



THE MONA TEACHER

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The Blessing and Bane of Faculty Evaluation



Faculty evaluation is fraught with difficulties and problems, yet in the firmament of higher education, it has emerged as an important component of academic life. It is even more important when the academic commons is understood as a learning community and evaluation is recognized as an important ingredient, informing the decision and actions of multiple players in the academy, especially the readers. In order for faculty evaluations to have a continuing honoured place in higher education, institutions must demonstrate commitment to the principal role of a college or university that is, to learning. Accordingly, the outcomes of the evaluation will be used to advance learning. This takes on added importance if the institution identifies as a learning college (O'Banion, 1997) and a learning organization (Senge, 1990).

Evaluating Classroom Teaching

In many colleges and universities, summative course ratings are usually done by students at the end of a course each semester. These course evaluations have gained widespread acceptance in many institutions of higher education, certainly in the Caribbean, Canada, the USA and elsewhere. These evaluations remain the most prominent and perhaps the primary source of data used to evaluate classroom teaching at many colleges and universities (Cashin, 1999; Felten, Little, & Pingree, 2004). This is definitely the case with faculty evaluations at the University of the West Indies (UWI). It is well known that at the UWI, Mona Campus, many believe that the students' judgment is definitive and if the student says the teacher cannot teach, then it is usually assumed that the teacher is doing a very poor job of teaching.

Throughout the course of a semester, some faculty members are mindful that they are on show. Their pedagogical expertise or lack thereof provides an opportunity for students to form judgments about their teaching skills and competencies as well as their classroom presence and overall professionalism. In many cases, faculty are under surveillance in the classroom (perhaps in formally) as students are constantly evaluating their teaching. Generally, these judgments are related by students to their peers. Usually members of faculty do not know the judgments of the students until the formal course evaluation exercise is completed (at the end of the semester and then communicated much later to the faculty member).

Faculty members might experience course evaluations in positive and negative ways. There are instances where faculty members are troubled by the evaluations and become defensive and extremely protective of themselves and their pedagogy. This is usually most evident when poor evaluation results are communicated to them. From time to time, these course evaluations are experienced as intrusive, invasive, frustrating and frightening (Ory, 2001). In most cases they do not know how deans, department heads and other powerful campus leaders will respond to their evaluations. **Cont' on Page 4**

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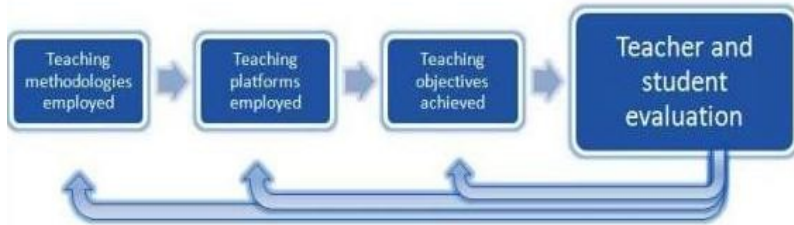
Professor Archibald McDonald

Producing Skilled University Graduates

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Teaching Evaluation



Generally, the research on student evaluations supports the following statements:

1. Well-designed and tested evaluation forms are reliable and valid.
2. Students' view of effective teaching correlates well with the faculty's view.
3. Classes in which students give higher ratings tend to be the classes where the students learned more.
4. Faculty cannot "buy" good ratings by giving light workloads or easy grades.
5. The time of day when the course meets (e.g. early morning) does not affect ratings.
6. Teaching a large class does not automatically guarantee lower student ratings, nor does teaching a small class guarantee higher ratings.
7. Instructor rank (Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, or Professor) does not significantly affect student ratings.
8. Lower level students (1st year, 2nd year) tend to rate more harshly than upper level students (3rd year, 4th year and graduate students).
9. Students in required courses tend to rate their instructors more harshly than students in elective courses.
10. Students tend to rate math, science and engineering courses more harshly than courses in the humanities.

