#### STUDENTS' CRITIQUE OF AN EDUCATOR - A CASE STUDY

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#### Abstract

It has never been easy to be informed of one's shortcomings as an educator, let alone approach the issue squarely, even with the intention to self-improve. Resulting negative reactions and self withdrawals by the educator can often initially stand in the way. Yet, motivated to do so from the lowest year-end overall evaluation score by students, a qualitative case study was carried out with a dozen willing participants from two groups of students taught, who responded to the researcher's invitation to sincerely and without reserve critique her. Areas covered included how they viewed her strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator and as a person, and their suggestions for her to improve in any aspect they felt fit. One-to-one email interviews were carried out in the strictest confidence, where which the participants saw it very safe to express their critically explicit views of the educator they knew, now seen solely just as an object of research. Findings revealed that beyond the surface of a student's demeanour and thinking of how students superficially appear to the educator, lie honest truths about how they respectively saw her. Moreover, they let her know exactly how they felt about her, simply because they had been given the rarest opportunity to do so. Interestingly, it became a personally enriching experience for both students and educator concerned, when all guard was let down. After all, how often are students given the upper hand to honestly critique someone teaching them, and yet not feel threatened by possible repercussion?

Keywords: educator, critique, students, strengths, weaknesses

#### Introduction

In Institutes of Teacher Education (ITEs) and Malaysian Universities, student critique of their lecturers is an evaluation tool for student satisfaction in assessing the teaching and learning process. Similarly, Musharraf and Sabina (2016) find student feedback to be most effective and dependable, though disputable, among the many types of teacher assessment. It is unavoidable for some students to use the evaluation to get back personally at the teacher . . . [even though] . . . feedback allows students to partake in their education . . . (Room 241 Team, 2012). Nevertheless, it is not easy, yet necessary, to not react negatively nor defensively in the light of criticism (Hesmondhalgh, 2018).

#### **Statement of the Problem**

As depicted in Table 1, the researcher had obtained an overall student evaluation of 4.87 for the year 2017, the lowest in the Language Department across all three language units, even though she had surpassed the predetermined 4.75 cut off point of the total average score of the ITE she originally belonged to.

| Table 1: Overall Student Evaluation | 2017 on | the Lecturers | of the Researcher's |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| Former Language Departme            | ent     |               |                     |

| Lecturer   | Unit    | Students Who<br>Evaluated | Total Score<br>Average /5.00 |
|------------|---------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1          |         |                           | 4.96                         |
| 2          |         |                           | 4.94                         |
| 3          |         |                           | 5.00                         |
| 4          |         |                           | 4.96                         |
| 5          |         |                           | 4.96                         |
| 6          |         |                           | 5.00                         |
|            |         |                           | 4.87                         |
| Researcher | English | Teaching English as       |                              |
|            | Studies | a Second Language         |                              |
| 8          |         | (TESL)                    | 4.97                         |
| 9          |         | Majors                    | 5.00                         |
| 10         |         | -                         | 5.00                         |

| Lecturer | Unit    | Students Who<br>Evaluated | Total Score<br>Average /5.00 |
|----------|---------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 11       |         |                           | 4.94                         |
| 12       | English | Teaching English as       | 4.96                         |
| 13       | Studies | a Second Language         | 5.00                         |
| 14       |         | (TESL)                    | 4.96                         |
| 15       |         | Majors                    | 4.91                         |
| 16       |         |                           | 5.00                         |
| 17       |         |                           | 5.00                         |
| 18       | Tamil   | Tamil Studies             | 5.00                         |
| 19       | Studies | Majors                    | 5.00                         |
| 20       |         |                           | 5.00                         |
| 21       |         |                           | 5.00                         |
| 22       |         |                           | 5.00                         |

| Lecturer | Unit    | Students Who    | Total Score   |
|----------|---------|-----------------|---------------|
|          |         | Evaluated       | Average /5.00 |
| 23       | Chinese | Chinese Studies | 5.00          |
| 24       | Studies | Majors          | 4.97          |
| 25       |         | -               | 4.99          |
| 26       |         |                 | 5.00          |

*Note.* Extracted from the Examinations Unit of the researcher's former ITE (November 2017).

However, the 4.87 score did not quite tally with the comments from the TESL students who had evaluated her, as portrayed in Table 2.

