Chapter 48

The Impact of a Learning Management System on Student Evaluation of Teaching:
The Difference Between Pre- and In-Service EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the impact of using a learning management system on pre-service and in-service teachers' evaluation of a teacher educator in a teacher training university was compared. Two groups of students participated in the study and for one semester experienced a blended learning where the extension of academic activities of the course Materials Evaluation and Syllabus Design was presented via a learning management system online. At the end of the course both groups' evaluation of the instructor's teaching was compared in two aspects: teaching style and student-teacher interaction. The result showed that there was a significant difference between two groups' evaluation of the educator. Pre-service teachers were found to have higher attitudes towards teaching effectiveness and they were more satisfied with both teachers' teaching style and social behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The widespread use of English as the language of science, commerce and -more recently- technology has urged many developing countries to embark on programs to revise their English as a foreign language (EFL) curricula (e.g., Eret & Ok, 2010; Xinmin & Adamson, 2003) both in secondary and tertiary education. These changes are done with the hope of promoting teaching effectiveness and consequently increasing students' achievement in English.

Research on teaching effectiveness places the blame mainly on teachers and the way they present the content while multi-layered nature of teaching effectiveness has been taken for granted by most researchers. Although teachers' instructional behavior and their direct teaching is reflective of their quality of teaching (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006), teaching effectiveness is by no means a single construct and other key factors such as teachers' individual differences, competencies, beliefs, and work environment play crucial roles in empowering teachers to have and to show effective teaching practices.

Literature review is indicative of a paradigm shift from deficit models of teacher education to technical teaching models in mainstream education and English Language Teaching (ELT) in which teacher's content knowledge is just a part of his/her professional identity (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009). In this framework teaching effectiveness is defined by teacher's subject matter knowledge, the knowledge of teaching and learning, the knowledge of teaching in a special context, and the knowledge of using technologies in instruction (Margerum-Leys & Marx, 2002). In other words, a successful and effective teacher should be knowledgeable in his/her subject matter and the theories of teaching and learning in general and that subject matter in particular; be aware of the context of teaching, the types of students he/she has, and the dynamics between the teacher and students; and know which technologies he/she can use effectively in line with the pedagogical theories and practices for teaching the subject matter to those students in a given context. In other words, "teachers' understandings of technology, pedagogy, and content can interact with one another to produce effective discipline-based teaching with educational technologies" (Harris, Mishra, & Koehler, 2009, p. 396)

The issue of using technology to promote student learning has a history as long as the technology itself. There is evidence that using computer-assisted instruction promotes students' motivation, critical thinking, self-regulation, and learning outcomes in many disciplines including foreign language learning. It is also been suggested that the lack of technology in language classes can be a source of demotivation among language learners (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009). Further, while based on recent views of teaching effectiveness technology integration into teaching the content is considered as one essential characteristics of an effective teacher, it is still unknown if the use of technology in the process of teaching can affect students' evaluation of their teacher's effectiveness. Subsequently, this study attempts to shed light on the way university students evaluate the teaching effectiveness of a teacher educator who uses technology in a blended class in an EFL teacher training program, considering the students' background in teaching (pre-service vs. in-service EFL teachers). The study focuses on finding answers to the following questions:

1. How students of a teacher training course evaluate the teaching effectiveness of a teacher educator who uses technology?
2. Is there any significant difference between pre-service and in-service teachers' evaluation of the teaching effectiveness of a teacher educator who uses technology?

BACKGROUND

English language teaching has undergone radical changes over the years to address the issue of effective teaching and to define the key elements that constitute this construct. For more than a century (1880-1980) the language teaching profession was involved in a search for an ideal '*method*' which was embraced enthusiastically by educationists as a panacea for the language teaching problems (Shahidi, 2004). However, observation of teachers' instructional practices throughout this period revealed that teachers seldom

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