HOW DO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PERCEIVE EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN HONG KONG?

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ABSTRACT

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The present study aimed to explore how the students and the teachers in Hong Kong conceptualised "effective teaching". 106 Form three students and 3 teachers were asked to rank the significance of forty teaching traits and evaluate the teachers' teaching performance. A focus group interview and individual interviews were conducted with the students and the teachers respectively. Classroom observations together with follow-up talks were also arranged for the teachers.

It was found that both the participating groups had similar though not identical views on the effective aspects of teaching. They generally thought that an effective teacher should use various strategies to motivate students, involve all of the students in the lesson, use a variety of activities/ learning methods, give clear instructions and explanations, and keep students on task throughout the lesson. They also thought that an effective teacher should have a good relationship with his/ her students and make the best use of reinforcements. They agreed with most of the reviewed literature about teaching effectiveness except that they preferred the teacher-centred approaches to the student-centred approaches. This could be mainly due to the cultural differences. Although the teachers claimed that students should take care of their own learning, they did not actively try to encourage their students to do so in reality. For students, a majority group tended to be passive and rely a lot on their teachers while a minority group tended to be more proactive and learn more independently.

Since the western theories might not be compatible with the eastern beliefs, it was suggested that teachers should test the theories before use. This could be encouraged by a more bottom-up educational system. It was also suggested that students and teachers should have a more active role to play in teacher evaluation. They should be given more chance to talk and share their perceptions of effective teaching. It is argued that this sharing of perceptions would enable greater consensus to emerge between teachers and students. Last but not least, it would be sensible for teachers to treat teaching as a combination of a science, a craft and an art so that they were better able to meet the expectations of different types of students.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts with some research problems before a discussion is made on the background information of the present study which explores the problems. Three main areas will be discussed. First, what is “teaching”? What does it mean by “effective teaching”? Next, why is “teacher evaluation” essential? Finally, who should be involved in evaluating “teacher effectiveness”? At the end of this chapter, the aim of the research will be stated and an outline of the thesis will be provided.

1.1 Research problems

In the previous numerous teaching episodes of the researcher, some of her students gave very positive feedback while some of them did not. It was not uncommon that some of them found the researcher’s lessons enjoyable and productive whereas the researcher herself did not. For this reason, the researcher wondered if she overlooked some aspects of the lessons that her students found satisfactory or if she put the focus on areas which her students did not find significant at all. Why would this happen? Was it possible that what mattered to the researcher was different from what mattered to the researcher’s students in the classrooms? To what extent did they agree on the essentials of an effective teacher?

When asked to describe their best teachers, the participants in the study of Pehkonen (1992) said they liked teachers who helped them have different and better strategies or processes to learn the subject whereas the participants in the study of Sizemore (1981) preferred teachers who demonstrated a willingness to explain materials and help them with their work. On the other hand, the participants in the study of Batten & Girling-Butcher (1981) were fond of those who built relationships with them. How would the students in Hong Kong respond when they were asked the same question? This is the topic which the present study is intended to explore.

1.2 Background information

In this section, there will be three areas to be discussed. The first one is the nature of "teaching" and the meaning of "effective teaching". The second one is the functions of evaluating teachers. The last one is the roles of teachers and students in the process of teacher evaluation.

1.2.1What is "teaching"? What does it mean by "effective teaching"?

What is teaching? It is important to address this question not only because it gives information about how teachers should be nurtured, but also because it gives information about how the professional development of the current teachers should be

promoted. Without this information, it is difficult to understand what makes a teacher, not to mention what makes an effective teacher. So what exactly is “teaching”?

Fenstermacher (1986) attempts to answer this question by describing an activity in which a person called T (teacher) who possesses and intends to convey or impart some C (content) to a person called S (student) who initially lacks C such that both T and S engage in a relationship for the purpose of S’s acquiring C. Based on the above description, teaching looks like a rather straight forward task but in reality, it may not be as simple as it looks like. There are far more aspects that are required to be considered when conceptualising teaching. One aspect is whether or not there is teaching if learning does not take place. As Fenstermacher (1986) puts it: has T taught something if S has not learnt anything? Dewey’s answer to this question is negative because to him, “teaching is like selling……you can’t have a sale unless someone buys …... [Similarly], you haven’t taught unless someone has learned” (Dewey, 1910, quoted in Mckeachie el al, 1994, p.313). It is quite true that students may not have learnt or achieved anything even if they have finished a task. According to Fenstermacher (1986), the relationship between teaching and learning is not a causal one even if there is an ontologically dependent relationship between them since learning often comes after teaching. He explains,

> the term ‘learning’ functions in both a task and achievement sense….. and thus [it is easy to] contend that the task of teaching is to produce the achievement of learning, when it in fact makes more sense to contend that a central task of teaching is to enable the student to perform the tasks of learning (Fenstermacher, 1986, p. 39).

This means that learning will not come naturally right after teaching. To refine the previous definition of “teaching”, Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) add “S to acquire C to some acceptable or appropriate level”. They believe that T is still conducting the activity called teaching even if S has not learnt anything but only when S has learnt something will the performance of T be considered good (Fenstermacher and Richardson, 2005). As a result, they refer “teaching in the task sense” to “good teaching” and “teaching in the achievement sense” to “successful teaching” (Fenstermacher and Richardson, 2005, p. 189). In other words, the meaning of “good” is different from the meaning of “successful” to Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005). Based on what they have suggested, having helped students to finish a task can only be considered “good” at most. Students must have learnt something from the finished task if teaching is considered “successful”. In short, there is no guarantee that teaching will bring about learning.

This distinction between good teaching and successful teaching appears to match the views held by Eisner (1994) relating to the meaning of teaching. Eisner (1994) regards teaching as “a set of acts performed by people we call teachers as they attempt

to foster learning" and "a form of achievement directly related to learning" (p.159). These two views seem to be similar to "teaching in the task sense" and "teaching in the achievement sense" respectively suggested by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005).

As stated by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), there are three elements of good teaching. They are "the logical acts of teaching" (e.g., activities such as demonstrating, explaining, and correcting), "the psychological acts of teaching" (e.g., motivating, encouraging, rewarding), and "the moral acts of teaching" (e.g., exhibiting and fostering honesty, courage, and fairness). They go further and note that there must also be "willingness and effort by the learner", "a social surround supportive of teaching and learning" and "opportunity to teach and learn" for student learning to occur (Fenstermacher and Richardson, 2005, p.190). With this broader perspective of teaching quality, Wechsler and Shields (2008) have developed a more comprehensive definition of teaching quality. They believe that high-quality teaching occurs

> when teachers come to the classroom with a rich toolkit of knowledge and skills that they utilise following a set of effective practices, and which lead, over time, to student learning (p.5).

They go on to say that high quality teaching occurs in a supportive environment

> where teachers work as part of a professional community within a workplace that fosters continuous learning on the part of children and adults (Wechsler and Shields, 2008, p.5).

Based on what has been discussed, there are reasons to believe that teaching is a far more complex activity than people may expect. It may look easy, especially to prospective teachers because Labaree (2001) finds that the apprenticeship of observation only shows student teachers a lot about what teachers do but almost nothing about why they do what they do. In fact, there are many factors that make teaching an enormously difficult job. Labaree (2001) has listed client cooperation, a compulsory clientele, emotion management, structural isolation and chronic uncertainty about the effectiveness of teaching. Among the factors, he highlights the fact that students must be willing to learn what the teacher is teaching and students are only present in the classroom because they are forced to be there (Labaree, 2001). These factors appear to resemble “willingness and effort by the learner” suggested by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005).

