CHAPTER 18

WHAT MAKES A 'GOOD' FIRST-YEAR LECTURER?

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Introduction

The first year is an important stepping-stone in the career of the undergraduate student. Lecturers of first-year students play an important role in guiding students into this new phase of their lives. Much research has focused on the challenges facing new students, especially struggling, or non-traditional students. However, to our knowledge, little has been written about the attributes of the lecturers who actively promote student learning during this phase. The contribution of lecturers of first-year students has tended to be downplayed, especially at 'research-led' universities.

Our work in Stellenbosch University's First-year Academy (FYA), an initiative to promote the holistic learning experience of all first-year students at the University, gave us an opportunity to explore this issue. The exploration was based on a sub-activity of the FYA, which aimed to encourage the academic achievement of first-year students and to acknowledge the work of lecturers of first-year students. The activity involved inviting the 30 top-performing students across the University to a dinner hosted by the University's Rector. These students each nominated the lecturer who, in their view, made the most significant contribution to their academic success. The students were required to write a letter to the lecturer, explaining why he or she had had an impact on the student's academic performance. The lecturer, in turn, was required to write a letter of support and encouragement back to the student. These letters were then exchanged during the dinner. This initiative was extremely successful and well received, particularly among the academic community. The conversations that emerged during and after the event served as a catalyst for the study. These focused on the question 'what makes a good lecturer?' Our research, therefore, set out to explore the following questions:

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1. What are the attributes of 'good' lecturers, as described by a group of academically successful students, and by the lecturers themselves?
2. How do the lecturers account for their development and continued performance as 'good' lecturers?

Before describing the research that we undertook, we present some of the key findings from the literature that guided the study, and illuminated our own understanding of what emerged from the data gathered during the empirical phase of the research.

Conceptualising 'good' lecturers

What *are* the attributes of successful lecturers of academically successful students? What qualifies one lecturer to be categorised as 'good' and another perhaps not? The literature on this topic spans several decades, and provides interesting responses to these questions. Yet it would appear that clear consensus as to a suitable definition remains elusive (Trigwell, 2001:65). Schön's seminal work on teachers suggests that '[A]s we consider the artistry of extraordinary practitioners and explore the ways they actually acquire it, we are led inevitably to certain deviant traditions of education for practice – traditions that stand outside or alongside the normative curricula of the schools' (Schön, 1987:15). Importantly, Elton (1998:3) suggests that '[T]eaching excellence is not a simple concept and, as a concept, lacks precision'. A further complexity is added when one recognises that simply listing a set of characteristics may be less useful unless consideration is given as to how such attributes might be acquired and grown (Kane, Sandretto & Heath, 2004:285).

Lists of attributes can be synthesised from the work of a number of recognised academic development practitioners. Citing work by Ramsden and others, Trigwell (2001:66) highlights that good teachers should:

- ▣ be good learners, prepared to learn from their own practice, through reflection;
- ▣ be enthusiastic about their subject;
- ▣ be aware of context, and teach accordingly;
- ▣ facilitate 'learning for understanding' by focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- ▣ show that they are able to 'transform and extend knowledge';
- ▣ present clear goals, apply fair assessment methods and offer 'high quality feedback'; and
- ▣ demonstrate respect for their students.

This list also encapsulates the work of Chickering and Gamson (1991) whose principles of good practice in undergraduate education highlight a focus on student-centred learning. Good teaching is about student learning and about creating places and spaces for engagement between the teacher and the student and between the students themselves (Carpenter & Tait, 2001:193). However, the Trigwell summary moves beyond these principles and hints at the need for a more reflective approach towards one's teaching. Elton (1998:6) offers a clearer distinction discerning between what he terms, dimensions of competence (e.g. organisation, presentation, relationships

with students, assessment and evaluation), and dimensions of individual excellence (aspects of reflection, innovation, research with respect to one's teaching and 'being scholarly in one's discipline'). Here Elton (1998:6) suggests that while 'teachers should be competent in a number of these (dimensions of competence), but not necessarily all', teaching excellence should move beyond such competencies to include those of individual excellence. Wood and Harding (2007:940) caution that when defining good teaching one must not idealistically assume that any single lecturer would excel in all areas. Their study led to a comprehensive list of 'ten areas of excellence in teaching' focusing on the importance of acting as facilitator in the classroom, being innovative and scholarly (which they describe as 'publishing teaching ideas ... [and being] part of a community of teaching') and having an enthusiastic attitude. Their list also includes aspects of classroom practice, planning, organisation and course development.

