Students' Perceptions of Effective Teaching at a Private University in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study analyzed students' perceptions of effective teaching at a private university in Thailand, using a simple random sampling to select 103 participants from six faculties. The survey, employing a Likert scale, measured factors like analytical approach, clarity, interaction, and lecturer enthusiasm. Findings revealed that well-prepared teachers and clear explanations are essential for effective teaching. Students also valued respect for each individual, encouragement of class participation, summarization of key points, enthusiasm in teaching, and checking for understanding. Organization and clarity were perceived as the most crucial elements. There were no significant differences in perceptions by gender and year level, but variations existed by major. The study highlighted the importance of preparation, clarity, and respect in creating an optimal learning environment for university students.

Introduction

Traditionally, the quality of teaching has been assessed through students' feedback or course evaluation. Students' rating of instruction to gauge the quality of teaching has been practiced in schools for almost a century. However, there has been debate over the clarity of qualities that make teaching effective. Thus, the question, "What makes a teacher effective in his/her teaching?" is the most intriguing one. Teachers and lecturers are faced with the most crucial question: How can we teach effectively or help students learn?

The most extensive work on teachers' characteristics and effective teaching was done by Ryans (1960). His study included 6,000 teachers, and their responses were analyzed using 300 teachers' characteristics or qualities. This study showed that effective teachers have some qualities in common, and the perceptions of effective teaching contribute to the teaching and learning process.

Several studies between the 1970s–2000s (Borich, 2017; Brophy, 1981; Good, Biddle, & Brophy, 1975) generated lists of basic "effective teacher" characteristics such as clarity in teaching, organized lesson structure, classroom management that maximizes student attention, active teaching, thought-provoking and engaging questioning, and frequent feedback are among the others.

Teachers may gain significant insight into new approaches to engage students by using students' perceptions to

measure instructor success and the quality of their teaching (Chang, 2010). Student surveys can be a valuable and reliable data source for evaluating teaching effectiveness (Wahlquist & Bone, 2000).

There was a lack of comprehensive data on what university students in Thailand consider effective teaching. Existing literature often highlights generic attributes of good teaching, but these may not fully capture the nuances of students' experiences in specific educational contexts, such as private universities in Thailand. Without this detailed understanding, efforts to improve teaching quality may be misdirected or ineffective.

This study aimed to fill this gap by exploring students' perceptions of effective teaching at a private university in Thailand. The findings from this research are expected to provide valuable insights for educators and administrators aiming to enhance teaching quality. By understanding what students value in their educational experience, universities can tailor their teaching strategies to support student learning and success better, ultimately fostering a more effective and engaging learning environment.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive method to investigate university students' perceptions of effective teaching at a private university in Thailand. A simple random sampling method was used to select participants, ensuring each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. The structured survey used Likert scale questions to measure aspects of teaching effectiveness, such as clarity of instruction, teacher preparation, lecturer-student interaction, and lecturer enthusiasm. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data,

identifying key trends and patterns in students' responses. This methodological approach provides a detailed and systematic understanding of the elements students associate with effective teaching, offering valuable insights for enhancing teaching practices and educational strategies at the university.

Instrumentation

Data for this study was collected using a survey questionnaire adapted from Eble's (1988) effective teaching recognition and evaluation format—the questionnaire comprised five subgroups and thirty-five items. The items were scaled as (5) very important, (4) fairly important, (3) somewhat important, (2) not so important, and (1) not important at all, which means students' perceptions of the practices of teachers are considered as not at all important to very important that demonstrates the effectiveness of teaching.

Data Collection

There are about 400 students in the international program at the selected university. Respondents for the study were selected through a simple random sampling method from the six programs under the international program. Out of the 120 questionnaires distributed and retrieved, only 103 were usable for the purpose of the study. The data obtained from respondents was examined in a group setting to avoid exposing any individual response. All ethical concerns, such as data privacy and confidentiality, were effectively addressed.

Data Analysis

A quantitative study (descriptive means) was used to analyze the results. The data collected were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and imported into

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25 by the researcher.

Results and Discussion

Tables 1-4 show the respondents' profiles for this study.

Table 1 Number of respondents by level of studies

	Frequency	Percent
Freshman	40	30.3
Sophomore	24	18.2
Junior	28	21.2
Senior	11	8.3

Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents by the level of studies, with the highest number of respondents being freshmen followed by junior and sophomore, respectively, as senior students' participation was the least.

