EFFECTIVE TEACHING METHODS AT HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of various teaching methods used for teaching students at graduate level. Two hundred and twenty undergraduate students studying in 11 departments of Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi, were interviewed about their perceptions of best and effective teaching methods and the reason for that. Most of the students rated lecture method as the best teaching method. Reasons included; teacher provides all knowledge related to topic, time saving, students attentively listen lecture and take notes etc. The group discussion was rated as the second best method of teaching because of; more participation of students, the learning is more effective, the students don't have to rely on rote learning, and this method develops creativity among students etc. Students' perception and ratings about the interesting and effective teaching methods is a way to suggest improvements in teaching/ learning process.

Introduction:

Teaching and learning are the two sides of a coin. The most accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of student learning that occurs. 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). This same criterion was also put forth by Thomas Angelo, when he said; "teaching in the absence of learning is just talking." Doyle.T. (n.d.). A teacher's effectiveness is again about student learning.

The literature on teaching is crammed full of well researched ways that teachers can present content and skills that will enhance the opportunities for students to learn. It is equally filled with suggestions of what not to do in the classroom. However, there is no rule book on which teaching methods match up best to which skills and/or content that is

being taught. Students often have little expertise in knowing if the method selected by an individual instructor was the best teaching method or just "a method" or simply the method with which the teacher was most comfortable. Doyle.T. (n.d).

"Research indicates that students are the most qualified sources to report on the extent to which the learning experience was productive, informative, satisfying, or worthwhile. While opinions on these matters are not direct measures of instructor or course effectiveness, they are legitimate indicators of student satisfaction, and there is substantial research linking student satisfaction to effective teaching (Theall and Franklin, 2001)." A meta-analysis of 41 research studies provides the strongest evidence for the validity of student ratings since these studies investigated the relationship between student ratings and student learning. Doyle. T. (n.d.) quoted Ory "The use of students' ratings for evaluating teacher effectiveness is the single most researched issue in all of higher education. Over 2000 articles and books have been written on this topic over the past 70 years". Research on student evaluation of teaching generally concludes that student ratings tend to be reliable, valid, relatively unbiased and useful (Murray, 1994).

Most universities embrace a process by which students provide anonymous feedback at the end of each course they complete. These ratings of instructor effectiveness, these ratings have been a hot topic since they were first employed in mid 1920's (Chang, 2001) and they create an enormous challenge for nearly every institution that uses them (Hoyt & Pallett, 1999). Over the years student evaluation of instructors has changed significantly especially in the areas of the purpose and methodology. They have transformed from being primarily used to assist students in the selection of courses, to helping faculty members further develop and improve their teaching skills, to assisting administrators with respect to personnel decisions (Ory, 2000).

Today, student ratings of instruction are widely used for the purpose of making personnel decisions and faculty development recommendations (Scriven, 1995). For administrators, the information derived from ratings aids them in making both summative and formative judgments dealing with faculty retention, tenure, and promotion, hiring, selecting faculty for teaching awards and honors, and in assigning teachers to courses (Franklin, 2001; Kulik, 2001). Braskamp (2000) suggests that instructors use the data formatively to develop and improve their teaching effectiveness. Student-ratings are in

fact used in over 90 percent of all colleges and universities in the United States and represent the most frequently used strategy for evaluating instructors and courses (Cuseo, n.d.).

There is much debate within the higher education community on how teaching or teaching effectiveness may be defined (Braskamp, and Ory; 1994). For instance, Centra (1993), defines effective teaching as "that which produces beneficial and purposeful student learning through the use of appropriate procedures" (p. 42), Braskamp and Ory, (1994, p. 40) include both 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".

Many researchers have focused on whether or not students are legitimate judges of teaching effectiveness. Though caveats abound, the general sense is that students are both rational and reliable sources of evidence (Arreola, 1995; Braskamp & Ory, 1994; Pratt, 1997), While in class, students are exposed to all sorts of instructional experiences (lectures, instructional materials and aids, readings, exams). They are in effect experimental consumers—able to discern quality, relevance, usefulness, and instructor interaction with students (Montgomery, n.d.). As consumers, Cuseo (n.d.) claims that students can judge what is taught and how it is taught, yet Braskamp & Ory (1994) claim that students can only provide information with respect to teaching. However, Ory (2001, p. 12) sums it up best stating: "unless they haven't been to class, as consumers they have a legitimate voice". Theall, M. (n.d.) mentioned that the students can answer questions about the quality of lectures, the value of readings and assignments, the clarity of the instructor's explanations. Students are certainly qualified to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience. They have a right to express their opinions in any case, and no one else can report the extent to which the experience was useful, productive, informative, satisfying, or worthwhile.