All in all, teaching is neither simple, nor easy and it is significant to construct a comprehensive picture of what exactly it is in order to understand what makes teachers effective. This will be dealt with in the next chapter when the nature of teaching is further discussed. In the next sub-section, there will be explanations on

why teacher evaluation is essential.

1.2.2 Why is “teacher evaluation” essential?

This thesis is concerned with the evaluation of teaching. There are many reasons why it is a high priority to evaluate teachers’ performance. First of all, teachers are required to be assessed to help improve the quality of an institution which, in turn, may help improve the institution’s competitiveness in relation to a source of funding. The public, including the government and the parents, have reasons to find out if the teachers are of high quality because some of their money has been spent on employing teachers. In these cases, teacher evaluation serves the purpose of accountability which assures quality, using the words of Roger & Badham (1992). Teachers are also evaluated to identify their strengths, weaknesses, needs and interests. Using the words of Roger & Badham (1992), teacher evaluation in these cases serves the purpose of improving quality of teacher performance.

The former purpose of teacher evaluation seems to be related to what McLaughlin and Pfeifier (1988) mean by the institutional level of accountability at which evaluation matches professional performance and regional standards, making the institution accountable to the public. The latter purpose seems to be related to the individual

level where objective feedback provides teachers with accounts of their work, which they can compare to their own personal standards (McLaughlin and Pfeifier, 1988). McLaughlin and Pfeifier (1988) further identify two components of individual improvement. They are reflection about teaching and areas of strengths and weaknesses as well as the motivation to change or to act on the results of reflection (McLaughlin and Pfeifier, 1988).

Nevertheless, maintaining good quality teachers is essential if student learning is the ultimate goal of teaching. Thornton (2006) has made it clearly that teacher quality makes a difference. She has reported studies which indicate the significant relationship between teacher quality and student learning, like the one done by Byrne in 1983 and the one by Darling-Hammond in 1999. Kelly (1987) has also recognised the significance of teacher evaluation. He points out that "without some kind of evaluation it is difficult to see what basis might exist for any real development either of the curriculum or of the teachers themselves" (Kelly, 1987, p.215). He concludes that "…for a prerequisite of improvement, [there] must be some evaluation of previous performance" (Kelly, 1987, p.215).

In short, teacher evaluation systems serve both summative and formative purposes

(Peterson 1995). Whereas accountability or other summative purposes are concerned with the selection, promotion, redeployment, dismissal of teachers and etc., formative purposes are concerned with professional development for identifying teachers' strengths, weaknesses, needs and interests.

There has been a tradition that the two evaluative practices are separately conducted. One of the reasons is that summative evaluation serves the purposes of administrators and is a public process, while formative evaluation serves the individual teacher and is therefore confidential. Another reason is the concern that the consultant may have a conflict of interest between serving the needs of the teacher and serving the needs of the administration. However, there are strong reasons for not separating them. One of them is if the primary goal of evaluating an individual's teaching is a summative one, significant difference in improvement achieved on an individual level may be overlooked. Another reason is the efficiency and the cost. All the effort, care and time spent on documenting and evaluating teaching can be used more efficiently if it serves two functions simultaneously rather than just one.

The implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and External School Review (ESR) as complementary processes is a local example of merging both formative and

summative evaluation. The Impact Study on the Effectiveness of ESR in Enhancing School Improvement through SSE in Hong Kong is an independent study led by Professor John MacBeath of the University of Cambridge, aiming to evaluate the implementation of the School Development and Accountability (SDA) framework from 2003/04 to 2007/08. It has followed the implementation of ESR since 2003/04, collecting quantitative and qualitative data from five successive cohorts of schools. The data comes primarily from school personnel themselves both through interviews and cross-school focus groups with key stakeholders and by means of anonymised questionnaires. Feedback has been continuously collected from over 42,000 teachers/ principals, in 648 ESR schools, with an overall response rate of 70%. According to "*The Impact Study on the effectiveness of External School Improvement through School Self-evaluation in Hong Kong-Final Report*" (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2008), the overall impact of SSE and ESR is positive, such as giving impetus to nurturing the culture of SSE, promoting the use of data and evidence as a basis for SSE, creating a greater sense of openness, transparency and collaboration within schools, enhancing a sense of ownership and team spirit as well as creating a positive impact on learning and teaching (p.iii). In the questionnaire for the School Development and Accountability framework adopted by the Education Bureau in Hong Kong, it is found that on the item "School Self-Evaluation (SSE) and

External School Evaluation (ESR) have made a positive impact on the quality of learning and teaching in this school", the level of agreement among the School Improvement Team (SIT) in all schools from 2003/04 to 2005/06 was as high as 97% (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2008, p.12).

Although the merging of SSE and ESR is an idea of a centralised approach to the administration of education and the reliability as well as the validity of the data in relation to the questions it is used to answer should be considered, the Study can be taken as an example to show that one single assessment can serve both formative and summative purposes. As Barber (1990) says, "whether or not the assessment is a summative or a formative or both summative and formative one depends on how the data is used" (p. 217).

All in all, developing effective teachers is important but maintaining teaching effectiveness is equally, if not more, important. This is why teacher evaluation is an essential thing to do. If there is a consensus that teacher evaluation is necessary, then who should take part in the evaluation process?

1.2.3 Who should be involved in evaluating "teacher effectiveness"?

Teacher evaluation used to adopt a top-down approach. Under this approach, the evaluation is often carried out by the staff in the authority positions, such as principals and head-teachers. Teachers and students have little say in the process. This section attempts to justify the participation of teachers and students in the process of teacher evaluation.

- **Teachers**

Kremer-Hayon (1993) says that supervision of teaching is commonly supervisor-centred but he has observed a shift from the traditional orientation to a progressive orientation which is considered more teacher-oriented. He thinks that the shift may be due to the growing perception of teaching as a profession (Kremer-Hayon, 1993). It is because "a total dependence upon the evaluation done by others stands in contradiction with the idea of professionalism" (Kremer-Hayon, 1993, p.viii). He goes on to explain that the work of Schön (1983) and that of Shulman (1986b) have attributed to the perception since Schön (1983) has developed the concepts of reflective practitioners and an epistemology of practice whereas Shulman (1986b) has developed the concept of pedagogical knowledge. The link between professionalism and self-evaluation has been recognised by Kilbourn (1991) who

believes that “an essential aspect of professionalism is the act of self-monitoring” (p. 722).

There may be possible conflicts between concerns about teacher autonomy and accountability because there are queries about whether or not autonomous teachers can be accountable. Will teachers be too autonomous to be accountable to anyone? If they are accountable to the students, to the school or to the public, will their autonomy be sacrificed? Are they still able to do what they think they should do for improving learning? After careful examination, it is believed that there should not be any reason why autonomy and accountability cannot co-exist. It is because teacher autonomy focuses on self-evaluation of one’s teaching performance. This self-evaluation allows teachers’ ownership of their evaluation which can result in staff development and eventually lead to school improvement. Consequently, when negotiating assessment outcomes, all stakeholders including teachers are recommended to have a voice so that the goals of individual teachers are more likely to be aligned with those of other stakeholders. The idea that autonomy and accountability can co-exist has also been supported by Eraut (1993) who claims that accountability to oneself is an inherent part of professionalism.

Teacher self-evaluation (TSE) is defined by Buchanan and Jackson (1997) as

> a set of processes which involve [teachers] in making value judgements, about [their] strengths and needs; critical analysis of the implications of [their] judgements; setting targets for future action; planning activities that allow evidence of achievement of targets to be gathered; and monitoring and evaluating the success and failure of [their] actions (p.3).

They add that self-evaluation should be seen as an ongoing activity since those processes can start off a second cycle with either the same or new targets (Buchanan & Jackson, 1997). They also believe that the purpose of self-evaluation is "to improve the effectiveness and hence quality of learning and teaching, i.e. above all, it is for the benefit of the pupils" (Buchanan & Jackson, 1997. p.3).

