

Analysis of Course Evaluation by Students with Bad Relationship with Their Professor; Perception, Cause and Consequences

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Abstract: A student is in "socio-cognitive conflict" when his or her conceptions and cognitive structures are confronted with disturbing information that is incompatible with his or her prior knowledge system. The cognitive disturbance resulting from it will engage the person in a search for a new cognitive equilibrium that will take into account the disturbing information. In this paper, we propose to identify, through the literature and a case study, the factors that promote or, on the contrary, hinder the professor-student relationship and then to confront these theories with reality through a case study of second-year management students from the 2012-2013 academic year.

Keywords: Student-professor relationship, academic environment, lecture evaluation.

Introduction

The higher education sector is key to sustainable development (ADEA, 2018) and universities should be key contributors to the continent's human resource needs by providing, in particular, quality human resources for public professions and the civil service (Muller J., et al.2017). However, the higher education and research sector in general, and in Africa in particular, is not prioritized for investment but often relies on external funding. It is often relegated to second place. Given the limited budget allocated to education, a significant share of the state budget is allocated to primary and secondary education to the detriment of higher education and research (Cooper-Knock S.J., 2015).

Let's take the case of Madagascar to justify the situation: despite the high need for teaching staff at the level of each department in charge of education, in 2020, the initial finance law allocated 7,000 teaching posts for primary and secondary schools; 500 posts for technical education and only 100 posts for higher education and research. As a result, the average number of students per teacher in sub-Saharan Africa is twice as high as the international average: 64 students per teacher in Kenya versus 150 students per teacher in Madagascar. Insufficient investment is a real constraint for the sector in question.

Ever since Charlemagne invented the school, we've been looking for ways to improve teaching. Class sizes have been reduced. Boys and girls have been separated. We motivate teachers with high salaries. All other things being equal, and in particular for the same initial level and parents' professional category, 10% to 15% of the differences in results between students at the end of the year can be explained by the teacher to whom the student has been entrusted. Proof that this is just as effective as having small classes, and more important than the school's reputation.

Generally speaking, higher education institutions, which have been shaped by the socio-economic contexts and political dynamics of nations and societies, play roles and assume responsibilities in development policy (Clark, 1983). Indeed, by improving human capital, they promote the mastery of new technologies, essential conditions for a country's development.

Historically, for over 30 years now, university teaching has been subject to constant evaluation by students. According to a 1997 article in *University Affairs*, 90% of Canadian universities evaluate teaching using questionnaires. Yet these evaluations are often controversial in terms of validity. They are also seen as an inadequate and incomplete measure of effective teaching. But this is not an obstacle to their popularization, since according to Richard Lescure, a French didactician: "*Evaluation should be one of the main talking points*", as it perfectly embraces the concept and practices of evaluation and self-evaluation.

Indeed, when we say word, it implies at least two people, i.e. interaction. "*Teaching is a profession of human relations, and therefore requires human interaction. [...] Only human beings can train other human beings humanely. This fundamental truth lies at the very root of the fundamental anthropological reality that is educational activity: the human being is a being who needs others to become human, and it is through*

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mediation with other humans that his or her own humanity is made possible." (Tardif and Mukamurema, 1999) This quote sums up the hinge of teaching: human interaction.

The integration of new communication technologies (NTIC) into the various courses to facilitate and extend in space and time these communication possibilities beyond the classroom and/or the teacher's office hours seems to challenge this notion of human interaction. Far from reducing the "human" component, the increased availability and freedom of space offered by forums, social networks and e-mail seem to strengthen the teacher-student relationship and interaction. Interaction with others is the vehicle for developing mastery or understanding of a subject area.

Galileo and Copernicus asserted that the earth revolves around the sun, so it could be said that in teaching, everything, or almost everything, revolves around the teacher. This raises a legitimate and obvious question: what makes a good teacher/professor? The answer to this question can be found in a number of ways: you can ask the teacher to self-assess, you can send a national education or university inspector to assess the teacher on the job. We can simply ask students to evaluate their teacher.

