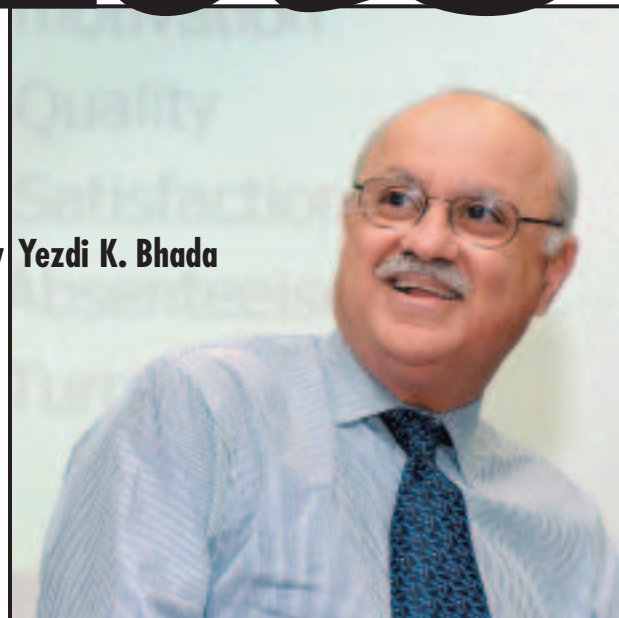


No longer is it good enough to have a Ph.D. and a job offer.

Top *of the* Class

by **Yezdi K. Bhada**



Today's truly effective teachers must be able to convey knowledge and enthusiasm in an environment that promotes active learning.

Yezdi Bhada's views on effective teaching were strongly influenced by a comic strip he once read. "In the cartoon, one child is telling an older boy that he has taught his dog to whistle," says Bhada. "The bigger boy bends down and listens to the dog but says, 'I don't hear him whistling.' The smaller child replies, 'I said I taught him. I didn't say he learned it.'"

Bhada, who is professor of accounting emeritus at the J. Mack Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University in Atlanta, has made the topic of effective teaching his major focus of research. Co-director of the Southeast Master Teacher Program and special advisor to the dean at GSU, Bhada has conducted numerous programs on teaching improvement in the U.S. and around the world.

One of the reasons more business schools are focused on teaching effectiveness these days, Bhada believes, is that there has been a paradigm shift in how schools view its importance. "When I first started teaching, the implicit criterion was 'survival of the fittest,'" he says. "A good teacher was tough. Whoever had the highest attrition rate was the best teacher. At that time, if you had a Ph.D., you were still breathing, and you could solve Problem #17-9 on the board, you were a teacher."

This period of traditionalism in teaching gradually gave way to a series of other models. First came a more teacher-centered era, in which administrators focused more on student and teacher satisfaction. At this time, success was measured by student evaluations, faculty self-assessment, and judgments made by the department chair. This era was followed by a student-focused stage, when schools began to engage in active learning and incorporate certain accreditation standards for student learning.

"In the '90s, schools began to work on process improvement by introducing teaching portfolios and awards for teaching innovations," says Bhada. "Organizations like the American Association of Higher Education and the Carnegie Foundation began to have a stronger influence on the practice of teaching."

Today, the emphasis has shifted to student learning outcomes, the scholarship of teaching, and the incorporation of active learning techniques. "The paradigm shift has been from *teaching to learning*," says Bhada. "We are changing from an emphasis on lecturing in the classroom to designing learning methods that rely on discussion, teamwork, and off-site communications."

In fact, teachers not only are teaching their students to whistle, but are devising methods to gauge how well they've learned to make music. In the following pages, Bhada outlines the traits that enable any teacher to become truly effective.

Learning how teachers teach and students learn—in effect, how faculty behavior influences student learning—has become a key focus for me and other colleagues at Georgia State. I've worked closely with professor Harvey Brightman in studying three different groups: faculty (service providers), students (service receivers), and colleges of education (research conductors).

The faculty: A study by Joseph Lowman, professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provided us with an excellent starting point. Based on observation of faculty members who had been identified as successful, Lowman came up with a two-dimensional model of the "master teacher" and published the work in *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*.

According to his model, the master teacher is successful both in the "intellectual dimension" and the "interpersonal dimension." In the intellectual dimension, teachers are well-organized, good at establishing relevance, dynamic in the classroom, and appear to love teaching their material. On the interpersonal side, they treat students as individuals, encourage questions and discussion, and behave in a positive manner toward students.

