

Good Teaching: Aligning Student and Administrator Perceptions and Expectations

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Submitted: April 23, 2016 | Peer-reviewed: December 1, 2016 | Revisions required: December 6, 2016

Revised version: January 11, 2017 | Accepted: January 19, 2017 | Published: March 1, 2017

Abstract: Extant literature attests to limited systematic inquiry into students' perceptions of good teaching in higher education. Consequently, there have been calls for engaging students in construing what makes good university teaching. This interpretivist study investigated final-year undergraduate students' perceptions of good teaching at Makerere University in Uganda. Results suggested that students conceived good teachers as being student centered, demonstrating strong subject and pedagogical knowledge, being approachable, being responsive, being organized, and being able to communicate well. Most perceptions of good teaching by students depend on what the teacher does (the means) rather than affording high-quality student learning (an end). The findings further demonstrate a troubling gap between students' perceptions of good teaching and the items in the university's student evaluation of teaching. We recommend ensuring congruence between perceptions of good teaching by the students and the items listed in Makerere University's student evaluation of teaching.

Keywords: good teaching, higher education, students, perceptions

Introduction

It is recognized that the most reliable indicator of good teaching is located at the level of the student (Yates, 2005), and measures to improve teaching should take students' perceptions of good teaching into account. Extant studies (e.g., Okpala & Ellis, 2005; Schulte, Slate, & Onwuegbuzie, 2011) have claimed that students' perceptions of good teaching are important to effective teaching for college instructors because they serve as a motivational factor. Despite this recognition, there has been limited systematic inquiry to examine students' perceptions regarding characteristics of good teaching in higher education (Allan, Clarke & Jopling, 2009; Hassan & Wium, 2014; Meng & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Reid & Johnston, 1999; Su & Wood, 2012) compared to a plethora of studies on perceptions of good teaching by frontline academics and academic administrators. Consequently, Su and Wood (2012) appealed for engaging students in construing what makes good university teaching and in developing a richer conception of teaching excellence. Such studies would inform a theoretical framework for assuring the quality of teaching. This is consistent with Barrie, Ginn, and Prosser's (2005) assertion that "If the aim of quality assurance is to assure and improve teaching and learning then a clear theoretical understanding of what constitutes quality teaching must inform all aspects of the evaluation and quality assurance (EQA) system" (p. 634). Against this backdrop, the study set out to answer the research question involving understanding how final-year undergraduate students at Makerere University perceive good teaching.

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Suggested citation: Nabaho, L., Oonyu, J., & Aguti, J. N. (2017). Good teaching: Aligning student and administrator perceptions and expectations. *Higher Learning Research Communications*, 7(1).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18870/hlrc.v7i1.321>

Literature Review

It is widely acknowledged that good teaching in higher education is that which affords high-quality student learning (Ramsden, 1992; Hativa, 2000; Prosser, 2013). This acknowledgement is based on the premise that teaching is not an end in itself but an aspect of the process of ensuring high-quality student learning (Hénard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Prosser, 2013; Zerihun, Beishiuzen & Van Os, 2012). Therefore, learning is inseparable from teaching because the purpose of teaching is to promote student learning. For instance, Sajjad (2010) asserted that “teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin” and “the most effective criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of learning that occurs” (p. 29). Similarly, Dewey (as cited in Mckeachie, 1986) contended that “Teaching is like selling...you can't have a sale unless someone buys . . . [Similarly], you haven't taught unless someone has learnt” (p. 313). Teaching is therefore fit for purpose if it maximizes student learning.

As observed in the introductory section, very few studies have been conducted on students' perceptions of good teaching in higher education. Spencer and Schmelkin (2002) established that students in a private university in the United States perceived effective teaching in terms of the college instructors' personal characteristics such as demonstrating concern for students, valuing students' opinions, clarity in communication, and openness toward varied opinions. Okpala and Ellis (2005), using data that were gathered from 218 United States college students regarding their perceptions of teaching quality components, identified the following: caring for students and their learning (89.6%), teaching skills (83.2%), content knowledge (76.8%), dedication to teaching (75.3%) and verbal skills (73.9%). Recently, Meng and Onwuegbuzie (2015) conducted a study on perception of effective teaching by 430 Chinese college students. The respondents prioritized good teaching as being ethical (treating all students equally), demonstrating expertise (having a deep understanding of the curriculum and demonstrating relevant and current content with key components of the curriculum), being knowledgeable (knowing and understanding what is being taught), and being student centered.

