MOTIVATING FACTORS FOR THE QUALITY OF TEACHING: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT: *Demand for assurance of education quality is escalating within the present competitive environment amidst universities. Multiple strategies and standards of teaching quality have been applied in many universities and higher education institutions. It is common to set the teaching quality from the stance of university students as an indispensable part. As such, this qualitative study looked into the significance of the 'teacher quality' concept based on the perspectives given by the students. Data for this study were collected from semi-structured interview to analyse the perceptions of students towards lecturers' teaching quality at university. The interviews were conducted with 60 third year students at three universities in Kerman, Iran in the 2017-2018 academic year. The results verified the effect of good quality of teaching to enhance satisfaction amongst students, which is deemed to result in good academic performance. Based on the study outcomes, several suggestions are recommended for courses and trainings to improve the quality of teaching amongst university lecturers, apart from assisting the lecturers to improve their relationship with the students.*

Keywords: Academic Performance; Education; Learning; Students' Satisfaction; Quality of Teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of education can be determined by the quality of teaching [1]. Quality of teaching is set to create an ambience of positive learning with suitable instructional objectives and examinations, efficient employment of curricula, as well as the varying instructional features to ensure that the students acquire knowledge at a higher level [2]. Teaching quality is multi-faceted. It emphasises a number of factors, such as expert knowledge, the curriculum, teacher education, and teaching skills. Teaching quality generates successful graduates with qualifications and skills that are valued by the students and support them in their post-study aspirations. Universities across the world address teaching as one of the main tasks of their educational vision. Although the task of teaching is a key determinant of students' academic performance, the quality of teaching seems rather vague. Teachers and lecturers have a fundamental function to assure the delivery of quality education. In the process of disseminating knowledge, teachers apply multiple teaching techniques, for instance, hands-on activities, collaborative activities, and lectures [3]. Thus, teachers have the imminent functions to disperse knowledge and educate students by adhering to the curricula. According to Williams [4], commitment, time, and effort are the integral demands in teaching to prepare the students in joining the job market and be part of the socio-economic progress. Hence, teachers need to display exceptional qualities in accommodating not only academic, but also emotional and social need of the students. Their passion is reflected in their efficacy, hence the need for teachers to commit in teacher professional development events, seminars, and courses. The teaching career is composed of excitement, challenges, personal reward, and the opportunity to support each other towards achieving objectives and mission [5]. Since one of the purposes of education is the acquisition of knowledge and skills, students' performance after graduation reflects their performance in the university. Elliott and Shin [6] asserted that "focusing on student satisfaction does not only enable universities to re-engineer their organisations to adapt to student needs, but also allows them to develop a system for continuous monitoring of how effectively they meet student needs"

(p.197). Therefore, the aspect of satisfaction felt by the students is significant to generate a culture that upholds continuous quality enhancement. With that, this present study looked into students' satisfaction towards the teaching quality at university. The focus is placed on enhancing teaching quality by identifying the factors that trigger improved teaching and learning processes based on the students' perspectives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching refers to the processes of making decisions and carrying out activities towards improving learning that should take place before, during, and after teaching [7]. Similarly, Ander and Burns [8] asserted that the teaching activity involves interpersonal interaction that projects language for communication purpose, aside from aiding the students to change their trait or simply put, learn. Since the students are the clients within the university setting, other companies alike, the university is held responsible in satisfying the students. Although satisfaction is linked with high value for both stakeholders and students, not all higher learning institutions are bothered about measuring this imminent aspect. Quality within the education system has begun receiving much attention since past few years. The stakeholders; society and parents, are attentive towards education system quality, which may be a result of the perceived poor quality products produced from the institutions on annual basis [1]. Since performance by students is highly affected by the quality of teaching [9], it is significant to attain high-level quality of teaching so as to meet learning goals and attain higher learning performance [10]. This is in line with the amount of money spent for the education domain. The aspect of quality is represented in a number of ways, commonly intuitively [11]. Education quality, as defined by [12], reflects "the principal measure of the effectiveness of education and the most vulnerable attribute that suffers when anything goes wrong with the system". Based on a report entitled "Priorities and Strategies for Education" (1995), upon dealing with several issues related to education policy, the World Bank observed the following: "it is indeed difficult to measure and to define