Methodology

Eleven departments were selected through purposive sampling from the Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi, including department of ; Special Education, Psychology, Social Work, Sociology, Mass Communication, Education, International Relations, English, Urdu, Persian, and Islamic learning. Twenty students studying at graduate level

from each department were selected through convenient sampling to seek their opinion about the most effective teaching methods (as perceived by them) used by their teachers, and the reasons for highly rating a particular teaching method. Total two hundred and twenty students were interviewed. They were asked to rate different methods of teaching used by their teachers on a scale of 1- 5, one being the least important and 5 being the most important teaching method. The results of the study were compiled and analyzed by percentage method.

Objectives of the Study:
- To find out the various teaching methods used by university teachers to teach graduate students in different departments of Faculty of Arts.
- To explore the opinion of students about the teaching method they perceived as the most interesting and best teaching method.
- To find out the reasons for perceiving any teaching method as the interesting and best method.
- To provide suggestions for improving quality of teaching in the light of students perception and use of ratings

Findings:

Most of the students rated lecture method as the best teaching method. Reasons included; teacher provides all knowledge related to topic, it is time saving method; students listen lecture attentively and take notes etc. The group discussion was rated as the second best method of teaching because of; more participation of students, the learning is more effective, the students don't have to rely on rote learning, and this method develops creativity among students etc. Students' perception and ratings about the interesting and effective teaching methods is a way to suggest improvements in teaching/ learning process

I.   **Rating of Various Teaching Methods:**

Rating was done on a scale of 1-5, 1 – being the least interesting and 5 being the most interesting teaching method as indicated in table 1.

Teaching methods	Rating	No of students [^4]

Table 1

	1		2		3		4		5		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Lecture	34	16%	18	08%	00	00%	80	36 %	88	40%	220
Group discussion	34	16%	18	08%	54	24%	34	16%	80	36%	220
Individual presentation	53	24%	44	20%	26	12%	53	24%	44	20%	220
Assignments	18	08%	53	24%	89	40%	34	16%	26	12%	220
Seminars	52	22%	54	25%	34	16%	54	25%	26	12%	220
Workshop	25	11%	54	25%	53	24%	53	24%	35	16%	220
Conferences	26	12%	53	24%	53	24%	35	16%	53	24%	220
Brainstorming	27	12%	34	16%	54	25%	80	36%	25	11%	220
Role play	25	11%	54	25%	27	12%	80	36%	34	16%	220
Case study	34	16%	27	12%	53	24%	52	23%	54	25%	220

II. **Reasons for rating various teaching methods as interesting and best teaching methods:**

1. **Lecture Method**
   - It creates new ideas.
   - It is good for large class.
   - Teacher is experienced and has mastery on subject, explain all points and can answer all questions raised by students.
   - Students can ask if they need any clarification.
   - Learn through listening
   - Teacher explains all points.
   - Students give their input
   - Teacher discuss whole topic in the class in easy language so students can easily understand the topic.
   - It is good for large class.
   - Teacher provides all knowledge related to topic.
   - Time saving as teacher is supposed to finish lecture in time.
   - Students give their views at the end of lecture.

- Students can ask question if they have any problem to understand lecture.
- Students attentively listen lecture and take notes as the teacher ask questions at the end of lecture.
- Students know and understand basic concepts.
- It creates new ideas.
- Teacher knows all the students so he/she can use suitable strategies for the class to make them understand.
- Teacher is experienced and has mastery on subject and can answer all questions by students.
- Teacher share information with students so it creates interest in students.
- Students are more involved and participate when teacher ask question.
- Teacher provides notes.
- Students easily understand every point.
- Students share knowledge with teacher.
- Teacher is role model for students.

2. **Group discussion:**
   - More participation of students.
   - Students listen to other's opinion & express their opinion.
   - Discuss with teachers the points that were missed during discussion.
   - Students learn on their own & find out key points.
   - Students exchange their ideas.
   - Students get point of view of all and not only those who always speak.
   - After discussion when students give their presentation, teacher corrects their mistakes.
   - Students can make their own notes.
   - The learning is more effective.

- They don't have to rely on rote learning.
- Develops creativity among students.
- It evokes thinking among students.
- Students have time for preparation of topic.
- Students should have material and knowledge before discussion. Suggestion
- Only those students participate who have confidence rest do not participate.
- Concepts become clear after discussion.
- Every student gives his/ her opinion.

