

# Faculty Members' Perspective on Theoretical Orientation, Dimensions and Elements of Effective Teaching

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**Abstract** - *This study was conducted to find out the theoretical orientation of the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao (USM), Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines on effective teaching whether leaning towards the Behaviorist or Constructivist learning theory. Further, dimensions and elements of effective teaching were identified based on their theoretical orientation. The study used the descriptive – cross-sectional survey design because it sought to find out the perspective of the faculty, differences in faculty perspective when grouped according to length of service and educational qualification. It used random sampling by proportionate allocation of 30% of faculty members per college or institute. They were chosen based on their length of service and educational qualification. The instrument that was used in this study is a questionnaire of twenty items, each with two statements about teaching. One statement leans towards Behaviorist view and the other towards the Constructivist view. Statements were randomly arranged to start with either Behaviorist or Constructivist view. The faculty members chose the statement they considered important in effective teaching. From their answers, the dimensions and elements of effective teaching were identified. USM faculty members' view of effective teaching leans towards the Constructivist theory. The identified elements of effective teaching by USM faculty members under the dimension of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance of Learning conform to the Constructivist view; however, they prefer a Teacher-Directed instruction. Regardless of length of service and educational qualification, the faculty members of USM are Constructivist in orientation.*

**Keywords:** *Faculty members' perspective, theoretical orientation, dimensions, elements, effective teaching.*

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of globalization is regarded primarily as a socio-political and cultural process that is restructuring the character of many nations in relation to global market, treaties, and customs. Lately it has become commonly explored in the perspective of education [1].

The challenge of globalization to education especially in higher institution of learning is how to cope with international standards and universalized teaching and learning to produce the kind of students that are ready for global competition. With this, every institution needs to continue to improve its effectiveness in delivering the kind of teaching that students need in order to acquire the necessary competencies in their particular fields.

Improvement on the quality of teaching should be given prime importance. Darling-Hammond, 1997; 1998 cited in [2] claimed that the quality of instruction

has the biggest impact on students' achievement as compared to socio-cultural factors. This has paved the way to highlight on quality teaching to promote students' learning in schools. This is a paradigm shift from the old notion that students' achievement is a result of socio-cultural factors such as family background, race, ethnicity and the likes as claimed by Jencks (1972) cited in Lovat [2].

In the Philippines, there are no clear elements of effective teaching except of general principles and guidelines on how to become an effective teacher. Some recognized ineffective teacher practices consist of teacher reliance on textbooks, workbooks, and manuals, emphasis on recalling of facts rather than understanding, lack of students involvement, low-level thinking skills, lack of attention to individual learning needs, and more individualized learning rather than cooperative learning [3].

This study aims to distinguish whether the faculty perceived effective teaching on the view of Behaviorism/Objectivism/Directed Instruction or on the view of Constructivism.

Behaviorism which is commonly referred to as the theoretical basis of the traditional way of teaching believes that learning happens when knowledge is transmitted to and acquired by learners. The behaviorists are not concerned with how or why knowledge is obtained, but rather if the correct response is given. The learner uses low level processing skills to understand materials and the materials are often detached from real-world contexts or situations [4].

Constructivism based on the proponents like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner offers the idea that learners construct knowledge in their minds by participating in certain experiences supported by background knowledge, experiences, and aptitudes [5], [6].

These two theories usually have conflicting views about effective teaching and address different classroom situations.

This study was also conceptualized to identify the dimensions and elements that the students perceived to be important in effective teaching. This is based on the "Quality Teaching" model used in public schools in New South Wales, Australia [7]. The "Quality Teaching" model was also based on several studies about Authentic Pedagogy [8], [9]. This model is a general teaching framework that can be used in all levels across all learning areas.

This study sought to find out the dimensions and elements of effective teaching that are perceived important by the faculty of the University of Southern Mindanao.