The notion of dimensions of good teaching has been taken up in the work of other scholars. In a study that, like this one, drew on responses from academics, Kane *et al.* (2004) developed a five-dimensional wheel-like model that places subject knowledge, teaching skills, interpersonal relationships, the research/teaching nexus and the personality at the wheel periphery, with the hub being represented by 'purposeful reflective practice as a means to integrate the different dimensions' (Kane *et al.*, 2004:292). Although the context for their model is that of teaching in the sciences, it echoes Trigwell's earlier list to some extent, drawing out the importance of relationships more strongly. Again, like Elton, it highlights the role of scholarliness and research. The Kane model (Kane *et al.*, 2004:292), as shown in Figure 18.1, has influenced the framework used in this study.

Figure 18.1 Dimensions of tertiary teaching (Kane *et al.*, 2004:292)

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The descriptions of the different dimensions that Kane *et al.* provided are in many ways congruent with the attributes that other researchers have proposed. The importance of ‘subject knowledge’ is uncontested, having ‘long been identified as a prerequisite of effective teaching ...’ (Kane *et al.*, 2004:293). Similarly, the importance of ‘interpersonal relationships’ between lecturer and student has long since been acknowledged. Writing in the seventies, Hildebrand (1973:46) provided five components of effective teaching, two of which – establishing a rapport with the class to facilitate engagement and interaction, and the ‘one-to-one’ response – speak directly to this aspect. A third dimension, which encapsulates earlier and other understandings, is that of ‘personality’. Kane *et al.* (2004:299) suggest that this dimension speaks to the ‘person’ of the teacher and echoes traits such as ‘enthusiasm’ (Hildebrand, 1973:46; Trigwell, 2001), dynamism (Hildebrand, 1973:46) and ability to inspire (Wood & Harding, 2007:944).

The notion of ‘skills’ in this model relates to pedagogic skill – what others have termed being able to ‘put it across’ (Hildebrand, 1973:46). This dimension encapsulates aspects of presentation, communication, formulation and methodology. Finally, the idea of the ‘research/teaching nexus’ completes the extremity of the wheel. This fifth dimension is both pivotal and complex. In the context of their model, Kane *et al.* would appear to be suggesting that being able to balance the relationship between teaching and research is what makes a ‘good’ lecturer. However, in their discussion of this dimension they themselves acknowledge the ‘complex and idiosyncratic nature ...’ of it. They argue that ‘[t]here is increasing support for the notion that university teachers do perceive there to be a definite link between research and teaching’ (Kane *et al.*, 2004:298).

Simply listing the attributes of a ‘good’ lecturer is of limited value if the process of growing into and becoming such is not considered. Thus a second question must be posed: How does one *become* a good lecturer? In addition, one might argue, a desire to be a good lecturer ought to be implicit in such becoming. Thus it is necessary to explore factors that might motivate lecturers to adopt the attributes and behaviour patterns of a ‘good’ lecturer. In the Kane *et al.* model, ‘reflective practice’ is seen to be the hub around which the different attributes of good teaching arrange themselves and we would agree. Common (1989:385) points directly to the role of the teacher in shaping his or her own teaching excellence – ‘Master teachers are not born; they *become* [our italics]. They become primarily by developing a habit of mind, a way of looking critically at the work they do; by developing the courage to recognise faults, and by struggling to improve’. It was Schön who gave life to the term ‘reflective practitioner,’ which describes ‘the expert who is awake to, and aware of, their practice, not just immersed in it’ (Mason, 2002:15). In seeking to theorise his understanding, Schön posited the notion of ‘reflection-on-action’ and ‘reflection-in-action’ where the former suggests thinking back on something that has already occurred, and the latter refers to being pointedly aware while engaging in a practice (Schön, 1987:26). However, is being a reflective practitioner an attribute, or is it a process that ideally leads to the enhancing or development of appropriate attributes? The answer to this may lie

in the response of a participant in the Kane *et al.* study: 'It's a continuous process of reflection and trying to do what you're doing as well as you can' (Kane *et al.*, 2004:300). Schön (1987:31) contends that 'reflection on our past reflection-in-action may indirectly shape our future action.'

