

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The UWI Mona



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Special points of interest:

- The Teaching Tips Newsletter is a publication of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/CETL/>) as well as in the office of the CETL.
- If you have an area that you would like us to explore in this newsletter, do not hesitate to contact us at the CETL.

Effective Teaching



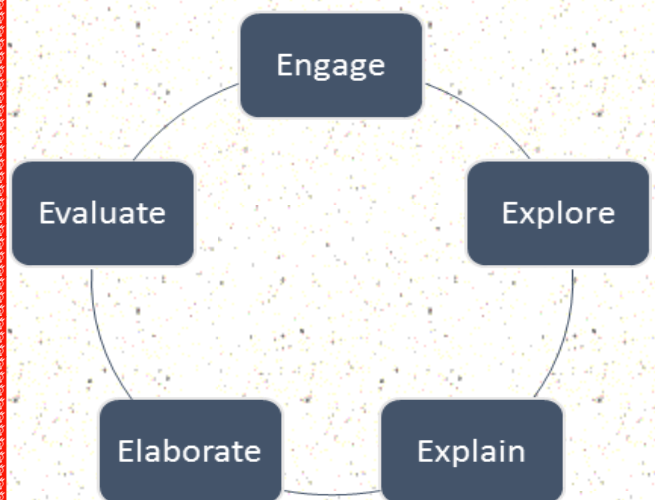
The good and effective teacher: A guide by the side

For some persons, the mark of good or effective teaching is learning. Teaching is about learning and we all want to be teaching in ways that result in learning. The research on teaching and learning in higher education suggests that teaching effectiveness or effective teaching is thought about in different ways by students and teachers. It would be easy to conclude that effective teaching is that which results in learning. However, we do know that it is just not as simple as that. Students are important players in teaching and learning. They are able to decide to learn and they are also able to make a decision that they do not want to learn. Motivation is extremely important in learning. It might also be that in a particular class the students do not have the requisite background information and hence are unable to make sense of the content. This does not encourage them to make the effort needed to learn. In some cases, students convince themselves that they cannot learn a particular content area, for instance, mathematics or another quantitative course. In fact, if the students do not embrace the possibility of learning and the teacher does all the things that are supposed to be associated with effective teaching, very little learning will occur.

In many universities, the results of the teaching evaluation or the student evaluation of teaching (SET) is understood as an important statement on effective teachings. In fact, in offering awards for good teaching, teaching evaluation scores from students are taken into consideration. Of course, other considerations such as the comments of colleagues and one's teaching philosophy are also used and they usually constitute important elements in a teaching dossier.

Weimer (2013) offers an important article on "teaching effectiveness." I find this article to be very instructive. She reports on the various meanings of the term to teachers, students and higher education administrators. She notes that when asked to list the three most important abilities of teachers, the students, teachers, and administrators listed the same three abilities, though not in the same order.

These abilities were **cultivate thinking skills, stimulate interest in the subject, and motivate students to learn.** It was clear that the teachers considered the cultivation of thinking skills important and rightly so since, we know that cognitive abilities are so important in the learning process.



THE 5E INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL:
Effective Teachers Engage Learners.

In her article on teaching effectiveness, Weimer (2013) notes also that researchers examined the words and phrases students used to describe effective

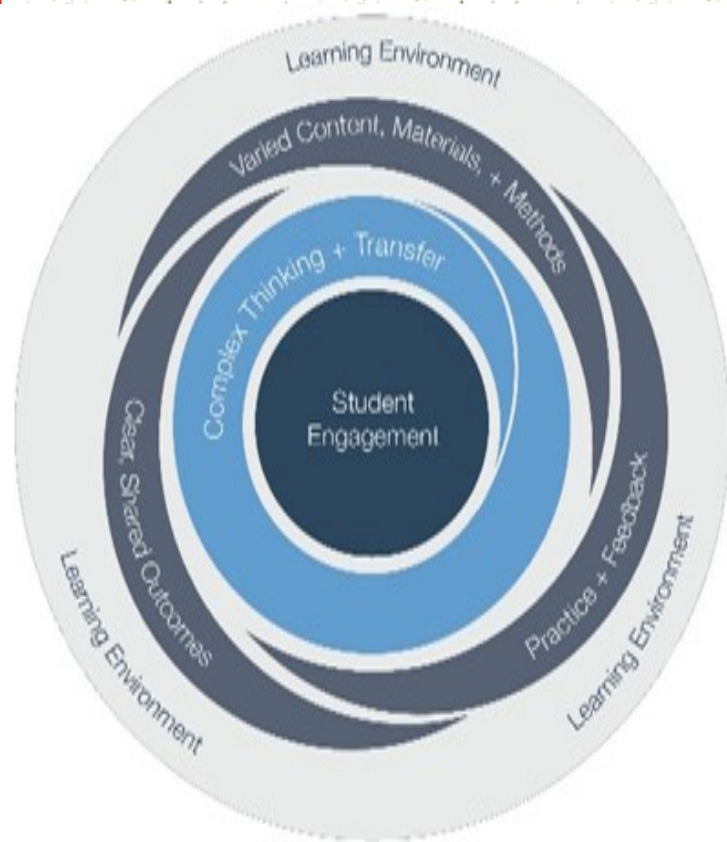
teacher and ineffective teachers. The top three words for effective teachers were “interesting”, “approachable”, and “clarity.” For the students, the soft or the softer characteristics seem to be the most important. It stands to reason that the teacher who is interesting, approachable and provides clear explanations would motivate students to learn.

Interestingly, in 1988, Kenneth Feldman meta-analysis of 31 studies found that students identified good teachers as those who were interesting, having good elocutionary skills, being available and helpful. For faculty, they emphasized the place of ones intellect, challenging approaches, motivating students, setting high standards, and encouraging self-initiated learning.



Effective Teachers are approachable and motivate students to learn.

The research suggests that the attributes of university teachers are important in student learning in colleges and universities. In fact, in evaluating teaching in higher education, there is greater interest in looking at the various attributes of the teacher and activities that are utilised in teaching and learning by these professionals. However, there are so many descriptors of good teaching or effective teaching that one wonders how one should navigate this terrain. I guess teachers in higher education want to really know that they are teaching well. They have their teaching evaluations scores which provide some information. They also have the research that identify from the teachers’ perspective certain abilities namely: cultivate thinking skills, stimulate interest in the subject, and motivate students to learn. I think therefore that in the classroom, we might want to consider both sets of abilities, those advocated by teachers and those advocated by learners. To underscore the learner’s perspective, effective teachers were ‘interesting’, “approachable”, and offered “clarity” in the teaching and learning of subject matter content. How do you measure up? Think on these things or better yet, practice these things. We all want to be teaching in ways that cause learning to occur.



Effective Teaching will focus on creating a learning environment that supports learning.

References

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Phone: 876-935-8341 extn. 2341, 2730

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