Student perceptions of a good university lecturer*

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Abstract

Adapting to the European Higher Education Area has meant a significant shift in the role of university lecturers. This study considers the personal, professional and methodological attributes considered most important for a university lecturer by students in the third year of degrees in Primary Education, Social Education, Psychology and Educational Psychology. The data was gathered via a questionnaire completed by 269 students distributed across the four courses offered by the Education Faculty. The results show that the attributes rated highest were those of a respectful attitude towards students, the ability to give clear explanations, a good command of the subject, good communication skills, the use of practical and authentic examples, good preparation, being a good listener and empathy with the students. Significant statistical differences were found in the appraisals in terms of gender and degree subject. The study supports that view that university lecturers require specialist training in order to develop critical attributes, especially in the case of faculties responsible for training future primary teachers and other related professions.

Keywords

Higher education – Lecturer – Appraisal – University student.

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* Translated for English by Joss Pinches.

Introduction

University teaching has been understood in terms of an educational process taking place in an institution which has as its objectives the seeking after, acquisition and construction of scientific knowledge, within a context of continuous critical intellectual rigour towards this knowledge (LÓPEZ LÓPEZ, 2007). In this model, the principal actor was the lecturer, whose responsibility it was to safeguard the knowledge and to transmit it, as a one-way, hierarchical exposition, to students whose role at all times was purely passive receptors of this knowledge (LEÓN GUERRERO; CRISOL MOYA, 2011).

It is a model that survived unchallenged for centuries, but new contexts have brought about a change in this role. Today, the lecturer is more an educational guide, orienting students, providing necessary and sufficient information, contextualising the subject matter to be covered, and deploying a variety of strategies to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved. At the same time, he or she is sensitive to the dynamics of the group and aims to strike an open and communicative tone to encourage cooperation and active participation among the students (CAPOTE GARCÍA, 2015).

The Bologna process has not only seen a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning equation, the student replacing the teacher as focal point, but has also been accompanied by a move away from essentially behaviourist models of learning towards constructionist theories based on the construction of meaning. The attempt to define the attributes of a good university teacher is nothing new, and there is abroad literature at both theoretical and empirical level (see SAN MARTÍN et al., 2014 for a full review). Numerous studies have identified particular qualities, chief among which are command of the subject area, engagement with the students, motivational skills and appropriate instructional strategies (RUIZ CARRASCOS, 2005).

Nevertheless, it is by no means an easy task, due to the complexity of the factors involved (DE MIGUEL, 2003), and the specialisation required for diagnosing learning (ARBIZU, 1994) in the distinct tasks a lecturer undertakes, with respect to the teaching-learning process, the role of tutor and professional development activities (MATEO, 1987). Ventura et al. (2011) offers a classification of the attributes of a good teacher according to pedagogical features, methodological traits and personal qualities.

According to Zabala (2000), teaching is composed of three factors: planning, execution and evaluation, taking into account who is doing the learning, what is being learnt, and the objectives of the learning. The ultimate aim of the teacher is not only to ensure that students successfully assimilate the required disciplinary knowledge (short term) and in this way contribute to their overall education, but also to be involved in an ethical activity which seeks to improve the learners and enable them to contribute to the development of society (CARLOS GUZMÁN, 2016).

As Ramsden (2007) points out, a good teacher should concern him or herself with ensuring that students achieve the stated learning objectives by giving them the necessary support to make them believe in their own abilities.

Other indicators of a good teacher are setting clear learning objectives, managing class time and resources effectively, accurately evaluating learning outcomes, and setting

achievable tasks (MCBER, 2000), ensuring these latter activate complex cognitive processes beyond simple memorisation (HATTIE, 2011).

Hamer's (2015) study into what makes a good university teacher was carried out by means of student questionnaires, and although no single profile emerged, certain elements did tend to converge irrespective of the degree course or country of study, specifically competence in the subject area, respect for students and passion for what they do.

We concur with Covarrubias and Piña (2004) when they underline the importance of taking the students' opinions into account, as there are two actors involved in the educational process – the teacher and the student – and each has a particular perspective with regard to the other's performance and expectations.

Albert (1986) notes that the representations which students make of their teachers are based on interests related to methods of evaluation used, the teacher's classroom performance and the teacher's personality.

In their study into students' perceptions of desirable attributes of university teachers, Castonguay-Leblanc and Couturier-Leblanc (1989, quoted in BELTRÁN LLERA; PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ, 2005), find that chief amongst these traits are mastery of the subject, availability, fairness in the evaluation process, method and structure, respect for the students, dedication, clear explanations, concern for the intellectual development of the students, good communication skills, originality and a sense of humour. In similar vein, Calvo and Susinos (2010) underline the approachability of the teacher, as well as their concern, enthusiasm and creativity.

A similar study by Gine-Freixes (2009) found that students were most concerned with the choice and organisation of syllabus items, the teaching techniques used for ensuring effective learning, and the relevance of the subject matter, on which point they specified the qualities of professionally empowering, up-to-date, functional and meaningful.

The aim of this study was to identify the attributes of a good teacher according to students in their third year of degrees in Primary Education, Social Education, Psychology and Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Education (at the University of Huelva, Spain), and once identified, to use the findings to contribute to a process of reflection on, and development in, the practise of teaching at the university.

The specific objectives were the following:

• To identify the attributes of a good teacher, according to the students in the aforementioned degree courses.
• To determine whether the students' overall perception was congruent with that of the literature.
• To establish whether there were any differences in the perception of good attributes according to gender and/or degree course.

Method

In view of the nature of the study and its objectives, we opted for a research design which was non-experimental, transverse, descriptive and relational, using a questionnaire

to record the frequencies of the variables gender and degree course in the appraisal of lecturers by a sample in which these two variables were well represented. Data collection was by means of a questionnaire.

Participants

The sample used for this study was a convenience sample of students from the first and second cycles at the University of Huelva. In total, there were 269 respondents to the questionnaire, administered during the academic year 2013-14.

