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## STUDENTS' EVALUATION ON TEACHING PERFORMANCE OF LECTURERS IN AN ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT AT CHINHOYI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (CUT), ZIMBABWE

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**Abstract:** *The study was conducted in the Department of Environmental Science at Chinhoyi University of Technology in Zimbabwe with the aim of investigating students' perceptions regarding the quality of their lecturers' teaching practice. A quantitative survey which used the M ISO quality standard to rate the responses of 100 students who were registered for the Bachelor of Environmental Science & Technology degree was employed. The study findings revealed that lecturers' performance was rated excellent with regards to coming to class on time, demonstrating knowledge of subject matter, indicating the direction of the course and marking and returning assignments timeously. The study concluded that, although students were satisfied with the quality of their lecturers' teaching practice, there was need to improve on lecture pacing, organization of practicals and lecturers' degree of interaction with students outside classrooms so as to improve on performance.*

**Keywords:** *Teaching, perceptions, evaluation, performance*

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, university lecturers are faced with an overwhelming challenge of improving teaching performance so as to meet the needs of diverse students (Chireshe, 2011 and Merrit, 2008). The diversity among students brings different expectations into the teaching and learning environment making teaching and learning a daunting task. Studies have proved that the success of learning institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is evaluated in terms of the performance of its academic staff (Chauraya at al, 2014 and Fernandez, 2013). Therefore, the provision of quality education is strongly linked to the performance of lecturers in the teaching practice.



Substantial research on the effectiveness of teaching practice indicates that the performance of a lecturer is often reflected by the achievements of learners (Fernandez, 2013). According to Mbise (2008), teaching is a complex process that involves bringing about desirable changes in learners so as to achieve specific outcomes. In order to improve teaching performance, Cunia & Erin (2007) argued that lecturers need to be conversant with numerous teaching methods that take cognizance of the magnitude of complexity of the concepts to be covered. Ampadu (2009) reiterated that students' ideas should be embraced in the teaching and learning environment while Barnes and Lock (2010) are of the view that without motivation, students will find it difficult to understand complex concepts taught by their lecturers. Hence, the ability to motivate students is an essential attribute that should be found in every lecturer.

Research has revealed that motivating students is a dynamic process that relies heavily on good rapport and effective communication skills (Xiao, 2006; Mphale & Mhlaudi, 2013 and Campbell & Doris, 2000). Motivational lecturers are approached easily by students during and after classroom periods (Merrit, 2008 and Machingambi & Wadesango, 2011), they are well-read (Gwarjiko, 2015) and they are acquainted with students' expectations given that they know how best to inspire students towards achieving great results (Oregbeyen, 2010). On the other hand, ineffective lecturers pursue their own ideas of effective learning and they rarely consult students on matters related to teaching and learning. Adult education is self-directed learning in view of the fact that students need to be consulted in the design and preparation of course outlines, they should be shown the direction of the course (Suarman, 2015) and their perspectives regarding the selection of teaching material, preparation of teaching handouts and assessment of students' coursework should be solicited (Ampadu, 2009). Lecturers should be knowledgeable on how to use activity based teaching methods which include group-presentations, seminars, role plays, practicals, field-trips, project based learning and problem based learning in order to promote self-directed learning (Barnes & Lock, 2010).

Teaching is a profession that should be upgraded in order to meet emerging demands and expectations of both students and the society. One way of measuring lecturers' competencies is through students' evaluations. Student evaluations are normally conducted at the end of the learning period such a semester or at the completion of a degree



programme. Hence, they are a summative way of evaluating the progress of teaching practice. However, they also provide formative information which could be used to inform future teaching practices.

