



ENHANCING STUDENTS PERFORMANCE THROUGH QUALITY TEACHING IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

There is widespread agreement that students in the tertiary institutions are displaying decadence in their academic performance these days. This paper revolves around how to enhance their performance through quality teaching. A section of the paper discusses what is meant by quality teaching. Another section discusses the common factors that determine students' performance. While the last section discusses how to enhance students' performance through quality teaching in tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Decadence in students' performance in tertiary institutions has been traced to different factors such as: proper guidance, unavailability of suitable teaching and technical personnel, poor infrastructural facilities and poor funding. No matter the amount of quality teaching passed across to a student without proper guidance, he/she will not be able to record a corresponding result. Proper guidance will help a student not to be lazy and how to plan his/her time schedule appropriately. If a student does not plan his schedule adequately, he/she will have a low academic achievement. Many of our higher institutions of learning today do not have availability of suitable teaching and technical personnel. Inadequacy of necessary infrastructural facilities in higher institutions today is a strong impediment to enhance students' performance. If sufficient funding is made available, many other factors contributing to academic decadence will disappear.

Academic decadence can be checked to a great extent when quality teaching is put in place. As quality teaching can be used as a fighting tool to combat academic decadence, consciousness that quality teaching is seasonal is important. Quality of teaching applied in the 80s cannot be effective today. Change is what is permanent in life. New students call for new teaching methods since student body has considerably expanded and diversified both socially and geographically. New pedagogical strategies must be developed by teaching staff because the world has become a global village thereby our institutions are now filled with students with different levels of intellect from all around the world.

According to Fabrice and Soleine (2015), quality teaching is considered to be stakeholders relative: teachers, students and evaluation agencies. "Good teachers" are assumed to have a lot of experience and empathy for students, they are expressive and organised. "excellent teachers" are assumed to have zeal: to acquire more knowledge, for their field, to teach and pass knowledge across to their students.

Many researches have pointed out that to determine quality of teaching, attention should not be given to teachers' pedagogical skills alone but also to students' attitude to learning in their environments.

Many agencies evaluate quality teaching using the combination of the two factors mentioned above as yard sticks.



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What Is Quality Teaching

Quality teaching may be defined as **instruction** which leads to effective learning and as a result brings about acquisition of the knowledge and skills. Michael (2011) says: the term *quality* is inherently value-laden, so that one person's or group's characterization might legitimately differ from another's, with neither one having more or less veracity. According to Fabrice and Soleine (2008), quality is seen as a multi-layered word with competing definitions which are:

a. Stakeholder relative:

As noticed by Harvey et al. (1992), quality teaching is stakeholder relative. Stakeholders include: students, teaching and non-teaching staff, employers, government or funding and evaluation agencies. All these stakeholders do not share the same definition of what a good teacher is.

b. Value for money:

The amount of skill and knowledge acquired by student is assumed to be relatively tantamount to the amount of money paid to acquire it.

c. Never-ending process of reduction of defects:

Many scholars define quality in higher institutions as a process of quality enhancement. They see quality as a never-ending process of reduction and elimination of defects.

d. Quality culture:

Culture is a very complicated word in English to define. According to European Universities Association (EUA) "Quality culture" project (2002-2006), quality culture is based on two distinct elements which are:

- A set of shared values, beliefs, expectations and commitment towards quality
- A structural/managerial element with well-defined processes that enhance quality and coordinate efforts.

Michael (2011), also came up with his own definition of quality teaching and used the following variables encompass what it really means:

- a. Teacher qualification (e.g., degree, quality of school attended, exam scores, subject-matter credential, certification, and experience).
- b. Teacher exhibited pedagogical standard (such as management skill in the classroom, establishment of positive classroom environment and teaching strategy).
- c. Personal or Psychological quality of a teacher (such as love for student, compassion, honesty, fairness, sense of humour, patience, personal appearance etc.)
- d. Demonstrated ability of a teacher to raise student learning (successful or effective learning)

However, research has pointed out that quality teaching is necessarily student-centred. Its aim is all about acquisition of knowledge and skills by students.

Factors Contributing To Students' Performance

Depending on researchers, different variables are used to determine the factors contributing to students' performance. In this paper, factors affecting students' performance are looked at from two perspectives: internal and external classroom factors. These factors are an embodiment of all other factors contributing to students' performance.

