

## **Academic Staff's Perception of Valuing and Rewarding Good Teaching: A comparative study**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

What constitutes good university teaching is difficult to define specifically, as the definition varies with different stakeholders. However, there is general agreement that good university teaching should:

- ??improve the quality of students' learning;
- ??develop skills of lifelong learning for students;
- ??enable students to contribute to the well-being of society.

The interest in good university teaching is an outcome of the rapid expansion of higher education in the past decade. Over the past decade, governments throughout the world, in response to the Knowledge Age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, have implemented policies that open up university study to all that qualify for entry, that is, university study for the masses in place of the traditional function of university for the elites.

This "massification" of university entry has resulted in high enrolments of a wide range of students with varying abilities and interests. However, the increase in student population has led to a worsening of student-staff ratio and resource availability in universities. That this situation had occurred was due to the so-called efficiency drive the government has imposed on universities through its steady state and often declining funding policy. As a result, stakeholders, particularly employers and students, are concerned about the quality of higher education provision, as universities began to cut budgets in all aspects of education provision in order to balance the declining public funding.

Stakeholder concerns have led to an unprecedented focus on the quality of higher education provision currently. One of these foci is on the quality of teaching, that is, good teaching. Academics on the whole feel that universities, especially the

traditional universities, do not properly recognise good teaching. They perceive that most of the recognitions, rewards and promotions accorded to staff are for excellence in research. Academics who are good teachers are often overlooked. Inevitably, in times of public funding cuts, resource allocation to teaching is further reduced while research either maintains a steady state or improved institutional funding. Yet the university is a place of learning for both students and academics. Students learn more effectively through good teaching. Therefore, it is timely now to address the question of how to encourage and reward good teaching.

In the case of China, there is a strong tradition of honouring teachers and valuing education for over 2000 years. However, this tradition was annihilated to a large degree during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. During this period, teachers were branded as the lowest of low in society and formal education was devalued, unless the peasants were the teachers.

With the “open door” policy in 1978 and the rapid economic take-off since then, valuing education has progressively been on a comeback trail. Concomitantly, the status of teachers is receiving some recognition in recent years. The government has recognised that China has to lead or at least catch-up with the developed world in research and development in all fields if it were to sustain its present rate of economic growth and to compete successfully in the global and knowledge-based economy. To achieve that it has to develop an educational policy that encourages good teaching and academic excellence. Good teaching comes from valuing and rewarding excellence in teaching.

It would be interesting therefore to examine how academic staff in universities in China perceive good teaching as compared to those in developed countries, given the above background to the study.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Given the variations in perception of what constitutes good teaching, the aim of this paper is to examine the perception of valuing and rewarding good teaching from two countries (China and Australia) of different cultures. The case study in China is based on a perception study of academic staff in Wenzhou University while the Australian study was based on the findings of the Australian Committee for the Advancement of University Study (1995).

The objectives of this paper are to:

- ??Discuss the literature on the status of teaching mainly in the developed industrialised world;
- ??Describe the teaching environment in China and compare it with the developed world;
- ??Discuss the findings of the perception study of academic staff on valuing and rewarding good teaching in Wenzhou University;
- ??Compare the Wenzhou study with the Australian Committee for the Advancement of University Study.

## METHODOLOGY

Two approaches were used to fulfil the objectives of this paper, namely,  
??Literature survey of existing knowledge on valuing and rewarding teaching in universities; and  
??Administration of a survey questionnaire on academic staff perception concerning valuing and rewarding good teaching using a case study of a private.

Most of the literature surveys were sourced from the Western traditions, owing to the plethora of research undertaken in this area. Interest in valuing and rewarding teaching, however, is a growth area in Asia, as governments are starting to fund public universities based on outcomes performance. At the same time students are questioning the value for money of their fee-paying education. As far as this research project is concerned, it can be said that this field of research is one of the pioneering studies in China at present.

The survey instrument, which is an adaptation of a commissioned project of the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT), comprises two parts containing 65 statements in total. Part 1 elicits views, based on a five-point Likert scale, about valuing and rewarding good teaching in the case study institution. Part 2 deals with views, based on a five-point Likert scale, about improving the quality of teaching. The differences between the CAUT commissioned project and this study lies in the scaling of responses (namely, the former used a two-point scale while the latter, a five-point scale) as well as containing some questions, which are more appropriate to China's higher education environment. For comparative purposes, the 5-point Likert scale was moderated to a two-point scale so that the CAUT data can be compared. This is done by dividing the mid-point value into half and allocating each half to the sum of values of the two points on each side of the scale.

Four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed to the academic staff of Wenzhou University. Two hundred and ten (210) completed questionnaires were returned. This represented 52.5 per cent of the academic staff in the 11 schools that encompass Wenzhou University.

Wenzhou University was chosen because it is a privately funded comprehensive university. Invariably, the demand for good teaching from the academic staff is paramount as good teaching contributes significantly to branding the university as a good university, a factor that is crucial in attracting and sustaining student enrolment at a commercial feasibility level. The university is located in the city of Wenzhou, located on the southeast coast of China.

