

**UNDERSTANDING EFFECTIVE UNIVERSITY TEACHING, LEARNING
MOTIVATIONS AND STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING**

by

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Abstract: Researchers agree that teaching effectiveness is a multidimensional construct, and that understanding teaching and learning behaviours are vital for managing classroom instructions. Furthermore, reviews of literature conducted by Aleamoni (1987) and Arreola (1995) highlighted that to relate student ratings forms to teaching effectiveness and improvement, they must be objective, reliable and valid. Researchers and meta-analysts strongly agree that evidences gathered support the assertion that student ratings are related to teaching effectiveness and learning motivation (McKeachie, 1997; Baharin Abu, 2000; Abrami, Perry & Leventhal, 1982; Braskamp, Ory & Pieper, 1981; Centra, 1993; Feldman, 1976a & 1976b; Marsh & Roche, 1997) – can provide constructive information to help guide the teaching improvement efforts of instructors, enhance the quality of teaching and learning in departments and institutions and promote learning motivation. Student evaluation of teaching (SET) provides valid evidences for developing teaching improvement and emphasizing effective or quality teaching when they are objectively employed and are combined with comprehensive initiatives including a variety of evaluation tools and systematic faculty development. Hence, this paper focuses on the understanding on conceptions of effective university teaching and practices on student ratings of instruction (SRI) as they contribute towards the quality of teaching and learning. The study employs a qualitative research design using ‘phenomenographic inquiry’ (see Marton & Saljo, 1984; Svensson, 1985; and Saljo, 1988) and ‘qualitative paradigm’ with in-depth exploratory, descriptive and analytical characteristics (see Yin, 1994; Stake, 1980, 1995, Burgess, 1984a,b; Bryman, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980; 1987; Merriam, 1988). Data from interviews were gathered from both students and lecturers. The data was analyzed using qualitative- phenomenographic analysis (Marton, 1981, p. 180) where expressions reflecting on the issues and experiences of the respondents were identified and grouped on the basis of similarities, differences and complementarities according to themes or categories (Merriam, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994) – categorized according to emerging themes. The findings revealed some qualitative evidences for improving teaching and learning practices and interactions among students and lecturers

Keywords: *conceptions of effective teaching and learning, teaching effectiveness and improvement; learning cultures and motivation, learning motives and approaches, student ratings of instructor (SRI), student evaluation of teaching (SET), student evaluation of teaching effectiveness, (SETE), Phenomenography*

THE INTRODUCTION

Significantly the quality of teaching and learning are evidently connected to the quality amount of interactions between lecturers and students (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Ornstein, 1990; Cullingford, 1995; Bligh, 1998; Baharin Abu, 2000). Examining both the experiences and interactions from teachers' and students' are important in understanding teaching and learning performances. It is then highly argued that understanding the conceptions of teaching and learning may help lecturers improve their teaching, both in preparation and presentation (Prosser, 1993; Marton & Saljo, 1984; and Saljo, 1988). In my view, it is also argued that these understandings on the conceptions of and experiences in teaching and learning will benefit students learning motivation. In addition, evaluation of teaching effectiveness or student rating, even though it is conflicting and debatable, would provide faculty members and organization valuable information. Many studies proposed that SET is a valid and a reliable tool to measure teaching effectiveness (see Aleamoni, 1987; Cohen, 1981; Arreola, 1995; Feldman, 1989; Marsh, 1987; d'Apollonia & Cohen, 1990; McKeachie, 1979; Murray, 1984).

Thus, this paper attempts to investigate effective lecturing, learning motivations and the use of student ratings as experienced both by students' and lecturers'. The paper will elaborate understanding effective teaching, learning motivations and student evaluation of teaching. It will discuss on the conceptions of effective teaching and teachers and effective students and learning, and the objective and dilemma of using student ratings in teaching.