The terms used to describe student course evaluations are numerous; the best-known terminologies are "student evaluations", "course evaluation", "student evaluation of instruction", "student evaluation of teaching". The use of a concept is motivated by the aspect it is intended to emphasize. Is it the student, the course, evaluation or other elements? This paper is part of this attempt to answer the question of whether there is a causal link between the teacher-student relationship and the evaluation of a teacher's course. We therefore hypothesize that the quality of the teacher's relationship with his or her students affects the latter's evaluation if they are asked to assess their teacher's teaching. Analysis of the survey results will enable us to verify whether or not this assertion is true.

1. Methodology

As announced in the introductory section of this paper, there were two evaluation forms for students to complete. The participation rate was 93.83% (365/389): [365 students handed in their evaluation forms and 389 students completed the follow-up and information forms]. Out of a total of 700 students, the evaluation participation rate was 52%, or 389 students who responded. Of these students, 35, or around 1 in 11, were members of an English Club. This number confirms the presence of a group of students interested in practicing English outside the academic setting.

In terms of honors, 87 of the 389 students, or around 1 in 5, obtained the mention "*Assez Bien*". In addition, 21 students, or around 1 in 18, obtained the mention *Bien*. These numbers support the teacher's statement that he is not joking when he uses the term "brilliant manager" to describe students who have achieved good grades. As for the declaration on honor, 30 students, or around 1 in 13, signed this declaration. This indicates that some students are prepared to make an official honorary commitment as part of their academic career.

In the case of responses to a specific question, it can be seen that of the 389 students who replied, 240 gave additional answers, representing around 60% of responses. In addition, 85 students agreed i.e. around 21% of responses. However, 64 students disagreed, representing around 16% of responses. In addition, 18 students expressed dismay at the question, representing around 4% of responses. It should be noted that 5 votes were invalid out of a total of 385 responses. These numbers provide an interesting insight into various aspects of student participation and opinions in the evaluation. They also illustrate the diversity of students' academic profiles and reactions, highlighting the importance of taking different viewpoints into account for a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.

2. Literature review

Above all, as far as teaching is concerned, the aim is to enter into a relationship with others, i.e. with students, since human beings are its main object. In this sense, it is an interactive profession (Cherradi, 1990). Unlike doctors, for example, who maintain minimal contact with his patient, the teacher must create relationships in order to transform his students in a direction deemed desirable. It is therefore impossible for the teacher to teach without taking into account the learners' reactions. For transformation to take place, the teacher must use persuasion (Gautier & Martineau, 1998). He must constantly concern himself with his "audience", while at the same time putting himself on stage. He must read the signs of boredom or interest in others and respond appropriately. In short, like a sort of seducer, he must "*woo the consent of the other*" in his classroom to win the learning joust (Boucher et al, 1998). This scenario requires the teacher to equip himself or herself with a series of attitudes, knowledge and skills in order to have an effect on the students, for as Wright (2006) so aptly puts it, "*A teacher's enthusiasm and expressiveness are likely to lead to higher assessment scores*".

When the classroom is a place of conflict

When we start a course or a lecture, our first objective is to establish a climate in which informal exchanges, the questioning of notions discussed and debated in class, and flexibility in the form, content and materials of the course are encouraged, and even perceived as necessary for the smooth running of the course and the acquisition of notions. But when faced with a teacher with whom the relationship is not good, exchanges are no longer formal, conflict is waiting to arise and tension is high. Discussions between the two protagonists are no longer conducive to learning.