In terms of gender, 23.7% of respondents were male, 76.3% were female.

Regarding courses of study, Primary Education accounted for 24.2%, Social Education 26.6%, Psychology 21.8% and Educational Psychology 27.4%.

With respect to age, the youngest respondent was 20 and the oldest 35; the average was 22.67 and the standard deviation 2.44.

Non probability sampling was used, in which respondents were selected according to their course of study and availability, whilst every effort was made to ensure the sample was as representative as possible.

These particular degree courses were targeted as the syllabus specifications include considerable amount of pedagogical input.

Instrument

The instrument used to define and measure teacher attributes was a questionnaire developed by Gargallo, Sánchez, Ros and Ferreras (2010). This consisted of eight sections, each focusing on a different cluster of characteristics associated with good university teaching (two examples from a battery of options are given in each case): personal traits (eg, friendliness, approachability), professional qualities (eg, subject competence, punctuality), teaching techniques (eg, ability to engage students, provision of learning strategies), explanations (eg, clear, well-ordered), specific methodologies (eg, Socratic method, case studies), materials and resources (eg, bibliography, past examination papers), type of evaluation used (eg, final examination, course work), and personal impression of evaluation used (eg, fair, negotiated, not too demanding).

The questionnaire was analysed across multi-dimensional sets, with a high measure of total reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.910). The reliability of the individual subsets ranged from the sixth, 'materials and resources' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.609) to the first, 'personal qualities' (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.779).

In total there were 71 individual items in the questionnaire, including respondents' gender, age and degree course. Of the remaining items, each could be selected or not, up to a maximum of seven choices, from the list of attributes for any particular section. In this way, totals could be easily counted and the most frequent attributes in each of the sections calculated.

Anonymity was guaranteed in completing the questionnaire, as by this means there was a greater likelihood of the responses reflecting honest opinions.

Procedure

With regards to procedure, the questionnaire was administered at the end of the 2014 course. The data was then inputted into the SPSS 15 programme for subsequent treatment and analysis.

Results

We first analyse the attributes of a good teacher in general, then according to degree subject, and finally we will look at significant differences in terms of the identified groups.

In general, students the attributes which students valued most highly were personal qualities, professional qualities, and teaching methodology, whilst those they valued to a lesser degree were explanations (with the exception of clarity), teaching methods, materials, resources and evaluation.

**Figure 1-** Attributes of a good university lecturer (total sample)
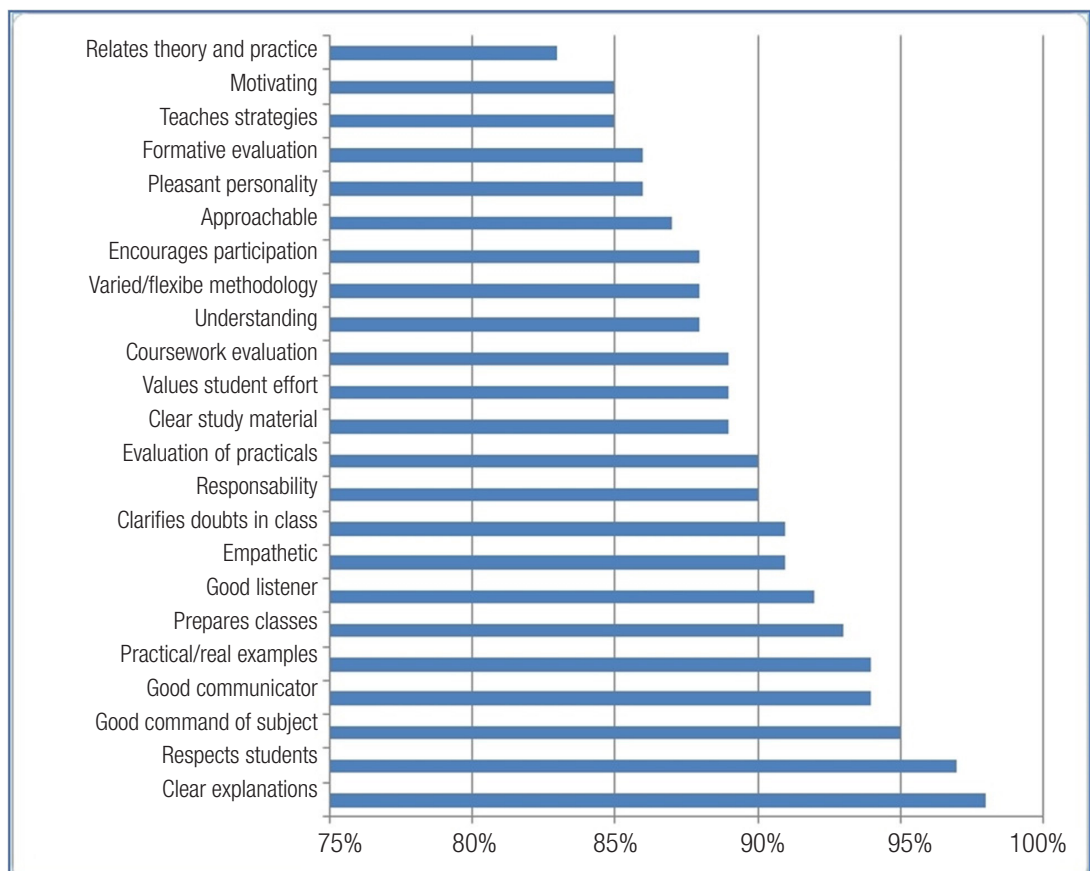
Source: Own data.

