

## ARE YOU THE MOST FAVOURITE TEACHER OF YOUR CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE BEST TEACHING LEARNING PRACTICE MODELS FROM AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

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### *Abstract*

*“Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.” - Theodore Roosevelt*

*In this contemporary world, information is at our fingertip. Any average student can keep teachers' lips sealed by asking questions on the discussed topic if internet is available in the classroom. If so, what is the role of a teacher in the classroom? If you are curious now, you can relax, you are a genuine teacher, you love your students and you would like to better it. The only thing left at the moment is whether the students also experience your inner love & care for them.*

*Robert McNamara said "Brains are like hearts. They go where they are appreciated". Aristotle the legendary Greek philosopher said, man is not only human being but also a social being. Man is by nature a social animal, therefore the ability to objectively look at our lives and interpret emotions & events and decisions with a grounded frame of mind is not easy in life. If students are always logical and rational, they may admire teachers on how much you know, how well versed you are as a teacher, but they will remember you for the ages for how much you cared for them and for the greater good, not the selfish good. Therefore, when a teacher begin to win the heart of each students in the class one by one through interaction and appreciation, you are on your pathway to become the most liked teacher of your classroom.*

*This article is prepared by using qualitative research techniques, where the researcher was able to interview 5 professors of James Cook University, Australia, get involved in different lectures, participate & observe group activities and classroom discussions as part of lectures. Reader of this article can understand and determine the effectiveness of various popular teaching methods used in JCU for teaching students at college level and also how should be an ideal classroom by looking through the lens of students. This minor research was done during the visit to James Cook University, Australia as a guest faculty.*

*Keywords: popular teaching methods, passion for teaching, role of teacher*

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## 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). In the last two decades, the importance of teaching learning evaluation has been emphasized in higher education. There has been many researches happened around the world to elicit what is the best suitable teaching practices help students to actively and interestingly learn their subjects. The primary purpose of teaching at any level of education is to bring a fundamental change in the learner (Tebabal & Kahssay, 2011). To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit specific objectives and level exit outcomes. This study was undertaken in the James Cook University, Australia to identify the most popular teaching methods used in the classroom teaching to get the best learning outcomes.

## Methodology

The information was collected from professors of James Cook University through direct interviewing and being a participant observer in group activities during the classroom lectures. 5 senior professors of JCU were the participants of this study. The main objectives of this study are

- *To identify strategies for effective lecturing/teaching.*
- *To identify the critical elements that define a good lecture.*

- *To use information resources to encourage development of critical thinking in students.*

It is important to remember that there are many things a teacher has to think of when the entire one hour class is planned according to the topic discussed. In the light of the fact that learning is a process that involves investigating, formulating, reasoning and using appropriate strategies to solve problems, teachers should realise that it becomes more effective if the students are tasked to perform rather than just asked to remember some information. A typical learning environment with a presentation from the course teacher accompanied by a lecture neither promotes learners' participation nor build the required level of reasoning among students (Ganyaupfu, E. M. 2013). Students build a better understanding of the main concepts more effectively when they are engaged to solve problems during class activities. Following are the most popular teaching learning models used in JCU.

### **Think-Pair-Share**

The Think-Pair-Share, developed by Frank Lyman and colleagues (1981) is a cooperative technique that encourages individual participation in the classroom. It is very simple apparently highly worthy method of engaging students. In the interaction with professors of James Cook University, Australia, on different teaching methods they use in their lectures, most of them agreed that think-pair-share is the popular technique they use in the classroom to inculcate the ideas of the day. When Dr. Peter Jones, senior lecturer of JCU explained this teaching method, I really wanted to physically see, how this technique is used in the classroom. I attended one of the lectures and found what an impact it creates in the teaching learning process.

There are different steps involved on how can a teacher make use of this strategy.

In the first place, teacher has to introduce the topic of the day to the whole class briefly. Introduce the topic in a way to stimulate the curiosity of the students on that topic. Remember what *William Butler Yeats* said, "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire". When the teacher is able to explain what topic is discussed for the day and the particular reason why it is important to understand, naturally the ideas start flowing from their head, instead of filling into the head.

