

Student Ratings: Evidence vs. Myths—Things a Chair Needs to Know

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Insight
Improvement
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- Individual Development and Educational Assessment
- Founded in 1975
- Not-for-profit status in 2001
- Mission:
 - To serve colleges and universities committed to improving learning, teaching, and leadership performance

“Ratings of overall effectiveness are moderately correlated with independent measures of student learning and achievement. Students of highly rated teachers achieve higher final exam scores, can better apply course material, and are more inclined to pursue the subject subsequently.”

(Davis, 2009, p. 534)

Objectives

- Describe causes of misconceptions
- Describe misconceptions associated with student ratings of instruction
- Describe recent research on teacher standards, expectations, and student ratings
- Discuss implications for faculty development and evaluation

Misconceptions Persist

- Common misconceptions persist about student ratings of instruction (Aleamoni, 1987; Benton & Cashin, 2012; Feldman, 2007; Kulik, 2001; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011; Theall & Feldman, 2007).
- These misconceptions are unsupported by research and make valid use of ratings difficult.

Reasons Why Misconceptions Persist

- Confirmation bias
- Emotional attachment to belief
- Consistent with every day experience
- Part of more general view of students

Common Misconceptions about Student Ratings

- Students not competent to rate teaching
- Students cannot make consistent judgments
- Student ratings are just popularity contests
- Students cannot appreciate good teaching until they are out of college a few years

Common Misconceptions about Student Ratings

- Student feedback cannot be used to improve instruction
- Emphasis on student ratings has led to grade inflation
- Students just want easy courses
- Others?

Students not competent to rate teaching

- **Evidence to the contrary:**
 - **Student ratings correlate positively with:**
 - **Student achievement measures**
 - **Instructor self-ratings**
 - **Ratings by administrators, colleagues, and trained observers**

Students cannot make consistent judgments

Evidence to the contrary:

- **Student ratings are consistent, stable, and generalizable**
- **Ratings consistent for teaching behaviors, student self-ratings of learning, and overall impressions of course/instructor**

Student ratings are just popularity contests

Evidence to the contrary:

- **Effect of teacher personality on ratings is weak**
- **Student ratings can assess more than just popularity or course satisfaction**

Students cannot appreciate good teaching until they are out of college a few years

Evidence to the contrary:

- **Retrospective ratings by alumni correlate positively with those given by same students years earlier**

Student feedback cannot be used to improve instruction

- **Evidence to the contrary:**
 - **Student ratings feedback leads to more improvement than no feedback**
 - **Ratings combined with consultation targeted at specific teaching behaviors leads to greatest improvement**

Emphasis on student ratings has led to grade inflation

- **Evidence to the contrary:**
 - **Expected grade has little effect on ratings**
 - **Correlations do not necessarily imply grade inflation**

Students just want easy courses

Evidence to the contrary:

- **Course workload and subject matter difficulty positively correlated with student ratings**
- **Amount of reading and non-reading assignments unrelated to students' desire to take a course**
- **Stronger desire to take a course when instructor expects students to take share of responsibility for learning**

