

Effective Teaching Methods In A Diverse And Challenging Higher Education Class In The UK

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ABSTRACT

Education in a multi-cultural environment also requires the participants (international students whose first language is not English) and local students (whose first language is English) to adapt themselves to the environment of education. There should be a two-way process of integration of students into the higher education sector in the UK or elsewhere in order to make the learning process effective. In this process, the teachers/lecturers should determine and adopt the method(s) which would be most appropriate to make teaching interesting and understandable for local and overseas students with a variety of cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, foreign methods of teaching should be regarded by overseas students as part of their learning process so that they are able to accept the best aspects of foreign methods of teaching. It is to be emphasised however that teachers in the higher education system in the UK or elsewhere should, during the initial stage of teaching on any programme, familiarise overseas students with the special aspects of teaching under this system, and alert students, in a friendly manner, of the essentials and techniques of learning and the evaluation system(s) thereto. Teachers/lecturers should be aware of an almost total transformation of a learning method which many of the overseas students are required to go through and also local students feel to be convenient in accordance to the British education system (Helmi and Pius, 2018a; Helmi *et al.*, 2018a; Helmi *et al.*, 2018b and Helmi *et al.*, 2018c). Students must have satisfied the admission requirements of the institutions concerned for a particular programme of study; thus their ability to understand the basic concepts relating to a variety of subjects which they opt for may not be questioned (Helmi and Pius, 2018a).

INTRODUCTION

The focus of the investigation is to evaluate critically the appropriate teaching methods to enhance the capability of students to learn in a diverse environment and to integrate the learning experience to their achievement. It is assessed throughout this research that teachers should be a proficient

observer and thinker to link the learning outcomes with the students' learning style to maintain the learning process. It is recognized that teaching in higher education is becoming even more challenging than ever before and that teachers/lecturers should be well aware of the choice of appropriate teaching methods and activities to achieve learning outcomes and students' curriculum development (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020a; Alharahsheh, 2019a and Alharahsheh, 2019b). This research is aimed to investigate the topic in context of local [UK] and international students [overseas]. In this context, it is necessary to highlight and investigate the teaching methods which may enhance students' learning experience in an almost entirely different environment.

Their work analyses that sometimes students are afraid to ask questions; it is therefore essential for a teacher/lecturer to observe the situation and adopt such teaching methods and activities to build the confidence in students which is another significant dimension in a diversified education environment (Alharahsheh, 2019b; Helmi and Pius 2018b and Helmi *et al.*, 2018a). Overseas students achieve their qualifications but do not play a more vital role in the economy to measure their education as achievement (Helmi and Pius, 2018a; Helmi *et al.*, 2018a; Helmi *et al.*, 2018b and Helmi *et al.*, 2018c). This is important for teachers/lecturers to adopt such teaching methods and approaches to enhance students' learning experience and identify the parameters of their strength and how their knowledge may be used in their learning (Alharahsheh, 2019b and Helmi and Pius, 2018b).

This result is based on: a) information acquired through a systematic inquiry of issues in assessed teaching sessions; b) questionnaires; and c) interviews

The subjects of this research were a group of local, European and overseas students and their lecturers. An analysis has been made that lecturers are using different teaching/lecturing methods to enhance students' learning and development. Various lecturers, program leaders and managers were also involved in investigating the research questions and objectives of this research. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted to understand how lecturers are enhancing students' learning whilst adopting appropriate teaching methods in diversified class rooms. Peer observation document analysis also shows the success rate and learning achievements of students on the basis of teaching/lecturing methods in a diverse environment. The chosen education providers in this research have a very diverse-education environment and variety of teaching methods are adopted there in order to ensure students are learning and enhancing their knowledge and skills. Students were assessed at the beginning of the course and during the course.

Ethical rules have been adhered to throughout this research to make it more appropriate and balanced. All relevant persons, lecturers, module leaders and program leaders are consulted and the research was open for suggestions and comments. All sources are cited and acknowledged wherever used. This research is conducted with honesty and dedication and it can be used as a reference in academics to provide a better learning environment to students.