*Table 2*: Anonymous Comments by the Class of Students who had Evaluated the Researcher Online

| Student | Comment   |
|---------|---|
| 1       | Good.   |
| 2       | She adheres to the course pro forma.                          |
| 3       | Great.  |
| 4       | Effective teaching and learning.                              |
| 5       | A lecturer who carries out teaching and learning well.        |
| 6       | A lecturer who carries out teaching and learning effectively. |
| 7       | A lecturer who is creative and experienced.                   |
| 8       | A lecturer who is very good!                                  |
| 9       | Effective teaching and learning delivery.                     |
| 10      | Thank you for a very great guidance, Dr.                      |
| 11      | The input delivered is easy to understand.                    |
| 12      | No comment.   |
| 13      | Nil.  |
| 14      | Nil.  |

*Note.* Extracted from the Examinations Unit of the researcher's former ITE (November 2017).

Yet, the accompanying comments did little to prevent a negative onslaught of emotions on the researcher, which included frustration, effort not being appreciated, total demotivation to carry on as before, a sense of failure, and embarassment towards the rest of her colleagues in her former Language Department. Johnson (2012) described being in a similar situation, "... [A]t first I felt betrayed by the students who I had worked so hard to help... It was like some of them were not even grateful at all" (para. 5), that never fails to penetrate (Chetna, 2014).

However, the researcher had assumed calm after coming across what Vanderbilt Center for Teaching (2018) posits, "Know that almost *all* faculty members receive negative feedback at some point in their careers, including those who are senior and

highly successful" (para. 8), before embarking on this case study, to investigate what went so wrong on the researcher's part as an educator, and how she could possibly rectify matters with the students she had taught.

# **Research Question**

The researcher in this study attempts to answer the following research question:

To what extent does students' critique of the researcher tally with what students seek for in an educator?

# **Related Literature**

Students have various ideas of the kind of educator they favour. Chtena (2014) found that "[When] . . . work[ing] your students to their full potential . . . some students [will not] be thrilled, no matter how good your teaching skills or how much you care" (para. 10). Therefore, ". . . it is only fair that there is a discussion about teacher [and] student expectations in the classroom" (Pullen, 2014, para. 3).

# **Instructional Qualities of the Educator**

On instructional qualities of the educator, some student expectations, as Pullen (2014) found include, students not being made to feel incompetent, being helped when in need, besides getting feedback on student strengths and weaknesses where their shortcomings are not over-emphasised.

Pullen (2014) asserts that educators should not favouritise any student, as they, "... [are] supposed . . . to be impartial [towards students, in terms of gender and favouritism]" (Hyder, 2016, para. 20). Moreover, as Hyder (2016) posits, "What is the duty of a teacher, if not to inspire!" (para. 7).

Besides, Hyder (2016) observes that "[s]tudents expect ... [the] teacher [to] make the content come alive in front of the class" (para. 10) ... [and is] clear, through personal examples ..." (para. 10), rather than to merely allow multimedia slides to replace the lecture. The student's world, is one of pop culture or technology (Hall & Russac, 2013) and the teacher is expected to be, as described by Massey (2013), "... more hands-on and creative ..." (para. 2), besides going slow when delivering the lesson.

Furthermore, students value clear instruction (Pullen, 2014) for the production of assignments or class presentations (Massey, 2013). Additionally, the teacher needs to deliver what students are expected to produce in the examination hall, so as to motivate them (Hyder, 2016).

### **Personal Qualities of the Educator**

Students would distance themselves from teachers who do not treat them properly, or who simply accuse them without investigating (Hall & Russac, 2013), when teachers are expected to be "... more undertsanding... [and] more approachable... [for students to] ask a question" (Massey, 2013, para. 2). Furthermore, "Witty banter and a dose of silliness [of the teacher] go a long way toward keeping [students] engaged" (Hall & Russac, 2013).

## The Research Methodology

The research design for this fully qualitative case study involved twelve voluntary research participants from a population of twenty-eight TESL majors (top achievers of the Fifth Form national-level school examinations) from the researcher's former ITE in the Kedah State. As put forth by World Development Report (2018), "[W]hen teachers solicit answers from students, the high performers are the most likely to volunteer them" (pp. 133-134).

