher encouragement and creation of a favorable classroom atmosphere and are also seen by students as having a great influence on their academic performance. The reason for the perception of great influence could be that students really need encouragement and motivation to arouse and sustain their interest and perform positive behavior, as also averred by Epachin *et al.,* (1994) and Salandanan (1985).

Table 4 shows results for the category involving personal qualities, punctuality and attendance. This category is composed of 6 qualities.

Table 4. Personal qualities, punctuality and attendance

TEACHER QUALITY	WEIGHTED MEAN	INFLUENCE*
Always present	4.11	Great influence
Shows interest in the welfare of students	3.96	Great influence
Comes to class wearing attire that commands respect and authority	3.96	Great influence
Comes to class as scheduled	3.96	Great influence
Projects good personality and poise	3.87	Great influence
Starts the class and dismisses the class as scheduled	3.87	Great influence
AVERAGE	**3.96**	**Great influence**

*each is significantly different (at 0.05 level) from 'moderate influence'

The one with the highest rank involves being always present. The implication seems to be that the teacher has to show a concrete form of commitment (i.e., by being always present) so that students can feel their importance as center of the teaching-learning process. In turn, this feeling can enhance academic performance. Some of the other qualities in this category also involve time or schedules. Thus, it seems that students need to feel a kind of predictability in terms of schedules, like having a structure for classroom routines, in order that they can perform better academically, as asserted also by Ferrer (2008) and Lardizabal, *et al.* (1991).

The components involving personality and appearance of the teacher are also highly valued by students. Since students possess feelings, it seems true that interpersonal relationships between the students and the teacher do lead a better academic performance, following some statements of Trowbridge, *et al.* (2000) and Clarke (2004).

Table 5 presents results for the category involving communication and teaching skills. This category is composed of 6 qualities.

The one with the highest rank involves speaking clearly. Together with this characteristic are the qualities of 'possessing command of the language of instruction and of a modulated voice'. This result does seem valid, because of the frequent use of the lecture method at BSU, where teacher's speaking ability becomes necessary in the teaching-learning process.

The lowest-ranking quality in this category, and thus the lowest in rank among the 24 qualities, is "Diagnoses learning problems and

strengthens students' weaknesses". This simply means that, in comparison with the other qualities that are listed in the instrument, students see this quality, in general, as having the least effect, even if it is still at the 'great influence' level, like the others. Nevertheless, the action of a teacher of diagnosing learning problems and strengthening weaknesses could perhaps be seen as having a great influence because it can show the students that someone is interested in their welfare. Thus, they may respond positively.

Table 5. Communication and teaching skills

TEACHER QUALITY	WEIGHTED MEAN	INFLUENCE*
Speaks clearly	4.16	Great influence
Evaluates, records and reports students' performance accurately	4.04	Great influence
Motivates students to do their best	4.02	Great influence
Possesses command of the language of instruction	3.84	Great influence
Possesses modulated voice	3.82	Great influence
Diagnoses learning problems and strengthens students' weaknesses	3.71	Great influence
AVERAGE	**3.93**	**Great influence**

*each is significantly different (at 0.05 level) from 'moderate influence'

Taken as a whole, results of this study indicate that, for students, the ability of the teacher to 'teach' (and with it, to plan what and how to teach) is just one of many important influences on academic performance. Aside from being their mentor, it appears that students desire that their teacher will also be a source of encouragement and motivation. These are in addition to their teachers being time-conscious, appropriately attired and projecting good personality and poise.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results indicate that teacher qualities or characteristics had a 'great influence' in enhancing academic performance of students, according to the students themselves. These qualities involve four facets: a) mastery, preparation, organization and presentation of subject matter, b) communication and teaching skills, c) classroom management, and d) personal qualities, punctuality and attendance. The level of influence was significantly different from 'moderate influence', at 0.05 level of significance. Of the qualities listed in the research instrument, the number

1 rank was "Shows mastery of the subject matter", which was also in the facet (i.e., mastery, preparation,…) that had the greatest influence on enhancing academic performance.

Based on these, it can be concluded that students desired that a teacher shall have professional competence, in addition to being time-conscious, appropriately attired and projecting good personality and poise, so that their best, in terms of academic performance, can be evoked. It can also be said that there is universality in the qualities of effective teachers, because these appear to cut across the cultural and political boundaries of the world.

In the light of the findings, school administrators are encouraged to organize teacher development activities that focus on the qualities listed in this study, so that teachers will recognize that these qualities have a great influence in enhancing students' academic performance. At their level, teachers are encouraged to cultivate the qualities listed and to deliberately use or show them during their classroom interactions with students, so that the academic performance of their students can be enhanced.

