

## The assessment of a good teacher: Student's paradigm

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### Abstract

**Objective:** To comprehend the students' behavioural attitudes and attributes in referring to a teacher as 'bad or good' so as to establish a better communication between the teachers and the taught and promote more effective teaching and learning in medical school.

**Materials and methodology:** Q-methodology questionnaire was distributed randomly on open-call to 94 final year medical students, who had been exposed to about 160 teachers of various departments of a medical college, to recognize Q-factors. Observations were analysed on adequacy score to derive normalized factor and frequency distribution.

**Results:** Three Q-factors have been constructed on distinct items. Teachers' recognition stands on different traits and trends. In fact, universal acceptance is still elusive.

Factor-1 Teacher is practical and up-to-date, neither too strict nor witty and shows no evidence of favour.

Factor-2 Teacher is a disciplinarian and is intolerant to misbehaviour and relies on examination performance to label students good/bad.

Factor-3 Teacher is dynamic and enthusiastic but not very knowledgeable and do not mind misbehaviour of students in the classroom and do not impose workload.

**Conclusion:** Q-methodology teachers' assessment appears to be a viable tool to mend and uplift the teaching standards.

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An ardent desire of every student is to have a resourceful, motivated, interactive, inspiring teacher. Obviously, a good teacher makes way for sustainable, self-stimulating productive learning. Students adore such teachers. The rationale for this remains variable and obscure. Do students have any paradigm of characteristics of teachers to refer their teachers as good/bad? There is an imperative need to discern what students like/dislike and how they recognize their good teacher. Can these trends be explored? This direct study is an attempt to understand attitude and attributes of students' assessment of a good teacher. Certainly, this will enable the teaching fraternity to adopt conciliatory measures wherever necessary. It is believed that students' opinions on effective teaching will bring sea of changes in teachers' attitudes. Significantly, all teachers are not same in creating excellent classroom climate. The innate personal traits and teaching methodology differ in decisive way among teachers. What the students opine about these? How their opinion creates flutter in the academic field? Current study aims at providing information about this to help teachers to mend their attitudes for better.

### Methodology

Q-methodology questionnaire was distributed randomly on open call to 94 final year medical

students to study their basis of assessment of a good teacher. Altogether 33 questions have been given relating to the different attitudes of a teacher. The questions were primarily on the teacher's ability, appearance, punctuality, discipline, operative classroom atmosphere, reaction to students' feedback etc. The identity of participants was kept confidential. Presumably, the opinion projected by the students reflects their role model concept development during the course. In fact, the questions were designed to obtain students' opinion about how their teacher reacts with them in different circumstances including classroom interaction. Participants were requested to opine without bias taking both disagreement and agreement issues alike. The response rate was 100%. However, observations were analysed on adequacy score. The questions were to be answered on a scale of -4 to +4 to indicate decisive opinion. Answers of each category were utilized for pyramidal file documentation. Results were analysed using PQ method software.

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Data and sorts were entered into the programme as they were being collected furnishing statement numbers of different piles. Intercorrelations among Q-sorts were calculated. Further, they were factor analyzed with the principal components method. All the factors resulted were rotated by varimax method and judgement was drawn with the help of two-dimensional plots. Relevant factors were then selected and flagging the entries was carried out to define the factors for final analysis. Participants who failed to express definite opinions were treated as passive. Similarly different views expressed by participants who were not accounted for the final factor structure were phased out of the study.

### Results

Data provided by 94 students including 56 girls were analyzed. Based on the analysis the students were grouped into 3 major Q-factors. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the items in each Q-factor respectively. The factors together accounted for 48% of variance. The factor one accounted for 25% variance and comprised of 47 students. Factor 2 accounted for 11% of the total variance with 15 students and factor 3 for 12% variance with 19 students belonging to the group. We labelled the first factor as belonging to a 'practical' teacher who is the most popular of the three types. The students, who prefer this type of teacher, identify the attributes of a good teacher as also somebody who talks about recent advances, who involves actively in the class, involves more students in the class by roaming around and who ends the class as soon as he finds students getting restless. He is also good in spoken English, is punctual and uses more of

blackboard than Overhead Projector. He does not change his teaching style from time to time. He is not very strict towards indiscipline and does not curtain his mistakes. He is not partial towards any student. The second factor was labelled a strict teacher, a disciplinarian, who would not tolerate any misbehaviour in his class. He does not create humour in his class and sticks to his ideas. Even though he is not partial to any student, he takes examination results to label his students good or bad, when compared to the other two types.

