Conceptions of Good Teaching by Good Teachers: Case Studies from an Australian University

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This paper contributes to the debate on what constitutes good teaching in early 21st Century higher education, through an examination of the experience of five outstanding lecturers from a business school in an Australian university. It is based on a qualitative study that explored their perceptions on what constitutes 'good teaching'. Resonating with existing research on good teaching practice, the findings suggest that good teachers tend to embrace constructivist principles, and are committed to facilitating learning that is deep, engaged, experientially-based, empowering, reflective, and life-long. The real-life examples of good teaching practice provided by the participants are a valuable resource to higher education teachers, in particular those beginning their careers.

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Keywords

good teaching; effective teaching; constructivism; experiential learning; engaged learning; management education

Introduction

A great deal has been written, over the past three decades, on what constitutes "good teaching" in higher education. In these works, scholars discuss good teaching practice, reflect on different aspects of teaching and learning and offer hands-on advice for teachers to enhance their teaching practice (see, for example, Biggs 2004; Bonwell & Eison 1991; Brookfield 2006; Chickering & Gamson 1987; Entwistle 1981; Light & Calkins 2008; Marton & Saljo 1976; McKeachie 1994; Prosser & Trigwell 1999; Ramsden 2003 [1992]; Saljo 1979). The variety of teaching approaches discussed in these works is itself indicative that teaching in higher education is a complex endeavour – and that good teaching is a "contested concept" (Skelton 2004, 452) with no universally accepted definition (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010).

The debate continues, and this paper aims to contribute to it by examining conceptions of good teaching, through the eyes of a small group of lecturers from a business school at an Australian university. The paper is based on a qualitative study carried out in 2010 to find out why these lecturers were regarded as "outstanding teachers" by their peers; more specifically, what approaches and techniques they used, and why they believed these approaches were effective.

The first part of the paper provides a brief review of influential works on good teaching practice, and the second presents five case studies developed from in-depth interviews with the participating teachers. The cases are illustrated with excerpts from the interview transcripts.

Good Teaching in Higher Education

In her review of works on good teaching practices, McMillan (2007) notes that many of the publications in this field fall into the "teaching skills, self-help" genre, providing educators with tips and strategies on how to improve their teaching (see, for example, Brown, Earlam, & Race 1995; McKeachie 1994). However, while pedagogical techniques are no doubt essential to enhance the teaching and learning process, it has been also argued that they are not the only means to ensure good teaching. Drawing on the work of Ramsden (2003), Clark (1998) and Cannon and Newble (2000), McMillan (2007, 211) comments that teaching tips "may merely extend the lecturer's repertoire of techniques rather than changing her or his understanding" of good teaching. This is because the "tips and strategies" approach does not make explicit the theoretical underpinnings of particular skills, and thus "can only be applied mechanically" (McMillan 2007, 211). As observed by Porter and Brophy (1988, 78), it is also important to take into consideration the "deeper dimensions" of teaching – in other words, the *principles* informing good teaching practice for effective learning in higher education.

In their informative synthesis of seminal research on good teaching, Porter and Brophy (1988) point out that the importance of the deeper dimensions of higher education teaching began to be more frequently acknowledged in the 1980s. One influential example of this genre is the Seven Good Practice Principles for undergraduate education, proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). For these researchers, good practice in undergraduate education:

      1. Encourages student-faculty contact.
      2. Encourages cooperation among students.
      3. Encourages active learning.
      4. Gives prompt feedback.

5. Emphasises time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Drawing on Chickering and Gamson (1987) and other educationalists who focused on good practice principles, Bonwell and Eison (1991) later popularised the notion of "active learning", a core concept in the constructivist movement (Piaget 1952; von Glasersfeld 1989; Vygotsky 1978, 1986). One of the underlying premises of constructivism is that learning is a dynamic process that engenders the active engagement and participation of the learner. Hence, activities designed to promote active learning should be consistent with this premise (Bonwell & Eison 1991). A teacher who embraces constructivist principles makes ample use of experientially based (Kolb 1984), participative techniques such as discussions, problem solving, cooperative learning, debates, drama, role playing, simulation, and peer teaching. These activities share in common the active involvement of the learner.