In the "Quality Teaching" model, there are three dimensions: Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance of Learning. Each dimension has six elements. Under Intellectual Quality are Deep Knowledge, Deep Understanding, Problematic Knowledge, Higher-order thinking, Metalanguage, and Substantive Communication. Under Quality Learning Environment are Explicit Quality Criteria, Engagement, High Expectations, Social Support, Students' Self-Regulation, and Student Direction. Under Significance of Learning are Background Knowledge, Cultural Knowledge, Knowledge Integration, Inclusivity, Connectedness, and Narrative.

This study also considered the different principles of teaching and learning in identifying the dimensions and elements of effective teaching. Corpuz and Salandanan [10] gave the following principles of teaching and learning: learning is an active process; the more senses are used, the more effective is the learning process; a non-threatening atmosphere enhances learning; emotion has the power to increase retention and learning; learning is more meaningful when it is connected to students' everyday life; good teaching goes beyond recall of information; and an integrated teaching approach is more effective than teaching isolated bits of information.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed to find out the theoretical orientation, dimensions and elements of effective teaching on the perspective of the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao. Specifically, it is intended to determine the theoretical orientation of USM faculty members on effective teaching whether leaning towards the view of Behaviorism or Constructivism. Consequently, the study identified the dimensions and elements of effective teaching as perceived by the USM faculty members based on their theoretical orientation. Finally, it sought to find out differences of faculty perspective on effective teaching when grouped according to educational qualification and teaching experience.

### **METHODS**

The study used the descriptive – cross-sectional survey design because it sought to find out the perspective of the faculty, differences in faculty perspective when grouped according to educational qualification and teaching experience. This was the most appropriate design for this study as it attempted to assess and describe the existing theoretical inclination of USM faculty on effective teaching.

The faculty respondents in this study were 96 or 30% of the permanent or temporary faculty members from the eight colleges and one institute considered. They were chosen randomly based on their educational qualification whether Bachelor's, Master's or Doctorate Degree and teaching experience or length of service which is either 0-20 or 21 years and above.

The instrument that was used in this study is a questionnaire of twenty items, each with two statements about teaching. One statement leans towards Behaviorist view and the other towards the Constructivist view. Every item in the questionnaire

points to an element in effective teaching. The statement on the Constructivist view was based on the "Quality Teaching" model of New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Australia [7] and the researcher placed a corresponding statement on the Behaviorist view. It was content validated by three experts on pedagogy from the College of Education, University of Southern Mindanao, Kabacan, Cotabato, Philippines.

The researcher gave a letter asking permission from each respondent to be part of the study with the assurance that all information given and responses to the questionnaire would be treated with utmost confidentiality. In the questionnaire, statements were randomly arranged to start with either Behaviorist or Constructivist view. The faculty members chose the statements they considered important in effective teaching. From their answers, the dimensions and elements of effective teaching were identified.

To show patterns and trends on faculty members' theoretical orientation on effective teaching, frequency counts and percentages were used. The contingency table and chi-square test of proportion were used to show differences in faculty members' perspective when grouped according to length of service and educational qualification.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Theoretical orientation of USM faculty members on effective teaching (n=98)

Theoretical Orientations	f	%
Mixed	8	8.2
Constructivism	90	91.8

The data showed that 90 or 91.8% of the faculty respondents have Constructivist theoretical orientation on effective teaching. This implies that most of the faculty members believe in the Constructivist view that teaching should develop intellectual quality among students to have deep knowledge, deep understanding of the concepts, develop higher order thinking, and students should be actively involved in the construction of knowledge based on their experiences. Further, the faculty members affirm the importance of a supportive environment in order for learning to take place. Students want fairness thus teachers should have explicit criteria in evaluating performance, they need the support of the teacher and their co-learners to make the learning process richer,

engaging and more meaningful. Moreover, the faculty members support the idea that to increase the significance of what the students are learning, teachers should consider their background knowledge, use varied instructional materials and connect the lesson to their everyday lives.