Relatedly, Zerihun (2012) conducted a study on perceptions of good teaching by students at Makelle University and Jimma University in Ethiopia. The findings were based on 434 questionnaires that were received from final-year students in the civil and electrical engineering, and nursing, and pharmacy departments. The results revealed that more than half of the students (52%) described effective teaching as transmitting knowledge, while the rest of the respondents stated that it was facilitating learning.

Generally, most extant studies on students' perceptions of good teaching have not been conducted in the African cultural setting. Similarly, though students at Makerere University assess the lecturers using a student evaluation of teaching questionnaire, little is known about whether the items in the form are in sync with students' perceptions of good teaching. This study therefore explored final-year students' perceptions of good teaching at Makerere University and assessed the extent to which the resultant perceptions are aligned to the items in the student evaluation of teaching questionnaire that is currently being used by the university.

Method

The study was conducted at the Makerere University main campus based in Kampala, Uganda. Makerere University was established in 1922 and comprises nine colleges: College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences; College of Business and Management Sciences; College of Computing and Information Sciences; College of Education and External Studies; College of Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology; College of Health Sciences; College of

Humanities and Social Sciences; College of Natural Sciences; and College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources, and Bio-Security.

The inquiry was anchored in the world view of interpretivism and adopted the qualitative research tradition. Within the interpretive approach, “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon [and] this meaning is mediated through the researcher as an instrument” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). The choice of the interpretive approach was informed by the research question, which aimed at understanding students’ culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of good teaching at Makerere University. In other words, the interpretivist approach was deemed an appropriate lens because it would facilitate gaining a better understanding of good teaching from the students’ own frames of reference.

Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed. Multistage purposive sampling was used to select colleges, schools, and departments, while convenience sampling was used to select students from teaching departments. Table 1 shows how the sampling was conducted.

Table 1. Sample Selection Procedures and Sample Size

| College | School | Department | Program | Number of respondents (N = 50) |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Education and External Studies | Education | Humanities and Language Education | Bachelor of Arts with Education | 6 |
| | | Science, Technical, and Vocational Education | Bachelor of Science With Education | 6 |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | Liberal and Performing Arts | Philosophy and Development Studies | Bachelor of Development Studies | 7 |
| | | Performing Arts | Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Music | 7 |
| Engineering, Design, Art, and Technology | Engineering | Civil and Environmental Engineering | Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering | 6 |
| | | Electrical and Computer Engineering | Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering | 6 |
| Health Sciences | Health Sciences | Dentistry | Bachelor of Dental Surgery | 6 |
| | | Nursing | Bachelor of Nursing | 6 |

The selection of colleges was purposively done to ensure that the resultant sample of students would comprise those undertaking hard-applied disciplines (i.e., dental surgery and engineering), soft-applied disciplines (i.e., nursing, education, and music, dance, and drama) and a soft-basic discipline (i.e., development studies). The sample that was based on the above classification of academic disciplines was intended to understand whether there are similarities or differences in perceptions of good teaching across hard-applied disciplines, soft-applied disciplines, and soft-basic disciplines.

From each college, one school was purposively selected from which two academic departments were also purposively selected. Furthermore, one academic program was

purposely selected from each of the sampled departments. The eight programs reflect six different disciplines (engineering, dentistry, nursing, education, music and drama, and development studies).

Between six and seven final-year undergraduate students undertaking each of the sampled academic programmes were selected using convenience sampling technique; as a result, 50 students were sampled. Convenience sampling was preferred because it was least costly in terms of time, effort, and money (Marshall, 1996). The main assumption associated with convenience sampling is that the members of the target population are homogeneous (Ross, 2005). Homogeneity of students was assumed because sampled students from each program were undertaking a particular program and in their final year of study. Final-year undergraduate students were used as participants because they were in position to provide information relating to good teaching because they had spent considerable time at the institution.