Is reflection sufficient to shape good teaching? Supporters of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) movement would suggest that the need for a more scholarly understanding of that upon which one is reflecting ought to be of greater value (Kreber & Cranton, 2000). In addition, one might read a level of inevitability in Schön's understanding of reflection, in that it appears less focused and directed than is desirable to effect *appropriate* or *useful* future action. It is here where the notion of 'reflexivity' offers an additional dimension as it acknowledges the role of reflection '... but takes things further. Specifically, it problematises issues that reflection takes for granted' (Taylor & White, 2000:198).

It is also necessary to consider what leads an academic to become and to remain a good lecturer. Boyer (1990:xii) has stated that academics are 'drawn to the profession precisely because of their love for teaching ...' and other studies have argued that intrinsic motivators, such as interest in the work, the opportunity to interact with students and a sense of purpose in one's work, emerge strongly as indicators (McInnes, 1998). In fact, McInnes' study showed a high percentage of his academic respondents acknowledging that they were motivated 'almost solely by intrinsic interest in their work' (McInnes, 1998:165). The cycle of 'becoming' is important here, particularly as we see that one's love for the discipline and the desire to interact with students to share this passion provides space for establishing a social learning system or 'community of practice' (Wenger, 2000:226). The 'good' lecturer is the one who facilitates the student's progression towards becoming an 'insider'. This is of particular relevance for more vulnerable students. Importantly, however, interaction in this sphere can be meaningful for both the newcomers and the 'insiders', who themselves may change through being exposed to the knowledge and competence of the apprentice (Northedge, 2003; Wenger, 2000).

What about extrinsic motivators? Internationally and in the South African context, recognition for good teaching remains problematic, particularly at 'research-led' universities. Extrinsic rewards for teaching are few and far between, such that adopting a scholarly approach to one's teaching often has to make way for discipline specific research activities (D'Andrea & Gosling, 2005). As will be seen in the section that follows, the tension between teaching and research may inhibit the process of becoming. In this volume, Scott (Chapter 1) makes the point that if teaching and its outcomes are to be improved, it is necessary for a university's recognition and reward system to overtly acknowledge and value good teaching. Writing from a socio-cultural perspective, Trowler (2008) identifies the department, and within that the 'workgroup', as the most significant site for communicating what is valued and hence for offering such recognition. At the same time, however, Becher (1989) points to the intersecting influence of disciplinary cultures.

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Our reading of the literature, mediated by our discussions after the initial set of interviews, led us to posit an adapted version of the Kane *et al.* model, in which we saw the notion of becoming as more encompassing and comprehensive than that of reflection. In this instance, becoming is influenced both by the individual attributes (being) as well as the socio-cultural contexts including the department, institution and disciplinary cultures. The importance of the influence that contextual factors (i.e. the socio-cultural context) have on becoming cannot be overstated. Disregarding the contextual influences severely limits the value of systematic reflection (Lea & Callaghan, 2008) thus inhibiting the process of becoming. Figure 18.2 depicts the revised model on which our research design was based.

Figure 18.2 The 'good' lecturer

Research design

The research, conducted by a team of educational developers, was motivated by the need to answer various questions pertinent to our educational setting. In the first instance, we wanted to know how top-performing first-year students describe a good lecturer, and secondly, we wanted to know how the lecturers understand what they do to motivate and sustain their becoming and remaining good lecturers.

