

Impact of the Teacher-Student Relationship on Course Evaluation: Case Study of Management Students at the University of Antananarivo

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Summary: People in general and student in particular are "in socio-cognitive conflict" when his relationship with his teacher and his cognitive structures are confronted with disruptive information incompatible with his prior knowledge system. In this paper, we propose to identify, through literature and a case study, the factors that favor or, on the contrary, disfavor the student-professor relationship, and then to confront these theories with reality through a case study of second-year management students.

Keywords: Student-Teacher Relationship, course/lecture evaluation

Introduction

Ever since Charlemagne invented school, we've been looking for ways to improve teaching and knowledge sharing. 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 of education and parents' professional category, 10% to 15% of the differences in end-of-year results between pupils 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.

Higher education institutions, which have been shaped by the socio-economic contexts and political dynamics of nations and societies, play important 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.

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, as Richard Lescure, idacticianstates : "*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 "speech" or "conversation", 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 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 into the various courses in order 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 student-professor relationship and interaction. Interaction with others is the vehicle for developing our mastery or understanding of a field.

Higher education 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

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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 us take the case of Madagascar, 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.

Just as Galileo and Copernicus asserted that the earth revolves around the sun, it can also be said that almost everything in teaching revolves around the student-teacher relationship. This raises a legitimate and obvious question: what makes a good teacher? The answer to this question can be found in a number of ways: the teacher can be asked to self-assess, or a national education or university inspector can be sent to assess the teacher in the course of his or her work. We can simply ask students to evaluate their professor.

There are many words to describe student course evaluations; the best-known terminologies are "student evaluations", "course evaluation", "student evaluation of instruction", "student evaluation of teaching". The use of one word to the detriment of another is motivated by the aspect we wish to emphasize. Is it the student, the course, the evaluation or other elements?

Our 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 a teacher's relationship with his or her students affects the evaluation if they are asked to assess/to evaluate their teacher's teaching. Analysis of the survey results will enable us to verify whether or not this hypothesis is true or not.

1. Methodological approach

In order to carry out our study properly and try to answer the main question "*How does the teacher-student relationship affect students' evaluation of their teacher and his/her teaching?*" we have adopted the methodology that will be detailed in this section.

1.1 Literature research

Our research was conducted on numerous university databases and bibliographical references. We focused mainly on published research on student course evaluations. The organization of our study is the result of an iterative process reflecting the evolution of our understanding of the subject. A particular effort has been made to include all the important themes we have identified in the research literature.

1.2 Student survey

Since our research is focused on a case study of second-year management students, we believe that our study should begin with the design of a questionnaire to be administered to the students. The sampling approach is therefore that of exhaustiveness, i.e. all students received and completed the questionnaire. The only limitation of this approach is the existence of students who were absent when the questionnaires were collected, or students who dropped out during the academic year. More explicitly, this class of second-year Management students at the Faculty of Economics, Management and Sociology (FAC EGS) has 722 students.

In order not to mislead the reader, the following points should be taken into consideration when reading this study:

- The professor who carried out the assessment is a lecturer in the aforementioned subject.
- The assessment was not made with a view to promotion or tenure.
- The aim of the study is to highlight the elements that help us to improve the teacher-student relationship if the proposed hypothesis proves to be true, i.e. that this relationship has a negative or positive impact on students' perception or understanding of a course.
- The subject taught is Microeconomics, a cross-disciplinary subject along with Quantitative Decision Techniques and Banking Techniques for the core curriculum for second-year Management students.

It is clear, therefore, that this study cannot be generalized. This remark echoes Wright's (2006) conclusion when he cites the study by Williams and Ceci (1997), considered by many authors to follow an invalid methodology because it draws conclusions from results obtained in one promotion and during one session only; these results cannot therefore be generalized. The results of our study will serve as raw material for more exhaustive studies, i.e., conducted over a number of years to fully understand the evolution of the phenomenon.