Only 8 or 8.2 percent have Mixed or Combined Behaviorist and Constructivist theoretical orientations. They were those faculty members whose preferences almost split equally to Behaviorism or Constructivism. These faculty members believe that in terms of intellectual quality, deep knowledge and deep understanding are important; however, facts and details are also equally significant. In terms of quality learning environment, they believe in engaging students in activities and should be given certain degree of autonomy in doing the task; nevertheless, they also give emphasis on the role of the teacher in directing the activities and in imposing discipline in the classroom. On significance of learning, these faculty members believe in integrating the prior knowledge and experiences of students to the lesson and using varied instructional materials but they do not discount the importance of the textbook and manuals in developing the concept of the lesson.

No one from the respondents has a pure Behaviorist theoretical orientation. This denotes that no one among the faculty members believes in the traditional role of the teacher as the giver of knowledge and the sole source of power in the classroom. No one concentrates on developing the basic skills or lower order thinking and no one solely depends on textbooks and manuals as instructional materials.

The result showed that the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao are familiar with the trends and approaches to teaching that are supported by research and literature [8]-[10]. This also showed open-mindedness of USM faculty members to changes and improvements in the teaching and learning process. The faculty members have indicated a shift in their role from giver of knowledge to a facilitator of learning. Lucas and Corpuz[11] emphasized that as a facilitator of learning, a teacher must consider learner-centered principles that promote active learning, critical and creative thinking, authentic activities, collaborative and interactive learning, and the maximum development of the potentials of every learner.

Table 2. Elements of effective teaching as viewed by USM faculty members.

Dimensions	Elements	Theoretical Orientation				Elements based on Modal Response
		Behaviorism		Constructivism		
		f	%	f	%	
Intellectual Quality	Knowledge	30	30.6	68	69.4	Deep Knowledge
	Understanding	7	7.1	91	92.9	<b>Deep Understanding</b>
	Presentation	9	9.2	89	90.8	<b>Problematic Knowledge</b>
	Thinking Skills	12	12.2	86	87.8	<b>Higher Order Thinking</b>
	Language	10	10.2	88	89.8	<b>Meta language</b>
	Communication	14	14.3	84	85.7	<b>Substantive</b>
Quality Learning Environment	Quality Criteria	2	2.0	96	98.0	<b>Explicit Quality Criteria</b>
	Engagement	11	11.2	87	88.8	<b>High Engagement</b>
	Expectation	7	7.1	91	92.9	<b>High Expectations</b>
	Learning Support	6	6.1	92	93.9	<b>Social Support</b>
	Regulation	42	42.9	56	57.1	Student Regulation
	Direction	54	55.1	44	44.9	<i>Teacher Direction</i>
Significance of Learning	Criteria Formulation	40	40.8	58	59.2	Teacher-Student Criteria
	Background Knowledge	13	13.3	85	86.7	<b>BK Integration</b>
	Culture Knowledge	34	34.7	64	65.3	CK integration
	Knowledge Scope	6	6.1	92	93.9	<b>Knowledge Integration</b>
	Student Participation	-	-	98	100.0	<b>Inclusivity</b>
	Lesson Enhancement	17	17.3	81	82.7	<b>Narrative</b>
	Learning Style	24	24.5	74	75.5	<b>Group Learning</b>
	Instructional Materials	10	10.2	88	89.8	<b>Varied and Authentic</b>

### USM Faculty Members' View on the Elements of Effective Teaching under the Dimension of Intellectual Quality

On the dimension of Intellectual Quality, all the Constructivist elements were perceived important by the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao. However, five elements were convincingly perceived important because they were preferred by more than 75% of the respondents. These were Deep Understanding (92.9%), Problematic Knowledge (90.8%), Metalanguage (89.8%), Higher Order Thinking (87.8%), and Substantive Communication (85.7%). The element Deep Knowledge was perceived important by 69.4% of the respondents.

