

## Research and Teaching in Higher Education: The Trade Off

\*Dr. Jasojit Debnath

\*\*Dr. Reshma K. Tiwari

### Abstract

The role of research in higher education has increased manifold in the recent past. Research helps the teachers in developing their knowledge base. Research contribution helps the academic world to discover new findings. The Regulations of the regulatory bodies have also emphasized for the research activities of the teachers of colleges and universities. The appointment of teachers and their promotion also depend upon their research contribution. Government and funding agencies help the teaching community to undertake research activities. Even there are funding agencies for the research scholars so as to enable them to carry out full time research. But, in the name of research the teachers can't shy off from the responsibility of teaching. Research findings must augment the teachers in the classroom teaching. There must be assessment of the impact of research in teaching-learning (Cabral and Huet, 2011) since research improves teaching (Katz and Coleman, 2001). The study aims to depict the role of research and its impact in the process of teaching-learning.

**Keywords:** Higher education, Research, and Teaching-learning

### Introduction

The role of a teacher includes in addition to teaching, the job of a researcher, consultant and administrator of the academic institution. In the knowledge world the teacher transforms the hope into reality. Their contribution is of paramount importance since they are the catalyst in transforming the learners into worthy human capital for the betterment of the society in which we all live (Rao, 2016). All the different roles a teacher has to portray efficiently to be considered as a successful teacher. While doing so, there may arise a time when a teacher also has to balance the different roles because each of the roles calls for devoting requisite time and the desired contribution.

Research in the institutes of higher education is an important aspect for the process of teaching-learning. The output of the research is an input for the students for their proper understanding of the subject matter. Research helps in adding newer concepts to the domain and helps in the expansion of the knowledge base.

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Nagaland University, Nagaland

\*\* Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Tezpur University, Assam

In this context it is important that the result of the research must have some positive impact in the classroom teaching. It is important to assess the impact of research in teaching-learning (Cabral and Huet, 2011) since research improves teaching (Katz and Coleman, 2001). But, there tend to be very little positive relationship between the faculty members' research output and their efficacy in teaching as evaluated by their students. In regard to measuring the quality of research, citation counts is used as one of the good measuring tool but yet it fails in linking it to teaching effectiveness (Feldman, 1987). Still, there is complete lack of any argument to clearly demonstrate the link between research and teaching. The question as to what one mean by the output of research and what is meant by quality teaching is completely ignored. Problem still lies in measuring good teaching. Research may not enhance the academic acumen in the classroom teaching of the teacher but it is definitely able to augment the knowledge of the teacher and his passion to understand the subject in the better way (Brew and Bound, 1995).

The importance of research as the central focus of a teacher's job in certain cases has even led to exempt the teachers wholly from the responsibility of classroom teaching. Studies have shown that the teachers are assessed by their proficiencies in both teaching and research. In countries like United States, Russia and some of the South American countries, teaching and not research is the backbone of their profession (Altbach and Lewis, 1997 cited in Serow, 2000). In the light of the above discussion, the paper focuses on the relationship between research and teaching and tries to highlight the role of research and its impact in the process of teaching-learning.

### **Research and Teaching: The Trade Off**

The understanding of the fact that every research may not contribute to the efficacy of teaching lead to discuss the then importance of research in classroom teaching. It is an ardent necessity that the teachers are involved in research activity as it not only helps the teacher to gather new knowledge but also helps in making their presence felt in the group of efficient academicians. The research activities even channelize the flow of ideas among the teachers who are working in the same arena. Fien (2002) is of the view that "*research is a personal, ethical and political enterprise as well as a technical one*". He further advocated that the criteria to decide about the topic to be researched must be based on the locally significant and culturally appropriate issues.