Constructivist concepts also inform the work of Ramsden, Margetson, Martin and Clark (1995) who, in a study carried out in Australia, found that good teachers:

- are good learners, in that they reflect on their teaching and they continue to engage in professional development activities;
- are enthusiastic about their discipline and convey this to their students;
- are meta-cognitive about their teaching and therefore plan, monitor, evaluate and adapt their teaching in response to their students and the learning context;
- use approaches that promote deep learning and problem-solving strategies;
- use their knowledge to help learners construct their own knowledge and understanding;
- have clearly defined goals, assess student learning appropriately and provide meaningful feedback;
- encourage lifelong independent learning;
- challenge and support their students; and
- are aware and responsive to their students' needs.

Focusing on the learner, Race (2010) has drawn attention more recently to "seven factors underpinning successful learning": ' wanting to learn; needing to learn; learning by doing; learning through feedback; making sense of "things"; explaining, coaching and teaching in small groups; and learning by assessing in small groups. Endorsing the advice of his colleagues, Rice (2010) also draws attention to the quintessential role of motivation in the learning process, recommending experientially based activities to help students make sense of knowledge.

Shifting the focus from teacher to *teaching practice*, Australian researchers Kember and McNaught (2007, 1) have elaborated a model of "good university teaching" based on their interviews with a group of lecturers regarded by their peers as exemplary teachers. Kember and McNaught (2007) propose ten principles of good teaching that take into account, *inter alia*, the importance of motivating students to learn; developing higher-order skills for deep learning; engaging students in learning; and taking into account students' future needs.

Another important recent work contributing to the debate on good teaching is that of Light and Calkins (2008), who tackle the topic from a different angle. Drawing on Prosser and Trigwell's

(1999) phenomenographic study, they make a distinction between three types of "conceptions of teaching": teacher-focused, student-focused and learning-focused. In contrast to the teacher-focused and student-focused views, which privilege the role of the teacher, the learning-focused conception centres primarily on learners, involving approaches that facilitate their construction of knowledge. Light, Cox and Calkins (2010, 30) note that the learning-focused conception epitomises good teaching, as it helps students to "improve and change their conceptual understanding". In other words, it helps learners to understand that knowledge is socially constructed. Light et al. (2010, 75-76) also draw attention to the importance of sound curriculum design to allow students to develop learning skills and "the ability to transfer what is learnt to new and more complex situations".

To conclude this brief literature review, it is relevant to mention works that examine more specifically teachers' *perceptions* of what constitutes good teaching (this is the approach adopted in the research presented here). For example, in a study on award-winning teachers, Dunkin and Precians (1992) identified four dimensions viewed by the participants as characteristic of effective teaching: teaching as structuring learning*;* teaching as motivating learning; teaching as encouraging activity and independence in learning; and teaching as establishing interpersonal relations. Similarly, in a study on the perceptions of 44 exemplary university teachers from a range of disciplines, Ballantyne, Bain and Packer (1999, 243) used stories recounted by the participants to illustrate how they thought about teaching and learning issues. A set of common "discipline-focused and student-centred" themes in the participants' responses were identified by these researchers, including: "a love for one's discipline (and the desire to share it with others), valuing students and their perspectives, and making learning possible" (Ballantyne et al. 1999, 22). Sub-themes that emerged from the participants' stories included: teacher's enthusiasm; ability to create and maintain students' interest; caring for students; relevance of teaching to students' everyday experience; interaction with students to ensure understanding; and fostering lifelong learning skills (Ballantyne et al. 1999, 244-249).

In summary, the literature reveals a vibrant, ongoing debate on the meaning of good teaching, incorporating different perspectives and frameworks. Works published before the 1980s tended to fall within the "teaching skills" genre, focusing primarily on strategies and tips for teachers. Later, the literature shifted away from prescriptive approaches, towards principles for good teaching practice informed by constructivism. These principles highlighted in particular the notion of active learning.