education quality, wherein student outcomes must be embedded for an apt definition. Most educators would also integrate educational experiences in the definition towards generating the sought learning setting", (p. 46) [13]. In fact, the aspect of quality is not a fixed notion, since it is linked with standards in relation to place, time, circumstance, and specific learners. Education goals and relevance of subjects are some vital aspects in describing quality. Education is claimed to of quality when it offers the students appropriate tools to solve issues that affect humans [14]. Hence, quality refers to a notion with varied meanings for differing scenarios, simultaneously achieving education objective via effective learning and teaching [2]. Tsinidous, Gerogiannis, and Fitsilis [15] highlighted the significance of feedback pertaining to quality from the stance of students against that of the campus. Perceptions from students are essential in enhancing education quality, which leads to accurate decisions. Simply put, teaching is beyond mere teaching-and-learning, as it is composed of intricate concepts and activities. The task of teaching embeds interpersonal interactions amongst the students, the teacher, and the language, which are bound to shift the students' attitudes so as to meet learning objectives and education goals [16]. Evaluating and exploring the notion of teaching involve describing teaching quality as the gap between practical teaching activities and teaching plan [17].

3. METHOD

This study adopted the qualitative research approach. Sixty students from the English Language Department across three non-profit institutes took part in this research. The semi-structure interview approach was carried out to gather data from the respondents. The interview sessions were conducted towards the end of semester five in year 2017, when the students already had some initial experience of giving feedback in terms of the quality of teachers' teaching approach with a lot of experiences in education-related activities. The students who participated in this research were diverse in terms of age, gender, and background. The mean value for age amongst the respondents was 22.22±1.80. Besides, 37.5% (n=150) of them were males, while 62.5% (n=250) were females. The study context was selected for convenience. Three non-profitable institutes were located in Kerman city, where the researcher was residing at the time of the study, thus the access to the students. Hence, convenience sampling was carried out to select the respondents, which refers to a non-random sampling technique, wherein the target population can be accessed easily [18]. In determining the students' satisfaction towards teaching quality and in obtaining more information regarding teaching activities, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted. The interview sessions took 1.5 hours within two weeks based on the students' convenient hours. During the interview, the students were asked about their relationship with their teachers and their perception pertaining to quality of teaching without any reference to particular subject or person. In this study, responses given by the respondents were recorded and transcribed. Thematic coding was applied to interpret the interview outcomes in classifying the data and to minimise the amount of responses gathered. Answers to open-response questions had been documented in a separate manner. Next,

categories or themes were developed for every emerging concept. Lastly, after reviewing the data for several times, more themes were generated deriving from the typical themes.

4. RESULTS

A number of definitions are available in describing students' satisfaction [19, 20]. Vividly, many factors have been determined to influence students' satisfaction [21]. For instance, Choudhury [22] listed four aspects related to satisfaction, which are: convenience, facilities, attitude, and teaching. The study outcomes associated perceptions of students regarding teaching quality and the degree of their satisfaction towards teaching by lecturers, as well as factors that the students considered as essential in enhancing their academic performance. After the interviews, the criteria in students' satisfaction for this study were: a) teaching content, b) teaching method, c) teaching organisation, and d) teaching attitude. Table 1 presents students' perceptions regarding exceptional teaching quality.

Table1: Students' perception regarding exceptional teaching quality

a) Teaching content:
1. Conduct good curriculum planning
2. Select suitable instructional materials

b) Teaching method:
1. Use multimedia effectively
2. Use diverse assessments
3. Use new and update textbooks
4. Promote critical thinking
5. Promote class discussion
6. Provide constructive feedback
7. Pay attention to sum up, regulation

c) Teaching organisation
1. Regulate the class atmosphere well
2. Use class time effectively
3. Establish good relationship between teacher and students
5. Assign homework appropriately

d) Teaching attitude
1. Treat students friendly
2. Respect students
3. Care for students
4. Confident and knowledgeable in the subjects
5. Encourage students in the process of learning
6. Listen to students patiently

4.1 Teaching Content

In regard to teaching content, the students mentioned that their lecturers did execute exceptional curriculum planning and selected appropriate instructional aids. Teacher performance denotes teachers' ability to function effectively in performing their teaching tasks with high skills and effort with regard to their subject matter using sound pedagogical contents, which ascertains students' understanding and effective learning. In achieving these in teaching performance, teachers should master their subject contents, reckon the features of good teaching, possess knowledge of various and appropriate pedagogies and learning styles of students, as well as perceive their own strengths and