There are many reasons why teachers should play active roles in their own evaluation. Marsh and Roche (1997) find that teachers' self-evaluation provides insight into how teachers view their own teaching and so eventually help improve teaching. Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (1995) also agree that self-appraisal can aid teacher development.

The significance of teacher self-evaluation is also acknowledged in the local context. In *Education Commission Report No.5* (Education Commission 1992), there is a call for a greater emphasis on the development of teachers as professionals as well as a life-long learning for teachers. Moreover, a secondary school principal gave the following feedback to the teachers' self-evaluation in the final report of "*The Impact*

*Study on the effectiveness of External School Improvement through School Self-evaluation in Hong Kon*g" (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2008): "… staff have built up a greater sense of ownership and involvement" (p.11). In other words, teachers were given a greater stake in school improvement. This, in turn, improved team spirit, creating a feeling of pride in what had been accomplished together. It was also reported that morale had visibly increased and that conversations among staff had become more frequent, more informed, more self-critical, and leading to more effective.

In fact, self-assessment has been historically considered to be of little value. Peterson and Comeaux (1990) asked 48 high school teachers to assess several evaluation systems including a Self-Evaluation Checklist and discovered that the main disadvantage of the checklist mentioned by the teachers was their worry that teachers might not rate themselves accurately. Moreover, evaluation may become a form of self-justification whereby an incompetent person does not realise that his or her performance is unsatisfactory (Barber, 1990).

However, Koziol and Burns (1986) have identified some methodological problems in the observer reports which determine the accuracy of teacher self-reports. First, they

find that not much information is provided about the training or qualifications of the observers or about interobserver agreement and there may not be enough observations for observers to make accurate determinations of teachers' classroom practice (Koziol and Burns, 1986). They also mention that there may be undefined or mismatched observation schedules (Koziol and Burns, 1986).

To show that teachers could be accurate in evaluating their own performance, Koziol and Burns (1986) gave an account of two studies which dealt with the accuracy of teachers' self-reporting using focused self-report instrument. One of them was Newfield's (1980) study which examined teacher-observer agreement on the presence or absence of specific instructional practices during a single 30-minute class period and it was found that there was a very high teacher-observer agreement. Similar findings were discovered in the study of Koziol and Moss (1983) which compared elementary teachers' self-reports with their students' reports for composition instruction over a year-long period. Koziol and Burns (1980) also reported their own study which compared teacher self-reports with observer and student reports to determine the accuracy of teachers. It was found that teacher accuracy, as determined by percentage of agreement and kappa coefficients for teachers and observers and for teachers and students, was high, suggesting that teachers' self-reports could gather

reliable data on instructional practices. It was also found that there was a consistently higher agreement for the second teacher-observer reporting period, meaning teacher self-reporting accuracy was enhanced with repeated use of the same inventory.

It is quite true that self-evaluation is not perfect, like any other means of teacher evaluation. However, it has been shown that it can be an accurate means of teacher evaluation that is worth using. In the study of Peterson and Comeaux (1990) mentioned above, even if the teachers who participated in the study listed a number of disadvantages of the Self-Evaluation system, the majority of the participants agreed that the procedure of self-evaluation encouraged them to reflect on their teaching. Teacher's participation in their own evaluation is further justified by Brown et al (1995, quoted in Buchanan & Jackson, 1997) when they argue that

> any serious attempt to innovate in classrooms has to start from where teachers are and how they construe their own teaching, their pupils and what they are trying to achieve (p.5).

- **Students**

Like teachers, students have little say in the traditional top-down approach to evaluating teachers even if they, in a way, observe and assess teaching performance every day. Irving (2004, quoted in Hattie, 2009) points out that people should not overlook students who are in the best position to evaluate teachers as they share the

classroom with the teacher day in and day out.

Based on the information given by Centra (1993), students' evaluations of their teachers dated back to the universities of medieval Europe. It was noted by d'Apllonia and Abrami (1997) that student ratings were first used in North American universities in the mid-1920s. However, students did not seem to be encouraged to take part in the teacher evaluation. As observed by Beynon (1985), "although more attention was being paid to pupils' perspective, …… it still remains a comparatively neglected topic" (p.188). Knapper (2001) even comments that "student ratings of university teachers have been common for at least thirty years, but it is a rare campus where they are accepted with equanimity" (p.3). Hong Kong may be one of the examples, feeling reluctant with using SETs. There is evidence in *The Impact Study on the Effectiveness of External School Improvement through School Self-evaluation in Hong Kong* that there is little contribution of students in the evaluation process although progress has been made (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2008). Moreover, the scope of what students are allowed to say or do is very much restricted (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2008). The Study finally concludes that "there remains considerable latitude for schools to grasp the potential of engaging students in School Self-Evaluation and to be more adventurous in learning from students" (p. 16).

In recent years, the priority of student engagement in the teacher evaluation seems to be rising. One of the reasons may be because of the ethical and legal dimensions which stem from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (U. N. General Assembly, 1989). Flutter and Rudduck (2004) report the Declaration which asserts that children are autonomous individuals who have a voice in matters concerning his or her life. Consequently, students should be given more opportunities to express their views on their education.

The ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre) descriptor for student ratings is "student evaluation of teacher performance". Sproule (2000) describes the SET survey instrument as one which is comprised of a series of questions about course content and teaching effectiveness. Some questions are open-ended, while others are closed. Those, which are closed, employ a scale to record a response, ranging from a low of 1 for "poor", to a high of 5 for "outstanding". In the open-ended section, students are invited to offer comments on various aspects of the teaching performance of a particular teacher. Normally, the SET survey instrument is administered by one of the school staff in the absence of the teacher towards the end of the school term. Upon completion, responses on each questionnaire will be analysed so that question-specific as well as class-specific measures can be constructed.

Students' Evaluations of Teachers (SETs) serve many functions, like formative feedback to faculty about the effectiveness of their teachers or a summative measure of student ratings used in personnel decisions (Saunders & Walstad, 1990; Marsh, 1984). Flutter and Rudduck (2004) argue that student involvement holds a deeper significance for schools because

> it offers the possibility of taking school improvement efforts beyond the 'quick-fix' solutions often proposed by policy makers and returns to schools' attention to what really matters-pupils and their learning (p.131).

In fact, many countries around the world have already begun to grasp the importance of students' central role in the teacher evaluation. Schools have been encouraged to improve their teaching by asking students what they think of the lessons. In the United Kingdom, Transforming Learning which was part of the Hay McBer group designed questions to tease out what students really thought. It produced a web-based "classroom climate" questionnaire in two forms, with 29 questions for older primary school students and 59 for lower secondary school students. Transforming Learning would then process the feedback and draw up a private action plan for individual teachers. One of the pilot schools reported that it gave "invaluable" information as the feedback could identify areas of strength and weakness (Anon, 2000b).

Yet, there has been a heated debate on the merits and shortcomings of a greater involvement of students in evaluating teaching effectiveness. Generally speaking, most of the criticisms SETs have received are related to its validity and reliability. First of all, there are doubts that students are qualified to evaluate their teachers. Adam (1997) asks if students, who are almost universally regarded as lacking in critical thinking skills, are able to critically evaluate their instructors. However, there has been evidence that student perceptions of good and poor teaching are similar to those of more experienced observers. Arreola (1995) argues that there is no "clear, consistent evidence" in the research which suggests that researchers "are the only people qualified to evaluate teaching" (p.84). In fact, high correlations have been found between course-end student ratings and ratings by those who are presumably qualified, like peers (Marsh, 1987), administrators (Kulik and McKeachie, 1975) and alumni (Centra, 1974; Overall & Marsh, 1980). Murray (1984) has summarised several general reviews and also concluded that "student ratings of classroom teaching correlate moderately to highly (0.50 to 0.90) with comparable ratings made by supervisors, colleagues, alumni, and paid classroom observers" (p.119).

