



A qualitative study on the perspective and teaching practice of novice lecturers in a paramedic course

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aimed to obtain the perspective and teaching practice of novice lecturers serving at the training institutions, Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH). **Method:** A qualitative research was conducted on 4 novice lecturers at the Medical Assistant College, Seremban. Data were obtained from interview and observation on their teaching in the lecture rooms. The data analysis was performed by using NVivo 9 software. **Result:** In the aspect of the teaching perspective, the finding showed that there were two main themes; teaching concept and the teaching method. As far as the teaching concept is concerned, respondents perceived that lecturers were the source of knowledge and those who transferred the knowledge to the students. Meanwhile, the second perspective related to the teaching approach in which lecturers need to use their experiences, they need to be knowledgeable and creative in their teaching. The integration of the themes has formed the main perspective, which was the lecturer-centered teaching. In turn, in the teaching practice, it was consistent with their perspective whereby the approach of teaching is lecturer-centered. **Conclusion:** This study showed that new lecturers would employ the lecturer-centered approach. Apart from that, they were also lacking of the skills in terms of class control and value inculcation. The deficiency in both these aspects needs to be overcome as it can affect the effectiveness of the teaching, also the quality of the graduates produced.

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Introduction

The skills of teaching are integral to a teacher or lecturer. They give us an idea on how a teacher connects his or her knowledge, skills and values in his or her teaching [1-2].

A novice lecturer represents those who do not have the experiences and skills of teaching [3]. Novice lecturers are also those who start off their career in the teaching field without having any basic training in teaching [4].

Several previous studies have managed to show that the course of teaching pedagogy has positive effect on the teachers, especially with regards to the aspects of teaching and skills of teaching [5-6]. This is because, teaching through experiences alone without any specific training is not capable of developing the pedagogical skills and teaching techniques of a lecturer or teacher [7]. The lack of mastery of pedagogical knowledge will contribute to the weakness and flaw in the teaching and learning process [8]. Thus, education and basic training for teachers are also dictated as the main factors in determining teacher quality and teaching quality [9].

Since 2005, lecturers appointed to teach paramedical courses at the training institutions, Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) are no longer sent to attend teaching pedagogy course as has been done previously. This raises question as to whether or not novices who have no basic pedagogical exposure would be capable to conduct an effective teaching session. On the same note, to obtain some relevant information on this issue, this study is carried out, aiming at obtaining related information on the perspective and teaching practice of these newcomers at the Ministry of Health training institutions.

Method

We conducted a qualitative study to get relevant detailed information and an in-depth information in the field being studied [10]. This study was done in Medical Assistant College, Seremban. This college is one of the training institutes under the MOH which offers a paramedic course of the Medical Assistant Diploma. The rationale behind the selection of this college is due to the fact that this college has some newly-appointed lecturers who have fulfilled the criteria of the respondents needed for this study, those of which are; 1) not having any certificate or diploma in teaching pedagogy; and 2) appointed after 2008. The respondents of the study are 4 lecturers that have been identified and they were marked as Lecturer 1 (L1), Lecturer 2 (L2), Lecturer 3 (L3) and Lecturer 4 (L4). The lecturers were selected by way of *purposive sampling* who have characteristics as mentioned earlier.

This study employed the methods of interview and observation. An interview was done to obtain some in-depth information especially with regards to the perspective also the understanding of all four respondents in light of the aspect of teaching pedagogy. Several semi-structured questions were prepared to get desired information desired. The duration of time for the interview for every respondent was approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview session was recorded in the audio visual form.

Meanwhile, observations had been done in the lecture room, to see the teaching practice of all four respondents involved. The scope or focus of the lecture room observations would be in the aspect of teaching practice like delivery technique, student activities, interactions, teaching reflection also other related activities. The time taken for every observation in the lecture room was 1 hour for every respondent. Field notes were used to record every observation during the teaching process.

Data from the interviews recorded were transcribed beforehand, after which the data were processed and analysed systematically using NVivo 9 software. The data analysis process was done by comparing data from observations and interviews by way of constant comparative to form code, category and theme.

Result

The study findings obtained from the interviews and observations have been discussed based on the following aspect.

The perspective of novice lecturers on the pedagogy of teaching

All four respondents understood that the basis of the teaching concept lies in transferring knowledge to the students. All believed that teachers are the source of knowledge in the teaching process. They also shared the view that lecturers must prepare comprehensive teaching notes to make it easier for the students to do their revision. This can be seen in the following statement:

'.. I will provide a complete lecture notes to help students prepare for exams...' (Source: L2)

To put in other words, the learning concept that they have understood is one that centralises on the lecturer.