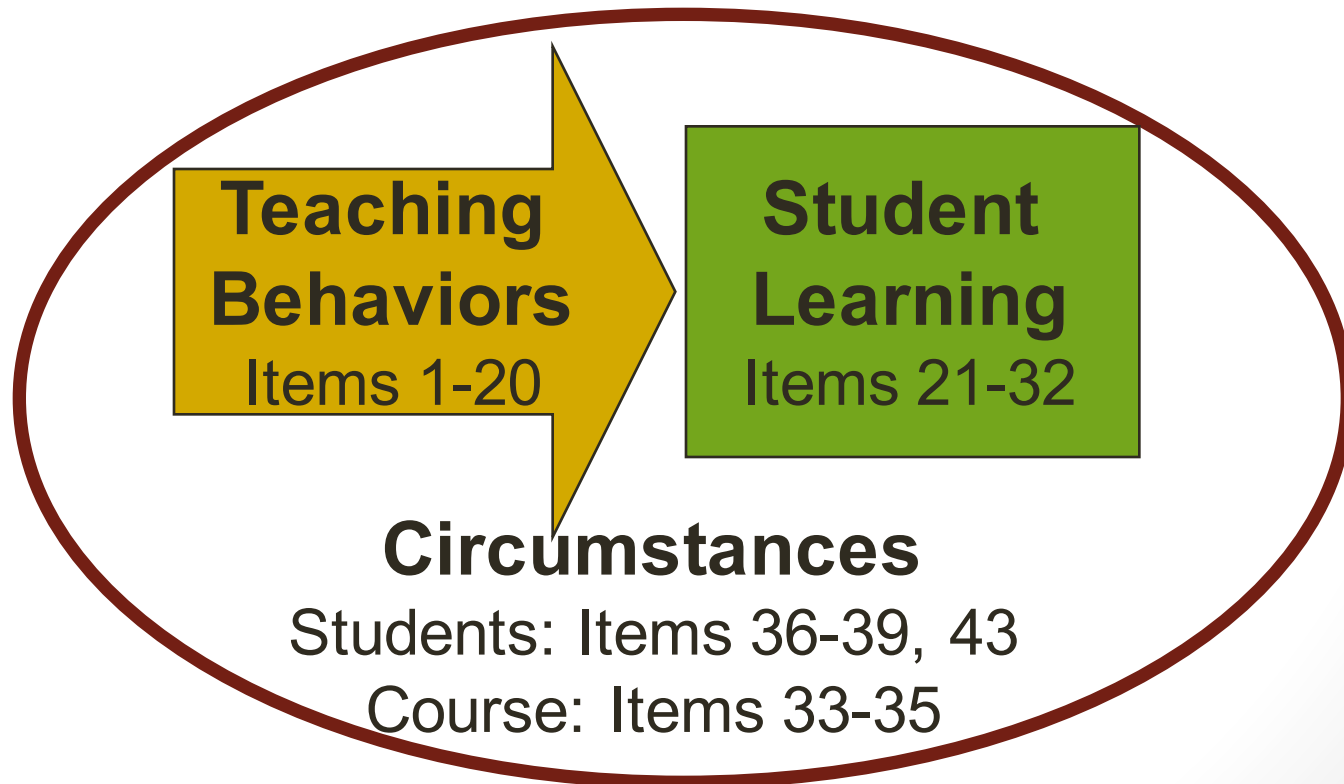
Questions and comments?

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between students' ratings of teacher standards and expectations and their self-reported progress on relevant learning objectives?
2. What is the relationship between students' ratings of teacher standards and expectations and their ratings of the course and instructor?

Instrument – IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction

Specific teaching behaviors influence certain types of student progress under certain circumstances.



Student Learning Model: 2

Assumptions

A
T
n
ir

Objectives: Using the scale provided, identify the relevance of each of the twelve objectives to this course. As a general rule, prioritize what you want students to learn by selecting no more than 3-5 objectives as either Important or Essential. The weighting system used to generate the IDEA report weighs Essential objectives "2," Important objectives "1," and Minor objectives "0."

(Scale - M = Minor or No Importance, I = Important, E = Essential)

- | | M | I | E | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) |
| 2. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories |
| 3. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Learning to <i>apply</i> course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions) |
| 4. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course |
| 5. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team |
| 6. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Developing creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.) |
| 7. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.) |
| 8. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing |
| 9. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems |
| 10. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values |
| 11. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Learning to <i>analyze</i> and <i>critically evaluate</i> ideas, arguments, and points of view |
| 12. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers |

Student Diagnostic Form

Assumption 2:

Effectiveness determined by students' progress on objectives stressed by instructor

IDEA CENTRE SURVEY FORM - STUDENT REACTIONS TO INSTRUCTION AND COURSES
IMPORTANT!