METHODS

In so far as published works are concerned, research has been processed on “**Research Methods for Business Students by Saunders, M. Lewis, P. Thornhill**” and “**The Postgraduate Research Handbook by Gina Wisker**”. These works really helped develop parameters of this research and provided a thorough understanding of the data to achieve the results of the research (Saunders *et*

al., 2009). Furthermore, the work developed by (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020b) enabled the researchers to gain further depth and understanding of key research paradigms such as positivism and interpretivism.

Data Collection Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used in this research to investigate various aspects of teaching approaches and methods to enhance the learning of students. The combination of both types of data produce balanced results and it proved to be easy to accomplish the aim of the research.

Data were collected from senior junior lecturers, programme leaders, program managers, quality assurance person through questionnaires and interviews.

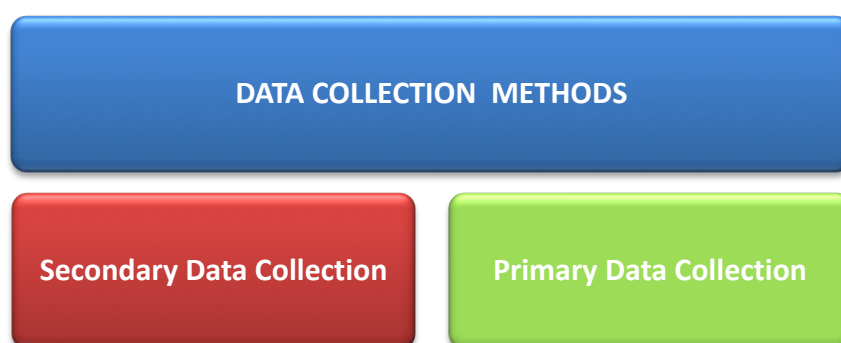


Figure 1: data collection methods

Source: Author developed

Triangulation

According to (Saunders *et al.*, 2009) qualitative and quantitative methods of research can be used in combination if the researcher is interested to gain triangulation. This is a technique which manages the overlaps between two approaches to produce balanced and the appropriate results.

Secondary Data Collection

This research involves peer observations, relevant journals and articles, books and teaching methods to understand the teaching methods and its variations of delivery and execution in a higher education environment. This information developed a systematic approach to a research of a primary nature. Document relating to teaching methods assisted further research and structure of primary data collection. Therefore, in researchers ensured that information was recent, valid and credible.

Primary Data Collection

Questionnaires and Interviews were carried out to complete primary data collection;

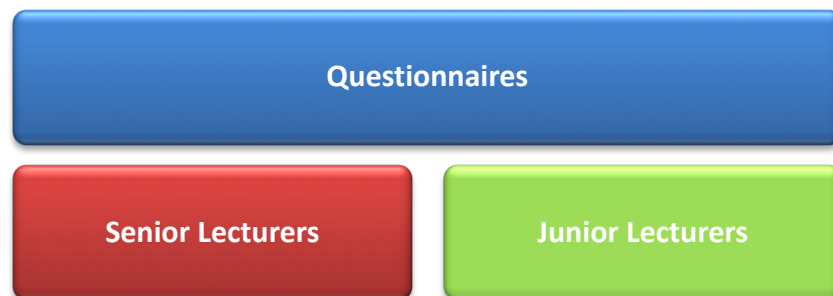


Figure 2: Primary data collection

Source: Author developed

Questionnaires Overview

Questionnaires were designed in two sessions to analyse the level of diversity of the current students admitted to the higher education specific to the selected institute. Questions were designed in such a way that responders would believe their responses might benefit the institution and the higher education sector. Therefore, the first section of the questionnaire was designed to investigate the appropriate teaching method in a diverse higher education environment; the second section of the questionnaire was designed to highlight the best practices of a learning environment in higher education in context of students with different learning styles and cultural diversity. This approach to questionnaire designing is also recommended by Lietz (2010).