Drawing on the most prominent themes identified in the literature, it can be inferred that good teaching begins with enthusiasm and passion for teaching, which motivate students to actively engage in learning. Good teaching is learner-focused and helps learners understand that knowledge is socially constructed and dynamic. Moreover, it helps students to shift their conceptual understanding through approaches that promote deep learning – in particular approaches designed to hone skills such as critical thinking, reflection and problem solving, through experientially based, participative activities. Good teaching involves continual reflection on teaching processes and commitment to fostering independent and lifelong learning skills. In more practical terms, good teaching entails commitment to providing constructive feedback to students and a soundly designed, relevant curriculum that aligns learning outcomes with teaching methods and assessments.

As will be seen in the sections below, similar thematic patterns emerged in the stories recounted by the five champion teachers interviewed for the study reported in this paper.

The Study

Methodology

The study presented here had a qualitative design; the rationale for this is that qualitative research yields rich and multi-layered data that can generate "thick descriptions" (Geertz 1973) of the lived experience of the participants. This is ideal for exploring the experience of teaching in higher education as a complex, multi-dimensional and multi-layered endeavour.

Purposive sampling was used in the study: the researcher deliberately targeted a specific population (in this case, "exemplary teachers from an Australian business college") because of its potential to shine light on the phenomenon under investigation. Recruitment of participants was based on two criteria: a) teachers with consistently high scores in formal student evaluation over the past three years, and b) evidence of peer recognition of outstanding teaching. Five participants were selected, with the assistance of Heads of School from four business-related disciplines: economics, management, marketing and law. All participants had been teaching in higher education for more than 10 years, and four of them had received internal and external teaching awards. Two of them had been recipients of the prestigious Teaching Excellence Award from the former Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).

Case studies were developed for each teacher from the data obtained through semi-structured, face-to-face, in-depth interviews of 50 to 60 minutes. The interviews were treated as *conversations* during which the researcher encouraged the participants to talk freely about what they perceived to be good teaching, based on their own experience as university educators. Here it must be noted that it was not the aim of this study to identify problems or issues hampering good teaching; the focus was what was working well, and why. An interview schedule was used to ensure that a set of essential points were covered in the interview. This schedule highlighted themes such as the participants' disciplinary background, teaching philosophy and approaches, views on what constitutes good teaching and specific techniques they used in class.

The method of analysis in this research project involved both deductive and inductive logic: , while the researcher was looking for certain thematic categories, she was also open to emergent themes in the interviews that could to shine light on the phenomenon under investigation. In order to preserve anonymity and confidentiality, the participants are called, for the purpose of this paper, Philip, Amanda, Sebastian, Jade and Jonathan.

Conceptions of Good Teaching

Philip

Philip has been teaching in higher education for more than two decades, and shows a strong passion for his disciplinary field. He believes that for students who care about "how the world works", economics should be one of "the most relevant and exciting courses they study". However, he stresses, studying economic theory is not sufficient, nor is it simply recalling on demand large amounts of information. Students should be taught how to apply economics principles to real-world, practical problems. In his own words:

> [Economics] is often taught in a very turgid, dull, mathematical way; a very technical, abstract way. Students quite rightly wonder about its relevance, its usefulness. So my goal is to change that impression to explain things in simple, easy-to-understand, intuitive ways so that students can see that it is a vitally important discipline.

Philip notes that his teaching is geared towards promoting deep learning, which requires an ability to apply what one has learned in new and different situations; it also requires the ability to analyse, interpret, evaluate and synthesise information. He believes this approach enables students to learn and graduate with the capacity to participate actively and responsibly in a diverse and changing world.