Students may also be accused of making inconsistent judgements about teaching effectiveness. This refers to the inter-rater reliability. Costin et al (1971), however,

clearly point out that “students can rate classroom instruction with a reasonable degree of reliability” (p.513). Marsh (1987) finds that the reliability of the class average responses depends on the number of students in a class with the reliability correlations .95 for 50 students, .90 for 25 students, .75 for 10 students, and .60 for 5 students. This means that the more the students, the more reliable the ratings will be.

The issue of reliability also refers to consistency across time. It is quite difficult to compare ratings of a given student, years after they have graduated because student ratings are usually carried out anonymously. Therefore, most of the research in this area looks at the relationship between student ratings by alumni and those made by current students. One research in this area was conducted at the University of Illinois by Alemoni and Yimer (1973). High positive correlations were found between ratings of graduates and currently enrolled students. This evidence, therefore, suggests considerable stability in the ratings of courses and instructors; those rated most highly by current students are also likely to be highly rated when considered retrospectively.

One common criticism of SETs is that students are easily biased. People are worried that students tend to give higher ratings when they expect higher grades in the course. In a survey done by Gilbaugh (1982), 70% of students admitted that their rating of an

instructor was influenced by the grade they expected to get. Goldman (1985) even worries that this may cause grade inflation. A related complaint is that SETs may encourage teachers to make their classes easier in order to get high ratings by keeping their students happy. In one survey, 38% of professors admitted to making their courses easier in response to the student evaluations they received (Ryan et al., 1980). This seems to be what is meant by “consumer satisfaction”. Teachers just teach the way their students like in order to please them. Haskell (1997) even sees SETs as a threat to academic freedom (Haskell, 1997). This means that SETs may somehow become a political issue and teachers may end up structuring their teaching in order to get “good” evaluations so that they can keep their jobs, get pay rise, and be promoted (Rosenfeld, 1987). Williams and Ceci (1997) echo and regard SETs as “opinion polls”, suggesting that teachers may need to think like politicians to avoid offending students.

The idea that teachers tending to give higher grades to get higher ratings will invalidate the ratings is not agreed by McKeachie (1986) because he observes that if students learn more from a teacher, one would expect their grades and their ratings to be higher. Marsh and Roche (1997) also point out that the effect is both “weak and the size of such an effect is likely to be unsubstantial” (p.1192). Greenwald and Gillmore (1997) attempt to explain the correlation by using the leniency bias hypothesis that

people tend to like those who praise them and dislike those who criticise them. Teachers who grade leniently, in fact, praise the students, who, in turn may like the teachers more. They may then reward the teachers with higher ratings.

Another criticism SETs have received is that they are unduly affected by the personality style of the instructor rather than the instructor's ability to convey instructional material (Abrami, Leventhal & Perry, 1982). Feldman (1986) finds that the overall relationship of instructor personality to student ratings is substantial, with positive correlations ranging from moderate to high. Hamermesh and Parker (2003 quoted in Zabaleta, 2007) also illustrate that the perceived attractiveness of the instructor is an important component in student evaluations of teaching performance. As a result, Sproule (2000) argues that student ratings can only be best regarded as indices of "instructor popularity". Altschuler (1999 quoted in Sproule, 2000) even puts down his observation in *The New York Times* that "students are becoming more adjectival than analytical, more inclined to take faculty members' wardrobes and hairstyles into account when sizing them up as educators" (p.8).

All these seem to suggest that factors totally unrelated to actual teaching effectiveness can exert a sizable influence on student ratings of that same teacher's effectiveness. In

a well-known study called the Dr. Fox Effect (Naftulin et al, 1973), a professional actor was hired to deliver a non-substantive and contradictory lecture, but in an enthusiastic and authoritative style. The audiences had been told they would be listening to an expert on the application of mathematics to human behaviours. They were then asked to rate the lecture. It was found that Dr. Fox received highly positive ratings, and no one saw through the hoax. This result shows that audience ratings of a lecture are more strongly influenced by some cosmetic factors like these superficial stylistic matters than by content. This seems to imply that it is not necessary to know anything of what the teacher has said in class in order to predict a fair accurate rating to a teacher. However, the original study of Dr. Fox has been criticised for its methodological weaknesses (Marsh, 1987, Marsh and Dunkin, 1997) including inappropriate experimental manipulations. Marsh and Ware (1982) reevaluated the subsequent “Dr. Fox” studies and discovered that the “Dr Fox” effect did not occur when students were given an incentive to learn.

Many other studies were also conducted to illustrate the validity of SETs. Costin et al. (1971) reviewed the study of Guthrie (1954) and found that teachers who were highly rated were considered to be “substance teachers” and not simply “entertainers” (p.518). Murray (1983) employed neutral observers in his study and concluded that

student ratings seemed “determined more by the actual classroom behaviours of the instructor than by extraneous factors such as ‘personality’ or ‘popularity’” (p.146). He reasons that “expressive teaching behaviours serve to communicate the lecturer’s enthusiasm for the subject matter, and thereby elicit and maintain student attention to lecture material” (Murray, 1983, p.147). This, in turn, assists students in remembering the material which they have learned and consequently and appropriately, also affects the ratings students give their instructors (Murray, 1983). Ali and Sell (1998) reported a study conducted by Phillips at York University in 1998. In the study, Phillips (1998) collected student opinions regarding student evaluations of teaching. According to the opinions, students admitted that personality did enter into their assessment and that they would most likely rate the charismatic lecturer more highly but they insisted that this was relevant to the question of the effectiveness of the pedagogy (Phillips, 1998). To quote one student,

> if I am bored I learn less… if I am constantly engaged by the teacher I learn more (Phillips, 1998, p.9).

There are also doubts about the validity of rating interpretations. Damron (1996, quoted in Zabaleta, 2007) argues that even if a sufficiently valid rating questionnaire exists, there are no guarantees that interpretations of rating data will be valid. Kulik (2001) even accuses SETs of being meaningless quantification. To solve the problems

in analysing the SET data statistically, Cashin (1990) recommends providing comparative data to meaningfully interpret student rating data. For example, a written explanation along with the results is found more desirable.

SETs together with consultation are also found very powerful. Overall and Marsh (1980) show that feedback with consultation leads to improved examination performance and affective outcomes as well as higher SETs. In Cohen's (1980) meta-analysis, instructors in feedback groups were subsequently rated 0.30 standard deviations higher than controls on a total rating. The study of Marsh and Roche (1997) further demonstrates that SET feedback with consultation is an effective means to improve teaching effectiveness.

It is quite true that the validity of student rating measures of instructional quality was severely questioned in the 1970s. However, Greenwald (1997) finds that many of those questions have been sufficiently answered as a result of subsequent research. Other researchers have also given their support to SETs. In the research addressing the validity of student ratings of instruction featured in the November, 1997 issue of American Psychologist (McKeachie, 1997), all the authors including Greenwald (1997), Marsh and Roche (1997), d'Apollonia and Abrami (1997), Greenwald and

Gillmore (1997) and McKeachie (1997) agree that "student ratings are the single most valid source of data on teaching effectiveness" (McKeachie, 1997, p.1219). He adds that "there is little evidence of the validity of any other sources of data" (McKeachie, 1997, p.1219).