Data was collected from April 1 to July 1, 2014, using focus group discussions that were facilitated by the first author. Each focus group comprised male and female participants under the age of 30. Though follow-up questions were asked, the following questions guided the focus group discussions: When someone talks of good teaching at university level, what is it that comes to your mind? What do you trace your perceptions about good teaching to? Each discipline-based focus group discussion lasted 90 min and was recorded following the consent of the respondents.

Data were analyzed simultaneously with data collection. Data analysis adopted Creswell's (2003) six steps of qualitative data analysis, namely (1) organize and prepare the data for analysis, (2) read through the data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on the overall meaning, (3) begin detailed analysis with a coding process, (4) use the coding process to generate a description of the categories or themes, (5) advance how the description and relationship of themes were represented in the qualitative narrative, and (6) make an interpretation or find meaning with the data. Organization of data for analysis involved transcribing each focus group discussion. Each transcript was read to get a feeling for students' wording. Second, coding was done, and two codes emerged from the data: "instructor's personal characteristics" and "instructor's skills." Finally, six themes of good teaching were generated from the codes. To ensure confidentiality, the program of study was used to identify participants during data analysis and report writing.

Member checking or respondent validation of findings was used to ensure trustworthiness of findings. Member checking into the findings has been advanced as "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Precisely, member checking involves getting feedback on data, interpretations, and conclusions from participants themselves. To facilitate member checking, a copy of the research report was provided to one respondent from each group. Each participant was requested to indicate any distortions or misrepresentations. None of the eight students indicated any distortions or misrepresentations.

Results

Based on eight-subject focus group discussions, six broad themes relating to good teaching emerged from the data. Specifically, students perceived good teachers as being student centered, demonstrating strong subject and pedagogical knowledge, being

approachable, being responsive, being organized, and being able to communicate well. These perceptions are discussed below.

Student-Centered Teaching

Among the dimensions of good teaching, student-centered teaching was mentioned three times as a theme across the eight focus group discussions, and related adjectives were mentioned more than any other attribute of good teaching. Asked about what they considered good teaching, an arts education student replied, “I would regard good teaching as teaching which is learner-centred.” To emphasize the centrality of students in the teaching and learning processes, a nursing student said, “For me good teaching is that kind of teaching that allows the student to be at the centre [of teaching and learning]; the teacher should be at the periphery.” In line with this view, a civil engineering student said, “Despite the fact that we need...lecturers to enlighten us on what we must learn in certain course units, the best thing could be for students to learn on their own”. Relatedly, a dental surgery student said,

I think good teaching, the way I perceive it, is that the lecturer gives you a clue on what you are supposed to read upon [sic], and give you a little detail but not so much as a lecture, so that you can have the opportunity to go out and research and find out more [information].

These excerpts demonstrate that students prefer to be self-directed learners or to take responsibility for their learning. This responsibility requires students to construct their own knowledge from the learning experiences provided by the teacher. To buttress the idea of self-directed learning, a civil engineering student said, “If you can learn something on your own, there is that confidence or pride that you get.” Self-directed learning in higher education necessitates a shift from the teacher and teaching to the student and learning. Students, especially those who were initially exposed to student-centered learning, detested any attempts to take away their responsibility for learning—a trend that was slowly taking place in some schools of the university. For example, a nursing student explained,

I think the system of teaching should actually change because when we joined the university, there was an attempt to do student-centred learning and then as we come to the final year, we have slowly drifted back to the old lecture system. For me that one (lecture method), does not change the student. It does not make better students. How I just wish they could just stick to what they had started.

The benefits that students attained from student-centered learning explicate their positive association with the pedagogical approach. Such benefits include deep learning (i.e., understanding) as opposed to surface learning (i.e., memorization).

Students’ perception of good teaching as being student centered illuminates the role of a university teacher in a student-centered learning environment. Within the student-centered paradigm, students perceived facilitating learning to be the central role of a teacher. A nursing student remarked,

For me, good teaching is when...the teacher appears as a facilitator [of learning] and not as someone who is instructing [students]. But basically, his work should be to facilitate the course and students should be the ones who are at the centre of the learning.

