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## **An assessment of college teaching: case study**

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### **Abstract**

This research evaluated six professors' teaching practice to assess strengths and weaknesses, and suggested prescriptions for their teaching. Reflecting that the prevalent teaching method utilized by professors is direct instruction, a rubric consisting of 17 teaching behaviors for effective direct instruction was developed and used as a checklist. As a result, successfully performed behaviors were clear explanation of contents, utilizing instructional media for interest and comprehension, well organized contents in power point, and positive atmosphere. In conclusion, direct instruction oriented teaching and inefficient teaching behaviors of college professors call attention to ill-prepared professors in view of teaching.

**Key Words:** College, Teaching behavior, Direct-instruction.

# Una evaluación de la enseñanza universitaria: estudio de caso

## Resumen

Esta investigación evaluó la práctica docente de seis profesores para evaluar las fortalezas y debilidades, y sugirió prescripciones para su enseñanza. Reflejando que el método de enseñanza prevaleciente utilizado por los profesores es la instrucción directa, se desarrolló una rúbrica que consta de 17 conductas de enseñanza para una instrucción directa efectiva y se usó como una lista de verificación. Como resultado, los comportamientos realizados con éxito fueron una explicación clara de los contenidos, utilizando medios de instrucción para el interés y la comprensión, contenidos bien organizados en Power Point y una atmósfera positiva. En conclusión, la enseñanza orientada a la instrucción directa y los comportamientos de enseñanza ineficientes de los profesores universitarios llaman la atención a los profesores mal preparados en relación con la enseñanza.

**Palabras clave:** universidad, comportamiento de enseñanza, instrucción directa.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Attempts to improve the quality of college teaching have been increasing lately. For instance, center for teaching and learning in colleges provide various programs such as seminars, workshops, consulting, grant, evaluation, and resources (Kil, 2001). Notwithstanding, the pressure of research makes professors spend more time on research rather than improving their teaching. Moreover, they overestimate their own teaching performance, frequently considering it better than the students' evaluation. With such reasons,

whether the quality of professors' teaching is improving is not clear. Even though researches that examine the effects of staff development programs have been increasing, research methods used are still limited to survey, correlational research, and content analysis (Centra, 1993). Well-designed experiment is hard to find.

Studies concerning the state of college teaching can be summarized as follows. First, the most prevalent teaching method in college classrooms is a direct instruction (Blackburn et al, 1980). A study showed that the ratio of direct instruction observed from 269 classrooms in 47 colleges was over 90% (Blackburn et al, 1980). Second, the most prevalent method adopted for innovation was evaluation of teaching. Colleges usually observe their faculties' teaching and use the results in faculty evaluation. Feedback from students is often assumed to enhance the quality of teaching. However, researches point out that sole evaluation does not improve teaching (Levinsonrose & Menges, 1981). Third, while support for teaching ranges from workshops, consulting, evaluation, seminars, and grant for educational research to leave of absence, the result of such effort is not clear. In recent years, teaching portfolio appeared as a way of improving teaching (Cho, 2009; Seldin, 2004). Preparing portfolios for a semester helps teachers reflect the process of classroom teaching. Reflection is considered to be the most salient characteristic of professionals (Schon, 1987; Flake, 2017).

Within such limitations, this research suggests four conditions of staff development: new knowledge, value, how to change, and

motivation. First, teachers have to learn something about their teaching performance (new knowledge). Second, they have to value the information (value). Third, professors must understand how to make changes needed (how to change). Finally, teachers have to be motivated to make changes (motivation). These recommendations suggest that changing college teaching is more difficult than expected. Consulting is a method to satisfy the four conditions. Monitoring each person from diagnosis to prescription, implementation, and evaluation is expected to satisfy the four conditions leading to change successfully. The conditions explain why existing programs of the center for teaching and learning were not successful. Mostly, the programs fail to provide new knowledge about the current state of teaching. So, this study attempted to find some new knowledge about the professors' state of teaching. While previous researches are based on a survey and content analysis in large part, this research adopted observation and content analysis because self-evaluation of teaching was not very accurate. Another difference is that this study used effective teaching behaviors for direct instruction as criteria of classroom teaching. It was because the prevalent teaching method found in college classroom was direct instruction. Over 80 percent of the professors used lecture as a main teaching method (Kil, 2001). This study examined the effectiveness of teaching performance, according to direct instruction principles. The data is expected to sort out the strengths and weaknesses of college teaching behaviors, and leads to prescriptions for professors' staff development (Esiadonkoh et al., 2015).