Since the study involved only BSAS and BSIT students, it is recommended that students of the other degree programs be considered in future studies. A comparison of responses according to degree program can also be done, as well as comparison according to year level of students, especially when more students are involved.

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Appendix A
List of Teacher Qualities or Characteristics

LABEL	TEACHER QUALITY
VAR00003	Shows mastery of subject matter
VAR00004	Has adequate preparation of subject matter
VAR00005	Presents subject matter logically and clearly
VAR00006	Gives relevant and up-to-date information
VAR00007	Cites real-life applications of concepts, whenever possible
VAR00008	Possesses command of the language of instruction
VAR00009	Possesses modulated voice
VAR00010	Speaks clearly
VAR00011	Motivates students to do their best
VAR00012	Diagnoses learning problems and strengthens students' weaknesses
VAR00013	Evaluates, records and reports students' performance accurately
VAR00014	Instills and maintains proper discipline of the class
VAR00015	Explains the course objectives clearly
VAR00016	Creates classroom environment conducive to learning
VAR00017	Encourages student participation in class discussion
VAR00018	Encourages and motivates students to raise questions, ask for clarifications, and express ideas freely
VAR00019	Gives examinations and assignments adequately reflecting course objectives
VAR00020	Returns corrected test papers and exercises within a week
VAR00021	Comes to class as scheduled
VAR00022	Projects good personality and poise
VAR00023	Shows interest in the welfare of students
VAR00024	Comes to class wearing attire that commands respect and authority
VAR00025	Starts the class and dismisses the class as scheduled
VAR00026	Always present

Appendix B
One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
VAR00003	45	4.4667	.6941	.1035
VAR00004	45	4.2444	.7121	.1062
VAR00005	45	4.1333	.7862	.1172
VAR00006	45	3.9111	.8481	.1264
VAR00007	45	3.7333	.8090	.1206
VAR00008	45	3.9556	.9282	.1384
VAR00009	45	3.9333	.9630	.1435
VAR00010	45	4.1556	.8779	.1309
VAR00011	45	4.0222	1.0551	.1573
VAR00012	45	3.7111	1.0362	.1545
VAR00013	45	4.0444	.8245	.1229
VAR00014	45	3.9111	.7331	.1093
VAR00015	45	3.9778	1.0333	.1540
VAR00016	45	3.8889	1.0707	.1596
VAR00017	45	4.0222	.7830	.1167
VAR00018	45	4.2222	.7946	.1184
VAR00019	45	4.4000	.7804	.1163
VAR00020	45	4.0889	.9960	.1485
VAR00021	45	3.8667	.9439	.1407
VAR00022	45	3.9556	.9034	.1347
VAR00023	45	3.9556	.9524	.1420
VAR00024	45	3.9556	.9990	.1489
VAR00025	45	3.8667	1.0357	.1544
VAR00026	45	4.1111	.9587	.1429

Appendix C
One-Sample Test: Test Value = 3

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
VAR00003	14.174	44	.000	1.4667	1.2581	1.6752
VAR00004	11.723	44	.000	1.2444	1.0305	1.4584
VAR00005	9.670	44	.000	1.1333	.8971	1.3695
VAR00006	7.207	44	.000	.9111	.6563	1.1659
VAR00007	6.080	44	.000	.7333	.4903	.9764
VAR00008	6.906	44	.000	.9556	.6767	1.2344
VAR00009	6.502	44	.000	.9333	.6440	1.2226
VAR00010	8.830	44	.000	1.1556	.8918	1.4193
VAR00011	6.499	44	.000	1.0222	.7052	1.3392
VAR00012	4.604	44	.000	.7111	.3998	1.0224
VAR00013	8.498	44	.000	1.0444	.7967	1.2922
VAR00014	8.338	44	.000	.9111	.6909	1.1313
VAR00015	6.348	44	.000	.9778	.6673	1.2882
VAR00016	5.569	44	.000	.8889	.5672	1.2106
VAR00017	8.757	44	.000	1.0222	.7870	1.2575
VAR00018	10.319	44	.000	1.2222	.9835	1.4609
VAR00019	12.034	44	.000	1.4000	1.1655	1.6345
VAR00020	7.334	44	.000	1.0889	.7897	1.3881
VAR00021	6.159	44	.000	.8667	.5831	1.1502
VAR00022	7.095	44	.000	.9556	.6841	1.2270
VAR00023	6.730	44	.000	.9556	.6694	1.2417
VAR00024	6.417	44	.000	.9556	.6554	1.2557
VAR00025	5.613	44	.000	.8667	.5555	1.1778
VAR00026	7.774	44	.000	1.1111	.8231	1.3991