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A Model of Effective Teaching in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how graduate students with undergraduate majors in arts, humanities, and social sciences perceived individualized consideration, Student-Professor Engagement in Learning (SPEL), intellectual stimulation, and student deep learning, and how these variables predict effective teaching. A sample of 251 graduate students responded to a survey posted in two professional associations, and four universities in the United States and other countries. A structural equation model analyzed the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable, effective teaching. A multiple regression analysis indicated that individualized consideration, SPEL, and deep learning were significant predictors of effective teaching. Intellectual stimulation was a predictor of deep learning, which in turn influenced effective teaching.

Introduction

Arts, humanities, and social sciences have provided an intellectual framework, and context for thriving in the world (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2013). These disciplines have taught students how to raise critical thinking questions, search for abstract answers, and identify what is most important to students (Pleshakova, 2009). Both scientists and the social scientists have relied upon the humanistic art of interpretation to make sense of even the most reliable data (Bloch, 2009). However, recent research reported that students have lost interest in humanities and social sciences (Barret, 2013). There has been a decline since the late 1960s when nearly 18 percent of all bachelor's degrees were earned in humanities. By 2010, the number of earned bachelor's degrees in these disciplines had fallen to less than 8 percent (Wilson, 2013). According to Bloch (2009), economics influenced the shift away from arts, humanities, and social sciences, as funding was allocated for science. Wilson has argued that the decline resulted from short attention spans among students, and others held professors accountable based on their teaching. Recent research has shown that professors continue to struggle with conducting research and reflecting on the philosophical principles that have guided their teaching practices. Many professors have lacked sufficient pedagogical training needed to teach their courses effectively (Husband, 2013).

Effective Teaching

The term *teacher effectiveness* has been defined as the collection of characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of teachers at all educational levels that have enabled students to think critically, work collaboratively, and become effective citizens (Hunt, 2009). Teacher effectiveness has been demonstrated through knowledge, attitudes, overall performance, and more interaction between students, and teachers (Regmi, 2013). Teaching effectiveness has been related to the ways in which students have experienced learning (Brookfield, 2006). Effective teaching has provided students with opportunities to explore ideas, acquire new knowledge, synthesize information, and solve problems (Hunt, 2009).

Student ratings have been the most widely used measure of teaching effectiveness in colleges and universities (Hunt, 2009). At college level, students do not evaluate a professor's effectiveness solely in terms of technique, rather students have wanted to feel confident they were learning something different, and being treated as adults (Brookfield, 2006). As a new generation of learners have entered higher education classrooms, effective teachers and professors have adapted strategies to match their student learning styles (Kraus & Sears, 2008).

Individualized Consideration

Harris (2011) found that professors have demonstrated individualized consideration by treating each student as an individual, and assisting them in their personal growth. Professors have also shown individualized consideration by listening to students' needs, and helping them become self-actualized (Boyd, 2009). Professors have to be willing to establish relationships with students that extend far beyond the current time period besides exceeding the official course requirements (Husband, 2013). Additionally, professors have to be willing to value and validate the perspectives of their students to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning in their courses, which in turn can lead to better teacher-student interaction in particular and enhance teaching effectiveness in general (Husband, 2013).

Student-Professor Engagement in Learning

Both professors and students share the responsibility of engagement in the classroom (Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Overall, professors must create a learning environment for students to be academically successful, and supported. Additionally, professors must build relationships with students, and give students opportunities to build relationships with one another (Husband, 2013). Professors must be willing to deconstruct traditional boundaries between students and professors that position the professor as the primary source of knowledge in the classroom (Husband, 2013). Professors should adopt the notion that students are co-teachers in the classroom. The teaching and learning process is one in which both teachers and students co-construct knowledge, and learn from each other (Husband, 2013). Students are motivated to engage in learning processes when they view information, activities, and assignments as relevant, feel emotionally connected to course content, and experience positive interactions with their professor (Lukowiak & Hunzicker, 2013).