CONTRASTING LEARNING MOTIVES, CONCEPTIONS AND ORIENTATIONS

Higher education (HE) attracts students from various socio-economic backgrounds and learning cultures. The students bring with them different learning experiences as they possess different beliefs, motives and values about learning. Learning motives and orientations are significant in understanding students' study behaviour and enhancing understanding. Taylor (1983) in his extensive research interviews with students in trying to find out and describe the motives or reasons for students deciding to enter HE, found four distinct motives or 'educational orientations' referred to as academic, vocational, personal, and social. Gibbs et al. (1984) later narrowed it to two reasons why students decided to take a particular course and to pursue HE, mainly either for (1) for intellectual development, or (2) ensuring getting good job and salary. In their study in 1984, they argued that these differences in learning orientation are known to affect not just the amount of effort students put into the course but also, the way they approach their learning and studying. They however, concluded that most students had mixed motives.

In interviews with adult learners by Saljo (1979), when students were asked to explain what they understood of 'learning', a series of contrasting different 'beliefs' about learning were found. He referred these different beliefs as 'conceptions of learning'. Conceptions are said closely related to perceptions or mental constructs that arises from the process of perception. The perceptions that form as initial conceptions are found influence one's own understanding and awareness of learning (Biggs, 1987; Laurillard, 1993, 1997; Ramsden, 1984, 1997; Kember & Sivan, 1995). In addition, there are also sufficient evidences in literature to support the view that awareness of one's own learning processes is a valuable step towards improving the effectiveness of learning.

The synthesis of earlier research on understanding students' learning was based on a series of work by principally four groups, in Sweden (Marton and his colleagues), in US (McKeachie and his colleagues), in UK (Entwistle and his colleagues), and in Australia (Biggs, Ramsden, and their colleagues). These previous research on students' learning had laid out various systems of

classifying conceptions of learning. However, one that many researchers frequently quoted was by Saljo (1979) who identified five levels of students' learning conceptions:

- i) learning as quantitative increase in knowledge
- ii) learning as memorising
- iii) learning as acquisition of facts and procedures
- iv) learning as abstraction of meaning and
- v) learning as an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality.

Saljo then added that levels 1 to 3 were related to a *surface* approach to learning whereas, levels 4 and 5 were related to a *deep* approach. In another study, van Rossum et al. (1984) further confirmed such a division. These different conceptions of learning were then again reported by Beaty et al. (1989). They found a similar hierarchy of conceptions of learning, which then suggested a sixth conception: 'learning as changing a person', forming a model from Conception A to Conception F as pictured in Figure 1 below.

Fig. 1: The Different Conceptions of Learning

Increasing one's knowledge Memorising and reproducing Utilising facts and procedures	<i>REPRODUCING</i>
Developing an initial understanding Transforming one's understanding Changing as a person	<i>TRANSFORMING</i>

Marton et al. (1984) later found students differed in their level of understanding due to contrasting intentions shown by the students (see Figure 2 below).

Fig. 2: The Three Approaches to Learning

Surface approach	<i>Reproducing by</i>
<i>Intention - to cope with course requirement</i>	
Studying without reflecting on either purpose or strategy Treating the course as unrelated bits of knowledge Memorising facts and procedures routinely Finding difficulty in making sense of new ideas presented Feeling undue pressure and worry about work	
Deep approach	<i>Transforming by</i>
<i>Intention - to understand ideas for self</i>	
Relating ideas to previous knowledge and experience Looking for patterns and underlying principles Checking evidence and relating it to conclusions Examining logic and argument cautiously and critically Becoming actively interested in the course content	
Strategic Approach	<i>Organising by</i>

Intention - to achieve the highest possible grades

- Putting consistent effort into studying
- Finding the right conditions and materials for studying
- Managing time and effort effectively
- Being alert to assessment requirements and criteria
- Gearing work to the perceived preferences of lecturers

A surface approach involves a simple conception of learning as memorisation and intention to merely satisfy task or fulfil course requirements (Entwistle, 1990). Students adopting a surface level processing employed a reproductive orientation. In contrast, a deep approach to learning produces an intention to reach understanding of the material presented (transforming orientation). Achieving or strategic approach where the intention was to achieve the highest possible grades, with the process depending on cue seeking, well organised study methods, and effective time management (organizing orientation).

