

## **The Influence of the University Lecturer on the Students – a Prerequisite for the Assessment of his/her Teaching by the Students’ Audience**

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**Summary:** *The assessment of the university lecturer by the students happens constantly in the reality of the teaching/learning process. This assessment expresses the subjective viewpoint of the audience, its role as the most correct and important criterion about the usefulness and the quality of the lecturer’s work. Assessment, in this regard, is one of the essential aspects of the interaction and the relationship “university lecturer ↔ students”. The term “activity” has been used instead of “profession” deliberately because of the understanding that teaching should not be seen only as a separate profession, but as a multiprofile human activity, integrating in itself different aspects of various professions.*

*Actually, a basic characteristic of the teaching activity is that everything it has in itself such as information, competences, communication, qualities and properties, the lecturer shows and presents to his/her audience. The audience, in turn, in the process of interiorization of the lecturer’s information and influence, forms in itself certain psychic formations, established as psychic – forming sense of the process of education in general. The learning audience, accordingly, is not, cannot and should not be in the role of a passive recipient (receiver, consumer) of the teaching influences. It reacts subjectively and in a specific way, as well as actively towards their implementation.*

*We have to share a few methodological formulations, without aiming at a detailed analysis, of the assessment, defining it as a psychological phenomenon and as an interpersonal process. The definition we use is “interpersonal process” because in its core the assessment is a psychological phenomenon, which functions only in terms of the interpersonal relationships between at least two individuals.*

**Key words:** *survey, indicators, empirical analysis, teaching activity, student assessment*

The specificity of the teaching activity is its interdisciplinarity and psychological complexity as well as its unconditional meaningful and technological universality. It is not necessary to go deep into details to say that in general the university lecturer has to be in good command of the professional field “didactics” in order to lead, organize and guide in a certain direction the total mainly intellectual, psychological activity of its object, in our case, the students audience. He/she also has to be an educator, for with the help of his/her influence he or she forms certain psychic qualities, formations and competences in the students. The lecturer uses and by means of social interaction provides certain information with certain content. ‘This process needs curriculum mapping, electronic communication between students and teachers and a clear system of assessment in addition to online students’ portfolios’ [4, p. 13] Therefore, he/she has to be a professional in the field of the subject he/she teaches i.e. to be a historian, a mathematician, a physicist or working in other social or natural sciences, serving the content of the teaching/learning process. It is impossible for the lecturer to provide information with certain content, without knowing it beforehand introspectively and consciously in its full depth and fullness as well as without processing it in a suitable to be provided to the audience type. Here we mean both traditional and innovative education. In the past years the application of the so called blended learning has established itself, combining innovation and traditions. By the way, in reality, while carrying out his/her activity the lecturer is provoked to apply different professions → of the organizer – facilitator of the intellectual and social activities of the audience, of the social psychologist, who is able to communicate with the students, of the social pedagogue, solving their psychological problems. Also of the ICT specialist who has competences in the field of modern presentation technologies, methods and tools, of the actor who uses a variety of techniques of verbal and nonverbal communication, etc. At the present stage of development of the sciences of training and education the term pedagogy means not only the process of teaching and learning of a certain range of knowledge, but the practical training and educational activities in problem-based practical guidance for it. "The technologies are entering a rapid pace in our lives as a whole. Not a small

number and educational platforms and programs are developed and implemented in education. Bulgarian teacher tries to be "up to date" [2, p. 13]

Broadly speaking, so far, we have tried to make a vague and incomplete attempt to mark the professional spheres which the lecturer touches in his/her activity. Moreover, in this publication we do not intend to discuss the conglomerate and the enormous variety of purely human personal qualities and competences, which a successful lecturer should possess – moral, cognitive, intellectual, social, organizational, etc. They define the successful lecturer as a complex and psychologically complete personality.

**The aim** of the following study is to find the content of the assessment done by the students of the work of their lecturers, outlining its parameters and the importance of each of them.

The first theoretical formulation about assessment is that the latter should be seen as a subject-object phenomenon, as a subject-object process. By it the subject i.e. the assessor expresses their conscious attitude towards the actions and qualities of the object i.e. the recipient of the assessment. The latter is the expression of the relationship between the subject and the object in the process of assessment.

On the other hand, seen from a psychological perspective, the assessment is an expression of the psychic activity of both the subject and the object. The object demonstrates his/her activity when by the actions and influence shows and exteriorizes his/her qualities and characteristics. The activity of the assessing subject is shown in the fact that he/she consciously perceives the influence of the object, interprets its content and forms a certain personal attitude towards the qualities of the object which have been set in his/her actions. As a result of this conscious interpretation of the influence of the object, by means of his/her assessment, the subject expresses his/her more particular or full attitude towards the object of the assessment. We have a logical chain here: qualities of the object → attitude of the subject → assessment of the object.