Intellectual Stimulation

Traditional passive learning environments were based on lectures, in which students listened, and took notes without active inquiry or engagement (Bloch, 2009). Intellectual stimulation in the classroom helps students challenge assumptions that limit their thinking, by exposing students to opposing viewpoints (Boyd, 2009). Professors of arts, humanities, and social sciences provided students with experiences in which their feelings and emotions were included in the process of learning (Pleshakova, 2009). For these students, learning and teaching patterns were affected by the way professors stimulated them intellectually. This intellectual stimulation was also associated with challenging students, encouraging independent thought, and using an interactive teaching style (Bolkan, Goodboy & Griffin, 2011).

Deep Learning

The most effective pedagogies that foster students' deep learning and metacognition included teaching students how to construct new knowledge, as well as engaging and motivating students. Learning adapted to individual students' needs, strengths and experiences, was more substantial and long lasting (Pang & Ross, 2010). Therefore, professors have had to move beyond seeing teaching as a process of merely transferring knowledge and skills, and move toward a view of teaching as process of intellectual change among students (Husband, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

With new research on effective teaching, and student learning (Almay & Tooley, 2012) educational institutions can also be more deliberate and strategic about creating environments that attract and retain students. Since arts, humanities, and social sciences have provided opportunities

for integrative thinking, innovation, and citizenship (AAAS, 2013), insights could be gained into professor behaviors that helped the current generation of students feel connected and engaged in learning processes. This study will examine how graduate students with undergraduate majors in arts, humanities, and social science perceive individualized consideration, student-professor engagement in learning, intellectual stimulation, and deep learning as predictors of effective teaching.

Method

Economos (2013) collected data from 3,232 graduate business and education students enrolled in face-to-face and hybrid courses from two professional associations and four universities in the United States and other countries. Three hundred and sixty responses were received, reflecting a response rate of 11 percent. Out of three hundred and sixty respondents, this study focused on 251 students who majored in arts, humanities, and social sciences in their undergraduate programs.

Participants responded to a two-part survey. Part I of the instrument surveyed demographic information such as age, gender, ethnicity, native language, undergraduate major, self-reported grade point average, parental educational attainment, years in program, enrollment status, learning environment, and primary professional area of interest. Part II of this survey contained 39 questions rated on a Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The survey statements were adapted from research literature with permission from the authors. The statements were converted into items to measure all of the variables. A content analysis and axial coding were used to condense categories.

Nine items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with effective teaching according to Kane, (2004). Twenty-one items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with transformational leadership behaviors from the qualitative findings of Bolkan and Goodboy (2011). Six behavior statements were adapted to measure graduate students' perceptions of professor intellectual stimulation. Seven behavior statements were adapted to measure graduate students' perceptions of professor individualized consideration. Nine items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor pedagogical content knowledge from Shepherd's (2009) dissertation instrument. The items were adapted from Pintrich's (1988) study. Finally, seven items examined graduate students' perceptions of professor behaviors associated with deep learning from Nelson et al. (2005). Additionally, the statements were adapted from *The College Student* Report, and The National Survey of Student Engagement's survey instrument (NSSE, 2001-13). Cronchbach's Alpha reliabilities of the variables and number of items per variable used in this study are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1*Scale Reliability of the Items*

Dimension	Number of Items	Alpha Coefficient α
Effective Teaching (Pedagogical Content Knowledge)	9	.881
Individualized Consideration	8	.844
Student-Professor Engagement in Learning	5	.752
Intellectual Simulation	6	.776
Deep Learning	6	.825

(Economos, 2013)

Table 2*Pearson Correlation Analysis between Dependent and Independent Variables*