Interviews Overview

Interviews which were more focussed were conducted to investigate how teachers/lecturers were executing teaching methods to enhance the learning of students. One of the aspects of the interview questions was to understand how students were kept engaged in various activities thorough interactive teaching methods for student having different learning style; took interest in the subject and discussion to share knowledge with others and examine their knowledge. Some questions were asked to assess and evaluate the current status of higher education teaching methods and whether overseas students were capable of learning and improving their curriculum. It is observed that some students were often hesitant to interact because this education system was new to them. Thus, this research concentrated on how the teaching methods could build their confidence and how it would encourage them to enhance learning. Both Structured and un structured methods of interviewing to subjects were conducted to achieve balanced results.

Reliability and Validity of Data

It became evident that reliability and validity of data was achieved by applying them several times and this method produced same results each time it was applied. This research which was conducted with honesty and dedication may be of some use in the world of academics who are engaged in teaching in diverse higher education environment.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

According to Robson (2007) teachers/lecturers confront various challenges and issues in a higher education environment as students' learning styles are different and also they are hesitant to adopt any new learning approaches. In these circumstances, the responsibility of teachers/lecturers has

become challenging. It is therefore recommended that teachers/lecturers should assess students in early sessions and then design schemes of work and session plans. It was noticed that lecturers focussed on covering maximum areas in the session but the appropriate and recommended approach used to deliver the required and recent knowledge bears in mind the students. Baden and Major (2004) discussed another important aspect regarding teaching in diverse class rooms which suggested that problem-based learning was an effective tool and approach in teaching as it prepares students for critical thinking and solution approaches.

They also stated that learning in higher education is an interactive process and should be executed and achieved when students are ready to learn and teachers have the capability to create an environment for learning. In this context, it is appropriate to prove that many lecturers also from overseas and they had experience in teaching different students. Thus sometimes it became challenging for them to adopt new teaching methods. However it became evident that appropriate teaching methods should be adopted and the students' learning experience was the most important issue; so teachers should spend enough time to keep themselves up-to-date through research in order to ensure that students accomplish their goals. The diverse relationship between diversity and learning may be effectively applied and the nature of this relationship is well understood. According to Carroll (2002) teaching becomes quite challenging when students and teachers are both interested in bringing new approaches into practice during teaching sessions.

If students express feelings and debate their teachers/lecturers to their expectation then the teacher/lecturer should appreciate students' interest and intention to learn because it shows that student is interested to play his role in learning process. In contrast of this view, the present research analysed that teacher/lecturer should motivate students to suggest but this is the responsibility of a teacher/lecturer to perform research to identify the parameters required to satisfy students but not only agreeing with them all the time.

According to (Madeleine et al. 2002) in view of the various teaching methods and it often proved to be challenging to adopt specific teaching method in a diverse education environment because each student's expectation is different. Teachers/lecturers who are working in a diverse education environment should adopt case studies, interactive scenarios, management games, question answer approach, group discussion, problem based questions, and video based examples. But whatever method may be adopted, it should pay attention to the students' requirements. One to one discussion is very important in diverse classrooms as it helps a teacher/lecturer to understand the student's learning background, way of understanding, level of academic structure and standards, practical knowledge and experience etc. It also provides confidence to students because they feel they are new to this education system but their teacher/lecturer is supportive to guide them to learn. Although one to one discussion is very difficult to conduct but it can be achieved with certain planning.