Another theoretical aspect of assessment is that it is a process of deep personal experiences both for the subject and for the object. This part of the assessment is especially typical of the interactions lecturer-students, where the students take the role of the subject of the assessment and the professor with his/her activity is the object. An expression of the students' experiences are the emotions, feelings, moods which they feel adopting the words, actions, sign language, posture and other means of verbal and nonverbal communication, the

lecturer uses during the learning process. In other words, experiencing the contact with their lecturer, the students form in themselves his/her image and this image they turn into the object of their active personal assessments.

How does the lecturer accept the assessment done by his/her students? Here things seem to be a little more special, being somewhat deeper and more complex. Why? Because there isn't a lecturer who is disinterested, apathetic or indifferent as to how he/she is perceived and assessed by the students. And this is not a question of vanity or selfishness. The lecturer dedicates his/her efforts and competences to the cause to form certain knowledge and skills in the students and, with this in mind, his/her sensitivity to the students' assessment is logical and justified. No matter how high the introversion, independence and self-absorption of the lecturer is and, accordingly, no matter how low his self-criticism and high sense of independence and personal inviolability is, once again we have to say that there cannot be a lecturer who is indifferent to how his/her students perceive and assess him/her. This is so because in its essence the learning process is social full of constant interpersonal interactions, during which the subjects show their qualities and characteristics, which in turn, leads to the sharing of social relations and assessments.

What, in general, is the lecturer as the subject of student assessment? What is he like in the eyes of his/her students? To which qualities of teaching, carried out by the lecturer, students are more sensitive and accept them as more significant and impressive? What would the ladder of teaching qualities look like, built by summarizing the assessments of students? With the creation of such a ladder we will probably be able to form the portrait of the successful, impressive and accepted by the students lecturer.

### Design of the research

Our purpose was for the **strategy and algorithm of the research** to be clear and specific. They consist of the following: *we formulated certain indicators that identify different aspects of the process of teaching and outline the "portrait" of the appearing before the students lecturer.* These seven indicators were explained in detail. The function of the indicators is to orient the students what exactly should be assessed in the process of teaching done in front of them. They comply their own assessment with them. The actual assessment is performed during or after the students have heard the lecture.

**The technology of the research** is a type of voting, submission of a specific vote by the students made with two types of ballots - marked "Yes" and marked "No". At the beginning of the lecture which is to be assessed we present the ballot urn. The students optionally put their ballots in it either at the

end of the first period or at the end of the second or both ways. Naturally the ballots "Yes" and "No" are distributed to each student at the beginning of the first period, and those who want can take their own additional ballots during the break. The voting procedure was accepted by the students as an attractive and they gladly took advantage of their right to participate in it.

The list of the seven indicators is put on the whiteboard at the beginning of the first period and it stays there during the two periods of lectures. The audience is given the following instruction: "Students, today during these two periods you will take part in an experiment. You have to assess my work. The presentation in front of you shows 7 indicators which outline my work and which you can use to assess it. Each indicator defines a particular aspect of my work. Only indicator № 7 – "General" – does not point at a particular aspect but reflects my work as a whole. Each indicator gives you the idea of what you can assess in teaching as well as what its aspects are. Each of you has two ballots – one "Yes" and one "No". Please, while listening to the lecture or at the end of it, write your notes about my work on the back of the corresponding ballot. Give your impressions in your own words having in mind not the indicator itself but your thoughts and assessment in relation to it. You can share on one ballot your thoughts about more than one indicator. The indicators serve to orient or direct you but you are not obliged to point them directly. Please give your positive impressions on the back of the ballot marked "Yes", and the negative ones on the ballot "No". The assessments are absolutely anonymous – don't write any signs, marks and/or your initials except for the date and your group. Each of you can use more than one ballot and can take part in the assessment with both ballots. We understand that our instruction in a way is too verbose and lengthy but we have to be sure that the students are aware of the experimental voting procedure.

After the students put their ballots in the urn and leave the hall we proceed with the processing (interpretation) of the thoughts written. Any freely shared student opinion we relate to a particular indicator and thus we get the "picture" of the assessment done by the students in relation to the process of teaching in this particular lecture. That was **the focus of the tactics** of our experiment – to analyze and interpret the thoughts the students have shared, their judgments and impressions and to come to a certain interpretation of their specific and overall assessment of a lecturer's teaching. This interpretation related to the assessments of the whole sample will lead us to generalizations which will be arranged in a certain ranking scale, type of the assessment of the lecturer's teaching done by the students.