This excerpt sheds light on the facilitator roles of a university. This facilitator role requires the teachers to perceive themselves as managers of student learning and not disseminators of information. Second, the facilitator role entails development of learning experiences from which students construct their own knowledge. Finally, the facilitator role involves motivating the students to engage in learning activities that lead to achievement of pre-determined learning outcomes.

Being Knowledgeable

In all the focus group discussions, students highlighted being knowledgeable on the part of the teacher as an attribute of good teaching. The responses of students relating to this theme suggest that being knowledgeable is a multidimensional construct that can be broken down into four subthemes: knowledge of content (what to teach), knowledge of current developments in the subject, knowledge of pedagogy (how to teach), and knowledge of how to use various teaching aids.

Regarding knowledge of content, students perceived good teaching to demonstrate sound command of the subject (content), be able to marry theory with practice, provide practical examples from personal experiences, and tell stories related to the topic under consideration. However, having a good command of the subject emerged as the dominant variant of being knowledgeable. Consequently, students regarded good teaching as that which is performed by teachers who

...come to teach and surely you say that he has the data (subject matter) . . . in that they do not only come with the hand-out per se, but come and conduct a lecture and you feel you have learnt as opposed to others who come with hand-outs and they read during the lecture. (final-year electrical engineering student)

This view is consistent with that of a nursing student who described good teaching in the following way:

It (good teaching) is when the teacher or lecturer knows what he is teaching and is not following basically what he has written down or projecting [on the screen] but has fully understood the concepts and knows how to deliver them to the students. For me the lecturers I admire are those who know the content very well. (final-year nursing student)

Therefore, knowledge of subject matter is and remains an indisputable feature of good teaching. The adoption of student-centered learning—with its emphasis on self-directed learning—does not relegate the teacher's subject-specific knowledge to a peripheral position. Within the student-centered paradigm, the teacher is a manager of learning. This new role requires teachers to have a deeper understanding and appreciation of the disciplinary field. Similarly, teachers who are knowledgeable contribute to student learning. This is based on the notion that one cannot offer what he/she does not have. Similarly, a teacher cannot develop knowledge and skills in a field in which he/she lacks the requisite expertise.

On the other hand, students were of the view that good teaching blends theory with practice. A dental surgery student explained, "Good teaching is teaching that involves both the theoretical and practical aspects." A music and drama student echoed this perception of good teaching:

Good teaching is anything that is practical in relation to the theory part, which we get in class; for as long as we can put it into practice. Most times, we do the theory part of it like 80% and we rarely do the practical part of it.

Relatedly, a civil engineering student explained good teaching as follows: “Good teaching involves the students being shown how to apply practically what they have been taught theoretically.” This view is consistent with that of a student of arts education who described good teaching as “quality teaching is one where the teacher has to relate what he or she is teaching to reality.” Good teaching was also conceptualized in terms of the lecturer being in position to share their personal experiences with students. Interestingly, students of applied disciplines were emphatic on the issue of relating theory to practice as opposed to their counterparts from development studies. This can be attributed to the high application element of applied disciplines. Basic disciplines such as development studies are more concerned with developing critical thinking abilities of students. Therefore, the practical components should be embedding in applied disciplines.

Finally, students conceived good teaching in terms of the teacher’s knowledge of pedagogy. Pedagogical knowledge hinges on the abilities to use visual aids, use a variety of methods, use modern technologies such as smart boards and overhead projectors, and motivate students to learn. The excerpts below lend support to knowledge of pedagogy as a dimension of good teaching.

“Good teaching is one that should involve visual aids.” (final-year civil engineering student)

“Good teaching is one where they use demonstrations; where a teacher can demonstrate using these aids.” (final-year civil engineering student)

“To me, good teaching is teaching that is accompanied by demonstrations since the course I am doing is a practical course (program). I would expect to have more of the practical aspects.” (final-year dental surgery student)

The findings on knowledge of pedagogy demonstrate that subject matter knowledge is necessary but not sufficient in guaranteeing that teaching is fit for purpose or students learn. This therefore necessitates augmenting the pedagogical abilities of university lecturers.