weaknesses in teaching so as to perform their teaching responsibilities in an effective manner. The students claimed that they valued curriculum based on their world view to widen their horizon. They appreciated lecturers who conducted exceptional teaching. The students commented that a curriculum that is flexible weighs in experiences of the students. Moreover, good curriculum allows students to challenge practice. The students also commented on up-to-date evidence and materials. The curriculum refers to a tool used by teachers in moulding their students in accordance to education goals within formal education scenario. The objective of curriculum must embed prior learning, apart from ensuring that the students do integrate and use the learnt skills, knowledge, and attitude in displaying standard attainment. A curriculum is bound to offer adequate scope that cultivates interest, skills, appreciation, and attitude. Meeting education goals is important for good curriculum. A curriculum that is not in line with education goals is deemed to produce unfit generation in flourishing the country. Besides, students value well-organised materials as such teaching aids assist them to comprehend a subject matter with well-elaborated instructions and crystal clear evaluation criteria. Teaching materials refer to tools that empower learning process, apart from promoting concrete learning. This study exhibited that such educational tools do not only exert positive impacts, but also make teaching and learning processes more effective. A teacher should not take teaching materials lightly as they facilitate learning process and offer permanence of those learnt information [23]. Use of instructional materials greatly helps a teacher to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Such visual aids are vital to motivate and arouse interest amongst students. Besides, they must be related to the topic or lesson introduced. Teachers use instructional materials to ease the burden of teaching and so that the students can comprehend the topic area better. Instructional aid is the locus in teaching and learning the English language as it enhances the efficacy of a teacher's teaching and the effectiveness in delivery of lesson [24]. Teaching materials are important catalysts of effective instructions and they are the key factor in generating effective teaching and learning environment. Esu, Enukoha, and Umoren [25] verified that learning of abstract concepts can be facilitated by using teaching aid, especially in concretising conceptions and stimulating imagination. Apart from that, teaching aid promotes active participation in learning, since it minimises teacher-centred activities. Similarly, Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff [26] asserted that teaching aid helps the effectiveness of the teaching process, aside from encouraging active participation in the classroom, thus enhancing students' performance. Olumorin, Yusuf, Ajidagba, and Jekayinfa [27] reported that teaching aid assists teachers to carry out the teaching process in a convenient manner, while the students learn without much stress. They added that such materials have direct impact upon human senses. Similarly, Kochhar [28] highlighted the importance of instructional materials, since appropriate and relevant teaching aid arouses interest amongst students towards the lesson and promotes interaction in classroom. In sum, usage of instructional materials in classrooms can assist teachers in elaborating new concepts so as to help students comprehend better of the lesson taught.

Instructional materials appear to be significant as they aid both learners and teachers in preventing overemphasis of reciting and rote learning, which may easily take over the lesson taught in classroom [29]. Nevertheless, such materials are not ends, instead being means to accomplishment [30].

4.2 Teaching Methods

The students seemed to appreciate lecturers who displayed flexibility in teaching, apart from being sympathetic towards their personal attainment for success. According to the students, lecturers should be approachable, besides encouraging and inspiring students by providing oral and written feedback. They should be positive and be constructive in classrooms. The students also depicted that the use of a variety of approaches by their instructors in giving reminders and guidance in the form of audio, email/item updates, video, and texts appeared to be substantially helpful. Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy, and Salvi [31] revealed that one's quality of teaching differs depending on the professional qualification, as those without pedagogy background lacked teaching approaches and failed to prioritise teaching goals. Teaching methods do play a fundamental role in determining impressive teaching and learning processes. At conducting lesson, content delivery must be carried out with suitable and effective approaches so as to ease content comprehension amongst students [32, 33, 34]. Students expressed satisfaction in attending synchronous discussion and group activities, which enabled them to familiarise with their classmates. The preference students express in classroom activities engagement (e.g. group discussion) aids them to engage in an authentic manner in asynchronous forums or discussions by making personal connection with the others. In fact, several students claimed that they were encouraged to think deeper through certain activities, such as peer review and group discussions. Besides, they appear to reckon the culpability of writing tasks in forums and discussions as such activities are recorded permanently in class. The ways in which communications are embedded into the study approaches promoted the students to develop a sense of community. In realising this, the students must engage with the rest in an authentic manner. Nath and Anderson [35] found substantially satisfaction amongst students exposed to a discussion method than those who did not. Besides, the students had wanted to inform their instructors that they were indeed 'right on track' with the course objectives. The interviewees appreciated the involvement and feedback offered by their instructors; highlighting that responses from instructors are vital although they did not depend solely in the feedback. The students also felt comfortable posing questions about content, particularly via forums. Feedback from classmates was also appreciated. Novel teaching ideas and integration of new methods, instead of depending on textbooks, enhance learning amongst students by developing interest towards the subject, creativity from within, and curiosity to learn. This is especially when making the students comprehend what is learnt in the classroom is applied in the real world. External and internal study activities escalate satisfaction due to the increasing exposure amidst students. Motivation is built upon acquiring new knowledge for they become more knowledgeable and practical about the world ways. Classroom activities

enlighten students with multiple ideas and issues, where they are expected to perform based on the issues. Computer-assisted teaching is also trending in this digital age. Interest is sparked amongst students through use of multimedia during class via colourful and interactive videos, simulations, slide shows, and animations.