On the other hand, the voting procedure showed us one more possibility. Knowing when (the date given) and by whom (the group) the voting was done



we can refer the results to the topic of the lecture and to the lecturer's personal impressions of his/her work. Thus we get a possibility for a correlation between the assessment done by the students and the self-assessment done by the lecturer. In this way the "picture" of the assessment done by the students is more complete and has a significance for the quest for self-improvement of the lecturer helping him/her to self-assess himself/herself and to become aware of the quality of his/her own activity. The self-assessment of the lecturer, however, is the subject of another topic.

The research was carried out among 72 students from the specialties Preschool and primary school pedagogy and Primary school pedagogy and foreign language (regular training and Preschool and primary school pedagogy (distance learning). The students who took part in the research gave a total of 139 value judgments which we analyzed. We look for the percentage ratio of the number of positive assessments to the total number of assessments 139 in the statistical analysis. Thus we get a **coefficient of the students' assessments X**, calculated using the formula:

$$X = \text{number of assessments multiplied by indicator } \text{№} (139 \times 100 / \text{in } \%)$$

Here we have to make a statement, a clarification. The statistical analysis is only of the registered positive assessments – these on the back of the ballot "Yes". Why? Not because there weren't negative votes. It was because, firstly, the negative vote was far more insignificant compared to the positive – 9 ballots marked "No" and secondly because it was absolutely general i.e. unidentified, following no particular indicator but just the indicator "General" (№ 7). In this way we cannot make any specific statistically justified conclusions about the negative students' vote apart from this that the students do not comprehend and have difficulty understanding and finding themselves in the negative aspects of the lecturer's work but they simply assess is as bad. We come to the conclusion that the students' negative vote can be defined as not specific compared to the positive which is specific and justified.

In this study we approbate and offer to your attention the following **system of indicators** of the students' assessment of the lecturer's work. Each indicator implies a particular aspect of the process of teaching. To make things clear, to each indicator we give the questions to which its content refers and which explain what its essence is.

#### Indicator №1: **Contents of the material.**

What do students learn? What do they get information about?

**Indicator №2: Good grasp of the curriculum.**

Does the lecturer show confidence in handling the information? Does he show ease and simplicity presenting the information? Does the lecturer look convincing when presenting the information?

**Indicator №3: Teaching style.**

In what situation does the lecturer put his/her students during the process of teaching? What means does he/she use to make the information understood by the students? What is the quality of the influence of the university lecturer, providing the information, on the students? What is the quality of the perception and awareness of the information by the students in the process of teaching?

**Indicator №4: Style of communication.**

How does the university lecturer interact and communicate with the students? How do the students feel during the lecture? How do they experience their social role of “students”?

**Indicator №5: Style of expression (language)**

How does the lecturer express himself/herself verbally? How does his/her speech sound?

**Indicator №6: Activating the audience.**

What is the position of the students involved in the process of teaching? Is the students’ cognitive and intellectual activity provoked? Do they have to or do they express their viewpoints, opinions or decisions during the process of teaching? Do they have the opportunity to practically interpret the theory?

**Indicator №7: General assessment.**

Lack of any arguments for the assessment.

**Analysis and summary.**

**Meaningful parameters of the 72 student assessments** after registering the impressions and opinions of the participants in the survey. All 139 expressed by them value judgments were carefully analyzed and according to their content each of them was referred to a corresponding indicator. Thus the seven indicators gained particular meaningful type. Certain student judgments refer to each indicator and these indicate the content of the students’

assessments. The ascertained in this way meaningful parameters give a definite practical-applied shape to the whole study as far as they orientate the reader in what the students appreciate and value in the lecturer's work. They also show what impresses the students positively and what they wish to find in each lecture which is delivered to them.