This is an exploratory study of one case study of a private university but, nonetheless, the findings should be able to reveal how the academic staff perceive what constitutes good teaching and how it can be appropriately rewarded. In addition, these findings, derived from a different culture and educational system, are used to compare the findings of the Australian Committee for the Advancement of University Study (1995), in order to elicit similarities and differences in staff perception. It is also the

intention of the authors to use this study to lay the foundation of a broader and more comprehensive and representative study in China in the future.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Interest in revitalising the status of teaching as an important university function and a central aspect of the academic profession has gathered momentum for the past decade. This interest was due to the following public expressions of concerns from various stakeholders of higher education:

??Students and employers questioned the quality of undergraduate teaching (e.g. Philp et al, 1964; McInnis, 1993), as universities face public funding cuts and expansion of student enrolments;

??Appointments and promotions in UK and Australian universities still relied heavily on research excellence while good teaching was often ignored (e.g. HEQC, 1994);

As a result of these public concerns, public funding for universities in UK, Australia and North America has shifted increasingly to performance and innovation in teaching. Universities are providing more opportunities for academic staff development in teaching and increasingly creating incentives for academics to perform highly in teaching. One of these incentives, in the case of Australia, is the annual National Teaching Award, which was created to recognise excellence in teaching.

Aside from teaching awards, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC, 1993) has published a list of institutional indicators to show whether a university is committed to good teaching. These include the following:

??Mission statements which express the educational ethos of the institution and how it may be realised;

??Administrative practices, and practices associated with teaching related services, which support the educational ethos of the institution;

??Adequate resources for effective teaching and learning;

??Allocation of responsibilities, which allows staff time to consult with individual students, and to conduct teaching as a scholarly activity instead of as a routine task;

??A policy on academic appointments that encourages the recruitment of individuals with demonstrated teaching commitment, and on tenure and promotion which give teaching parity of esteem with research;

??Policies on matters affecting student learning opportunities;

??Policies addressing ethical issues which might arise in the relationship between staff and students;

??Professional experience or study leave programs which allow for focus on teaching, course design, teaching materials and curriculum development;

??Assistance provided to all staff in defining and enhancing their teaching role;

??The availability of funds for exploring, developing and implementing new approaches to teaching aimed at improvement of student learning;

- ??Publications which describe and commend effective teaching and learning environments within the institution;
- ??Mechanisms for identifying and funding learning enhancement strategies;
- ??Procedures for the review of new and existing courses to ensure that programs of study are coherent, properly organised, and that they provide students with learning experiences that meet the program's aims;
- ??Procedures for regular contributions from students and external groups into the development of teaching and learning practices and the design or review of courses;
- ??A framework for enabling an institution to review and change institutional practices related to the quality of teaching and learning, and for managing change.

Universities possessing the above institutional indicators may create an environment conducive for good teaching. However, good teaching depends on the personal attributes of the teacher. As indicated by Brain (<http://www.bygpub.com/eot/eot1.htm>) a teacher must possess four core qualities in order to establish good teaching, namely, command of knowledge, skills to transmit the knowledge, ability to make the material interesting and relevant, and a deep-seated respect for the students. Leblanc (1998) further expanded Brain's four core qualities and identified good teaching as containing the following characteristics:

- ??Good teaching is about substance and treating students as consumers of knowledge;
- ??Motivating and teaching students how to learn and doing so in a manner that is relevant, meaningful and memorable;
- ??It is about listening, questioning, being responsive and remembering that each student and class is different;
- ??Good teaching is about being flexible, fluid, experimenting and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances;
- ??It should be entertaining;
- ??Good teaching requires humour in the classroom;
- ??It is about caring, nurturing and developing minds and talents;
- ??Good teaching is supported by strong and visionary leadership, and very tangible institutional support;
- ??It is about mentoring between senior and junior academic staff, teamwork and being recognised and promoted by one's peers;
- ??Good teaching is about having fun, experiencing pleasure and intrinsic rewards.

While we know the conditions for good teaching, little is known about the perception of academic staff towards valuing and rewarding good teaching. In 1995, Ramsden et al filled this gap by conducting a perception survey of academic staff towards valuing and rewarding good teaching in six representative Australian Universities. Ramsden and Martin (1996) observed that over 90 per cent of the universities make explicit reference to valuing and rewarding the development of teaching in their institutional missions and strategies. Despite this, academic staffs habitually identify a mismatch between what they experience and what universities claim when it comes to recognizing and rewarding teaching (Ramsden et al, 1995).

This study is an attempt at duplicating the Ramsden et al's (1995) study by adapting their questionnaire and applying it to academic staff employed at Wenzhou University.

As indicated in the aim and objectives of the paper, this study is to explore academic staff's perception in a cultural environment vis-à-vis the Australian context.

