

Trading Teaching for Research? A Personal Testimony

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Torn between two lovers

***“Torn between two lovers,
feeling like a fool.
Loving both of you is breaking
all the rules.”***

***-- Excerpted from the song “Torn Between Two
Lovers”***

My 1997 story

- Low in research, and high in teaching and administration
- My lowest SFQ experience
 - Learning outcomes: 4.4/10
 - Interaction: 5.8/10
 - Individual help: 5.3/10
 - Organization and presentation: 4.9/10
 - Motivation: 4.5/10
 - Feedback: 4.5/10

One voice saying

- Teaching is a hindrance to my research progress.
- Teaching is not as highly valued as research.
- It does not worth my effort of teaching those who did not even care for themselves.
- The best strategy is to maximize research and minimize teaching.

Another voice saying

- I love and enjoy both teaching and research.
- I believe that teaching is a very powerful and effective means to help people.
- I am good at teaching, and could become a highly effective teacher if I want to.
- My academic integrity would be compromised if I trade teaching for research.

I was tired of teaching

- Symptoms of tiredness?
- Not because
 - There were too many courses to teach.
 - Teaching was not considered important.
 - The quality of the students was dropping.
- But because
 - I was overwhelmed with different demands.
 - I was losing the meaning of teaching.
 - I had not renewed my passion for teaching.

Renewing my passion for teaching

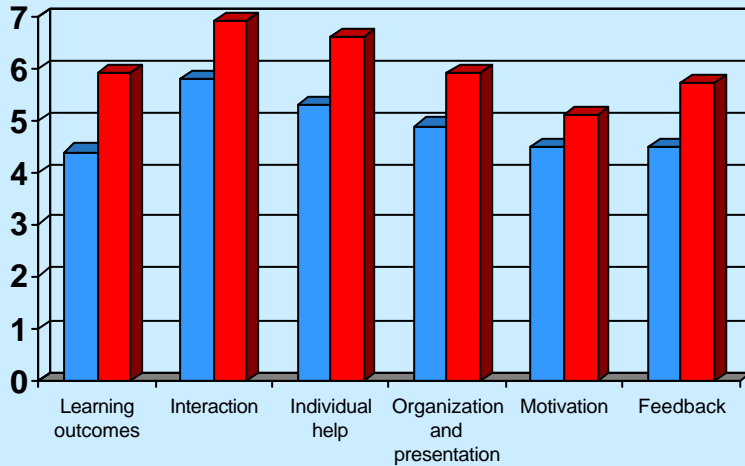
- Conviction reaffirmed: teaching can make a marked difference in people's lives.
- Secure enough time for quality teaching (and research).
 - First things first
 - Best tasks verses good tasks
- Persevere and mature throughout the process.

The immediate turning point

- Took up all the tutorials.
- Divided students into two groups: weak (35) and not-so-weak (24).
- Conducted additional 2-hr weekly tutorials for the weaker group.
 - Made up for the term 1 material.
 - Supplemented for the term 2 material.

My second lowest SFQ experience

■ Term 1 ■ Term 2

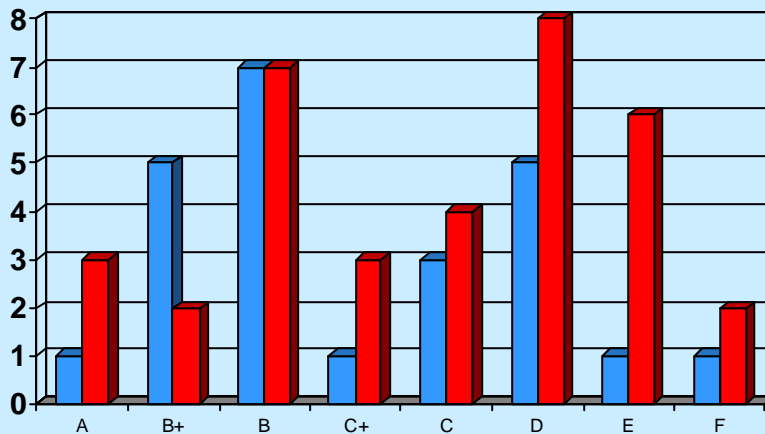


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Exam results

■ Not-so weak group ■ Weak group



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Impact on my teaching

- Deepened my conviction for teaching.
- Developed and articulated my own teaching philosophy, style, and approaches.
- Enjoyed my teaching and my students (SFQ-free teaching)
- Impacted on my students in various ways.

A final note to my students

- Some of you have done “unexpectedly” well in the exams, ...
- Overall, I am very pleased with your participation and effort put into this class.
- I hope I can do even better next year and your feedbacks will definitely help me do that.
- I hope that the effort and time that you spent in this subject mean something to you.
- I also hope that you remember the importance of the I word.
- One thing I would like to request from you: say hi whenever we meet on campus or elsewhere.

A student's response to my note

- *“You are the first lecturer, as far as I know, who remembers all the classmates' names and really concerns students.”*
- *“You are also the first lecturer who ‘dare’ to make an open book exam.”*
- *“You are also one of the lecturers who can keep my attendance throughout the semester.”*
- *“Keep on your good work and make an even better lesson next semester.”*

Impact on my research

- “Slowed down” my research.
- “Slowed down” my research for a healthy, long-term growth.
- Attracted like-minded RS and RA.
- Enjoyed teaching my RS and RA.
- Two CERG grants awarded, and steady research publications

Discrepancies between the two

- Different sets of skills (internal)
- Different kinds of motivation (internal)
- Different levels of control (external)
- Different evaluation criteria (external)
- Different types of recognition (external)

Harmonizing the two

- Teach and research in the “same” field.
- Teach thoroughly
 - Discover research problems issues.
- Teach fundamentally
 - Build up a solid foundation for further research.
- Teach non-defensively
 - Open to new ideas and criticism
- Teach honestly

A postlude

- What is teaching?
 - Teaching in research
 - Research in teaching
- Not one for the other, but two for each other.
- The two will get along better, not worse.
- Harmonizing the two does not imply an equal time allocation.
 - Strategies to excel in both

Torn between two lovers

***“I couldn't really blame you if you
turned and walked away.
But with everything I feel inside,
I'm asking you to stay.”***

***-- Excerpted from the song “Torn Between Two
Lovers”***