Faculty members believe in developing Deep Understanding among students by encouraging them to participate and demonstrate understanding through providing information, views, and reasoning about the lesson. They require students to explore relationship of ideas and express their arguments related to concepts that are being developed during the course of the lesson. The element Problematic Knowledge means that faculty members give students the opportunity to view knowledge in different perspectives which enable them to offer varied views and even question the concept; thus, teaching them to construct their own knowledge. Additionally, they

also agree on the importance of the element Meta-language because they provide a thorough discussion on words, sentences and language used in the lesson to aid in the understanding of the topic discussed. Moreover, developing Higher Order Thinking Skill like analysis, synthesis or generalization, and evaluation or judgment is perceived important because these are the skills necessary to succeed in their fields as the world is always confronted with complex problems that need wise decision making. Finally, they consider Substantive Communication as important element since sustained interaction between the teacher and the students, and among students is necessary throughout the lesson.

The value of the elements of Intellectual Quality was supported by [12] who asserted that although students need basic knowledge as basis for more learning, they also need deep, conceptual understandings – “knowledge that lasts longer than the time it takes for a student to pass a test.” Moreover, [13] called for revitalization and continuous dynamism of teaching practices to create new visions, teaching that enables students to be creative and to go out of their comfort zones, and to make education the real practice of freedom.

### **USM Faculty Members' View on the Elements of Effective Teaching under the Dimension of Quality Learning Environment**

On the dimension of Quality Learning Environment, four Constructivist elements were persuasively perceived important by the faculty. These elements were Explicit Quality Criteria (98.0%), Social Support (93.9%), High Expectations (92.9%), and High Engagement (88.8%).

Explicit Quality Criteria is important for students to produce a desirable quality of work because there is a standard and basis in assessing their work [7]. The lack of explicitness by teachers about their expectations of student performance is a systematic hindrance to improve literacy outcomes [14].

Newmann, Marks and Gamoran [15] and Avery [16] both confirmed that engaging students in highly intellectual and authentic tasks improve their performance. Likewise, students are motivated to learn when teachers communicate their expectations and display the belief that students can do what are expected of them [17].

The faculty members also recognized the value of Social Support wherein teachers directly communicate their high expectations that students are able to do the task. It also creates a friendly atmosphere where students work cooperatively. Marks, Doane and Secada [18] stressed that social support includes cooperative learning among students, teacher's encouragement for students to give their best, teacher's attention to students' needs, and shared responsibility between teacher and students in the pursuit of learning.

Another Constructivist element Student Regulation was perceived important by 57.1% of the respondents. The faculty members wanted the lesson to proceed with momentum because students demonstrate independence and initiative in relation to their own behavior. There is no time wasted in disciplining students because they regulate their actions and behavior. Students' self-regulation of their own learning is associated to academic performance [19].

The only Behaviorist element perceived important by the 55.1% of the respondents was Teacher Direction. USM faculty members valued their competence in deciding and specifying the activities to be performed by students. This perception was in consonance with the study of [20] which stated that starting 1980s, interactions between teachers and students were more relaxed and classrooms were less

formal places compared to centuries before; however, far fewer teachers jointly planned with students on what content to teach, which activities to use, and how much time to allocate to each activity.

USM faculty members should be open to research findings about this element. NSW, DET [7] emphasized that Student Direction aims to give students some degree of autonomy in the learning process such as in the choice of activity, the time spent for the activity, and the strategy in doing the activity as long as they agreed with some conditions they set with the teacher. As Biggs [21] emphasized the need for students to participate, determine, construct, and monitor their learning.

### **USM Faculty Members' View on the Elements of Effective Teaching under the Dimension of Significance of Learning**

On the third dimension Significance of Learning, six Constructivist elements were undoubtedly perceived important. These were Inclusivity (100%), Knowledge Integration (93.9%), Varied and Authentic Instructional Materials (89.8%), Background Knowledge Integration (86.7%), Narrative (82.7%), and Group Learning (75.5%). The other two Constructivist elements were Cultural Knowledge Integration (65.3%) and Teacher-Student Criteria (59.2%).

All faculty members regard Inclusivity as a very important element in teaching and learning process. This means that they give all students equal opportunity to participate in the class and their contributions are recognized and valued. They do not limit participation to academically performing ones. This perspective of the faculty members support [22] who claimed that inclusive classroom practices lead to better social and academic outcomes for all students.