## **OVERVIEW OF VALUING AND REWARDING TEACHING IN CHINA**

Traditionally, teachers were highly regarded and respected in China. Teaching was a noble and honourable profession, which held high status in society since the time of Confucius, some 2500 years ago. In fact, honouring and respecting teachers is one of the two fundamental tenets of Confucian education associated with the wholesome development or self-cultivation of a person; the first, being filial piety. Teachers, according to Confucius, are important role models in imparting knowledge based upon research rigour and in leading by examples of moral conduct in their way of life. Teachers were looked upon as guardians of students' academic and personal development as well as their career. In short, teachers were expected to establish leadership (师), guardianship (保) and educating/nurturing (教) relationships with students. Thus, the role of teachers in Chinese society was highly esteemed and honoured by all, and receiving a good education has been recognised as an essential element for upward mobility even in China today.

Since the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the social status of teachers has greatly eroded. However, in recent years, with China experiencing rapid economic development for the past two decades, the government has elevated the status of teachers through better pay and service conditions. The reversal of teachers' status was due to the rapid economic development and China's membership in the World Trade Organisation, which have exposed the country to international investments and competition. This exposure has revealed structural and sectoral weaknesses of its economy in terms of managerial capacity, availability of highly trained knowledge workers in sufficient quantity and ICT infrastructure. To rectify these weaknesses, higher education reforms have been implemented in which universities are to play a major role in increasing the supply of highly trained knowledge workers and moving the economy to one based on knowledge and skills.

The reforms require universities to play an active and leading role in promoting better knowledge transfer from academia to commercial markets aside from the traditional role of generating and disseminating new knowledge. This is because the present industrial R&D capabilities are still limited, despite the growing number of local and international corporations operating in the country. Universities must also respond rapidly to the increasing social demand for life-long learning, as higher education services are increasingly in high demand and they are growing to become a major knowledge-intensive industry in the near future.

All these requirements entail that universities become efficient and effective in its delivery of learning and that the quality of learning outcomes is assured. Under these conditions, the pressure for teachers to perform well in their teaching has no doubt increased from the government, administrators and students.

The government has set in place measures to evaluate and reward academic performance in teaching, research, public service and administration. As in elsewhere in the world, high-flyers in academia are immensely rewarded through bonuses (including improved service conditions). While the base salary remains the same, the variation in bonuses has caused high deferential in total take-home pay and service conditions amongst staff across institutions and regions. This policy of valuing and rewarding academics is aimed at transforming the higher education system from an input- and supply-driven system to an output- and demand-driven system that is suitable for operating in a global market economy. At the same time, students are beginning to question the value of the education they received in relation to their academic and professional abilities to compete in the job market upon graduation. The same question is also raised by the employers, who employ graduates as value-adding resources and not as cost components in terms of additional training provision.

Given these demands on the teaching staff in terms of their ability to provide good teaching, it is relevant to examine how academic staff perceives their present conditions on valuing and rewarding good teaching. The findings below are based on a case study survey of Wenzhou University, one of a thousand over private educational institutions in China. To reiterate, these findings are indicative only at this stage, as the study is in an exploratory stage.

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

The discussion of the results of the perception study about practices recognising good teaching in Wenzhou University comprises four parts:

1. Views of academic staff about valuing teaching and research in their respective department and university;
2. Academic staff's perception towards valuing good teaching in academic appointments;
3. Perception towards valuing good teaching in promotion and tenure decisions;
4. Views about improving the quality of teaching.

The results of the Wenzhou study are compared with the results of the Australian study of Ramsden et al. Differences in value that "is" (perceived value) and "should be" (preferred value) of the two studies are also compared to reveal an indicative expression of dissatisfaction towards the institutional policies and practices related to recognising good teaching in the two countries of different cultural traditions.

### **Views of academic staff about valuing teaching and research**

Academic staff in Wenzhou University viewed that there is no significant difference in value given to teaching and research in their respective department and university (Table 1). Analysis of differences between the value that "is" and "should be" (Table

2), however, shows staff preferred the university to place greater value in teaching as compared with research. It is also interesting to note that about 20 per cent of the staff perceived that good teaching and research has no or least value at all, and to a large extent they are satisfied with their perceived status quo.

As a private university, Wenzhou University's primary function is to deliver academic courses and training based on market demand as well as to brand itself in a way that it could attract students to sustain its profit-making objective. One of the ways is to establish the institution as a centre of excellence for teaching and learning. The emphasis on good teaching is in no doubt an important branding activity of the university. This is supported by the ever-increasing number of student enrolments annually. Nonetheless, staff preferred to have further improvement made to teaching.

**Table 1 Valuing of Teaching and Research in the University**

Items		Is Valued (%)			
		No/least valued		Some/Great value	
		Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Teaching	In your University	29	20	37	69
	In your Department	22	11	51	81
Research	In your University	6	17	84	73
	In your Department	9	11	77	75
Items		Should be Valued (%)			
		No/least valued		Some/Great value	
		Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Teaching	In your University	<1	10	95	85
	In your Department	<1	3	95	83
Research	In your University	<1	5	90	81
	In your Department	<1	4	90	83

**Table 2 Differences between value that is and should be**

Items		Differences between value that is and should be (%)			
		No/least valued		Some/Great value	
		Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Teaching	In your University	28	10	-58	-16
	In your Department	21	8	-44	-2
Research	In your University	5	12	-6	-8
	In your Department	8	7	-13	-8

Unlike the Wenzhou study, the Ramsden et al study indicates high dissatisfaction towards the practice of valuing good teaching in both the department and university, as reflected in the high negative scores of -44 and -58 respectively (Table 2). This difference between the Wenzhou and Ramsden et al studies is explained by the research tradition of universities in Australia. Research excellence brings prestige, funding and academic high-flyers to the university, in addition to the fact that research

can be quantified. Good teaching can only be qualified and is seldom recognised. As such, more than 20 per cent of the respondents in the Ramsden et al study indicated that good teaching has no or least value (Table 1). This is despite the fact that emphasis has been placed on valuing good teaching in policy and practice in the higher education sector for the past decade.