4.3 Teaching organisation

The students appreciated creativity, instead of being a tool for their teachers. Hence, more classrooms activities are sought. One respondent opined that student-lecturer communication was not satisfactory, but it can be improved by providing good environment in the class. Students asserted that learning is facilitated in a relaxing environment. Student-teacher relationship seems to be essential in determining teaching and learning quality because exceptional relationship generates empathetic teaching and better learning, while poor relationship leads to ineffective teaching and learning as students tend to psychologically reject the instructor and his teaching. Positive interaction is developed when both students and teachers indulge in dual-way communication, including via question-and answer session [36]. Time management, which is essential for one's success, refers to maximised time usage meant for achievement and productivity, by planning and managing work schedules in advance so as to meet teaching and organisation goals. Although it does not necessarily enhance one's performance, time management training aids teachers to improve time management skills [37]. Advanced planning, punctuality, effective procedures, practical time schedule, and meaningful assessment are required for optimum content delivery. Studies have reported the significant correlation between academic performance achieved by students and time management by teachers. Upon resulting in moderate academic performance and time management, teachers are suggested to enhance their time management skills by consciously controlling time [38]. Besides, teachers often grumble about insufficient time to perform activities [39]. Numerous insufficient resources, time management being one, negatively affected academic performance exerted by students [40].

4.4 Teaching attitude

The students claimed that the emotional effect by their teachers upon them did influence their learning attitude. Emotional impact is viewed as one that is positive because the teachers could successfully promote learning with affective and motivational aspects. Similarly, Basaran [41] asserted that academic performance amongst students can be enhanced with positive perception towards the teacher, where the teacher becomes the role model. The students added that they preferred lecturers who were helpful, established authentic interactions, easy and fun to be with, as well as good facilitator of forums and debates. the following are the traits of an ideal teacher: kind, funny, creative, passionate, full with smiles, communicative, respectful, empathetic, avoids monotony, cares about students, and open to novel ideas. Upon reckoning one's impact upon students, the teacher becomes responsible for his abilities and knowledge, apart from developing positive relationships with the students and relaying to them efficiently [42]. Thus, the impact of teacher's personality development cannot be underestimated

in dictating students' academic performance. Teacher-students interaction can affect one's attitude, creativity, as well as communicative and research abilities [43]. Motivation and success amongst students can be enhanced with good interaction and positive traits, such as understanding their thoughts, respecting them, asking questions, displaying interest, and voicing appreciation. In equipping students with development information, behaviour, and experience; the teachers should practice what they preach. Success and positive ego are dictated by positive attitudes, and vice versa [44]. A good teacher reckons good communication because it is vital for teachers to understand the emotions of students (fear, worry, interest), to be supportive, value and appreciate students, compliments them, and ascertain that the teacher decides for their own benefits (ibid).

5. CONCLUSION

This empirical study displayed how the students valued their teachers and how the education experience was dictated by teaching quality. The students-lecturers correlation is essential in determining teaching quality, as well as students' academic performance and satisfaction. Students need qualified lecturers who are caring, helpful, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable, friendly, and efficient in executing their tasks. Hence, feedback and opinions given by students need to be weighed in towards enhancing the quality of both teaching and learning in each level of course. Therefore, much effort is demanded to improve teaching and learning quality amidst universities. Enhancing the education process and satisfaction amongst students can be attained by addressing drawbacks in teachers. Teaching has to be encouraged and retained by the campus by making full use of its resources, such as establishing teaching and pedagogic researches. It is also important to reward innovative and effective lecturers to maintain excellence [45]. A higher learning institution should add value to their performing lecturers so as to meet the needs of stakeholders – the government, the university, and the students [46]. The study outcomes should be considered as a possibility of building a useful knowledge base for teaching at the tertiary level, so as to serve as a tool to the development of university academics, because teachers and novice teachers may benefit, and the study can function as a platform for more extensive research agendas in the area of educational effectiveness at the higher education. It is vital to determine students' satisfaction as it is a typical measure of performances exerted by the university and its lecturers; and to some degree, a measure of student success [47]. Aitken [48] discovered that academic performance is an essential factor that determines satisfaction, while Pike (1991) concluded that satisfaction exerts greater influence on grades than academic performance. Bandura [49] and Schunk & Swartz [50] claimed that students use self-regulatory attributes to control their personal learning processes, wherein self-efficacy affects selection, efforts, and volition. Successful students possess the ability to motivate themselves in accomplishing a task, while those less successful face difficulties in developing self-motivational skills [51].

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