

LETTER to EDITOR

Academic Excellent Educators: A Student Election or an Administrator Selection?

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Dear Editor in chief

Each year, Iranian university authorities, as a good tradition on Teacher's Day, choose and introduce their top educators to their academic community. Undoubtedly, this effort is a good action, generally leading to effective promotion of the educational system. However, the criteria for these selections are always a matter of big debate.

In overview, an academic excellent educator is supposed to be at a superior level of educational competency in comparison with his/her colleagues. University administrators and students are two individual references may rate to the criteria. However, many surveys have revealed that students distinctively highlight different criteria for teacher excellence (1, 2).

From the academic authorities' perspective, faculty members must be excelled in a combination of abilities and activities in three fields: Ability of teaching, quantity of teaching, and scholar engagement (3). In contrast, students commonly believe that an excellent educator is distinct from his/her colleagues by "the quality of his/her course delivery and the type of his/her educational interactions with the learners." (4). In essence, from learners' point of view, the quantity of teaching is not generally a privilege for a teacher. Moreover, learners are not concerned about scholarship engagement of their educators. Consequently, neither the quantity of teaching activities, nor the scholar engagement of educators does affect on learners' assessment of their educational competency.

What the learners notice sharply and consider it well in their teacher evaluation is the quality of teaching and the type of educational communication, behavior and characteristics of an educator.

Despite some disagreement, many educational researchers believe that learner assessment provides a legitimate measurement tool with multi criteria to rate excellent educators. The same researchers have also shown that professional ability of faculty members in course delivery, their personality and type of their communications with the learners both inside and outside the classrooms are of

utmost plausible criteria in learner assessments (3-7).

In a student-centered academic system and especially in terms of customer approval, student satisfaction is one of the major evidence of a successful teaching. If learners accept their teacher professionally and emotionally, then they are ready to hear, understand, communicate with, and especially learn from him/her.

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We all have heard this Persian old statement: "If an educator teaches with passion and love, then he/ she can make an uninterested learner to take part in the classroom even on weekends willingly".

The above statement clearly indicates that from the old days, learner's viewpoint has had a key value in enhancement of educational communication of the learners as well as their enthusiasm to learn. Therefore, it seems that in a student-centered educational system, learner assessment make significant contribution to rate educators and allocates their level of excellence.

The attitude of students towards teachers is highly important in American and Canadian universities. There are many local and national websites where students can vote for choosing the best academic teachers. For example, the site www.ratemyprofessors.com works daily to record university students' assessments for more than 3.1 million educators. In some modern universities, learner assessments weigh up to 30-40% of a comprehensive assessment (360-Degree Assessment) aiming educator excellence (3 & 7). This means that the less weight of learner assessment, the more lose of teaching quality - a criterion considered as the focal point for annual teaching excellence and educator promotion. In addition, in a 360-Degree Assessment of educators, any decline the weight of learner assessment, leads to wider gap between the students' selections and the university administrators' elections. This may consequently distrust students to the academic educational evaluation system.

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