In China, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and key universities (the designated 100) undertake most of the research. Most of the universities are teaching (or Normal) universities, which basically emphasise on teaching. Most importantly, valuing teaching has been a long established tradition in China. Further, in the case of private universities, such as Wenzhou University, the main business is teaching. Therefore, in contrast to the Ramsden et al study, the perceived and preferred value of valuing teaching and research in the Wenzhou respondents showed only marginal variation, indicating some form of congruency between the perceived and preferred value related to valuing teaching in the institution.

### **Perception of valuing good teaching in academic appointments**

Respondents in Wenzhou University were asked to consider nine perceived and preferred items related to academic appointment in terms of its value to good teaching (Table 3). A quarter or more of the respondents expressed that the quality of research and publication, service to the University, service to the community, teaching undergraduates, quality of students learning, experience in teaching and scholarship have no or least value in influencing academic appointments in their University. Over 60 per cent of the respondents, however, perceived that the nine items related to academic appointment have some or great value. They perceived that the university gives particular emphasis to qualifications in teaching (82 percent) and quantity of research and publication (80 per cent) when making academic appointments.

As contrasted with the perceived criteria, 90 per cent of the staffs cited quality of research and publication, assuring quality of students learning and teaching undergraduates as the most preferred criteria (Table 3). This revelation shows a mismatch between the university's criteria and staffs' criteria for making academic appointments. Looking from the pedagogical point of view on the two contrasting preferences (between employer and employees), the latter appears to be more practical in terms of benefiting students' learning.

Analysis of differences between the values that "is" and "should be" indicates that overall, staffs are dissatisfied with the criteria used for academic appointment (Table 4), especially relating to assuring the quality of students learning and the quality of research and publication. As mentioned earlier, student enrolments are critical to the private university's financial survival, and staffs recognise that the assurance of quality of students learning is catalytic to the sustainability of continuous high enrolments. In fact, the institutional criteria (qualifications in teaching and quantity of research and publication) for academic appointments appeared not to receive the ire of staffs as reflected by the low marginal differences between that "is" and "should be" (Table 4).

**Table 3 Perception of Academic Appointment**

Items	Is Valued (%)			
	No/least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	11	30	69	63
Quantity of Research and Publication	5	16	80	80
Service to University eg Admin	29	27	32	66
Service to the Community	53	28	16	66
Teaching undergraduates	37	28	31	67
Quality of students learning	44	34	24	60
Qualifications in teaching	59	18	16	82
Experience in teaching	41	26	23	69
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	13	25	58	67
Items	Should be Valued (%)			
	No/ least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	1	5	89	90
Quantity of Research and Publication	15	14	45	84
Service to University eg Admin	16	16	41	75
Service to the Community	20	10	43	85
Teaching undergraduates	1	4	86	90
Quality of students learning	2	6	88	90
Qualifications in teaching	20	12	47	85
Experience in teaching	6	7	65	87
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	<1	6	89	89

When the Wenzhou study is compared with the Ramsden et al study, variations in the perceived and preferred selection criteria for academic appointments can be discerned (Table 3). Over 50 per cent of the staffs in the Ramsden et al study perceived that “qualifications in teaching” and “service to the community” are not or least valued in their universities, followed by “assuring the quality of students learning” and “experience in teaching”, when making academic appointments. In the case of Wenzhou, no more than 30 per cent of the staffs felt this way. However, there is congruency in perception (80 per cent respectively) when it comes to the giving great value to the criteria on “quantity of research and publication” and quality of research and publication. The rest of the criteria show divergence in perception between the two studies.

As for the preferred criteria, there is some form of convergence in views as to what is “not/least valued” or “some/great value” in the two studies (Table 3), except for the following:

??“not/least valued” – qualifications in teaching

??“some/great value” – quantity of research and publication, service to the university, service to the community, qualifications in teaching and scholarship in the discipline

**Table 4 Differences between Perception of the value that is and should be in Academic Appointment**

Items	Differences in value that is and should be (%)			
	No/least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	10	25	-20	-27
Quantity of Research and Publication	-10	2	35	-4
Service to University eg Admin	13	11	-9	-9
Service to the Community	33	18	-27	-19
Teaching undergraduates	36	24	-55	-23
Quality of students learning	42	28	-64	-30
Qualifications in teaching	39	6	-31	-3
Experience in teaching	35	19	-32	-18
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	12	19	-31	-22

In the Wenzhou study, staffs’ dissatisfaction with the selection criteria for academic appointments is far lesser than those of the Ramsden et al study in Australia (Table 4). The divergence in dissatisfaction, while occurring in all the nine criteria, is most marked in the following criteria: assuring quality of students learning, quantity of research and publication, qualifications in teaching and teaching undergraduates, where the Australian counterpart had a much higher mismatch of that “is” and “should be” than Wenzhou staffs.