The approach is thus primarily qualitative, and emic, directing attention to specific cases in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is 'interpretive' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005), in that we sought to understand the phenomenon of being and

becoming good lecturers, as this is perceived and described by key actors: the lecturer and the student. It should be stressed that the participants were not selected according to a definition of a 'good lecturer' as defined by the research team or the literature, but rather, as perceived by the students who were asked to nominate the lecturer who made the most impact on their studies.

The research project utilised the following data sources:

- ▣ the written descriptions of their lecturers by 30 students from ten faculties; and
- ▣ transcribed audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with ten of the nominated lecturers, chosen according to predetermined criteria.

The criteria for selection were that the interviews should cover a range of categories, including: gender, levels of seniority, language and disciplinary clusters (Science and Technology; Humanities; and Business and Management). The list of interviewees and the interview questions are provided in Appendices 1 and 2. The data was analysed using content analysis. The interpretation of the data was more grounded and intuitive than deductive.

While coding the data from the interviews with lecturers, we noted that while there were evident trends amongst the views of interviewees, there were instances where lecturers stated opposing points of view. One example of this is the statement made by many of the lecturers that confidence and enthusiasm are important personality attributes. One even went so far as to say that 'if you are not confident, you should at least act as if you are' (Marcia).¹ In contrast, another lecturer stated categorically that it was important to 'be yourself' (Soo n), and that if you fake it, students will easily pick this up. Most of the pronouncements on good teaching made by the lecturers could be shown to confirm what is considered good practice in the literature and the University's policy on student-centred teaching, but there were also statements that could be shown to be in direct contradiction to this.

Findings

What was clear from the data was that notions of being (attributes) and becoming are interlinked. However, in the interest of clarity, we discuss these issues separately when reporting on our findings.

'Being' a good lecturer

According to our sources, what does the good lecturer look like? Our interviews displayed all the elements of good teaching outlined by Kane *et al.* (2004). However, it became immediately apparent to us that one cannot treat attributes of good teaching as isolatable elements. An example comes from the interview with Arnold, in which he was describing his disciplinary knowledge of Physics and at the same time, the value of Physics problems for pacing sequences, and for making the interaction appropriate for students with different levels of ability:

¹ All names are pseudonyms.

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

Students also perceive the attributes as interrelated. This is demonstrated in the following extract from a letter from one of the top-performing students, whose comments contain evidence of appreciation for his lecturer's subject knowledge, pedagogic practices (high expectations) and personality attributes (enthusiasm and accessibility):

Thank you very much that Professor handled the work so thoroughly that I never doubted what was expected from me in the module, that you never minded to help me out of class times. With Prof's thorough explanations and unquenchable passion for Prof's subject, you could do none other than to encourage my love for studies and awaken an intense interest in mathematics. ... In conclusion, can I say with gratitude that your accessibility, enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge opened doors for my future and played a key role in my first year success.

Many comments by lecturers as well as students were devoted to the issue of personality and interpersonal relationships. For students, humour was an important attribute. There was also an acknowledgement that positive personality attributes alone are necessary, but not sufficient attributes of a good lecturer:

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

A facet of pedagogic practice which stood out in many of the interviews was the effort that the lecturers went to in order to prepare their lectures, or to produce coherent and comprehensible learning resource materials which would often be stored directly after the lecture on the electronic web system used at the University (WebCT).

The concept of the research-teaching nexus was also shown as linked to that of pedagogic practices. Welma provided an interesting account of research-rich teaching at first-year level, where she used data obtained from her research as resources in her teaching, and in so doing, promoted interaction in the lecture:

The research I do, I make many videos, and I ask permission from the patients to use the video material in my teaching, and I always use practical examples, of babies and patients, and out of these video materials I can involve the class beautifully, with a good discussion session and I find it was more interactive.

Soon's participation in the broader mathematics disciplinary community provided him with a greater degree of understanding of the essentials of mathematics as a discipline, and hence, a better idea of how to teach the subject to first-years:

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

These indications of the benefits of the research-teaching nexus are useful in guiding the lecturer of first-year students away from the notion that first-year teaching can be divorced from research or scholarship in general.

