

Classroom/Department Effectiveness: A Way of Improving Student Performance at MET University*

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Abstract

The centrality of classroom processes in determining the overall academic effectiveness of institutions has been emphasised by many (Sammons, 2007; Yu and Thomas 2008). Accordingly, this study examined the similarities and differences in the quality of teaching/learning by way of classroom/department processes using three generic courses — African Studies, Communication Skills and Computer Literacy as cases. In all, about 1556 students and 40 teachers took part in the study. The input-process-output-context framework presented in the Global Monitoring Report (2004) was used in selecting appropriate issues and variables for the study. Data on classroom/department processes collected via student/teacher survey were analysed using descriptive statistics and ANOVA with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Key process factors identified as potentially determining the effectiveness of the institution include: order and discipline, curriculum assessment, cooperation among teachers, the leadership of the service heads of departments. One major recommendation was the need for improvement in order and discipline particularly, in the area of clear rules for acceptable behaviour.

Keywords: Quality of teaching, order and discipline, curriculum assessment, classroom culture, and feedback.

Introduction

Institutional processes have long been identified as one group of factors affecting student performance and providing a better and more appropriate basis for comparing students' performance. Although process data is difficult to collect objectively, many researchers consider it as the most important measure of quality given that it is designed to isolate the effect of practices within the control of schools that make them instructionally effective (see O'Sullivan, 2006; Raudenbush, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000). In fact,

* Coined by the researcher to hid the real identify of the university because of ethical requirements

some researchers argue that classroom processes hold the most promise for understanding student performance. This is because although institutions may have little control over student characteristics and resource inputs, they can have a fair amount of control over how they organise and manage the teaching provision (Rumberger & Palardy, 2004).

The purpose of this study therefore, was to examine similarities and differences in the quality of teaching/learning by way of classroom/department processes using the following three generic courses — African Studies (AFS), Communication Skills (CS) and Computer Literacy (CL) as cases. By so doing, feasible ways of improving classroom teaching/learning and overall institutional effectiveness may be identified. Overall, evidences such as these are relevant for monitoring and promoting quality assurance at the institutional level (Schildkamp, 2007). The three courses were appropriately chosen because they have a wider population as they are pursued by all first year students. They are also fundamental to most tertiary specific disciplinary courses. Hence, their assessment represents a fair way of assessing what actually happens in the average classrooms in the university.

To do this, the process component of the input-process-output-context framework presented in the Global Monitoring Report (2004) was employed. Areas covered by the process component and addressed by this study include: general teacher satisfaction and opportunities for teacher professional development, quality of teaching, order and discipline, feedback to teachers, cooperation among teachers teaching the same course, consistency in approach and the leadership of the service Head of Department/HoD (addressed by the teacher survey), high expectation of student achievement, quality of teaching, curriculum assessment, classroom culture, and order and discipline (student survey). The focus of the analysis was on similarities and differences in teaching and learning processes as reported by: (1) teachers from the servicing departments — Languages and Liberal Studies (for AFS and CS) and Computer Science (for CL only) and (2) students from the academic departments. The teachers are assigned to teach these courses to students located within the various academic departments. The study had the following two objectives:

1. To identify similarities and differences between the three courses in terms of classroom/department processes.
2. To test whether the differences in classroom/department processes were statistically significant.

The research questions for the study were:

1. What are the similarities and differences between the three courses in terms of classroom/department processes?
2. Are there statistically significant differences between the courses in terms of classroom/department processes?

The *first* objective and research question seeks to summarize the overall pattern of teacher and student survey responses in terms of similarities and differences in classroom/department processes. Accordingly, descriptive statistics are used to present key findings from the student and teacher survey in terms of: (a) typical classroom and service department activities that occurred most/less often across all three courses (using the means) and (b) the extent of agreement/disagreement among students/teachers (using Standard Deviations, SD). These findings indicated strengths and weaknesses at the institutional level. The *second* objective sought to use Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to identify areas of statistically significant differences. The unit of analysis for the ANOVA is the course. Hence, the ANOVA findings are used to summarise key findings from the students/teacher survey in terms of students/teachers views that were significantly different across the three courses. Evidence from the ANOVA is more robust and more defensible in terms of proposed explanations.

Literature Review

There is a greater level of agreement across studies (both large-scale quantitative and case studies) that certain school features including; school management and ethos, effective monitoring, classroom management and pedagogical quality, potentially influence students' performance and overall institutional effectiveness (Mortimore, 1998; Thrupp, 1999). School management features, that have stood out in this respect include good leadership, staff participation and appropriate rewards for collegial collaborative working. The importance of school ethos, including an orderly atmosphere, high expectations, positive reward/feedback, clear and fair discipline, positive models of good teacher behavior and good teacher-student relationships have also been identified and associated with good student progress. In the area of regular monitoring, the measurement of students' performance across a range of domains has been emphasized.

Relevant pedagogic features identified by previous studies include good engagement of student interest, effective classroom teaching, maximisation of learning time, good subject knowledge by the teacher and the promotion of students' independence (Thrupp, 2010; Schereens, Glas & Thomas, 2003).

Even though there are different conceptual models for measuring effectiveness (e.g. the dynamic model by Kyriakides & Creemers, 2008; the comprehensive model of educational effectiveness by Creemers 1994), the input-process-output-context framework was chosen for this study. According to Schereens (1992), **input** consists of all kinds of variables connected with financial or personal resources. **Process** refers to factors within the school that make a difference between effective and less effective schools. Process can also be interpreted as the forms of interaction between teachers, students, administrators, materials and technology in educational activities (Cheng & Tam, 1997). **Context** on the other hand refers to the socio-economic and educational context of schools (e.g. guidelines and regulations for schools and the characteristics/structure of the formal educational systems). **Outputs** typically refer to changes in student achievement, completion rates, certification, skills and certain attitudes and values. The reason for choosing this model is that it has been used by different researchers in the African context for reasons similar to the purpose of this study. These include using the model:

1. as an evaluation tool to analyse individual schools in order to formulate more general pictures of school quality in a given education system and as a tool to monitor and evaluate the implementation of activities aimed at improving the effectiveness of African primary schools (Yu & Thomas, 2008);
2. as the starting point for educational reform programme designs particularly through guiding the diagnosing of school needs (Heneveld & Craig, 1996);
3. in making summaries for educational planners and policy makers on how schools work (Heneveld & Craig, 1996);
4. to provide a structure for school supervision in terms of monitoring educational research programmes and designing teacher and school head training programmes (Heneveld, 1994).

Methodology

The study employed a case study design. The focus was on understanding the dynamics present within the single setting of the technical university (Yin, 2009). Thus, the design facilitated a much richer understanding of the dynamics present within this single setting. However, the results of the study may be idiosyncratic considering the fact that a bottom up approach was employed.

Research Participants and Sample

The survey involved 40 servicing teachers from the Centre for Liberal Studies (24 teachers) and the Computer Studies departments (16 teachers). Also, 1556 students who studied the above compulsory first year courses during the 2016/2017 academic year took part in the survey. A four-point (1–4) likely scaled instrument ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (4) or never (1) to very often (4) was utilised during the survey. The details of the teacher and student surveys are presented below:

Teacher Survey

The teacher questionnaire was administered to *all* servicing teachers who taught AFS, CS and CL during the 2016/2017 academic year after piloting. The servicing teachers were important because to some extent, they directly/indirectly determined how much the students learnt in the classroom. The teacher survey focused on the following: high expectation of student attainment, general teacher satisfaction and opportunities for teacher professional development, order and discipline, quality of teaching, feedback to teachers, cooperation among teachers, curriculum assessment, classroom culture and consistency in approach.