Pooja (2011) investigated that a teacher/lecturer must adopt teaching methods which motivate students and also inspire them to learn with self- confidence. Teaching is a complex process and it is not an easy task to select the teaching method. It is necessary for a teacher/lecturer to establish a friendly communication system with students and learn about their expectations, behaviour, patience, skills, and experience. The class room situation in the context of the size and number of students should also be taken into account. It is observed that usually when a research supervisor

conducts sessions on a one-to-one basis, a novel approach is required to be adopted as each student has different research questions and each of them has different cultural and educational background. Teachers/lecturers should also portray themselves in a professional way so students respect them and become eager to learn. According to Ray (2004) as far as teaching methods in diverse environment is concerned, group discussion in classes is very helpful. The benefit of this teaching method is that students belong to different cultural and learning backgrounds so they have an opportunity to share knowledge with each other. This method builds a high confidence level in students and thus they appreciate each other as they are new and believe they all are here to learn.

It is stated by (Holtbrugge et al. 2010) that it is interesting to teach/lecture to students who have different learning styles and approach to understand because students who already have some knowledge about the subject and also have experience they enhance their confidence level while understanding issues and then planning answer accordingly in a learning environment. In a diverse higher (education environment teaching and learning process would be more effective if it is done through question-answer sessions and by students' presentation of papers.

A critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the selected research tools;

The research tools for this research have been chosen carefully with a view to accomplish the research in an appropriate manner. The relevant documents have been critically analysed at critical level, as was done in respect to observation on participants with respect to research question, questionnaires, structured and unstructured interviews wherever necessary. Discussions have been considered as research tools throughout this research. These are obvious options as the research requires a variety of information and a problem-based approach to find the most appropriate solution.

DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE SELECTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Data analysis has been done critically throughout this research and graphs, charts, diagrams, tables and examples have been applied to analyse the collected data and then this analytical data have been engaged to produce results.

The research was conducted with involvement of lecturers, programme leaders, the management, Questionnaires and interview were designed while considering them and it was presented such a way to receive appropriate responses. Questions were divided into sections to make them more organized to understand so that more accurate and balanced results could be achieved. [6] higher education providers in the London were engaged as the subject of investigation for this research and to observe diverse students of HNC/HND Business. Data are analysed in various phases to understand all aspects of research.

Ethical Considerations

Consent was taken from each participant so they would give enough time to questions to respond and also reflect in their lecturing styles while answering. All discussions and meetings were conducted in accordance to schedule and an agenda was developed. Questions were straightforward and easy to understand but perhaps due to their work load they could not be involved in each activity of teaching methods. It is carefully considered that the information provided by participants is used to accomplish the aim of the research.

Results and Finding

Data were analysed to produce appropriate results. Results were presented in the form of graphs, charts, diagrams, tables and examples. Questionnaires focus is discussed and interview questions' overview is adopted while producing results.

Rate of Response

Questionnaires were distributed to [27] lecturers and all are received back. All questions in questionnaires were answered. Interviews were conducted with 10 lecturers, 5 program leaders, 3 program managers, [120] students. All response is shown in the results.

Results of Questionnaires

Two sections of questionnaires are used in this research and each questionnaire contains 12 questions.

Questionnaire Section 1: Results and Findings

Question 1 to 5 were designed to investigate the appropriate teaching methods and approaches in diverse higher education. The participants were asked the following questions;

- What are the most effective lecturing methods adopted in higher education in diverse environment
- How lecturers should have in consideration the cultural values to select interactive teaching methods
- How to identify students' learning needs while assessing potential problem areas
- How to execute strength based teaching methods to motivate students to enhance learning
- How to create a learning environment in class rooms to maintain the learning culture in small groups and large groups of students

In this part, lecturers were informed in view of the fact that several teaching methods are used in higher education, which approach and method would be the most appropriate because most of the students are from overseas. 100% response was received and all provided a unanimous response that discussion based lecturing and case study was the most appropriate method and approach, as it produces opportunity for students to learn several aspects and enhance their learning process. The second question asked raised the issue how important cultural values and interactive teaching methods were to achieve learning in diverse environment. In the third question, learning needs of students were enquired of lecturers and they were asked how the assessment could be carried out to ascertain students' expectations as they need to develop their learning process.