Philip has always regarded teaching as one of his strengths because of his ability "to communicate to large groups in an effective way". In the interview, he talked about what he deems important when teaching a large first-year class (more than 30 students):

> If students perceive that you have their interests at heart, if they perceive that you are really enthusiastic about what you're doing, and that you're well prepared and that you could communicate effectively, you can keep them captivated and you can keep the attendances up [...] You have to create a conducive learning environment where students *want* to be there.

Thus, teaching for Philip is a type of performance that requires a specific set of techniques to capture the attention of "the audience". He offers some hints on how to achieve this, emphasising the role of humour in teaching:

> You have to work on your delivery. It can't be a monotone delivery. You can't just read off PowerPoint slides. You have to work on the way you express yourself and vary your pitch and volume. You've got to stop in mid-sentence. You've got to change the way you normally talk so that you attract their attention. You've got to have students continually focusing on what you're saying. You have to have a good sense of humour […].You have to have them laughing at various points [giggle].

In dealing with the challenges of teaching large first-year classes, Philip reports that he has always been open to exploring innovative approaches that facilitate improved learning outcomes. One of such approaches is the Peer Assistance Support Scheme (PASS), a program that involves "students teaching students". PASS sessions are led by senior students (PASS Leaders) who have performed outstandingly in the subject in past years, and can therefore help junior students in need of assistance.

Philip is committed to continually providing good teaching, and therefore pays a great deal of attention to how students evaluate his teaching at the end of semester. He is nevertheless aware of the shortcomings of formal evaluation surveys (e.g. ambiguous questions; standardisation that overlooks disciplinary diversity), and supplements these surveys with his own statistical tests. However, Philip points out, the "litmus test" for good teaching occurs some years after students have graduated. "How much will they remember? How much have they absorbed, and are they using in their career now?"

Summing up, Philip's conception of good teaching highlights teacher's enthusiasm, a measure of performativity and commitment to exploring innovative cooperative approaches that make teaching engaging, relevant and enduring. He also draws attention to the importance of students'

evaluation to ascertain what is and isn't working in his teaching.

Amanda

Amanda's path to academia began in the early 1990s, when she worked as a research officer for a trade union. She regards her activism in the trade union movement as an "engaged training" in industrial issues, which later became her area of teaching. Amanda acknowledges the influence of her own professional trajectory – from union activist to academic – on her teaching philosophy and approach, which emphasise the need for contextualisation. In other words, it is essential that students are encouraged to grasp the socio-political context that informs a given area of inquiry – in her case, industrial relations.

Amanda recounts that in her early days as a university teacher, she focused primarily on content. As she knew a great deal about industrial relations, she felt that her role was to transfer all that knowledge to students. To this end, she endeavoured to resource her students as much as possible through extensive lecture notes and lengthy reading lists. However, as she became better acquainted with the teaching and learning process, Amanda's perspective on good teaching began to shift toward *fostering understanding*, rather than just disseminating content. This shift began to occur when she realised that her students were unaware of the contextual forces shaping industrial relations events. She notes that, for example, students failed to appreciate the political context that shaped collective enterprise agreements, one of the core topics in the unit she taught. Therefore, Amanda felt a need to try a more critical and engaging teaching approach that would enable students to understand the political nature of employment relations. She decided that, rather than focusing on the more scholarly insights of negotiation strategies, it would be more fruitful to *immerse* her students in the process of negotiation, through situating course materials into the broader context of work-related structures and issues. As she puts it, "Contextualising the material and, in a sense, giving it something that was tactile for the students, became the bridging point to any sort of interface with what we may have considered 10 years ago as the starting point."

In her units, Amanda makes materials meaningful through an innovative activity, based on a technique developed by Ray Fells (1995) to teach industrial relations negotiation: students actively engage in online negotiation over a complex issue, trying to reach an agreement with the other party. For Amanda, *experience* is an essentially important dimension of learning:

> I wanted this exercise to be experiential for the students to just get in and do it, and understand the frustrations of negotiation, because it can be frustrating. […] It is a time-hungry thing, but they understand the process of negotiation by having to immerse themselves in it.