Students Survey

The survey involved all students belonging to the 2016/2017 cohorts who were willing to participate in the study. The students were in the best position to tell which classroom processes influenced their performance because they were the ones who actually experienced classroom teaching/learning.

The Piloting and administration of the Student/Teacher Survey

The student questionnaire was piloted using 86 continuing students (2015/2016 cohort). The piloting proved very helpful in developing effective

strategies for the main study. For example, it became obvious that it would be more effective to administer the student questionnaire before, rather than after a lesson so that almost all students would be present and teacher can help control the students. The need to check every questionnaire to see if it was properly completed when handed in became obvious as some students filled only some parts (e.g. front and back), marked one answer for all questions etc. during the piloting. The teacher questionnaire was piloted using three teachers, one for each course — AFS, CS and CL (these teachers did not teach the students in the selected academic year). The piloting informed the decision to administer different questionnaires for each course, although they all contain the same set of questions. The student questionnaires were administered before a lesson by arrangement (date, time, venue, group of students, etc. determined in advance). For teacher questionnaire, the contact details (e.g. telephone/mobile numbers and e-mail addresses) of individual teachers were collected from their departments and used to arrange meetings to explain the purpose of the study, ethical issues, and administer the questionnaire.

Ethical Considerations

The data collection process started only after, verbal permission was sought from individual Deans and HoDs. Other ethical considerations observed included informed consent and voluntary participation. For example, the meeting with the students involved informing them about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality of any information provided and how to fill the questionnaire (e.g., how to mark choices, fill written portions etc.). The students were then given some time to read through the instructions and the questionnaire items, freely ask questions and sign the informed consent form.

Validity and Reliability

There is no doubt that the piloting improved the quality of the research instruments. For instance, the use of participants similar to those used in the main study — teachers/students of different ages and gender increased the validity of the instruments. Further, by keeping a written record of all incidents, challenges and experiences that occurred during the piloting, the reliability of research instruments was improved. Also, on completion, each questionnaire was checked to ensure that it was completely filled. This helped to reduce the number of incomplete questionnaires and to improve the general quality of the information collected.

Results

Overview of University Activities

The findings of the study are grouped and discussed under the sub-themes from the process component of the EFA model, e.g. high student expectation, order and discipline etc. The presentation under each sub-theme proceeds as follows: the presentation of the descriptive findings, followed by the ANOVA findings and graphical representations. The teacher survey results are presented first followed by the student survey results.

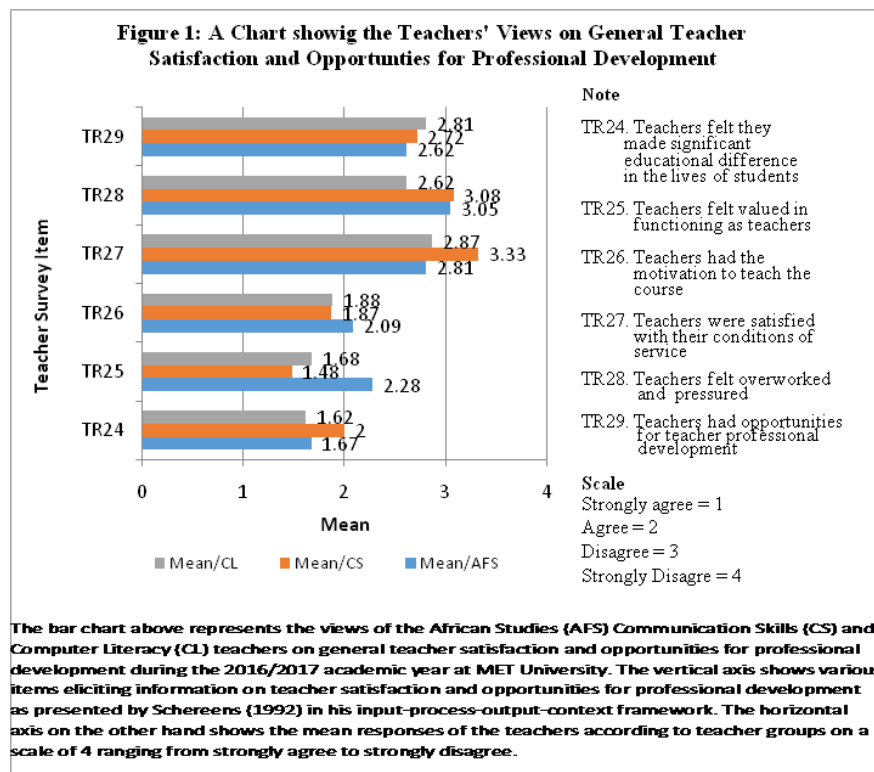
Teacher Perspectives

The sub-themes discussed from the teachers' perspective were: general teacher satisfaction and opportunities for professional development, quality of teaching, order and discipline, feedback to teachers, cooperation among teachers teaching the same course, consistency in approach and the leadership of the service HoD.

General Teacher Satisfaction and Opportunities for Teacher Professional Development

From the descriptive findings, all three teacher groups (AFS, CS and CL) were on average dissatisfied with their conditions of service, work load and opportunities for teacher professional development (all mean scores > 2). Comparatively however, the CS teachers were somewhat more dissatisfied with their conditions of service and work load [TR27 and TR28]; while the CL teachers appeared more dissatisfied with opportunities for teacher professional development [TR29]. The AFS teachers on the other hand felt relatively less valued in functioning as teachers [TR25] (mean > 2, also see Figure 1).

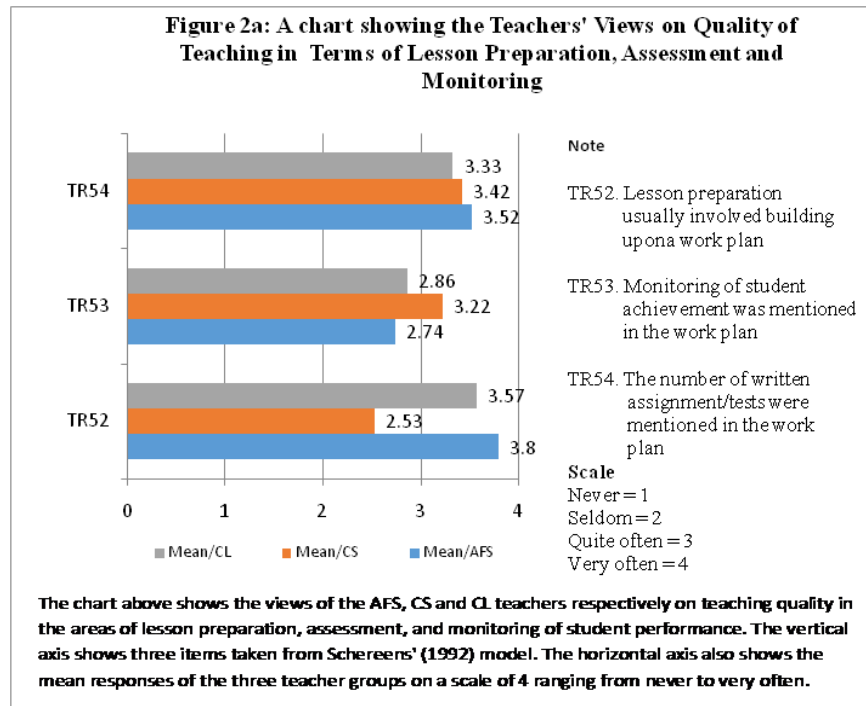
However, within specific teacher groups, some noticeable differences were evident. For example, there was a moderate lack of consensus among the AFS teachers with respect to opportunities for teacher professional development ($SD = 1$) indicting that some teachers had opportunities for teacher professional development whereas others did not. The differences between the three teacher groups in terms of the issues discussed were all statistically significant at .05 significance level.