The Fourth question focussed on investigation of strength based teaching and the lecturers were asked might build confidence in students as they are new to the higher education system in the UK. The Fifth question addressed the class room learning environment and cultural consideration while lecturing. It is also asked that how teaching methods should be adopted and implemented in small and large classes.

Table 1: Questionnaire Section 1: Results and Findings

Question No.	Question	Very Important	Less important	Not Important
1	Is "Case Study" is an affective teaching method in higher education environment	100%	0%	0%
2	Should lecturers consider cultural values and interactive teaching methods	99%	1%	0%
3	Is it necessary to Identify students' learning challenges in context of potential problem areas	100%	0%	0%
4	Strength-based teaching should be adopted	97%	3%	0%
5	Discussion with students can be used to create a learning environment in class rooms to maintain the learning process	95%	5%	0%

Source: Author developed

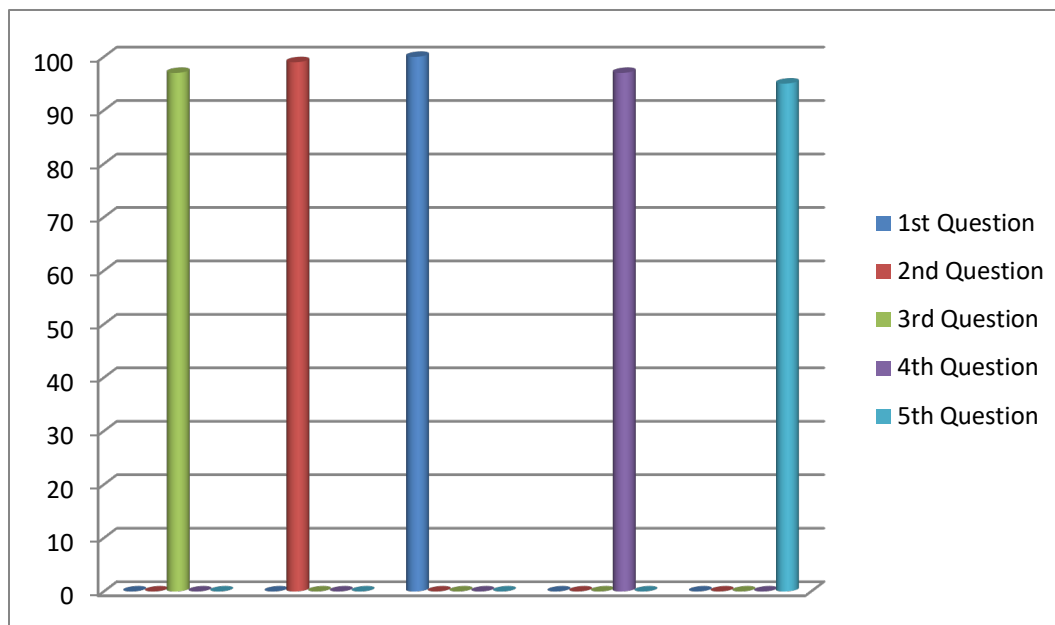


Figure 3: Results of Questionnaire Section 1

Source: Author developed

Questionnaire Section 2: Results and Findings

Question 6 to 12 were designed to investigate how a learning environment could be achieved while considering their learning styles. The participants were asked the following questions:

The following questions were asked;

- Is it important to consider learning styles of students in higher education environment?
- What are the essential considerations to develop a learning environment in relation to learning styles?
- How can lecturers manage students' learning styles during delivery of a lecturer?

- How to encourage students to interact with other students and engage social activities to synchronize learning style with the academic learning requirements?
- How to design scheme of work and session plans in the context of learning styles of students
- Is it necessary for a lecturer to discuss with students their level of knowledge and information about the subject to select teaching material?
- Should a lecturer be in touch with students as their learning styles vary during the period of their study?