### **Perception of valuing good teaching in promotion and tenure decisions**

The criteria used for determining promotion and tenure are similar to that of academic appointment, with the exception of an additional item “attitude towards teaching”. As shown in Table 5, a quarter or more of the staff perceived that the criteria, “quality of research and publication”, “service to the community”, “attitude towards teaching”, “teaching undergraduates”, “assuring quality of students learning”, “experience in teaching” and “scholarship in one’s discipline” have no or least value when it comes to deciding promotion and tenure in their university. This perception of Wenzhou

staff seemed to compare well with that of the Ramsden et al study, except that a relatively higher percentage of Australian staff expressed the same feeling.

Institutional similarities between Australian universities (85 per cent) and Wenzhou University (83 per cent) are found in the respective staffs' close agreement that the following criteria are of some/great value in deciding promotion and tenure: "quantity of research and publication" and "quality of research and publication" (Table 5). Aside from that, over 60 per cent of the Wenzhou staff (range from 63 to 77 per cent) perceived that the other eight criteria are of some/great value in influencing promotion and tenure, as compared with a relatively low percentage of Australian staff.

**Table 5 Perceptions of Valuing Characteristics in Promotion and Tenure Decisions**

Items	Is Valued (%)			
	No/least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	11	25	71	75
Quantity of Research and Publication	4	17	85	83
Service to University eg Admin	22	23	41	77
Service to the Community	50	27	17	73
Attitude to teaching	-	26	-	74
Teaching undergraduates	38	37	27	63
Quality of students learning	46	36	22	64
Qualifications in teaching	59	17	15	83
Experience in teaching	38	27	26	73
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	16	29	56	71

  

Items	Should be Valued (%)			
	No/least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	<1	3	91	93
Quantity of Research and Publication	13	11	52	86
Service to University eg Admin	12	17	48	77
Service to the Community	20	11	43	82
Attitude to teaching	-	14	-	86
Teaching undergraduates	1	6	86	87
Quality of students learning	2	4	87	91
Qualifications in teaching	23	11	45	85
Experience in teaching	6	6	68	89
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	1	5	88	96

In analysing the perception of satisfaction/dissatisfaction towards the criteria of deciding promotion and tenure, the overall pattern in Wenzhou seems to indicate

general satisfaction as indicated by the relatively low value differences between that “is” and “should be” in the some/great value category (Table 6). In fact, the criterion “service to the University” appeared to fully satisfy staffs’ preference. This was followed by “qualifications in teaching”, “quantity of research and publication”, “service to the community” and “attitude towards teaching.” The criteria that most concerned staff (indication of dissatisfaction) are “assuring the quality of students’ learning”, “scholarship in one’s discipline”, “teaching undergraduates”, “quality of research and publication” and “experience in teaching” in their order of priority.

These concerns were similarly expressed by Australian staff, but more strongly in the Ramsden et al study. This is shown in Table 6 by the wide differences in values that “is” and “should be” for the following criteria related to promotion and tenure (in their order of dissatisfaction): “assuring quality of students learning ” (-65 per cent), “teaching undergraduates” (-59 per cent), “experience in teaching” (-42 per cent), “scholarship in own discipline” (-32 per cent), “qualifications in teaching” (-30 per cent), and “service to the community” (-26 per cent). It can be seen that “assuring the quality of students’ learning” has been identified as the criterion of most concern to staff in both Australian and Chinese universities when deciding promotion and tenure.

**Table 6 Differences in Perception of Value that is and should be in Promotion and Tenure Decisions**

Items	Differences in value that is and should be (%)			
	No/least valued		Some/Great value	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Quality of research and Publication	10	22	-20	-18
Quantity of Research and Publication	-9	6	33	-3
Service to University eg Admin	10	6	-7	0
Service to the Community	30	16	-26	-9
Attitude to teaching	-	12	-	-12
Teaching undergraduates	37	31	-59	-24
Quality of students learning	44	32	-65	-27
Qualifications in teaching	36	6	-30	-2
Experience in teaching	32	21	-42	-16
Scholarship-Advanced Level of Knowledge In Discipline	15	24	-32	-25

### Views about improving quality of teaching

Twenty-nine items related to improving the quality of teaching have been selected from the 31 items contained in the Ramsden et al study. Table 7, an extraction from Table 8, shows the methods and strategies that were perceived to be the least effective in their order of ranking by staffs of Wenzhou University and Australian universities. As can be seen, variations in perception occurred between the two groups concerning methods that are least effective for improving the quality of teaching. For example, Wenzhou staff (40 per cent) considered the conduct of voluntary student ratings of individual teaching performance for promotion and/or extra financial rewards as the

most ineffective strategy for improving the quality of teaching. In the Australian case studies (Ramsden et al, 1995), the use of reprimands and disciplinary procedures to punish unsatisfactory teachers was considered to be the least effective (72 per cent).