When an alternative point of view is put forward in a discussion, participants tend to check whether it comes from a majority or a minority (Butera&Buchs, 2005). In general, when it comes from the minority, participants tend not to adopt it, or at least not from the outset, as it offers no a priori guarantee of validity. On one hand, to argue against a minority opinion, participants are nonetheless led to decentralize their point of view and put forward arguments they hadn't thought of at the start of the discussion (Butera, Legrenzi, & Mugny, 1993). On the other hand, a majority opinion that seeks to impose itself often results in the conformity of points of view to this majority opinion and a lack of search for alternatives.

Generally speaking, the degree of asymmetry of the social relationship, "*a highly asymmetrical relationship is likely to set in motion a mode of regulating socio-cognitive conflict that is not very conducive to learning*" (Bourgeois & Nizet, 1997, p. 162). Indeed, in hierarchical or appraisal relationships, for example, conflict may be resolved only on a relational level, out of complacency or to maintain the status quo in the relationship. However, the asymmetry of the relationship itself depends on a number of factors that can still lead to a cognitive resolution of the conflict: the support of a third party to the response of the "dominated" person, the representation that people have of the social relationship, the social significance of the task, etc.

The intensity of the social-cognitive relationship can have a positive impact on learning, depending on the frequency of verbal interactions and disagreements between people, or the intensity of each person's argumentation. The socio-affective characteristics of the social interaction: the social climate of the relationship has a positive impact on the cognitive resolution of conflict and therefore on learning. The cognitive and social prerequisites to be mastered by the partners in the interaction: the degree to which people are prepared to "enter" into conflict with others, whether on a cognitive or relational level, has an effect on the cognitive resolution of this conflict.

In such a case, everyone sticks to their positions, there's no real exchange, just opposition, and some will feel they've won and others will feel they've lost. However, if the debate is played out at the cognitive level, i.e. at the level of arguments and the substance of the participants' ideas, there's a chance that they'll be able to "decentralize" from their initial position and accept the information or arguments put forward by others. This is a learning process, a change in the way the debate is viewed.

To acquire knowledge, a person must, among other things, go to university. But "*the construction of knowledge is necessarily social, based on a set of interactions between people*" (Bertrand, 1993, p. 119). According to Bourgeois and Nizet (1997), it's not easy to "*shake*" an adult's convictions, especially when their knowledge is linked to their identity. This interaction can take many forms, and the ease or difficulty of learning will depend on the form of this relationship. However, not every interaction between people is necessarily a source of learning (Bourgeois and Nizet, 1997). The importance of this teacher-student relationship is such that we propose to evaluate either the teaching or the teacher, or both. Course evaluations, or student evaluations, are one of the most commonly used tools for assessing classroom teaching (Wright, 2006; Seldin, 1999; Centra, 1979). Student evaluations are the most controversial, but at the same time the most widely used measures. Abrami (2001) even dares to assert that no other option can provide the same kind of quantifiable and comparable data. And Ory J.C. (2001) adds that "*there are probably more misconceptions about student evaluations than known facts about them, even if the known facts are many*".

Purpose of evaluation

Before detailing the purpose of evaluation, let's ask ourselves what the purpose of teaching evaluation is? Among the many answers to this question, we can focus on the following two: (i) to improve the quality of one's teaching (evolutionary work during the process, self-evaluation work) and (ii) to help students choose a course (traditional teaching evaluation and end-of-course evaluation). "*The evaluation of teaching encompasses more than the evaluation of a teacher's performance. The latter ultimately influences only some elements of the many variables affecting student learning and satisfaction.*" (Shore et al. 1991)

Christopher Knapper (2001) writes about the difficulty of establishing fixed standards and criteria, given that learning objectives can vary enormously from one institution to another, from one department to another, from one course to another. Indeed, the answers given open up new questions. Which objectives should be prioritized? What criteria should be chosen? Those of the teachers, those of the students, those of the institution? Objectives differ from one approach to another, and so cannot be assessed solely on the basis of standard

teaching evaluations, which do not take into account all the variables influencing the quality of learning and the effectiveness of teaching. Patricia Cranton (2001), for her part, argues that the quantitative measures used to evaluate teaching (questionnaires) cannot account for the complexity of the pedagogical context, nor can they reflect the diversity of factors that affect this context. For Cranton, teaching evaluations are valid sources of information if the authors of the questionnaires and those who fill them in share a common vision of what effective teaching can be in a specific context. However, it is essential to bear in mind the subjective nature of these evaluations.