Another important element in this dimension is Knowledge Integration. This implies that faculty members relate the lesson to other areas of learning, to the experiences of students and to the local, national and international situations. This finding is in consonance with [7] which asserted that knowledge integration allows students to use their accumulated knowledge from different sources if they are useful in the understanding of concepts at hand [7].

They also valued the use of Varied and Authentic instructional materials like multi-media resources, students' experiences, and manipulative materials aside from textbooks and workbooks. They believe that these materials facilitate a lively classroom and

encourage student participation. Through these materials, students are able to visualize the concepts they are learning. This affirms [10] who emphasized that varied and authentic instructional materials help achieve the lesson objectives and assist students grasp difficult concepts.

Background Knowledge, on their perspective, should be taken into consideration. It should be incorporated into the lesson. They provide students the opportunity to make connections between their knowledge and experience and the substance of the lesson. Bruner [23] claimed that educational process is connecting the known to the new.

Narrative was also perceived important. Narrative is the use of stories written, told, read, viewed or listened to help illustrate or bring to life the knowledge that students are addressing in the classroom. Narratives may include personal stories, biographies, historical accounts, case studies, literary and cultural texts and performances. Egan [24] argued for the universal value of "story form" as facilitative to teaching and learning.

The faculty members likewise valued the importance of Group or Cooperative Learning. They give more importance on group working together to lighten difficult task rather than individual-focused learning which usually encourage competition. They believe that the social skills students develop in cooperative learning are necessary for them to succeed in their chosen career and in their lives. According to research findings stated in the work of [25], cooperative learning promotes emotional and social benefits such as increased student interest in and valuing of subject matter, and develops positive attitudes and social interactions among students who differ in achievement levels and other characteristics.

### USM Faculty Members' Theoretical Orientation According to Length of Service and Educational Qualification

Based on the data gathered, 48 out of 52 or 92.3% of the faculty respondents with 0-20 years of service were Constructivist in orientation. For faculty with 21 years and above length of service, 42 out of 46 or 91.3% were also Constructivists. The result showed that regardless of length of service or number of years in teaching, the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao are aware of the new trends and approaches in teaching that support the development of deep knowledge and deep understanding about concepts of the lesson, students' active involvement in

the learning process by providing them a supportive learning environment, and engaging them with real life activities through the aid of authentic and varied instructional materials.

Most of these faculty members were products of the 80's and 90's. In the United States of America, since the 1980s, student-centered tradition of teaching was alive and well. Teachers created versions of child-centered classrooms where students could move freely in activity centers, students work together, and teacher-student planning occur daily [20]. This practice also influenced the Philippines and other countries in the world in the 90s. Consequently, majority of the faculty have Constructivist orientation. Constructivist approach to teaching is also supported by research as it promotes the ability to think and to apply concepts to real life situations, and develop students' communication skills through interactive and collaborative learning [25].

In terms of educational qualification, it was evident that regardless of degrees, most of the faculty members have Constructivist theoretical orientation. However, faculty members tend to be more Constructivist as they continued their professional learning. Constructivist percentages were the following: 88.5% for Bachelor's Degree, 90% for Master's Degree, and 100% for Doctorate Degree. Numerous studies and literature suggest that teachers' continuing education is essential to improved teaching competence and practices. Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin [26] claimed that professional development provides teachers the opportunity to reflect critically on their practice and to fashion new knowledge and beliefs about content, pedagogy, and learners.

Table 3. Theoretical orientation of USM faculty members on effective teaching according to length of service and educational qualification

Grouping Variable	Theoretical Orientation			
	Mixed		Constructivism	
	f	%	f	%
Teaching Experience				
0 – 20 years	4	7.7	48	92.3
21 years and above	4	8.7	42	91.3
Chi-square value = .033 <sup>ns</sup>			p value = .86	
Educational Qualification				
Bachelor's Degree	3	11.5	23	88.5
Master's Degree	5	10.0	45	90.0
Doctorate Degree			22	100.0
Chi-square value = .431 <sup>ns</sup>			p value = .12	

## Summary

Most of the faculty members of the University of Southern Mindanao have Constructivist theoretical orientation towards effective teaching. They view that teaching should develop intellectual quality among students to have deep knowledge and deep understanding of the concepts, develop higher order thinking and students actively construct knowledge through the guide of the teachers. The faculty members also affirm the importance of a supportive learning environment founded on fair and explicit criteria in evaluating performance, and support from the teacher and co-learners. Moreover, the faculty members support the idea that to increase the significance of learning, teachers should consider students' experiences, and engage them through the use varied and authentic instructional materials.