Secondly, teacher tells the students to "think" about what they know or have learned about the topic. The "think" step may require students merely to be quiet for a few moments and ponder their thoughts about the question. They may write some thoughts in response to the introduced question.

Thirdly, teacher tells the students to share their thoughts on the topic to the pair sitting close to them, it may be between students who are on the same table. Teacher has to provide adequate time to share and listen each other.

Fourthly, teacher intimates one of the pairs to present their ideas with the whole class. At this moment teacher has to write all the main ideas in the whiteboard while the pair expand their thoughts on the given topic. Once they finish sharing their discussion, teacher tells the next group to present their ideas and it goes on until the total pairs complete their presentation. Then the teacher has to appreciate everyone for their valuable contributions, involvement and presentation on the topic of the day. Now, the teacher has to explain each points written on the white board in detail and convince why and how that point is important or not important.

Finally, the teacher has to elucidate other points related to the topic of discussion which is not thought of by the students with suitable examples. At the end of the discussion remember to provide the reference book of the discussed topic.

### **Why Is It Important?**

Students need many opportunities to talk in a linguistically rich environment. Researchers have found that students' learning is enhanced when they have many opportunities to elaborate on ideas through talk (Pressley 1992). The think, pair, share strategy increases the kinds of personal communications that are necessary for students to internally process, organize, and retain ideas (Pimm 1987). In sharing their ideas, students take ownership of their learning and negotiate meanings rather than rely solely on the teacher's authority (Cobb et al. 1991).

Additional benefits of using the think, pair, and share strategy include the positive changes in students' self-esteem that occur when they listen to one another and respect others' ideas. Students have the opportunity to learn higher-level thinking skills from their peers, gain the extra time or prompting they may need, and gain confidence when reporting ideas to the whole class. In addition, the "pair" step of the strategy ensures that no student is left out of the discussion. Even a student who is uncomfortable discussing his or her ideas with the whole class still has an audience in this step. Finally, while the strategy may appear to be time-consuming, it makes classroom discussions more productive, as students have already had an opportunity to think about their ideas before plunging into whole-class conversations.

### **Segment the one hour**

Each day, students attend 50- to 60-minute lectures that too from morning till evening. This model of education is so commonplace that we have accepted it as a given. For centuries, it has been the most economical way to “educate” a large number of students. Today, however, we know about the limitations of the class lecture, so why does it remain the most common format? Psychologists have clinically proven that a student’s attention span is active continually up to maximum of 15 minutes, but educational system can’t be changed by the teacher. So, what next?

Interview with the professors of JCU reveals that segmenting the entire teaching hour into small pieces can enhance positive outcomes in teaching learning process. The given one hour in the classroom can be divided into various segments with variety of peer based application of the topic of the day. An amazing teacher can change the world through their students. They can create a passion for a subject that lasts a lifetime. A bad teacher wastes that opportunity (and, in my personal opinion, is an insult to the profession.).

According to the topic for the day in the class, teacher has to develop the story board one after another with the perfect ingredients to catch the minds of each student. The duration of each segment and distinctions can vary according to the area of discussion. However, a one hour class must include;

- Time for developing investigating spirit among students on the topic of discussion
- Time for interaction between each other on the topic of discussion

- Appreciation time on their achievements (achievement can either be from that moment of the classroom or activities of the past)
- Time for elucidating inspirational example or living stories on the given topic
- Time for presenting the latest news or updates on the given topic of the day
- A teacher should be a good humorous person too, to stimulate and refresh between the segments of one hour class
- Time to debate each other on the given topic
- Provide time for students to share the most touched points of the session.

The lectures I attended in JCU were divided into various segments and each segment is fully in alignment with the topic discussed for the day. It was interesting to see in one hour of lecture in JCU, a passion for that topic is created among students in the first 15 minutes, then I found the teacher making a platform for each student to interact on the given topic in the next segment. Then, teacher delivered a planned brilliant joke to students and the whole students laughed and enjoyed even though I did not understand the meaning of it. I found that joke was a refreshment for the students during the class to eagerly continue listening to the topic of the day. In the last segments, teacher added those extra points which were not thought of by the students on the topic with reference book. Segmenting the one hour session has very positive impact in teaching learning process.