The aim of this research was to determine the performance of lecturers based on students' perceptions so as to gauge their lecturers' performance in the Department of Environmental Science at CUT in Zimbabwe

### **1.1 Evaluation of lecturers' performance**

Student evaluation which Nolan & Hoover (2011) as cited in Phillips, Balan & Manko (2014) described as the process of generating evidence of lecturers performance and using that evidence to judge the quality of teaching based on students' expectations is not a recent phenomenon in the teaching practice. A study by Watchel (1998) cited in Lee Chuan & Kiang Heng (2012) shows that the initiative to evaluate teaching performance using students' views started in 1915 and the first evaluation report was released in the 1920s. According to Chireshe (2011) the outcome of students' evaluation of lecturers' performance is a crucial indicator of lecturers' performance. Chireshe (2011) and Chauraya at al (2011) agree on the view that students' evaluations are a good indicator of lecturer performance given that students are at the receiving end of the teaching process. An analysis of what Chireshe (2011), Chauraya at al (2011) and Watchel (1998) as cited Lee Chuan & in Kiang Heng (2012) reiterated proves that students' evaluation of lecture performance is crucial for improving lecturers' performance in higher education systems. Hence the motion by the researcher to undertake this study is justifiable given that CUT has established the department of quality so as to adopt a sustainable culture of providing quality teaching and better learning.

In this study, teaching will be defined as the process of imparting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and acquire skills that will be used to face the challenges in life; thus, providing the learners with knowledge, skills and values that enhance development (Senge, 2000 and Mbise, 2008). As for evaluation, Nolan & Hoover (2011) as cited in Phillips, Balan & Manko (2014) described it as the process that involves generation of evidence of lecturers' performance and using that evidence to judge the quality of teaching based on students' expectations. From the definition we can decipher that evaluation is about making judgment about lectures' performance based on measurement. What it implies is for evaluations to be effective there should be established standards upon which lecturer



performance and students' perspectives are to be compared against. Such standards will help differentiate between satisfactory performance and unsatisfactory performance. Performance is defined as the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy (Business Dictionary.com). In this study, the M ISO quality indicator standards as has been used by Chauraya et al (2011) and Lee Chuan & in Kiang Heng (2012) was used as a yardstick to measure students' perceptions of lecturers' performance. Perceptions are referred to as the process by which students arrange and interpret sensory data in order to make meaning regarding the quality of lecturer performance environment (Dearborn & Simion, 1958).

### **1.2 Purpose of study and significance**

The study was done to rate lecturers' performance using students' perceptions so as to gauge the quality of teaching and also to diagnose areas where lecturers need to polish up in order to improve the quality of teaching in the Department of Environmental Science at CUT, Zimbabwe.

## **2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Research approach.**

The study employed a quantitative approach which was an objective way of measuring reality. Students' perspectives were quantified by way of weighted means and standard deviations. The calculated means were compared against the M ISO mean score to determine lecturers' performance. The researcher used quantitative data in order to get objectively verifiable data that helped in determining the exact nature of the way lecturers were performing in the department.

### **2.2 Research Design**

The descriptive survey employed a questionnaire which was in the form of an evaluation form the university uses in evaluating lecturers' performance. The instrument had 24 items where students were asked to rate lecturers' performance in terms of five aspects (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree). The instrument had an open ended section where students could freely express their views concerning lecturers' performance.

### **2.3 Population size and sampling technique**

The study population included all the 103 students who had registered for the Bachelors degree in Environmental Science & Technology (BEST) in the Department of Environmental



science in the year 2016. Questionnaires were distributed to the students towards the end of the semester and they were asked to evaluate their lecturers. This is a requirement set by the university that students should evaluate their lecturers at the end of the semester. The evaluation should be done under the care of either the lecturer or the administrative assistant. However, students were under the care of the researcher and only 100 students participated in view of the fact that 3 students were absent during the study period.

#### **2.4 Data presentation and analysis**

Students' perceptions were generated and analyzed using SPSS version 16. Data was presented in the form of tables in order to get the descriptive information of the issues which stemmed from the study. Generated data was weighted using means and standard deviations and the means were compared against the M ISO mean score to determine the level of lecturer performance. The M ISO quality indicator uses the following ratings to measure quality:

3.90 – 4.00: excellent performance

3.80 – 3.89: very good performance

3.70 – 3.79: good performance

3.60 - 3.69: satisfactory performance

3.50 – 3.59: marginal performance (minimum score recommended by M ISO)