The discussion as to whether research supports the instruction in the classroom has been a debate which is continuing for quite a long time. It is understood that there are and will be two schools of thoughts regarding this debate. In one side there are people consisting of the academic administrators and faculty members who support the motion by arguing that research will definitely support the classroom teaching. The other side constantly argues against the motion by citing different works which fails in making any connect between research and teaching effectiveness. It is argued that the chief characteristic of research is to add newer concept in the knowledge base of the subject. In regard to teaching, the major objective lies in the improvement of the skills of the pupil. In the debate of research and teaching it is also said that a good research discovers and solves the problems in hand and for that matter a good researcher is also bestowed with recognition and appreciation. On the other hand, a good teacher helps the students in discovering and solving the problem. It can be referred here that both good research and good teaching may sometimes be mutually exclusive. Both the activities call for full time devotion and thus the time devoted to one activity surely means the time taken away from the other activity. It is thus necessary in the present context to effectively bring research in the classroom teaching and involving the students in the research projects so as to bring a tradeoff between the two (Prince, Felder and Brent, 2007).

Serow (2000) has conducted a study on the tension prevailing between teaching and research in a research university in USA whereby the finding reveals the importance given to research over teaching. The study found that faculties receive more reward for their research output, their publication and their success in undertaking externally funded research. Research provided the faculties with better promotional opportunities and also helps in getting appreciation and admiration from their peers. Even it is viewed that a researcher must be involved in right type of research to be considered a genuine teacher. In contrast, teaching is considered to be less significant. It is assumed that the teachers will demonstrate good teaching skills in the classroom. If not, it may invite persecution from the department. There is hardly any acknowledgement for good teaching. Even investment for the improvement of classroom instruction is too meagre.

This notion of research over teaching in recent times is shifting the trend from quality teaching to research proficiency for evaluating a teacher. It is no denying the fact that research is the need of the hour but maintaining a good classroom teaching still holds much importance.

In the current scenario, motivating the teachers is also a major task in addition to measuring their responsibility towards effective teaching and research acumen. Many of the western countries academic institutions give more impetus towards research activities of their faculty members. This has led to the faculties getting more engaged with their research work in the institutions. In India, still the teaching community is thriving hard to reach that stature as enjoyed by the teachers in the western world (Raina and Khatri, 2015). The scenario may have changed in the recent past in India if we analyse the new roles defined for the faculty members by the higher education regulator. The teachers have been provided opportunities for undertaking research and they are encouraged to participate in different fora to share their views on their research activities. The growth and promotion of the faculty members heavily depend to a great extent on their research contribution and even the perks and salaries provided to them is highly competitive. So, motivating the teachers may not be a difficult proposition in the current scenario. Rather, importance lies in witnessing their contribution in the classroom teaching by linking it with their research output.

Jiang and Roberts (2011) have made a study involving the students of undergraduate and graduate students for two courses in international business. The study was conducted to assess the impact on students' learning experience if it is based on research-led education. The approach has two dimensions. In the first part, the teacher's research provides the base for the case-based assessment activity; and in the second, to understand the students' perception about research the students were advised to undertake a research-based learning project. The findings revealed that in the context of case-based assessment, the teacher uses his own experience of research to make them understand about the issues of the subject. The students appreciated the teacher for using his own research because they found that while discussing the topic, the teacher was highly enthusiastic and his knowledge in the field was not only helpful to understand the topic but also was useful in mentoring them for undertaking their research-based learning project. But, another interesting conclusion was derived in the study when the researcher assessed the perception of the students in respect to the learning from research-led education. It was found that majority of the students didn't refer about the impact of case-based education in their learning. They found the research-based learning is challenging but accepted it as a new learning process. They were also of the view that research-based learning involved them to the subject matter and led to searching new ideas and contributing to the knowledge base of the

subject. The study highlights that inspite of the teacher sharing his own research work in the classroom discussion; the students were more motivated by the research activity done by them on their own. It raises a then serious question as to the contribution of the research in the learning of the students. It has become an ardent necessity to develop the measuring tool to assess the effect of the teacher's research for the betterment of the students learning experience.