Mid-semester Feedback Service

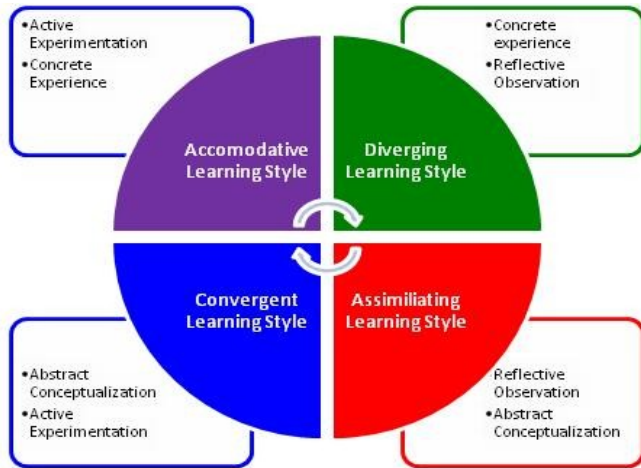


We know that feedback is important in all forms of education. In fact it is one of the most valuable approaches to improving our teaching. Oftentimes we say formative assessment is for development. Therefore, introducing an official mid-semester feedback opportunity (formative assessment) in your class to receive comments from your students is good. Of course, the notion of receiving timely and valuable information from your students that can inform your teaching for the rest of the semester is something you will want to do. This augurs well for your overall professional development and you will want to demonstrate a commitment to improving your pedagogical skills and seek to advance learning in your classroom.

In order to collect this timely and valid information from your students, you will have to design your own instrument or partner with the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) to help you design the instrument and collect the data. If you are able to give up 45 minutes of a class, the IDU can come into your classroom and have a structured discussion with your class about your teaching and then provide you with the feedback. This is not an evaluation in the usual sense since the process will be designed to help you make adjustments to your teaching. The results will be confidential. They will not be reported to the administration. You might also want to discuss with MITS how you might facilitate an online feedback opportunity using OurVLE or some other platform available at the UWI Mona campus.

Generally, a mid-semester feedback opportunity, especially one in which the IDU comes and engages your students can be extremely beneficial to you and your students. It is a statement of your interest in the academic development of your students and their interest in your professional development to continue to serve them and succeeding groups of students. A structured discussion with your students enables complaints to be turned into constructive recommendations. Of course this can be positive if you allow it to be positive. It requires a willingness to listen to your students and a readiness to discuss with them the results afterwards.

Learning Style or Learning Preferences?



Students might not learn any better when taught in their preferred style, psychologists suggest

Our students are different. They vary dramatically in the ways they acquire, process, understand and apply information. These differences in their approach to learning are oftentimes referred to “learning styles.” Increasingly, the concept of teaching to learning style is coming under pressure. In the recently concluded Post UWI/Guardian Life Limited Award Ceremony Workshop, the facilitator Dr Todd Zakrajsek admonished lecturers to pay attention to learning preference but be aware that all students can learn through various approaches and employers are not overly interested in tailoring approaches in the work place to fit learning preferences. Further, the review of the research on learning styles does not offer any conclusive evidence that will allow us to say that students learn better when they are taught according to their preferred learning style. A study called “Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence” published in 2010 and , commissioned by *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, the main journal of the Association for Psychological Science and written by psychology professors Harold Pashler of the University of California, San Diego; Mark McDaniel of Washington University in St. Louis; Doug Rohrer of the University of South Florida and Robert Bjork of the University of California, Los Angeles questioned the validity and reliability of findings heralding the authenticity of learning styles and teaching to students learning styles. These researchers and others are claiming that when several studies are examined that purport to show the effectiveness of teaching to different learning styles that none proved scientifically that students learn better when taught according to their preferred learning style. In this regard, some researchers are saying that the evidence for teaching to different learning styles is very weak. Accordingly, the tradition of teaching to learning style and the resources used by colleges and universities in this way should be diverted to support evidence based teaching practices instead.