Internal Classroom Factors

1. Learning Facilities

Learning facilities include- classrooms, libraries, technical workshops, and laboratories. Apart from direct effect that inadequate learning facilities have on both students and teaching personnel, it gives poor concentration to students and creates stress and job dissatisfaction for teaching personnel.



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• **Classrooms**

Condition of classroom goes a long way to determine students' performance. Size of classroom to students number, classroom location, classroom ventilation, lighting condition of classroom, classroom temperature, classroom neatness (such as floor condition, ceiling condition and wall condition), tables and chair arrangement and condition of classroom toilet contribute to students level of assimilation and as a result determine students' performance.

• **Libraries**

A library is an organised collection of physical or digital information and similar resources made available to a given set of people for reference purposes or borrowing. According to Michele (2003), a strong library arrangement that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded goes a long way to determine students' achievement regardless of socioeconomic situation of their communities. No matter academically poor a student is, availability of a good library to him can improve his/her academic performance.

• **Technical Workshops and Laboratories**

According to David Kolb, students who physically interact with material being taught give learning a continuous cycle in which the students form abstract concepts and generalizations by testing the implications of the concepts in new situations through concrete experience thereby giving reflections on what was observed (Kolb 1984).

• **Teaching Aids**

This is the use of visual, audio, and hands-on materials to pass knowledge across to students. The essence of the tools is to involve the students, promote interaction, and promote faster learning and comprehension. Being able to see, hear, or get involved goes a long way to increase students' rate of knowledge acquisition.

2. Teaching Personnel

Michael (2011) claimed that teacher quality is the most important school influence on students learning. Characterization of teacher quality is dependent on perspective and interests of individual. Robert Walker conducted a study at several institutions by asking students to describe the qualities of teachers who had helped them to learn and record success (Michael S.2011). The followings are the characteristics given by the students.

- Good preparation for class
- Positive attitudes about teaching and students
- High expectations for all students
- Creativity in teaching the class
- Fair grading of students
- Display of approachable touch to students
- Giving a sense of belonging to all students
- Compassionate about students problem
- Good sense of humour
- Display of some respect to students
- Forgiving in nature
- Good in admitting mistakes

There is none of the characteristics given above that do not have little or large effect on students' performance.

3. Language of Communication

Language through which a student is taught in school contributes to students' performance. When all other conditions remain constant, academic performance of a student who is being taught in a language he understands very well will definitely be better than that of a student who does not have a good understanding of that particular language.



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According to a survey conducted by Nurzali, L. and Khauru'l, N. (2009), it was revealed that lecturers who have effective communication skills in the languages through which they teach are more excellent lecturers than those who have poor communication skills.

4. *Proper Guidance*

Proper guidance can be regarded as both internal and external classroom factor that affect student's performance. Under "teaching personnel" as a factor affecting students' performance described above, "display of approachable touch to students" and "compassionate about students' problem" as characteristics that affect students' performance are guidance that students receive in classroom from the lecturers.

5. *Peer Group*

It is natural to assume that a student's classmates will affect his/her performance in school. Students tend to perform better in classrooms that contain peers of higher intelligence than themselves (Kelvin, T. 2012). This means if a student of low ability is placed in a class of better ability students, the student will improve with time. At the same time, a high ability student performs best if placed in a class of co-high ability students.

External Classroom Factors

Some of the external classroom factors that affect students' performance in school are:

1. *Home Environment*

Every individual is a product of his/her environment. Anybody's nurture serves as his/her input and this determines his/her output. Home environment can be looked at from different perspectives:

- **Peer Group**

The type of peers a student keeps outside the classroom goes a long way to determine his performance in school. A student who keeps peers outside the school environment whose interests are not in academics will definitely affect the students' academic performance.

- **Students' Home Distance to School**

A student who undergoes a long distance from his/her home to school undergoes more stress to and from school and this definitely contributes to his/her academic performance in school. This is because he/she has contributed part of time he/she would have spent on his/her education to go and come from school.

- **Room Condition**

Students room conditions such as: room ventilation, room lighting condition and room temperature contribute to the students' academic performance.