The explanation to the contrast in perception of the two case studies could be explained by differences in the cultural traditions. In a long established tradition where teachers and elders are honoured and education is highly valued, such as in China, students have a tacit understanding that teachers are beyond reproach, at least by them. It is also a traditional social etiquette that requires everyone to know his or her place or position in society. Hence, having students evaluating teachers' performance is still an unfamiliar exercise.

On the other hand, in Australia, students have been evaluating staff performance for the past decade. With the current drive to improve the quality of teaching, students' evaluation of good teaching is a frequent feature of Australian universities. Thus, the Australian staffs have accepted this annual procedure of student evaluation, even though one third of them thought the method as least effective. However, Australian staffs are not used to the methods of reprimands and disciplinary procedures to punish unsatisfactory teachers. Hence, 72 per cent of the staffs stated that this method is the most ineffective for improving the quality of teaching. But in the case of the Chinese staffs, this method was more acceptable than the methods listed in Table 7.

**Table 7 Methods perceived to be the least effective for improving the quality of teaching**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Least effective methods perceived By Wenzhou staff</b>	<b>Ramsden et al study – least effective Method perceived by Australian staff</b>
1	-conduct voluntary student ratings of individual teaching performance for promotion and/or extra financial rewards (39 %)	-use reprimands and disciplinary procedures to punish unsatisfactory teachers (72%)
2	-build and apply tests and test banks (32%)	-undertake internal quality audits of teaching (46%)
3	-implement system of course credits on the basis of flexible educational system (28%)	-establish faculty or departmental teaching committees to oversee teaching (40%)
4	-undertake internal quality audits of teaching (27%)	-conduct surveys of employers' perceptions of graduates (35%) -introduce a system of performance related pay for teaching (35%)
5	-use reprimands and disciplinary procedures to punish unsatisfactory teachers (26%)	
6	-establish faculty or departmental teaching committees to oversee teaching (25%) -conduct student evaluation of individual teaching performance using results for feedback to the staff member	--conduct voluntary student ratings of individual teaching performance for promotion and/or extra financial rewards (33%)

Methods that are considered to have some/great effects on the quality of teaching are shown in Table 8. Over 80 per cent of the Wenzhou staffs perceived the following methods (in their order of ranking) to be effective in improving the quality of teaching:

- ??Award prizes for good teaching to individual academic (88 per cent)
- ??Arrange courses familiar to teachers (87 per cent)
- ??Take more account of teaching when appointing staff (86 per cent)
- ??Create a working environment in which staff can gain intrinsic satisfaction from teaching students (86 per cent)
- ??Allocate the University budget so that teaching is treated equally with research (85 per cent)
- ??Provide more scope for staff to set teaching goals and pursue own interests (85 per cent)
- ??Introduce a system of performance-related pay for teaching (85 per cent)
- ??Ensure heads of departments give more praise for good teaching (84 per cent)
- ??Conduct more activities of teaching and research (83 per cent)
- ??Remove obstacles to enjoying teaching, such as excessive workloads (82 per cent)
- ??Interview graduates for information related to practical use of their specialities so that the colleges are informed of the feedback (82 per cent)
- ??Conduct surveys of employers' perceptions of graduates (81 per cent)
- ??Provide funding for staff to set up research programs to improve teaching quality (81 per cent)
- ??Take greater account of teaching in promotions (81 per cent)
- ??Provide more teaching development grants and fellowships (81 per cent)

It should be pointed out that the Wenzhou staffs (over 60 per cent) considered all the 29 methods have some/great effects on the quality of teaching. As indicated in the above listing of the most preferred methods, rewarding good teaching extrinsically is the most preferred choice of Wenzhou staffs. The strategies for rewarding good teaching include "award prizes for good teaching to individual academic", "take more account of teaching when appointing staff", "introduce a system of performance-related pay for teaching", "ensure heads of departments give more praise for good teaching", "provide funding for staff to set up research programs to improve teaching quality", "take greater account of teaching in promotions" and "provide more teaching development grants and fellowships". As can be seen, the preferred strategies are tied to tangible rewards (such as monetary, promotions, recognition by the authorities and grants).

Awarding prizes for good teaching to individual academic has been a common practice for a long time in China. That it has been the most preferred method for improving good teaching by Wenzhou staffs appeared to reinforce this institutional practice in universities across China. It could also be due to the fact that they are most familiar with this method. However, such awards, especially those at the provincial and national levels, are embedded with ideological overtones or political correctness, in addition to the standard pedagogical criteria of good teaching.

Methods related to intrinsic incentives and rewards which staffs preferred in promoting good teaching are "arrange courses familiar to teachers", "create a working environment in which staff can gain intrinsic satisfaction from teaching students",

“allocate the University budget so that teaching is treated equally with research”, “provide more scope for staff to set teaching goals and pursue own interests”, “remove obstacles to enjoying teaching, such as excessive workloads”, “interview graduates for information related to practical use of their specialities so that the colleges are informed of the feedback” and “conduct surveys of employers’ perceptions of graduates”. These preferences can pose major challenges to the university, particularly a private one, where investors of the university are equally or more concerned with their return on investment than their staffs’ satisfaction with the incentives and rewards system for good teaching. Nevertheless, these concerns and preferences should be considered in the context of the university’s strategic plan, as recognition of good teaching helps in motivating staffs and producing satisfied students/customers.