The use of SETs is also locally recognised in Hong Kong. In a handbook on good practices in assuring and improving teaching and learning quality called *Education Quality Work: The Hong Kong Experience* (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2005), it is stated that

> students are eyewitnesses to all that goes on in classrooms and around them, and are in the best position to judge what influence this has on their learning. More pragmatically, they are a 'captive audience' from whom it is relatively easy to collect feedback (p.63).

In 1991, Fullan asked "what would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered"? (p.170). It seems to be the time for students to get more involved in evaluating teaching effectiveness. Although SET may not be the only form of teacher evaluation, it is worth being one of the sources providing data about teaching effectiveness, like their teachers. As Flutter and Rudduck (2004) stress,

> to find new directions for improving schools we must take as our starting point the classroom itself and explore teaching and learning through the eyes of those most closely involved – teachers and young learners (p.2).

Flutter and Rudduck (2004) are not saying that “undue weight” should be given to the students’ perspective. Like Nieto (1994), they think that students’ opinions should not be final and conclusive (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Also like Nixon et al (1996), they do not think that students’ views are more ‘true’. However, they believe that SETs do provide a crucial element which has been overlooked (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004).

To sum up, this chapter has explained the importance of understanding teaching. It has shown that teaching is a complex activity and there are various interpretations of the meaning of effective teaching. This chapter has also explained the importance of teacher evaluation and justified the participation of the teachers together with the students in teacher evaluation. The last two sections of this chapter will state the aim of the present research and provide an outline of the thesis.

1.3 The aim of the research

This thesis is about the views of the students and the teachers in Hong Kong on “effective teaching”. It aims to find out how the local students and their teachers conceptualise “effective teaching” and whether or not there are significant differences between teachers’ self-evaluation and students’ evaluation of the same teacher.

It is not only an interesting but also a meaningful topic which is worth studying because the findings of the research can probably provide insights into the knowledge about the conceptualisation of effective teaching among the teachers and the students in Hong Kong. Consequently, the local educators are more likely to devise an effective evaluation system for assessing teaching performance. Moreover, there will be a clearer picture of the current local teaching and learning situation. All these can help improve the quality of teaching and eventually, the quality of learning in Hong Kong.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

As stated before, this thesis focuses on the perceptions of “effective teaching” among the students and the teachers in Hong Kong. The next chapter will continue the discussion made in this chapter. Firstly, there will be a discussion on the nature of teaching and how the conceptualisations of teaching as well as the conceptualisatons of learning are related to the meaning of effective teaching. Then, there will be a review of some of the previous teacher effectiveness research. After that, explanations will be given on why evaluating teacher effectiveness is a difficult task. Lastly, some of the previous studies on the perceptions of teachers and students concerning effective teaching will be reported. At the end of Chapter 2, both general and specific

research questions will be identified. Chapter 3 is about the methodology of the research. The research paradigm and method together with the approach will be justified and described. Then, the methods of data collection including questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations will be detailed with a discussion on their reliability and validity. Information about the participants will be given and the research procedures will be outlined. How the data is analysed will also be explained. Finally, the ethics and the limitations of the research will be examined. In Chapter 4, both the quantitative and qualitative data collected will be analysed and presented with reference to the research questions stated. A detailed discussion on the findings will follow. Chapter 5, the last chapter, will summarise the whole thesis before making implications to the learning and teaching situation in Hong Kong and recommending future studies.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been stated in Chapter 1 that the aim of this study is to explore how the teachers and the students in Hong Kong perceive "effective teaching". In this chapter, previous literature on the issue will be reviewed. First, the nature of teaching will be explored. The association of the conceptualisations of teaching as well as the conceptualisations of learning with the meaning of effective teaching will be discussed. Next, the criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness will be identified. Then, attempts will be made to explain why evaluating teacher effectiveness is a challenging job. After that, some of the previous studies which examine how teachers and students evaluate teacher effectiveness in various contexts will be reported. Finally, research questions of the present study will be listed.

2.1 What is the nature of teaching? What makes teaching effective?

As stated in Chapter 1, it is important to know more about the nature of teaching in order to understand what makes teaching effective so is teaching a science or is it a craft/ skill or an art? What is seen as the basis of teacher effectiveness?

The word, "paradigm", is defined by Kuhn (1962) in his book, "*the Structure of Scientific Revolutions*", as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques

shared by members of a given scientific community" (p.75). He later further explains that a paradigm includes a group of researchers having a common education and an agreement on "exemplars" of high quality research or thinking (Kuhn, 1977). Gage (1963, quoted in Harris, 1998) refers to paradigms as "models, patterns, ….ways of thinking or patterns for research" (p.95). Shulman (1986a), on the other hand, prefers using the concept of a research programme which is originated from Lakatos (1970) to describe the genres of inquiry found in the study of teaching.

With reference to its nature, teaching can be seen as a science which lends itself to research in the traditional positivisitic "scientific" sense, seeking to "establish empirically the most efficient and effective ways of attaining certain goals" (Pring, 2000, p.31). On the other hand, it can be seen as an art which lends itself to a post-modern approach which basically "questions the dominance of any one view of the world" (Pring, 2000, p.110), utilising personal accounts. Teaching can also be seen as a craft or a skill which falls in between the two with an emphasis towards qualitative approaches. It is believed that different ways of conceptualising teaching are associated with different approaches to teaching and also different ideas about what "effective" means in relation to teaching.

If teaching is a science, teachers are expected to teach by applying scientifically grounded theories to their daily teaching in the classrooms, like education psychology, one of the learning theories devised from the empirical research. This kind of knowledge is experimental, objective and methodical. It can also be tested and made public. It is quite true that a huge amount of research has been done relating to teaching. One of the examples is presage-product studies which attempt to find out the psychological features of an effective teacher by studying teachers' personality characteristics, attitudes and experience (Campbell et al, 2004). In this kind of research, the main criterion of an effective teacher is "the extent of which his/her students achieve specific educational goals" (Campbell et al, 2004, p.62). In the next section, the definition of being an "effective" teacher will be dealt with in more detail.

Research studies are commonly found in the curriculum of teacher education, like the work in cognitive development of Jean Piaget (1952). For student teachers who learn how to teach English as a foreign language, they should come across the audio-lingual method which is based on the results of experimental research on behaviourism by B. F. Skinner (1957). Other studies on student aptitude, attitude and motivation and their relationship to the success in foreign language learning are also useful to beginning English teachers. All these theories generated from the research

studies help formulate teachers' knowledge base about teaching in several ways. First, they help teachers deduce their actions in the classroom as they provide teachers with "directions, options and priorities for [their] actions" (Gagne and Driscoll 1988, p.17). They also enrich teachers' understanding of the learning situations encountered so that teachers can quickly find solutions to the practical learning problems (Bigge and Shermis, 1992).

However, academic theory alone is not an adequate basis for the practice of teaching. As Gagne and Driscoll (1988) say,

> an understanding of learning theory does not lead to the use of standardised procedures, nor is it likely to furnish a single best procedure that can be applied in all teaching situations (p.16).

In other words, it is unrealistic to believe that these theories can solve all the practical problems in the complex teaching situations. This view echoes with the National Research Council (2000) of the United States of America which emphasises that

> research on learning does not provide a recipe for designing effective learning environments [even though] it does support the value of asking certain kinds of questions about the design of learning environments (p153).

For this reason, teachers are not encouraged to apply the theories derived from empirical research into practice without "testing" them, or "practical judgement" which is the term used by Field and Latta (2001). They are sometimes encouraged to be the researchers in their own classrooms, developing themselves as critical and

reflective practitioners so that they can test the theories which are determined by others (Schubert and Ayres, 1992). The idea of "teachers as researchers" is advocated by Stenhouse (1975) who notes that "the extended professionalism" includes "…the concern to question and to test theory in practice…" (p.144). It is, therefore, suggested that an element of artistry is necessary to some teaching approaches because teachers who rely on the research-based theories for their teaching are required to be creative. As Schwab (1969 quoted in Eisner, 1994) argues, theories require a supplement to bring them to their applications. He explains that

> first, arts …… identify the disparities between real theory and theoretic representation; second, arts …… modify the theory in the course of its application, in light of the discrepancies; and third, arts …… devise ways for taking account of the many aspects of the real thing which the theory does not take into account (p.157).

