EFFECTIVE TEACHING
Garrett Dickerson, Hope Jerrils, Damon Smith, and Jeremy Wooldridge
(Faculty Advisor: Mike Drysdale, PhD)

Effective Teaching

What makes up an effective teacher? What makes a good teacher, a good teacher? From our data gathered over forty interviews, striking similarities were found, each relating to how the teacher taught and ran the classroom, how the teacher interacted with students, and the teachers personality.

About 80% of the participants stated that when it comes to the structure of a classroom they like the teacher to be prepared, organized, and have clear goals and objectives for the class. In one example, to be prepared for the class the participant said the teacher needed to be ready to answer any question a student might ask them, and if the teacher can’t answer then he/she needs to be honest with the students, and find out the answer for them. Another example was that a teacher always needs to be on time and ready to go when class starts.

When it came to the way a teacher taught it was unanimous among the participants that an effective teacher makes personal connections with the students, is fair, needs to make real world connections, and should care about their job and the students. Many participants said that by making personal connections with students, teachers help make a big class feel smaller, as well as making the classroom environment a more friendly and welcoming place. About 90% of all participants said that if a teacher can make real world connections with the material at hand it allows the students to feel like they are learning something worthwhile, and that it helps give them some insight into how that material will be applied in the real world. A few students said in the interviews that when a teacher teaches students, but doesn’t care, it makes the class a lot harder to follow and makes the students feel like they are missing out on things that class could offer.

A teacher has to do more than just stand up and teach, as it seems from the data gathered over the forty interviews. Approximately 8 out of every 10 interviewed participants mentioned something about teachers being energetic, engaging with students during lectures, asking questions and answering them, as well as being humorous. It was said that by doing this it made class more entertaining, making things easier to learn, it caused information to stick more, and made the classroom a lot more fun.

Other things that were mentioned throughout the interviews were things like providing a syllabus, challenging students, having in class discussions, and the teacher making him- or herself more available.

Method

We had a collection of forty semi-structured interviews consisting of twenty Psychology majors and twenty Engineering majors. The interviews ranged in time from twenty to thirty minutes. As a group we analyzed the content of each searching for what caused the students to rate teachers a certain way and why. Then throughout several meetings we merged our work together finding what was most commonly said about effective teaching among students, and what was not expressed as much.

Suggestions

During the interviews all of the participants where asked what suggestions they had for teachers to not be ranked as ineffective teachers. The most common suggestions mentioned by the participants were things like not caring about teaching or the students. Other things said were to not be mono-toned and/or read from PowerPoints. Also expecting students to know the material before the students come into the class was said to be a poor way to start the class.

Conclusion

Based on the data we gathered from the 40 interviews, we were able to conclude that teachers were considered effective if they were able to address multiple teaching styles, were organized, and clear and honest on what they wanted and expected from the students. Also humor, making personal connections, and providing real life examples and connections were the most common things the participants mentioned as making teachers a good teacher. We were even able to gather that not reading from PowerPoints, being mono-toned, and caring about things were the strongest suggestions from the participants.