		Effective Teaching	r^2	Individualized Consideration	Deep Learning	Student Professor Engagement in Learning
Individualized Consideration	r	.754**	56.85%			
	p	.000				
	N	234				
Deep Learning	r	.743**	55.20%	.699**		
	p	.000		.000		
	N	237		238		
Student Professor Engagement in Learning	r	.834**	69.55%	.808**	.739**	
	p	.000		.000	.000	
	N	234		234	237	
Intellectual Stimulation	r	.778**	60.52%	.754**	.668**	.938**
	p	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	238		237	242	238

p \leq 0.01.Data Analysis and Results**

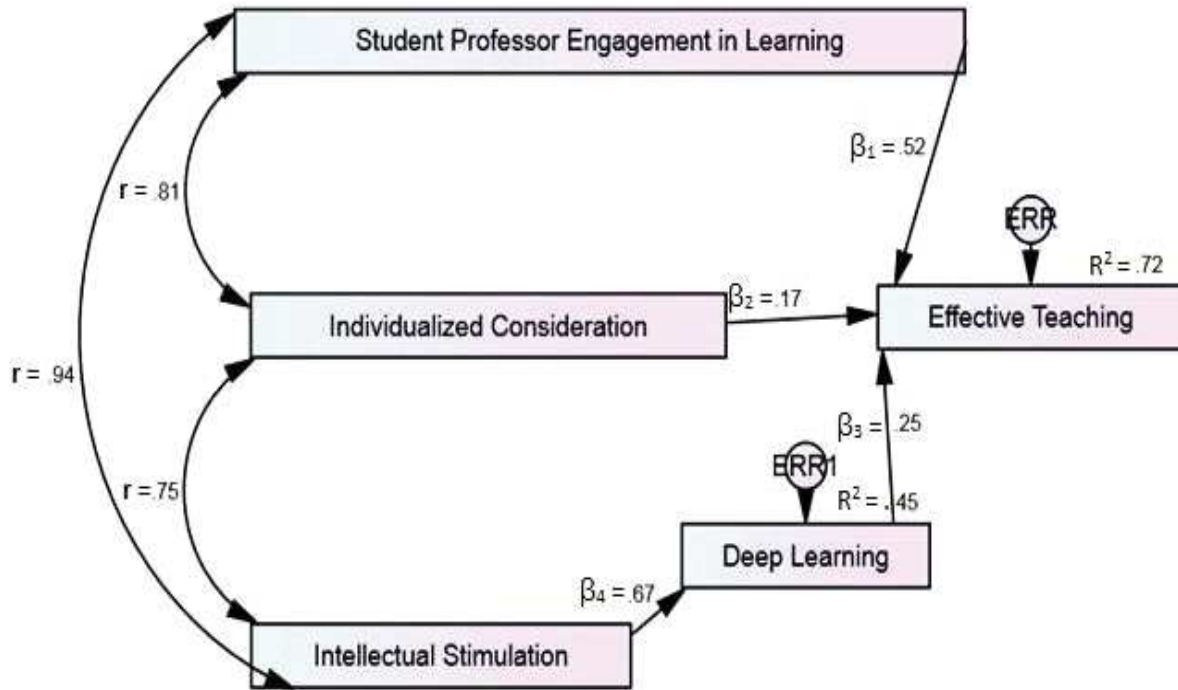
A correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship among independent variables and with dependent variable (Table 2). After the correlation analysis, a structural equation model (Figure 1) was constructed to illustrate the variance accountability percentage, correlation coefficients, and regression coefficients.

All of the correlations among the variables SPEL, individualized consideration, deep learning, intellectual simulation, and effective teaching were statistically signifi-

cant and were greater than .67 in Table 2. Table 2 shows contribution to effective teaching were, individualized consideration ($r^2 = 56.85\%$), deep learning ($r^2 = 55.20\%$), SPEL ($r^2 = 69.55\%$), and intellectual simulation ($r^2 = 60.52\%$). The major contribution to effective teaching is from SPEL ($r^2 = 69.55\%$). Figure 1 also shows a strong correlation between intellectual simulation and SPEL ($r = .94$), intellectual simulation and individualized consideration ($r = .75$), and individualized consideration and SPEL ($r = .81$).