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This research evaluated the current state of teaching effectiveness by comparing teaching behaviors, according to the principles of effective direct instruction. For this, six college professors were recruited from those who asked for consultation of their teaching. Each subject had their classroom teaching videotaped for an hour. Six hours of teaching were analyzed by two evaluators. For the assessment, a rubric consisting of 17 teaching behaviors was devised. The 17 criteria were teaching behaviors that research and textbooks on direct instruction suggested for effective direct instruction (Joyce et al., 2004; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). They are found in Table 1.

To check the hypothesis that teaching method adopted by the subjects is direct instruction, two assessors have reviewed videotapes to see if teaching activities include characteristics of direct instruction, which consists of a content presentation, example, and practice. Since all professors adopted direct instruction, assessment according to the rubric was done. Each subject's teaching was judged as either good or poor in each criterion and counted for the sum. Classification reliability, which is determined by the rate of agreement between two evaluators, reached .8 after an hour of practice. Since the total number of subjects is small, only frequency was reported and tendency was monitored (Halder & Chandra, 2012).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

Main findings were as follows. First, all professors used direct instruction. This was inferred from the fact that professors' teaching behaviors fell in the criteria of direct instruction as shown in Table 1. This result supports the previous research that over 80% of the teaching methods used by the professors is direct instruction.

Table 1. Criteria of effective direct instruction and results

Lesson stage	Criteria of effective direct instruction	Performance(Frequency)	
		Good	Poor
Induction	Check the prerequisite knowledge	0	6
	Inform objectives	1	5
	Motivate students	1	5
	Explain procedures	1	5
Development	Clear explanation of content	5	1
	Giving examples and non-examples	3	3
	Check understanding	1	5
	Give feedback	1	5
	Providing opportunities to practice	1	5
	Stimulate students' participation	1	5
	Using instructional media for understanding	5	1
	Organized power point	4	2
	Positive atmosphere	4	2
	Reflect individual differences	0	6
	Closure	Summarizing lesson in detail	2
Assessment		0	6
Giving homework		0	6

Second, efficient teaching behaviors were found only in four criteria. Teaching behaviors in 14 criteria were performed poorly. Both

good and poor performances were observed in one criterion. Highlighted numbers call for attention because they mean college teachers performed either well or poorly on the categories. That is, they point out strong points or weak points. Four behaviors performed successfully were a clear explanation of contents, using instructional media for interest and comprehension, well-organized content, and positive classroom atmosphere. This result is similar to the previous research result that college teachers' teaching behaviors are less than satisfactory in more than half of the classes. It was only worse than that. However, the finding that subjects in this study organized contents well and presented clearly using instructional media is contrary to the result by (Hong, 2010; Michael., Maithya., & Cheloti, 2016). The reason is subject to further research.

Fourteen teaching behaviors performed unsatisfactory were checking prerequisite knowledge, informing instructional objectives, motivating activities, instructional procedures, comprehension checking, giving feedback, opportunity to practice, stimulating participation, reflecting individual differences, summarizing the lesson, evaluation, and providing homework for practice. Providing examples was well performed by half of the professors and not by other half. While previous research found problems in encouraging students' study, improvement of teaching styles, obtaining special types of teaching methods, etc. in rather vague terms, this research was able to describe the problems more clearly in detail in terms of effective teaching behaviors for the direct instruction. The result suggests that the quality of college teaching is not as good as secondary teachers'



because college teaching also shows the pattern of lecture-oriented teaching focused on knowledge and the college professors are usually not trained in teaching skills. It implies the needs of further staff development (Jayakumar, 2016).