1.3 sample

As stated in the introduction, there were two 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 722 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 figure confirms the presence of a group of students interested in practicing English outside the academic context. As for the declaration on honor, 30 students, i.e. around 1 in 13, signed this declaration. This indicates that some students are prepared to make a formal commitment on their honor in relation to the information given in the evaluation form.

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 with the question asked, i.e. around 21% of responses. However, 64 students were against the question, representing around 16% of responses. A further 18 students expressed dismay at the question, representing around 4% of 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 points of view into account for a comprehensive and balanced evaluation.

2. Literature Review and State of the Art

Teaching is a complex, multi-faceted art, influenced by so many participants and external influences that isolating one variable from the others is a real challenge. A great deal of research has been devoted to understanding adult learning in social interaction (Bourgeois & Nizet, 1997), with a particular focus on teaching university students (Bourgeois & Frenay, 2001).

2.1 The aim of the assessment

Before getting to the heart of the matter, let's ask ourselves: what is the purpose of teaching evaluation? 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) raises 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. From Cranton point of view, 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.

2.2 Evaluation objective

Course evaluations are generally 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 student assessment of a teacher's teaching effectiveness. But qualitative data is also used to improve teaching and develop courses.

The scientific community opinion is divided on the usefulness and effectiveness of such feedback. On one hand, some believe that the feedback provided by course/lecture 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 behavior and contribute to teaching effectiveness (Marsh, 1987).

According to the same logic, 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. Threefold reasons are given for such behavior: (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.

2.3 Teaching: an interactive activity

First and foremost, the aim of teaching 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 health people, for example, who maintains minimal contact with his patient, teachers 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 kind of seducer, he must "*court 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*".

In order to acquire knowledge, a person must, among other things, go to school or 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.

If we take the example of North American countries (Canada and the USA), common methods of evaluating teaching include course evaluations, letters of appreciation from students and colleagues, classroom and peer evaluations, teaching awards received, teaching materials and course notes. Some of these elements can be found in the teaching dossier. This file "*summarizes a teacher's achievements and key strengths in teaching. It is to teaching what a list of publications, grants and academic honors is to research*". (Shore et al. 1991)

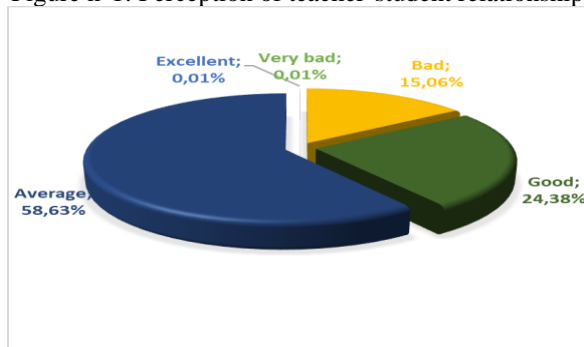
Yet course evaluations, or student evaluations, are one of the most commonly used tools for assessing classroom teaching (Wright, 2006; Seldin, 1999; Centra, 1979). Student evaluations are the most controversial, but at the same time the most widely used measures. Abrami (2001) even believes that no other option provides the same kind of quantifiable and comparable data. And Ory J.C. (2001) adds that "*there are probably more misconceptions about student evaluations than there are known facts about them, even though there are many known facts*".

Little research has been carried out on 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 promote or hinder cognitive perception.

3. Results and Discussions

One person's perception of something done by another is linked to the existing relationship between these two people. In this section, we will present and discuss the results of the evaluation forms in relation to the relationship students have with their teacher.

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.