There are those who have pointed out that classification of students and teaching to preferred learning styles pays enormous dividends and the evidence for this can be seen anecdotally even if the quantitative research approaches cannot be easily seen. However, there are mounting concerns that those studies might not be credible. A credible study needs robust documentation and of course meaningful findings from experimental approaches. It was noted that after reviewing the learning styles research studies that there were virtually no evidence that teaching to learning styles help students learn because very few studies have used an experimental methodology capable of testing the scientific validity of the learning style approach. In fact we are told that studies that used an appropriate experimental methodology found results that flatly contradicted the learning style approach to teaching and learning.

Some of the research have noted increased student performance (based on test scores) and have concluded that teaching to a particular learning style, since it appears to increase test scores is an indication of actually learning. This has not been accepted by the cognitive psychologists who reviewed the research on learning styles.

There are those who hold to the view that rather than assessing students learning styles and targeting instruction directly, the preferred approach ought to be to integrate the various approaches to teaching and learning and use strategies in meaningful ways to make an impact and to promote deep learning. In fact, this approach called the Universal Design for Learning underscore the importance of student learning best in preferred ways but creates opportunities for them to be exposed to multiple approaches. In this way a flexible approach to student learning is created so that the student can demonstrate competence and of course there would be opportunity for differences to be accommodated without requiring a learning-style test.

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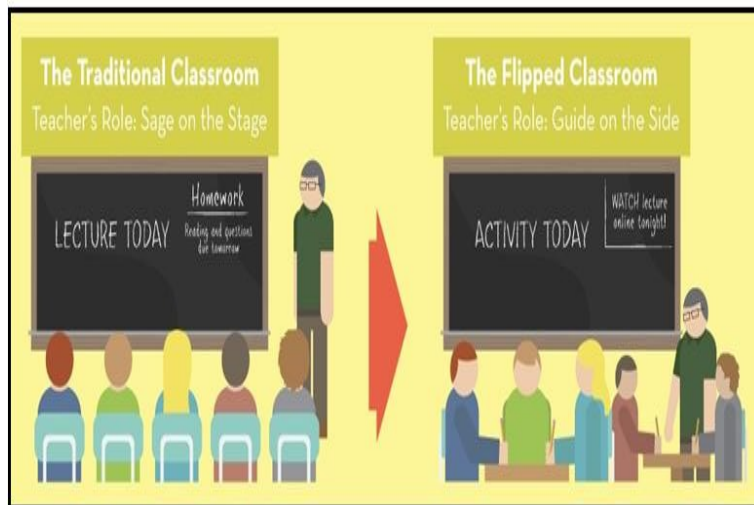
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The Flipped Classroom: Rethinking the Way You Teach

Is this a fad?

Is this one of those passing educational strategies?

Is it here to stay?



In recent times there has been much talk about flipping the classroom. This talk has been about changing the pedagogical model of the typical face-to-face classroom. In that typical classroom, students are usually presented with lectures or taught using other presentational modalities. Of course, the lesson is taught based on the syllabus or the course outline that was agreed on earlier. So in this flipped classroom, the lessons are sent to the students or the students are able to access them online usually as pre-recorded lectures. However, but they might be made available in other ways as well. The traditional in-class activities (lecture, presentation of large swathe of information) are moved out of the regular face-to-face classroom in the flipped classroom. These activities are completed independently since if a video of the lecture is produced the student can easily watch this in his or her time at home or elsewhere. This makes room available for students to get expert assistance from the teacher in the classroom to complete assignments and activities that will advance and increase learning.

The flipped classroom opens up amazing possibilities for active and engaged learning. Students can also work together in groups in a flipped classroom. They can learn from each other and there are more opportunities for the teacher to model, demonstrate, correct and redirect students' thinking and learning.

The Blessing and Bane of Faculty Evaluation cont...