### **Be with me teacher**

The ultimate goal of a teacher is to complete the syllabus in a stipulated period of time. Teacher can complete the entire portions and prepare

students for exam not even being with them or having no personal interaction with them. Logically speaking, teachers' duty is fulfilled when the syllabus is covered, but did it create any impact among the students?

Mentoring has a significant impact on the teaching learning process said in the interview with JCU professors. One of the professors asked me, have you come across the feeling that students don't seriously learn anything until the university exam is declared. If the students study only before the university exam why do we engage so many hours? Exactly, it is to meet the total semester hours given by the university and to answer the question in the college performance appraisal on how many hours in a semester a teacher is engaged.

Professor continued asking me; have we ever asked our self why students study only for university exams that too just in the previous days? Answer to this point will pose a question on how would your students rate your ability to engage them in the learning process? Making learning fun and meaningful for students requires developing different strategies to travel with students, understand them, being with them with all the day to day difficulties. Each and every student is unique. Therefore they require different amounts and kinds of attention, advice, information, and encouragement. It is clear that teachers as mentors play a critical role in supporting students to develop into effective and reflective learning experiences. According to Gibb, S. (1999), "mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation can occur, potential skills can be developed, and in which results can be measured in terms of competence gained rather than curricular territory covered" (p. 18). Crucial components of mentoring relationships include personal and professional development (Rosser & Egan, 2005).

Mentoring enhance mental health of the students and it is important to nurture and stimulate their capacity to learn and achieve the optimal psychological functioning and wellbeing. It is directly related to the level reached and competence achieved in psychological and social functioning. A mentally healthy child can use real life connections in the classroom learning. Students spend much time at college, and teachers must be with them to understand their behaviours, attitudes and stressful events related to their personal and family life. Teachers' support and understanding of them have significant influence in the day-to-day studies. Mentoring is the most important factor which can result in to understanding the emotional well-being of each child and then get on with the teaching learning process from the present learning level to further stage.

A dedicated teacher has to inject into their mind few fundamental facts explained by World Health Organisation (Helen Herrman, 1984). Absence of any of these following will have negative impact on students' learning and normal vigour.

- Students need to be healthy and happy to become productive and contended adults
- Students, think, feel and learn differently at different ages
- Students of the same age often behave differently
- General health of a student also affects how he thinks and feels
- Students can grow up happy if they have other people around who are interested in them
- There are many things student cannot do for themselves and they need much adult help
- Knowing how they think and what they can do at different ages helps students in helping them with their problems effectively

- If students feel sad, angry or afraid much of the time, they may have problems for which they need help
- Students do not grow up whole unless they feel at home with themselves and with people around them
- Students burdened with anxiety and self-doubt cannot commit themselves wholeheartedly to learning but exhaust their energy in fighting within themselves
- The upset student strives continually to satisfy his needs and to resolve his conflicts. He demands to be heard and consequently affects the entire classroom
- In every class room, there are probably 3 or 4 students whose behaviour deviates to a significant degree
- In addition, there are many students with less visible problems who need special help and skilled handling

Hence, the role of mentors and the extent in which it affects student teacher level of autonomous motivation, reflective practice, and their ability to make theory-practice linkage, and their perceived competence in classroom teaching processes such as lesson planning, lesson delivery, classroom management and feedback and evaluation is an inevitable part of teaching learning practice.

### **Conclusion**

Professors of James Cook Australia are dedicated their life to the university. It was overwhelmed to see their passion as a teacher to *research* what they propagate, initiate practical *activities* in connection with their area of interest and *publish* their contributions to help others to help themselves. The teacher must act differently from other. The body

language is of utmost importance here. Just act like an actor on a stage and go over your topic with changing facial expression, body movement, eyes focusing and speech annotation and stress. With this quality, the students would concentrate on the teacher and would be attentive because the teacher would be interesting to them. Remember to add humor in your teaching so that the students enjoy teaching. This can be done through funny examples from everyday life to reinforce your teaching.

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