Lowman's model was further validated through a later study that looked at how faculty and administrators articulate teaching effectiveness. For this, he content-analyzed the material submitted on UNC teachers nominated for teaching awards. Among the words that came up over and over again in the letters of nomination were *enthusiastic, knowledgeable, clear, organized, concerned, caring, and helpful*.

Students: When we turned our attention to how students perceive teaching effectiveness, we found that literally thousands of studies had been done in this area. Initially we looked at teaching effectiveness in a general way. Eventually we narrowed our focus to teaching effectiveness from the perspective of business schools—specifically to the business school at Georgia State University.

The most influential piece on students' perceptions was a meta-analytical study done by John Centra in *Determining Faculty Effectiveness*. His factor analysis provided clustering of attributes that influence overall teaching effectiveness as perceived by students. The primary factors identified by Centra are *organization/clarity, student-teacher rapport, communication ability, workload challenge, grading, and motivation*.

Through research we conducted at Georgia State University, using a home-grown instrument, we were able to confirm Centra's top factors that influence student perception of teacher effectiveness. Listed in order of impor-

tance (with the first two representing significant influence), these factors are:

■ **Organization/clarity.** Students perceive a teacher to be clear and organized if the lecture is easy to outline or cases are well-organized.

■ **Presentation ability.** Students give high marks in this category if the teacher shows enthusiasm, has self-confidence, and seems to enjoy teaching.

■ **Grading/assignments.** Because business students are often working while they are in school, they are generally time- and grade-conscious. They seem to put a lot of weight on a teacher returning impartially graded papers quickly and following an established syllabus.

Other factors—such as *intellectual stimulation, student interaction, and student motivation*—did not rank highly with GSU business students; however, we believe they carry more weight with students in arts and sciences or social sciences fields.

Ninety percent of the time, faculty members who don't fare well on student evaluations will give one of two explanations. They will either say, "I am not an extrovert, and therefore students rate me poorly," or "I'm a tough grader, so they mark me down." What these studies show is that those aren't necessarily the only factors that students care about. What they're interested in is someone who is organized, clear, enthusiastic, and attuned to their needs. The other elements do play a role, but not as strongly as some people want to believe.

Six Questions for the Author

1. Students earning Ph.D.s almost inevitably will become professors, but many of them are given no instruction on how to manage a classroom. Should universities take an active role in preparing doctoral students to teach?

During my doctoral program, which was predominantly research-based and discipline-oriented, no one really spent any time talking to me about teaching—yet I became an assistant professor on receiving my Ph.D. Sure, I was required to learn research skills, but I was assumed to have teaching skills. My response to your question is an unqualified affirmative. Fortunately, in the last decade or so, there's been an awakening. More and more schools are offering programs to help doctoral students become good teachers. At Georgia State, we initiated a university teaching seminar that all doctoral students must take if they're going to be graduate teaching assistants.

2. In EMBA and executive education programs, participants learn from each other as much as they learn from the teacher. Is student-with-student learning also important in undergraduate classes?

Today's undergraduate learning environment is far more cooperative and collaborative than it used to be. Involving students in the teaching process is a real plus. Let's face it, I cannot get myself to think like a sophomore. Even though I may want to, I cannot always come up with terminology that young students can relate to. But if one student in class understands what I am attempting to convey and comes up

with an alternative way of phrasing it, she can explain it to others in the class in language they can understand. And, once students see that their peers can do something, they are more motivated to try to do it themselves.

Inevitably, there will be some resistance to interactive teaching—from both students and teachers. It's easier for a professor to prepare a lecture, go into the class, and pour the knowledge into the students' brains. Also, it's easier for the student to copy it down and regurgitate it back on a test. But what we want is not necessarily what we need.