Schwab (1983, quoted in Shulman, 1986a) also argues that teaching, like every art, "…… has rules, but knowledge of the rules does not make one an artist. Art arises as the knower of the rules learns to apply them appropriately to the particular case" (p.265). This may imply that the science of teaching is rooted in the art of teaching. Eisner (1994) has listed four senses to form the significant base of teacher effectiveness with reference to the art of teaching. The four senses are "…teaching as a source of aesthetic experience, as dependent on the perception and control of qualities, as a heuristic or adventitious activity, and as seeking emergent ends" (Eisner, 1994, p.156).

In his book, *The Art of Teaching*, Highet (1959, quoted in Centra, 1993) has associated teaching to painting a picture or composing music. Dewey also (1934, quoted in Eisner, 1994, p. 154) once said, “the [teaching] experience can be justifiably characterised as aesthetic". Their idea is supported by Eisner (1994) who finds that “the way [teachers] orchestrate activities, ask question and give lectures constitutes a form of artistic expression” (p.155). Highet (1959, quoted in Centra, 1993) also says that “teachers ……. make judgements based largely on qualities that unfold during the course of action,” (p.155). The idea that a teacher’s activity is affected by the qualities and contingencies which are unpredictable is similar to that of Wise et al (1984) who believe that

> the more complex and variable one considers the educational environment, the more one relies on teacher judgement to guide the activities of classroom life and the less one relies on generalised rules for teacher behaviour (p.11).

It is also coincided with the idea of Labaree (2001) who points out that “the technology of teaching is anything but certain, and teachers must learn to live with chronic uncertainty as an essential component at their professional practice” (p.231).

Nevertheless, unintended and sometimes intangible effects are found legitimate when teaching is seen as an art whilst teaching is far more concerned with what is concrete and measurable when it is seen as a science. In fact, the science of teaching is also

rooted in the craft or the skill of teaching which tends to be associated with utility, achieving something that is fit for a defined purpose. In order to bridge the gap between theory and practice, there have been attempts in integrating knowledge about teaching and its practical application. Campbell et al (2004) quote the argument of Findlay (1902) that "theory is practice become conscious of itself, and practice is realised theory" (p. 30). The idea that any theory of education which is not rooted in practice cannot be upheld reinforces the suggestion that teaching as a science and teaching as a craft/ skill are not dichotomised.

As mentioned previously, teaching can be seen as a theory-testing process. This process may apply more to the early stages of a teaching career, such as the pre-service training and induction phases. As time goes by, a significant part of teaching may become more automatic and even a routine process which is less available to reflection. These routines are based on earlier trial and error experiences, which are a form of theory testing. The theories are sometimes academic theories, but other times, they are self-generated theories or what is meant by a craft. Similar to other crafts, the analogy of teaching as a craft conforms to Lortie's notion that "experience improves performance" (Lortie, 1975, p.266). Following Brown and McIntyre (1993), Cooper and McIntyre (1996) refer to Shulman's concept of teachers'

“professional craft knowledge” which they define as

> the professional knowledge and thought which teachers use in their day-to-day classroom teaching, knowledge which is not generally made explicit by teachers and which teachers are not likely always to be conscious of using (p.19).

This implies that some of the theories teachers possess may be commonsense theories which are based on experience. Therefore, in the craft-oriented approach, it is the teachers’ past experiences that form the significant base of teacher effectiveness. Past experiences include the previous teaching experiences of the teachers as well as their experiences as a student. As Ramsden (1993) observes, teachers may recall their own learning experiences. Marland (1998) also observes that teachers draw heavily on their own school experiences as students over 12 or more years. All these experiences can be seen as a databank of solutions built up over years. With more experience, teachers are likely to have encountered a greater variety of problems and so should have more solutions organised and stored in a “schema” which is defined by Clift (1987) as a conceptual model based on past experience.

The analogy that teaching is a craft or a skill implies that teacher education is like a kind of apprenticeship through which repertoires of specialised skills can be transferable from experts to novices. By trial and error, student teachers gain expertise, based on the principle that ‘practice makes perfect’. Berliner (1994) has described

five stages in the development of expertise and claimed that novices imitate the behaviours of expert teachers to gain expertise. However, he points out that “while experience is a necessary condition in developing expertise, it is not sufficient as many highly experienced teachers do not reach the highest level” (Berliner, 1994, p.7). He has observed that experienced teachers who may be seen as experts “very often lack the ability to articulate the basis for their expertise and skill” (Berliner, 1994, p.7). This fundamental problem in apprenticeship programmes seems to coincide with the observation of Cooper and McIntyre (1996) that teachers may not be capable of stating their knowledge explicitly even if they are applying the knowledge in their teaching.

In fact, there are differences between a craft teacher and a novice teacher. According to Tom (1984), acquiring the knowledge and skill of a craft is not just a matter of the novice observing and imitating the master. He explains that “the stress was not on making the craftsman a passive observer of skilful practice so much as it was on preparing him for his own active attempts to solve problems of practice” (Tom 1984, p. 111). This seems to imply that there is a sense of intuition in the idea of teaching as a craft or a skill. There may be reasons to believe that experiences alone are not sufficient to make a teacher effective. As Johnson (1994) highlights, “it is the thought

and subsequent action associated with the experience which determine its value in the learning process" (p.201). This resembles what Cooper and McIntyre (1996) mean by "reflection". Richards and Nunan (1990) have also observed that "the experience coupled with reflection is a much more powerful impetus for development" (p.201).

The idea that there may be an element of artistry in the analogy of teaching as a craft has been agreed by Brown and McIntyre (1993). Even if they have strong faith in the craftperson analogy, they admit that they "would not deny the aesthetic components of grace, improvisation and creativity [of teaching]" (Brown & McIntyre, 1993, p.19). The element of artistry can also be justified by the fact that teachers improvise every day in their classrooms when they teach. Like the "bi-directionality" of Shavelson et al (1986), the transactional model of learning is described by Cooper and McIntyre (1996) as "a complex 'interweaving' of 'language, interaction and cognition' … [which]… involves the sharing and testing of intersubjective meanings and the negotiation of interpretations through interaction and the exercise of empathy" (p.117). This is what they mean by "interdependence" that teachers' actions can be influenced by the students and the influence of the students makes an important contribution to learning in specific cases (Cooper and McIntyre, 1996, p.117). In all these cases, teachers seem to improvise, like actors or actresses.

Based on what has been discussed, there are reasons to believe that the science of teaching is rooted in the art of teaching as well as the craft/ skill of teaching. In fact, the art of teaching may have a scientific basis. According to Gage (1978), a science requires rigorous laws that yield predictability and control. He argues that though research on teaching has not demonstrated such predictability, it does not mean that research on teaching negates the scientific basis of teaching (Gage, 1978).

All in all, it may be oversimplified to treat teaching solely as a science or as a craft or as an art. Referring to the above discussion, the science of teaching is rooted in the craft of teaching which consists of an element of artistry. On the other hand, the art of teaching has a scientific basis. The relationship between these three views of teaching is complex. It may not be easy or even necessary to determine which of these views is true. In fact, Shulman (1986a) is worried about a single paradigmatic view, “illuminating some part of the field of teaching while ignoring the rest” (p.4). Based on the fact that teaching is a multi-faceted activity, it may be more sensible to regard teaching as a mix of a science, a craft and an art.