**Table 8 Perceived Effects on Quality of Teaching**

Methods	No/Few effects		Some/Great effects	
	Ramsden	Wenzhou	Ramsden	Wenzhou
Take more account of teaching when appointing staff	10	10	68	86
Arrange courses familiar to teachers	-	12	48	87
Remove obstacles to enjoying teaching, such as excessive workloads	5	16	85	82
Award prizes for good teaching to individual academic	29	12	43	88
Provide more scope for staff to set teaching goals and pursue own interests	17	14	55	85
Conduct more activities of teaching and research	-	15	49	83
Introduce a system of performance related pay for teaching	35	15	39	85
Take greater account of teaching in promotions	6	19	80	81
Provide more teaching development grants and fellowships	23	18	46	81
Build and apply tests and test banks	-	32	-	67
Implement system of course credits on the basis of flexible educational system	-	28	-	69
Establish informal courses based teaching for academic staff, not leading to qualifications	29	21	42	78
Ensure heads of departments give more praise for good teaching	18	14	61	84
Conduct surveys of employers perceptions of graduates	35	17	35	81
Interview graduates for information related to practical use of their specialities so the colleges are informed of the feedback	-	18	-	82
Provide funding for staff to set up research programs to improve teaching quality	13	19	64	81
Conduct student evaluation of individual teaching performance using results for feedback to the staff member	18	25	55	72

Conduct voluntary student ratings of individual teaching performance to promotion and/or extra financial rewards	33	39	39	61
Undertake internal quality audits of teaching	46	27	23	71
Educate academic managers in leadership skills related to effective teaching and learning	22	21	54	78
Encourage more collaboration and discussion about teaching among staff in academic departments	14	21	62	77
Provide general workshops and seminars on teaching and learning	21	18	46	76
Provide academics more time to develop and introduce innovations in learning and teaching	13	24	76	76
Introduce mentoring programs in which experienced teachers help less experienced ones to develop their skills	15	21	62	79
Create a working environment in which staff can gain intrinsic satisfaction from teaching students	8	14	79	86
Allocate the University budget so teaching is treated equally with research	13	15	74	85
Establish faculty or departmental teaching Committees to oversee teaching	40	25	27	75
Improve performance in research	31	21	41	77
Use reprimands & disciplinary procedures to punish unsatisfactory teachers	72	26	11	71

While over 60 per cent of the Wenzhou staffs perceived that all the 29 methods have some/great effects on the quality of teaching, the Australian staffs (over 60 per cent) considered that only ten methods have any substantial effect (Table 8). The methods identified in their order of preferences were:

- ??Remove obstacles to enjoying teaching, such as excessive workloads (85 per cent)
- ??Take greater account of teaching in promotions (80 per cent)
- ??Create a working environment in which staff can gain intrinsic satisfaction from teaching students (79 per cent)
- ??Provide academics more time to develop and introduce innovations in learning and teaching (76 per cent)
- ??Allocate the University budget so that teaching is treated equally with research (74 per cent)
- ??Take more account of teaching when appointing staff (68 per cent)
- ??Provide funding for staff to set up research programs to improve teaching quality (64 per cent)
- ??Encourage more collaboration and discussion about teaching among staff in academic departments (62 per cent)
- ??Introduce mentoring programs in which experienced teachers help less experienced ones to develop their skills (62 per cent)
- ??Ensure heads of departments give more praise for good teaching (61 per cent)

The Australian staffs' (85 per cent) most preferred method ("remove obstacles to enjoying teaching, such as excessive workloads") for effecting good teaching was intrinsic vis-à-vis the extrinsic preference ("award prizes for good teaching to individual academic" and "introduce a system of performance-related pay for teaching) of the Chinese staff. However, casting aside the order of preference, the Chinese staff (82 per cent) considered this method was just as significant in influencing teaching effectiveness in the context of excessive workloads. Nevertheless, the focus on extrinsic rewards by the Chinese staffs can be attributed to the mismatch between academic salaries and what academics can earn in the private sector, even though academic salaries have increased proportionately relative to those in the private sector in recent years.

Like their Australian counterparts, the high enrolments and funding cuts have increased the workloads of staffs in Chinese universities dramatically. In many cases, teachers were asked to deliver courses beyond their field of expertise (implied in the method "arrange courses familiar to teachers" – 87 per cent). The situation is exacerbated in private universities where the demand for high return-on-investment from investors is paramount to the financial viability of the institution.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION

This study explores academic staff's perception of valuing and rewarding good teaching in a Chinese private university. It aims to provide some preliminary findings on:

- ??How academic staffs perceived their university's attitude towards good teaching?
- ??What procedures or processes they prefer their university to institute in order to enhance the quality of teaching in their institution?
- ??How do their perceptions compare with the Australian study by Ramsden et al?