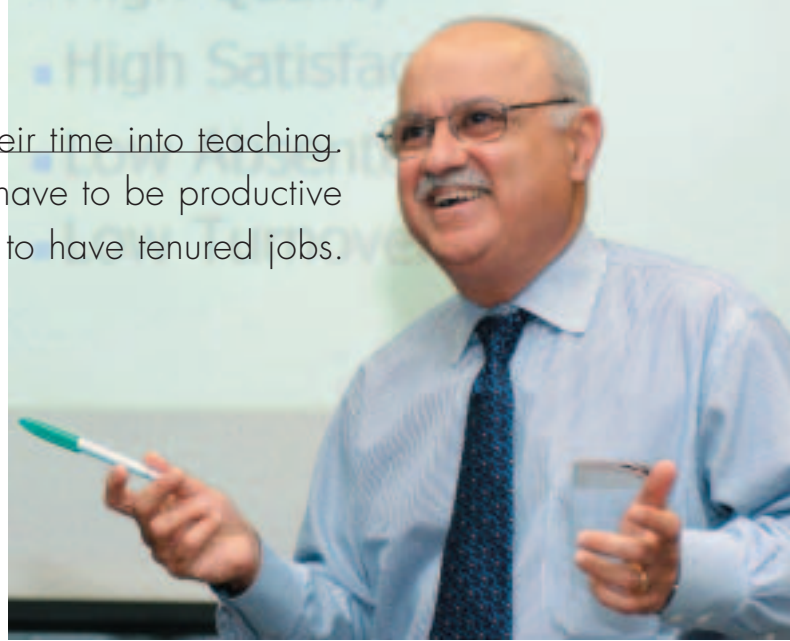
3. You've said it's extremely important that teachers present their material with enthusiasm. Isn't this more difficult to do with material that is particularly dry or technical?

Some courses may not be as sexy as others, but I don't think there's any subject that cannot be exciting. Those who don't love what they teach are in the wrong profession. I'm convinced most professors love their disciplines. The question is: Do they show that? Do they demonstrate their excitement to the students? My contention is that every faculty member can and should make their presentations interesting, relevant, and exciting.

4. Do you think a time will come when universities emphasize teaching as much as they emphasize research?

I would hope so. I would like to see a balance. Don't get me wrong, research is an integral part of a university's function, and I don't think any university professor should be exempt from undertaking the scholarship of discovery. And I believe every faculty member should be doing research in his own field of interest. I am not saying teaching should be a *substitute*

I would be dishonest if I told them to put all their time into teaching. Given the current environment, they still have to be productive in their research, or they're not going to have tenured jobs.



Teaching and Learning

Turning our attention to the relationship between teacher attributes and student learning, we were heavily influenced by the work of Kenneth A. Feldman. He correlated faculty attributes with student accomplishment as measured by common examinations—for example, department-developed exams or functionally based exams administered by outside institutions. Here again, the two most important criteria influencing student achievement were: *teacher preparation and organization* and *teacher clarity and understandability*.

The third factor is usually a surprise to people: *Instructor meets course objectives*. This emphasizes the fact that students' accomplishment is enhanced when they know what to expect.

Another highly rated item was: *Teacher communicates relevance and impact of the instruction*.

Knowing that these two items are so important to learning should have a profound impact on teaching. If I am teaching a course on accounting and I know that “relevance” and

for research. What I am stating is that there should be equal consideration for the teaching function as for the research skills.

I believe a shift is already taking place. We've seen a little more balance between teaching accomplishments and research accomplishments, at least from a reward perspective, and we know that faculty resource allocation is strongly influenced by the reward system.

5. Do universities have to be the ones sponsoring radical changes in teaching methods? Or can individual teachers make a real impact?

It will take both. Universities have to encourage teaching innovations, which means they must give proper recognition to creativity through the reward system. This is far more difficult than you might expect, because university administrators have to ask themselves, “How much risk are we willing to take?” A faculty member has to face the question: “If I move to the learning paradigm, what impact will this have on my student evaluations?” I can tell you, in the initial stages, the evaluations are likely to be negative, particularly in environments where one or two teachers are innovative and the rest want to continue with traditional teaching. Students will resent the fact that they're in a section where they have to think, while their colleagues are in sections where they can study the night before the exam and get an A.

So, are the administrators willing to take this risk? And will faculty tenure and promotion committee members—most of whom came up through the research models—also be willing to change? Are faculty members willing to take time to acquire new skills? I believe the change has to come from higher administrations, from each individual, and from the faculty as a body. At the same time, we know that every movement, every change that has ever come about, has come because some individual has taken a stand on a position.

6. If you were giving advice to a college professor just beginning his first semester of teaching, what would you tell him about how to develop into a great teacher?

I would begin by saying there is no quick fix. It is going to be a continuous process, and therefore there has to be a mindset that says, “I will improve as I go.” But that alone is not going to do it. I believe new teachers should attend workshops and pursue training. They must take a holistic view and realize improvement is not going to occur if they just fix one thing here or there.

Having said all this, I would add that if I were talking to recent Ph.D.s getting jobs as professors, I would be dishonest if I told them to put all their time into teaching. Given the current educational environment, they still have to be productive in their research, or they're not going to have tenured jobs.

Even if one institution says, “We're really going to have a balance between research and teaching,” the ratio may work at that institution, but the individual's mobility will be strongly impacted. You can get by on a not-so-strong teaching record, but you cannot expect to get a great job on a not-so-good research record.