3. **Individual presentation**
   - Hamm (2008) quoted Rafe; "A presentation involves motivating listeners to accept a new idea, alter an existing opinion, or act on a given premise."
   - Students first thoroughly understand the topic before giving presentation i.e. mastery on topic.
   - It increases confidence among students.
   - Good way to learn for only one student who is presenting.
   - Students search lot of books to collect material
   - Teacher's supervision is important

4. **Assignment**
   - It enhances the ability of research on any topic as the students search topic from different books, websites etc.
   - Active learning

5. **Seminars**
   - Give Chance to meet other people of same profession.
   - Motivate and make student active in learning.
   - Interested method.

6. **Workshops**
   - Give Chance to meet other people of same profession.

7. **Conferences**
- Give Chance to meet other people of same profession.
- Networking with other institutions and professionals.

8. **Brain storming**
- More interesting
- More informative
- Gain knowledge
- Learning is effective
- More participation of students
- Students give their opinion
- Active learning
- Creative thinking is encouraged.
- Students think beyond their knowledge.
- Every one gets the chance to express their thoughts.
- Simple topics can be learnt through different angles.

9. **Role play**
- Interesting method
- Creative thinking is encouraged.
- Students think beyond their knowledge.
- Students enjoy the situation
- Active learning
- Easy to learn

10. **Case study**
- Active learning
- Creative thinking is encouraged.
- Students think beyond their knowledge.

Discussion:

Making teaching methods more interesting

Higher education faculty strives to become more effective teachers so that students can learn better, and many explore methods to improve their teaching practice. Depending on the nature of subject, number of students, and the facilities available, there are different methods teachers are using in the classroom. Below are given various methods and certain tips and techniques for improving these methods. (Sajjad, S.1997)

Lecture Method: A lecture is a talk or verbal presentation given by a lecturer, trainer or speaker to an audience. With all the advancement of training systems and computer technology, lecture method is still a backbone widely used in teaching and training at higher level of education. This method is economical, can be used for a large number of students, material can be covered in a structured manner and the teacher has a great control of time and material.

A study conducted by Benson, L., Schroeder, P., Lantz, C., and Bird, M (n.d.). provides evidence that students may place greater emphasis on lecture material than on textbooks. Lecturing is not simply a matter of standing in front of a class and reciting what you know. The classroom lecture is a special form of communication in which voice, gesture, movement, facial expression, and eye contact can either complement or detract from the content. (Davis.1993). McCarthy, P.(1992) in article "Common Teaching Methods" stated strengths of lecture method that it presents factual material in direct, logical manner, contains experience which inspires, stimulates thinking to open discussion, and useful for large groups. Our findings also revealed that most of the students considered lecture as best method because according to opinion of students ; it creates new ideas, it is good for large class, develops creativity among students, teacher is experienced and has mastery on subject, explain all points and can answer all questions by students.

Sullivan & McIntosh (1996) said that with planning and effective presentation techniques, the lecture can be a highly effective and interactive method for transferring knowledge to students. Lecture gives the pupils training in listening and taking rapid notes. (Kochhar. 2000, p.345)

Tips and techniques for improving lecture method
- Lecture material should be stimulating and thought provoking.

- Information should be delivered dramatically by using example to make it memorable.
- The teacher needs to use questions throughout the lecture to involve students in the learning process and to check their comprehension.
- Reinforce learning by using visual supports like transparencies, flip charts, whiteboard/ black board etc.
- Teacher should take feedback of students to improve lecture method.

Discussion: It is a free verbal exchange of ideas between group members or teacher and students. For effective discussion the students should have prior knowledge and information about the topic to be discussed. McCarthy, P. (1992) stated strengths of class discussion as; pools ideas and experiences from group, and allows everyone to participate in an active process. Kochhar (2000, p.347) stated that; a problem, an issue, a situation in which there is a difference of opinion, is suitable for discussion method of teaching. Our study also revealed that the students rated group discussion (class discussion) as the second best method by giving reasons that; it has more participation of students, the learning is more effective, the students don't have to rely on rote learning, every student give his/ her opinion, and this method develops creativity among students.

Tips and techniques for improving discussion method

- The teacher should spend sufficient time in preparing the process and steps of discussion.
- Different aspects of the topic and the parameters should be selected for the focused discussion.
- Sufficient time should be allotted to discuss all the issues. At the same time students should know the time limit to reach a conclusion.
- The teacher in the beginning should introduce the topic, the purpose of discussion, and the students participating in discussion.
- Before the start of discussion, background information about the topic should be provided.
- There is a need to include questions to provide direction.
- Relaxed environment should be created to foster the process of discussion.