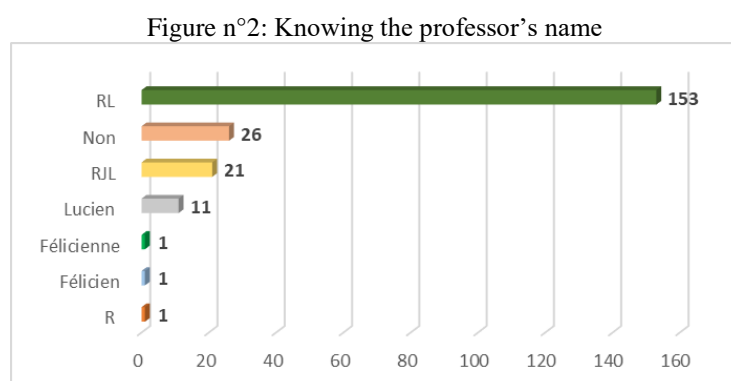
The results of the assessment of the quality of the relationship between students and teacher show a varied distribution of evaluations. A relative majority of students (58.63%) rated their relationship as average, suggesting that there is room for improvement.

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.

Only 24.38% of students who answered the questionnaire 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.

3.1 Knowing the professor's name

Analysis of the 214 students who found their relationship with the teacher as average reveals some interesting results. The majority of students (71.50%) knew the teacher's first and last name (Razafindrakoto Jean Lucien). This indicates a certain familiarity and recognition of the name among these students, which may facilitate communication and strengthen the relationship.



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

However, it is worrying to note that a significant percentage of students (12.15%) do not know the teacher's name, suggesting a lack of communication or introduction on the part of the teacher.

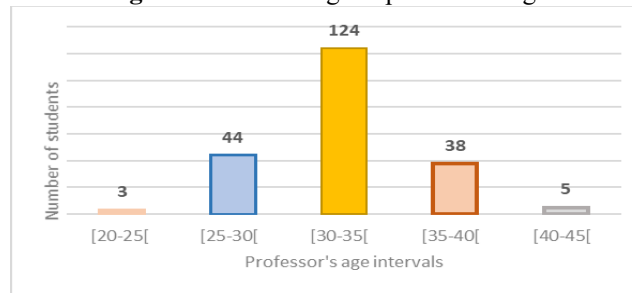
It would be important for the teacher to implement measures to make himself better known to these students, in order to foster better interaction and a sense of belonging and closeness. It is also interesting to note that some students (5.14%) know the teacher's exact first name and have identified him as "Lucien".

In summary, although the majority of students are familiar with the teacher's full and exact name, it remains important to address the percentage of students who don't know their teacher's name. By implementing appropriate communication strategies and clarifying his or her full name, the teacher can improve familiarity and interaction with students, fostering a more solid and committed relationship.

3.2 Knowing the age of the professor

Analysis of the teacher's age, based on student responses, reveals a diverse distribution of estimates. The majority of students (57.94%) estimated that the teacher was between 30 and 35 years old, suggesting a perception of a relatively young teacher at the start of his or her career. A significant number of students (20.56%) estimated that the teacher was between 25 and 30 years old, reinforcing the idea of a relatively young presence in the university environment. However, it is also interesting to note that a significant percentage of students consider the teacher to be over 35 years of age, with 17.76% in the 35 to 40 age bracket.

Figure n°3: Knowing the professor's age



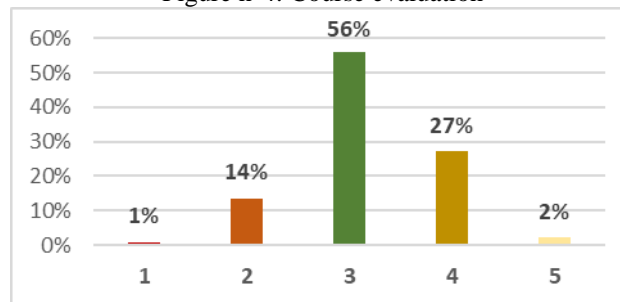
Source: Authors, based on data from the evaluation of second-year management students, University of Antananarivo, 2012-2013.