Hence, the researcher utilised an email interview template of twelve semi-structured interview questions, of which each research participant was to type their responses into the said template and re-email the researcher. Any futher clarification on any part of the research participants' responses involved further emailing between the researcher and the research participant concerned, till there was no more room for ambiguity.

Thus, the research participants gave their views on the researcher as a critique specimen, which would empower them to highlight certain truths of her strengths and weaknesses as an educator, without any fear of retaliation by her as their lecturer, all in the name of research. While some might argue how valid students' critique of an educator would be, as they still have much to learn, Musharraf and Sabina (2016) have found students to be best at assessing a teacher's delivery of a lesson.

Ripley (2012) elaborates that teachers are provided concrete suggestions about what they can currently improve on, straight from those they teach who observe them, who have had months to formulate a viewpoint of them. Furthermore, a win-win situation for both researcher and student is enabled when, as Hesmondhalgh (2018) proposes, the teacher seek[s] advice from those who criticise, to enable them to become a part of the solution to the problem at hand, besides being grateful to them for their contribution.

#### **Research Findings**

Strengths and weaknesses of the researcher's teaching/facilitation and personal traits as observed by the research participants, besides student individual comments and suggestions for improvement on them are depicted in Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7, Table 8, Table 9, Table 10, and Table 11.

Table 4: Aspects of the Teaching/Facilitation of The Researcher (R) Liked by the Student (S)

### Aspect 1: Well-organised lessons

- S3 "[The] organisation of her lessons [is v]ery well structured . . . [and h]er lessons are also always well prepared and organised in a smooth easy . . . flow, so we know what to focus on".
- S5 "[R's] lectures [are]very clear and [orderly] ... [and] the content in power point slides [are] according to the topic, title and the sub-title [which enables] me to follow the lecture very well".
- S8 "R's slides are useful for me to help me understand better in my revision".
- S12 "She is always prepared for her lesson with all the materials [slides] and the subject content. It helps me to understand the lesson better".
- S10 "I like the way R . . . [delivers information] and [presents] slides [what to write and the colour and so on] during the tutorial presentation".

### Aspect 2: Uses words easy to understand

S2 "R [uses] words [easy] to understand when teaching us".

### Aspect 3: Explains in depth

- S4 "[R] explains it to the core whenever we do not understand a particular issue . . . repeatedly. She also gives immediate feedback/response to . . . questions . . . I am not a fast learner . . . It really helps when someone explains it again . . . ."
- S5 "Whenever we are confused or [do] not really understand about the lecture/tutorials, R will always explain to us so that we are clear . . . ."

# Aspect 4: Commited to the job

S7 "R is serious in her teaching and always [does her] best to teach us ... in [terms] of content so that we can do it better for our lesson plan and assignment".

S9 "R [delivers] contents in an energetic manner where she uses gestures, body language and facial expressions which keeps the class lively. She also frequently [provides] questions that [require higher] order thinking skills to keep the students thinking".

### **Aspect 5: Humorous**

- S7 "[R is also a humorous] and nice lecturer".
- S9 "The way R teaches keeps the class lively, through humour inbetween the academic contents that she delivers and the questions provided by her [which help] students understand topics that she [teaches]".

# Aspect 6: Highlights areas for improvement (Grammar/ Pronunciation/ Voice Projection/ Colour Choice/ Word Choice)

- S2 "R [points] out our . . . [grammatical] error[s] directly to help us identify [them in our] sentence [structures] especially during tutorial presentation / pre-micro teaching presentation".
- S3 "[R gives a]ttention to detai[1]. [She picks] up on language errors when others just breeze through them or may not even notice the mistakes . . . [and teaches] the proper term right there and then".
- S6 "R always [points] out and [corrects] the mistakes that she found . . . [such as my pronunciation and some words choice mistakes during] the [tutorial presentations] assigned by her. It makes me remember the mistakes that I have made . . . [and I] can always [remind] myself [not to make those] mistakes again".
- S8 "[R] is very patient in pointing out the mistakes we made in our work [and] corrects our mistakes immediately. For example . . . the pronunciation *their* . . . ."
- S11 "R is a very particular person. She makes me pay more attention to small details [which] I usually ignore, such as the importance of using correct punctuation, and silly grammatical errors . . . . and [I] try to fix it before it becomes a habit, especially in academic writing".
- S2 "[Other] mistakes [include] voice projection and the correct font size . . . and . . . suitable colour. [Her h]ighlighting important points during her lectures help[s] me to identify that [those] points [are] important".