Rowley (1996) is of the view that the teachers in higher learning institutions have always tried to combine meaningfully the job of teaching and research activities. With the increased activities of the funding agencies to fund research of the teachers, the universities are emphasizing on the research activities of their teachers which would enable the universities to be considered a university in the true sense. But, it was observed by the author that some of the institutions' teachers are heavily loaded with classroom assignments. They were earlier valued for their role in classroom teaching and designing quality course curriculum. They, thus couldn't devote much time for research and publishing activities. It then minimizes their chance in getting the desired promotion because there is a tectonic shift in the working style as emphasis is more in research and publishing activities of the teachers. The change has also pressurized the teachers of those universities whereby research was a significant part of their work profile to maintain the standard of research and also to amplify the quality of research. Hence, the pressure is not only to maintain a good teaching standard in the classroom but also to contribute significantly by way of research and publishing work. The teachers thus, have to efficiently deal with the situation and have to address both the demands efficiently and effectively. Thus, it would be required on the part of the teacher to write quality textbooks and other learning materials based on their experience as an instructor and researcher. The students have to be involved in the process and the best way to do so is to encourage them to publish their own work. While doing so, the students will be guided by the teacher in their research activities and they will feel more involved in the learning process.

## **Conclusion**

It is now an accepted fact that research in the higher education institutions is having a paramount importance. A teacher without quality research output and publishing work stands in a less advantageous position than their peers who contribute significantly with their research output. The regulator and the administrator of the higher learning institutions are not denying the importance of quality teaching for the development of the skills of the students in the process of

teaching-learning. But, in the recent past it can be seen that the importance is tilted more towards research than classroom teaching. Different studies have been undertaken by the researcher to link research and teaching and the contribution of research in the effective learning environment. But, still the result is inconclusive. A teacher needs to balance between research and teaching. It can be argued that in the present time, without the involvement of the students, the standalone research may not bear quality result. The teachers while undertaking the class ought to link the instructions with his research output. The teachers who efficiently do this will be valued more by the students. The teachers still need to deliver efficiently in the classroom as it is central to the job of a professional teacher.

## References

1. Altbach, P. and Lewis, L. (1997). The academic profession in international perspective, in Altbach, P. (ed.). *The International Academic Profession: Portraits of Fourteen Countries*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 3-48. Cited in Serow, R.C. (2000). Research and Teaching at a Research University. *Higher Education*, 40(4), 449-463.
2. Brew, A. and Bound, D.(1995). Teaching and Research: Establishing the Vital Link with Learning. *Higher Education*, 29(3), 261-273.
3. Cabral, A.P. and Huet, I. (2011). Research in Higher Education: the role of teaching and student learning. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 91-97.
4. Feldman, K.A. (1987). Research productivity and scholarly accomplishment of college teachers as related to their instructional effectiveness: A review and exploration. *Research in Higher education*, 26(3), 227-298.
5. Fien, J. (2002). Advancing sustainability in higher education: Issues and opportunities for research. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 3(3), 243-253.
6. Jiang, F. and Roberts, P.J. (2011). An Investigation of the Impact of Research-led Education on Student Learning and Understandings of Research. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 8(2), 1-14.
7. Katz, E. and Coleman, M. (2001). The growing importance of research at academic colleges of education in Israel. *Education + Training*, 43(2), 82-93.
8. Prince, M.J., Felder, R.M. and Brent, R. (2007). Does Faculty Research Improve Undergraduate Teaching? An Analysis of Existing and Potential Synergies. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 96(4), 283-294.

9. Raina, K. and Khatri, P. (2015). Faculty engagement in higher education: prospects and areas of research. *On the Horizon*, 23(4), 285-308.
10. Rao, M.B. (2016). Motivation of teachers in higher education. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, 8(4), 469-488.
11. Rowley, J. (1996). Developing constructive tension between teaching and research. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 10(2), 6-10.
12. Serow, R.C. (2000). Research and Teaching at a Research University. *Higher Education*, 40(4), 449-463.