Table 2 Number of respondents by gender

	Frequency	Percent
Male	49	37.1
Female	54	40.9

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents by gender. There were more female respondents (40.9%) compared to male respondents (37.1%).

Table 3 Number of respondents by major

	Frequency	Percent
ESL	14	10.6
Education	48	36.4
Business	11	8.3
Religious Studies	10	7.6
Arts & Humanities	12	9.1
Information Tech.	8	6.1

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents by major of studies, with the highest number of respondents from the Faculty of Education, followed by the ESL program, Arts and Humanities, Business, Theology, and students from the Faculty of Information Technology.

Table 4 Number of respondents by teaching experience

	Frequency	Percent
No experience	39	42.9
Part-time volunteer	23	25.3
1-2 years	23	25.3
More than 3 years	6	6.6

Note: missing 12 respondents

Table 4 shows the distribution of the respondents by years of teaching experience. It shows that 39 respondents do not have any prior teaching experience, 23 respondents worked part-time or volunteer teaching experience, and the same number of respondents said they had 1-2 years of teaching experience. In comparison, 6 respondents reported having

more   than   three   years   of   teaching   experience.

Table 5 Respondents' perceptions on the elements of effective teaching

Elements of Effective Teaching Sub-groups	Very Important	Fairly Important	Somewhat Important	Not so Important	Not important at all	Total Score	Rank
Analytical/synthetic approach							
Discusses point of view other than his/her own	150 (29.1)	156 (37.9)	96 (31.1)	2 (1)	0	404	33rd
Contrast implications of various theories	180 (35)	188 (45.6)	57 (18.4)	2 (1)	0	427	26th
Discusses recent developments in the field	220 (42.7)	152 (36.9)	57 (18.4)	2 (1)	0	431	23rd
Presents origins of ideas and concepts	175 (34)	204 (49.5)	48 (15.5)	2 1)	0	429	25th
Gives references for more interesting and involved points	210 (40.8)	184 (44.7)	42 (13.6)	0	0	436	21st
Presents facts and concepts from related fields	210 (40.8)	184 (44.7)	45 (14.6)	0	0	439	18th
Emphasizes conceptual understanding	195 (37.9)	200 (48.5)	36 (11.7)	4 (1.9)	0	435	22nd
Total						**3,001**	
Organization/Clarity							
Explains clearly	350 (68)	88 (21.4)	27 (8.7)	4 (1.9)	0	469	2nd
Is well prepared	355 (68.9)	100 (24.3)	21 (6.8)	0	0	476	1st
Gives lectures that are easy to outline	230 (44.7)	120 (29.1)	66 (21.4)	10 (4.9)	0	426	27th
Is careful and precise in answering questions	240 (46.6)	168 (40.8)	33 (10.7)	4 (1.9)	0	445	13th
Summarizes major points	275 (53.4)	140 (34)	39 (12.6)	0	0	454	6th
States objectives for each class session	230 (44.7)	152 (36.9)	51 (16.5)	4 (1.9)	0	437	20th
Identifies what he/she considers important	180 (35)	208 (50.5)	39 (12.6)	4 (1.9)	0	431	23rd
Total						**3,138**	
Lecture-group interaction							
Encourage class discussion	290 (56.3)	120 (29.1)	45 (14.6)	0	0	443	16th
Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences	305 (59.2)	136 (33)	24 (7.8)	0	0	465	4th
Clarifies thinking by identifying reasons for questions	210 (40.8)	188 (45.6)	42 (13.6)	0	0	440	17th
Invites criticism of own ideas	125 (24.3)	176 (42.7)	90 (29.1)	6 (2.9)	1 (1)	398	35th
Knows if the class is understanding him/her or not	295 (57.3)	140 (34)	24 (7.8)	2 (1)	0	461	5th
Has interest and concern in the quality of his/her teaching	235 (45.6)	188 (45.6)	27 (8.7)	0	0	450	10th
Has students apply concepts to demonstrate	235 (45.6)	152 (36.9)	45 (14.6)	6 (2.9)	0	438	19th