Quality of Teaching

According to the teacher survey results, quality of teaching in terms of lesson preparation, monitoring of student performance and student assessment was of a fair degree of quality across all three courses. On average, all three teacher groups (AFS, CS and CL) indicated that lesson preparation quite often involved building upon a work plan [TR52] that included information on monitoring of students' performance [TR53] and the number of times students were to be assessed [TR54] (all mean scores > 2). Comparatively, however, the AFS teachers appeared more effective in providing information on the number of times students were to be tested [TR54].

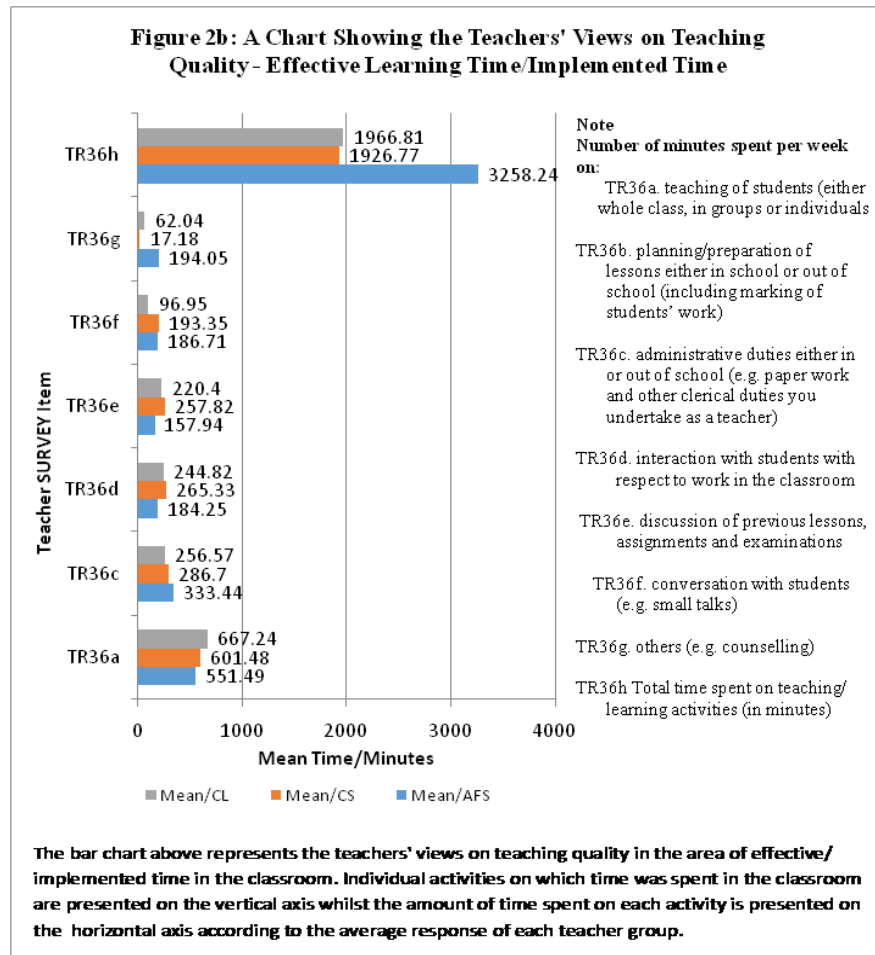
The CS teachers on the other hand were to an extent more effective in incorporating the monitoring of students' performance in their work plans [TR53] (see Figure 2a). Nonetheless, there was a moderate lack of consensus within specific course teacher groups especially within the AFS



and CS teacher groups with respect to the monitoring of students' performance (all SD were $> .5$), implying that perhaps, the monitoring of student performance was challenging for very few teachers. The ANOVA further showed the means of all three teacher groups to be significantly different with regard to the issues discussed above.

Figure 2b is a graphical representation of implemented time/effective learning time/opportunities for students to learn in the classroom. Implemented time or opportunity to learn on average appeared somewhat problematic with all three teacher groups indicating different amount of time spent on: actual classroom teaching, lesson preparation, revision of previous lessons and assignments/exams, interaction with students in the classroom and other teaching/learning related activities such as counseling. Overall, the AFS teachers appeared to have spent more time on teaching related tasks than the CS and CL teachers (mean = 54 hours per week).

The AFS teachers on average, spent more time on lesson preparation [TR36b] (mean hours each week > 8 hours) in contrast to the CS teachers who spent less time preparing for lessons (mean < 8 hours per week) but relatively more time revising previous lessons [TR36e] (mean > 4 hours per

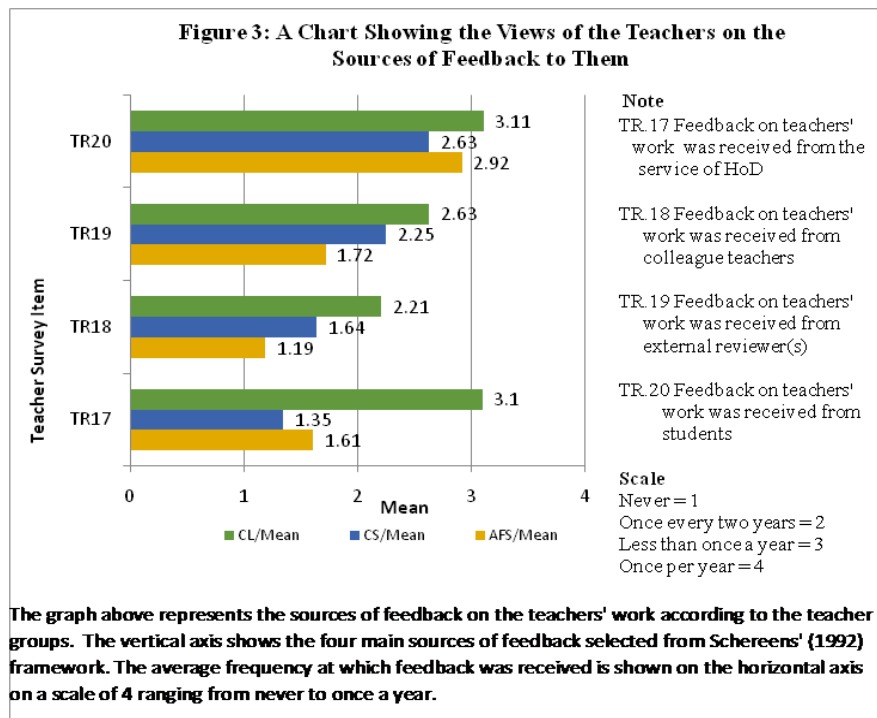


week), interacting with students in the classroom [TR36d] (mean > 4 hours a week) and conversing with students (TR36f) (mean > 3 per week). The CL teachers on the other hand spent more time on actual classroom teaching [TR36a] (mean hours each week > 11 hours). See Figure 2b for the graphical representation of the issues discussed. Nevertheless, there were differences *within* specific subject teacher groups. For instance, the very high standard deviations associated with the mean total hours spent on teaching/learning activities within the AFS teacher group (SD= 50 hours per week) suggest that some teachers were over worked compared with others. Results from the ANOVA further indicated statistically significant differences between the African Studies, CS and CL teachers in terms of the mean hours spent

on the various teaching related activities and the total time per week spent on teaching/learning.