These results underline the importance of teachers taking into account students' perception of their own age, and adapting their communication and teaching approaches accordingly to foster a balanced and respectful relationship with students of different ages.

3.3 Course evaluation

Analysis of lecture quality, based on student evaluations, reveals some interesting results. The largest proportion of students (56%) rated the quality of the course as average, suggesting that there are areas that could be improved to meet student expectations. These results underline the importance for the teacher to take into account students' comments and concerns in order to identify specific areas requiring improvement and adjust his/her teaching accordingly.

Figure n°4: Course evaluation



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

These figure shows that 27% of students consider the quality of the course to be good, indicating that certain aspects of the teaching are appreciated by these students. This may be the result of good organization, relevant teaching resources or clear communication on the part of the teacher. It is encouraging to see a positive assessment among a significant percentage of students.

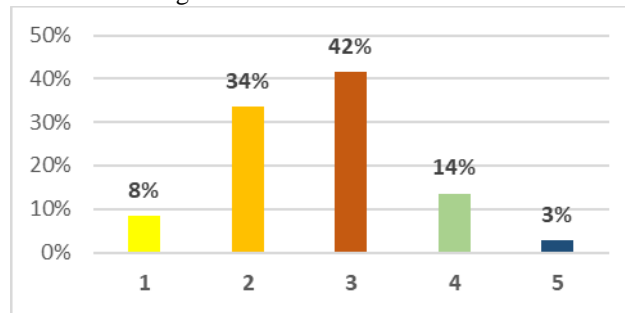
However, it is also important to note that a small proportion of students (2%) rate the quality of the course as excellent, suggesting that certain aspects of the teaching are highly valued and fully meet their expectations. It would be beneficial for the teacher to identify these elements and reinforce them to further improve the overall quality of the course.

In summary, although the majority of students rate the quality of the course as average, there are opportunities for improvement and adjustment to meet student expectations. The teacher can build on student feedback and positive evaluations to reinforce appreciated aspects and work on areas requiring improvement. This will contribute to a more satisfying learning experience for students and a better overall quality of the course.

3.4 Tutorials evaluation

A significant percentage of students (42%) consider the quality of tutorials to be average. This shows that there are things that could be improved to meet students' expectations and optimize their learning experience. The teacher should take these evaluations into account and consider adjustments to make the tutorials more engaging, interactive and enriching.

Figure n°5: Tutorials evaluation



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

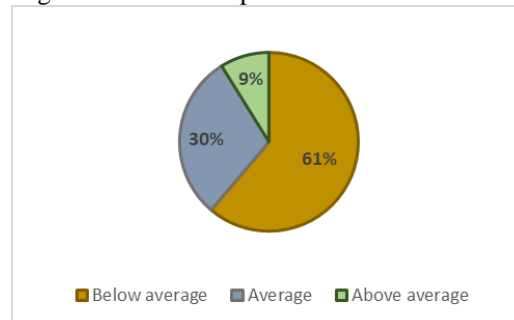
According to that figure, a significant proportion of students (34%) rate the quality of tutorials as poor. This highlights the need for the teacher to identify the underlying reasons for this assessment and take steps to improve the structure, clarity and relevance of the tutorials. The aim should be to provide students with a stimulating and productive learning environment, where they can develop their skills and understanding of the subject. Pedagogical adjustments, additional resources or more transparent communication may be required to address student concerns and improve the overall quality of tutorials.

In summary, student assessments of tutorial quality indicate a need for improvement. A significant proportion of students consider the quality to be average or poor. By promoting interaction, clarity and relevance, the teacher can create a more effective and rewarding learning environment for students.

3.5 Grade expectation without tutorials

The analysis of grade expectation without tutorials reveals a significant distribution of student answers. The majority of students (61%) expect to achieve a below-average grade. This may indicate concern about their academic performance in the absence of tutorials, which underlines the importance of tutorials in their learning and understanding of course content. The teacher should be aware of this concern and explore ways to support these students, such as extra revision sessions or additional resources to help them improve their results.