In short, teachers may need different bases of knowledge under the three approaches to teaching in order to be effective. Under the science-oriented approach, teachers’

decision making about pedagogical issues will lead to more successful results if it is based on good quality research evidence. Hence, student teachers should be given lots of research-based theories during their in-service teaching training. The knowledge generated from the empirical research is also essential to keep the practicing teachers updated. Combined with the craft-oriented approach, the science-oriented approach can help bridge the gap between theories and practice. In the craft-oriented approach, experience is seen as the basis of teacher effectiveness. It is believed that student teachers should be taken care of by an experienced teacher who acts as his or her mentor. They are expected to imitate their mentor and learn how to teach from them. It is believed that student teachers are likely to gain expertise eventually through practice. It is also believed that practising teachers develop themselves professionally with time while constructing and reconstructing their schemata regularly.

It is quite true that the behavioural aspects of teaching can be observed and measured from a scientific viewpoint. It is also quite true that many aspects of teaching can be learnt by imitation and developed through practice as a craft or a skill. However, these two orientations are still not perfect. Something is still missing. For the science orientation, teachers are not supposed to apply the theories without their own judgement while for the craft orientation, teachers need reflection other than

experiences. In both cases, artistry appears to be the missing piece of a puzzle. It is the “power to teach” mentioned by Campbell et al (2004). According to Campbell et al (2004), artistry is comprised of qualities which are innate and natural and not learnt or acquired through training. It is also seen by Harris (1998, p.170) as “a highly creative activity involving the use of sophisticated repertoires of responses and the ability to reflect upon practice”. The presence of artistry is necessary for the human dimension of teaching. Campbell et al (2004) call it the mysterious ‘X factor’, “without which the other essential skills and qualities were incomplete” (p.36). In a word, “[teaching] requires artistry to achieve the greatest effect” (Centra, 1993, p.46).

This section has explored the nature of teaching. It is argued that it is not necessary to determine whether teaching is a science or a craft/skill or an art and that each of the views has a role to play. Instead of deciding which of the three views of construing teaching is ‘true’, it is better to think of them as differing ways of conceptualising teaching which are associated with different approaches to teaching and different ideas about what “effective” means in relation to teaching. In the next section, how the conceptualisation of learning is related to different meanings of “effective teaching” will be discussed.

2.2 How are the conceptualisations of learning related to the meaning of "effective teaching"?

The previous section has shown how the conceptualisations of teaching shape the meaning of effective teaching. If the ultimate goal of teaching is learning, then how learning is conceptualised should also help shape the meaning of effective teaching. Several theories of learning will be discussed below.

In the teaching approaches based on the cognitive theories of learning, effective teaching is demonstrated when instructors

> use classroom procedures that are compatible with a student's cognitive characteristics, can organise and present information to promote problem solving and critical thinking on issues (Fuhrmann and Grasha, 1983, pp.287-288).

In other words, teachers who can make students become competent problem-solvers and critical thinkers may be regarded as effective teachers.

Teachers may also be regarded as effective if they are able to help raise their students' awareness on meta-learning. Watkins and Biggs (1995) refer "metacognition" to "being aware of the processes of learning and problem solving … [as well as] … regulating and controlling those processes" (p.149). Biggs (1993) also identifies three approaches to learning which are surface approach, deep approach and achievement

approach. The 3P (Presage, Process and Product) Model of learning introduced by Biggs (1993) illustrates how approaches to learning occupy a central place in classroom learning. There is a close relationship between the teaching context, student learning processes and learning outcomes. Each component may affect other components and form an integrated system. In the words of Hattie (2009), surface learning involves "a knowing or understanding of ideas or fact … [while]… deep learning consists of relational and elaborative processes which are cognitively more challenging than surface questions" (p.28). Biggs (1987) adds one more category called achievement approach. The motive of the students who apply achievement approach is based on competition and ego-enhancement (Biggs, 1987). Biggs (1989) presented data from a study made in 20 Hong Kong schools in Secondary Form one, Form four and Form six. One of his findings showed that the achieving motive increased steadily throughout secondary school in both sexes. In that case, teachers who help develop students' achievement approach can be regarded as effective.

In the approach based on humanistic theories of learning which promote self-initiated learning, or learning through self-discovery, teaching will be considered effective when

> teachers can demonstrate that students have acquired content that is relevant to their goals and needs, that they can appreciate and understand the thoughts and feelings of others better, and that they are able to recognise their feelings about the content (Fuhrmann and Grasha, 1983, p.288).

In the behaviourist approach to learning, teachers are labelled effective when they can bring about and maintain favourable behaviours with suitable reinforcement. Since the behaviourist tradition focuses on observable behaviours and the stimuli that control them, learning is conceptualised as a process of forming connections between stimuli and responses (Skinner, 1938). In that case, children are passive learners who are easily managed or controlled.

On the other hand, theories derived from the rationalist learning approach acknowledge that children are active learners who will test and experiment language when they learn a language. One of the rationalists, Chomsky (1957; 1968), believes that people are able to produce an infinite number of sentences by an innate linguistic competence and that all humans are equipped with a language acquisition device (LAD) which contains a set of universal grammar. It is based on the principles of this set of universal grammar that meanings are transformed into words (Chomsky 1957; 1968). Another rationalist is Lenneberg (1967) who believes that people are able to

understand and produce language because of an inherited species-specific characteristic which is tied closely to physiological maturation. Therefore, teachers who can recognise the interaction between innate potential and experience in learning can be named effective teachers. Though the children in the rationalist approach are found more active than those in the behaviourist learning approach, there are still negative comments on its assumption that all language learning is pre-programmed. With its emphasis on the role of the brain or LAD in language, other factors in aiding the children's language learning such as the children's cognitive development or the interaction with others seems to be neglected.

The constructivist approach may be a remedy to the rationalist approach as it posits that children are active in constructing knowledge and language development cannot be separated from its social context (Vygotsky, 1978). This socio-cultural approach views children's culture as the critical factor in developing their cognitive growth. As Vygotsky (1978) argues, children develop higher mental functions by internalising the values and knowledge of their culture and children's self-talk or inner speech is part of the internalisation process. He also argues that the internalisation process depends very much on interaction among human beings and that the process will be more efficient when significant people, like parents, teachers, siblings or more capable

peers work with the children (Vygotsky, 1978). Wood (1988) suggests that teachers can scaffold students' learning by encouraging them to pay attention to what is relevant, to use appropriate strategies and to keep the task and goals in mind. As a result, effective teaching is demonstrated in the constructivist approach when students play an active role in their own learning (Munro 1999). Furthermore, teaching will be considered effective when teachers, the significant people, are able to "scaffold" or give support to children to accomplish a task that the children cannot manage independently, reaching a higher level at the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Bruner, 1985).

The social-constructivist approach is considered appealing to people when describing how best learning should take place because it is found more humane compared to the behaviourist approach in the sense that children are no longer regarded as passive learners. Children are also expected to take a more active role than the role they play in the rationalist approach as they are required to cooperate with their teachers as partners. However, the approach is not without flaws. Since it is the process rather than the outcome of learning that is focus of the social-constructivist learning approach, traces of the children's learning progress are difficult to be found. Besides, Hattie (2009) emphasises that "constructivism is *not* a theory of teaching, but a theory

of knowing and knowledge" (p.26). He disagrees that teacher-centred teaching and student-centred learning which are associated with direct teaching and constructivist teaching respectively, are opposite (Hattie, 2009). Instead, they should be combined according to his model of visible teaching and learning (Hattie, 2009). Advocated by Hattie (2009), visible teaching and learning can help make teachers effective. It occurs

> when learning is the explicit goal, when it is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained, when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought, and when there are active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, student, peers, and so on) participating in the act of learning (Hattie, 2009, p.22).