Feedback on Teachers' Work

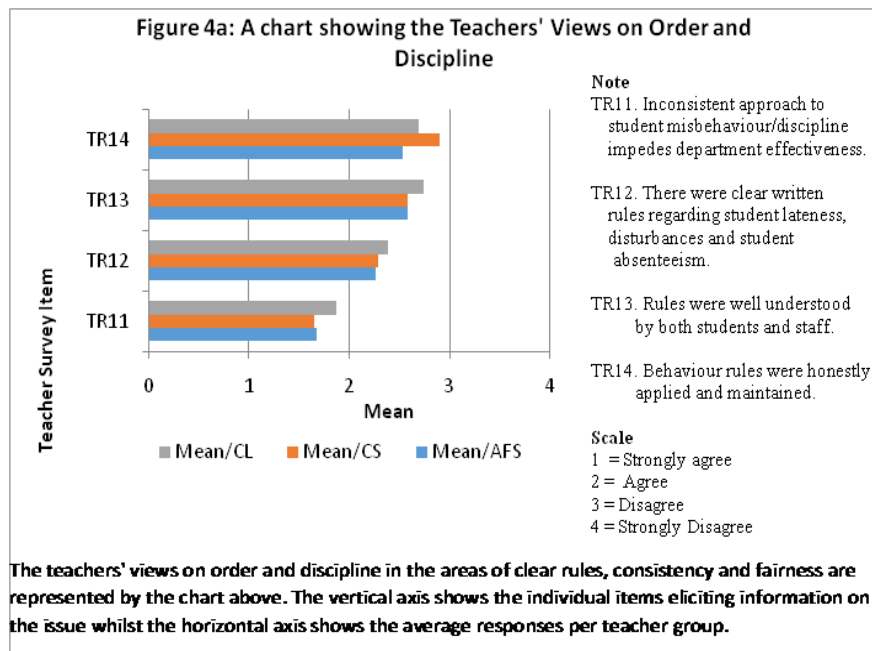
The teacher survey further presented evidence that typically, feedback on teachers' work from both external (e.g. external reviewers) and internal (e.g. the service HoD, colleague teachers and students) stakeholders was to an extent problematic. In fact, all the teacher groups indicated that feedback from both sources was received less than once a year (all mean scores < 4). However, there was a lack of consensus within specific teacher groups especially with respect to feedback from internal stakeholders to the CS and CL teachers (all SD were > 1.0). Relatively, the CL teachers most likely received feedback from both internal and external stakeholders [TR17 to TR20]. The AFSteachers on the other hand less likely received feedback from external reviewers [TR19] and colleagues [TR18]. The CS teachers however, received some feedback from the service HoD [TR17] and the students [TR20] (see Figure 3). The ANOVA findings further



indicated statistically significant differences between the three teacher group means in terms of feedback from the four stakeholders examined by the study.

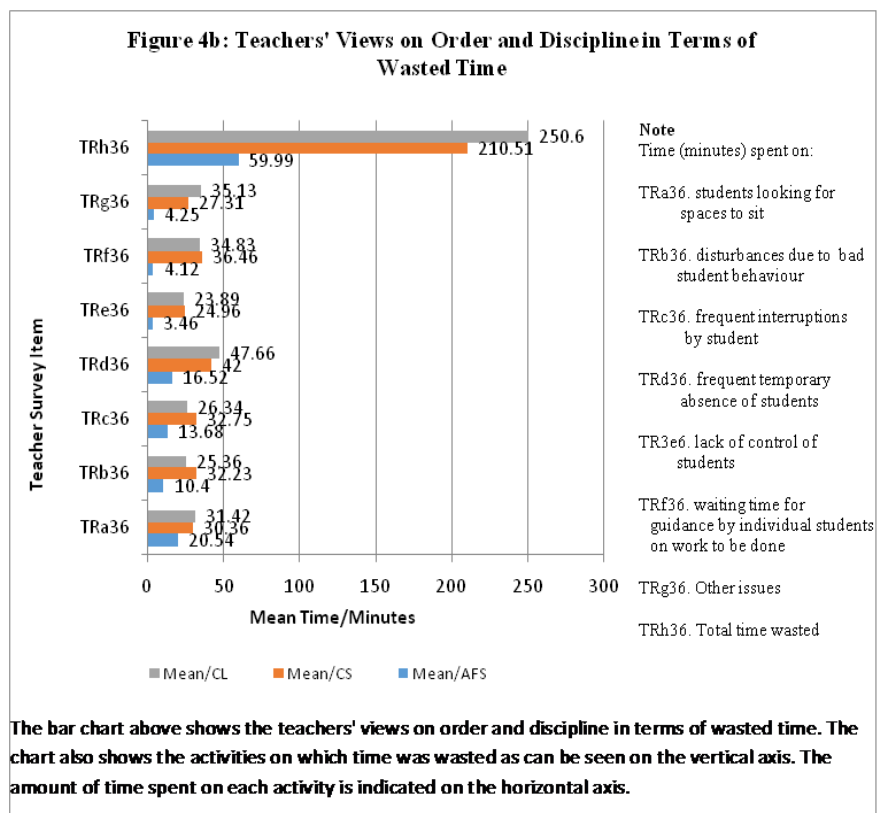
Order and Discipline

Order and discipline were typically problematic for all teachers across the three courses. The course teachers generally disagreed with the three items relating to the existence, understanding and application of rules (most means scores > 2). The AFS teachers to an extent disagreed most, with the view that rules were honestly applied. The CL teachers on the other hand mostly doubted the existence of clear written rules that were clearly understood by both students and teachers (see Figure 4a). Nevertheless, there was a moderate lack of consensus among teachers within specific teacher groups, especially with respect to the existence of clear rules (SDs were mostly higher than 0.5). Results from the ANOVA further indicated statistically significant differences between the three teacher group means in all three aspects of department rules examined by the study. Moreover, regarding the time teachers spent on order and disciplinary matters in the classroom such as: disturbances due to bad student behaviour [TRb36], frequent



interruptions by students [TRc36], frequent temporary absence of students [TRd36] and lack of control of students [TRe36], teachers across all three courses reported the same key problem of wasted class time to a greater or lesser extent.