Figure 1

Structural Equation Model: Predictor of Effective Teaching (N=251)



Researchers proceeded to develop a model using structural equation modeling concepts. **Figure 1** shows that a combination of three variables, SPEL ($\beta_1 = .52$), individualized consideration ($\beta_2 = .17$), and deep learning ($\beta_3 = .25$), accounted for 72% of the variance in effective teaching ($R^2 = .72$). The strongest predictor of effective teaching among social sciences, arts, and humanities graduate students was SPEL ($\beta_1 = .52$). In addition, deep learning was also identified as a dependent variable influenced by intellectual stimulation ($R^2 = .45$). For that reason, deep learning acted as a modifier of intellectual stimulation when researchers predicted effective teaching.

Conclusions

The present research study involved 251 arts, humanities, and social sciences students to determine whether individualized consideration, SPEL, intellectual stimulation, and deep learning influenced effective teaching. The results indicated that three of the four independent variables were significant predictors of effective teaching. However, deep learning was dependent on intellectual stimulation, which contributed to more strength in predicting effective teaching.

The findings of this research study indicated that SPEL is a predictor of effective teaching. It supported the findings of previous research, which showed student engagement was closely related to effective teaching (Lukowiak & Huzick, 2013). It implies that students' abilities to work meaningfully with their teachers determine their level of learning, and that ability can be honed through meaningful engagement in humanities and social sciences. Furthermore, Senge (2002) also advocated for a learning community where the teacher is a designer in learning processes in which he or she participates with the learner. This research highlights these alignments, and can inform educators about best practices for effective teaching. Likewise, students would have benefited from learning experiences in the classroom that are relevant to their realms of experience (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2011). Students would also likely gain from professors who keep up to date with the latest developments in the content area to promote SPEL in the classroom (Economos, 2013).

The results conclude that deep learning is a strong predictor of effective teaching. This research suggests that deep learning depended on intellectual stimulation to influence effective teaching. This research also suggests that deep learning is the result of intellectual stimulation,

that leads students to learn, and leads teachers to teach effectively. The correlation between deep learning and intellectual stimulation supports this finding as deep learning can develop students' critical thinking skills in the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Rowland, 2000). Professors should foster deep learning by encouraging reflective practices in which students can find ways to consider new perspectives. Additionally, professors are encouraged to integrate diverse perspectives such as race, religion, and politics into their courses, as students will likely obtain a higher level of deep learning (Economos, 2013).

Since the results indicated a strong influence of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, professors are strongly encouraged to incorporate these variables into their teaching. In previous research, Harris (2011) concluded that transformational leadership such as intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration produced increased performance, and satisfaction. This study supports these findings, and provides valuable information regarding teaching effectiveness.

Students would benefit if professors integrate the following behaviors in their classroom to foster individualized consideration including (a) availability; (b) individual feedback; (c) verbal immediacy; (d) personalized content; (e) conveying interest; (f) special considerations; (g) remembering student history; and (h) promoting participation (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2011). Additionally, professors who include students in the development of the course syllabus may foster a higher level of individualized consideration (Economos, 2013). If professors take an interest in students' personal lives, they will ultimately facilitate deep learning through confirmation behaviors such as (a) their responses to students' questions or comments (b) showing an interest in students and their learning and (c) style of teaching (Ellis, 2000) that mediate intellectual stimulation (Economos).

Limitations and Recommendations

It was unknown if the participants were enrolled in a teaching or research-intensive university for their undergraduate or graduate programs. Research must continue to investigate which professors' behaviors provide the best achievement possibilities for students (Polk, 2006). Subsequent research should also be conducted to determine whether the perceptions identified in this study are applicable to other academic disciplines.

The results of this study can be utilized to develop methods for effective teaching, and professional development workshops. Ongoing professional learning for professors is necessary to improve teaching effectiveness with respect to college, and career-ready standards (Coggshall (2012). This research can also be used in order to find ways to retain students of arts, humanities, and social sciences in classrooms by providing a teaching environment, which is based on their needs, interests, and experiences.

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