Use of Course evaluation

One thing is certain, student course evaluation of faculty should be used responsibly and should never be the only source of evidence in evaluating the classroom teaching of the faculty. The course evaluation process provides the students with anonymity, allowing them to report without the fear of being sanctioned or victimized their observations and impressions of the teaching. This can be a blessing as well as a bane. Blessing because in an institution of higher education, committed to teaching and learning, the course evaluation provides opportunities for the individual faculty learner and the institution to assess the quality of teaching and learning with a view to ensuring that, the mission of learning is being fulfilled. Further, it can communicate to teacher and administration important concerns of the students and these could be addressed to make the academic community more responsive and student-centred. Student course evaluations can also be a bane. Sometimes, there are multiple problems with the course evaluation ratings, for instance, at times much ambiguity and ambivalence are communicated about teaching, learning and the teachers through student responses to teaching. There are cases where the instrument might be flawed and hence the information communicated is false. In some cases, evaluation instruments might allow for narrative comments to be made and these narrative comments can be very personal and of course highly subjective, even venomous. Some teachers, because of the relationship with students will receive effusive praise, others who might have had problematic relationships with some students or a class might be the recipients of extremely negative critical comments. Of course, the implicit criteria for judging good teaching might be ill-informed.

Course evaluations provide a venue for students to exercise disciplinary power over faculty, judging them, pressing into service institutionally sanctioned methods of appraising teachers and communicating their findings. In making their judgments, students might use explicit understandings of good teaching, however it is more likely that more often than not, they use their own implicit norms of good teaching (Felten, Little, & Pingree, 2004).

The Blessing and Bane of Faculty Evaluation

It must be remembered that course evaluations are often used in making decisions about the fate of faculty members. The institution has the power to appoint or reappoint the faculty member and students' evaluations in many cases contribute to the decisions. Campus leaders must exercise their power to use course evaluations, to appoint and reappoint faculty with exquisite care and watchfulness, since the ambiguities and uncertainties contained in the evaluations are problematic. Seldin (1999) notes a "growing chorus of complaints from those who serve on tenure and promotion committees that they are given little solid information about classroom teaching performance" (p.22).

This is true in cases where course evaluation scores are provided. This contributes to what Theall and Franklin (2001) call "major problems in day-to-day practice of making sense of even technically rigorous evaluations: student ratings are often misinterpreted, misused, and not accompanied by other information that allows users to make sound decisions" (p.46). Since there are a multitude of problems associated with student course evaluations, the sovereign power possessed by campus leaders who will act upon course evaluations should be tempered with due care because students might abuse the disciplinary power inherent in course evaluations.

Conclusion

Faculty evaluation done by students is fraught with problems and should be handled with exceeding care. Student course evaluation should be done in pursuit of the greater mission of the university/college and not merely for promotion and tenure decisions. These evaluations should be one of the resources of the academy that is used to enrich and enhance the teaching, learning, and research environment-one that serves the interests of the academic community and the society.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE IDU'S WORK THIS SEMESTER

Orientation, August 2012



In this photograph, two members of the Faculty panel at the Orientation Seminar for New Faculty are seen. From Left are Dr. Vivette Milson-Whyte, Lecturer English language Unit, Faculty of Humanities and Education and Mrs. Natalie Corthesy, Lecturer Faculty of Law. Each lecturer gave a brief presentation on the experience of teaching at the UWI Mona Campus. Other panelists were Dr. Delroy Chevers, Lecturer, Dept. of Management Studies & Business, Faculty of Social Sciences; Dr. Annette Crawford-Sykes, Lecturer, Department of Anaesthesia & Intensive Care, Faculty of Medicine; Dr. Andre Coy, Lecturer, Dept. of Physics, Faculty of Science & Technology.

The Instructional Development Unit was pleased to host another Orientation to University Teaching Programme, August 28-29, 2012. This two day programme of activities/seminar was designed to introduce new faculty members to aspects of the teaching and learning environment at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.

As the programme commenced, the Campus Principal, Professor, the Honourable Gordon Shirley was on hand to offer welcome and an opening address. In his opening address, he gave the new lecturers an overview of the working environment of the UWI and offered his thoughts on the path that might be considered by new faculty to develop and hone their skills and competences to be the best that they can be. He also provided information on best practices in preparing for promotion.