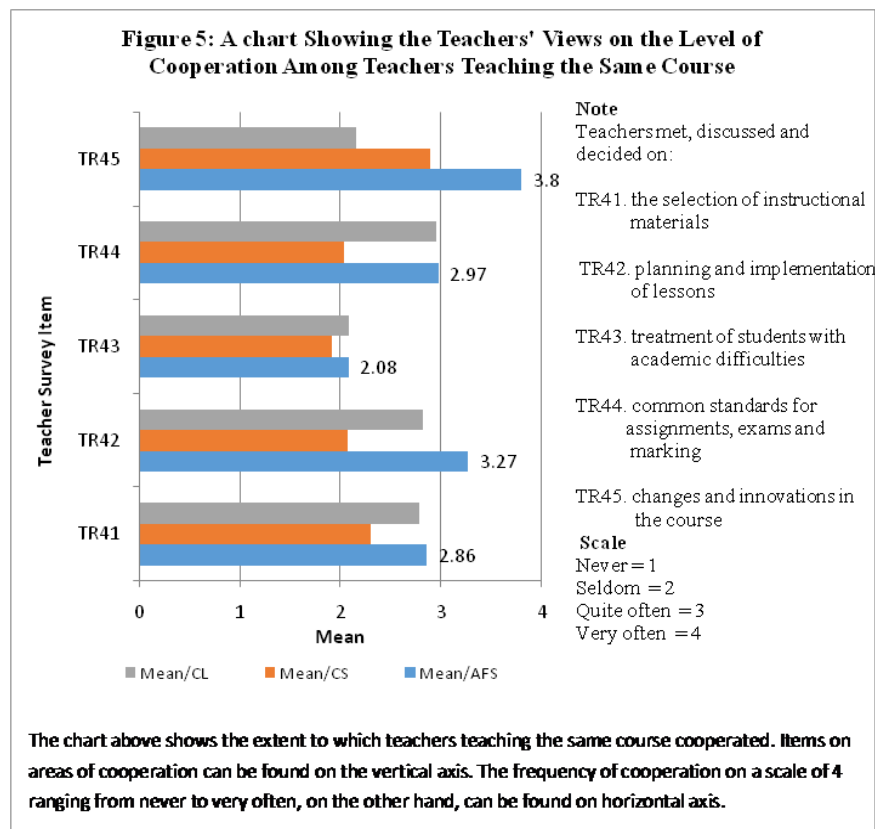
For example, the teachers reported a total of 1 hour (AFS), 3.5 hours (CS) and over 4 hours (CL) of class time per week wasted. The differences between all three teacher group means were also statistically significant (see Figure 4b). Overall, it appears that the AFS teachers appeared more effective in managing student misbehavior on many occasions than the other teacher groups. For the two courses, CS and CL, there was a notable lack of consensus *within* specific course teacher groups (with SD of three hours or more per week wasted on disciplinary matters). These strongly suggest that some teachers on specific courses found student behaviour issues especially challenging in the classroom, especially the CS and CL teachers.



Cooperation Among Teachers Teaching the Same Course

Teachers teaching the same course cooperated with colleagues in the following areas: dealing with students with academic challenges [TR43], setting common standards in curriculum assessment (TR44) and bringing about needed changes/innovations in the courses [TR45]. However, doing these appeared problematic for all three teacher groups. In fact, all three teachers groups indicated that they seldom cooperated with colleagues in these areas (all mean scores were less than three). The AFS teachers however, were relatively more effective in cooperating with colleagues in the areas of changes in the course and lesson planning and implementation (see Figure 5).

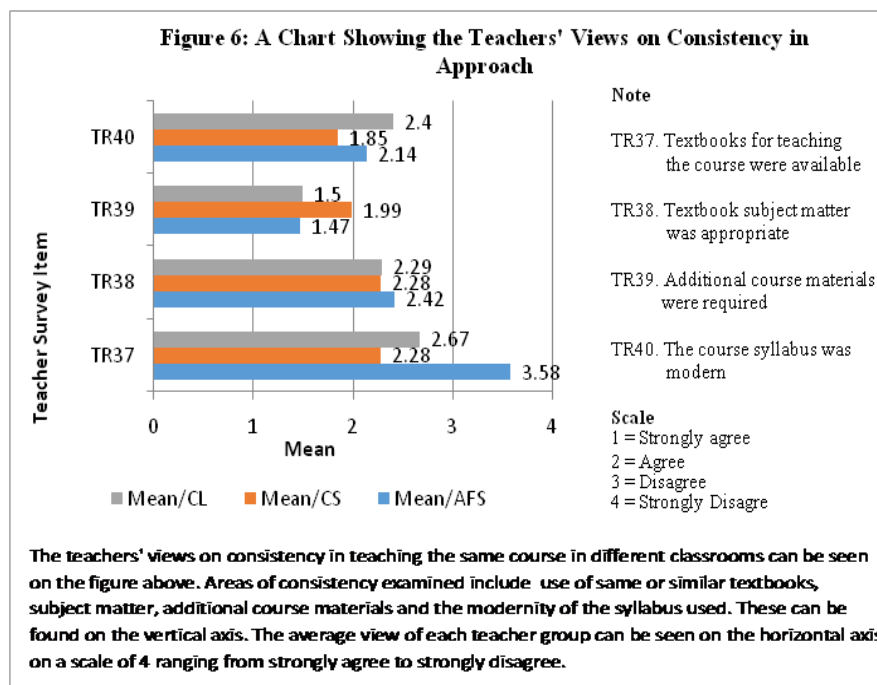
As expected, views within specific teacher groups were also quite varied. For instance, notable differences in the views of the CS teachers



with respect to lesson planning and implementing, dealing with students with academic difficulties and bringing about innovations in the course were evident (all SD were > 1.0). The ANOVA Findings additionally showed that all group means were significantly different.

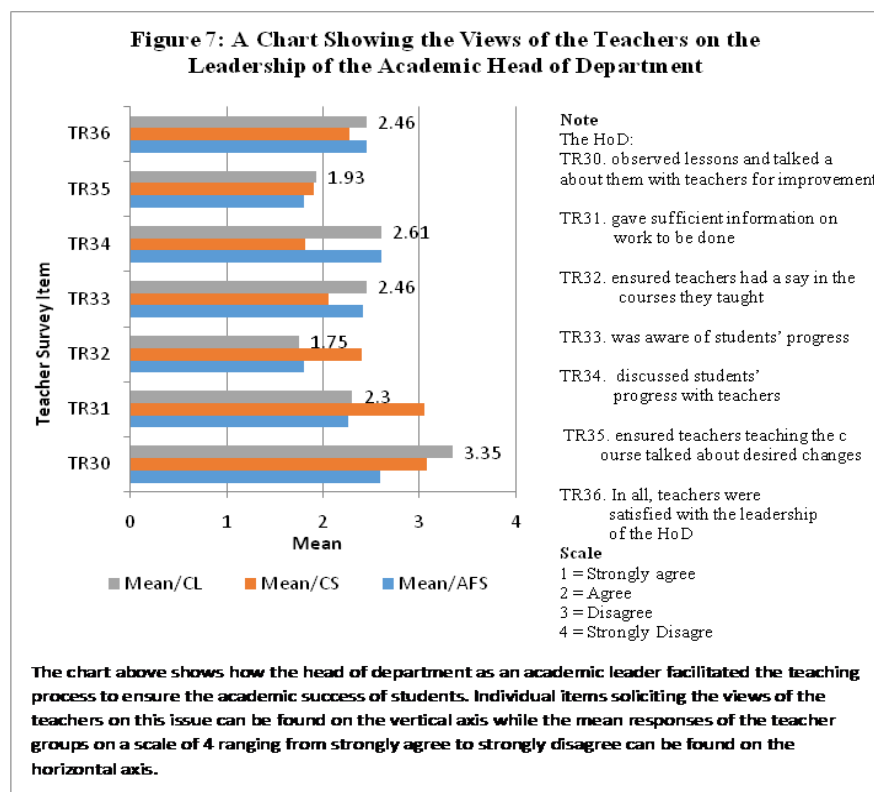
Consistency in Approach

In the area of consistency in approach, the survey results showed that all three teacher groups were concerned about the availability of course textbooks (TR37) and the appropriateness of textbook subject matter [TR38] (all means scores > 2). As indicated on Figure 6, the AFS teachers generally disagreed that course textbooks with appropriate subject matter were available. Interestingly, there was a fair degree of agreement within the AFSteacher group with respect to this issue ($SD < .5$). The ANOVA findings further indicated statistically significant differences between the teacher groups in terms of the availability and appropriateness of course textbooks, the modernity of course syllabi and the need for additional course materials (see Figure 6). This implies that generally, the courses were challenged in these respects.



