



How Your Teachers Teach? Students Perceived Characteristics of Effective Teaching Strategies

Ariel E. San Jose^{1*}, Siverlyn M. Camposano², Carlo A. Magonlig³,
Judy Ann C. Lelis⁴ and Pearl Ma. Janssen Bodiongan⁵

¹*Institute of Education and Graduate Studies, Davao del Sur State College, Davao del Sur, Philippines.*

²*Department of Arts and Sciences, Davao del Sur State College, Davao del Sur, Philippines.*

³*Department of Governance, Accounting and Communication, Davao del Sur State College, Davao del Sur, Philippines.*

⁴*Department of English, Davao del Sur State College, Davao del Sur, Philippines.*

⁵*Department of Mathematics, Davao del Sur State College, Davao del Sur, Philippines.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author AESJ designed the study, performed the data analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors SMC and CAM facilitated the gathering of information, provided the literatures and managed the editing of the study. Authors JACL and PMJB managed the protocol and transcribed the information gathered of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: The aim of this study was to determine the relevant experiences of the students on teaching strategies used by their teachers in the classrooms; what made these teaching effective; and what suggestions the students can offer to enhance the teaching strategies.

Study Design: Qualitative-phenomenology.

Place and Duration of Study: Institute of College Education and Graduate Studies (IEGS), Southern Philippines Agri-Business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology, School year 2018-2019.

Methodology: Included 200 college freshmen taking BSEd Secondary Education and were the first batch graduates of the K-12 program. They were grouped into 40 focus groups. Information were obtained through interview.

Results: Data analysis formulated five themes. Prevalent used strategies discussed the commonly used strategies; improvements gained from strategies looked into the benefits the students obtained; evaluation of ineffective strategies dealt with the irrelevant strategies the teachers used; relevant experiences showed the meaningful encounters of the students to the strategies and suggestions centered on the comments students had offered to improve the use of strategies.

Conclusion: Strategies are relevant in delivering the lessons. However, strategies should be well-thought before they are used. Thus, teachers need to identify who the learners are. Moreover, teachers should also consider the topic. Various topics require different strategies. Also, teacher needs to discuss thoroughly the marking criteria used. Mark criteria guide students to set their targets and to avoid confusion. Likewise, teacher should always prepare and set plans before coming to class. Further, nearing retiring teachers should not solely rely on their experiences because curriculum changes. Lastly, one of the best ways to know what strategies fit the students is consulting the students themselves. Teachers will not get wrong if they know better their students.

Keywords: Teachers; teach; students' perception; effective teaching strategies; Southern Philippines agri-business and marine and aquatic school of technology; Digos City.

1. INTRODUCTION

Something can be better appreciated if examined from two sides; hence, in teaching, clients' perspectives need to be considered for a well-structured definition of 'effective teaching'. However, it is observed that there are misconceptions on the definition of 'effective teaching' among students and teachers because of their pre-conceived ideas, opinions, and beliefs. Felder [1] identifies 10 routinely mistake strategies which teachers used and claimed to be effective in their classrooms. On the other hand, [2] previously identifies teachers' classroom mistakes such as: failing to establish the authority and compensating it through being harsh toward students; being authoritarian and disciplined; and seeing themselves as the only source of knowledge. For [3], one of the unacceptable notions of effective teaching in higher education is the claim that a teacher is effective when he/she demands more than what students can actually do. He exclaimed that effective teaching is 'nothing to do with making things hard.'

On the other hand, the belief that students' praising is effective because it boosts students' morale has no empirical evidence [4,5] opine that there is no master key that could define effective teaching. Some timid students may find lecture as an effective teaching while frustrate some active and enthusiastic learners.

Brought by differing views on effective teaching, it becomes an interesting ground to explore how

the first batch of K-12 freshmen college education students of Southern Philippines Agri-Business and Marine and Aquatic School of Technology characterize effective teaching. Although there were already several studies conducted related to effective teaching strategies, those were quantitatively done. This study was conducted through qualitative-phenomenological method, which inquired the experiences, opinions, views, and thoughts of the students. Through this research, students' perspectives on effective teaching strategies were revealed; thus, became bases for teachers on how they could enhance and improve their ways of delivering their lessons.