Focus on first-year issues

Our interviews suggest that the attributes of good lecturers of first-year students are not that different from the attributes of good lecturers in general, but that specific attributes and practices are emphasised in relation to the challenges generated by this context. The first challenge to which first-year lecturers need to respond, is that the classes are often large and the environment can appear impersonal and daunting. The students benefit from empathy and understanding from the lecturers. Some lecturers reported building bridges with students by pedagogic practices, such as learning students' birthdays and congratulating them in lectures (Christelle), as well as by encouraging and even instructing students to come and see them to discuss matters affecting them in their offices. This contact is also enhanced by lecturers' insights into the first-year experience:

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

Several of the lecturers indicated that they were aware how important the beginning of the first year is and that they had to steer students towards facing this positively:

It is their first meeting point with university life, that first year, especially the first lecture, but the first class, and what will happen there, will determine what will happen in the future. (John)

A second challenge responded to positively by many of the lecturers, was to teach groups who are varied, either in terms of ability level, or in terms of cultural, educational or geographic backgrounds. The interviews provided examples of lecturers acquainting themselves with the biographical details of their students, such as their matric results, or using problems in the class that refer to particular students' home contexts. John makes reference to the cultural heritage of his class, with examples of interactive learning techniques in the mathematics classroom. During the rugby world cup he used the example of a rugby ball and two students with rope in front of the class, to show how an ellipse is created.

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In addition to making links with students' prior learning and contextual cultures, many lecturers made links to their professional futures, and in so doing, gave them a sense of direction, vision and of agency. Welma's students were shown research clips demonstrating phenomena the students would experience as professionals. The significance of linkages between a learner's past and future in order to enhance meaningful learning is underscored by Wenger:

As trajectories, our identities incorporate the past and the future in the very process of negotiating the present. ... they provide a context in which to determine what, among all the things that are potentially significant, actually becomes significant learning. (Wenger, 1998:155)

The need to convey strong expectations, an attribute of good lecturers in general, was found to have strong purchase in the first-year context (Chickering & Gamson, 1991). One student wrote: 'Especially in my first year I was still inclined to be slack and just get through, but you awakened my ambition and pride, so that I finally spurred myself to greater heights.' Nicoline was one of the lecturers who specifically mentioned the importance of clear expectations. She said, 'It is important to state the privileges and expectations clearly at the beginning of the year.' This message was conveyed to the stronger students as well as to those who were struggling, as Christelle spent several hours counselling weaker students in her office, telling them that they, for example, were not working hard enough.

A final challenge to which these lecturers responded, was the need to induct their students into the discourse of their discipline, and into the practices required for successful study at university. Christelle used her awareness of the students' learning needs to integrate learning approaches directly into her first-year classes:

[First-year students] do learn differently. I've had several students in my office here, who tell me it is so different for them to sit in class and take down notes, they never did that at school ... because they received the set of notes and that was all they had to study ... so the first thing is, how to take down notes, so you need to be aware of that, especially the first semester, ... so you have to teach them ... how to manage your time ... you have to teach them confidence, to be critical of issues, especially the Afrikaans-speaking students ... they are not accustomed to being critical.

Even top-performing students appreciated this guidance on how to learn, as this student wrote:

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

Thus, in addition to the general attributes highlighted earlier, with specific reference to the first-year lecturer, what emerged was the notion of the lecturer as guiding to the student into the new community of practice, and the idea of the lecturer as providing students with a bridge or stepping stone from one community into another.

Becoming a good lecturer

Our framework presents 'being' as if it were a stable component, whereas it actually is in a state of flux, interacting with 'becoming' a 'good' lecturer. During the analysis of the interviews, various forms of 'becoming' emerged.

Self-development

According to the lecturers, being a good lecturer comprises an element of innateness and talent: 'It's in your blood', Arno said. It is also partly learnt and hard work, as Soon says, 'It is to an extent instinctive and innate [and] you give yourself in-service training'. The interviews provided many examples of how and why the lecturers improved their own practice. Marcia, who had recently left the accounting world to become a lecturer, provided a reason for wanting to improve:

And then I decided to come and teach here and then I realised, I don't know everything about teaching, I don't know what to do, I know my subject, but I don't know how to present this, and then I decided to go further with this.