In this part, questions were asked in the context of learning styles of overseas students' different culture. The questions focussed to investigate how a lecturer should manage students' learning styles in accordance with the learning environment ethics. Once students' learning style is assessed, then lecturers may continuously be in touch with students as their learning style changes with their educational development and knowledge in the subject. The lecturers were also asked how students would be encouraged by teaching activities to be self-motivated and discuss and communicate with other fellow students. It was observed by academics that some lecturers designed their lecturers according to their capability to deliver and knowledge in the subject but students' were unable to understand.

Therefore in this context lecturers were asked what would be the strategies to choose lecturing material, designing schemes of work and lesson plans in a diverse environment. It was analysed through results that learning styles were very important to consider and this was the responsibility of lecturers to synchronize lecturing material and methods in accordance with a capability and learning style to achieve the desired learning outcome.

Table 2: Questionnaire Section 2: Results and Findings

Question No.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Agree
6	Is it important to consider learning styles of students in a higher education environment	85%	15%	0%
7	What are the essential considerations to develop a learning environment in relation to learning styles	77%	23%	0%
8	How a lecturer can manage students' learning styles during delivery of course	82%	18%	0%
9	How to encourage students to engage with other students and social activities to synchronize learning style with the academic learning requirements	97%	3%	0%
10	How to design scheme of work and session plans in context of learning styles of students	93%	7%	0%
11	Is it necessary for a lecturer to discuss with students their level of knowledge and information about the subject to select teaching material	86%	14%	0%
12	A lecturer should be in touch with students as their learning styles vary with the time they spend in the study	89%	11%	0%

