

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY OF TEACHERS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS

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**Abstract.** The article provides a theoretical analysis of scientific approaches to determining the components of teaching effectiveness from the students' point of view. Three groups of indicators of the teacher's effectiveness are distinguished: pedagogical mastery, professional and personal qualities; their components are revealed. Students' feedback on the teaching of subjects at Berdyansk State Pedagogical University in two periods - pre-war (during the coronavirus pandemic) (735 reviews) and the military invasion of Russia in Ukraine (627 reviews) were analyzed. It was revealed that the war affected the change of priorities in the assessment of the effectiveness of the professional activity of teachers of higher education institutions, namely: during the martial law, the highest indicators were given to personal qualities, in contrast to the professional qualities of teachers, which were prioritized in the pre-war period.

**Keywords:** teacher of a higher education institution; students opinion; teacher's efficiency; efficiency assessment criteria

### 1. Relevance of the problem

Quality control of the teacher's work is one of the most difficult and important tasks in the general problem of quality management of education in higher education. The activity of a teacher is multifaceted and, according to regulatory documents, consists of such activities as: educational, methodical, scientific and organizational. However, all these types of work do not take into account the opinions of students, without which the evaluation of the teacher's activity is incomplete and formal.

The problem of assessing the quality of the activity of a teacher at a higher education institution and determining its effectiveness is being investigated by many domestic - I. Annenkova, K. Bagme, T. Vasilyea, O. Veres, O. Kozak, L. Lyakhovets, V. Pasichnyk, A. Shostak and foreign researchers scientists. The results of their research revealed a number of key qualities that make up the profile of an effective teacher, namely: pedagogical and communication skills, passion for their profession (Murray 2021), effective management strategies and deep knowledge of the subject or field (Nushi 2022). Most scientists emphasize the need for a multifaceted study of these qualities: from the point of view of teachers themselves (Lisa 2021), students, internal and external experts (Lyakhovets 2016).

The question of what makes a teacher's work effective is of primary importance for obtaining high-quality learning outcomes, establishing relationships between teachers and students, improving institutional quality, motivating students, and professional development of teachers (Nushi 2022). However, it should be noted that the characteristics of an effective teacher are socially constructed and context dependent. The perception of the qualities of a teacher at one university may vary depending on the year of study, ethnic differences, student performance rating (Hughes 2022), the impact of crisis phenomena on the teaching system (Nushi 2022). In this context, the study of students' opinions about the characteristics that make up the profile of the work of an effective teacher and changes in their priorities during social crises can be particularly relevant and useful.

**2. The purpose of the article** is to analyze the influence of social conditions on the views of students regarding the characteristics of the effectiveness of the professional activity of teachers of higher education institutions and to establish possible changes in determining priority qualities during social crises.

### **3. Current state of the researched problem**

The level of skills acquired by students largely depends on the activities of teachers of higher education institutions and the quality of their work. There is no doubt that the quality of the work of teachers translates into the quality of the professional reserve of students they create and, as a result, is one of the most important determinants of the economic growth of countries. In view of the above, considerable attention of scientists and practicing educators is devoted to the development of mechanisms that will allow teachers to be mobilized for more effective work and to fully involve them in the process of creating new human potential and improving its quality.

The results of the evaluation of the activities of teachers of higher education institutions, their scientific potential and methodological competence are considered key indicators of the quality of the educational process at the university.

Given the fact that the quality of teaching and its perception are influenced by the values of both teachers and students, the characteristics of the effective work of a teacher are considered from different points of view.

Teacher evaluation systems by students have been the subject of debate among both researchers and educational institution administrators since their appearance in US colleges in the 1920s. The main debates about the evaluation of teachers by students were due to differences in the results of empirical studies, which proved that the evaluations received by students often do not correspond to the quality of teaching, because the acquirers do not have relevant knowledge of the subject. At the same time, when evaluating the activities of teachers, students focus primarily on such indicators as: the level of preparation of teachers for lectures and seminars, how clearly the teachers teach the material and how rial is interesting to the audience (Andruschak 2011).

The results of the study by V. Morrison and S. Evansom (Morrison 2018) showed that the main attention of students is focused on the pedagogical skills of teachers. Similar studies were conducted by F. Su and M. Wood and determined that such factors as the integration of the teacher's subject knowledge, his willingness to help students, the use of encouraging teaching methods play a significant role in the formation of student views on a "good" university teacher. Among other important characteristics of teachers, a sense of humor and quick feedback were named (Su 2012). J. Murray also emphasizes the importance of such values as cooperation, focusing on the interests of the student, support, respect for the student, concern and care (Murray 2021).

