

THE REWARD OF TEACHING AND DOING RESEARCH: A REFLECTION

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and research activities are regarded as part and parcel of academia. Teaching and doing research at the same time have become a routine to most of us when we regard these as our preparation to equip ourselves in the learning and teaching process. This paper attempts to highlight the author's personal experience both as a lecturer and researcher. The reward from teaching and research is not merely the recognition given through awards. What is more rewarding is the inner satisfaction when our little effort is acknowledged.

Keywords: Teaching, Research Activities, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is the finest work of all and it emerges from one's inwardness (Palmer, 1997). Therefore, teaching is a very pleasant task when one delivers this responsibility to the best of his or her ability. Through teaching lecturers like us are always aware and be prepared with up-to-date information because it is a duty bound upon us to share our knowledge and valuable experience with our students. Knowledge acquired through research findings, innovative projects and publications are valuable assets for more meaningful teaching. Yet, it is a great pleasure when our humble effort bears fruitful results and well acknowledged by our valuable customers such as our students.

LECTURING AND DOING RESEARCH

We often hear the statement 'I don't have time for research because my time is too occupied with teaching and students activities'. This case requires good time management. If we are determine to conduct research or at least get involve with

any research activities that are relevant to us, it is duty bound upon us to allocate time for such purpose. The choice is ours. We do it for our own career advancement.

Meaningful Teaching through Research Activities

Teaching has become a daily routine for us and it is so natural that we sometimes ignore to ponder how effective our teaching is. Most of the time, we deliver information that we gather from the thoughts and findings of others. We are just merely explaining and elaborating theories and facts put forward by other writers or researchers, which sometimes do not conform to our own condition and cultures.

Challenged by this scenario, I began embarking on research since early 1990s. My personal experience while undertaking a research project entitled “Preservation Characteristics of Malaysian Timbers” (Suhaimi, 1989) to fulfill the Ph.D. requirement, inspired me to carry on with other research projects in the hope to establish facts which are relevant and more meaningful for my teaching career.

Research findings from two projects under Intensification of Research on Priority Areas (IRPA) and five projects under the Bureau of Research and Consultancy – Universiti Teknologi MARA (BRC-UiTM) are beneficial aids in my teaching. Information and facts from such findings have direct applications, thus, making my teaching interesting and more meaningful.

My research project “Wood Quality Indicators of Rubberwood (*Hevea brasiliensis*)” (Suhaimi *et al.*, 1998) under IRPA grant, has benefited not only my own students at the Department of Wood Industries but also students from other institutions of higher learning especially University Putra Malaysia (UPM) where two students completed their thesis for the requirement of B.Sc. Forestry. It is more rewarding when the findings from this project were recognised by experts from Brazil and Europe.

Another research project under IRPA grant entitled “Glued-laminated Timber Beam from Light Red Meranti” (Wan Mahmood *et al.*, 1997) has generated interest for the wood-based industries especially those dealing with heavy wooden structures. This project with a grant of RM 300,000.00, is the first of its kind as it involves tropical hardwoods. Previous research in this area focused mainly on softwoods for wooden structures.

Meaningful Teaching through Innovative Projects

Research findings are not only published locally and internationally for shared information and knowledge. Such findings lead to innovative products and

techniques. Chen Fung Woo and I (1998) embarked on several innovative projects in the hope to fully utilize oil palm residues. Such projects were as follows:

1. Composite Panel from Oil Palm Residues
2. Oleoglass
3. Reconstituted Lignocellulosic Panel with Simulated Wood Grain Appearance
4. Environmentally Friendly Sandwich Composite Panel
5. Environmentally Friendly Light Weight Sandwich Composite Panel

Projects 3, 4 and 5 won the Special MINDS-Henry Goh Environmental Innovation Award at I.TEX'98 sponsored by The Malaysian Invention and Design Society.

Inspired by the above achievements, we moved forward for international recognition. In this context, three of our innovations have been granted international recognition at The International Exhibition of Inventions: New Products and Techniques in Geneva, Switzerland (Suhaimi and Chen, 1999; Wan Mohd. Nazri and Suhaimi, 2001).

1. Zero Waste (1999)
2. Envirocard (1999)
3. Wood I-joint: Effective Jointing Technique (2001)

Two of such innovations won silver medal (No.1 and No.3) and the other one won bronze medal (No.2). This achievement was very rewarding and I regard it as a very powerful tool in my teaching career. As a result, students become more motivated in their learning and the process of teaching proceeds in a more meaningful manner.

CONCLUSION

Teaching with the aid of our own research findings and innovative projects create a more pleasant environment. Our students not only gain up-to-date knowledge but they also become more attentive, motivated and highly inspired in their studies. Therefore the process of teaching becomes more interesting and leads to more meaningful outputs. Finally, inner satisfaction is the reward for the valuable effort when we manage to share our valuable knowledge with our students and future generations of knowledge-seekers.

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