In terms of the teaching method, all believed in the fact that they have to be knowledgeable in the field that they teach to help them teach more effectively. Past experiences and creativity can also facilitate them in delivering interesting, yet effective lessons. The summary from this discovery is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Summary of the Perspective of Teaching Pedagogy

Theme	Category	Explanation	Respondent
Teaching Concept	Lecturer as the source of knowledge	Lecturer-centered	L1, L2, L3, L4
	Transferring knowledge	Lecturer-centered	L1, L2, L3, L4
Teaching Method	Using experiences	Lecturer-centered	L1, L3
	Knowledgeable	Lecturer-centered	L1, L2, L3, L4
	Creativity	Lecturer-centered/students	L1, L4

Novice lecturers' teaching practice

To know the approach of teaching practice that they have adopted, observations had been carried out on the four respondents. It is found that all respondents had employed the lecturer-centered teaching technique, which is delivering lessons through lectures and one-way delivery only. All respondents have used powerpoint slides as their teaching aid.

In terms of interactions, there were questions and answers noted. Nonetheless, there were interactions that did not benefit anything as the lecturer did not give her fullest attention to the question, as evident in L1.

As far as the classroom control is concerned, the study findings demonstrate that L1, L3 and L4 do not have good classroom control as compared to L2. From observation, while L1, L3 dan L4 were teaching, there were evidently students who

had been distracted, sleeping, talking among themselves especially those sitting in the back row.

The study finding also shows that the majority of the respondents did not really stress on the aspect of values. From observation, only L1 had attempted to stress on values while delivering her lessons. This can be seen in the following statement:

'...make sure you do not tell others about the humiliating part of your patients' cases. Of course, you wouldn't want to be humiliated the same way, right. Same goes with the patients, of course they would not want to be humiliated in front of others ...' (Source: L1)

A summary from the observation is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Lecturers' Teaching Practice

No	Observation	Theme	Respondent
1.	Lecture, One-way delivery	Delivery technique	L1, L2, L3, L4
2.	Asking questions, Active communication	Interaction/Communication	L2,L4
3.	Noise class, Students sleeping	Class control	L1,L3, L4
4.	Respecting patients, Keeping patients' information confidential	Value inculcation	L1

Discussion

In terms of the teaching perspective, there were two themes extracted namely teaching concept and teaching method. In terms of the teaching concept, respondents have the perspective that lecturers were sources of knowledge and they served to transfer the knowledge to the students. The second perspective, in turn, is related to the teaching method whereby the lecturers need to use their experiences, knowledge also creativity in their teaching. The integration of both themes has formed the primary perspective which is the lecturer-centered teaching.

Lecturer-centered teaching approach like lectures is the most popular approach as compared to other approaches in higher education [11-12]. Despite this, several flaws have been reported to be synonymous with the lecturer-centered approach. This approach is said to entail the transfer of knowledge only from the curriculum and accepted by the students without much fuss [13]. Other than that, lecturer-centered approach seems to fail in training students to master main skills, such as thinking skills, problem-solving skills and communication skills [12,14]. If this is to continue, it will ruin the government's aspirations to produce quality and competent students to deliver excellent services to the community and to the country.

In the context of medical education, an effective teaching method is one that centralises on students. This is due to the fact that such an approach is able to enhance the integration between theory and practice [15].

For the teaching practice, this is consistent with their perspective which goes for the lecturer-centered technique. This is evident as seen in the lecture room, where all four respondents had adopted this particular approach.

The study finding also manages to highlight that class control and value inculcation are two skills in which most of the respondents are lacking. Effective classroom control has been a tough challenge for lecturer [16]. Lecturers also need to master classroom control to make sure that the learning can take place effectively.

In terms of values, these novice lecturers have seemingly side-tracked the emphasis on values. Good moral values need to be instilled in the classroom to nurture the students into good human capital for the country. Value inculcation has become the main agenda in the Malaysian education curriculum [17-19]. In the aspect of paramedical education, the inculcation of values and ethics is also a very important component [20]. This is understandable, as they will be dealing with patients and the society when they enter the working world soon.

Conclusion

This study proves that it has supplied a lot of useful information related to the novice lecturers' perspectives and teaching practice at MOH training institution. In the perspective of teaching, it can be concluded that the perspective of novice lecturers towards the teaching pedagogy is in line with the teaching approach they adopt, namely the lecturer-centered teaching.

The finding of this study has also shown that novice lecturers lack the skills in controlling the class and instilling good values among their students. The lack of this aspect needs to be overcome due to the fact that the effectiveness of classroom control is crucial to the effectiveness of the teaching. In the meantime, value inculcation is also vital to the paramedical teaching context because the graduates produced will serve their patients and the society at large, indicating that the aspect of value is of utmost importance in providing quality services [20].

There is also an implication to the MOH policy makers in selecting new quality lecturers in the training institutions. Other than that, in line with the finding of this study, it is suggested that the would-be appointed lecturers are sent for training in the field of teaching pedagogy, to ensure enhance the quality of teaching in MOH training institutions.

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