Evaluation objective

In general, course evaluations are used for summative rather than formative purposes, i.e. as a tool for human resource management decisions (e.g. hiring, tenure or promotion) based on students' assessment of a teacher's teaching effectiveness. But qualitative data is also used to improve teaching and develop courses.

The scientific community is divided on the usefulness and effectiveness of such feedback. On one hand, some believe that the feedback provided by course evaluations is not effective in bringing about changes in teaching behavior. On the other hand, some researchers consider that student evaluations are useful for measuring teaching behaviors and contribute to teaching effectiveness (Abrami, 2001; Marsh, 1987).

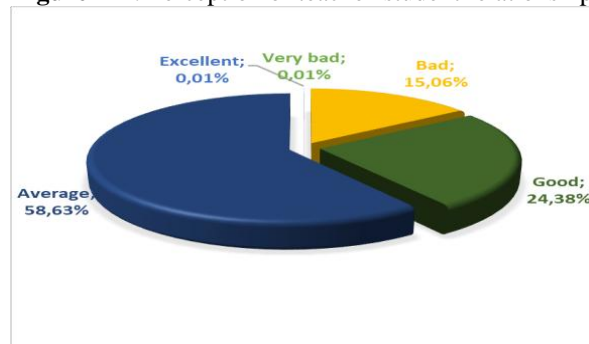
Still in the same vein, but this time on teachers' perceptions of student evaluation, Ryan et al. (1980) demonstrated that student course evaluations are a source of anxiety for faculty. Franklin and Theall (1989) express outright opposition to them. The reasons given for such behavior are threefold: (i) evaluations are biased (Feldman, 1976); (ii) students are not competent evaluators (Ryan, Anderson and Birchler, 1980); and (iii) evaluations are influenced by the grades expected by students (Baldwin and Blattner, 2003). These negative perceptions of evaluations can lead teaching staff to minimize their importance and/or hinder efforts to improve courses and teaching. Abrami (2001) has argued that there is a greater percentage of teachers showing a negative rather than a positive or neutral attitude towards evaluation tools. Little research has been carried out on these issues with regard to the impact of the quality of the student-teacher relationship on the latter's cognitive perception. For this reason, the aim of this paper is to identify the factors in the literature that either promote or hinder these perceptions.

3. Results and discussions

In this section, we show both the results of the questionnaires and the discussion of these results in relation to the literature and field reality.

The results of the assessment of the quality of the relationship between students and teacher show a varied distribution of evaluations. A relative majority of students (58.63%) rated their relationship as average, suggesting that there is room for improvement. This may indicate that certain aspects of the student-teacher relationship could benefit from particular attention, such as communication, coaching or student support. It is important for the teacher to identify the possible reasons behind these average ratings and put in place measures to strengthen the quality of the relationship.