Other researchers have concluded that the highest criterion for teacher evaluation (from the students' perspective) is evaluation policies and practices (Nushi 2022). Let us emphasize that this question is quite controversial among researchers, because it is based on the assumption that the assessment of students' educational achievements does not directly belong to the characteristics of the quality of education and depends on the complexity of the discipline, the demands of teachers, and their popularity among the student audience (Hughes 2022). At the same time, the relationship between grades and the time students spend studying depends on grading standards: the stricter teachers are in grading, the more you need to study to get good results. In this situation, the student is better off when the assessment standards are low, and the teachers give high marks for the minimal "work" of the students (Nushi 2022), but the quality of the acquired knowledge of the discipline in this case may be mediocre.

So, studying the criteria for evaluating the work of an effective teacher, which were named by students in the analyzed studies, we identified three groups of teacher effectiveness indicators: pedagogical skills, personal and professional qualities. The summarized data are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Indicators of the effectiveness of the teacher's work in the eyes of students

| No | Indexes                | Characteristics of the teacher  |
|----|------------------------|---|
| 1  | Pedagogical skill      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– the depth of knowledge of the subject, the desire to arouse interest in it;</li><li>– clarity, clarity and consistency of presentation of the material (Andruschak 2011);</li><li>– language literacy, clarity of diction;</li><li>– accessibility, sociability, ability to find contact with the audience (Hughes 2022);</li><li>– audience reaction; ability to relieve tension and fatigue of the audience;</li><li>– encourages discussion, competition;</li><li>– overcoming the contradiction between formal and personal approaches to education (Marukhina 2015);</li></ul> |
| 2  | Personal qualities     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– benevolence, willingness to help (Marukhina 2015);</li><li>– tact;</li><li>– respect for students;</li><li>– ability to listen and understand the student;</li><li>– objectivity in knowledge assessment (Agranat 2019; (Marukhina 2015);</li><li>– breadth of erudition;</li><li>– organization and discipline (Su 2012);</li><li>– interest in student success (Andruschak 2011);</li><li>– appearance, manner of behavior;</li><li>– emotion control</li></ul>   |
| 3  | Professional qualities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– has the necessary knowledge of the subject he teaches;</li><li>– uses the latest technologies in the teaching process (Marukhina 2015);</li><li>– focus on results;</li><li>– connection of educational material with the current state of research in a certain field (Agranat 2019);</li><li>– guides the use of the studied material in the further professional activity of specialists;</li><li>– constantly improves teaching methods;</li><li>– has a creative approach and interest in his business.</li></ul>  |

The analysis of studies proves that students evaluate the indicated indicators in different ways, which allows us to draw a conclusion about the multifaceted perception of the image of an effective teacher by students: some emphasize that the pedagogical qualities of teachers are the most important criterion, other students emphasize personal qualities, high popularity is also objective assessment of students' educational achievements.

Most researchers are convinced that the process of students' perception of the pedagogical professionalism of their teachers affects the quality of their teaching

(Agranat 2019; Nushi 2022). However, some authors believe that only the existence of external standards, which have been established in the community of teachers and, perhaps, have been established by law, in general, allow obtaining reliable student evaluations of teachers, which can be used as characteristics of the quality of education (Lyakhovets 2016; Lisa 2021).

#### **4. The influence of social conditions on the evaluation of teachers by students**

Research on this issue also assumes that the characteristics of a teacher's activity are dynamic and open to contextual, cultural, and temporal factors (Marukhina 2015), and the features of an effective teacher's work depend on time, context, and social conditions (Su 2012).

For example, a number of Iranian scientists who examined the similarities and differences in students' perception of the qualities of an effective teacher depending on their level of knowledge, came to the conclusion that the higher the knowledge rating of students, the higher they rate their teachers. In addition, in the first year of study, students value the communication skills of teachers and their broad outlook, and in the senior years - professional competence, the connection of the studied material with the practical activities of future specialists (Lisa 2021).

Israeli researchers emphasize that the perception of the qualities of a "good" teacher also depends on the ethnicity, mentality and culture of the students. Thus, the Arab-Israeli survey participants preferred the teacher's ethics. At the same time, Israeli Jews primarily emphasized mutual understanding and positive interaction with students (Marukhina 2015). During the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers have also noted a change in student priorities for effective teaching and giving special importance to qualities such as concern for the well-being of subordinates and the use of the latest online teaching methods (Hughes 2022).