Source: Author developed

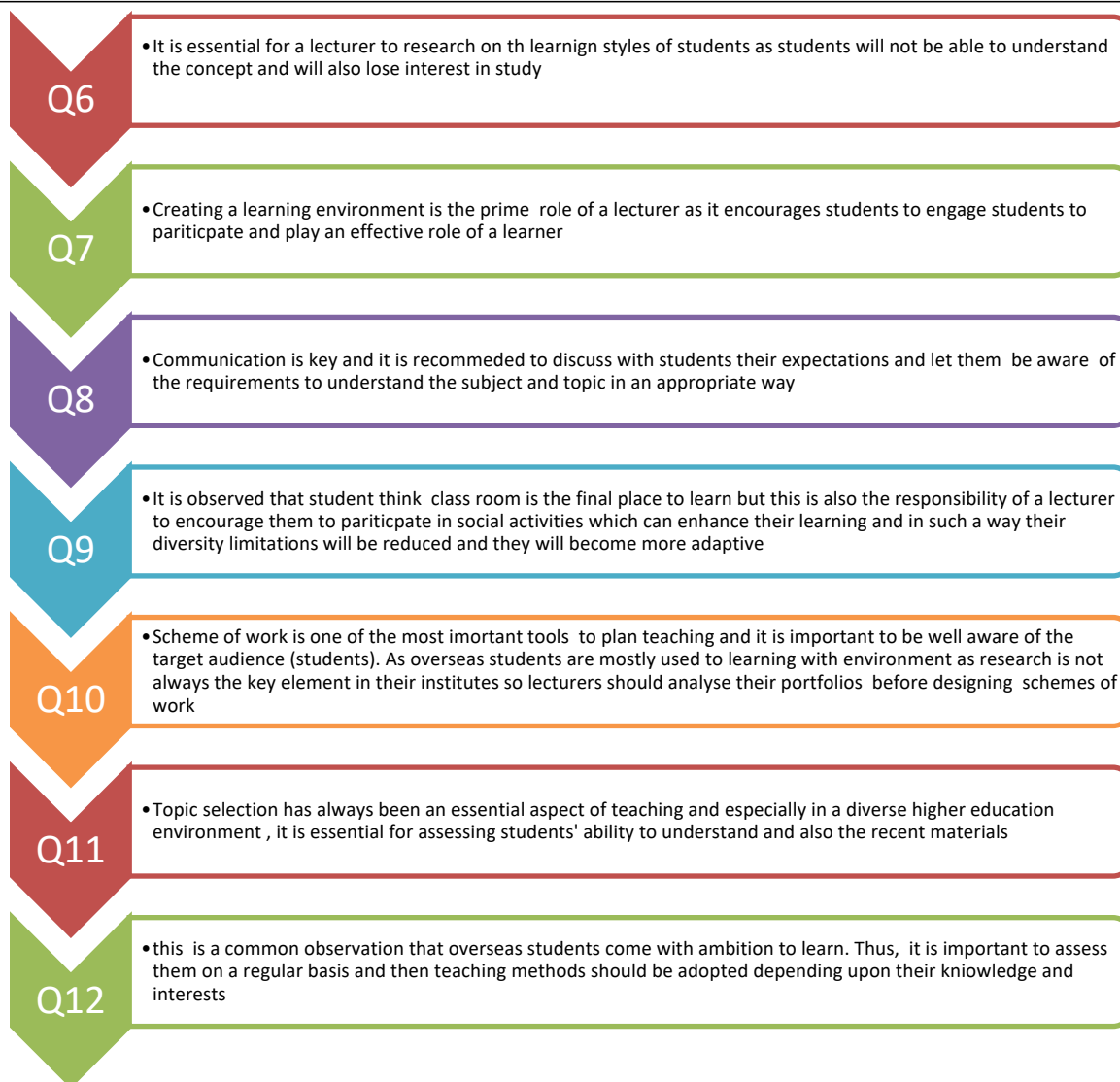


Figure 4: Results of Questions 6 – 12: Section 2

Source: Author developed

Overview of Interviews

Two interviews were conducted in this research. These interviewees were senior lecturers, junior and senior students from three different countries. The questions were presented in a professional way and participants were given an agenda for interviews before they took place. 5 questions in each interview were asked and each interview took 45 minutes discussion.

Senior Lecturer Interview Questions

The following were the questions:

- Which teaching methods were the most appropriate in diverse higher education environment and do you think that the problem based teaching can be an effective teaching method and approach
- What is the role of a lecturer in creating a learning environment and how do you see cultural diversity and attitude towards learning by international students

- How can students be encouraged to cope with academic structure in the UK although they may not be used to do research
- How are the lecturers informed of the students' cultural and educational backgrounds; and
- Is there any discussion forum where lecturers and student could communicate for the purpose of developing a better understanding of each other?

Interviews Results:

Table 3: Interview results

Effective Teaching Methods in Diverse Higher Education Environment Percentage	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Agree
Lecture	-	Yes	-
Group discussion	Yes	-	-
Presentations on individual basis	Yes	-	-
Problem based assignments	Yes	-	-
Scenario-based activities	Yes	-	-
Seminars	-	Yes	-
Workshops	-	Yes	-
Brainstorming sessions	Yes	-	-
Role play	-	Yes	-
Case study based teaching	Yes	-	-

Source: Author developed

Table 4: Interview results

Essentials to be communicated	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Agree
Academic Standards	Yes	-	-
Understanding students' cultural diversity	Yes	-	-
Self-confidence building	Yes	-	-
Learning environment development	Yes	-	-
Encouragement towards developing learning attitude	Yes	-	-
Communication Forum	Yes	-	-
Assessment in earlier sessions	-	Yes	-

Source: Author developed

Students Interview Questions

These were the following questions;

- Are you satisfied with the current teaching methods in class- rooms?
- How do lecturers consider your learning styles and cultural values to achieve your learning needs?
- What are the best approaches that your lecturers use to enhance your learning process?
- Do you think that discussion of topics during teaching helps?
- Do lecturers adopt the appropriate communication channels

Interview Results

Table 5: Students' interview results

Lecturers Role and Students Response	Satisfied	Less Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Teaching Methods used in class rooms	Yes	-	-
Lectures are delivered in accordance to learning styles	Yes	-	-
Cultural values are considered	Yes	-	-
Communication	Yes	-	-
Discussion	Yes	-	-

Source: Author developed

It can be stated here that results evidence the fact that the above mentioned teaching methods were found to be helpful for lecturers and students in a higher education environment especially when student is diverse.