1.1 Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored on The Four Aces of Effective Teaching" proposed by Bulger et al. [6]. The Four Aces represent a summary of the thinking about the "process" (ways of teaching) as it significantly affects the "product" (student learning). The first ace concerns with the outcomes-based instruction orientation which enable students to focus their attention on clear learning objectives and inform them on the direction they are going and how they will arrive there. Moreover, it also allows teachers to evaluate student learning as a measure of their own instructional effectiveness. The second ace involves the clarity of instruction. An effective teacher typically provides students with highly explicit directions and explanations concerning the course organization and content and tells,

shows, and makes the message available from alternate perspectives to alternate senses. The third ace is engagement. It suggests that students learn by doing. An effective teacher must create a dynamic, educational environment that affords students the opportunity to practice every concept that they are learning. More effective teachers utilize instructional strategies that engage students repeatedly throughout the entire lesson. Finally, the fourth ace is enthusiasm. This principle reflects teachers' professional competence and confidence. Teachers can start to establish a conducive learning environment by showing their passion for the subject matter, using student names, reinforcing student participation during class, and being active in moving among the students.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS/ EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS/ METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

Due to the nature of this study, the researchers used the qualitative-phenomenological. [7] mentions that qualitative method is used if investigators wanted to 'explore and discover personal insights and understanding' and [8] point out that qualitative method looks into the individual's lived experiences. On the other hand, [9] aver that the main objective of phenomenology is to explicate meaning, structure, and essence of the experience of a person or group of people around a specific situation. Thus, this study attempts to know and understand human views through the eyes of the participants. Moreover, [10] opines that phenomenology takes into consideration methodological congruence and experiential concern that provide insights in terms plausibility and illumination about a specific condition.

2.2 Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers used the validated interview-guide questionnaire. This interview-guide was anchored on the research questions. It is composed of the main questions and probe questions. [11,12] mention that follow-up questions are relevant to clarify some unclear questions. Likewise, to look for more details of the answer [13]. Moreover, the interview-guide was subjected to internal and external validations. This was done to make sure that the participants can answer the questions with ease, clarity, and spontaneity. It was mentioned by

King [14] that interview-guides need to be clear so that the participants can best answer the questions. Further, the interview-guide was used in the focus group. During the interviews, the researchers carefully carried out questions so that there was no manipulation of answers. Krueger and Casey [15] reminds that a focus group should be carefully planned to gain the participants' views and perspectives regarding the topic under investigation.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants of the study were 200 college freshmen taking BSEd Secondary Education and were the first batch graduates of the K-12 program. There were 120 females and 80 males. The participants were grouped into focus group and each group had five members. Moreover, each focus group involved both sexes. Okabe [16] states that the Philippines implements a comprehensive reform of its basic education in 2012 because it is the only country in Asia with a 10-year basic education and wants to catch up with global standards. Moreover, its main objective according to the [17] is to produce more productive and responsible citizens equipped with the essential competencies and skills for both life-long learning and employment.

2.4 Limitation of the Study

This study only involved freshmen education students. Other levels and courses were not included. Moreover, qualitative method particularly phenomenological approach was used. Collection of information was conducted through focus groups. Further, this study only explored what teaching strategies were used by the Education teachers; how these strategies were appraised by the students; and what suggestions the participants could offer to improve the use of the strategies. This study did not measure the level of satisfaction of the students on the use of the strategies. Thus, due to the above-mentioned limitations, [7] points out that findings could not make generalization to the entire students and teachers but could only be applicable to the participants who were considered in the study. Further, [18] mentioned that findings could be a good basis for consideration for further research in the future.

2.5 Trustworthiness of the Study

In qualitative research, credibility is always an issue. To address this issue, the researchers used the four essential procedures which were





| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A |  | Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Letting the learners know where they are going and why. - Driving students hard towards clear goals. |
| B |  | Clarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making the content as clear and simple as possible. - Building on what students already know. |
| C |  | Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Avoiding lecture for more than 30 minutes before running an activity that involves all students. - Learning what people do, so have students do everything that you want them to learn |
| D |  | Enthusiasm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you hate to teach it, your students will hate to learn it. - The only way to motivation is success. |

Fig. 1. The four aces of effective teaching

offered by [19,20]. These steps were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is obtained when there is consistent encounter and observation between the investigators and the participants [21]. Shenton [19] Mentions that this continuous encounter allows meaningful exchange and familiarity between the researchers and the participants. In this research, the researchers had good encounter with the students because they handled the classes of the participants; hence, there was comfortable dealings with them. The atmosphere of trust, friendliness, and honesty were already established. Thus, during the conduct of the focus group, the participants answered the questions with alacrity and willingness.