Figure n°1: Perception of teacher-student relationship



Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

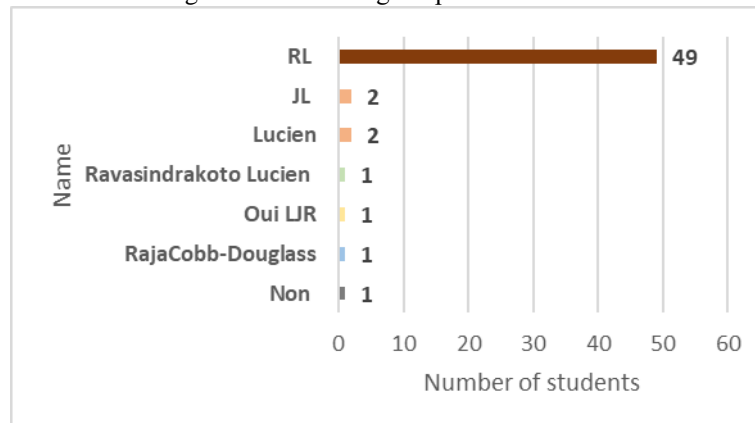
According to the answer to the questionnaire, only 24.38% rated the relationship as good. This suggests that certain aspects of teacher-student interaction need to be improved. It would be beneficial for the teacher to analyze and evaluate the reasons for these positive evaluations and try to replicate them in his or her relationship with other students. By taking into account the students' qualitative comments, it would also be possible to identify specific practices that contribute to a positive relationship and reinforce them for the whole class. In the

rest of our article, we'll be looking at the responses of those students (15.06%) who think there's a poor relationship between students and their teacher. There are 57 of them.

3.1 Professor's name

Among the 57 students who feel they have a poor relationship with their teacher, data reveal a varied distribution in terms of first names. The first name RL is the most frequently mentioned, accounting for 86% of these students. This indicates that the vast majority of students who perceive their relationship with the teacher as poor identify with this first name. For the record, the full name of the teacher is Razafindrakoto Jean Lucien.

Figure n°2: Knowing the professor's name



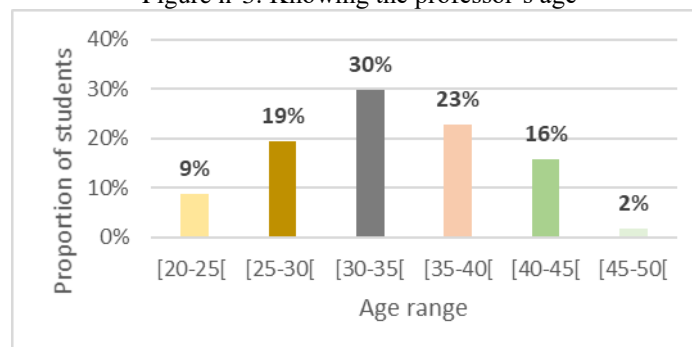
Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

These results highlight the importance of taking into account students' individual perceptions and recognizing that the quality of the relationship can vary from one individual to another. By focusing on students who have identified themselves with the first name RL, the teacher can work to improve the relationship with them by paying particular attention to them and seeking to understand their specific concerns.

3.2 Age of the professor

Analysis of the data reveals that the majority of students (30%) perceive the teacher as being between 30 and 35 years old. This suggests a preference for teachers in this specific age bracket. The percentages gradually decrease as the age of the teacher increases, with 23% of students believing the teacher to be in the 35 to 40 age bracket, followed by 16% for the 40 to 45 age bracket.

Figure n°3: Knowing the professor's age

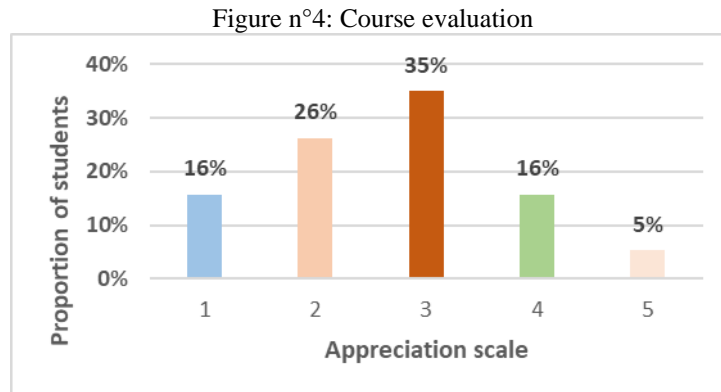


Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

Only 2% of students perceived the teacher as being between 45 and 50 years old. These results underline the importance of the teacher's age in students' perceptions, and suggest that students may have different expectations depending on the age of their teacher.