By degree subject, the results show that for students in the first year of *Educational Psychology* the attributes of a good lecturer are the following:

Within the set 'personal qualities', the most desirable attributes for a lecturer were considered to be respect (98%), being a good listener (96%), having a pleasant personality (88%) and being good at dealing with people (87%). In terms of 'professional qualities', the most highly valued attributes were class preparation (98%), responsibility (96%), meeting tutorial schedules (89%) and punctuality (80%).With respect to 'teaching methodology', the highest scoring attributes were encouraging the participation and involvement of the students (93%), employing a varied methodology adapted to the students (89%), providing strategies for making progress in the subject (83%), using appropriate supplementary resources (80%) and establishing relationships between concepts and topics (80%). In 'features of explanations', the highest scoring attributes were clarity (99%), the use of practical and real examples (94%), stimulating motivation (85%) and highlighting the basic concepts (78%). In 'approaches' which the respondents felt the lecturer should use, the top items were clarifying doubts in class (93%), using case studies (77%) and using discovery learning (72%). In 'materials and resources', the most highly valued attributes were that the material used should be clear and straightforward (94%), audio-visual media should be used (82%) and that the course notes should be good quality and consistent with the programme (74%). In 'methods of evaluation', most importance was given to the inclusion of practicals (93%), effort (89%), assignments (88%) and classwork (88%). In terms of 'evaluation features', those scoring highest were that the evaluation should be formative, such that students could learn from their errors (90%), published beforehand (86%) and flexible, allowing for various means of passing (84%).

Figure 2- Attributes of a good university lectureraccording to students of Educational Psychology
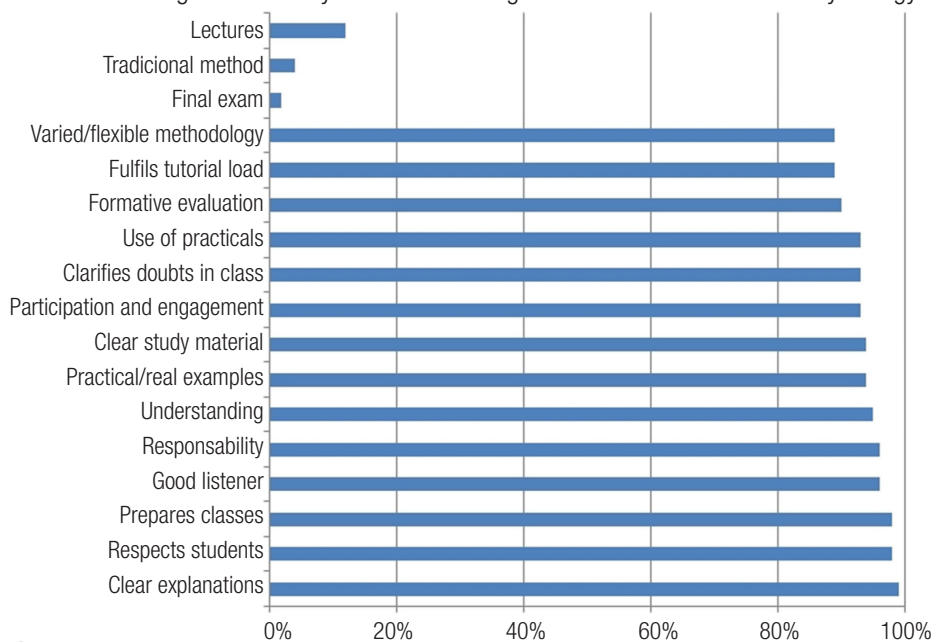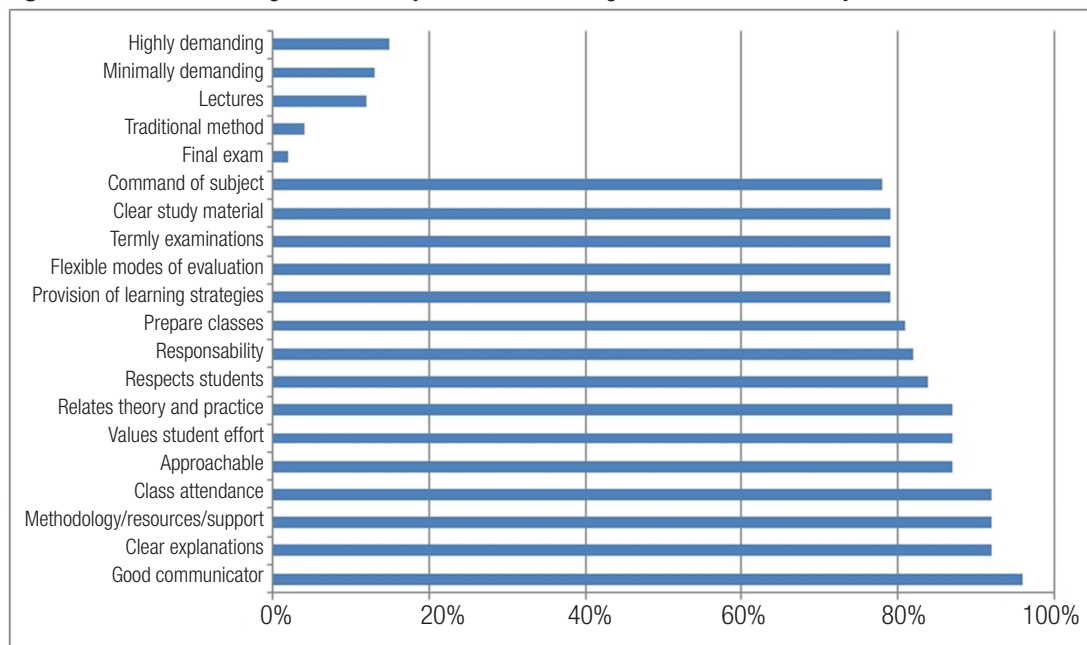

Source: Own data.