understanding

| Total | | | | | | 3,095 | |

Elements of Effective Teaching Sub-groups	Very Important	Fairly Important	Somewhat Important	Not so Important	Not important at all	Total Score	Rank
Lecture-individual interaction							
Has a genuine interest in students	265 (51.5)	136 (33)	42 (13.6)	2 (1)	0	445	13th
Is friendly towards students	265 (51.5	132 (32)	51 (16.5)	0	0	448	12th
Relates to students as individuals	190 (36.9)	152 (36.9)	66 (21.4)	10 (4.9)	0	418	31st
Recognizes and greets students out of class	170 (33)	176 (42.7)	63 (20.4)	6 (2.9)	1 (1)	416	32nd
Is accessible to students out of class	185 (35.9)	176 (42.7)	57 (18.4)	6 (2.9)	0	424	29th
Is valued for advice not directly related to the course	135 (26.2)	164 (39.8)	90 (29.1)	10 (4.9)	0	399	34th
Respect students as persons	310 (60.2)	136 (33)	21 (6.8)	0	0	467	3rd
Total						**3,017**	
Dynamism/enthusiasm							
Is dynamic and energetic	235 (45.6)	168 (40.8)	42 (13.6)	0	0	445	13th
Has an interesting style of presentation	255 (49.5)	164 (39.8)	33 (10.7)	0	0	452	8th
Seems to enjoy teaching	265 (51.5)	144 (35)	42 (13.6)	0	0	451	9th
Is enthusiastic about the subject	240 (46.6)	176 (42.7)	33 (10.7)	0	0	449	11th
Seems to have self-confidence	275 (53.4)	140 (34)	36 (11.7)	2 (1)	0	453	7th
Varies the speed and tone of his/her voice	195 (37.9)	152 (36.9)	72 (23.3)	2 (1)	1 (1)	422	30th
Has a sense of humor	215 (41.7)	160 (38.8)	45 (14.6)	4 (1.9)	1 (1)	425	28th
Total						**3,097**	

Table 5 illustrates the perceptions of the respondents on effective teaching based on the 35 teaching effectiveness elements organized into five major subheadings. These subcategories include analytical/synthetic approach, organization/clarity of teaching, lecturer-group interactions, lecturer-individual student interaction, and dynamism/ enthusiasm of the lecturer.

In the Analytical/synthetic approach to teaching, all respondents considered giving references for more interesting and involved points and presenting facts and concepts from related fields as the most important elements, though of different importance. About 40.8%

of respondents perceived it as very important, 44.7% fairly important, while 13.6% and 14.6% considered it somewhat important. The least important elements for effective teaching in the analytical/synthetic approach were lecturers discussing points of view other than their own, with 29.1% considering it very important, 37.9% fairly important, 31.1% considering it somewhat important, and 1% thought it unimportant.

Regarding the sub-group of organization and clarity in teaching, all elements except lectures that identify what they consider important were considered by 44.5% of respondents as very important. This

suggests that students consider lectures that are highly organized, lessons that are explained clearly, lectures that are easy to outline, lectures that are careful and precise in answering questions, summarizing major points, and stating objectives for each lesson to be highly effective.

As for lecture-group interactions in teaching and learning, inviting students to share their knowledge and experiences and know if the class understands the lecturers are considered the most important elements. About 59.2% and 57.6% considered it very important. The third ranking is the element of encouragement. classroom discussion, with 56.3% considering it very important and 29.1% and 14.6% viewing it as fairly important and somewhat important, respectively. This result was supported by a study (Gonzales, 2014) in which, for effective teaching, the teacher enhances the quality of discussion by allowing students to tap into their curiosity, engage in interpersonal discourse with peers, and encourage them to discover information themselves.

About 60% of the respondents considered respecting students as people to be an essential element in the lecture-individual interaction. Having a genuine interest in students and being friendly towards students are considered by many respondents as very important (51.5% each). In the lecture-individual interaction, few respondents considered advice not directly related to the course as an important element of effective teaching, with 26.2% saying it was essential, 39.8% and 29.1% considering it as fairly important and somewhat important, respectively.

Concerning the elements describing the lecturer's dynamism and enthusiasm for the job, respondents indicated lecturers who seem to have self-confidence as the most important element, with 53.4% rated it as very important. In comparison, lecturers who seem to enjoy teaching as the second most important element, with 51.5%, considered it as very important, followed by lecturers who have an interesting style of presentation, with 49.5% regarded it as very important.

When analyzing each element, university students considered lessons that are well prepared as the most important element of effective teaching, though of different importance. About 68.9% considered this as very important, 24.3% considered it as fairly important, while the rest 6.8% viewed it as somewhat important. It was followed by lecturers who explained lessons clearly, with 68% of respondents considering it very important, 21.4% fairly important, while 8.7% and 1.9% considered it somewhat important and not so important, respectively. The least important element is lectures that invite criticism of their own ideas, with 24.3% of respondents considering it as very important, 42.7% fairly important, 29.1% somewhat important, 2.9% not so important, and 1% not at all important.