It was evidenced in many studies that factors influencing approaches to learning can be seen originating both from student's own orientation to education and their contrasting forms of intentions and motivations in learning or studying (Biggs, 1999; Entwistle, 1988), and also embedded from the student's perception of educational context (Ramsden, 1984; 1997). In a study conducted by Marton et al. (1984) they reported that when students were asked to carry out an academic task, the way they attempted the task was influenced by the 'intentions' or the reasons or why they took the course, and what they believed as learning required by the course and all of these differentiated intentions later influence on the quality of the learning they achieved. Similarly, Biggs (1993a) argued that learner's intention in carrying out a learning task is more important in determining their approaches to learning than the actual strategies used. Conceptions of teaching classification are listed in Appendix 1.

Purpose of Lecturing

Research has shown that traditional lectures has frequently been criticised as a passive method and are less effective than other methods which fully engage the learner (Ramsden, 1992; Bligh, 1998, Dunkin, 1983; Ramsden, 1992; Waugh, 1994). Gow et al. (1992) criticised the quality of teaching in HE that was over-dependent of one way teaching and learning. Brown and Bakhtar (1983) pointed out that the common dislikes of lecturing were uninterested students, lack of interaction and too large a group. On the other hand, the critiques and limitations of lecturing prove not to be general among students although they do fairly often comment on poor lecturing techniques (Bliss et al., 1977; Beard et al., 1980). Some researchers argued the inefficiency was not in the method but rather in the process and aspects of applying lecturing (Beard et al., 1984; Staton, 1960; Brown and Atkins, 1988). Brown and Atkins (1988) argue that the lecture method is as effective as most other methods if it is for presenting, conveying or transmitting information and providing explanations. They, however, agreed that it is less effective for promoting and encouraging thought, or changing and developing attitudes, provided without variations in the usual lecture techniques. Gibbs (1992) showed how to make the lecture method an active and interactive experience for students. Significantly, some researchers emphasized lecturing not focusing on understanding would minimise learning in students (Beard et al., 1984; Ramsden, 1992; Bligh, 1998)

Effective Lecturing and Learning Motivation

Understanding characteristics of effective lecturing and teaching are important in bringing learning. In a study by Newble et al. (1994) the characteristics of a good lecturer (teaching) are as follows.

- presents the material clearly and logically
- enables the students to understand the basic principle of the subject
- can be heard clearly
- makes the material intelligibly meaningful
- adequately covers the ground
- maintain continuity in the course
- is constructive and helpful in his criticism
- shows an expert knowledge of the subject
- adopts an appropriate pace during the lecture
- includes material not readily accessible in textbooks
- is concise
- illustrates the practical applications of the theory of the subject

Brown and Bakhtar (1983, p.13) describes likes and dislikes of lectures among lecturers and students.

i) The 5 most common reasons for liking lectures were:

- Intellectual challenge in structuring a lecture
- Personal satisfaction in giving a good lecture
- Student responsiveness during a lecture and subsequently
- Arousing and stimulating interest in one's subject
- Motivation from having to give a lecture

ii) The 5 most common reasons for dislike of lectures among lecturers were:

- Unresponsive audiences
- Large groups (depending on subjects)
- Effort and time involved in preparation
- Feelings of failure after a bad lecture
- Lecturing on topics disliked

iii) The 5 most common criticisms of lecturers mentioned by students were:

- Inaudible
- Incoherence
- Failure to pitch at an appropriate level
- Not emphasising key points
- Poor blackboard work

iv) The 5 most common criticisms of lectures according to lecturers were:

- Saying too much too quickly
- Assuming too much knowledge
- Forgetting to provide summaries
- Not indicating when making an aside (rather than a main point)
- Difficulty in timing the length of a lecture

In lectures, students expect lecturers who can make them understand, whereas lecturers expect active and interactive students. Ineffective or bad teaching reduces understanding, learning and motivation, increases negative attitudes towards learning, and produces lower achievement. Thus, it is the aim of all lecturers to lecture clearly and stimulate students to think by getting or

drawing students' attention and bring them to 'deep learning' (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Ramsden, 1992) which is in line with the aims of higher education to develop thinking.