This Orientation programme ran for two days and other sessions included one focusing on the students of the institution. This session was called "Who are the students we teach?" and it was ably led by Miss Nadeen Spence, one of our Student Services Managers. Dr. Angela Gordon-Stair, Senior Counselor and Head of the Counseling Service of The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, facilitated a session entitled "Faculty as a helping resource for students." There was also a panel of students and they examined the topic "Students perspectives and experiences of teaching and learning in the UWI classroom." Not to be outdone,

the faculty was also represented by its own panel. Panelists on the faculty panel made brief presentations on the topic of "Lecturer's perspectives of teaching and learning in the UWI classroom."

Over the years the library has partnered with the IDU in the presentation of Orientation programmes and countless other workshops and seminars. This year the library was also involved as a valid and continuing academic partner and the Coordinator of Mona Information Literacy Unit, Mrs. Karlene Robinson facilitated a session using as her topic "The library as a resource tool." There were also presentations on using technology to make teaching and learning more interactive and the banks, the building society on campus and the credit union facilitated sessions on wealth management and of course presented tokens to the participants.

The seminar was brought to a grand finale on the second day with the IDU presenting a welcome gift to each participant. There were expressions of gratitude from the new lecturers and from all accounts another meaningful and productive Orientation programme was brought to a close with a sense of fulfillment for those who planned it and for those who attended.



Student panelists at the Orientation Seminar for New Faculty proudly show the tokens of appreciation presented to them by the IDU. The students each gave a brief presentation on the experience of learning at the UWI Mona Campus. They also responded to new faculty questions and gave advice on how new faculty could reach students.

Producing Skilled University Graduates

(The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus and the Partnership with HEART/NTA)



Workshop participants in the activity in the “Producing Skilled Graduates” Workshop at the IDU on Thursday August 30, 2012

In October 2011, the University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona Campus and the HEART/NTA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to work more closely. The Instructional Development Unit was one of the units of the UWI that was mandated to work with HEART/NTA to operationalize the agreement. The first project under this MOU was a workshop. Two HEART/NTA officers from their training department at the Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI), Mrs. Marjorie Blagrove-Williams (programme Coordinator for Assessment) and Mr. Kornel Brown, training officer for curriculum and adult education facilitated a workshop on Competency-Based Education and Training on Thursday August 30, 2012 at the IDUs training room. The workshop was called “Producing Skilled Graduates” and twenty six faculty members participated. In this workshop, faculty members were taught about writing course and lesson objectives in relation to competency-based education procedures. In particular, faculty members fine-tuned their skills in writing these objectives in terms of the precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study. In general, competency-based training addresses the development of specific competencies or skills of major concern in

competency-based training are the expectations and requirements of the workplace. Accordingly, in this workshop the focus was on linking intimate knowledge of a particular content area to a specific outcome or job requirement or the demonstration of a skill in relation to a specific task in the workplace.



Mr. K Brown Workshop facilitator of the HEART/NTA assists a workshop participant from The UWI Mona Campus in the “Producing Skilled Graduates” Workshop held at the IDU on Thursday August 30, 2012



Mrs. Marjorie Blagrove-Williams, Workshop facilitator from the HEART/NTA gesticulates as she drove home a point on Thursday August 30, 2012 at the “Producing Skilled Graduates” workshop at the IDU.

UWI/Guardian Life Limited Premium Teaching Awards 2012



Dr. Todd Zakrajsek Chief Judge and Keynote Speaker illustrates a point as he addressed the audience at the 2012 staging of the UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Awards. His address was on the topic “The 21st century University Teacher: Staying Engaged.”

This year the UWI/Guardian Life Limited (GLL) Premium Teaching Award 2012 was held on Thursday October 11, at 6pm in the Main Medical Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Medical Sciences, located on the grounds of the University Hospital of the West Indies. The UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Award is the highest and most prestigious award offered for excellence in University teaching at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus. It is co-sponsored by the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus and the Guardian Life Limited (Jamaica) and her parent company Guardian Holdings Limited with headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago. Applicants for the UWI/GLL premium Teaching Awards presented teaching portfolios and these were adjudicated by a panel of overseas judges. This year the judges were Dr. Sheron Fraser Burgess, Associate Professor of Social Foundations of Education /Multicultural Education at the Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, USA,

Mr. Trevor Homes, Senior Instructional Developer, The Centre for Teaching Excellence, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and the Chief Judge, Dr Todd Zakrajsek, Associate Professor and Educational Developer, School of Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA.

