What makes a “Good” First-year Lecturer?

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Research design

- Letters of 30 students
- Speech of the Vice-Rector (Teaching) at the dinner
- Literature review
- Transcribed audio-taped interviews with 10 lecturers
- Coding of letters and interviews by research team

A model from the literature

Kane et al. 2014

Coding framework

Attributes

- Subject knowledge
- Interpersonal
- Pedagogic practice
- Personality
- Research/teaching nexus

Becoming

Students’ perceptions

Thank you very much that you handled the work so thoroughly that I never doubted what was expected from me. With your thorough explanations and unquenchable passion for your subject, you could do none other than to encourage my love for studies and awaken an intense interest in mathematics. … your accessibility, enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge opened doors for my future and played a key role in my first year success.
Lecturers describe themselves teaching

Physics lends itself brilliantly towards problem solving, and the whole discussion about how to solve it. Then you can proceed from a reasonably easy problem to a complex one, so I always try to maintain a balance between these two, that you provide challenges for the good student where you combine different concepts, and I must go back to things I did five weeks ago, and incorporate that in order to solve the problems.

"Being a good lecturer"

...but you can be as charismatic as you like, if you are not prepared and you’re making it up as you go along, students... pick it up immediately, “we miss this here” and especially in mathematics, you must be so accurate and precise, but you must get beyond accuracy and precision, it must be there, the technique must be there, you must be able to relax out there, while you already have it.

"Being a good lecturer"

The research I do, I make many videos, ... and I always use practical examples, of babies and patients, and out of this video materials I can involve the class beautifully.

See that you have a research trajectory in your field ... and do active research in it. ... go to conferences, talk at conferences, hear what others say about your subject ... if you do that, then you will be a better lecturer at first-year level. The deeper you get into mathematics, the better you would, as they say, see the wood for the trees.

... of (top-performing) first-year students

You are still struggling to find your balance between all these new things in your life, so I think a first-year lecturer must have sympathy with a student’s steps on this journey to find balance in your life, so be, be very sympathetic with them in this regard.

... of (top-performing) first-year students

Especially in my first year I was still inclined to be slack and just get through, but you awakened my ambition and pride, so that I finally spurred myself to greater heights.

It is important to state the privileges and expectations clearly at the beginning of the year.

... of (top-performing) first-year students

I’ve had several students in my office here, who tell me it is so different for them to sit in class and take down notes, they never did that at school.

You didn’t only teach me the French language and culture, but also how to go about studying effectively, how to be persistent even when it looked as if success was unobtainable.
Lecturers’ becoming

It’s in your blood
I give myself in-service training

After every lesson I go and think, okay where could I have done better, and where did I lose them, and where did I go too fast, and I try to make notes for myself, and I try to think how I could do it differently …

Lecturers’ becoming

I think my frustration with a discussion like this is often that I can’t give you anything scientific
Maybe I can become a guru in accountancy

The moment that you become conscious that it is a good idea to reflect, and you involve your class, it unleashed new energy for me, to ask the class how it works, … not only my teaching style, but in the end it has an effect on your method, your whole approach

Lecturers’ becoming

It is such fun for me
I’m crazy about them

Of course the strongest motivating factor for me is that I can live with myself, after I gave a lecture, and if I don’t feel that I truly gave them what is their due

Lecturers’ becoming

This is for me one of the biggest compliments that I have ever received from this university, more than sending my portfolio into the Dean for the Teaching Award, … but to get it unasked for from a student, and then even more so from a top student, … I often feel I do not do enough for the top students, because you focus so much in the class on the struggling students

New model

Subject knowledge
Pedagogic practices
Personality
Interpersonal relationships
Research/teaching nexus

In summary

• Good teaching at first-year level is similar to, but accentuates certain challenges specific to undergraduate teaching
• It is possible to teach large and diverse classes well and to establish contact with students
• The same understanding of the social situatedness of learning, should be applied to learning to become “good lecturers”
In conclusion

Teaching first-year students well can make a difference!