A great deal of evidence was provided in the interviews of how the lecturers gave themselves 'in-service' training. These examples could all be clustered together as reflective practice. Lecturers were able to conduct reflection-in-action. For example, Christelle would see from students' body language whether they were getting tired and that she perhaps needed to change tack midway through the lecture. They also conducted reflection-on-action, using various sources at their disposal, for example student feedback. Two lecturers indicated that they cultivated a special relationship with the class representative, so that this student would be able to give immediate accounts of how the students were responding to the lectures. Patrick practised reflection in a particularly disciplined and systematic way:

I work even harder to master, and to try and work out, after every lesson I go and think, okay where could I have done better, and where did I lose them, and where did I go too fast, and I try to make notes for myself, and I try to think how I could do it differently ...

Lecturers also deliberately sought out social opportunities to learn more about teaching. Christelle learnt a lot from chatting to colleagues and senior students in the tea room. John got an idea from an economics lecturer at a workshop, to invite guest lecturers to his classroom, and had already implemented this idea.

While most of the lecturers engaged extensively in various forms of reflective practice and self-in-service training, few engaged directly with the discourse of pedagogy as a means to become a better lecturer. Christelle and Soon expressed elements of embarrassment or frustration in the interview, because they could not articulate what they do well in theoretical terms. Christelle concluded her interview with the words, 'I think my frustration with a discussion like this is often that I can't give you anything scientific'. Only two of the lecturers, Marcia and Patrick, indicated an interest in

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pursuing the scholarship of teaching by wanting to study further in this area. Marcia, for instance, said ‘maybe I can become a guru in teaching accountancy’.

Andrianetta felt she had until recently taught instinctively, and began to become more reflective after engaging with an advisor in the Centre for Teaching and Learning:

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

The fact that Andrianetta taught instinctively (and well) without being reflective, but really enjoyed becoming more reflective, suggests that good teaching can occur without reflectivity, reflexivity or the scholarship of teaching, but that these various forms of ‘self in-service training’ add value to the classroom experience, as well as to the motivation and energy of the lecturer.

Motivation

Most of the forms of motivation mentioned in the interviews were intrinsic, including a passion, even a ‘love’, for the discipline (Rowland, 2000). Another was interest or enjoyment of working with students. Marcia said she ‘can’t wait’ to give her lectures, ‘It is such fun for me’ and she said about her students, ‘I’m crazy about them’. A second and most compelling form of intrinsic motivation described in the interviews was a sense of commitment or vocation. Andrianetta explained that although her first love was for research rather than teaching, she felt that she owed it to her students to give them her best: ‘Of course the strongest motivating factor for me is that I can’t live with myself after I gave a lecture and if I don’t feel that I truly gave them what is their due’. According to Biesta and Tedder (2006:27), sense of agency is related to situations in which ‘people experience a calling, have a sense of vocation, or more generally feel that there is a certain ‘theme’ or ‘direction’ in their life to which they should respond’. Thus sense of vocation or commitment can play an extremely important role in motivating lecturers to become good, or in helping them to sustain their efforts in this regard.

Three extrinsic forms of motivation were mentioned: support, for example, from the Centre for Teaching and Learning; awards, for example, the Rector’s Award for Teaching Excellence; and the prevailing departmental and institutional culture, and acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of the value of undergraduate teaching. Many of the lecturers we interviewed had received one or other teaching award in the past. Four out of the ten had received the Rector’s Award for Teaching Excellence itself, and some had received other awards in addition. They indicated that this nomination from the students had more significance for them, as it came from students rather than staff, and presumably because of what the top-performing students said about them in the letters. Marcia echoed the sentiments of other lecturers:

This is for me one of the biggest compliments that I have ever received from this university, it is worth more than sending my portfolio to the Dean for the Teaching Award, ... but to get it unasked for from a student

and then even more so from a top student, shocked me, ... I often feel I do not do enough for the top students, because you focus so much in the class on the struggling students.