The Investigation

The study extends the earlier work primarily by Saljo (1979) and Taylor (1983). Data from semi-structured interviews were gathered from both students and lecturers from different years of study and work position levels, respectively. The findings highlight the results from the analysis of the qualitative interview data where expressions reflecting on issues or similar themes were identified and grouped on the basis of similarities, differences and complementarities (see Taylor, 1983; Marton & Saljo, 1984; Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988). The four questions were:

- i. *What are the intentions of students attending university education?*
- ii. *What are the characteristics of effective university teachers and students?*
- iii. *What do lecturers like about university students? What do students like about university teachers?*
- iv. *What can we learnt from students and lecturers characters and behaviours on student evaluation of teaching?*

THE FINDINGS

This section examines effective university teaching, learning motivations and student evaluation of teaching. The findings are drawn from the analysis of semi-structured interviews and are then organized based on the questions asked to both group of students and lecturers.

I. THE STUDENTS' MOTIVES ATTENDING UNIVERSITY

Ideally, the goals of higher education (HE) are to promote thinking and enhance understanding in students (Barnett, 1990; Baharin Abu, 2000) and to apply knowledge in vocational situations (Boulton-Lewis, 1995). From the national point of view, the general aim and philosophy of education in Malaysia is to develop competent individuals in all aspects of human development to contribute to the society and the national economic development. Higher education is to produce 'suitable' graduates for the development of the nation at large.

From the study, it was found that the general perceptions and expectations from both the lecturers and the students would concord with common international goals of higher education:

- (i) to equip and '*to teach students so that they can apply a sound knowledge of the content and structure of their chosen disciplines and can apply it effectively in further development of knowledge and in vocational situations*' (Boulton-Lewis, 1995, p.143)
- (ii) to develop an independent and critical learner or the cognitive development (Barnett, 1990), and
- (iii) to promote thinking and enhance knowledge and understanding in students (Barnett, 1990; Baharin Abu, 2000)

From interviews, a diversity of issues emerged from the study in relation to the roles of university education in Malaysia. The study identified five themes: (1) providing continuing education for lifelong learning and developing a competent workforce or 'human capital' concept; (2) imparting new knowledge, developing critical and an intellectual person; (3) getting a good job, upgrading status and recognition; (4) fulfilling family obligation and responsibility; and (5) inculcating moral development.

However, the findings from this study revealed the motives of students attending higher education in Malaysia are three-fold: (1) the common universal philosophy of (western) higher education, (2) the influence of government political and economic aspirations and (3) materialistic socio-cultural values and achievement oriented personal goals. As we look at the

eight themes, it is obvious, nevertheless, that the second and third sources occur more frequently. It was found that majority of students attending university have mixed motives. In particular, students attending university are to secure good job and for paper qualification.

II. THE ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

There is a wealth of literature which identifies characteristics and qualities of exemplary teachers and effective students through research on teaching and learning. However, to date, much of the research has been done from a Western perspective, particularly in the UK, USA and Australia and there is less research in Eastern ‘cultures’. This section tries to answer the question ‘*What are the characteristics of effective university teachers and students?*’. The findings are synthesized into two sets of characteristics: (a) effective students and (b) effective teachers.

A) The Characteristics of Effective University Students

The characteristics of effective university students mentioned by both staff members and students are listed in Table 1 below. As expected, there were discourses on ‘hard work or commitment’, ‘active learning’, and ‘good relationships and communication’. Students, for example, mentioned effective study behaviours such as making early study preparation and engaging in constant study revision. Similarly, staff characterised effective students as those who ‘mastered’ study skills and were ‘excellent’ in time management and hence, could understand lectures better.