- Teacher after opening the discussion should play the role of a facilitator involving every one and at the end should summarize the discussion.
- Encourage students listen other's point of view and then evaluate their own.
- Teacher should give value to all students' opinions and try not to allow his/her own difference of opinion, prevent communication and debate.

Role Play: Role play occurs when participants take on differentiated roles in a simulation. These may be highly prescribed, including biographical details, and even personality, attitudes and beliefs; or loosely indicated by an outline of the function or task. These techniques have already demonstrated their applicability to a wide range of learners, subjects and levels. (Singh, and Sudarshan, 2005, p 238, 239). It is a memorable and enjoyable learning method. To gain maximum benefits from this method, the incidents selected for enactment should be as realistic as the situation allows.

Tips and techniques

Before the role play, the teacher should brief participants about the roles they will play, give them time for preparation, confirm confidentiality of role play, and ask participants to behave naturally.

- Teacher should select & brief observers about their roles.
- During the role play, the teacher must keep quiet, listen & take notes, avoid cutting role play short, but give time warning if previously agreed. The teacher should be prepared for some action if participants dry up and can intervene as a last resort.
- After the role play, the teacher thanks participants, ask for feed back from lead participants, take comments from observers, ask other participants to comment,
- The teacher should use role names not those of participants, summarize, drawing out learning points, leaving the participants with positive comments and feelings.

Case Study: Primarily developed in business and law contexts, case method teaching can be productively used in liberal arts, engineering, and education.This method is basically used to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as to

present students with real-life situations. The students are presented with a record set of circumstances based on actual event or an imaginary situation and they are asked:

1. to diagnose particular problem(s) only.
2. to diagnose problem(s) & provide solution(s).
3. to give reasons & implications of action after providing both problem & solution.

It is a time consuming method and sometimes the case does not actually provide real experience. It could be in-conclusive, and insufficient information can lead to inappropriate results. At the end, the students want to know the right answer by the teacher. The role of the teacher in conducting the case study should be to:

- read the case and determine the key problems faced by the decision maker,
- determine the data required to analyze the problems and for a synthesis into solutions,
- develop, analyze, and compare alternative solutions, and recommend a course of action.

Tips and techniques

- Cases should be brief, well-written, reflect real issues, and open to a number of conflicting responses.
- Students should work in group to prepare a written report and/or a formal presentation of the case.

Brainstorming: It is a loosely structured form of discussion for generating ideas without participants embroiled in unproductive analysis. It is a very useful technique for problem solving, decision making, creative thinking and team building. It develops listening skills.

Tips and techniques

Ground rules for running brainstorming session include:

- There should be no criticism and the wild ideas should be encouraged and recorded without evaluation.
- Emphasis should be placed on quantity of ideas and not the quality.
- There is a need of equal participation of members.
- It can be unfocused so teacher should know how to control discussion and facilitate issues.

- It works well in small group

Assignment method: Written assignments help in organization of knowledge, assimilation of facts and better preparation of examinations. It emphasizes on individual pupil work and the method that helps both teaching and learning processes (Kochhar, 2000, p.358).

Tips and techniques

- Teacher should describe the parameters of the topic of assignment.
- Fully explain assignments so that students know how to best prepare. When the inevitable question, "Will we be tested on this?" arises, make sure your answer includes not only a "yes" or "no," but a "because . . . ".Shea, A. (2009).
- Davis (1993) suggests that "Give assignments and exams that recognize students' diverse backgrounds and special interests. For example, a faculty member teaching a course on medical and health training offered students a variety of topics for their term papers, including one on alternative healing belief systems. A faculty member in the social sciences gave students an assignment asking them to compare female-only, male-only, and male-female work groups."

Recommendations:

- To evaluate teaching effectiveness different methods can be used including: peer review, self-evaluation, teaching portfolios, student achievement and students' ratings of teaching methods used by their teachers.
- Students must be assured that the information they are giving is welcomed by the
- faculty and will be used to improve the teaching and learning in the course; otherwise they are unlikely to take the rating process seriously (Doyle.T. n.d.).
- Teachers need to educate students in effective ways of giving precise feedback that addresses specific aspects of their learning experience.
- Teachers need to continually assure students throughout the semester that the ratings will be used for productive changes in teaching/ learning process and that there will be no chance of retribution to the students.

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