Transferability is gained by making a 'clear description of the context' of the topic under study [22]; providing rich and thick description [23]; describing a phenomenon in a sufficient detail [24]; applying the results to other settings and groups [21,25,20,26]. In this research, the researchers handled transferability by providing the problem, objectives, theories involved, participants, research design used, results through thematic analysis, discussions and conclusions. All these, described the context of this study. Moreover, each section was explained thoroughly in details and the researchers believed that the results of this study can be replicated to other students and courses.

Confirmability involves the truthfulness of results of the study [19,27]; shows the ability of the investigator to corroborate the gathered information [28]; establishes reliability and objectivity [29]; ensures that information exists to support interpretations [30]; provides deep discussions of the findings [31]. Confirmability is

established in this study by adopting an audit trail by someone who was not involved and disinterested to the study. Moreover, the information gathered through the focus groups were given to an expert qualitative researcher for verification. Likewise, the same information were subjected to thematic data analysis by a data analyst. Further, the transcribed information and recordings were kept. It was also established by providing thorough discussions of the results.

Dependability is gained by observing a rigorous procedure in the conduct of research [32], peer checking [33], and triangulation [29]. It is obtained when investigators provide enough literatures which are related and significant to the topic under investigation [34]. Definitely, this research was dependable because it considered the strict procedures in the conduct of qualitative research from the formulation of the problem until the preparation of the references. Additionally, the 40 focus groups were reasonable to triangulate the information obtained. Peer checking was also conducted to confirm the veracity of the information and procedures followed. Likewise, reasonable numbers of literatures were provided to support and contradict the results of this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the participants of the basic teaching training course. It also deals with the answers raised in the research questions. Further, the information revealed from in-depth interviews were categorized according to recurrence of reactions. [35] offers the responses to grouped into *General* if similarities in responses were 50 percent or more; *Typical* if similarities in replies were 21-49 percent; and

Variant if the similarities of the responses were 20 percent and Table 1.

3.1 Prevalent Used Strategies

Generally, teachers assigned to teach the freshmen students did the oral presentation or reporting as strategy. In this strategy, the students were given topics to be presented in the classroom. However, the respondents did not mention in the focus group whether the teachers gave or discussed criteria for marking the graded presentation. This may confuse the presenters where they would give more effort. Likewise, it may also lead the presenters to doubt the transparency of their teachers in giving marks. This may also imply that the teacher was not prepared or fully aware of the requirements on how a reporting strategy is conducted. This

finding coincides with [5] who found that reporting is the most common strategies used by the teachers in the classroom. Interestingly, [36] confirmed that reporting in a flipped classroom improves students' learning. However, this result did not follow the First Ace of Effective Teaching which deals with the Outcomes. It states that to have effective outcomes, learners should be informed of the learning outcomes; explained why they needed to have such outcomes and be driven in clear goals. In this case the teacher failed to perform this aspect; thus, led the learners doubt and confusion. The researchers believed that the teachers failed to plan ahead and that the syllabus used was not modeled after the Outcomes-Based Curriculum. In an OBE curriculum, syllabus must state specific teaching and learning activities, assessment tasks, and materials needed.

Table 1. Themes and core ideas on the characteristic of effective teaching

| Themes | Frequency of responses | Core methods |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Prevalent used strategies | General Typical | Reporting One-minute quiz Open Discussion Role Play |
| | Variant | Listening Group Activities |
| Improvements gained from strategies | Typical | Developing self-confidence Helping to understand the lesson early Enhancing retention Improving communication skills |
| | Variant | Fostering interaction and collaboration |
| Evaluation of ineffective strategies | Variant | Making the students bored and lazy Lacking research and information Focusing on note-taking than listening Giving students too much activities to do Not addressing the students' learning styles Lacking connectivity Using the same strategies |
| | Typical | Cooperating with others and learning faster Overcoming fear in speaking |
| Relevant experiences | Variant | Handling feedbacks, questions, and criticisms Sharpening students critical thinking skills and focus Connecting lessons to reality Learning how to conduct good report Learning while having fun |
| | Typical | Giving further explanations and examples Considering students' opinions Allowing students to ask questions |
| Suggestions | Variant | Lessening reporting Giving support and guidance to student Using simple words |