3.3 Courses evaluation

The students' assessment of course quality (on a scale of five) reveals a breakdown of responses as follows: 16% of students rated course quality as level 1 (very low), 26% as level 2 (low), 35% as level 3 (medium), 16% as level 4 (high), and 5% as level 5 (very high).

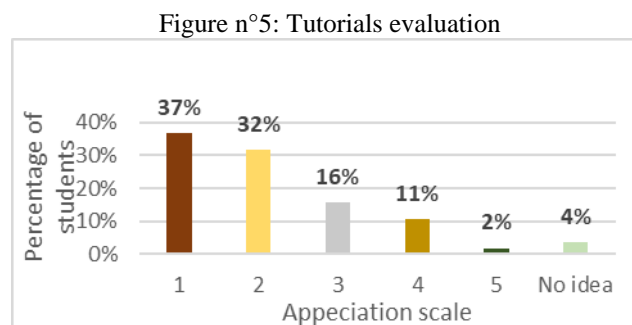


Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

These data suggest a relatively balanced distribution of student opinions on course quality, with a predominance of level 3 (average) judgments. This indicates that a significant proportion of students consider the quality of the course to be satisfactory overall. However, it is important to note that significant proportions of students rate the quality of the course as low (level 1 and 2), highlighting the need to identify specific aspects of the course that could be improved to meet student expectations. The results also highlight the importance of taking into account students' comments and opinions in order to continue to improve teaching quality and create a more enriching learning experience for all.

3.4 Tutorials

When we analyze the responses of the 57 students who feel they have a poor quality of relationship with the teacher, we can observe a diversified distribution of their evaluations concerning the quality of tutorials. Of these students, 21 (around 37%) rated the quality of tutorials as level 1 (very low), while 18 (around 32%) rated it as level 2 (low). These results indicate that more than a third of the students dissatisfied with their relationship with the teacher also have a negative perception of the quality of the tutorials.



Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

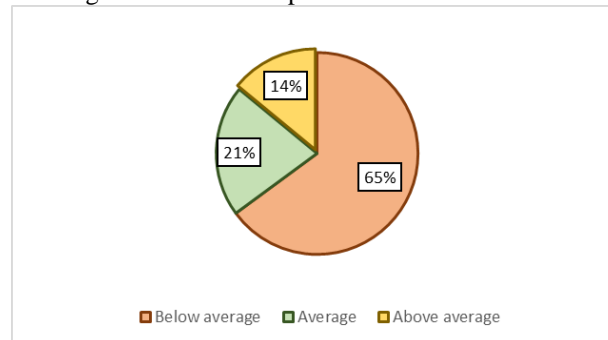
However, it is interesting to note that a relatively smaller number of students, 9 (approx. 16%), rate the quality of tutorials as level 3 (average). A further 6 students (approx. 11%) rate it as level 4 (high), and only 1 student (approx. 2%) as level 5 (very high). These figures suggest that, despite their negative perception of the relationship with the teacher, some students may still appreciate the quality of tutorials to some extent. It's a truism to say that one person's perception of something done by another is linked to the existing relationship between these two people. For example, if you like your professor, you'll laugh out loud at his silly jokes. However, when we don't like him/her, if the professor tells a joke, even good ones, in the eyes of students who don't like him "The professor tries to be funny, but his jokes don't make me laugh!"

Nevertheless, it is essential to take these evaluations into account in order to improve the quality of tutorials and, consequently, the overall student experience. The results highlight the need to look closely at the specific aspects of tutorials that contribute to negative perceptions of their quality. By identifying potential areas for improvement, such as clarity of instructions, interaction with students and relevance of activities, it is possible to enhance student engagement and improve their learning experience during tutorials sessions.