To understand the respondents' preferences, a further attempt was made by computing the total score of each element based on the responses and ranked in Table 5. The highest ten rated elements of effective teaching by respondents in order of ranks include coming well prepared to class, clear explanations, respecting students as individuals, inviting students to share their knowledge and thoughts, ensuring whether the class understands the lesson or not, summarizing major points, self-confident lecturers, showing interesting style of presentation, seems to enjoy teaching, and showing interest and concern in the quality of teaching.

Among the five major subgroups, the organization/clarity aspect of teaching was considered the most important group of

elements of teaching with a total score of 3,138 (out of 3,605), followed by dynamism and enthusiasm in teaching (3,097) and lecture-group interaction (3,095) are considered as important. The least important, as perceived by university students, was the analytical/synthetic approach to teaching (3,001).

Further efforts were made to determine the differences in scores among respondents' perceptions. There were no significant differences in the means regarding gender, level of studies, and teaching experience. However, there were significant differences in the means regarding the major of studies (p=.045, p-value less than 0.05).

Table 6 Analysis of variance in responses among the respondents by group of elements, gender, level of studies, major, and years of teaching experience.

Source of Var.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.016	1	.016	.086	.769
Within Groups	18.529	101	.183		
Total	18.545	102			
Gender					
Between Groups	.016	1	.016	.086	.769
Within Groups	18.529	101	.183		
Total	18.545	102			
Level					
Between Groups	.473	3	.158	.863	.463
Within Groups	18.072	99	.183		
Total	18.545	102			
Major					
Between Groups	2.022	5	.404	2.374	.045*
Within Groups	16.523	97	.170		
Total	18.545	102			
Teaching Exp					
Between Groups	.163	3	.054	.298	.827
Within Groups	15.868	87	.182		
Total	16.031	90			

Significance level at p=0.05

Conclusion

The study investigated and analyzed university students' perceptions of effective teaching. The study explored 35 critical teaching effectiveness elements organized into five major sub-groups, including analytical/ synthetic approach to teaching, organization/ clarity of instruction or teaching, lecturer-group interaction, lecturer-individual interaction, and dynamism and enthusiasm of the lecturer. The findings from the analysis showed that the first ten rated elements of effective teaching by respondents in order of ranks are coming well prepared to class, having clear explanations, respecting students as individuals, inviting students to share their knowledge and thoughts, ensuring whether the class understands the lesson or not, summarizing major points, self-confident lecturers, showing interesting style of presentation, seems to

enjoy teaching, and showing interest and concern in the quality of teaching.

The results of this study are consistent with those of Cochran and Hodgin (2001), who found that thorough planning, impartial grading, and clear communication improve teaching effectiveness. However, other studies (Benzehaf, 2018; Etuk, Afangideh, & Uya, 2013) showed knowledge of the subject matter as the top characteristic of an effective university teacher.

On average, organization and clarity in teaching are considered the most important elements in effective teaching, followed by lecturers' dynamism and enthusiasm in teaching and lecture-group interaction in which a learning community exists and lecturer-individual interaction where respondents considered respecting students as individuals is essential. The least important group of elements is the analytical and synthetic approach to teaching.

There were no observed significant differences in the means concerning respondents' gender, level of studies, and years of prior teaching experience. However, there were significant differences in the means regarding respondents' major of studies. This can be explained by the fact that students taking different majors of study have different perceptions about elements of effective teaching.

From the study, the conclusion can be drawn that university students appreciate well-prepared and clearly explained lessons that invite them to express their knowledge and ideas. On a personal level, university students want to be acknowledged and respected as individuals. This, therefore, implies that effective teaching requires careful and well-organized lessons as well as respectful teaching practices. The result was endorsed by the study of Kaloi et al. (2021), which stated that students expect teachers to respect students' desires and needs.

Recommendation

The study's findings can enhance the understanding of effective teaching in tertiary education. Based on the findings, it is recommended that instructors in higher education prepare the lesson well to provide lesson clarity that contributes to the engaging learning experience. As adult learners, university students value allowing them to participate in discussions and respecting them.

This study covers only students in the international program of the selected private university in Thailand; it is suggested that other research be done on students' perceptions of the Thai program or a larger population, such as public universities, and compare the results to see if there are any differences in perceptions of effective teaching. Educators and lecturers should consider the findings of this study in their preparation for teaching in the tertiary education program.

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