Strengths and Limitations of Research

This research is quite comprehensive and its strengths include; a valuable critical analysis which should be beneficial for lecturers in higher education in a diverse environment, students' methods of engaging themselves in learning and development, cultural values and lecturing methods and lecturing according to learning styles etc.

As far as limitations are concerned;

- Not much research has been done earlier so it may be a limitation of this research to consult sources
- It may be possible that participants could not disclose the most appropriate information because of the institute's data protection policy
- It may be possible that students were not able to respond to questions because of their busy schedule although they were allowed enough time to deliver participation in this research process.

Validity and Reliability Issues

Validity and reliability are the two key areas in higher education research. It was challenging to maintain the quality of the information and achieving objectives in time but it was done with extra efforts. Reliability is also focussed in this research and all sources are confirmed with authentic people in academics and by reading in detail.

Implications of the study for professional practice and personal and professional development

The results and findings of this research are achieved in accordance with QCF standards framework and it is carefully considered that all actions taken throughout this research are synchronized with higher education standards.

Area of activity, core knowledge and professional values have been involved in this research and this research is focussed on investigating various aspects of the nature of research for a practical application of the results it attained. As far as the area of activity is concerned, results and findings of the research show that above mentioned teaching methods are quite effective in a diverse higher

education environment and it also helps creating learning environment in which students share knowledge and enhance their learning process. As far as teaching and learning activities are concerned, the present research maintains that lecturers are responsible for engaging students in activities to enhance their learning process on regular basis. It is also observed in this research and presented in results that overseas students are new to the UK academic structure and lecturers need to support them to build their confidence and enhance their learning process.

As far as the core knowledge is concerned, the selection of subjects and topic material are always very important and lecturers should assess students' learning styles and capability of understanding while choosing material. This research also confirms that students should be encouraged by lecturers to develop themselves by performing various effective learning activities such as general discussion and also topic oriented discussions. Technology plays a vital role in a learning process and it is also observed in various phases of their learning process that students are interested to learn from interactive methods and technology can be used to achieve them. It has also been analysed that lecturers should evaluate their teaching methods and delivery approach from time to time and improvement should be made.

Quality assurance should also be kept in mind while designing lectures. Professional values are also having significant position in QCF standards. Every learner should be given respect and the learning outcome should be well explained by lecturers. Encouragement is always considered a key in higher education learning as far as overseas students are concerned. In QCF standards it is clearly stated that diversity consideration in higher education teaching/lecturing is essential and it should be given a high priority.

It can be stated here that the higher education standard framework clearly focuses on learners' involvement to make learning process effective and also diversity assessment is an integral part of it

Contribution of this Research

This research will help higher education teachers/lecturers to understand diverse students' issues and what are the criteria and factors to choose for the most appropriate teaching/lecturing method. It should also encourage teachers/lecturers in higher education environment to assess students through various academic activities during sessions and build their confidence to play a vital role in learning and enhancing their knowledge by sharing information and discussion. This research also identified various factors which are not very commonly adopted in higher education as teachers/lecturers believe that those methods can only be used at a school level such as assigning mind mapping and thinking tasks and then explaining the students' work on the basis of their own strengths etc.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This action research has investigated the effective teaching methods and approaches in diverse higher education environment and it clearly elaborated the various aspects their significance such as cultural values, confidence, learning styles, discussions, knowledge sharing, interaction etc.

This research is conducted in comprehensive spectrum which addresses essential aspects of teaching/lecturing methods when students are diverse. There are some suggestions which can be

adopted to further enhance students' learning experience through effective teaching/lecturing methods;

- The lecturers should provide weekly or monthly students' progress report to students, program management, and also to guardian or parents so students know there are some people who are expecting the best from them.
- A test should also be taken as it improves students' critical understanding for the course.

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