Being Approachable

Being approachable emerged as a dimension of good teaching across the six subject areas. We can categorize approachable into three variants groups: the comfort level of students to ask the teacher questions and respond to questions from the teacher, the comfort level of students to seek guidance and advice from the teacher, and the availability of the teacher to students for consultation.

Being approachable has the potential to promote learning through lessening the gap between students and lecturers and cultivating an inquisitive culture in the learners. This was articulated by a dental surgery student as follows: “Being approachable [on the part of the lecturer] helps...to bridge the gap between the student and the lecturer. So, it helps you (the student) inquire more about what you did not understand and fill in your knowledge gap.”

Finally, good teaching entails the teacher setting aside time for the students outside the classroom. This important aspect was emphasized by students in the following statement: “Good teaching is when your teacher is readily available; makes himself readily available [to students]” (final-year dental surgery student).

From the foregoing, we can infer that a teacher who is approachable has a bearing on student learning.

Being Responsive

Participants in the study perceived good teaching to entail provision of timely, detailed, individualized, and constructive feedback on formative assignments. However, within the university, there is a disjuncture between students’ perception of responsiveness and reality. Students on some programmes expressed concern over failure by lecturers to give them feedback on formative assessment. A music and drama student said, “Actually, there are some courseworks [that]...I have never got [back] since [my] first year and I am [almost] finishing [the programme]. I saw the results (marks) but did not get [back] the scripts.” A development studies student raised similar sentiments: “For most of the tests, we do not even receive [back] the scripts. You see the same marks from your first year up to the final year; indicating that sometimes they do not mark.” An electrical engineering student also alluded to this worrisome state of affairs: “A great number [of lecturers] do not actually return...test and course work scripts. You just get surprised...at your results that I thought I had passed the assessment or this is not what I expected.” All these observations attest to the fact that feedback on formative assessment in Makerere University is delinked from student learning. Similarly, the sentiments of students about feedback cast doubt on the reliability of students’ grades.

Students further expressed dissatisfaction over timeliness of feedback on formative assessment. In most cases, feedback comes late and its learning value therefore diminishes. A music and drama student observed, “Sometimes they (lecturers) even take the whole semester without giving you feedback. You get your results in the next semester.” This is surprising because feedback comes after the course has ended and when students have already embarked on other course units. In such cases, students are denied the opportunity to engage with the instructor about the feedback. It should be observed that the Bachelor of Dental Surgery program was exception—students received timely feedback. However, on the rest of the programs, timeliness in delivering feedback to students left a lot to be desired. The findings demonstrate an association between the number of students on a particular program and the pace of receiving feedback. The Bachelor of Dental Surgery program, in which feedback was provided promptly, had nine final-year students, whereas the rest of the programmes that were sampled for this study had over 100 students.

An attempt was also made to investigate the nature of feedback that is given to students in cases where assignment scripts were returned, that is, whether it was given in form of a mark/grade alone or with constructive comments. The nature of feedback relayed to students varied from lecturer to lecturer and from program to program. However, most lecturers, save for those in the Department of Dentistry, provided feedback in terms of marks on scripts and not a combination of marks with detailed constructive comments. An electrical engineering student lamented, “Very few of them (lecturers) give comments [on assignments]. They just give a mark.” A music and drama student echoed,

There are those [lecturers] who put both marks and comments where you have gone wrong. I think that would be the best way of teaching a student because if I have

performed poorly in [the] coursework, I need to know where I went wrong such that I can improve next time. And there are those just put marks and you do not know how you got it [and] where you went wrong. It is always good to know where you went wrong so that you can correct [your mistakes].

A nursing student, when asked about the nature of feedback relayed to students by their lecturers, responded,

That is a tricky question because for the time I have been here, I have not received any [written] feedback on assignments. May be the feedback I always receive is what [mark] I got in the assessment but not really comments on how I should improve.

To emphasize the generic nature of feedback, a development studies student commented, “You do not even see any red pen in the paper (script) but you only see the mark not even knowing whether they (lecturers) read your work or not.” In view of these excerpts, it can be inferred that feedback on formative assessment at Makerere University is predominantly in form of marks or grades.