Institution: _____ Instructor: _____
Course Number: _____ Time and Days Class Meets: _____

Your thoughtful answers to these questions will provide helpful information to your instructor.
Describe the frequency of your instructor's teaching procedures, using the following code:
1=Hardly Ever 2=Occasionally 3=Sometimes 4=Frequently 5=Almost Always

The Instructor:

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 1. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 1. Displayed a personal interest in students and their learning |
| 2. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 2. Found ways to help students answer their own questions |
| 3. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 3. Scheduled course work (class activities, tests, projects) in ways which encouraged students to stay up-to-date in their work |
| 4. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 4. Demonstrated the importance and significance of the subject matter |
| 5. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 5. Formed "teams" or "discussion groups" to facilitate learning |
| 6. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 6. Made it clear how each topic fit into the course |
| 7. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 7. Explained the reasons for criticisms of students' academic performance |
| 8. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 8. Stimulated students to intellectual effort beyond that required by most courses |
| 9. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 9. Encouraged students to use multiple resources (e.g. data banks, library holdings, outside experts) to improve understanding |
| 10. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 10. Explained course material clearly and concisely |
| 11. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 11. Related course material to real life situations |
| 12. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 12. Gave tests, projects, etc. that covered the most important points of the course |
| 13. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 13. Introduced stimulating ideas about the subject |
| 14. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 14. Involved students in "hands on" projects such as research, case studies, or "real life" activities |
| 15. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 15. Inspired students to set and achieve goals which really challenged them |
| 16. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 16. Asked students to discuss and experiences with others whose backgrounds and viewpoints differ from their own |
| 17. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 17. Provided timely and frequent feedback (tests, reports, projects, etc.) to help students improve |
| 18. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 18. Asked students to help each other understand ideas or concepts |
| 19. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 19. Gave projects, tests, or assignments that required original or creative thinking |
| 20. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 20. Encouraged student-faculty interaction outside of class (office visits, phone calls, e-mail, etc.) |

Twelve possible learning objectives are listed below, not all of which will be relevant in this class. Describe the amount of progress you made on each (even those not pursued in this class) by using the following scale:

1-No apparent progress
2-Slight progress; I made small gains on this objective.
3-Moderate progress; I made some gains on this objective.
4-Substantial progress; I made large gains on this objective.
5-Exceptional progress; I made outstanding gains on this objective.

Progress on:

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| 21. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 21. Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends) |
| 22. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 22. Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories |
| 23. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 23. Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions) |
| 24. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 24. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course |
| 25. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 25. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team |
| 26. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 26. Developing creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.) |
| 27. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 27. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.) |
| 28. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 28. Developing skill in expressing myself orally or in writing |
| 29. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 29. Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems |
| 30. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 30. Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values |
| 31. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 31. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view |
| 32. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | 32. Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking my own questions and seeking answers |

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Measures of teacher standards and expectations

- Item 45: “The instructor expected students to take their share of responsibility for learning”
- Item 46: “The instructor had high achievement standards”
- Response scale: 1 (*Definitely False*) to 5 (*Definitely True*)

Outcome measures

- Student average progress on relevant learning objectives
- Item 41: “Overall, I rate this instructor an excellent teacher”
- Item 42: “Overall, I rate this course as excellent”

Sample

- Student ratings data were analyzed from over 300 institutions using the IDEA Student Ratings System (SRS) during the years 2002 to 2011 ($N = 490,196$ classes).

Results

- Students gave higher ratings of their own progress when they perceived the instructor had
 - high achievement standards ($\beta = .53$), and
 - high expectations for students' share of responsibility for learning ($\beta = .36$).
 - $R^2 = .47$

Results

- Students gave higher ratings of the excellence of the instructor when they perceived
 - high achievement standards ($\beta = .65$), and
 - high expectations for student's share of responsibility for learning ($\beta = .47$).
 - $R^2 = .40$

Results

- Students gave higher ratings of the excellence of the course when they perceived
 - high achievement standards ($\beta = .65$), and
 - high expectations for students' share of responsibility for learning ($\beta = .48$).
 - $R^2 = .42$

Insert question or topic here?

DISCUSSION

“SETs [student evaluations of teaching effectiveness] are multidimensional, reliable and stable, primarily a function of the instructor who teaches a course rather than the course that is taught, relatively valid against a variety of indicators of effective teaching, relatively unaffected by a variety of potential biases, and are seen to be useful by faculty, students, and administrators.”

(Marsh, 2007, p. 372)