Individuals must also ask whether they want to work at a university that emphasizes research or teaching. What are your personal goals? Do you want to move to a more research-oriented university, or are you willing to stay at the university that emphasizes teaching, or where administrators are willing to accept a trade-off? It's a fine line. I would advise new faculty to “put most of your emphasis on research—but don't disregard teaching.”

Tenured, established faculty? They have the opportunity to follow their own paths to excellence.

“meeting course objectives” are two of the primary concerns of students, I will spend more time on examples that show students the practical ramifications of accounting in the work situation. Thanks to recent examples such as Enron and WorldCom, this should not be too difficult to do. Instead of focusing on insignificant technical details, I can communicate learning objectives and allocate more classroom time to getting students to relate to the subject.

Attributes of Effective Teachers

After reviewing all these studies, we are confident that effective teachers must possess certain key characteristics. They must be:

- **Knowledgeable and current in the field of study.** All other attributes are merely window dressing if the teacher does not have a syncretical/evaluative grasp of the subject matter. However, being a first-class scholar in the field does not assure being an effective teacher, unless the other attributes are also present.

- **Organized and prepared.** That doesn't mean they cannot be flexible; it means they must know their course objectives and get them accomplished.

- **Clear and understandable.** They must take the time to develop key concepts, know what is difficult and requires more time, and know when to let students work by themselves.

- **Enthusiastic.** I heard Lowman once acknowledge that it is controversial to say that all good teachers are good performers—but they all are! This, however, does not mean that all good performers are good teachers.

- **Able to establish relevance and connections.** Business teachers often fail to make those connections. If I teach accounting, I must help students see how it interacts with finance, marketing, and all our other disciplines.

- **Respectful and fair.** Fairness is a perception issue, but successful teachers are perceived to be consistent in how they treat students.

- **Committed to high standards that motivate student accomplishment.** The really good teachers I know are high-expectation teachers. They do not sacrifice their standards; but they give of themselves, and the students recognize that.

Self-Improvement and Evaluation

Once teachers understand the attributes that are viewed as important, and once they understand where their weaknesses lie, I believe they can improve. But they've got to have the heart for it. At Georgia State—and many other universities—teachers can attend workshops and faculty development seminars that will help them become better teachers.

Teachers also can improve their techniques by videotap-

ing themselves and watching that tape with a mentor. Most people can pick up on their own idiosyncrasies as they watch themselves on video. However, some traits are so ingrained that they feel normal and natural, and it takes an outsider to point out where the individual has gone wrong. For instance, most people don't realize if they talk too fast, even if they hear themselves on tape. But teachers who talk too fast can lose their students, particularly students who are learning in a language that is not their mother tongue.

Another tool teachers can use to help improve their performance is the teaching portfolio. Peter Seldin has compiled a list of items that can provide inputs for a comprehensive teaching portfolio. One important element is the teacher's philosophy. This reveals whether a professor is content-oriented or process-oriented, generates critical thinking or relies on rote memorization, hands out knowledge on a silver platter or encourages discovery learning, incorporates innovations or relies on yellowed notes. Evidence of the professor's teaching style can be found in syllabi, course examinations, peer evaluations, and classroom videotapes.

While I believe teachers should develop their portfolios primarily to help them improve their own performance, I do think the information gathered in the portfolios can help administrators evaluate a teacher's success in the classroom. In fact, I am confident that good teaching portfolios eventually will be among the key tools used for evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Conclusion

Business schools may be behind the curve in implementing new theories of teaching and learning. But we're at a point in time where a lot of people are questioning the value of a business degree. We must keep up with effective teaching practices to maintain relevant and regenerative student learning. Business schools will inevitably undergo some changes because university provosts often come from backgrounds other than business. These provosts are more in tune with the educational philosophies gaining popularity around the nation.

I believe the movements that will have the most profound impact on business schools will originate in associations such as the American Association of Higher Education, the Carnegie Foundation, other education-oriented organizations, and accrediting bodies such as AACSB International. In fact, some of the new accrediting standards proposed by AACSB specifically focus on student learning. They call for schools to demonstrate their learning goals by defining the goals, providing appropriate learning experiences, and assessing learning accomplishment.

All of these educational associations have strong followings by senior administrators, and they have tremendous potential for influencing education trends. I do believe business schools are beginning to value teaching as a skill—but we have a long way to go before we can ensure that every teacher is an effective teacher. 