Typically, the respondents shared that few of their teachers gave the one-minute quiz. The quiz was usually given before the start of the class. The quiz had one question to be answered in 60 seconds. After the quiz, the teacher randomly read some papers to confirm whether the answers were correct or wrong. Accordingly, this strategy allowed the teacher to know whether the students learned the previous lessons. On the other hand, some teachers also used open-discussion. In this strategy, the teacher gave a lecture, pause, and threw questions to the students to answer. The purpose of this strategy was to obtain the views and opinions of the students. Interestingly, other few teachers used the role play. In this strategy the teacher grouped the students and gave scenarios to be acted. Unfortunately, the respondents during the focus group did not make mention on how they were rated by their teachers. Murphy et al. [37] point out that it is necessary to the teachers to inform the students on how they are given marks in non-quantitative tasks for the students to predict their performances. In the same vein, [38] aver that making students aware on marking criteria allow them to set content relevance of their performance on the task. These results supported the Third Ace of Effective Teaching which is Engagement. The one minute quiz, open-discussion, and role-play allowed the learners to be involved cognitively and psychomotorically. The activities also touched the Fourth Ace of Effective Teaching which is Enthusiasm. The strategies motivated the students to strive and look forward for the next lesson. However, teachers using role-play failed to provide the learners with clear goals and outcomes by neglecting to provide the rubrics which would measure students' performances.

Variantly, there were few teachers who made use of the listening strategy. The teacher played the recorded conversation and a listening comprehension followed. The recording was IELTS based which has British enunciation and diction. Likewise, group activities were also used. In this activity, the teacher grouped the students before doing the tasks. The teacher assigned group leader to steer the group. Again, teachers the First Ace of Effective Teaching was neglected in these results. The use of IELTS materials for listening and group activities may be good; however, letting the students blind of why they were doing the activities defeated the purpose.

3.2 Improvements Gained from Strategies

The participants had no general answers to this theme. However, they mentioned that reporting helped them developed their self-confidence and managed their stage fright. They were able to surpass their fears of speaking in front of an audience and in dealing with their queries. Other participants also shared that open-discussion helped them understand the lessons easily because there was a free interaction with their teachers and peers. Bean [39] mention that open-discussion is usually used by teacher as a strategy to value the response of the students and to encourage shy students to interact. For [40], open-discussion allows students to share information, accurate or not, then the teacher makes stages of metacognition to allow students to think and active.

Few student-participants considered the one-minute quiz to boost their memories because it forced them to recall the previous lessons discussed. The one-minute quiz was usually used by the teachers to check whether the students were able to grasped past lessons. Variantly, other participants also shared that reporting improved their communications skills. It forced them to exert efforts in preparing, conceptualizing, and rehearsing for their oral presentation.

3.3 Evaluation of Ineffective Strategies

The participants had various thoughts regarding the ineffective strategies used by their teachers. They revealed that the lecture method made them bored and lazy. Sometimes, their attentions were split because they could not focus whether to listen or to take-notes. Lecture hindered the students to be engaged. The method made passive receiver of information. This finding goes contrary to [5] who find among literature students that lecture was an effective strategy because it gives inputs and shows the expertise of the teacher on the subject matter. Comparing these results, we can imply that different students have different judgment on teaching strategies. It further implies that lecture method depends on how the teachers delivered their lessons. Lecture may be interesting if lecturers had showmanship.

The participants of this study also noticed that some teachers come to the classroom unprepared because the materials they presented lacked research and substance. Thus, connectivity among the lessons, the teachers,

and the students was low. Further, the participants also mentioned that too much tasks stressed them out and made them out of focus. They also revealed that some teachers used strategies which did not consider their learning styles and worsts innovatively stagnant. They utilized the same teaching strategies again and again. This implies that these teachers lacked updating on the various strategies in teaching or worsts they were teachers who were lazy. These teachers were usually old and nearing retirement.