Table 1: The Characteristics of Effective University Students

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE STUDENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● active or ask questions, contribute ideas (highest responses) ● hardworking, high commitment and interest ● understand lecture ● relationship or meet lecturers ● constant study or revision ● like to search for (new) references ● come prepared or read before lectures ● hand in work or assignments on time ● be independent ● attend class lecture regularly ● good discipline and time management ● share knowledge and co-operative ● like to read and do extra reading ● use thinking skills, mature in thinking or be critical ● show moral skills, polite, good manners ● take lecture notes ● concentrate and pay attention in lecture ● possess leadership skills ● participate in co-curricular activities ● punctual to lectures ● creative in work ● sensitive to changes ● have good academic grade point ● problem solving skills ● able to relate to current issues ● able to elaborate or gives examples

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinking about exam • communication skills • decision making skills • active in or contribute to community (lowest responses) |
|--|

From Table 1, the most important characteristics associated with being an effective student are being active in class, hard working or committed, and understanding lectures. Furthermore, components of skills such as study and note taking, thinking, leadership, problem solving, communication and decision making were also mentioned as important in becoming an effective student. Yet only half of the students mentioned they studied constantly. Significantly, in the Malaysian educational context (which is different from the Western orientation), not only did the students need to be ‘academically’ good, they were also required to show moral values, politeness and good manners. Staff members were then asked what they liked (and disliked) about university students. Expectedly, their responses were similar to characteristics of effective students.

[Faculty]...*I feel these (characteristics of effective students) are also the characteristics of students that I like.*

It was found that weak students were portrayed as those who just aimed to pass exams, put in minimal effort and showed less effective study behaviour, motivation and commitment. In informal conversations and interviews, students blamed course overload, resulting in the production of lower quality assignments and reducing their time for study revision.

[Student]...*We do them (assignments) for the sake of doing it*

[Student]...*Sometimes we want to study but because the course loads are too much, we just can't cope. Sometimes we just hand in our work without thinking of its quality. Many of us then, study at the last minute.*

In conclusion, it was revealed that effective students were perceived as those with effective study approaches, habits and skills (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Biggs, 1999; Entwistle, 1992; Ramsden, 1992) arguably to understand lectures. However, some students admitted having ineffective study behaviours. A different view of effective university students in Malaysia (from the Western countries), students must also possess good moral behaviour as it is emphasised in the national philosophy of education

B) The Characteristics of Effective University Teachers

The discussions on an effective HE teacher by various authors (for example, Brown & Bakhtar, 1983, 1988; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Newble, 1994; Ramsden, 1992,) focused on theoretical aspects of teachers’ knowledge (as an expert) in academic content and teaching skills, and personality qualities. The results for the characteristics of effective lecturers are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: The Characteristics of Effective University Teachers

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LECTURERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • give knowledge (highest responses) • focus on understanding • effective delivery or methods • well-prepared • humour • friendly and helpful

- discussions
- expert or knowledgeable
- opportunity to ask questions
- share problems, concerns and caring
- easy to meet or approach
- diplomatic or flexible
- promote interest or motivating
- respect or moral behaviour
- use teaching aids
- easy to take notes
- give quality assignments, project or work
- gives notes and learning modules
- interest in teaching or subject
- strong and clear voice
- honest
- fair and objective
- well-dressed (lowest responses)

Similarly, three aspects were mentioned by both students and lecturers - knowledge competence, teaching skills and personality qualities. Significantly, the two most important characteristics of effective lecturers were able to 'give knowledge' and 'focus on understanding'. In addition, the other important characteristics were:

- effective delivery methods and being well-prepared
- sense of humour and not always strict or serious
- friendly and helpful
- discussions and opportunity to ask questions,
- expert or knowledgeable

Both staff members and students thought effective lecturers should be committed in delivering their lectures, emphasising or creating an interactive learning environment which then promoted students' learning and increased understanding. Students should be actively involved in the class, exercising their freedom to give opinions and their thinking skills. Hence, an interactive lecture was conceptualised as more motivating and interesting. Interestingly, the listings for characteristics of effective lecturers are more related to personality characters.

In general, there seemed to be an agreement between staff members and students in Malaysia on the characteristics of effective university teachers. They were mainly to deliver knowledge and to focus on understanding (Ramsden, 1992; Kyriacou, 1986; Ornstein, 1990). In addition, they were expected to have a good personality, acquire good teaching skills and be an expert (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Newble et al., 1994). Another important issue highlighted in this study which characterised effective lecturers was knowledge of teaching skills or pedagogy. Nonetheless, there were also many other ineffective behaviours or problems mentioned by both sets of informants with regard to effective teaching and learning.