2. *Family Matters*

A student's family matters can be itemised as: family financial situation, parental guidance and parents' education level. A student with adequate financial support will have better academic performance than another with poor or no financial support if other conditions remain constant. A student with good guidance from his/her parents are prone to perform more excellently than those with no or poor guidance. At the same time, parents with education do give some support to their children and so such children perform better in school.

3. *Students' and Lecturers' Health*

Health of any student is a good variable to determine his/her academic performance. An indisposed student will commit less time to his/her academics and so his/her academic performance will be invariably affected. The same thing is applicable to teaching personnel. A lecturer with poor health condition cannot perform in class than what his/her health condition dictates to him/her.

How To Achieve Quality teaching



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Good/quality teaching as instruction that leads to effective learning, which in turn means thorough and lasting acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and values the instructor or the institution has set out to impart.

However, since students' performance are affected by different factors (both within and outside the classroom), the successes a particular student will achieve when he/she undergoes different external classroom conditions but the same set of strategies set out by an instructor/institution to enhance students' performance will vary.

In the sections that follow, several strategies known to be particularly effective are described:

- **Setting up an Effective Counselling Unit**

Counselling is defined as an activity that utilizes inter-personal relationships to study and understand an individual and make changes in his/her life.

Counselling is thus the application of measures to provide intervention to students so that their social and emotional problems do not affect their academic performance.

Social and emotional problems result from external classroom factors.

- **Writing of Instructional Objectives**

Richard M. and Rebecca B. (1999) say by instructional objectives they mean writing out of specific observable actions that students should be able to perform if they have been able to master the content and skills the instructor/lecturer has laid down to teach.

They further explained that the greatest benefit of instructional objectives when well-formulated is that they can help the instructor/lecturer to prepare lecture and assignment schedules and facilitate construction of in-class activities, out-of-class assignment, and tests.

The more students understand what are expected of them, the more they likely able to meet them.

- **Using In-Class Active Learning**

A classroom research study proved that immediately after a lecture, students recall 70% of the information presented in the first ten minutes and only 20% of that from the last ten minutes (McKeachie 1999). This means most students cannot stay focused throughout a lecture period especially when it is lengthy.

Students' attention can be maintained throughout a class session if they are periodically given a task to do like randomly calling on students to answer questions.

- **Using Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning is a way of making students work in team to achieve a goal under the following conditions:

- **Positive interdependence**

This is a situation whereby every member of the team is obliged to contribute his/her quota in order to achieve their common goal. If any member of the team fails to do his/her part the entire group suffers for it.

- **Individual accountability**

This is a situation whereby every team member is held accountable for doing his own part of the team work and at the same time for understanding everything about the final product.

- **Face-to-face promotive interaction**

This is a situation whereby, even though, a group member is made responsible to contribute his/her own part to the success of the entire group, all the group member still interact with other group members to have a mutual feedback and guidance in order to attain their consensus (Richard M. and Rebecca B. 1999).



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- *Appropriate use of team work skill*

This is a situation whereby every team member is encouraged to develop and exercise leadership, communication, conflict management, and decision making traits.

- *Regular self-assessment team functioning*

This is a situation whereby the entire team periodically assesses its set goals or the task allocated to every team member.

• **Assessment and Evaluation of Teaching Quality**

This explains measures taken to confirm an accurate picture of students' content knowledge and skills. This is achievable by giving students tests, asking them to write project reports, asking them to learn logs and journals, asking them to attend conferences, interviewing them, to mention a few.

• **Giving Incentives for Performance**

A research made by Locke and Braver in trying to see the effect of incentive on the employee psychology by making the employee work on some task whereby punishment and reward are involved, and by using Behavioural Inhibition/Activation System (BIS/BAS) to check their heart rates while doing it. Their research concluded that, BAS assesses individual sensitivity to reward and was significantly positively correlated with maximum heart acceleration in response to high cash rewards and suggests that incentive can produce generalized performance benefit (Bara E.2012).

This means if incentives are given to students, no matter their internal and external classrooms conditions, they can yield better result.

Conclusion

It is concluded that if an institution adopts several of the teaching quality methods as mentioned, the potential for improving the overall teaching quality of an institution becomes greater

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