# **Aspect 7: Motivates students**

S1 "R always puts high expectation and hope on [us] to always study and improve our proficiency to become an expert of English before teaching in the future. We become motivated to strive for improvement in . . . the assignment". S10 "Her [style] of correcting [asking nicely and not sarcastically nor embarrass me before my classmates, and giving suggestions to make it better in the future] is not to demotivate me, but [to] encourage me to do better than before in presenting my work".

| Aspect 8: Makes time for students |   |  |  |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|
| S2                                | "R always [has] time whenever I needed help in the particular |  |  |
|                                   | subject [and] in my assignment".                              |  |  |

- S8 "... [Whenever] I [ask R] questions, [be it] assignments or tutorial, she will generously answer my questions".
- Table 5: Hints from Student (S) Suggestion on whether the Researcher (R) Should
   Maintain/ Modify/ Further Improve on R's Way of Teaching/ Facilitation

| Hint 1  | : Maintain having well-organised lessons                           |  |
|---|--|--|
| S12   | " I do not have any problem understanding when it comes to         |  |
|   | her class, so any further improvement is unnecessary".             |  |
| 95  |  |  |
| S5  | " I am fine with [her] way [and am] able to understand             |  |
| Hint ?  | lectures and complete all the tutorials".<br>: Continue to go slow |  |
|   |  |  |
| S4  | " [M]aintain the way she teaches in class [which] is easy          |  |
| TT: 4.2   | to follow and suitable for a [not fast learner] like me".          |  |
|   | : Maintain using words easy to understand                          |  |
| S2  | " [Her] word choices [are] easy to understand [which]              |  |
|   | help me to understand better in her lesson and during tutorial".   |  |
| Hint 4  | : Continue linking analogy to learning                             |  |
| S2  | "The way she taught us [is] also fun and interesting. Every time   |  |
|   | R [explains] a new concept, she always uses [an] analogy to help   |  |
|   | us understand better relating it [to] her past [experiences]".     |  |
| Hint 5  | : Maintain being committed   |  |
| <b>S</b> 7  | " I can understand the content that she is delivering and her      |  |
|   | explanation on the topic is brief and easy".                       |  |
| Hint 6  | : Continue being humorous/ Need to inject more humour              |  |
| <b>S</b> 7  | "She always [cracks some jokes] when she is teaching [and] that    |  |
|   | makes us not feel bored easily".                                   |  |
| <b>S</b> 3  | "I say maintain for the most part, then just add a touch more      |  |
|   | anecdotes to lighten the mood every so often. Some topics in       |  |
|   | the lessons could be very dry, a comical story could be            |  |
|   | helpful".  |  |
| Hint 7: Maintain highlighting areas for improvement |  |  |
| S2  | "The way R taught has [helped] me a lot [in] correcting my         |  |
|   | mistakes, especially in grammar and [in] sentence[s]".             |  |

- S6 "... The ways she teaches me enable me to reduce my mistakes [pronunciation and sentence structures] and from that, I . . . construct sentences correctly and [reduce my grammatical] mistakes as [much] as possible".
- S11 "I honestly think that I'm comfortable with the way she is right now, but if she feels like there is a need to change for the [better], I'm open [to] changes . . . . Sometimes, . . . I do feel like she's giving me so much work to do, tutorials and extra exercises for our own understanding towards the subject, but in the end, . . . it's for me. If I always get it the easy way, been spoon-[fed] by her or other lecturers, I personally do not think I will ever grow as a student and a future teacher".
- S8 "... R can just maintain the way she teaches us. I can understand well when [she] teaches us".