1.00 – 3.49: unsatisfactory performance

#### **2.5 Validity and Reliability**

To ensure validity and reliability, a pilot study was done to test if the instrument would provide the information that the study intended to find. It involved distributing questionnaires to a group of 10 year 1 students and checking if they answered the questions correctly. The study also used a large population which was representative of all the students. This limits the effect of outliers or extreme observation and ensures high accuracy. The method of collecting information from students who are the recipients of lecturers' teaching practice is the most appropriate in view of the fact that students had first hand information which is vital for improving lecturers' teaching performance. The study also used numerical data to quantify responses and rate students' perceptions towards lecturers' performance and there are also direct quotations which highlight some of the responses students made.



## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

In carrying out the study some ethical consideration were taken into account by the researcher. The researcher started by soliciting for permission from university authorities which include the Dean and the Chairperson of the department before asking for consent from participants. Participation in the study was purely voluntary given that the respondent could withdraw from the study at any time. Lecturers were also notified of the evaluation process and their permission was sought. Participants were told about the purpose of the study and they were given the assurance that information from the study would be used for study purpose and no names were to be disclosed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher also did not falsify the data all the information presented in this study are an expression of what was obtained from the research.

## 3.0 RESULTS

### 3.1 Students' perceptions on lecturers' teaching performance

Data in Table 1 shows that students were satisfied with the quality of their lecturers' teaching as the mean scores for 21 items were above the M ISO mean average of 3.50 (satisfactory performance). However, students were not satisfied with the way lecturers paced lecturers, organized practicals and interacted with students outside the classroom environment (M ISO mean score of 1.00-3.49).

**Table 1 Means, standard deviations and M ISO ratings for lecturers' teaching performance**

No	Item	Mean	Standard deviation	M ISO Rating
1	Marked and returned assignments timeously	3.96	.974	3.90-400 Excellent Performance
2	Was punctual for class	4.170	.8047	
3	Related lectures to practical situations when possible	4.02	.887	
4	Came to class in a presentable state	4.14	.975	
5	Was well prepared	4.19	.813	
6	Demonstrated knowledge of subject matter	4.16	.813	
7	Was well organised in class	4.03	.948	
8	Gave informative comments in marked assignments	3.96	.974	
9	Was objective in marking students assignment	4.06	.851	
10	Consistently indicated the direction of the course	3.85	1.009	3.80-3.89 Very good
11	Had good questioning skills	3.81	1.116	
12	Used effective methods of teaching	3.83	.995	
13	Motivated all students to participate in class	3.83	1.138	
14	Encouraged students to think for themselves	3.92	.872	
15	Responded well to questions from students	3.86	.995	
16	Communicated effectively with students	3.89	.886	
17	Stimulating prior knowledge	3.82	1.123	
18	Constructively considered student ideas	3.80	1.015	
19	Was sensitive to students concerns	3.79	1.047	3.70-3.79



				Good
20	Had interest and ability to be involved in other student activities	3.68	1.188	360-3.69 marginal
21	Provided learning reference and links to students	3.67	1.045	
22	Organised practical learning effectively	3.25	1.298	1.00-3.49 unsatisfactory
23	Interacts with students effectively after lectures	3.49	2.380	
24	Was good at pacing lectures	3.35	1.140	

Source: Fieldwork (2016)

#### 4.0 DISCUSSION

A comparative analysis of the study findings with findings from other researchers revealed a lot of similarities. In our study, lecturers had good rapport attributes because they responded well to students' questions in class; Chireshe (2011) established the same finding. Lecturers were sensitive to students needs like what Chauraya et al (2011) confirmed in their study. Students perceived that their ideas were considered constructively by their lecturers during class discussion a finding which tally with what Ampadu (2009) discovered. Lecturers responded well to questions in class a finding which is similar to what students from Zimbabwean universities expected from their lecturers as indicated in Chireshe (2011) study. However, in our study lecturers were not available for consultation outside the classroom environment, a result which is contrary to what was discovered by Merrit (2008) and Machingambi & Wadesango (2011). This shows that lecturers' rapport attributes were confined to the classroom environment of which rapport characteristics should go beyond the boundary of the classroom. The following comments by students reveal the nature of lecturer-students relationships which existed outside the classroom environment.