The Leadership of the Service HoD

Focusing on the leadership of the service HoDs, the tentative finding was that to some extent all course teacher groups were dissatisfied with the overall leadership of the service HoDs [TR36]. Specifically, all the teacher groups disagreed that the HoDs provided feedback on classroom teaching [TR30] and sufficient information on work to be done (all means scores > 2). Comparatively, the CS teachers disagreed most with the view that their HoD was effective in managing information and in involving teachers in decision making (see Figure 7). The CL teachers on the other hand were more dissatisfied with the overall leadership of their HoD. However, within teacher groups, differences regarding specific items were evident. For example, the CS teachers were quite divided over whether the HoD provided information on work to be done or got teachers involved in decision making



(all SDs > 1.0). This suggests that information management and decision making was problematic in some service departments. The ANOVA results further showed that the differences between the three teacher groups in the following areas were statistically significant: the effectiveness of the HoDs in managing information and decision making, discussion of student progress and feedback to teachers on classroom teaching.

Student Perspectives

Five major themes including: high expectation of student achievement, quality of teaching, curriculum assessment, classroom culture, and order and discipline are presented in subsequent paragraphs.

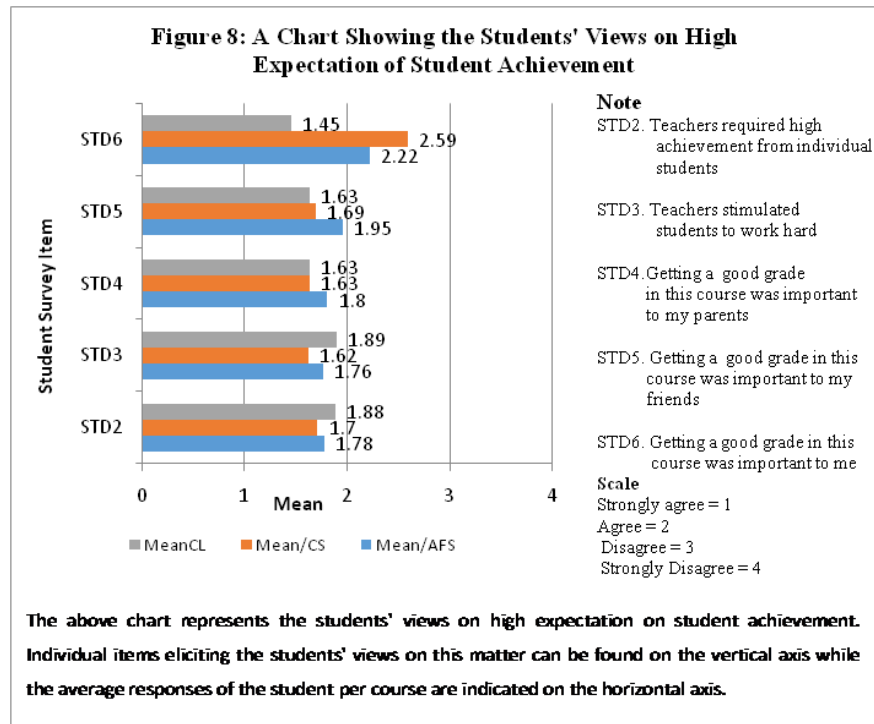
High Expectation of Student Achievement

The results of the student survey presented evidence that all three course teacher groups had high expectations on student achievement [STD2] and stimulated students to work hard [STD3] (all mean scores < 2). Nonetheless, to the students, their friends and parents, a good grade in some of the courses was considered more important than others. For example, a good grade in CL was more important to the students [STD6] and their friends [STD5] than the other courses (see figure 8). The associated SD however, indicated that this view was not shared by all the students (all SD > .5).

The ANOVA findings further showed the course teacher groups were significantly different with regards to: high expectations on student achievement, stimulating students to work hard and rewarding students for good academic performance.

Curriculum Assessment

Generally, curriculum assessment in terms of method [STD7], coverage [STD8 and STD10], fairness [STD13] and the discussion of previous assessments [STD12] across all three courses was somewhat problematic as some teacher groups appeared more effective in some specific areas than others (see Figure 9). Comparatively, the CS teachers were perceived by the students as apparently more effective in: assessing the students using different ways, providing different approaches to solving the same problem,

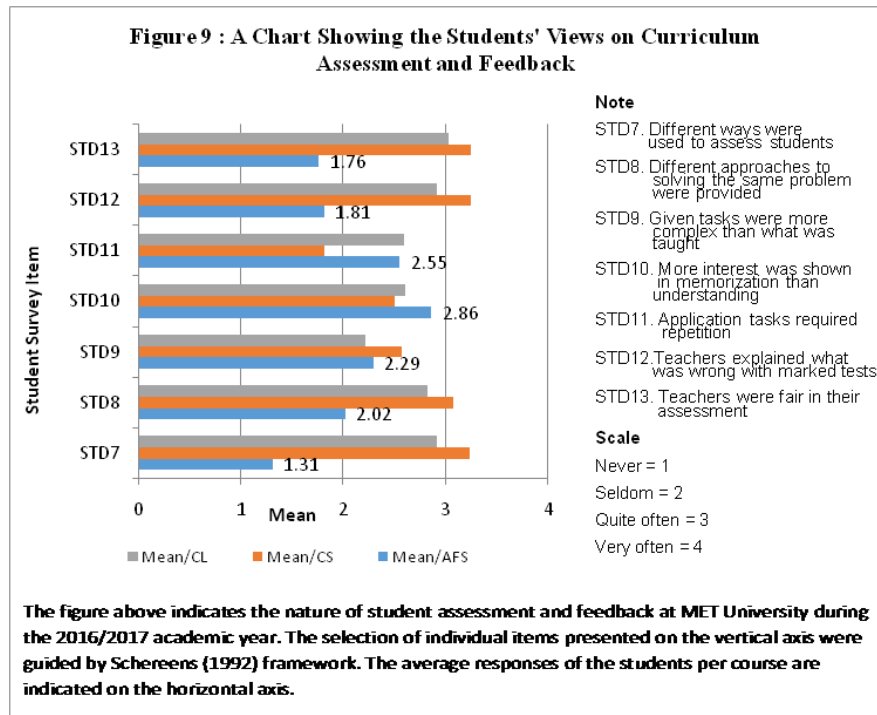


explaining what was wrong with marked work and being fair in curriculum assessment (all mean scores > 2). The AFS teachers on the other hand quite often showed more interest in memorisation than understanding (mean > 2).

Nonetheless, there was a moderate lack of consensus within specific teacher groups from the perspective of the students. For example, the students were considerably divided over assessment issues such as: the complexity of given tasks and teachers' interest in memorization or recall (all SD were > 1.0). Statistically significant differences in the views of the students regarding these issues were further indicated by the ANOVA.

