

## **Instructor's characteristics and students evaluations**

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to develop a theoretical framework to understand the role of instructors' characteristics in the success of the learning process. Recognizing the social-ness of the learning process, that encompasses students inability to transcend or even realize structurally predisposed social biases they unintentionally and unknowingly carry with them to the classroom, and using a sociology of education approach, this study analyzes the role of three of the relevant characteristics of the instructors that influence the relative poverty or strength of the learning process. Nationality, race, and gender are factors that influence the power and credibility of the deliverers of knowledge and play a role, sometime decisive one, in any communication influencing the person at the receiving end, despite the instructor's intellectual high-mindedness and the ability to clearly communicate knowledge displaying all appropriate appurtenances.

The First part of the study analyzes the relationship between characteristics of UW-Parkside instructors (nationality, race, gender) and student evaluations. Our study will determine the extent to which instructor's characteristics influence students' perceptions at UW-Parkside. For this purpose, the study analyzes the results of student evaluations for each class offered at UW-Parkside from the Fall of 2000 to the Fall of 2005. Students evaluations contain the year, date, department, course number, section, name of instructor, and class averages for each of the questions on the student evaluations. Additional data about gender, race/ethnicity, and nationality of each instructor over this time period will be collected from the office of equity and diversity as well as contacting individual instructors or their departments.

The Second part of the study that investigates the role of the social structural conditions, illuminates much on the nature of learning process and its socio-political and historical character despite the sheer dexterity instructors might have, as on the necessary connection learning has with new socio-economic regimes and organizations human societies constantly give rise to. For this purpose, an investigation of the consequences socio-economic and political conditions have on people's world views and perceptions of social categories and aggregates is intended to construe the individual student evaluation. Examining, and in retrospect critically evaluating, individual views of certain social forms and characteristics, might render, by implications, a critical assessment, if not edifying reprove, of socio-historical powers delimiting individuals' freedom and imaginativeness.

Thus, cerebral comprehension of recent economic phenomenon (the rise of neo-liberalism), political events (September 11, war in Afghanistan and Iraq, and immigration debate), and cultural transformation (increase religiosity) and available literature suffice the excursus into new structural conditions pursued in this study.

The significance of this study stems from the increasing number of minority and international faculty employed in the U.S universities and colleges. Data available from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) indicate that future increases might be most significant for the category of non-resident aliens, thus validate inquiries into the role of instructor's nationality in the learning process. Other studies reviewed in this paper elucidate the role both gender and race have.

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