For students in the third year of *Primary Education*, the attributes of a good lecturer are the following:

In terms of 'personal qualities', openness (87%), respectfulness (84%), attentiveness (79%), good listening skills (76%) and understanding (72%). In 'professional qualities', good communication skills (96%), responsibility (82%), class preparation (81%), and command of the subject (78%). In 'teaching methodology', methodology backed up by appropriate resources (slideshow presentations, videos and the like) (92%), the provision of strategies for dealing with and learning from the subject (e.g., exam preparation) (79%), establishing relationships between concepts and the topics covered in class (75%), and the use of a varied methodology adapted to each student (70%). For 'features of explanations', the most desired features were clarity (92%), that they establish relationships between theory and practice (87%), are interesting (83%), use practical and real examples (76%). Regarding the 'approaches' that the lecturer should use, the highest scoring items were clarifying doubts in class (76%), the use of questions about the topic and varied modes for explaining subject matter (67%). In 'materials and resources', the use of audio-visual media for expositions (92%), that the material used should be clear and straightforward (79%) and that past examination papers be studied (71%). In 'methods of evaluation', the most frequently selected items for inclusion among evaluation criteria were attendance (92%), effort (87%) and assignments (83%), while the opportunity to do termly examinations (79%) was also highly valued. In terms of 'evaluation features', flexibility (79%), formative design (72%) and transparency regarding the evaluation criteria and procedures (67%) were the most valued features.

Figure 3- Attributes of a good university lecturer according to students of Primary Education
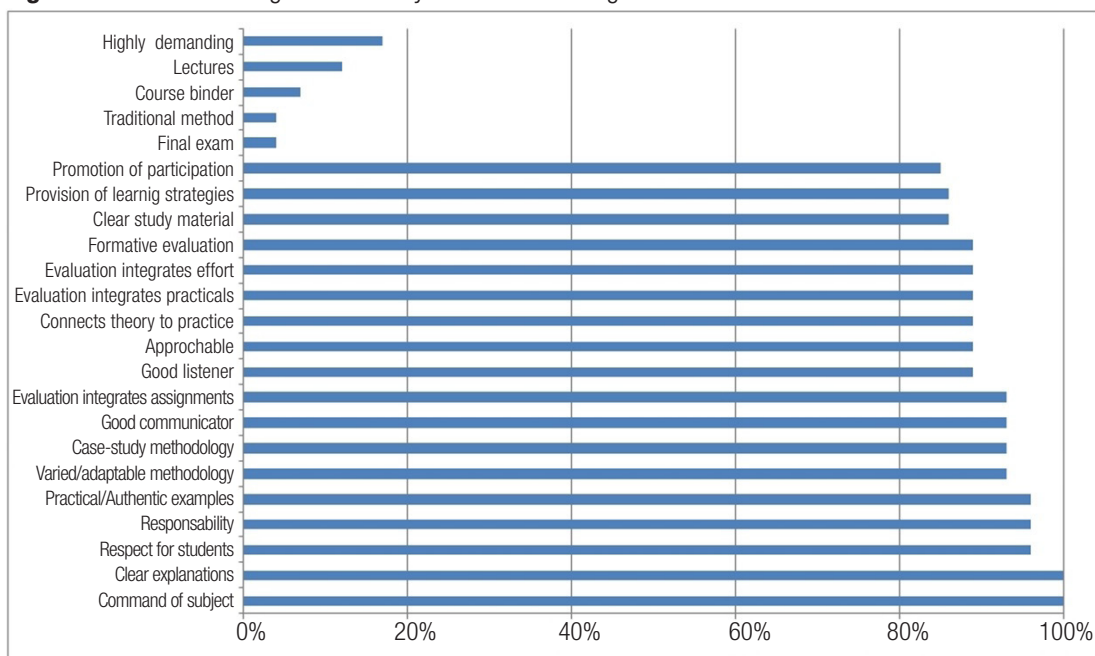

Source: Own data.

For students in the third year of *Social Education*, the attributes of a good lecturer were the following:

In terms of personal qualities, the highest scoring attributes were respect for students (96%), and being approachable, a good listener and pleasant (82%). With respect to professional qualities, the chief attributes were command of the subject area (100%), responsibility (96%) and being a good communicator (93%). Regarding 'teaching methodology', employing a varied methodology adapted to the students (93%), providing strategies for making progress in the subject (85%), promoting participation and engagement among students (85%) and making connections between concepts and the topics making up the subject (82%) were all highly rated. With respect to 'features of explanations', the most desired features were that they be clear (100%), make use of practical and real examples (96%), making connections between theory and practice (89%), and should be motivating (82%). The highest rated 'approaches' were the use of case studies (93%) and the use of varied modes for giving expositions of subject matter (68%). The most highly valued attributes under 'materials and resources' were clarity and simplicity (86%), good quality course notes consistent with the course programme (75%) and the use in class of past examination papers (75%). The highest rated items for 'methods of evaluation' were the inclusion of classwork (93%), practicals (89%) and effort (86%) among evaluation criteria, while in 'evaluation features', continuous (formative) modesof evaluation (89%) which were flexible (82%) and established the criteria and procedures beforehand (82%) were most highly rated.