While good teaching for Amanda is primarily about deep engagement with students, she also acknowledges the importance of practical considerations such as a sound and "interconnected" curriculum design.

In brief, good teaching for Amanda involves making content accessible and meaningful for students through contextualisation, engagement and immersion in experientially based activities. This is enhanced by an integrated curriculum design that encourages learners to establish links between topics and concepts.

Sebastian

Before joining the higher-education system, Sebastian was an agricultural scientist. His job had an educational dimension, in that he was required to design and deliver special courses and workshops for farmers. One of the lessons Sebastian learnt from this experience is that, in order to be able to communicate knowledge effectively, a teacher must "try to make complex issues understandable". This insight has since become a fundamental principle in his teaching.

Sebastian is "passionate about teaching", and his philosophy is underpinned by the premise that teachers should *inspire* students to learn. For him, teaching is about "trying to make learning fun, engaging the students, and stimulating a hunger and a thirst for learning". Like Philip, Sebastian is attuned to the performative dimensions of teaching, which, he believes, is the element that inspires students to learn. As he puts it:

> Each time I get up in front of a class I see teaching as a performance and, you know, I do put a lot of work into preparation and revising. I never run a session with any notes...and I always try to sell the message to the students to try to inspire them, to facilitate their learning.

Sebastian stresses, nevertheless, that performance for him is more than just a visual metaphor for teaching. He facilitates learning through the use of established dramaturgic techniques to engage students in his marketing units. Invoking emotions to enhance learning is paramount to Sebastian's teaching approach, and he accomplishes this through experientially based activities designed to turn the learning process into a "memorable experience". In his own words:

> What I do in the classroom – although it might be entertaining or theatrical – is not just being a clown or a performer. In fact, in a lot of the work that I do with the students in improvisational drama, it's the students doing the acting… Through drama I've tried to engage students in terms of their emotions. And I think one of the great virtues of learning through drama is that you do invoke the emotions.

In order to make learning "memorable and relevant" Sebastian goes beyond the conventional "transmission approach" that focuses primarily on content. Consistent with his experientially based approach, Sebastian explains that good teaching transcends the mere transmission of knowledge in the classroom; it must instil in students "the will to learn". From this perspective, the role of the teacher is primarily that of a facilitator who will "motivate students to want to learn; to want to explore and learn for themselves".

He facilitates learning through the use of a technique developed by Dorothy Heathcote (1981, 1985) called "process drama", in which teacher and student work "in and out of role" to explore a given theme or issue. For example, Sebastian regularly uses an "imaging" technique whereby students are required to freeze a pose" derived from a case study. He also uses artefacts such as "funeral homes' bookmarks and those little shampoo bottles that you get in a hotel" to generate "learning conversations"[1] with students.

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[1] Based on the ideas of theorists such as Argyris (1977), Asch (1952) and Senge (1990), the notion of *learning conversations* refers to interactions based on trust, openness and respect between the parties. This is believed to optimise learning.

Summarising, good teaching for Sebastian is intimately connected with one's ability to inspire students to learn through performative techniques that invoke emotions and make learning "memorable" and lifelong. Like Amanda, Sebastian sees himself as a facilitator of learning who has shifted away from conventional transmission approaches towards constructivist methods that engage students in active, deep learning.

Jade

Jade has more than 17 years of experience as an educator, and is also a passionate and committed teacher. She sees her educational mission as "making learning relevant" to marketing students. Echoing Amanda and Sebastian, she states: "I love teaching, and I am keen to make all aspects of marketing education accessible and meaningful."

Like the other participants, Jade views herself as a facilitator of learning. She believes teachers do not need to know "everything", but they must be "enablers of learning", and they must appreciate that knowledge can come from multiple sources – including their own students. Hence, good teaching, for Jade, stems from collaboration between teacher and learner; it is a partnership in which they work together to *discover* knowledge. As she puts it:

> I try to position myself in the minds of the students and work with them to learn stuff. I think I've got a moral responsibility and a duty of care to help them learn; so it's collaboration. My role is a sort of "leader with wisdom" to help someone else uncover stuff that they need to know.