The third factor has been labelled a dynamic 'students' teacher', who need not be very knowledgeable but should have a lot of enthusiasm. He allows students to enter the class at any time, does not mind them sleeping in the class and is quite liberal about the discipline in the class. Even, he does not practice favouritism. He is not 'high-tech', but on the whole, is attractive to his group of students. He does not tax the students by asking 'find out next day type of questions'. He does not lose his cool and is not highly particular about attendance. This is not to say all students do not agree on at least a few things (Table 4). They all agree strongly that a teacher should be approachable after the class for course related as well as personal problems. A teacher should revise the topics covered in the previous lecture briefly before each class. They also felt in a stronger fashion that a teacher should give emphasis on character building and moral lessons. They are of a general opinion that a teacher should ask for student opinion relating to his/ her teaching and strictly NOT indulge in self praise.

**Table 1:** The distinguishing items in factor 1 – The practical and up-to-date teacher

Items	Normalised Factor Score Z
A teacher should give more importance to practical application rather than theory in lecture	1.61
A teacher should always tell us about the recent advances on the topic in the class	1.57
A teacher should end the class if he can see that students are getting restless and bored	1.33
A teacher should involve actively himself in the class	0.95
It is necessary for a teacher to have a good command over spoken English	0.8
I like a teacher who does not stand still in the class but roams around and involves all students	0.75
A teacher should be very punctual to the class	0.57
A teacher should prefer blackboard teaching than using Over Head Projectors	0.44
Changing teaching style from time to time	-0.31
Sleeping or reading novels in the class is ok	-0.32
A teacher should be strict about regarding attendance	-0.54
It is obvious for the teacher to curtain his/her mistakes and ignorance	-1.16
It is natural for the teacher to pay more attention to the students known to him	-1.57

**Table 2:** The distinguishing items in factor 2 – The teacher disciplinarian

Items	Normalised Factor Score Z
A teacher should shout and be very strict whenever required for discipline	1.40
A teacher should be very punctual to the class	1.16
A teacher should be very strict regarding attendance	0.43
Teacher must create humour during the lecture	-0.04
A teacher always knows the best so he/she should stick to his/her own ideas	-0.33
It is natural for the teacher to pay more attention to the students known to him	-0.34
A teacher can label a student good or bad by mere evaluation in the examination	-0.41
Jokes cracked by teachers can be okay even if they are not decent	-0.98
Sleeping and reading novels in the class is okay	-1.75
Carrying mobile phones to the class is okay	-1.87

**Table 3:** The distinguishing items in factor 3 – the dynamic and enthusiastic teacher

Items	Normalised Factor Score Z
I prefer enthusiasm and dynamism of a teacher to his knowledge or command over the subject	1.21
A teacher should permit entry into the class at any time	1.16
Sleeping and reading novels in the class is okay	1.04
A teacher should ask basic questions related to the ongoing topic to the class	0.15
He /She must be attractive	0.04
“Find out next day questions” should be given by teachers	-0.76
It is natural for the teacher to pay more attention to the students known to him.	-1.06
I like teachers who prefer advanced and high tech teaching aids	-1.32
It is understandable for a teacher to use bad words in highly provocative situations	-1.38
A teacher should be strict regarding attendance	-1.75

**Table 4:** Consensus Opinions

Item	Normalised factor score	Normalised factor score	Normalised factor score
A teacher should be approachable after the class for course related as well as personal problems	1.18	1.12	0.99
A teacher should revise the topics covered in the previous lecture briefly	0.59	0.71	0.33
A teacher should give emphasis on character building and moral lessons	0.43	0.52	0.57
A teacher should ask for student opinion relating to his/her teaching	0.45	0.63	0.22
It is natural for the teacher to indulge in self praise	-1.52	-1.2	-1.21

## Discussion

The 'factor stories' from our students seem to be universally applicable and probably are characterizations of teacher attitudes that students would identify with in many parts of the world. A repeated study conducted in some other place will

again find recognizably similar teacher profiles, plus perhaps a new study might find a few more different attitudinal characteristics not present in the group of students recruited from the Kasturba Medical College. While we do not generalize from any qualitative study, the world of Q methodological scholarship has repeatedly found the same factors again and again. Professor Stephenson, the British innovator of Q Methodology in the last century felt that factor structures (the collection of all the different viewpoints about teacher profiles) are so deeply rooted in the human behaviours of the participants (in our case, students) to be considered as invariants.

When students are "changed" by good and bad teacher experiences over time, the theory is they might load less strongly or not at all on their original factor view about professors, or the effect of teaching /learning experiences could actually cause student attitudes to jump from one factor to another. But we would expect to see our three factors emerge again and again in recognizable (essentially unchanged fashion) as students are asked to make new Q sorts with the same 33 statements and identical Condition of Instruction over time, i.e. longitudinally.

In this way Q sorting can be used to document affective behavioural growth and changes in attitudes. This is a powerful way to gather standardized data (factor loadings) for each individual on all the factors to be used as new independent variables in discriminant function studies, regressions, cluster analysis, etc. It could also be the basis for an extension to our study: ask teachers with varying reputations among students to prepare Q sorts with the same items to document how they think about teacher behaviours in classrooms. Teacher perceptions could then be compared (correlated) with student views.

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