Figure 4- Attributes of a good university lecturer according to students of Social Education
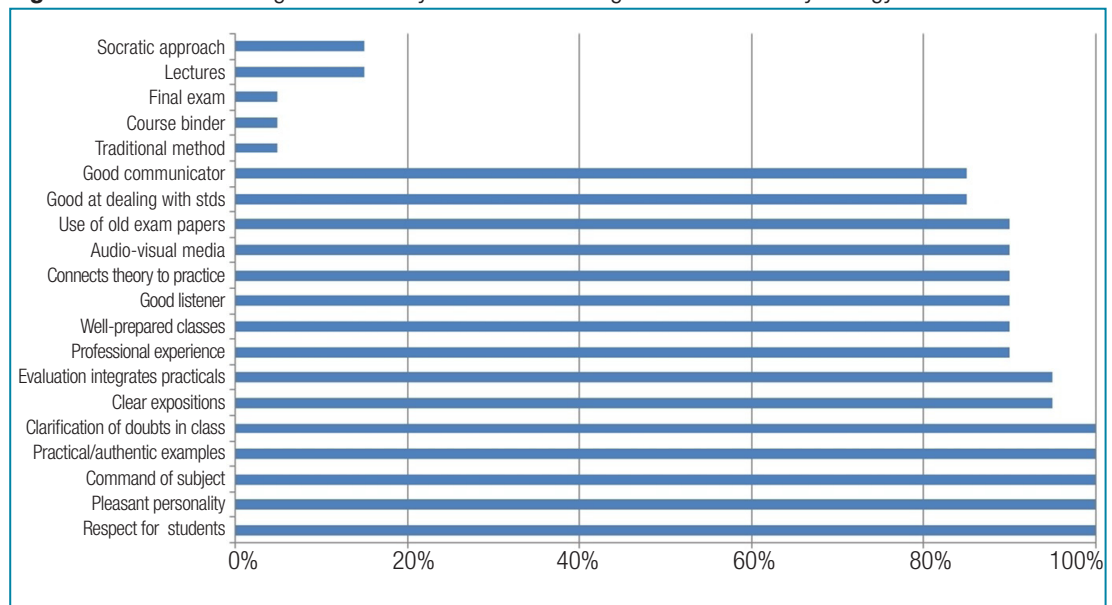

Source: Own data.

For students in the third year of *Psychology*, the attributes of a good lecturer were the following:

With respect to 'personal qualities', the highest rated attribute was respect for students (92%), followed by being a good listener (90%), having a pleasant personality (80%) and being good at dealing with people (85%). Among 'professional qualities', the attributes scoring highest were command of the subject matter (100%), professional experience (90%), being well prepared (90%) and having good communication skills (85%). Regarding 'teaching methodology', the top attributes were making connections between the different concepts and topics of the subject (99%), using appropriate supplementary resources (90%) and providing strategies for making progress in the subject (85%).The highest valued 'features of explanations' were clarity (100%), the use of practical and authentic examples and making connections between theory and practice (90%). With respect to 'preferred approaches', the most frequently chosen were clarifying doubts in class (100%) and being able to subject matter in different ways (80%). In the category 'materials and resources' the top items were the use of past examination papers and the use of audio-visual media (90%), that the study material should be clear and straightforward (80%), and that the course notes should be clear and consistent with the course programme (80%). Regarding 'methods of evaluation', the highest scoring attributes were the inclusion of practicals (95%), student effort (81%) and assignments (80%). The most frequently selected attributes for 'evaluation features' the use of formative evaluation (80%) and the publishing of the criteria and procedures beforehand (75%).
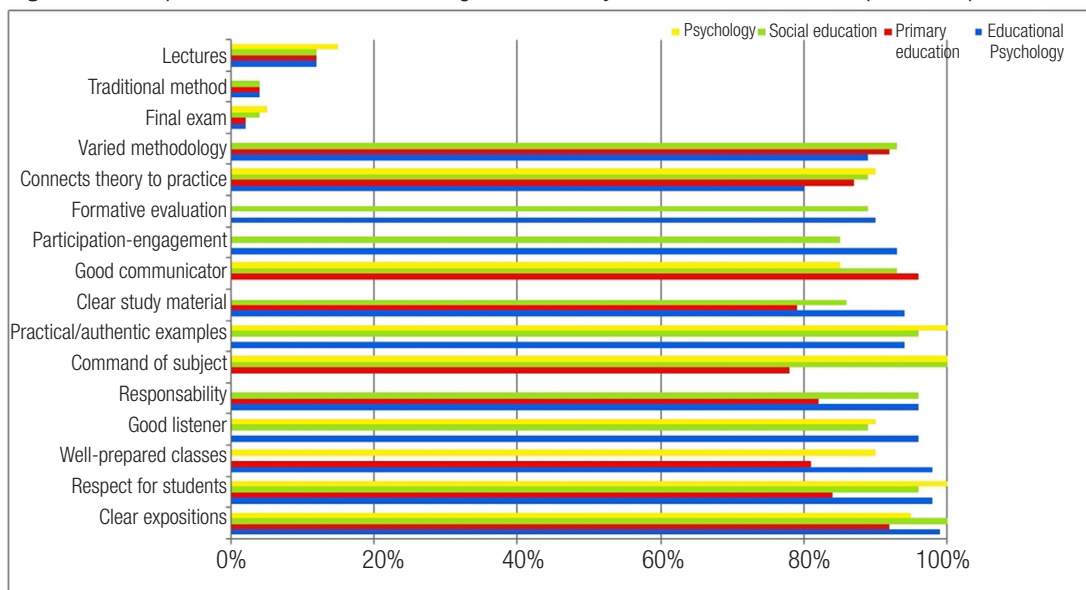
Figure 5- Attributes of a good university lecturer according to students of Psychology

Source: Own data.

The table below gives a comparison of the highest scoring items for each degree subject.

Figure 6- Comparison of theattributes of a good university lecturer across the complete sample

Source: Own data.

In the following section we analyse the statistically significant differences in these data, first by degree subject and then by gender. With respect to the former, the findings are summarised in Table 1[2] below:

Table 1- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Personal qualities'

Set 1: Personal attributes	Primary Education	Primary Education	Social Education	Psychology	Statistical Significance
Friendliness	62%	64%	50%	78%	P=.024
Respect for students	84%	96%	100%	98%	P=.001
Pleasant nature	67%	82%	100%	88%	P=.000
Good people skills	59%	64%	85%	87%	P=.000
Ability to empathise	45%	71%	80%	97%	P=.000
Good listener	76%	89%	90%	96%	P=.001
Understanding	72%	79%	80%	95%	P=.000
Inspiring of confidence	56%	68%	65%	77%	P=.018
Honesty	46%	43%	80%	77%	P=.000
Good person	55%	46%	55%	81%	P=.000

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

2- Green: highest; yellow: lowest.

For the students of educational psychology, the most important attributes of a good teacher are friendliness, good people skills, empathy, being a good listener, understanding, inspiring of confidence in students and being a good person.