Classroom Culture

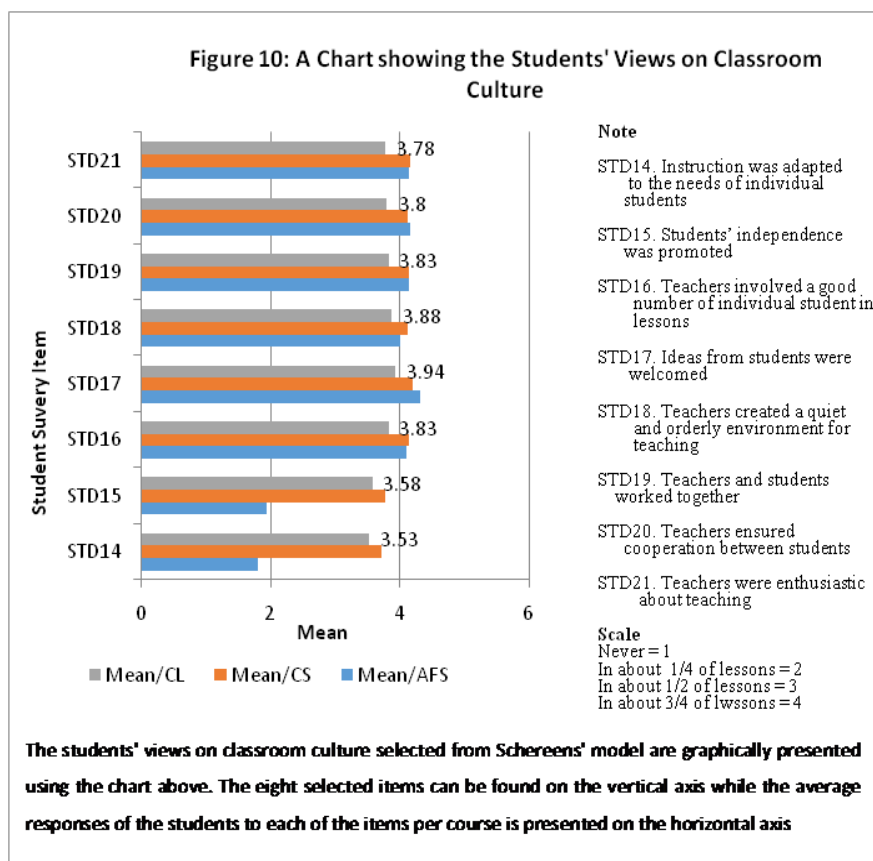
In the area of classroom culture, adaptive instruction [STD14] and the promotion of students' independence [STD15] were seen as challenging for some specific course teacher groups. For example, the AFS teachers were seen as less effective in adapting instruction to the needs of students



and promoting their independence (all means < 2). Nevertheless, the students were highly divided over other issues such as the flowing across all three courses: the involvement of students in lessons [STD16], the working together of teachers and students [STD19], students working together [STD20], teachers welcoming ideas from students [STD17] and teachers ensuring a quiet and orderly environment for teaching [STD18] (all SD were > 1.0). Generally, speaking, classroom culture appeared problematic. However, for two of the items — teacher enthusiasm and the involvement of individual students in lessons, the differences in the views of the students were particularly, noteworthy especially for CL (SDs were 1.7 and 1.4 respectively). The likely conclusion is that, the views of the students were very diverse regarding these two issues. The observed differences were statistically significant.

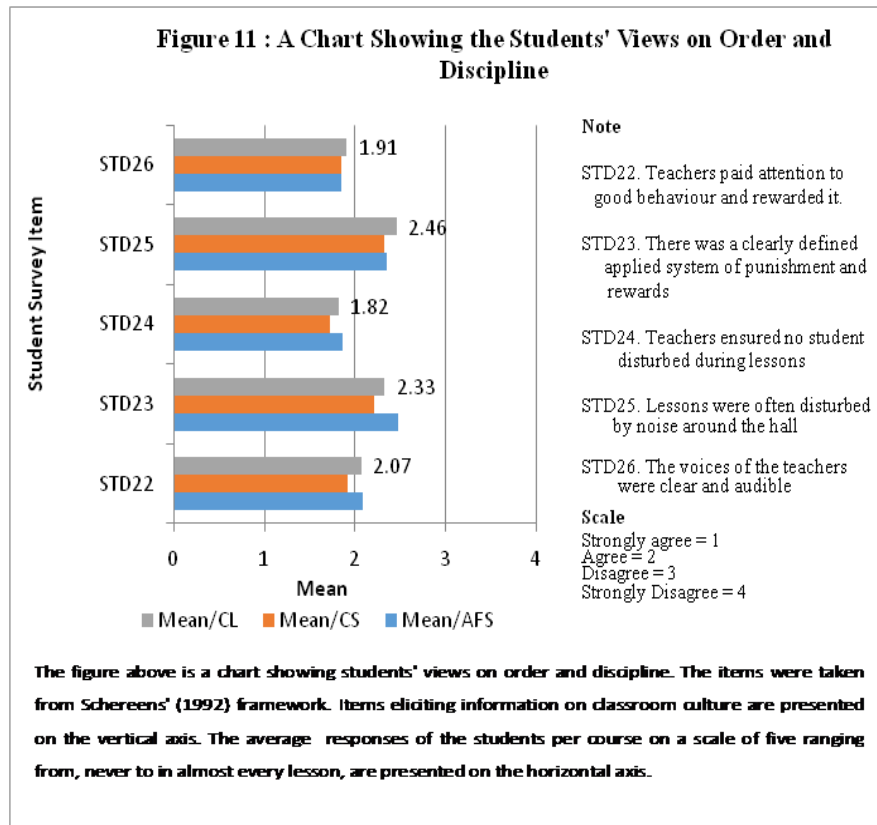
Order and Discipline

Although from the perspective of the student (via the student survey) all three course teacher groups were relatively effective in ensuring order and



discipline in the classroom (mean < 2), comparatively, the CS teachers appeared more effective in rewarding good student behaviour [STD22], applying a clearer system of rewards and punishments [STD23] and ensuring that no student caused a disturbance during lessons [STD24] (see Figure 11). Variations in the views of the students regarding specific courses were also evident. For example, there was a moderate lack of consensus regarding the items: "lessons were often disturbed by noise around the hall" [STD25] and "teachers ensured no student disturbed during lessons" [24] (all SDs > .5) implying that order and disciplinary issues in the classroom were challenging for some course teachers.