3.4 Relevant Experiences

With regard to the significant experiences worthy of sharing to other learners, the participants typically believed that strategies which made them involved others and learn the lessons fast were the most essential. This implies that the participants consider others students as relevant factor in learning the lessons. It also shows that the participants like strategies which are simple and clear that could enhance their understanding.

The participants also typically favored strategies which helped them overcome their fear of speaking in front of an audience, handle feedbacks, answer questions and criticisms, learn while having fun, sharpen their higher order thinking skills and focus, learn how to compost good report, and have contextual lessons.

3.5 Suggestions

The participants did not come up with general suggestions. However, typically they suggested that teachers need to give further explanations and examples during the lessons. They would also ask the teachers to consider and listen to the views and opinions of the students. Related to this, few other participants suggested that they may be allowed to ask questions to clarify gray areas or reconfirm their understanding regarding the lessons. Although some participants preferred reporting, few suggested to lessen its use. These few participants found reporting as tedious because it needed preparations. Additionally, few participants would want their teachers to offer support and guidance. For them these were relevant so that they could cope with their academic needs. Specifically, they also recommended that teachers may use simple words for them to understand better decipher the topic discussed.

4. CONCLUSION

Strategies are relevant in delivering the lessons in the classroom. However, these strategies should be well-thought of by the teachers before they are used. Teachers need to be guided with the Four Aces of Effective Teaching. They should inform students of clear learning outcomes, know what students already learn, motivate and involve students, and keep them enthusiastic. Moreover, teachers need to identify who the learners are. Are the students exuberantly active or timid? Do they like group activities or silent reading? Knowing the learners allows the teachers to appropriately choose the right strategies for them. Different types of learners need different strategies. Also, teachers should also consider the topic not just the learners. Does the topic require students' critical or trivial thinking? Various topics require different strategies. More importantly, teachers should discuss thoroughly the guidelines or marking criteria before a strategy is used. It is important that students are guided for them to set their targets and to avoid confusion. Teachers should always be ready before coming to class. Sometimes, because of the unavoidable paper works and errands, teacher come to class empty handed. Likewise, old and nearing retirement teachers should not solely rely on their experience but should consider the types of learners they have and their needs. Thus, teacher should set always his/her plans for the lesson. Lastly, one of the best ways to know what strategies fit the students is to consult the students themselves. Teachers will not get wrong if they know better their students.

4.1 Implication for Practice

Teaching strategies give magic to the delivery of lessons. With an average of 50 students in each classroom, teaching strategies can make a difference. The results of this study implicate that teachers needs to master some teaching strategies. Teachers may consider that teaching and strategies go hand and hand; that teaching strategies may have best results if students' learning styles are identified; that teaching strategies can be innovated and recycled; that teaching strategies are not inherent with teachers; and that teaching strategies can be copied and learned from other teachers. It is therefore inevitable for teachers to try some strategies which are applicable for the course they are handling; to ask the guidance of co-teachers on how a certain strategy is performed;

and to use strategies which can address the needs and skills of the students.

Teaching in contemporary classrooms is a big challenge. Students are impatient, exuberantly high, gadget savvy, aside from they are culturally variant. Thus, teachers are challenged or burdened on how the lessons are to be delivered. Several prominent authors on teaching strategies [41,42,43,44] previously mentioned that there was no best strategy which can fit to all learners; however, teachers should have good reflections on what teaching strategies are appropriate for their students. Thus, teachers need to be eclectic to deal students of different personalities, to address various learning theories, and to let learners perform more of what are expected of them. Lastly, teachers should be reminded that teaching is a vocation which needs commitment and patience. Thus, teaching should become way of life. Just like growing seeds, teaching needs efforts - strategies. The best rewards teachers can get from teaching is knowing that their students are motivated, learned, and successful.

CONSENT

Permission was obtained from the participants through written informed consents before the conduct of the focus group discussion.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Research protocols were strictly followed upon the conduct of research. It was made sure that the safety of both the participants and the researchers were secured. Objectives of the study were clearly conveyed; benefits and shortcomings were explained; 'withdrawal and confidentiality clauses' were included.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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