### Implications of the study

#### 1. *Valuing of teaching and research in the University*

Staffs at Wenzhou University are generally satisfied about their University's policy on teaching and research. This is in contrast with the Ramsden et al's findings, which showed that Australian staffs are highly dissatisfied with the low status given to teaching as compared with research. However, Wenzhou staffs still see the need for the University to focus more on teaching as well as research.

Therefore, Wenzhou University needs to strengthen its policy on valuing and rewarding good teaching and develop strategies for establishing an environment conducive for good teaching. This means the University needs to enhance its institutional research capabilities that are able to sustain excellence in teaching and learning.

## *2. Perception of Academic Appointments*

A quarter or more of the staff in Wenzhou University felt that the University does not value “scholarship in one’s discipline”, “experience in teaching”, “service to the University”, “service to the community”, “teaching undergraduates” and “quality of students learning” when making academic appointment. Yet these selection criteria are crucial to the University’s competitiveness in the private higher education marketplace, as employing teachers with teaching abilities and experience would attract students to the University as well as enhance its image for excellence in teaching. The University should review its appointment policy and strengthen the following selection criteria for academic appointment: “quality of students learning”, “quality of research and publication”, “teaching undergraduates”, “scholarship in one’s discipline” and “service to the community”. These criteria showed the greatest mismatch between what is perceived and what is preferred by the staffs.

## *3. Perceptions of valuing characteristics in Promotion and Tenure*

A quarter or more of the staff felt that the University placed no/least value to “teaching undergraduates”, “quality of students learning”, “scholarship in one’s discipline”, “experience in teaching”, “service to the community”, “attitude to teaching” and “quality of research and publication” when it comes to promotion and tenure of staff. Majority of the staffs also felt that their preference for “quality of students learning”, “scholarship in one’s discipline” and “teaching undergraduates” as criteria for promotion and tenure was neglected by the University. This perception has wide implications on the quality of teaching, and the University needs to rectify the situation before it starts losing the competition for student enrolments and quality teaching staff.

## *4. Perceived Effects on Quality of Teaching*

Wenzhou staffs considered all the 29 methods are important in influencing the quality of teaching, particularly methods that are extrinsic and tangible. This is not surprising in an economic environment of high GNP growth for the past two decades and where material consumption and accumulation increases annually. While wages in universities have increased for the past decade, it has not caught up with the higher wages in the private sector, except in the top 100 universities in China where high-flying academics receive salaries and perks similar to those offered by international corporations.

In the case of Wenzhou University, the proclivity of staff towards extrinsic and tangible rewards for good teaching could pose a financial challenge as it is a private university, which means that it also has to make a good ROI for its investors. It is important therefore for the University to develop policies and strategies, which enhance the quality of teaching based on understanding staff’s perception of institutional processes that are considered effective or ineffective in improving the quality of teaching in the University.

## Conclusion

The main conclusions of this study are that:

??Variations occurred between the views of Chinese staffs and Australian staffs regarding what is perceived and what is preferred in their assessment of institutional processes related to valuing and rewarding teaching. Differences in educational systems, culture and objectives may account for these variations in views. Nevertheless, there is a general agreement in the two cultural groups that their respective universities have not paid enough emphasis on teaching. This is particularly so in the Australian study and less so in the Chinese study. Therefore, the respective universities should demonstrate their commitment to excellence in teaching by strengthening its policies and processes to serve that goal. If this commitment is not genuinely implemented system-wide on the ground, the quality of teaching would be affected as teachers would invariably follow the directives of their paymaster.

??The GIGO effect of “garbage in, garbage out” applies to staff appointment. For a university to have good teaching staff, the selection criteria should be streamlined to effect good teaching outcomes as suggested by the staff. In this case, the selection criteria should be widely publicised and easily available for reference as well as implemented per se, without any hidden agenda. It is generally accepted that good teachers will deliver good teaching.

??The above conclusion also applies to promotion and tenure. Staff would accept the recognition and reward processes, and standards for good teaching as appropriate provided they are revised accordingly when required. Like in making academic appointment, the university authority should publish explicit criteria related to good teaching for promotion and tenure. Based on this case study, it calls for a review of existing institutional procedures so that staffs are more amenable to effecting good teaching in the university.

??In promoting good teaching, the University should consider using all the 29 methods for developing its policy and objectives for establishing excellence in teaching in the university. An important consideration is to recognise good teaching using tangible rewards or of extrinsic value. Perhaps in the later years when the standard of living of staff is at par with developed countries, they would prefer intrinsic rewards similar to those in Australia. Nevertheless, the university needs to create a supportive environment for good teaching.

??Finally, without quality management processes, policy development and strategy implementation to establish good teaching in the university, good teaching will not prevail. Institutional research is one of the keys in establishing quality management processes. As universities throughout the world attempt to imitate the entrepreneurial model of capital accumulation practised by corporations, it is appropriate to conclude this article by stating that valuing and rewarding good teaching establishes the basic foundation of an entrepreneurial university. The cement for this foundation comes from rigorous implementation of an institutional research strategy.

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