3.5 Students grade expectation without tutorials

Students' expectation without tutorials work reveals that 65% feel they will get a below-average grade, while 21% think they will get an average grade, and 14% are confident of an above-average grade.

Figure n°6: Grade expectation without tutorials



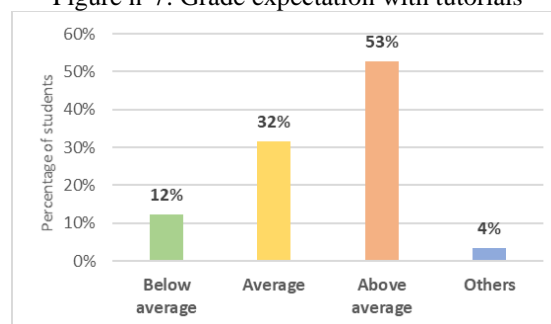
Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

These results highlight significant concern among students about their academic performance in the absence of tutorials, with a majority expecting below-average results. This perception is reason to examine the underlying reasons for these concerns, and to provide adequate support to students to help them improve their results and boost their confidence in their academic abilities.

3.6 Students grade expectation with tutorials

Students' perceptions of their marks after tutorial sessions are as follows: 12% felt they would get a below-average grade, 32% felt they would get an average grade, and a majority of 53% felt confident they would get an above-average grade. However, it should be noted that a minority of two students expressed a different opinion. They believe that the tutorials sessions made things worse, as they initially had a positive perception of their performance and thought they would achieve an above-average grade before the tutorials. However, after the tutorials sessions, they now feel they won't get the average on the exam.

Figure n°7: Grade expectation with tutorials



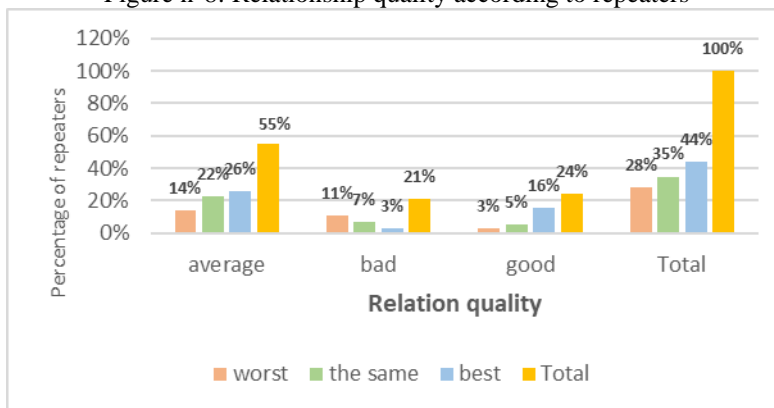
Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

These overall results suggest that the majority of students perceive the tutorials sessions as beneficial to their academic performance, with increased confidence in their ability to achieve above-average results. However, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of the two students who felt that tutorials had a negative impact on their results. Their experiences underline the importance of carefully monitoring the effectiveness of tutorials sessions and adapting teaching methods to meet students' specific needs and expectations. By

identifying the factors that have led to a deterioration in their perception and performance, corrective measures can be put in place to support all students on their academic journey.

For repeaters who have a poor relationship with the teacher (21% of repeaters), 11% feel that teaching has deteriorated since their first visit, 7% feel that nothing has changed and 3% feel that teaching has improved. Thus, among repeaters with a poor relationship, the majority (55%) perceive a deterioration in teaching.

Figure n°8: Relationship quality according to repeaters



Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

Among repeaters with an average relationship with the teacher (55% of repeaters), 14% feel that lecture quality has deteriorated, 22% feel that nothing has changed and 26% feel that teaching has improved. Thus, among repeaters with an average relationship, most (44%) perceive an improvement in teaching.