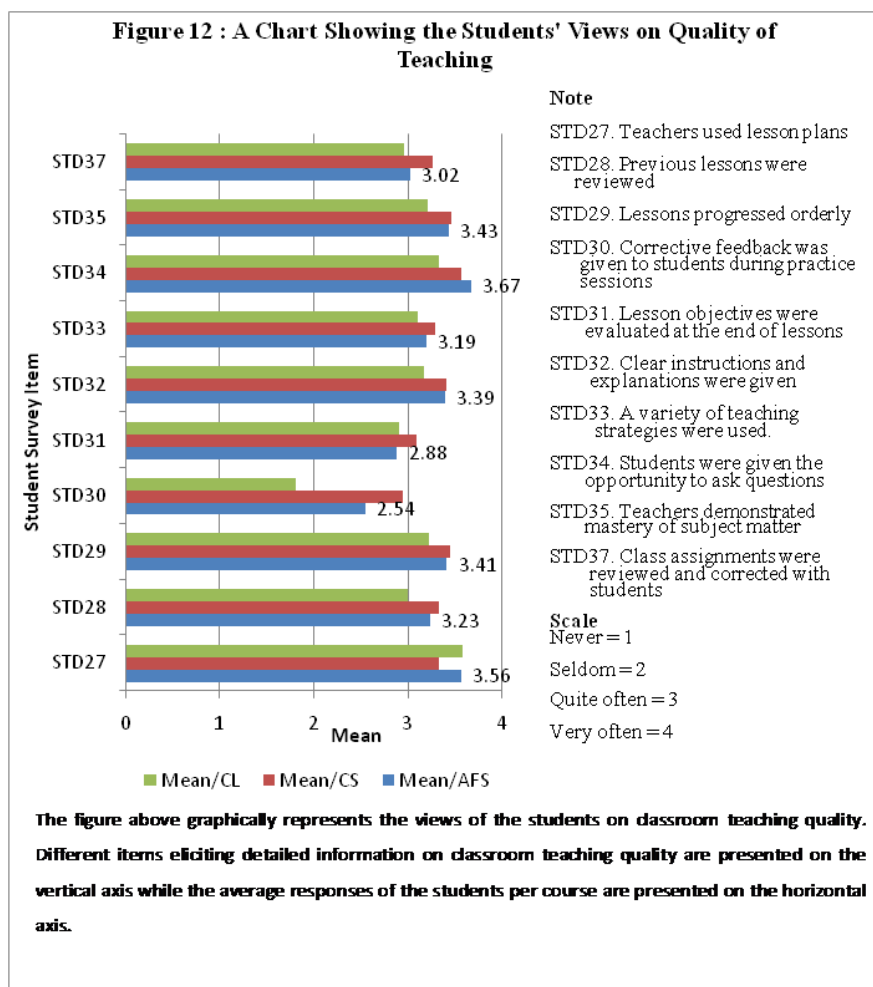
The statistically significant differences were observed with respect to the items discussed above (STD22–25) except for the item "teacher paid attention to good behaviour and rewarded it" [STD26].



Quality of Teaching

Structure dinstruction (STD27–STD29) and direct instruction (STD32–37) across all three courses was quite adequate, with the majority of the students indicating that these activities quite often happened in the classroom (means > 3).

The CS teachers however, appeared more effective in reviewing and correcting class assignments with students [STD37] and using different teaching strategies [STD33] (Figure 12). Moderate differences in the views of the students regarding specific courses were also evident (all SDs > .5). For example, there was a moderate lack of consensus among the students regarding corrective feedback during practice sessions [STD30] and the orderly progression of lessons [STD28] for all three courses. This was so especially in the case of Computer Literacy. This suggests that some teachers



found correcting students during practice sessions quite challenging. According to the ANOVA results, the different views of the students regarding these issues were statistically significant across all three courses.

Discussion

For discussion purposes, the following classroom/department issues emerging from the study are discussed: (1) order and discipline (2), lack of cooperation among teachers teaching the same course and (3), emphasis on memorisation.

Classroom discipline encompasses complex interactions among teacher, student, school and societal variables. No wonder, the issue has been discussed under different designations such as “classroom order”, “classroom misbehavior”, “classroom disruption”, “classroom indiscipline”, or “classroom disorder”, just to name a few (Lopes and Oliveira, 2017). Basically however, classroom discipline refers to a set of teacher actions that constitute organisational and management processes aimed at establishing classroom order (routines, norms, procedures, etc.).

Although students are by far the most frequent source of indiscipline (Kulinna, Cothran, & Regualos, 2006), teachers or school staff may also be a source of disruption (Good & Brophy, 2000) as shown by this study. Granted, most teachers occasionally spend some amount of time on other issues apart from instruction nevertheless; the amount of time wasted by the AFS, CS and CL teachers on the following activities was overwhelming: students looking for spaces to sit, addressing disturbances due to bad student behaviour, frequent interruptions by student, frequent temporary absence of students, and lack of control of students etc. For example, the total time wasted on the above activities averaged almost three hours (2.90) a week across the three courses — AFS, CS, CL. This is a clear evidence of teacher ineffectiveness. Of course, effective teachers maximise instructional time while ineffective teachers lose their focus and address interruptions and off-task behaviours, thereby losing instructional time (Lopes and Oliveira, 2017). High levels of classroom indiscipline often leads to low student academic achievement because teachers may feel emotionally exhausted after addressing classroom disruption and opportunities to learn may likely be decreased (Sun, 2015). High levels of indiscipline may further indicate the absence of clear written rules on accepted behaviour given that there is a specific link between where power lies (teacher-centered or student centered perspectives).

Another key factor identified by the study as demonstrating institutional ineffectiveness was the level of cooperation among teachers teaching the same course. Indeed, a critical way of ensuring that all students on average receive equal quality instructions is to regulate or control what happens in the different classroom for the same course. This to an extent requires teachers teaching the same worse to work together. Evidence from the ANOVA however, pointed to significant amounts of conflicts within course groups. This finding resonates with previous studies that have indicated that, collaborative teaching has historically not been the norm in tertiary

education (e.g. few professors teach collaboratively or receive substantial support from colleagues). Hence, tertiary teachers are often forced to rely on try and error or their own experiences (Goddard, 2007; Broad *et al.*, 2007).

In the area of curriculum assessment, the students indicated that the AFS teachers quite often showed more interest in memorisation than understanding. In other words, rote learning (memorisation) instead of deep learning was encouraged. This means that, possibly the students just concentrated on certain topics or specific responses that were more likely to appear in the exams and recalled/reproduced them when called upon to do so. Put simply, the students shifted between recall of knowledge and deep understanding depending on the interest of a particular group of course teachers. This is indicative of poor teaching because according to Gibbs and Simpson (2004) when a totally new course material is taught poorly such that students are unable to apply them in different settings; the students may be tempted to rely on recall or cheating.

Recommendation

The existence of classroom indiscipline as evidenced by the amount of time wasted on non-instructional activities suggests the need for the standardisation of classroom/department rules regarding acceptable student behaviour. This is necessary given that without satisfactory levels of it, the best planned and potentially most engaging lessons may fail to have the desired impact (Romi *et al.*, 2009)

In the area of curriculum assessment, the students indicated that the AFS teachers often encouraged rote learning. Thus, regular staff training on test construction especially for new teachers on standardised measurement principles such as how to: calculate reliability estimates, standard error measurements, validity coefficients, item discrimination, standard scores and how to reduce guessing and diagnose procedural error is recommended for the Personnel Section of the university to carry out. The training on curriculum assessment is important because teachers make assessment decisions that enhance/discourage students.

Regarding cooperation among teachers teaching the same course, knowledgeable conversations initiated by the course coordinator around the following is recommended: teaching methods, unique content, processes of teaching, academic standards, how to meet the needs of students, helping academically poor and disabled students etc.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify feasible ways of improving classroom teaching and overall institutional effectiveness from the perspective of classroom/department processes. The descriptive and ANOVA findings have indeed provided an overall picture of what was happening in the various classrooms as well as the two servicing departments. The use of the EFA model (used in developing the research instruments) has further led to the identification of the following factors as potentially influencing the quality of teaching and learning in the university. Key factors identified by the study include: high expectation of student attainment, order and discipline, curriculum assessment, cooperation among teachers, quality of teaching, whether or not students/teachers felt valued and the leadership of the service HoD. Tentatively, evidence is provided that the EFA model could be a useful tool in examining institutional effectiveness in the Ghanaian context. Interestingly, these factors have previously been identified and associated with good student academic progress and institutional effectiveness (Yu and Thomas, 2008).

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