Those studying Psychology rated the attributes of respect, being pleasant and honesty highest, while the percentages of students on the Social Education and Primary Teaching courses were on the whole lower than those of the others.

Table 2- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Professional

Set 2: Professional attributes	Primary Education	Social Education	Psychology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Competence. Knows the subject matter	78%	100%	100%	96%	P=.000
Punctuality	62%	57%	35%	80%	P=.000
Responsibility	82%	96%	60%	96%	P=.000
Professional experience	42%	57%	90%	68%	P=.000
Well-prepared classes	81%	79%	90%	98%	P=.001
Fulfils tutorial duties	44%	75%	60%	89%	P=.000

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

With respect to professional attributes, those studying Educational Psychology returned the highest percentages in nearly all the cases: punctuality, responsibility, class preparation, and tutorial obligations.

For Psychology students, the most essential attributes were command of the subject and professional experience, with punctuality and responsibility representing the least important. Once again, those studying Primary Teaching returned comparatively lower percentages across the range of attributes, and indeed gave less importance than the other subject areas to command of the subject, professional experience and tutorial obligations.

For the students of Social Education, the two attributes considered most significant for a good lecturer were command of the subject and responsibility, although they also gave less importance to class preparation than students of the other subject areas.

Table 3- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Teaching methods'

Set 3: Teaching methodology	Primary Education	Primary Education	Social Education	Psychology	Statistical Significance
Establishes links to previous courses	31%	25%	45%	64%	P=.000
Uses a varied methodology adapted to the students	70%	93%	75%	89%	P=.000
Reduces lectures to a minimum	36%	21%	21%	52%	P=.013
Promotes participation and engagement among students	67%	85%	75%	93%	P=.000

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

Regarding teaching methodology, Social Education undergraduates gave very little importance to either establishing links to previous courses orreducing lectures to a minimum, but did consider it important to use a varied methodology adapted to the students.

The attribute of most importance to students of Educational Psychology was that of promoting participation and engagement among students, which, curiously, was the item least selected by those on the Primary Education course.

Table 4- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Features of explanations'

Set 4: Features of explanations	Primary Education	Social Education	Psychology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Clarity	92%	100%	95%	99%	P=.047
Use of practical and authentic examples	76%	96%	100%	94%	P=.000
Highlighting of basic concepts	51%	79%	74%	78%	P=.002
Motivational quality	66%	82%	75%	88%	P=.005
Inclusion of lesson reviews	61%	39%	61%	73%	P=.010

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

In the section exploring the quality of the lecture's explanations in class, the Social Education undergraduates considered clarity and the highlighting of basic concepts as the most important attributes, while those studying Psychology favoured the use of practical and authentic examples. By contrast, the Educational Psychology students gave greater importance to the motivational qualities of the explanations and the inclusion of lesson reviews. For their part, although they also identified important aspects, especially clarity, the students of Primary Education again returned lower percentages than their counterparts in the other degrees.

Table 5- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Approaches favoured by students'

Set 5: Approaches favoured by students	Primary Education	Social Education	Psychology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Case study analysis	37%	93%	71%	77%	P=.000
Resolving areas of doubt in tutorials	44%	54%	72%	69%	P=.003
Discovery learning	44%	29%	25%	72%	P=.000
Traditional method	25%	18%	5%	4%	P=.000
Resolving areas of doubt in class	76%	93%	100%	93%	P=.001

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

The approach which students of Psychology felt to be most associated with good teaching was that of resolving areas of doubt, whether in tutorials or in class time, whilst

they considered least effective that of discovery learning, an approach which, by contrast, was given considerably more importance by students of Educational Psychology. So far as students of Social Education were concerned, the most effective approach was the use of case studies. Traditional approaches represented the least frequently selected item across all disciplines, although one in four Primary Education students did include it among their choices of what constituted good teaching.

Table 6- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Materials and resources'

Set 6: Materials and resources	Primary Education	Social Education	Psichology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Clear and straightforward study material	72%	86%	80%	94%	P=.001
Exercises with solutions	51%	32%	76%	45%	P=.030
Course notes available online	32%	43%	75%	50%	P=.002
Supplementary material	40%	36%	49%	64%	P=.004

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

With regard to materials and resources, all subject areas concur on the primacy of having clear and straightforward study material, the Educational Psychology students being almost unanimous in this respect. Beyond this there is little agreement among the disciplines, although a high proportion of Psychology students do identify the use of exercises with solutions and having course notes available online as essential attributes.

Table 7- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Assessment methods'

Set 7: Assessment methods	Primary Education	Social Education	Psichology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Solely final examination	14%	36%	50%	2%	P=.005
Assessment via day-to-day classwork	60%	71%	65%	88%	P=.000
End-of-term examinations	76%	71%	65%	58%	P=.007
Assessment via practicals	63%	89%	95%	93%	P=.000
Assessment via assignments	20%	7%	5%	43%	P=.000
Replacement of examinations with other assessment system	19%	32%	20%	57%	P=.000

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

In terms of assessment, there is a clear partition between the three preferred and the three dispreferred modes. The broad consensus favours practicals, with end-of-term examinations and assessment via day-to-day classwork being slightly less popular options (with the exception here of Primary Education, which favours end-of-term examinations

before the others). There is a clear disjunction between these favoured modes and the three other constituting this set – assessment via assignments, the use of solely a final examination and the replacement of examinations with some other kind of assessment system.

Table 8- Statistically significant differences with respect to 'Evaluation features'

Set 8: Evaluation features	Primary Education	Social Education	Psichology	Educational Psychology	Statistical Significance
Formative	72%	89%	80%	90%	P=.006
Negotiated	31%	54%	60%	74%	P=.000
Published beforehand	67%	82%	75%	86%	P=.024
Demands the basics	28%	14%	24%	13%	P=.005

Source: Own data. (Yellow represents the lowest percentage and green the highest).