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.

This figure shows that 30% of students expect to achieve an average grade. This suggests that they are confident in their skills and ability to succeed without heavy reliance on tutorials. However, it is important for the professor to maintain regular monitoring of these students and ensure that they have access to adequate resources and support to achieve their academic goals.

Finally, only 9% of students expect to achieve an above-average grade. These students show a higher level of confidence in their ability to succeed without the help of tutorials. The teacher should encourage and support these students, while ensuring that they are constantly stimulated and pushed to reach their full potential.

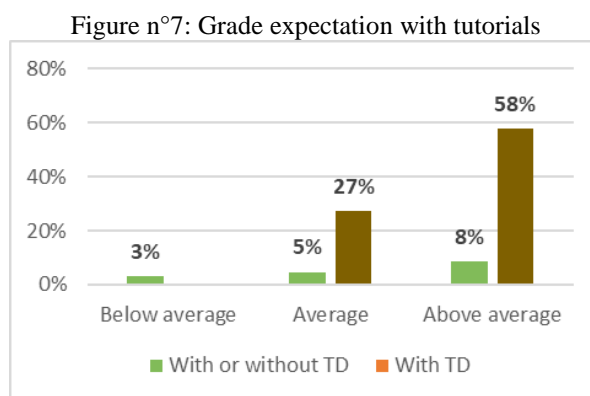
In summary, analysis of predicted grades without tutorials highlights major concerns among students, with a majority predicting a below-average grade. The teacher needs to identify ways of providing extra support to these students to help them improve their academic results. In addition, confident students who expect to

achieve a grade of average or above should be recognized and encouraged to maintain their motivation and strive for excellence.

3.6 Grade expectations with tutorials sessions

An analysis of grade forecasts, taking into account the presence or absence of tutorials, reveals some interesting results. Firstly, with regard to predicted below-average grades, the survey shows that only 3% of students expect to achieve a below-average grade, with or without tutorials. This suggests that the majority of students are confident about their academic performance, even without tutorials sessions.

In terms of expected marks equal to the average, there is a significant difference depending on the presence of tutorials. Without tutorials, 5% of students predicted a mark equal to the average, whereas with tutorials, this number is as low as 27%. This underlines the positive role of tutorials in improving students' performance and their confidence in their academic results.



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

Finally, when it comes to above-average grades expectation, there is also a big difference depending on the presence of tutorials. With them, 58% of students expect to score above average, while without them, that number gets as low as 8%. This underlines the significant impact of tutorials on improving students' performance and their ability to excel academically.

In summary, the results indicate that the majority of students are confident in their academic performance, even in the absence of tutorials. However, the presence of tutorials plays a crucial role in improving students' performance and their ability to achieve grades at or above the average. Their professor should continue to use tutorials as an effective tool to support and encourage students in their academic progress.

Conclusion and Further Research Study

Before concluding our study, let us first recall that our objective was to show that the quality of the teacher-student relationship influences student evaluation. The scientific literature abounds with thousands of articles 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. This article is not intended to put an end to this debate. On the other hand, we believe that it may now be time to focus on some of the other questions that deserve our attention. These are:

- Regularly review assessment instruments according to the needs and objectives of the facility and in relation to current research findings.
- Improve information and training for users of the assessments and results analyzed;
- Ensure faculty and student commitment to the evaluation process;
- Develop and test interpretation tools and effective means of communicating results (in relation to user needs);

Bearing in mind 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.

Finally, intellectual honesty obliges us to point out the limitations of our study. These are twofold. Firstly, only 389 of the 770 students submitted their evaluation forms. Some student 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 is that it is difficult to set up classical 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 the teacher-student relationship is not at its best.

In short, it has been clearly demonstrated that evaluations in general, and student evaluations in particular, are valid and important tools for assessing both the teacher and his or her teaching. Due 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 questionnaires.

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