Jade stresses that she is not a person with "a passion to change the world", but she encourages students to understand that they all have a role to play in the world which they themselves have contributed to create, and this is an "empowering experience". Further reflecting on her teaching philosophy, she states:

> I don't have a strong view that this is "right" and this is "wrong" – although I ask students to always think about what's right and try and understand what's right for them.... My role is to help students facilitate themselves, acquiring the knowledge that they could all obtain if they'd had my time and space.... I guess I empower people to learn.

To a considerable extent, Jade's pedagogical approach has been inspired by the team-based learning model proposed by Larry Michaelsen and colleagues (Michaelsen, Watson, Cragin & Fink 1982). Particularly suitable for large classes, this approach entails the extensive use of permanent student work teams, with six to seven members, to accomplish specific learning objectives. Reflecting on her experience with team-based learning, Jade believes that this technique can work more effectively when teachers have high expectations of students. As she puts it, "I expect students to know more, [because] they rise to your expectations."

Resonating with the perspectives of Amanda and Sebastian, Jade believes that experientially based activities are central to good teaching, as they encourage greater engagement in class, and higher levels of reflection. For example, in her first-year marketing class, she starts the semester with a "taste-test" for breakfast cereals in which students are required to taste different types of breakfast cereals and then write reflectively about their taste experience.

Jade tries to make her lectures engaging through the use of innovative techniques. For example, when she teaches mathematics, she asks the class "to say the equation out loud [while] jumping up and down". This is because, in her view, "a lot of early developmental learning is all about doing and feeling and shaping things".

In brief, Jade's conception of good teaching closely resonates with that of Amanda and Sebastian, in that she tries to instil passion for learning in her students, valuing intensive classroom engagement. She sees herself as a facilitator of learning, but has high expectations of her students. She places particular emphasis on empowering them to learn though experientially based activities and collaborative work.

Jonathan

Jonathan has more than 10 years' experience in teaching law, and likes the idea of continually exploring different pedagogical approaches to improve student learning. As he puts it, "You have to trial a few things and see whether or not they work; what works for you and what works for the students." He mentions storytelling, role playing and service learning as examples of the innovative experientially based techniques that he uses in his teaching.

Perhaps informed by the practices of his own disciplinary field, Jonathan's teaching philosophy highlights the need to foster reflection skills in students, to pave the way for them to become *reflective practitioners* (Schön 1983, 1987). This is accomplished through an engaged learning approach that is, he says, "a two-way street"; that is, "teaching staff need to be reflective as well, not just the students". Jonathan believes that teachers need to continually reflect "on what the students' needs are; on how things are going; on whether some areas are going better than others". For him, it is essential that teachers be an integral part of the engaged-learning process. Echoing Sebastian and Amanda, Jonathan recounts that as his teaching career evolved, he found himself shifting away from the transmission model of teaching towards a more engaged approach based on *active learning* (Bonwell & Eison 1991).

Jonathan acknowledges the importance of being aware of students' different learning styles, an ability that he acquired as his career developed and he attained a better sense of his role as a teacher. He became particularly aware of different learning styles through teaching two significantly different cohorts – law and accounting students. As he explains:

> [Law students] are very much analytical. They're interested in challenging the thought processes, which immediately lends itself to some engagement. In contrast, accounting students tend to be a little bit more "black-and-white" and number-braced. So, I tend to focus a little bit more on the numbers there, rather than the underlying concepts which come from, say, legislation and cases, which is what the law students are very much interested in.

Jonathan is particularly fond of storytelling as an experientially based teaching tool that he adapts to the specific needs of his two cohorts. He explains that while storytelling is not commonly used in law, it can be useful to foster a deeper understanding of legal cases. Using materials publicly available on the internet, Jonathan asks his students to read legal cases as "stories" and try to identify the theoretical principles underpinning these narratives; "what the judge is trying to convey in a given judgement". Taking into consideration the different learning styles and needs of his accounting students, Jonathan uses a modified version of the storytelling approach for them. He asks his accounting students to produce reflective journals with their own analyses of the

stories told by participants in a tax-assistance legal-aid program, also publicly available on the internet.