An interesting finding is that failure to give students timely and constructive feedback diminishes the learning potential of formative assessment. An electrical engineering student illustrated,

When the lecturers return the test and coursework scripts on time and with detailed comments, someone (a student) gets to know that I actually went wrong here so that the person can rectify the mistake in the final exam. But, if the person cannot be given the opportunity to realise that he was wrong in a given way, then it becomes a consistent fault from test one, test two to the final exam. So, it ends up hurting the person thrice instead of hurting the person once.

This highlights the contribution of timely, detailed, and individualized assessment feedback on student learning. Such feedback helps in pinpointing gaps and making recommendations on how to address the gaps.

Finally, except for in the Bachelor of Dental Surgery program, students expressed consternation over failure by some lecturers to give them guidance on tests, individually or in groups before another series of tests. An electrical engineering student said, “...some lecturers do not give us guidance in the previous tests. It is just a continuous doing of tests and not being corrected.” This situation contributes to perpetuating mistakes from one test to another.

The foregoing exposition on feedback suggests that teaching and assessment are two sides of the same coin; teaching is incomplete without the teacher providing timely, detailed, and individualized feedback to the learners. It can be concluded that the formative assessment (or assessment for learning) at Makerere University is decoupled from learning.

Being Organized

This dimension of good teaching hinged on the level of preparedness of the lecturer. Relatedly, a civil engineering student described good teaching as follows:

Good teaching involves good preparation from the lecturers' side. You realise sometimes most of them are busy. So, they come raw (unprepared) in class. They just come and read their notes. But if someone is prepared...everything becomes simple. Sometimes they talk off curve.

Students were of the view that, unlike in secondary schools, teachers in higher education institutions do not always prepare for classes. In secondary schools, it is custom for a teacher to develop a lesson plan for each session. The lesson is an important indicator of preparedness on the part of the teacher. The reverse is prevalent in higher education. Students have the ability to gauge the level of preparedness of the teacher. Unprepared teachers, according to students, focus on general knowledge and are incoherent in their delivery of the lesson. The incoherence is manifested in shifting from one topic to another. Lack of preparedness has the potential to make the subject confusing to students. This statement from a development studies student encapsulates the above issues:

At least in secondary schools, teachers have to prepare...what to teach...the next day. But in the university, they (teachers) don't know what to lecture the next day. When they come in class, sometimes they talk about general knowledge. You find him (the teacher) on one topic and then he goes to the other; something, which shows that he doesn't prepare.

Thus, unprepared teachers hinder learning rather than promote it. Surprisingly, such teachers focus on general knowledge rather than the subject matter.

Being Able to Communicate Well

Being able to communicate clearly is a defining feature of good teaching at any level of the education system. It is therefore not surprising that students identified effective communication as a characteristic of good teaching. Significant aspects of communication that emerged from the data include ability of the teacher to put the message across in a clear and convincing manner, be audible, and listen to students' concerns.

Concerning the ability to put across the message clearly, an electrical engineering student said that good teaching entails the ability of a lecturer to "transfer information to students in a language or in a format that is understandable to students." The respondents considered being audible to be a characteristic of good teaching. Good teaching involves the teacher being "...audible enough for everyone to pick what he or she (the teacher) is saying" (development studies student). Finally, being able to communicate well was conceptualized in terms of the lecturer being able to listen to the concerns (and complaints) of students. In view of this, it can be asserted that being able to communicate well is a multidimensional concept that should be assessed beyond auditory aspects.

Comparison Between Students' Perceptions of Good Teaching and Items in the Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching Questionnaire

Good practice dictates that student evaluation of teaching questionnaires should largely reflect students' perceptions of good teaching but also be sensitive to teachers' perceptions of good teaching. Makerere University uses a form called the Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching (SECAT). With this form, students are given an opportunity to evaluate courses, lecturers, and the teaching process. Regarding evaluation of teaching, students evaluate teaching on 13 items using a 5-point rating scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 5 (*strongly*

agree). Table 2 shows the institutional perceptions of good teaching and the extent to which they are in sync with students' perceptions of good teaching.

