

An Examination of the Dialogue and Relevance; Foci on Students; and Thinking and Progression of Successful Instructors in a College of Agriculture

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Need for Research

Associated deans, program directors or department heads can evaluate faculty for annual merit review as a criteria for teaching (Diamond, 2004). It is the most influential measure of performance used in promotion and tenure decisions at institutions that emphasize teaching effectiveness (Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2003). Faculty instructors who are recognized for their teaching are performing at highly effective levels in the classroom. This descriptive study sought to determine the occurrences and frequencies of effective modeling among selected faculty.

Theoretical Framework

- This study was guided by the Framework for Effective College Teaching model by Maxwell, Vincent and Ball (2011). In their study, award winning instructors were interviewed to seek what characteristics made them effective.
- In this study, the researchers selected to examine the first of two constructs, The Act of Effective Teaching.
- The three sub-themes which fall under this construct are: Dialogue & Relevance, Student Focus, and Thinking & Progression.
- The researchers in the study felt there were limitations in the original study, since it only interviewed the instructors and did not observe them in the act of teaching.
- The researchers sought to determine if and how often these themes exist with award winning faculty in the College of Agriculture at the University of Kentucky by observing them in the classroom.

Methodology

- Actively teaching faculty members, within the College of Agriculture, who received a perfect score on their annual merit review for teaching were selected ($n = 6$).
- Two randomly selected 50-minute classes were videotaped.
- The footage was analyzed and coded by each five minute interval.
- Within the intervals, the authors calculated the occurrences of the three sub-themes within the selected conceptual model.
- Time where neither teaching nor learning occurred was also calculated.

Results/Findings

From the analysis of the six instructors observed of the three constructs, the average outcome of the results are as follows:

- Thought & Progression, $m = 25$; $SD = 6.56$
- Dialogue & Relevance $m = 19$; $SD = 9.84$
- Student Focus $m = 16$; $SD = 7.91$
- Time where neither teaching nor learning occurred $m = 22.3$ seconds.
- Results indicated the instructors who had lower levels of constructs observed, had higher levels of time where neither teaching nor learning occurred; adversely, the instructors with higher levels of constructs observed had lower levels of recorded time where neither teaching nor learning occurred.

Conclusion

- It was concluded, based on the findings, the three constructs are prevalent in the instructors.
- The indicated Thinking & Progression was observed more often in the instructors.
- Majority of results indicate constructs increase in frequency in the first 15 minutes of class and decline in the last 15 minutes of class.
- Recommendations:**
 - Utilize the constructs as a training model for college faculty.
 - In different study, compare the outcomes of these results among first and second year faculty to see if a difference exists.
- Limitations:**
 - Difficult to observe the constructs in classes where traditional teaching is not possible.
 - Conduct anonymous observations to see if instruction style changes results.