| Hint 8     | : Continue motivating students                               |
|------------|--|
| <b>S</b> 1 | "R should continue motivating her students by exposing us to |
|            | an excellent use of English language in writing/ speech. We  |
|            | become extra motivated in completing and perfecting our      |
|            | assignments before we hand them over to her".                |
| Hint 9     | Continue making time for students                            |
| <b>S</b> 8 | "We can also ask question[s] anytime and she is willing to   |
|            | answer us patiently".  |
| Hint 1     | 0: Continue keeping the class engaged                        |
| <b>S</b> 9 | " R should maintain the way she teaches/facilitates in       |
|            | class as it is effective, [p]ersonally to me. During her     |
|            | lesson, I am constantly engaged as she provides questions to |
|            | keep me thinking and focused".                               |
| Hint 1     | 1: Speak louder  |
| S10        | "Maybe R should speak louder".                               |
|            | _  |
| Hint 1     | 2: Reduce over-elaborating                                   |
| S10        | "[R should make] her explanation brief, simple with a clear  |

- S10 "[R should make] her explanation brief, simple with a clear meaning. [She elaborates] too much on a point . . . until I am
- [confused what she is [actually] stress[ing] on".
   S1 "R could be more straightforward...[and] could minimise the connection of the point she [wants] to make with other complicated things outside the topic, because some students might become confused".

*Table 6*: Weaknesses of the Teaching/Facilitation of the Researcher (R) as Observed by the Student (S)

| Student Observation: |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| S11                  | "There's none, for now One day, she might think that there            |  |
|                      | is a better [method] to teach/facilitate her students and I cannot    |  |
|                      | be sure of how I would feel about the new method, if she really       |  |
|                      | does it. I may take it positively or vice versa".                     |  |
| No we                | eaknesses per se observed by S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, |  |
| and S                | 12.   |  |

Table 7: Extra Suggestions by the Student (S) on R's Way of Teaching/Facilitation that Would Totally Satisfy Them

| Student    | Extra suggestion   |
|------------|--|
| S12        | " R could try asking more responses from those students<br>who do not participate much in the class [who] might have<br>different views [from] others".  |
|            | (Hint: Leave no one out)   |
| S3         | "No class An online class sort of thing where R presents<br>the lesson from wherever and the students tune in to the lessons<br>via their phones/laptop [I]t does seem somewhat irrelevant<br>to have all [lecturers teaching the same subject as R] agree<br>and carry out such online lessons. However, carrying out at<br>least one trial class of this sort could be very beneficial for<br>everyone to experience a new form of learning".<br>(Hint: Explore borderless learning) |
| Num        |  |
| No extra s | suggestions from S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10, and S11.   |

Table 8: Personal Qualities of the Researcher (R) Liked by the Student (S)

| Person | nal Quality 1: Particular to detail   |
|--------|---|
| S12    | "R is a very particular person [who] would correct us when we did mistakes, even to the smallest [detail in terms of] grammar [and] spelling errors".   |
| Person | nal Quality 1: Particular to detail   |
| S11    | "Again, R is a very particular person, but she makes me<br>realise how important it is to be particular sometimes and<br>reminding me and everyone [else] to take academic writing<br>seriously". |

| Persor     | nal Quality 2: Has a structured way of doing things                                  |
|------------|--|
| <b>S</b> 3 | " I feel comfortable when I am able to expect and be ready for                       |
|            | the next course of action as everything has already been                             |
|            | structured out neatly [by R]".   |
| Persor     | nal Quality 3: Time management   |
| <b>S</b> 1 | "R is a very disciplined person, very punctual, and                                  |
|            | emphasises [this] value [on] her students".  |
| <b>S</b> 2 | "[I like R's] time management [ whereby whenever] we miss                            |
|            | a class, she [will be able to] find time to replace the class back".                 |
| Persor     | nal Quality 4: Comical   |
| S2         | R is [comical] in her [own]way in [her] ideas.                                       |
| <b>S</b> 5 | "I like R's sense of humour [which] makes her an easy                                |
|            | [person to approach]".   |
| Persor     | nal Quality 5: Friendly/ Approachable  |
| <b>S</b> 4 | "R is friendly and very knowledgeable and always [relates] them with our daily life" |
| S9         | "R is a talkative person which shows that she is friendly and easy                   |
| 57         | to approach to keep communication flowing to enable                                  |
|            | intelligent [conversation] to occur inside and outside the class".                   |
| <b>S</b> 7 | "R is a very nice lecturer , very easy-going and likes to chat                       |
| 57         | with me as a friend sometimes I keep forgetting things she                           |
|            | asked me to do but still she will [say] <i>never mind, never mind, as</i>            |
|            | long as you remember".   |
| <b>S</b> 6 | "Approachable. R will try her best to explain and solve our                          |
|            | queries on the instructions [for] tutorial and assignment                            |
|            | questions, or [whenever we are confused]"  |
| <b>S</b> 8 | "R is a lecturer who can be approached more easily as compared                       |
|            | to [other lecturers]. I don't feel scared or nervous when I talk to                  |
|            | her"   |
| S11        | "I'm honestly comfortable talking to her as well, about anything.                    |
|            | She does not make me feel threatened in any way as a student,                        |
|            | under any circumstances. I believe I can voice out anything, ideas                   |
|            | or opinions freely, even if they are opposite of what she believes                   |
|            | in or says, and she will still take it nicely instead of trying to                   |
|            | prove I am wrong and she is right".  |
| Persor     | nal Quality 6: Shares personal experiences/ Performs alongside                       |
| studen     |  |
| S4         | "[S]ometimes, R tells us stories based on her experiences. I learn                   |
|            | a lot from her. R sings very well and she always [performs] in                       |
|            | TESL-related [occasions] [N]ot many older people or                                  |
|            | educators are as open as her. Most of them do not like performing                    |
|            | on stage especially when their students are also there. I consider                   |
|            | R a cool person".  |