The system of meaningful parameters of different indicators is as follows:

Meaningful parameters **Content of the curriculum** referring to indicator № 1:

- importance of the information for the teacher's job;
- interesting information;
- practical applicability;
- relation of the knowledge gained with real life;

Meaningful parameters **Good grasp of the curriculum** referring to indicator № 2:

- understanding of the curriculum by the lecturer;
- thoroughness in presenting the curriculum;
- revealing the essence, the most important in the information;
- logical structure when presenting knowledge;
- orderliness of information;
- systematic approach, structuring, fragmentation of the thought of the lecturer;
- completeness of the information without going into excessive details;
- timeliness of infant and primary school age in work in kindergarten and elementary school;
- topicality for work in family environment;
- the lecturer shows inner confidence and competence in handling the information;

Meaningful parameters **Teaching style** referring to indicator № 3:

- logical, clear and focused explanations;
- interesting information;
- understandable and accessible information;
- persuasiveness by clarifying the theory;
- persuasion through examples from the lecturer's teaching practice and the reality of the profession;
- enjoyability, attractiveness of the information;
- ease and simplicity in presenting the information;
- visualizing and using original presentations;



- lack of information overload – reducing the amount of information to the students' abilities for its understanding;
- the lecturer does not read from notes, but he/she speaks freely;
- the lecturer does not dictate the information, but offers interpretation and his/her personal transformation of its content;
- introduction of universal human meaning in information – examples from life and for life.

Meaningful parameters **Communication style** referring to indicator № 4:

- the lecturer in no way derogates from the dignity and self-esteem of students;
  - the lecturer signals friendliness goodwill and collegiality;
  - the teacher notices, recognizes and reacts correctly to the signals for change of mood and he/she prevents his/her students tiredness;
  - manifestations of goodness, understanding and normal human attitude towards students;
  - the lecturer aims at arousing positive emotions in the students;
- the lecturer uses humour and at times he/she is attractive and entertaining, at times it is attractive and entertaining;
- the lecturer is cheerful and smiling;
  - the lecturer is well-dressed and has an attractive appearance;

Meaningful parameters **Style of expression (language)** referring to indicator № 5:

- clear and precise expression;
- concrete language;
- understandable speech, information is understood easily;
- lack of abstract and incomprehensible terminology, and in case there is such it is explained right away;
- rich in expressive means language – beauty and attractiveness of expression;
- emotional language;
- good nonverbal expressive means – gestures, facial expression, posture, etc;
- humorous and entertaining moments in the speech of the lecturer;

Meaningful parameters **Activation of the audience** referring to indicator № 6:

- at times the teacher thought provoking students;

- at times the lecturer asks the students about their viewpoints;
- the lecturer asks a questions and poses problems to be solved;
- the lecturer wants feedback from the students about their understanding;
- the lecturer skillfully combines theory and practical examples;
- the lecturer, assigns the students related to the lecture tasks which to be reproduced in their practice;
- the lecturer allocates time to answer the students' questions;
- the lecturer uses presentations containing certain problematic content which is to be dealt with during the lecture;
- the presentations which are used provoke certain problems and require decision-making by the students;

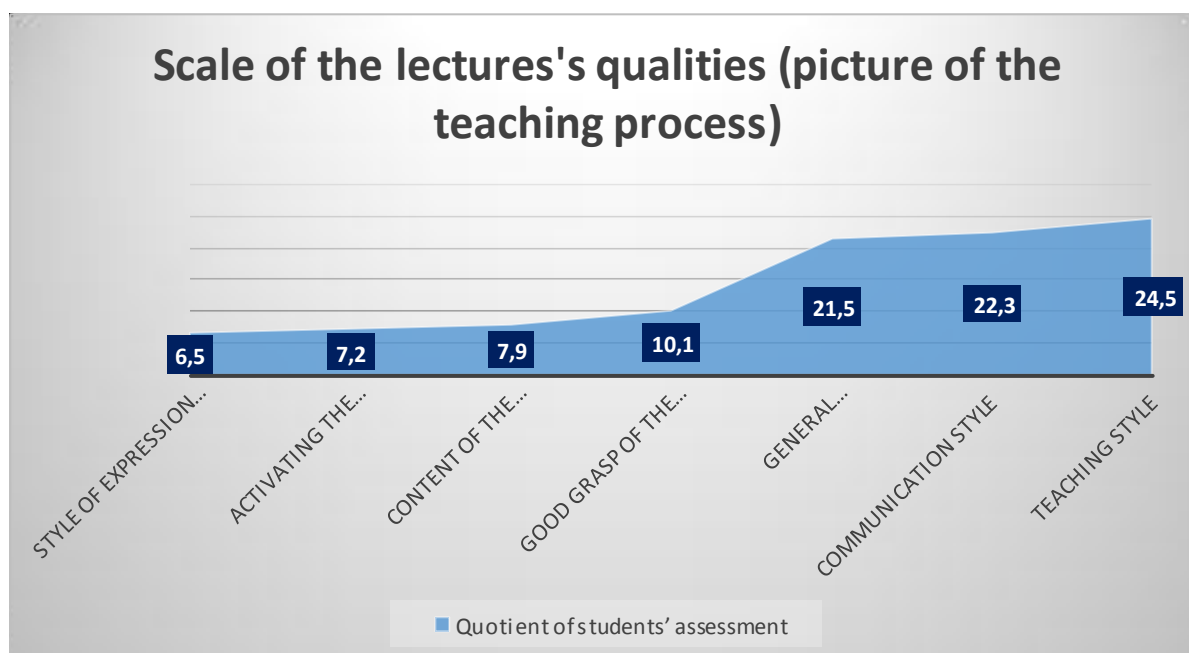
Meaningful parameters **General assessment** referring to indicator №7:

- good lecturer;
- a lecturer who is liked by the students;
- a recommendation to the lecture to continue working in the same way;

Quantitative values of the quotients of students' assessments. We will **analyze them empirically** using the data from the *analytical table used below* (Table 1) and the resulting scale of lecturer's qualities (Figure 1)

**Table 1. Analytical table of students' assessments**  
(values of the indicators)

Indicator №	Content of the indicator	Number of received assessments	Quotient of students' assessment (X)
1	Content of the curriculum	11	7,9 %
2	Good grasp of the material	14	10,1 %
3	Teaching style	34	24,5 %
4	Communication style	31	22,3 %
5	Style of expression (language)	9	6,5 %
6	Activating the audience	10	7,2 %
7	General (unspecified) assessment	30	21,5 %
<b>Total:</b>		<b>139</b>	<b>100 %</b>



**(Figure 1). Scale of lecturer's qualities**  
(picture of the teaching process)

The scaling of the indicators presented in the analytical table and the scale of lecturer's qualities show the following: indicator № 3 – “Teaching style”, which has assessment quotient of 24,5%, has the greatest relative weight. This clearly and unambiguously shows that the students show sensitivity to the way in which they are taught, to the means which the lecturer uses to present the information, to the way they experience the lecturer's influence and what the overall situation is in the course of the assessed lecture. The values of indicator № 3 are close to those of indicator № 4 – “Communication style” –22,3%. We expected that this indicator will come first as far as it is related to the sensitivity of the students to the way the lecturer treats them. It turned out though, that they consider more important the ability of the lecturers to present the curriculum which is the core of the indicator “Teaching style”. The fact that the indicator “Communication style” comes second shows that the students require collegiality as far as the lecturer's attitude towards them is concerned; they require an atmosphere of positivity, calmness and emotionality in communication. The next in significance is indicator № 7 – “General assessment” 21,5%, which fixes the overall, fix overall, undifferentiated

approval of the lecturer. The following indicators № 2, 1, 6, 5 have approximate values far lower than the three indicators we have already analyzed. Their order – good grasp of the material which is taught (№ 2), content of the curriculum (№ 1), activity of the audience (№ 6) and style of expression (№ 5) – reflects the gradation in the significance of the students' opinions about their lecturers' work.

We would like to quote V. Voinohovska here, which states: 'Students are more motivated to participate in learning activities that are interesting to them or involve important aspects of their lives. The teacher offers tutorials that allow students to see the meaning and value of abstract concepts and principles.' [7, p. 85] Knowledge is obtained through individual participation and contact with other trainees, not through imitation or repetition as in traditional memory-oriented didactic models. 'This is because the world in which the student lives, as a subject in the life and education space, is infinitely rich in information. And he enters the classroom, not with the question of what is happening, but with the question of how it happens. The pedagogical competence of the teacher has, therefore, long ago not only included the regulation.' [5, p. 4].

The new tendencies are for democracy, quality of education for the so called key competencies for lifelong learning, the foundations of which are laid and built at preschool age in the kindergarten. „The key competences are a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes which all people need for their personal fulfillment and development, inclusion and employment. They have to be developed by the end of the compulsory school education and have to function as the basis for their further training as part of lifelong learning.“ [6, p. 547]. The democracy and quality of education are realized through the individual approach of the lecturer as well. When working with students, it is very important that they be motivated so that they can develop the idea, the teacher's project. That way they will learn it, not just reproduce it. [3, p. 88]. Quality education requires to provoke imagination, to deepen the knowledge, to form the skills for search for effective solutions to practical problems, etc. 'Education and business must be united, because good staffing is precisely from the student benches' [1, p. 37]

So, the above mentioned quantitative and qualitative data gave us the answers to many questions, but they also raised many new questions. The lecturer needs his teaching to be assessed by the student, when he wants to look „inside himself/herself“, through the eyes of those whom he/she teaches and

educates. These are the ones who want and who will learn the teaching activity and be “Better than your teacher!”.

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