The elements of effective teaching deemed important under the dimension of Intellectual Quality were: Deep Knowledge, Deep Understanding, Problematic Knowledge, Higher Order Thinking, Metalanguage, and Substantive Communication. All these elements gear towards the development of meaningful knowledge by understanding the whole concept of the lesson and not only the bits of facts or details. USM faculty members believe that through this, learning becomes more lasting and significant to students.

The elements under the dimension of Quality Learning Environment were: Explicit Quality Criteria, High Engagement, High Expectation, Social Support, Teacher with Student Regulation, and Teacher Direction.

These elements showed that faculty members provide an environment conducive to learning characterized by fairness and objective criteria for evaluation. They also engage students with authentic activities at certain degree of autonomy; however, they specify the activities based on course content and they ensure proper behavior and discipline in the classroom.

The elements under the dimension of Significance of Learning were: Teacher-Student Criteria, Background Knowledge Integration, Cultural Knowledge Integration, Knowledge Integration, Inclusivity, Narrative, Cooperative Learning, and Varied and Authentic Instructional Materials. These elements convey that faculty members are empowering students in the classroom. They value students' participation regardless of personal background and their experiences are used as

resources in learning with the aid of various instructional materials to make learning fun, engaging, meaningful and more lasting.

Most of the faculty members have Constructivist theoretical orientation regardless of their length of service and educational qualification. As they enter the teaching profession in the university, they already have the belief on student-centered teaching which actively involved students in learning. Moreover, as they stay longer and continue their higher learning, this belief is more strengthened through their daily teaching experiences and professional development.

## CONCLUSION

With the foregoing findings of the study, the following conclusions are derived: USM faculty perspective of effective teaching leans towards the constructivist theory; the identified elements of effective teaching by USM faculty under the dimension of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment, and Significance of Learning conform to the Constructivist view, however, they prefer a Teacher Directed instruction; regardless of length of service and educational qualification, USM faculty are Constructivists.

To the University of Southern Mindanao where these faculty members belong, it connotes positive indication to the teaching-learning process in the university because they have the right perspective towards teaching as they believe in Constructivist view that primarily involve students in active construction of meaningful knowledge and that they view the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than a giver of knowledge.

The result of the study suggests that even though the faculty members have the learner-centered perspective towards teaching, they need continuous professional development whether through formal higher education or through in-service trainings to be constantly updated with the approaches and methods which are supported by research to ensure quality education thereby optimizing the potentials of every student.

The findings of the study support the Constructivist learning views of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner to mention a few, which are founded on the concepts that learning consider certain cognitive processes, the learners need social interaction and support, and learners should be engaged actively in the construction of knowledge based on their past and present experiences.

## RECOMMENDATION

With the above mentioned findings and conclusions, the researcher recommends the following to improve the teaching and learning process: the faculty as much as possible shall align their teaching methodology with the elements of effective teaching; in the supervision of instruction delivery, the elements of effective teaching shall be considered in the Performance Evaluation of faculty members; educational institutions should allocate funds to support a continuing Professional Development of faculty members about the learner-centered approaches and new trends in teaching and learning to constantly improve delivery of instruction services; educational institutions should have a dynamic Professional Development program for faculty members to relentlessly improve teaching and instructional material preparation in specific fields of specialization; the study is limited only to the perspective of faculty members; hence, it can be validated through the conduct of related study on the actual classroom practice of faculty members through classroom observation to find out whether their perspective are actually congruent to their actual practice.

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