| Personal Quality 7: Thinks of others |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| S10                                  | "[Making] the student's life easier".   |  |
| Perso                                | nal Quality 8: Unpredictable  |  |
| S2                                   | "R's character. R can shift her expression from [being] serious to<br>[more relaxed]".  |  |
| Table 9                              | : Student (S) Reasons for Liking the Personal Qualities of the Resear<br>to Continue  |  |
| Reaso                                | n 1: Comfortable with R's particularity   |  |
| S12                                  | " [S]ure, why not? I think it would help students to be more mindful and critical about our [work]".  |  |
| Reaso                                | n 2: R's ways are motivating  |  |
| S3                                   | "Yes, [R's structured way] gives a sense of motivation for me to do work I would find doing things on my own more tedious".   |  |
| <b>S</b> 1                           | "Yes, because [R's discipline] positively [affects my friends and I] in the way she pushes us to study better and always improve  |  |
| Pageo                                | our proficiency no matter where we are, not only in the class".<br>n 3: R's time management is a good influence   |  |
| S2                                   | "[S]eing R [organises her time makes] me want to improve my   |  |
| 32                                   | [own] time management because sometimes I like to<br>procrastinate my work "  |  |
| Reaso                                | n 4: R's comical side appreciated   |  |
| S2                                   | "Sometimes the anology that R gave always make us laugh<br>and have fun but [helps] us to understand [what is taught]<br>better".   |  |
| S5                                   | " Even [if her] lectures are serious natured topics R will<br>tell us some jokes or stories [that would] enable me to stay awake<br>and not feel [bored]".  |  |
|                                      | n 5: At ease with R's approachable nature   |  |
| S4                                   | "R's nature makes me comfortable and not scared whenever I see<br>her R is a person who is not snobbish and she even stops to<br>reply my <i>Good Morning, Dr</i> each and every time I see her"  |  |
| S9                                   | "Her friendliness [allows] students or anyone to feel at ease<br>when around her [which further] allows students to be more<br>likely to approach her in case there is a need".   |  |
| S7                                   | "[Her approachability] make[s] me [respect] her and [at] the<br>same time, I won't feel afraid that I will get scolded if I ask any<br>question or any if I faced any academic problem. I think this is a<br>good lecturer and student relationship". |  |
| S6                                   | " I am able to learn and practice [being approchable like R] in my teaching [career] in [the] future".  |  |
| <b>S</b> 8                           | " I can ask her [questions] without feeling [scared] or nervous,<br>and can approach her more easily when I have any question".   |  |

S11 "... I like having lecturers whom I can talk with comfortably without having the feelings that I will be in trouble for telling her anything ...."

| Reason 6: Appreciate being thought of by R |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| S10  | "R plays the role as a lecturer very well as she helps the        |  |
|  | students a lot with the attendance and booking [of] the room [for |  |
|  | lectures/tutorial] [that would] lighten our burden a little bit". |  |