The study also gathered comparative data from both students and staff members on characteristics of what students like (and dislikes) about lecturers. Staff members highlighted it in relation to assessment and grading matters, and course demands. Such comments were confirmed by some students who mentioned they like lecturers who were lenient in giving marks and had fewer course demands. Therefore, it could be argued besides personality characters, assessment and course workload were important factors in how students viewed their lecturers

and course programmes and possibly influenced the way they evaluated teaching staff. Presumably, these 'easy' lecturers would get good evaluation from students.

III. DELIVERY TECHNIQUES IN MOTIVATING LEARNING

This section illuminates the approaches and techniques adopted in lectures to enhance students' learning experiences, and motivate them. The findings are drawn from analysis of the semi-structured interviews only.

A. Techniques in Enhancing Understanding

Both sets of informants mentioned various teaching approaches being employed to increase students' learning, to promote cognitive skills and at the same time, to enhance social and communication skills. They are:

- i) create conducive learning environment
- ii) give clear explanation and examples
- iii) give new ideas and experiences
- iv) stress main points, use advance organizers, use teaching and memory aids
- v) have class presentations
- vi) use formative assessment, feedback, reflections and evaluation
- vii) ask questions, use problem solving and create discussions
- viii) give meaningful assignments, projects and extra reading

B. Techniques in Motivating Students

The staff members and students also mentioned four main techniques of motivating students in learning and studying.

- i) good relationships, showing concern and giving guidance
- ii) active and well prepared students
- iii) mastery of content knowledge and teaching skills
- iv) create opportunity to interact

What emerged from this section was students' motivation and understanding could be enhanced by many ways.

Implications for Student Evaluation of Teaching

There are extensive literatures on studies focussing on student evaluations of teaching (see Marsh and Dunkin, 1992; Cashin, 1988; Wachtel, 1998; and series work by Remmers). It is well known that students' rating of instructors is the most widely used method of assessing instructors' teaching effectiveness. Many studies proposed that SET is a valid and a reliable tool to measure teaching effectiveness (see Aleamoni, 1987; Cohen, 1981; Arreola, 1995; d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997), even though some studies explain on the problems, criticized and misused of SET (Baharin, 2000; Dowell & Neal, 1982; McCallum, 1984). Wachtel (1998) summarized factors may influence SET, even though some factors were found inconsistent: (i) timing of evaluation, (ii) anonymity of student as rater, (iii) instructor presence in classroom (iv) purpose of evaluation, (v) characteristics of course electivity, (vi) class meeting time, (vii) level of course, (viii) class size, (ix) subject area, (x) course workload, (xi) cross department, (xii) instructor rank and experience, (xiii) reputation of instructor, (xiv) personality, (xv) seductiveness of 'Dr Fox' effect, (xvi) gender of instructor, (xvii) minority status of instructor, (xviii) physical appearance of instructor, (xix) students personality characteristics, (xx) subject interest, (xxi) gender of students, (xxii) expected grade, (xxiii) grade leniency, (xxiv) student expectations, (xxv) emotional stage, (xxvi) student age.

Therefore, it could be argued from the study besides personality characters, factors such as assessment and course workload were important in how students viewed their lecturers and course programmes and possibly could influence the way they evaluated teaching staff. Presumably, 'nice and easy' lecturers would get good evaluation from students. In addition, other factors could influence rating such as course discipline, undergraduate and post graduate course level, instructor rank/position and experience, education and non-education students, students' attitude, personality and leaning motives, 'recency effect' of rating error, modes/methods of instruction, enrolment age group and demanding instructors.