Once again, despite substantial differences in the specific percentages for individual items, there is general agreement across the four subject areas as to the order of their importance, with respondents indicating that their primary concern is for an evaluation format which is above all formative, published beforehand and negotiated, in that order of preference.

It can be noted that in this set of attributes, as in others, the proportions of Primary Education students selecting particular items is somewhat lower than in the other disciplines (although the actual ranking is the same). Also of note is that the respondents from Primary Education represent the highest proportion by discipline for the feature 'demands the basics'. In this respect, Educational Psychology and Primary Education consistently represent the extremes, whilst Social Education and Psychology display mid-range (and generally very similar) percentages.

Analysing the variables in respect of gender returns just three elements in which the differences are significantly different. In all three cases the items in question – the attributes of 'enjoyable classes', 'intelligence' and 'teaches strategies for learning and progressing in the subject' – are considered more important by women.

Table 9- Statistically significant differences in terms of gender

Items	Male	Female	Estadístico
Enjoyable	33%	77%	P=.006
Intelligence	32%	69%	P=.012
Teaches strategies for learning and progressing in the subject	20%	80%	P=.015

Source: Own data.

One of the aims of this study was to determine, according to the students, the attributes of a good university lecturer in terms of personal qualities, professional capacities and methodological choices. The results indicate that the most highly rated attributes are clear expositions, respect for students, command of the subject, effective communication skills and good class preparation. In other words, respondents place as much importance on personal qualities as on the professional, thus underlining the human dimension of the job of the lecturer. This leads us to consider that students regard a good teacher not only through the lens of academic and professional competences, but also in the light of personal qualities such as a positive and motivating attitude, and the ability to engage with students at a human level, as indicated in the work of Calvo and Susino (2010), Friesen (2011), Gutiérrez, Pilsa and Torres (2007), Hativa (2000), Medina and Pérez (2017), Noddings (2003),and Peart and Cambell (1999, quoted in CARRASCO EMBUENA; HERNÁNDEZ AMORÓS; IGLESIAS MARTÍNEZ, 2012).

According to the findings of our study, the areas of competence required of a university lecturer can be enumerated thus: knowledge of the subject, pedagogical awareness, classroom management skills and tutorial duties, as well as the ability to respond to cultural, contextual, communicative, social, metacognitive and technological demands. This is consistent with the work of de Álvarez (2011).

When we compare our results with those obtained by Fernández and González (2012), we find we concur with the importance these researchers find in being able to explain subject matter clearly, but diverge from them with regard to highlighting the basic concepts, as their study placed this item second, whilst in ours it placed thirteenth.

Our results are more in line with those of Rioseco (1983, quoted in LIZARDO, 2006), which found that students are most concerned for the clarity of the lecturer's expositions, along with the motivation and enthusiasm that he or she is able to generate.

Among professional attributes, it is notable that previous experience is not regarded as important for good teaching, the percentage of respondents selecting this item being among the lowest in the corresponding set. This leads us to understand that students are not overly worried that a lecturer lacks experience in the subject area they teach; what matters is that they are capable of communicating the subject effectively and preparing good classes. This raises the question of whether university students are calling not so much for experienced practitioners within the field as good communicators.

In their study into what makes a good teacher in the view of 5th and 6th year primary pupils, Jiménez Trens and Navaridas Nalda (2012) found the pupils favoured teachers who were able to establish a relationship with pupils (displaying the attributes of being caring, friendly, a good listener and approachable), who were sensitive to pupils' needs (with the attributes of respecting the pupils along with being understanding, supportive, considerate, sympathetic, fair and patient), but who were demanding of the pupils while being enthusiastic (expressed in terms of the attributes fun, engaging, attentive, friendly, nice, honest, expressive and a good person). With respect to methodological considerations, the majority of responses gave preference to the teacher being able to explain things clearly and being willing to go back over things the pupils didn't understand, whilst having a good command of the subject, summarising the important things and setting practical

tasks were scarcely selected at all. Although the researchers found that competence in the subject matter was not regarded as fundamental by the pupils, with just 1.8% of them selecting it, we concur with them that this attribute, along with teaching expertise and professional experience, are important elements that go to make up a good teacher. The authors of the paper wonder whether this perception of subject competence might change as one moves up the educational system, the answer to which our study suggests is that the attribute does in fact gain importance, occupying third place behind clear explanations and respect for students, a little lower than in the study by Fernández and González (2012), where it was considered the most important attribute.

Hence in our study, the university students prioritised clarity in explaining things over competence in the subject area. Regarding subject competence, 80% of the students considered it indicative of a good lecturer.Amade Escot (2000) and Barnett and Hodson (2001) argue that expert subject knowledge not only equipsthe lecturer to teach the subject, but also signifies being mentally organised and well prepared to teach the subject. They suggest this attribute generates a feeling of confidence and security among students, confers credibility on the teacher, and strengthens the relationship between teacher and students. Their view, however, contrasts sharply with the findings of Merellano (2016), Ventura et al. (2011) and Casero (2010) in which only 23%, 14% and 5% of students respectively considered competence in the subject a key attribute of a good university lecturer.

The second aim of this study was to determine whether the attributes identified by the students were in line with previous studies. Our findings displayed a high degree of unanimity in terms of the students' opinion of what constitutes a good university lecturer – an ability to explain things clearly, treating students with respect, competence in the subject area, good communication skills, being well prepared, being responsible, and having good listening skills – attributes which largely coincide with those found in García Valcárcel (1992), San Martín et al. (2014), Gargallo et al. (2010), Martínez et al. (2006), Casero Martínez (2010), Álvarez, García and Gil (1999) and Muñoz San Roque (2004).With regard to the attributes of providing motivating expositions, being approachable, being understanding, resolving student doubts, and being responsible and friendly, our findings are consistent with those of Casero Martínez (2010), Gargallo et al. (2010), Martínez et al. (2006) Celdran and Escartín (2008) and San Martín et al. (2014).