In order to expand knowledge in this field and investigate the question: which of the indicators of the effective activity of teachers are most important for students in the period of changes in socio-political conditions, we conducted an online survey among students of Berdyan State Pedagogical University (hereinafter – BSPU). The survey was conducted in two stages: the first – identification of the qualities of the teacher's effective work in the pre-war period (1st semester of the 2021 – 2022 academic year); the second – during the war in Ukraine (1 semester 2022 – 2023 AD), when the university was temporarily relocated in connection with military operations and the occupation of the territory of Berdyansk. It should be noted that in both studied periods, the form of education was online, that is, the teaching methods were the same, using the MOODLE distance learning platform and the program for organizing classes through ZOOM video conferences.

As part of the first stage of the research, a total of 735 comments on 600 disciplines from students from 6 faculties were analyzed. We conducted a content analysis to study and interpret the feedback on the teaching of the subjects, which included

the use of a selective coding procedure. Its purpose is to identify and distinguish categories and provide evidence for each based on existing data. By reading and highlighting the most important points, the main, most common characteristics were highlighted, and then the feedback on the discipline or recommendation was grouped based on their similarities or differences. We combined the obtained characteristics into three groups of indicators of the effectiveness of the teacher's work, the students' answers are as follows (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Indicators of the effectiveness of the teacher's work in the eyes of students (results of the analysis of feedback from students of the BSPU 2021 – 2022 year)

| No | Indexes   | Number of reviews                     | Share in % |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 1  | Pedagogical skill:<br>Clear presentation of the material<br>Interesting presentation of the material for better understanding<br>Application of visual material, presentations<br>Motivates and supports students<br>Finds an individual approach and helps<br>Pleasant atmosphere in pairs | 186<br>143<br>19<br>15<br>3<br>4<br>2 | 25,3       |
| 2  | Personal qualities:<br>Positive attitude of the teacher<br>Kind, understanding  | 16<br>9<br>7                          | 2,2        |
| 3  | Professional qualities:<br>The teacher is cool, literate, competent, modern<br>Provides knowledge needed for further work<br>The teacher's activity and interest in students' knowledge<br>Provision of relevant, modern knowledge  | 533<br>394<br>98<br>35<br>6           | 72,5       |

So, according to the results of the coding of answers regarding the quality of teaching subjects by students of the BSPU in 2021 – 2022, the most important for students (the highest positions among the characteristics) were called "professionalism of the teacher", "comprehensible teaching of the material" and "professional orientation of the provided knowledge". which accounted for more than 86% of the total number of student comments. The other nine characteristics accounted for only 14% of the responses.

As we can see from Table 2, in the pre-war period, students paid considerable attention to the professional qualities of teachers. For example, among the students' comments were the following: "The teacher thinks narrowly, he has outdated information, so you have to agree with him so as not to underestimate the grade"; "The teacher is not bad, but very unprofessional, she does not explain her thoughts well", "I would like more instructions on how to complete the tasks, and not as if you were given an exercise and you struggle with it yourself".

The second category was pedagogical skill, in which students note the ability of teachers to motivate students to study, despite the fact that "it is difficult to do practical tasks and perform group work in distance education". They highly appreciate the "interesting presentation of the material, because in a few lectures the teacher was able to motivate them to study the discipline further on their own".

The personal qualities of the teacher in the distance form of education are not highly rated by the students, since the applicants do not have direct contact with the teacher and often only listen to lectures. It is interesting to note that in the comments students emphasize that the teachers have become "too strict" and "demanding".

At the second stage of the study, we analyzed the period 2022 – 2023 AD, which coincided with the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine. Most of the participants in the educational process found themselves in the epicenter of hostilities, others became forcibly displaced persons. Those students who remained at home in Ukraine constantly suffer significant mental and physical injuries due to the shelling of populated areas; outside the country, mental disorders arise in students due to separation from their families or the loss of loved ones, financial difficulties, the need to work hard, etc. All this is one of the serious problems that creates obstacles on the way to ensuring the quality of education (Scarlet 2022, p. 14).

So, based on the content analysis of 627 comments and recommendations of students of the BSPU in 2022 – 2023 N.Y. we obtained the following results (Table 3):

**Table 3.** Indicators of the effectiveness of the teacher's work in the eyes of students (results of the analysis of feedback from students of BSPU 2022 – 2023)

| No | Indexes   | Number of reviews  | Share in % |
|----|---|--|------------|
| 1  | Personal qualities<br>Friendly, ready to help<br>Open to communication<br>High level of loyalty<br>Treats students with understanding and respect<br>Patient, tolerant, impartial<br>Works overtime with students when the latter need it<br>Answers all questions<br>Pleasant in communication<br>Respects the student's opinion, even if it differs from others<br>Attentive<br>Responsible<br>Changes the worldview of the student for the better<br>Tactful | 245<br>41<br>36<br>24<br>23<br>22<br>19<br>17<br>17<br>14<br>14<br>8<br>6<br>4 | 39,1       |