After reviewing the portfolios, the judges named Dr Delroy Chevers, Lecturer, Mona School of Business and Management and Dr Sharmella Roopchand-Martin, Lecturer, Department of Basic Medical Sciences, Section of Physical Therapy as the joint winners.

This year a special award of “Honourable Mention” was also made to Miss Marina Ramkissoon, Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Psychology and Social Work for her efforts.



Dr Delroy Chevers (Right) the joint 2012 UWI/Guardian Life Limited Premium Teaching Awardee accepts his award from Professor, the Honourable Gordon Shirley (Left), Principal the UWI Mona Campus (at the UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Awards Ceremony

UWI/Guardian Life Limited Premium Teaching Awards 2012

Our Chief Judge and guest speaker Dr Todd Zakrajsek spoke well on the night of the award ceremony. The keynote was entitled “The 21st century university teacher: Staying engaged.” In his address he challenged all university teachers to continuously update themselves in their fields and in approaches to teaching and learning so that they would be able to provide sterling leadership in the classroom.



Dr Sharmella Roopchand Martin (Right) the joint 2012 UWI/Guardian Life Limited Premium Teaching Awardee accepts her award from Mr. Eric Hosin (Left), President Guardian Life Limited at the UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Awards Ceremony



Miss Marian Ramkissoon (Right) “Honourable Mention” Awardee accepts her gift from Mr. Larry Outen, (Left) the representative of Guardian Holdings Limited at the UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Awards Ceremony.



Ms. Patricia Valentine, Marketing and Communication officer at UWI Mona, presented Dr. Todd Zakrajsek the Chief Judge and Keynote Speaker a gift of appreciation.



The awardees in the UWI/GLL Premium Teaching Award Ceremony flanked by the Heads of Guardian Life Limited and The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. From left are Mr. Eric Hosin, President Guardian Life Limited, Miss Marina Ramkissoon, Lecturer of Psychology (Honourable Mention Awardee), Dr. Sharmella Roopchand-Martin (2012 awardee), Lecturer, Physical Therapy, Dr. Delroy Chevers (2012, Awardee), Lecturer Operations Management and Information Systems and Professor, the Honourable Gordon Shirley, Principal, The UWI Mona Campus

Professor Archibald McDonald Certificate in University Teaching and Learning



*Professor Archibald McDonald
Deputy Principal, UWI, Mona Campus*

As of August 1, 2012, Professor Archibald McDonald assumed responsibilities as the new Deputy Principal of the UWI Mona Campus. The IDU reports directly to the Deputy Principal and we use this medium to offer our congratulations to him and extend our best wishes to him for a very successful tenure as Deputy Principal.

We at the IDU will continue to work with the Deputy Principal and the Office of the Deputy Principal to ensure that teaching and learning is advanced even further in this institution.



Participants of the Assessment in Higher Education engaged in group work

(Certificate in University Teaching and Learning Cohort 5)

Throughout the course of the semester, the IDU continued to facilitate the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (CUTL). The fifth cohort commenced with the Summer Teaching Institute in August and the first course in the programme was taught. The fourth cohort also had a Summer Teaching Institute focusing on assessment in higher education.

For the graduation ceremony on November 2, 2012, thirteen graduates were named by the IDU for presentation to the Chancellor for having successfully completed the programme and hence earned for themselves the Post Graduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning. From all indications, this was a proud moment for all recipients of this credential.

Certificate in University Teaching and Learning

Certificate in University Teaching and Learning graduating class of 2012



Participants of the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (Cohort 4) actively engage in their technology course of the programme.



Participants of the Certificate in University Teaching and Learning (Cohort 5) take the time to pose for a group picture at the end of day three of the Assessment in Higher Education.