*He is not always available in his office; I don't know what he wants us to do with his assignments*

*That lady wears a completely different face when approached for assistance after class. No one dares to ask her for help once she's out of the classroom.*

These responses show how poor lecturer-student relationships were outside classrooms. The first response stemmed from a student who had failed to submit an assignment for marking because the lecturer was not available. The second response came from a student who found it difficult to ask for help from a lecturer because the lecturer switches into an indifferent mood once she is outside the classroom. Lecturers should be humorous and



approachable both inside and outside classrooms so that students feel free to approach them for consultations.

The study established that lecturers had good delivery skills given that students rated them high in terms of their use of effective teaching methods. This finding is in agreement with Moloko, Mphale & Mhlaudi (2015) study finding. Lecturers had good communication similar to what is supported by Chauraya at al (2011). Students were guided in the learning process as lecturers indicated the direction of their courses, a finding which agrees with Suarman (2015) results. The study concurred with Chauraya at al (2011) that lecturers should be well-read and should provide links to reference. This is also important in the sense that it provides direction to the students in terms of what to read and what not to read. Lectures also had good communication skills which are an important tool for delivering content which is consistent with Chauraya at al (2011) findings. Lecturers were also praised for their questioning techniques a result which is similar to the finding by Campbell & Doris (2006).

It was also established from the study that lecturers were fair in terms of how they handled students' exams'. Students indicated that lecturers were objectives and fair at marking and return assignments and tests. They also reported that lecturers did not show any sign of favouritism towards any student given that they were not awarding biased marks. Chireshe (2011) on a study entitled effective and ineffective lecturers: University students' perspectives in Zimbabwe discovered that students preferred lecturers who are fair. Fairness in terms of awarding of marks and handling of issues helps in removing misconceptions students might have toward their lecturers or the course and it also motivates students to work hard because they will be fully aware that they get what they deserve. Timely feedback is important because it gives students time to correct their mistakes in preparation for exams.

The other factor that played a crucial role in improving students' perceptions towards lecturers' teaching performance relates to the way lecturers mastered teaching content. Students were satisfied that lecturers knew their areas of specialization very well. This finding is similar to findings by Lee Chau & Kho Kiang Heng (2012); Fernandez (2013) and Gwarjiko (2015) that lectures should be well-ready and they must have thorough understanding of the knowledge of their subject areas. Having knowledge of subject area is important because lecturers will be teaching from an informed position in view of the fact





that they teach fully aware of the trends and new information being discovered in their subject disciplines. It is also easy for lecturers to explain clearly the concepts that they are fully knowledgeable about.

However, despite the good attributes lecturers got praised for, they were ineffective in terms of organizing practicals which include such things as field trips, laboratory experiments and research projects. The following comments are extracts from what some of the students said in relation to the issue of practicals

*Why is it that part ones have gone out for a field trip when we part twos have never been out on a field trip?*

*Why is it that lecturer have varied views about students' projects?*

*Why is it that we spend much of our time in the lab looking for apparatus?*

The first response shows that students who were in year 2 referred to as part twos had never been out for a field trip while their juniors (year 1) referred to as part ones have been out for field trips. The second response was made by a disgruntled student who had her suggestions in a dissertation project considered as incorrect yet the remarks were provided by another lecturer in the same department. The third response shows a student who was worried of spending time looking for apparatus in a laboratory instead of engaging in what they would have come to the laboratory for. All these response prove that lecturers were not effective regarding the issue of organizing practicals.

The study also revealed that lecturers were not good at pacing lectures. The following comments were made by the students with regards to the way lecturers controlled the pace of their lectures.