For Jonathan, the effectiveness of one's teaching is not reflected merely in pass rates, but in the levels of student retention – "the students' desire to remain in a given class". In his view, this comes from their reflection on "the value of what they have learnt".

Summing up, Jonathan shares in common with Amanda, Sebastian and Jade his belief in the importance of engagement between teacher and students to promote active, independent, life-long learning. He also recognises the value of regular reflection to foster learners' commitment to reflective practice in future professional life. Regular reflection, in his view, is something that educators also need to engage in to enhance their teaching practice.

Discussion

The above case studies reveal a set of themes that closely resonate with the list of attributes characteristic of good teaching that were identified at the end of the literature review: the critical role of teacher's enthusiasm to motivate students to learn (Ballantyne et al. 1999; Kember & McNaught 2007; Race 2001; Ramsden 2003 [1992]); commitment to pedagogical approaches that promote engagement and deep learning (Kember & McNaught 2007; Ramsden 2003 [1992]); the use of experientially based activities to make learning meaningful and relevant (Kolb 1984); and the importance of a soundly designed, logically connected curriculum (Light et al. 2010).

In general, the participants' responses focused on themes related to teaching philosophy and approaches, with only two lecturers acknowledging the more practical aspects of good teaching (i.e., Amanda alluded to the importance of a sound curriculum design; Philip stressed the need for ongoing evaluation of one's teaching). None of the participants mentioned instructors' *feedback* on assessment as a learning tool, which has been increasingly recognised over the past few years as an integral element of good teaching (see, for example, Budge & Gopal 2009; Carless 2006; Ferguson 2011; Hounsell, McCune, Hounsell & Litjens 2008; Huxham 2007; Poulos & Mahony 2008; Rowe & Wood 2008; Sadler 2010; Weaver 2006). It is widely agreed in the literature that constructive and timely feedback enhances learning, as it makes students aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and produces advice on how they can improve their performance.

The importance of motivating students to learn was a central theme in the interviews. Philip, Jade and Sebastian drew attention to the performative dimensions of teaching as a means to instil in students the "will to learn" – what Race (2010, p20) terms "intrinsic motivation". Experientially based activities were highly commended by the participants as an effective way to engage students in active learning. The need to stimulate "extrinsic motivation" (Race 2010), that is, motivation arising from external sources, was also recognised in the study. For example, Philip and Jonathan highlighted the value of regularly refreshing the curriculum through the introduction of innovative approaches and techniques (e.g., PASS and storytelling). Teaching innovations create and sustain the "need to learn" (Race 2010).

The affective dimension of the learning process is another noteworthy theme that emerged in the interview with Sebastian. For him, good teaching is associated with one's ability to inspire students to learn through invoking emotions, which he accomplishes through the use of dramaturgical techniques. In Sebastian's opinion, this is what makes learning "memorable" and

lifelong. His views resonate with those of Dirkx (2001, p70), who emphasises the importance of invoking emotions in teaching to help learners "locate and construct through images", thereby creating "deep meaning". While this theme was not prominent in the early works on good teaching practice, it has been receiving growing recognition in recent years (see. for example, Brookfield 2006; Meyer & Land 2003). As Brookfield (2006, p95) commented, "it is no exaggeration to say that if classrooms are experienced as emotion-free zones of practice, then something essential to the process of learning and teaching is missing."

Both Philip and Jade emphasised the benefits of collaborative, team-based learning techniques, which, as noted in the literature review, was one of Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Seven Principles of Good Teaching. Collaborative learning is part of good teaching, as it enables students to recognise that they, too, possess knowledge that they can share with their peers. As Jade put it, this can be an "empowering experience" to learners.