Table 10: Weaknesses of the Personal Qualities of The Researcher (R) Noticed by the Student (S)

| Weakness 1: Language choice too high flown sometimes            |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>S</b> 4  | "Sometimes, R uses high diction which I cannot really                |  |
|   | understand the meaning [of]".  |  |
| Weakness 2: Student ingrained respect for elders that becomes a |  |  |
| dividing factor   |  |  |
| <b>S</b> 8  | "I don't feel uncomfortable with R at the moment, but maybe          |  |
|   | [just] a little [scared [E]ven though I think she is friendly, I     |  |
|   | can't act like we are friends. I need have that respect towards      |  |
|   | [elders]".   |  |
| Weakness 3 : Overly serious expression                          |  |  |
| S11   | "Sometimes she looks so serious I do not know what to expect         |  |
|   | in her mind, but most of the [time], there's nothing serious"        |  |
| No wea  | aknesses per se noticed by S1, S2, S3, S5, S6, S7, S9, S10, and S12. |  |

Table 11: Student (S) Suggestion on How R as a Person, Would Not Make Students Feel Uncomfortable

Suggestion 1: Retain oneself totally (S5)

"...R can just be herself ... [addressing] us as Dear 28, and [calling] me [by name]. I [feel] comfortable with the way [her personality] appeals to us".

# Suggestion 2: No ill intention behind serious expression (S11)

"None, because most of the [time], it's me who overthinks R's reactions . . For example, she is showing a stern face in front of me and I would think that she hates me . . . but she is probably just thinking about something deeply . . . [and I conclude] that it's just her 'thinking face'. I have it too . . . so her stern face does not bother me that much anymore".

Suggestion 3: Vary using language choice based on student ability (S4)

"Use simpler words . . . I believe my vocabulary and some of my friends' vocabulary [is] not so wide, our words are limited and sometimes we are just scared to use Malay words when speaking with our lecturers. I am scared I might also pick the wrong Malay words and the word does not suit the context . . . ."

No suggestions by S1, S2, S3, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10 and S12.

#### **Implications of the Research Findings**

Students' critique of the researcher generally tallied with what the students as research participants sought for in an educator, suggesting that she tailors her educator skills and personality towards student needs. As posited by Room 241 Team (2012), [a] teacher's strengths highlighted by students can spur on the teacher's zeal.

Yet, two messages are derived from students' critique of the researcher. Firstly, despite the latter's academic credentials and years of teaching experience, the researcher is not perfect as an educator, and students are just trying to help her cater to their exact needs as students, as seen from some of their offered suggestions for further improvement. Therefore, based on strengths and weaknesses identified by students, educators can work harder in areas that could improve on, [and in this way, s]tudents can guide teachers toward granting them the educational experiences they truly appreciate (Room 241 Team, 2012).

Secondly, student criticism of the educator is meant to be constructive, rather than destructive, for the students involved are young adult learners who equally want their voices to be considered by their educators. As research by DiPaola (2018) found, "Adult learners . . . [f]ocus on issues that concern them . . . [besides] [r]equire a collaborative, respectul, mutual, and informal climate". Therefore, instead attacking the youth mindset of students and their lack of experience as feedback givers, the researcher had chosen to be neutral, and to further learn from her identified shortcomings seen through the eyes of her clients. Similarly, DiPaola (2018) found "[e]ffective [f]eedback [to be o]ngoing . . . for teachers to reshape their performance to better achieve their goals".

Furthermore, it was good for the researcher to learn how her serious expression impacted individual students, or why individual students still chose to maintain the "lecturer-student barrier", despite her efforts at being friendly with them. This hints that, there is always a reason behind such seemingly negative feedback, and it is the choice of the educator to decipher it. As expounded by Chtena (2014), "Don't ignore [negative feedback, for your students are trying to tell you something . . . ."

For future research, the researcher would still continue with replications of the study, with any future batch of students having similar tendencies to seemingly "downgrade" the researcher in terms of appraisal. Thus, such studies would only be a further delve

into the minds of students as to what they would want from her as an educator, servicing students.

# Conclusion

Getting less than expected from student appraisal is the challenge thrown to any educator involved, whether or not taken up, as each individual educator is unique in perception and decision-making. As clinched by World Development (2018), professional motivation comes in the form of evaluations, which are a platform to assess teachers' performance, with related outcomes.

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