



The Criteria of Effective Teaching in Higher Education: a Review of Research

KEYWORDS

effective, teachers, professional, achievement, learning

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ABSTRACT *The present article is concerned with what teaching effective is? What are the set of behaviours that effective teachers incorporate into their daily professional practice? In this article definitions of effectiveness based on work in both schools and university sectors are explored. This paper focuses on teaching strategies that are effective in maximising the achievement progress of students. Since teachers are the most valuable resource available to educational institutions an investment in teacher professionalism is vital by ensuring that they are equipped with pedagogical skills that are effective in meeting the learning needs of all students.*

Introduction

Higher education means programmes of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level provided by universities or other educational establishments that are approved as institutions of higher education by the competent state authorities, and/or through recognized accreditation systems. As you have chosen to teach in higher education because you are a subject matter specialist with a tremendous knowledge of your discipline. There is another field of knowledge you need to know: teaching and learning. It includes developing effective instructional strategies, reaching today's students, and teaching with technology. Since more students attend college now than ever before, it is only rational that some are not as prepared as we might expect. Institutions are dealing with this issue, but instructors must do some rethinking about how they teach, in order to meet the needs of all learners in their classrooms. The primary concern in this paper is to develop an understanding of what is effective teaching, so that university lecturers take advantage of effective teaching to enhance their teaching in a scholarly manner. Everyone, every parent, young person would like to have the assurance that all our children are being taught and prepared for future work and for life in the Twenty-First Century. In order to achieve this, we need to ensure that those who teach our children incorporate the qualities of effective teaching in their professional lives. There are consistently high correlations between students' ratings of the amount learned in the course and their overall ratings of the teacher and the course. Those who learned more gave their teachers higher ratings (Cohen, 1981; Theall and Franklin, 2001). There is substantial research linking student satisfaction to effective teaching (Theall and Franklin, 2001).

What is teaching Effectiveness?

Teaching may be regarded as providing opportunities for students to learn. It is an interactive process as well as intentional activity. Teacher effectiveness is generally referred to in terms of a focus on student outcomes and the teachers' behaviours and classroom processes that promote better student outcomes. Effective teaching does not occur by chance. Effective teachers have become good at what they do because they evaluate their practice. James suggests that "educational evaluation is a professional responsibility for academic staff, arising from a commitment to understanding the effects of teaching on students and to enhance student learning. Effective teachers strive to motivate and engage all students in learning rather than simply

accepting that some students cannot be engaged and are destined to do poorly. Generally speaking effective teaching is systematic, stimulating and caring (Mc Keachie and Kulik 1975; P.A. Cohen 1981; Marsh 1982).

Beck (2005) identifies the potential sources of evidence of teaching effectiveness these include:

- Student ratings (such as student evaluation of teaching);
- Peer reviews;
- Self reviews;
- Videos of practice;
- Interviews with students;
- Alumni, employer, and administrator rating;
- Teaching awards and scholarships;
- Learning outcomes measures and;
- Maintenance of teaching portfolios

Appropriate Teaching skills and Practices

Effective teaching and teaching effectiveness can be complex and controversial. Effectiveness is a contested term. There is much debate within the higher education community on how teaching or teaching effectiveness may be defined (Braskamp, and Ory; 1994). Effective teachers have deep understanding of subject matter, learning theory and student differences, planning, classroom instructional strategies, knowing individual students and assessment of student understanding and proficiency with learning outcomes. They also include a teacher's ability to reflect, collaborate with colleagues and continue ongoing professional development.

Hativa, Barak and Simhi (2001) propose four dimensions of teaching effectiveness interest, clarity, organization and a positive classroom climate.

Kreber (2002) suggests that teaching excellence requires sound knowledge of one's discipline and adds that excellent teachers are those who know how to motivate their students, how to convey concepts and how to help students overcome difficulties in their learning.

Young and Shaw (1999) propose six major dimensions of effective teaching: value of the subject, motivating students; a comfortable learning atmosphere; organization of the subject; effective communication; and concern for student learning.

Centra (1993), defines effective teaching as "that which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures".