### 3.2. Prescriptions for staff development

According to this research results, staff development programs designed to improve weak points are needed. Prescriptive or alternative teaching behaviors for effective direct instruction can be suggested in 14 teaching behaviors as exemplified in table 2. These prescriptions are example activities suggested from instructional theories and research on effective learning (Joyce et al., 2004; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006; Lee, 2001; Dong & Lin, 2017).

Table 2. Weak points and prescriptions

Weak points	Prescriptions(examples)
Checking prerequisite knowledge	-Quiz, asking questions
Informing objectives	-Showing goal behaviors -Write objectives on power point
Motivating students	-Relate objectives to learners' interest -Help students succeed in learning by various methods -Expect high and encourage
Explain the procedures	-Write the procedure on board or explain it
Checking understanding	-Give quiz or ask examples/non examples -Take time explaining -Let students explain or show how to perform -Give students time to organize -Summarize time to time

Giving feedback	-Provide the criteria or standard -Tell if the answer or behavior is reached the standard -Inform how the behavior can be changed
Provide opportunities to practice	-Give appropriate level of problems and let the learners solve them until they succeed while giving feedback
Promote students' participation	-Utilize the open question, pair share -Use activities
Consider individual differences	-Provide various problems and tasks that the learners can choose -Allow self-paced learning, self-led learning -Utilize various learning styles
Summarize the lesson in detail	-Summarize in detail so that it reviews key points -Use mnemonics
Evaluation	-Test if the learners reached objectives
Homework	-Provide review questions or problems so that it becomes practice

Suggestions are not limited to teaching behaviors. Since the research on staff development requires four conditions (new knowledge, value, how to change, and motivation) to be met, there has to be more efforts such as follows. First, there has to be continuing efforts to assess current teaching performances of college teachers. Since teaching methods used by the professors may vary, appropriate rubric for each teaching method is to be developed and used for diagnosis. Prescriptive teaching behaviors for each teaching method are to be devised so that it can be utilized for training. This kind of research will produce new knowledge on professors' teaching performances. Second, there are to be quantitative and qualitative researches to seek if the professors value the new knowledge on their teaching performances, if they know how to change their behaviors, and if they are motivated to change. Traditionally, center for teaching and learning focused on knowledge diffusion rather than individual

based consulting. They neglected three conditions (value, how to chance, and motivation). It is necessary to devise staff development programs incorporating four conditions to improve teaching behaviors. Since motivating professors to change may require changing the conditions of research and teaching, it may be more complicated than just providing educational programs. Extending research areas to other conditions of staff development is suggested (Kweka & Ndibalema, 2018).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Direct instruction-oriented teaching and poor teaching performances found in this research raise two questions related to further research. First, there must be more research regarding the current teaching performances of college professors. While a few of the researches pointed out the same or similar situation about lecture oriented, knowledge diffusion oriented, and inefficient teaching methods, not many research is following. Further research inquiring into the situation that fosters the knowledge-oriented teaching will uncover the structural, situational condition of poor college teaching. Second, considering the inefficient teaching behaviors of college professors, it is possible that college students' learning may have been influenced negatively. There may have been a high rate of students' failure due to inefficient direct instruction. So, it is also necessary to study how college students are learning from such instructional situations. Third, direct instruction oriented teaching means that

teaching method utilized normally in a college environment is limited. While colleges and universities are expected to teach a high level of thinking skills, teaching method does not reflect such expectation. Such phenomenon also demands reflection on the goal of college teaching and the matter of teaching method. Fourth, one reason that direct instruction is prevalent may be because colleges and universities also face the problem of content overload. This situation requires the change of framework for the college teaching such as competency-based education. The present may be the time to contemplate such alternatives (Semenov et al,2018).

A situation is a reflection of certain conditions. To understand the situation, it is necessary to look for preceding conditions. In that sense, direct instruction oriented teaching and inefficient teaching behaviors of college professors call attention to ill-prepared professors in view of teaching. Although this research had a small number of subjects, the results brought several issues to research further.

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