With regard to support – for example, workshops on teaching – lecturers did express appreciation for this, but almost as many indicated that they do not take up this support because of time constraints and pressure to publish in discipline-related forums. This pertains to the third form of extrinsic motivation, which was described as a negative by many of the lecturers: the relative absence of a pervasive culture of valuing the teaching and teachers of undergraduate students. This was given as a reason why some did not attend teaching-enhancement workshops or conferences. Lack of recognition of undergraduate teaching was attributed to the institution in general, as well as to the prevailing norms and attitudes in the faculty or department. Trowler and Knight (1999:185) point to the importance of this matter in supporting good teaching when they write 'HEIs seeking to improve their socialisation practices ought to look not so much to the provision of formal learning opportunities, (although they have a part) as to the cultures of academic departments'.

Conclusion

The interviews have allowed us a powerful glimpse of how lecturers understand their strengths and perceive their value. In seeking to understand what lies behind these conversations, however, one must be aware of the difficulty of 'capturing the impalpable ... the tacit and knowing and feelings' (Trowler, 2008:162) and translating this into hard and fast data. The interviews have demonstrated that what is described as good teaching by lecturers of first-year students is not untypical of good teaching in general, but it also suggests that certain challenges and needs are accentuated at this level. It does not appear that addressing the needs of top-performing students occurs at the expense of other students, but in fact, the converse might apply. For the lecturers, becoming and remaining good lecturers, is both innate and intuitive, as well as learned. It is also a combination of an internally, or intrinsically motivated process, as well as a socially situated phenomenon, influenced most powerfully by the social contexts beyond the borders of the classroom. This process of becoming is further mediated by the expectations and challenges generated by the students themselves.

A note of optimism and encouragement provided by the interviews is the idea that it is indeed possible to teach well to large, and diverse classes, and that one can establish elements of contact in these settings. What remains of concern, however, is how to support good lecturers, and how to share what they do with other lecturers. The interviews indicate that aspects of the prevailing culture require attention, so that the ecology within which lecturers work, allows them to flourish.

Our research suggests that, as argued in our introduction, teaching is not a simple concept, and it is not something that one can capture with a static or unvarying set of characteristics. The characteristics can however, be clustered according to the dimensions provided by Kane *et al.* (2004). The understanding of becoming presented here differs from 'reflective practice' in that we have understood 'reflective practice'

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to be a more all-encompassing phenomenon that we have labeled as ‘becoming’. Our understanding of ‘becoming’ is that it comprises motivation, as a powerful drive, as well as what we have called ‘self in-service development’. Our understanding of becoming differs in that becoming is not solely an individual trajectory. It is strongly situated within the social settings in which a lecturer lives and works. Our model of becoming, therefore, incorporates the social and cultural influences both the lecturer and the student bring to the teaching and learning situation, as well as the pervasive contexts of culture of the department and faculty, institution or discipline.

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SECTION FOUR • CLOSING PERSPECTIVE

Appendix 1: Lecturers interviewed

Pseudonym	Cluster	Seniority	Gender
Christelle	Humanities	Professor	Female
Nicoline	Humanities	Senior Lecturer	Female
Andrianetta	Humanities	Senior Lecturer	Female
Arno	Economics and Management Sciences	Lecturer	Male
Marcia	Economics and Management Sciences	Lecturer	Female
Patrick	Economics and Management Sciences	Lecturer	Male
Welma	Science, Technology and Health	Lecturer	Female
Soon	Science, Technology and Health	Professor	Male
Arnold	Science, Technology and Health	Senior Lecturer	Male
John	Science, Technology and Health	Senior Lecturer	Male

Appendix 2: Interview questions

1. What makes you a successful lecturer (of top-performing first-year students)?
Prompt: focus on the lecturer in the learning context; how are you different from other first-year lecturers; what do you do; what do you do outside of the actual lecture situation?
2. What steps have you taken, over the years, to enhance your teaching (of top-performing first-year students)? *Prompt:* focus on the lecturer's own professional development, whether they have changed over the years, and how they manage the teaching role in relation to work-related and other pressure.
3. What is particular about teaching first-year students and how they learn?
4. What was the significance of your nomination for you?

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