Braskamp and Ory (1994) include teaching and learning in their definition, defining effective teaching as the "creation of situations in which appropriate learning occurs, shaping those situations is what successful teachers have learned to do effectively".

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

- Effective teachers are clear about instructional goals.
- Are knowledgeable about curriculum content and the strategies for teaching it.
- Communicate to their students what is expected of them and why?
- Make expert use of existing instructional material in order to devote more time to practices that enrich and clarify the content.
- Motivates students and nurtures their desire to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment which develops compassion and mutual respect.
- Are knowledgeable about their students, adapting instruction to their needs and anticipating misconceptions in their existing knowledge.
- Cultivates cross cultural understanding and value of diversity.
- Monitor student understanding by offering regular appropriate feedback.
- Provide students equitable access to technology, space, tools and time.
- Uses multiple methods to systematically gather data about student understanding and ability.
- Teacher provides meaningful learning opportunities for students.
- Teacher scaffolds instruction to help students reason and develop problem solving strategies.
- Integrate their instruction with that in other subject areas.
- Effective teachers use techniques that best serve the learning needs of their students.

Effective teachers believe that every student is capable of achieving and they do all they can to find ways of making each student successful. Effective teachers have high expectations of students in terms of both their standard of learning and their behaviour, and they help their students meet those expectations. They also have high expectations of themselves and their own learning.

Over the past 30 years, a remarkable portrait of an effective Higher Education teacher from teachers' perspectives has emerged from a range of research studies. The summary of these dimensions as mentioned below in is based on the work of Marsh, 1987; Swartz et al, 1990; Entwistle & Tait 1990; Ramsden, 1991; Lowman & Mathie, 1993; Brown & Atkins 1993; Porter and Brophy 1998; Patrick & Smart 1998; Vielbha & Hillier 2000; Hillier 2002; ILT 2002; Biggs, 2003; Skelton 2004; & Yates 2005.

Findings from Effectiveness Research: Dimensions of Effective Teaching which are principally grounded in the views of teachers

Supportive Learning Environment

- Provision of intellectual excitement, enthusiasm and a stimulating & creative environment.
- High degree of subject knowledge.

- Respect for, and interest in students.
- Climate of approachability, provision of a motivating environment;
- Recognition of student diversity.

Academic Expectations

- High level of expected output
- Expected outcomes expressed directly in academic terms-explaining to students what they are to learn and why
- Clarity in standards and assessment criteria
- Appropriate workload and level of difficulty
- Development of critical thought

Scaffolding Learning

- Varied ways to teach content
- Anticipation of misconceptions in students' existing knowledge
- Appropriate pace for the group being taught
- High level of engagement
- Excellent management of student behaviour
- Systematic, well organized and well structured sessions
- Students work collaboratively with both their peers and their teachers
- Effective and timely feedback
- Encouragement of independent learning
- Encouragement of active learning
- Effective and sympathetic guidance

Clarity

- strong, unambiguous presentation skills
- high quality explanation

Conclusion

In sum, teachers can and do make a difference so what matters most? The imperative of quality teaching and learning provision, supported by teaching standards and ongoing teacher professional development focused on evidence based practices that are demonstrably effective in maximising students learning outcomes and achievement progress. Since most valuable resource available to any educational institution is its teachers the need for a refocus of the prevailing educational effectiveness policy and research agenda (e.g. Scheerens, 1993; Scheerens, & Bosker, 1997) to one that focuses on quality teaching and learning provision is obvious (OECD 2001, 2005).

The end result of all educational reform should be student improvement every reform initiative, if it is to succeed must begin with recognition of the importance of teachers in raising student performance, (Ferguson 1991, Armour-Thomas, Clay, Domanico, Bruno, & Allen, 1989). When teachers are given the opportunity, via high quality professional development, to learn new strategies for teaching, study the literature and learn about approaches such as learner-centred teaching, guided inquiry, active learning, lecture, group work, and online discussion to rigorous standards, they report changing their teaching in the classroom (Alexander, Heavside, & Farris, 1998).

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