*There are 48 hours in a lecture and why does he strive to finish everything in a single lecture.*

*She is too fast and she overloads us with content.*

*Is it our fault that the semester is too short why don't they give us learning material that in commensurate with the available time.*

All the three comments show that lecturers were too fast when it comes to content delivery. The reason as indicated in the third comment being that lecturers wanted to cover as much content as possible within a short space of time so that when examination dates are due students would have covered everything contained in the exams. This finding contradicts Oregbeyen (2010) finding that teaching should be learner centred and as such



lecture pace should be adjusted to the rate at which students understand concepts. This finding indicates that teaching at CUT is content based and is not student centred as lecturers teach with the intention of covering the course-outlines without focusing on the learning process that will be happening inside the minds of the students. It also shows that administrators should adjust examination dates to give lecturers enough time to complete their teaching content.

## **6.0 LIMITATIONS**

Generally the study proves that lecturer performance was good given that students had positive perceptions towards how they performed. The study revealed the strengths and weaknesses of lectures implying educational managers now know areas where there is need for training. Nevertheless, these results should be treated cautiously for many reasons. The first reason being that our study was limited to students' views alone, for comprehensive data on lecturer performance there is need to validate results using more than one instrument. There is need of peer evaluation, participatory observation from the researcher as well as use of external evaluators and also an examination of the contributions lecturers make towards research because research should also inform teaching. Scholars like Barnes and lock (2010), Oregbeyen at al (2010) and Merrit (2008) highlighted shortfalls associated with students evaluations which include issues like students scoring high on lecturers with mannerism which they like and also rating lecturers highly not because this is what students feel but simply because they feel that this is what lecturers want. Furthermore, the study covered the general characteristics of all lecturers in the Department of Environmental Science, lecturer performance vary with lecturer attributes and also with subject characteristics. Thus, it is imperative for other researches to study how the aforementioned factors affect lecturer performance so as to get a more holistic picture of lecturers' teaching practices at CUT.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

In a nutshell, although lecturers' performance was rated satisfactory they need to improve on lecture pacing, organization of practicals and in terms of their relationships outside the classroom environment so as to enhance student learning.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is need for lecturers to reduce speed when teaching so as to facilitate learning.



It is also important for lecturers to resort to student centred teaching approaches rather than to teach for the sake of finishing content so as to meet deadlines as set by the examination office.

The university should work hand in glove with lecturers so that they find an amicable way of timing examinations which do not interfere with lecturers' teaching practices.

Lecturers need to be available in the office in order to assist students who came to their offices after classroom hours. If they have commitments they can show it in writing so that students know when exactly they are supposed to come and get the help they need.

It is also crucial for lecturers to be always humorous and approachable outside the classroom environment for them to be approachable to students.

Lecturers need to organize more field trips which are inclusive of all students not just to cater for a particular group of students.

Lecturers should be taught how to plan and execute laboratory based practicals effectively.

Lecturers should be trained on how to write dissertations so that they have a unified way of appraising research projects.

Students' evaluation of lecturers teaching performance is a key component in the teaching and learning process and should be taken seriously.

Lecturers need to get feedback so as to improve performance.

Lecturers' performance is also affected by other factors like subject characteristics, lecturers' degree of involvement in research and community services. Hence there is need for research into how these factors influence lecturer performance so as to have a holistic picture of all the factors that determine lecturers' performance.

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**STUDENT EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE**

Chinhoyi University of Technology Academic Staff Evaluation Form

Department of Environmental Science & Technology

Staff number.....

For each of the item use 1-5 scale below. Please tick in the column for the number that describes your opinion

1. Strongly disagree    2. Disagree    3. Neutral    4. Agree    5. Strongly disagree

	1	2	3	4	5
Was well prepared					
Demonstrated knowledge of subject matter					
Was well organised in class					
Used effective methods of teaching					
Motivated all students to participate in class					
Encouraged students to think for themselves					
Responded well to questions from students in class					
Provided learning reference and links to students					
Communicated effectively with students in class					
Was available for consultation after class					
Organized practical learning effectively					
Was objective in marking assignments and tests					
Gave informative comments in marked assignments					
Marked and returned assignments timeously					
Was punctual for class					
Was sensitive to students' concerns					
Constructively considered students' ideas					
Consistently indicated the direction of the course					
Related lecturers to practical situations when appropriate					
Come to class in a presentable state					
Had interest and ability to be involved in other students' activities					
Had good lecture pacing					

Any other comments.....

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