Table 2. Degree of Congruence Between Students' Perceptions of Good Teaching and Items in the Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching Questionnaire

| Item | Perceptions of good teaching by Makerere University | Students' views to which the perception relates |
|-------------|---|--|
| 1 | The lecturer gave a clear description of course objectives. | Being able to communicate well |
| 2 | The lecturer was decent in language and dress during the teaching process. | Being professional |
| 3 | The lecturer encouraged class discussions and participation. | Student-centered teaching |
| 4 | The lecturer was knowledgeable and resourceful on the subject matter. | Being knowledgeable |
| 5 | The lecturer would review the previous lecture and blend it with the current topic. | Being knowledgeable |
| 6 | The lecturer guided and counseled students on academic problems. | Being approachable |
| 7 | The lecturer conducted lectures as scheduled and came to class prepared. | Being organized |
| 8 | The lecturer completed the syllabus. | Being organized |
| 9 | The lecturer assessed and gave timely feedback. | Being responsive |
| 10 | The lecturer was audible and an effective communicator. | Being able to communicate well |
| 11 | The lecturer presented subject matter with clear explanations. | Being able to communicate well |
| 12 | The lecturer had a cordial and professional relationship with students. | Being approachable |
| 13 | Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the lecturer. | — |

An analysis of the questionnaires against students' perceptions of good teaching reveals the following interesting aspects. First, most of the items on the SECAT relate to students' perspectives of good teaching, with the exception of one: being professional. However, the consistency is only in form, not in substance. Second, in some cases, there is a disjuncture between what students perceived to be good teaching and how the items are worded in the questionnaire. For example, students made sense of responsiveness in terms of provision of timely, detailed, and constructive feedback by the teacher, but the questionnaire focuses on timeliness of feedback. Third, student-centered teaching is highly regarded by students, but the dimension is given a single item in the questionnaire. Surprisingly, the single item covers a small dimension of student-centered teaching as perceived by student. Finally, the statement on being "approachable" does not bring out the significant aspects that students raised in their description of good teaching.

The number of items on each dimension of good teaching reflects the importance the university attaches to it. Being knowledgeable, therefore, appears to be the most important dimension of good teaching from the institutional perspective. In as much as the university is steering toward a student-centered mode of instruction, student-centeredness is measured by a single item. This may force academics to be teacher centered to get favorable ratings because most items in the questionnaire focus on what the teacher does.

Discussion and Conclusions

This exploratory study gives first insights into the attributes of good teaching from the lens of students from a transitional economy. The students considered good teachers as being student centered, knowledgeable, approachable, responsive, organized, and able to communicate well. Most of the attributes of good teaching from this study are consistent with extant literature (e.g., Meng & Onweuegbuzie, 2015; Okpala & Ellis, 2005; Spencer & Schmelkin, 2002). Nevertheless, the difference is in the priority attached to each dimension by students.

Unexpectedly, student-centered teaching stood out as the dominant perception of good teaching by students. This reflects a shift from viewing teaching as transmitting information to conceptualizing it as facilitating learning. Students also preferred a student-centered mode of instruction. This finding is inconsistent with Zachariah (2007) and Al-Hinai (2011), who found that students in higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman preferred teacher-centered instruction to student-centered approaches. Students in Oman and at Makerere University in East Africa could be operating on opposite coasts for two reasons. First, cultural variations could be responsible for the divergent preferences. From a cultural perspective, Maniku (2008) argued that the prevailing image of the teacher in many Asian societies is that of a learned scholar or an expert in the discipline. In addition, the relationship between the teacher and the student is formal and hierarchical. These two cultural perspectives lead to more formal teacher-centered methods of instruction. Second, student-centered learning is a policy matter at Makerere University and is currently being implemented in the various colleges. Therefore, Makerere University students' experience with student-centered learning partly influences their appreciation of learner-centered approaches.