Discussions and Conclusions

Analysing the findings from the interviews, a range of answers to the orientations towards higher education have been collected. Reasons and motives have been put forward by range of authors (Taylor, 1983; Gibbs et al., 1984; Perry, 1970, 1988; van Rossum et al., 1984). From the study, it was clear that both the lecturers and students agreed four main reasons (motives) as to why students pursue university education. They are:

- (1) for intellectual development or gaining new knowledge (academic intention)
- (2) for securing good job and salary (vocational intention)
- (3) for social and moral development (social intention)
- (4) for personal development (personal intention)

It was also found that majority of students attending university have mixed motives (Gibbs et al., 1984). Significantly, reasons one and two received high responses in Malaysia, although the government emphasized on reason three. The students, however, were shown to have multiple purposes of pursuing university, ranging from getting qualification to knowledge satisfaction. University education is the key to securing good job and getting social recognition. The study shows that majority of the Malaysian students especially the undergraduates candidates are chasing 'paper qualification' as the means for getting good job and for improving their social status.

Another significant issue emerging in the study that is also differed from Western system, HE in Malaysia emphasises moral and cultural (religious) values for individual personal development. The university education is not only to equip students academically but also to educate them to have high moral values and employability/generic skills

In the attempt to understand teaching and learning excellence, it became clear that it is difficult to separate the academic teaching staff (teacher) and students (learner) in their teaching and learning relationship, and their individual interaction. 'Excellent' teaching and learning are thus best understood through the examination of teachers' and students' characteristics, the practice of teaching and learning, and the teachers' teaching and students' learning experiences. How a student experiences excellence in teaching seems to be related to the product of teacher qualities, student characteristics, and the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the student (Ramsden, 1992; Bligh, 1998; Biggs, 1999; Prosser et al., 1999).

Teaching effectiveness is to emphasise understanding and to develop the critical individual. Therefore, the process of teaching and learning is based on active interaction to cater for these aims. Similarly, it is found from the study that effective teacher has three qualities: pedagogical knowledge, discipline mastery and a good personality (Dunkin, 1992; Bligh, 1998; Kyriacou, 1986). They are expected to deliver effective teaching. However, in the Eastern culture, particularly the Malaysian context, besides these qualities, effective teacher should also be role models and inculcate moral values and social skills. This is similar to claims made by Gao

(1996) and Lo and Siew (1990) about the Hong Kong and Chinese teachers. Thus, the Eastern culture even though claiming to focus on understanding, actually emphasises developing moral and good behaviour.

Students' learning approaches and degree of effectiveness were also sought in the study. Expectedly effective students were hoped to be critical and independent with effective learning skills (Prosser et al, 1999; Biggs, 1999; Gibbs, 1992; Ramsden, 1992). However, it was revealed from the study some students were considered and admitted as ineffective since they lacked the said qualities. Students blamed on heavy course load, and teaching and assessment approach employed by staff members which forced them to adopt ineffective study strategies. From the study, students were more conscious of getting good grades, jobs and achievements. This again relates to earlier arguments on the issue of social mobility and recognition.

In conclusion, university teaching system wants students to be independent and active learners. They are also expected to be responsible for their own actions and learning. In order for them to be successful, they are required to develop a positive learning culture and study skills. However, it is also wise to remember both the students and the staff members mentioned problems, dilemmas and conflicts they experienced in interactions in teaching and learning processes. Student ratings are found affected by many factors. Hence, student ratings if it were to be used, it should be carefully interpreted as some studies do reported inconsistencies in their findings.

Hence, improving teaching and learning requires heightened awareness of teachers, students, administrators and the organisation. Furthermore, effective teaching enhancement requires on-going commitment of staff members and management. The staff training and development department and programmes are seen as the appropriate avenue for making the improvements.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1: Various Classifications of Teaching Conceptions

Fox's (1983) classifications of teaching were:

student-initiated: learning with focus on student change

student-initiated: learning with focus on content

teacher-initiated: learning with focus on student change

teacher-initiated: learning with focus on content

Dunkin (1990) identified four conceptions of teaching dimensions:

a. structuring learning

b. motivating learning

c. encouraging activity and independence in learning

d. establishing interpersonal relations conducive to learning

Dall'Alba (1990) identified seven conceptions of teaching by focusing on particular levels of understanding:

a. level 1: presenting information (lowest)

b. level 2: transmitting information

c. level 3: illustrating the application of theory to practice

d. level 4: developing concepts and principles and their interrelations

- e. level 5: developing the capacity to be expert
- f. level 6: exploring ways to understand
- g. level 7: bringing about conceptual change (highest)