The need to acknowledge different learning styles was highlighted by Jonathan, who echoing Kolb (1981), noted that different disciplines engender different learning styles. Good teaching, for him, involves the teacher's commitment to designing appropriate activities to suit the needs of students from different disciplinary backgrounds – in his experience, law and accounting. Jonathan also mentioned the need for the teacher's continual reflection on their teaching as an important element of good teaching. As seen earlier, this was the first item on Ramsden et al.'s (1995) list of good teaching characteristics.

From a more critical perspective, perhaps influenced by her disciplinary field (industrial relations), Amanda views good teaching in terms of enabling learners to contextualise knowledge. In her units, she encourages students to establish connections between macro and micro contexts or, as C. Wright Mills (1973) would have it, to use their "sociological imagination" to grasp the link between personal experience and broader socio-economic and political contexts. Fostering the development of reflection and critical thinking skills is one of Amanda's core learning outcomes.

In summary, the findings indicate that, from the perspective of a small group of business lecturers, good teaching engenders the ability to motivate students to learn – intrinsically and extrinsically – through experientially based activities and regular teaching innovations; it is associated with the teacher's ability to invoke emotions in order to create deep meaning; it involves collaboration between teacher and students, and also among students; it requires awareness of different learning styles; it endeavours to foster higher-order skills such as reflection and critical thinking; and it entails the need for continual reflection on one's own teaching.

Conclusion

Based on a qualitative study involving a group of champion teachers from an Australian business school, this paper explored their conceptions of what constitutes "good teaching". The participants' stories revealed a host of themes that closely resonate with attributes of good teaching identified in the seminal works in the field.

The main conclusion to draw from the findings is that all five lecturers have been influenced, in various degrees, by the constructivist school of thought. This is reflected in the fact that they consciously decided to move away from the conventional dissemination model that, in the words of Pratt and Collins (2001), emphasises "mastery of the subject matter or content". The influence of constructivism was also observed in the participants' views on teaching and learning as a fluid,

dynamic and experientially based process; their emphasis on deep learning, and on the importance of collaborative relationships between teacher and learner and among learners. The paper contributes to knowledge by providing concrete, real-life examples of good teaching practice in contemporary times. The stories and teaching hints that emerged from the data are valuable resources for higher-education teachers, in particular those beginning their careers who are likely to benefit from the insightful reflections of experienced and successful teachers.

It is important to acknowledge, nevertheless, the limitations of the study. The first is the small size of the sample. A larger group of lecturers – perhaps involving individuals outside the "champions" category – would have generated richer data, not only with a greater variety of views and themes, but also with the opportunity for comparative analysis between the different groups. The second limitation is the exclusive focus on the teachers' perspectives – which is only one side of the story. Scope exists for a more comprehensive study including interviews with students to explore their views on what good teaching is. The third limitation is the single focus of the research on *business* teachers. While it can be argued that the participants' conceptions of good teaching are not necessarily discipline-specific, and can be applied to other disciplinary fields, it would be interesting to investigate more systematically whether there are cross-disciplinary differences in conceptions of good teaching practice. The fourth limitation is the focus of the research solely on the positive aspects of the participants' teaching experience, which has prevented a more critical analysis of factors that may hinder "good teaching". Indeed, a more critical approach would acknowledge, for example, the negative impacts of contextual forces beyond the control of individuals on their teaching practice. Shrinking government funding and relentless managerial reforms introduced over the past two decades in Australia and other countries have forced university lecturers to "make do with less", manage increasingly larger classes and cope with ever-expanding administrative workloads. It has been noted in the literature that teachers have had their creativity hindered by centrally designed, standardised unit outlines and learning guides, implemented not to enhance teaching, but for the convenience of administrative staff (see Saunders 2010; Szekeres 2006). There is thus scope for research that will situate conceptions of good teaching within the context of the "corporate university" (Blass 2005; Faber 2003; Giroux 2009; Marginson & Considine 2000; Miscamble 2006), more realistically acknowledging the prevailing tensions between good teaching practice and the imperatives of the economic system.

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