|   |   |     |      |
|---|---|-----|------|
| 2 | Pedagogical mastery   | 199 | 31,7 |
|   | Accessible, clear presentation of material                    | 55  |      |
|   | Various forms of material submission                          | 42  |      |
|   | Motivates to study  | 25  |      |
|   | A creative, non-standard approach to lectures                 | 24  |      |
|   | Helps to become more independent                              | 19  |      |
|   | Warm and friendly atmosphere during classes                   | 18  |      |
|   | Transparent assessment  | 16  |      |
| 3 | Professional qualities  | 183 | 29,2 |
|   | Provides material that is necessary for the future profession | 58  |      |
|   | Professionalism   | 44  |      |
|   | Rich pedagogical experience, fluent in the material           | 39  |      |
|   | Focused on the result   | 28  |      |
|   | Rational use of time  | 14  |      |

Analyzing the results of the second stage of the study, which coincided with the military operations in Ukraine, we can say that during the period of psychological stress, students began to highly value the personal qualities of teachers, primarily pointing to their willingness to help in completing tasks and writing scientific papers, to be open to communication for solving organizational issues. We received the following comments from the applicants: "A teacher from God. If a student wants to study and is ready to work, she will get in touch both day and night, even at four o'clock in the morning, and always works conscientiously." At the same time, students want teachers to be loyal in these difficult times regarding absences and unfulfilled tasks due to blackouts and air alarms: "You have to live in the same time and conditions as students. We are all human and should support each other, and not push into the framework that we have invented. Every student makes a lot of effort to get a quality education. And you, in turn, should support and not oppress students in such times." Therefore, applicants, first of all, see teachers as people who can help: "Communicating with the teacher brought not only benefit, but also joy, which helped to understand one's own problems" and "get away from reality", "The teacher is very friendly and has a sincere heart. Always ready to go to a meeting, to help, even when there was no communication, all the lessons were worked out later".

Note that all three indicators of teacher performance have almost the same percentage ratio (compared to the previous period), but each of them has several characteristics that occupy the largest number of reviews. Yes, among the indicators of pedagogical skill accessible, comprehensible presentation of the material is of particular importance for students. This showman took the highest position in both stages of the study. At the same time, at the second stage of the research, such an

indicator as “providing knowledge needed for the future profession” took the first position in the “Professional qualities” category. Students also highly value professionalism and experience: “I believe that this is exactly how teachers should be today – to have a huge amount of knowledge in the field and to keep up with the times, to be able to motivate students to study, to serve the material as if under an exquisite sauce, so that you want to savor it for the longest time, that is, learn and develop in the chosen direction”.

## **5. Conclusion**

There is a large amount of literature on the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of students, which can be divided into three categories: pedagogical skill, personal and professional qualities of teachers. This study was conducted to determine how and to what extent social conditions influence students' opinions about an effective teacher. For this purpose, students' feedback on the teaching of 600 subjects at Berdyansk State Pedagogical University was analyzed in two periods – in the pre-war period (735 feedbacks) and during the military invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine (627 feedbacks).

The results of the study revealed that when describing the characteristics of an effective teacher during the distance form of education, students in both periods name, first of all, the ability to teach educational material in an accessible and comprehensible manner. The provision of professionally oriented knowledge and mastery of various, modern forms and methods of teaching are also highly valued. However, the total number of responses in each of the categories indicates a change in priorities, which characterize the effectiveness of the work of a teacher at a higher education institution, in wartime. If in the pre-war period the highest positions were occupied by the professional qualities of a teacher, such as: thorough knowledge of the subject taught, modern teaching methods (use of presentations, group tasks, etc.), then in wartime the applicants highly appreciate the personal qualities of teachers: willingness to help in any time when performing practical tasks, writing qualification papers; understanding of the problems that prevent attendance at classes (bad Internet, blackouts, air alarms) and the opportunity to continue the educational process outside of working hours, develop students' competencies while performing creative tasks, extend the deadlines for submitting assignments, etc.

Therefore, it can be concluded that social conditions directly influence the students' perception of the effective professional activity of the teacher. With the transition to distance education, students began to highly value effective methods of working in the online format, the structuredness of the material, and methodical explanations for completing tasks. During the martial law, which is accompanied by difficult learning conditions, the deterioration of the psychological state of students and teachers, and a decrease in the quality of the educational process, students began to pay more attention and value human qualities such as understanding, loyalty, help, and kindness.

In our opinion, the assessment of teachers' performance by students should become an effective mechanism for improving the quality of education and a mandatory addition to the analysis of the activities of higher education institutions by the administration and the state, which makes it possible to quickly and effectively.

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