Among repeaters who have a good relationship with their teacher (24% of repeaters), only 3% feel that teaching has deteriorated, 5% feel that nothing has changed and 16% feel that teaching has improved. These results indicate that among repeaters with a good relationship, the majority (68%) perceive an improvement in teaching. It's important to note that these percentages are calculated in relation to the total number of repeaters in each relationship category. As expected, students' relationship with their teacher influences their perception of the quality of the course; when the relationship is poor, 14/27 (almost half) feel that the course is worse than last year.

When the relationship is good, 20/31 (64.51%) find the quality of the course better than last year. Unsurprisingly, the repeaters put their failure (not passing their exam) down to their teacher, hence the negative assessments of their perception of both the course and the tutorial sessions. To remedy this, and as a suggestion, we propose a frank discussion between the professor and these students. But how can this be done? According to the authors we consulted (Darnon et al., 2007; D. W. Johnson & R. T. Johnson, 2009), the first thing to consider is trying to prevent justification, for example by establishing clear rules for speaking up, or by providing students with precise evaluation criteria that will enable the discussion to be structured around concrete elements rather than more or less explicit personal opinions. Facilitation techniques such as professional co-development can be very instructive in this respect (Payette & Champagne, 1997). In this technique, the presenter is simply not allowed to justify himself, only to answer clarifying questions. It's only at the end of the discussion that he or she is again given the floor to say what he or she takes from the arguments of the other participants.

To increase the chances of learning occurring when a controversy arises within a discussion, it is important that the resolution of the controversy occurs at a cognitive level rather than just a relational one (Darnon et al., 2008; Darnon et al., 2007). The result of this type of confrontation is often a centering of points of view that crystallizes around a conflict that becomes purely relational, particularly when the participants' task incorporates a competitive dimension (Darnon, Muller, Schragger, Pannuzzo, & Butera, 2006). On the contrary, when the controversy remains at the level of ideas and arguments, i.e. at the cognitive level, participants are more likely to accept other points of view and integrate them, thus accommodating their own point of view.

4. Limitations of this paper and further research

The limitations are twofold, and intellectual honesty obliges us to point them out. Firstly, only 389 of the 770 students handed in their evaluation forms. Some students took the liberty of "making the teacher look uglier than he is" (Very bad, age range 45-50 and finally, anonymity allowed students to really let loose - perhaps a little too much!

Secondly, as mentioned above, the study of the emergence and resolution of socio-cognitive conflicts in university teaching activities is still relatively limited. One of the challenges we face is that it's difficult to implement conventional experimental designs. Instead, we are confronted with complex teaching and learning situations where many factors need to be taken into consideration. Comprehensive research approaches could therefore be envisaged, in particular to highlight the experiences and representations of students and teachers when their relationship is not at its best.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our aim has been to show that the quality of the teacher-student relationship influences student evaluation. The scientific literature abounds with thousands of papers devoted to the subject of student course evaluations. However, much research remains to be done. Special attention has been paid to questions of validity and reliability: in fact, a large majority of studies and literature reviews have shown us that the scientific community is divided on the reliability of student evaluations. Our paper does not intend to put an end to this controversy. However, we think it may be time to focus on some of the other issues that deserve our consideration. These include:

- Improvement and training for users of the assessments and results analyzed.
- Regular review of assessment instruments according to the needs and objectives of the establishment and in relation to current research findings.
- Faculty and student commitment to the evaluation process;
- Development and testing of interpretation tools and effective means of communicating results (in relation to user needs);

Recognizing that evaluations need to be accompanied by ongoing dialogue and support mechanisms to ensure that they contribute to sustaining and improving teaching, researchers need to refocus their work on the validity of course evaluations and move away from level-based research towards more holistic evaluations.

Whatever the level and quality of the student-teacher relationship, it has been clearly demonstrated that assessments in general, and student assessments in particular, are valid and important tools for evaluating both the teacher and his or her teaching. Care must be taken in their development, bearing in mind that their validity and reliability are determined by much more than simply how well students respond to individual questions and the questionnaire.

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