Students regarded being responsive to be an attribute of good teaching. A variant of being responsive that stood out was providing feedback on formative assessment. The findings revealed that, in most cases, formative assessment at Makerere University could be labeled "disguised summative assessment." The only difference between the two forms is that while formative assessment exercises are administered during the semester, summative assessments take place at the end of the semester. Jacques (as cited in Rust, 2002) gave a checklist of good practices in student assessment. He observed that feedback, if it is to contribute to learning, should, *inter alia*, be prompt, include a brief summary of the teacher's views of the assignment, make general suggestions on how to go about the next assignment, ask questions that encourage reflection about the work, suggest specific ways to improve the assignment, explain the mark or grade and why it is not better, and offer an opportunity to discuss the assignment along with comments. At Makerere University, except in the Department of Dentistry, these good practices of student assessment are honored more in breach than in practice. Students attested to the facts that feedback was late or nonexistent, or it came in the form of marks rather than constructive comments. These problems with feedback have been reported in earlier studies (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Jonsson, 2012; Kandiko & Mawer, 2013;

Price, Handley, Millar, & O'Donovan, 2010; Williams & Kaine, 2009) and make it difficult for the students to use feedback for learning purposes.

This study has further revealed that students prefer specific, detailed, and constructive feedback and this finding resonates with Brown (2004). The issue of feedback in the form of marks or grades is recurrent in higher education since the advent of massification. The students in this study would appreciate grades if they were accompanied by an explanation. In a study in the United Kingdom by Kandiko and Mawer (2013), university students considered feedback in a form of a grade or a few generic comments as useless. Kandiko and Mawer (2013) attributed inadequate feedback to students to “pressure for quick feedback returns with limited staff time” (p. 40).

Despite the above weaknesses, students attested to the positive effect of timely, constructive, and individualized feedback on learning. This finding is consistent with Black and William (as cited in Gibbs & Simpson, 2004), who established that there were extraordinarily large and consistent positive effects of feedback on learning compared with other aspects of teaching. Duarte (2013) also attested to the same finding and argued that constructive and timely feedback facilitates learning by making students aware of their strengths and weaknesses and equally provides advice on how students should improve their performance. This calls for strengthening feedback mechanisms in higher education.

Higher education institutions should therefore design innovative ways of providing students with feedback on formative assessment given the positive effect of feedback on learning. Several studies have recommended innovative ways of providing feedback to students in the wake of massification of higher education. Brown (2004) advocated for class collective feedback. In addition, Higgins, Hartley, and Skelton (2010) proposed mechanisms such face-to-face feedback, written feedback, peer feedback, self-assessment, exemplar assignments, oral feedback, and feedback via Podcast or video. Proposals by Higgins et al. (2010), such as self-assessment and peer feedback, introduce the role of students in the feedback loop, and they mark a sharp departure from extant studies, which look at feedback as primarily stemming from the teacher.

Finally, there is a noticeable gap between the characteristics of good teaching in the SECAT and what students perceive to be the most important dimensions of good teaching. This can be attributed to the fact that the items in the questionnaire were developed based on administrators' perceptions of good teaching. This finding is consistent with Meng and Onwuegbuzie (2015), who faulted most student evaluation of teaching instruments for being based on administrators' perceptions of good teaching. This finding calls for bringing the items in the questionnaire closer to students' perception of good teaching.

In view of the discussion, we can conclude that good teaching transcends what takes place on stage. In practice, good teaching involves what happens before teaching (e.g., preparation), what takes place on the stage (delivery of lessons or facilitating learning), and what happens after the stage (advising students, conducting assessment, and providing feedback on assessment). This therefore suggests that measures to assess good teaching should take a wider rather than a narrow view of teaching. Good teaching is therefore more than being a content expert and being able to deliver the content well. The findings also show that the six attributes of good teaching are not an end in themselves but a means to an end, that is, promotion of student learning.

In terms of contribution, the themes of good teaching from this exploratory study are a valuable resource for academics to reflect on them, vis-a-vis their current viewpoints of good teaching, and work toward becoming good teachers by improving teaching and learning. Second, the study has revealed a mismatch between students' perceptions of good teaching and items in the SECAT questionnaire at Makerere. The findings of the study have potential to inform the attempts to align the student evaluation of teaching instrument with students' perceptions of good teaching.

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