With respect to modes of assessment, the findings in our study indicated a preference for continuous assessment which was both formative and flexible, and took into consideration coursework and effort on the part of the students; end-of-term examinations were dispreferred. This perspective is consistent with the methodological preference for continuous assessment of the European Higher Education Area (EEES), and concurs with the findings of Gargallo López et al. (2010), although not with those of San Martín et al. (2014).

As in Pérez Pérez, López Francés y Sospedra Baeza (2013), respect for one's students was found to be a highly valued attribute of a good lecturer, but whereas in that study personal qualities were rated ahead of academic ones, in our study both personal and professional qualities, along with methodology, rated highly.

Tarabay Yunes. (2009) found that the majority of students considered it important for the lecturer to briefly review previous classes in order to facilitate progress through the course. By contrast, respondents in our study gave greater importance to punctuality and the inclusion of attendance in assessment criteria (seven out of ten students). This may be accounted for by the fact that, for many courses, attendance is obligatory, and students feel that the imposition of this obligation has an inherent value which should be compensated by its inclusion in the mode of assessment, irrespective of their involvement in the classes.

Our results are also consistent with those of García Garduño and Medécigo Shej (2014), who found that students gave positive ratings to approaches in which they took a more active role, as opposed to more traditional, passive ones. In our case, there was a preference for discovery learning and the use of case studies, although it should also be noted that few students favoured a Socratic approach. Our findings also coincide in respect of the positive ratings given to the use of practical, authentic examples and command of the subject area. However, they diverge in terms of the relative importance given to attendance and punctuality. In our study, greater importance was given to the mode of assessment being formative and flexible, and taking into account students' coursework and effort than to the question of punctuality (with the exception of the Educational Psychology students, who did rate punctuality as an important attribute of a good lecturer).

With regard to degree subjects, significant differences with other studies are to be found, in terms of both the number of items and their relevance. Celdrán and Escartín (2008) note that in their study, the attributes which the Psychology students rated highest were clearing up areas of doubt, flexibility, the treatment students receive, and the lecturer's communication skills. These finding coincide with ours, as the Psychology students rated highest competence in the subject and professional experience, followed by respect, good communication skills, resolving areas of doubt and using exercises with solutions (with regard to this latter, it should be note that this degree includes various courses in psychometrics and statistics).

In a study into students' satisfaction with their degree studies, Zurita, Viciana, Padial and Cepero (2017), found that the Primary Education students rated highest academic quality, punctuality and the fulfilling of tutorial obligations. These findings again coincide with ours, although with those of students of Educational Psychology, whose preferences were the inclusion of day-to-day class tasks in assessment and alternatives to the typical exam, such as a portfolio assessment (by way of clarification, it should be noted here that this degree was the first in the Education Faculty to incorporate methodology from the European Higher Education Area, such as cross-curricular activities, assessments based on presentations of group work, the development of portfolios, and the carrying out of evaluative tasks in class, among others).

The analysis of the data in terms of gender indicated that women gave a higher rating than men to the attributes of fun classes, intelligence and the provision of strategies for developing in the subject. These findings are comparable to those of Fernández and González (2012), as in both studies there were few items which indicated any significant

difference, and all were relatively unimportant. This strongly suggests that it is possible to identify the key attributes of a good lecturer independently of gender.

The respondents clearly indicated that they what they most highly valued was good communication skills, the ability to give clear explanations, continuous assessment and good class preparation over competence in the subject and professional experience. This perspective would seem to place less value on the lecturer having knowledge, and more on their ability to plan and execute learning strategies which facilitate the process of learning. The impression one gets from these results is that the university students essentially would like to have university lecturers that strongly resemble their school teachers. University education, and by extension university teaching, finds itself at a difficult crossroads. Due to increasing expansion, the work that goes on there is becoming ever more like that of secondary school teachers. Indeed, just as in its day the increase in compulsory education blurred the lines between primary and secondary education and with it the differences between the two types of teacher, so the expansion within the university system is having the effect of dissolving the differences between university and secondary education, and hence between the teachers at the two types of institution.

It is necessary to bear in mind the limitations of this study. The sample was small and from a single faculty, and to make any further claims would require amplifying its range to include all degree subjects and other universities within Andalusia and indeed across all of Spain, as well as to stratify the sample according to year cohorts.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this study. First, is the similarity between the findings in this study and those of the various studies referred to in the theoretical framework.

Second, the attributes of a good university lecturer identified by the students participating in the study were (in order of preference) the following: the ability to give clear explanations, an attitude of respect towards their students, a good degree of competence in the subject matter, the use of a continuous assessment mode of evaluating student performance, good listening skills, empathy with students, a responsible approach, a willingness to deal with areas of doubt in class, and the inclusion of student effort in the assessment system.

Third, in terms of the overall rating of attributes, those concerning clear explanations, a respectful attitude and good communication skills achieved the highest ratings, and this held true across all the degree subjects included in the study.

Also of interest is the high number of significant differences in each of the sets of attributes with respect to the different degree subjects.

This study into the attributes of a good university lecturer contributes to improving the training available to new entrants to the profession, and to determining whether their perspectives of what constitutes good teaching is compatible with what actually takes place in degree programmes at the University of Huelva.

When students consider what attributes constitute a good university lecturer, we can conclude that they focus on personal and professional qualities along with teaching methodology, whilst the consideration of specific classroom strategies, materials, resources and assessment are accorded less importance. A good lecturer needs to be in possession of

pedagogical, human and methodological attributes, with a constructive view of teaching focused on learning. However, a somewhat passive stance on the part of the students can be detected, and consequently greater weight is given to the work of the lecturer than to that of the student.

This observation leads us to consider the importance of the training available to new lecturers. Our aim should be to train motivated and motivating future lecturers whose approach is consistent with the European Higher Education Area, and who are thus able to transmit this same motivation to their students.

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