

Will Lecturers from Minority Ethnic Backgrounds Be Perceived as Less Effective in Teaching- A Comparative Study on Students' Perceptions of Teaching

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Abstract:

There has been a wealth of studies on how to teach in a diversified university student body, however little research has been done to explore issues associated with a diversified teaching body. Australia is a multi-cultural society and in recent years, the number of academic staff from minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing dramatically in most Australian universities. When the university student body is still dominated by Caucasian students, will academic staff members from ethnic minority backgrounds (i.e., Chinese, Indians, Malaysians) be perceived as less effective in teaching? Moreover, will students from ethnic minority backgrounds have significant different perceptions about the same lecturer's teaching from their Caucasian classmates?

Ethnic similarity may lead to liking, trust and cooperative behavior in teaching and learning environment. It is proposed that students from minority backgrounds will have better perceptions towards a lecturer's teaching than their Caucasian classmates if the lecturer has a minority ethnic background. Moreover, these students will be more motivated in learning. This preliminary study is conducted to explore the effect of ethnicity in the higher education environment. It will apply both qualitative and quantitative methods to verify those propositions. It is hoped that findings from this study can make universities be more aware of the particular challenges that lectures from ethnic minority backgrounds are facing. It is also hoped that this study can stimulate discussions as how to deal with those challenges.