To sum up, there are different ideas about not only what teaching is but also how learning should take place. These various conceptualisations of learning have both strengths and weaknesses. There may never be a perfect one to explain how best learning happens. Nonetheless, the conceptualisations of learning in addition to the conceptualisations of teaching are significant in defining the meaning of effective teaching. In the next section, some of the teacher effectiveness research will be reviewed and the criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness will be identified.

2.3What are the criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are strong justifications for carrying out

teacher evaluation. However, it is found in Section 2.1 and 2.2 that reaching consensus on a list of criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness is not easy, mainly due to the fact that the definition of “effective teaching” varies with different beliefs in teaching and learning. Even back to 1960, Ryans in his book, *Characteristics of teachers: their description, comparison, and appraisal,* discovered that it was extremely difficult to identify the characteristics of excellent teachers because successful teachers often displayed quite different characteristics of effectiveness. Yet, it is essential to find out the significant aspects of teaching that should be evaluated.

To identify features of good teaching, research on teacher effectiveness has gone through numerous stages or paradigms. It has to be noted that the chronological ordering of the following research programmes is not as simple as it looks like. Stages may overlap. No single research study is perfect. They all possess merits and shortcomings which will be discussed in this section.

2.3.1 Research on teachers’ characteristics

Presage-product studies are described by Campbell et al (2004) as studies which attempt to find out the psychological features of an effective teacher by studying teachers’ personality characteristics, attitudes and experience. One example is the

study of Costin and Grush (1973) which explores the relationship between student ratings of teachers' personality and their perception of teachers' effectiveness. Direct relationship has been found between the teaching features and the achievement of students in the meta-analyses conducted by Hattie (2009). However, Leverne (1991, quoted in Campbell et al, 2004) claims that there is only some evidence of an indirect effect through the effect of personality on classroom behaviour of teachers. In fact, there have been criticisms about the research on teachers' characteristics. Gage (1963 quoted in Harris 1998) finds them "too far removed from actual classroom events to be a good predictor of effective classroom behaviour". Campbell et al (2004) also accuse the presage-product research of

> the often experimental nature of the studies, the wide variety of psychological factors tested, and the relative immutability of personality characteristics (p.42).

2.3.2 Research on teaching styles

Most of the studies on teaching styles develop dichotomies along the "non-directive versus directive" or "progressive versus traditional" continua. A "non-directive" or "progressive" teaching style is supposed to be more student-centred whereas a "directive" or "traditional" teaching style more teacher-centred.

In the study of Tuckman's (1968, quoted in Campbell et al, 2004), a "directive" teaching style is found more effective with authoritarian students whereas a "non-directive" teaching style is found more effective with non-authoritarian students. The findings of Bennett's (1976) study which involves another set of two polarised teaching styles show that English and Mathematics students make more progress over time with the "traditional" teachers than those with the "progressive" teachers. However, Campbell et al (2004) find that the results are not entirely clear-cut because some of the highest rates of progress are achieved by students who are with the "progressive" teachers.

Research on teaching styles tends to suggest that a teacher with a particular teaching style adopts a particular teaching approach. Further research has been done on identifying different models of teaching which bring about particular kinds of learning and help students become more effective learners. Four teaching models have been identified by Joyce et al (1997). They are information processing, the social family, the personal family and the behavioural systems family. Whereas the model of information processing emphasises ways of organising data, sensing concepts and generating solutions to problems, the model of social family focuses on working together within a social context and so are constructed to take advantage of

cooperative relationships in the classroom and to produce integrative and productive ways of interacting which support vigorous learning activity (Joyce et al, 1997). While the model of personal family pays attention to the individual perspective and seeks to encourage productive independence so that individuals can become increasingly self-aware and responsible for their own destiny, the model of behavioural systems which is also called behaviour modification, behaviour therapy and cybernetics is based on the idea that people learn through feedback and adjustment (Joyce et al, 1997). According to the report of Harris (1998), no evidence seems to suggest that any one of the models is better or more effective than the others. His research evidence also suggests that these models and strategies have even greater potential for improving pupil learning and making teaching more effective when they are combined (Harris, 1998).

The ORACLE (Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation) study, conducted by a team of researchers led by Maurice Galton (Galton et al, 1980) groups teachers by cluster analysis into four categories. They are individual monitors who mainly let students work on their own and interact with individual students; class enquirers who spend an above-average time teaching the whole class; group enquirers who favour group work and style changers who tend to move between these teaching

(Galton et al, 1980). This classification of teachers is found problematic by Mortimore et al (1988, quoted in Campbell et al, 2004) who point out that variance within styles is far greater than variance between styles within the study. Campbell et al (2004) add that the profusion of possible teaching styles one can study is also a problem.

Nonetheless, Harris (1998) comments that the research findings related to teaching styles do not really reveal any concrete evidence in favour of one teaching style in terms of overall effectiveness due to "the sheer diversity of teaching situations and contexts" (p.176).

2.3.3 Research on teachers' behaviours

These studies which examine the effects of specific teacher behaviours on pupil achievement are called process-product studies (Rosenshine, 1971). As described by Evertson and Smylie (1985), process-product studies generally "… focus on the teacher and look across a large number of classrooms to identify teacher behaviours (processes) that correlate with student outcome measures (products)" (p.4). In these studies, pupils are tested at the beginning and end of the study using standardised achievement test. Teachers are observed by researchers using structured observation instruments. Correlational methods are used to relate the teaching factors with the

outcomes. This has created a massive database from which many of the characteristics of effective teaching behaviours have been derived. Examples are Report for Key Stage 3 (11-14) and Report for the 14-19 age range (Ofsted, SCAA., TTA 1996) in the United Kingdom. They both not only provide general results of the survey on teaching effectiveness but also address research into the effectiveness and improvement of teaching and identify a number of key questions and challenges which need to be met.

It is generally perceived that the majority of research studies exploring teacher behaviour consistently endorse a structured or direct mode of instruction as being most effective in the classroom (Brophy & Good 1986; Porter & Brophy 1988). Some of the features of structured teaching are: carefully organising and sequencing the curriculum, explaining clearly and illustrating what pupils are to learn, providing pupils with ample opportunity to practice and giving prompts and feedback (Doyle 1986, p.95). In other words, “the effectiveness of teaching was seen as attributable to combinations of discrete and observable teaching performances per se, operating relatively independent of time and place” (Shulman 1986a, p.10).

There are several reasons why this process-product research was once the most vigorous and productive type of research on teacher effectiveness. First of all, these

types of studies provide opposite findings to the Coleman Report (Coleman et al, 1966 quoted in Mohan & Hull, 1975) which claims that teachers do not make a difference in school achievement. Process-product research does show that variations in teacher behavior are found to be systematically related to variations in student achievement (Shulman, 1986a). Second of all, process-product research is "consistent with a strong existing research tradition-applied behaviouristic psychology" (Shulman, 1986a, p.11). Last but not least, this programme of research is carried out in naturally occurring classroom, not like the laboratory tradition for the study of learning. The generalisations about teaching effectiveness are not based on a 'test-tube' classroom, but on the real thing (Shulman, 1986a, p.11).

However, as time passes, the process-product research has lost their popularity. One of the main reasons is their view of classrooms as reducible to discrete events and behaviours which can be noted, counted and aggregated for purposes of generalisation across settings and individuals. As Shulman (1986a) points out, "there was little evidence that any observed teacher had ever performed in the classroom congruent with the collective pattern of the composite" (p.12). There are also strong criticisms about process-product studies for their over-emphasis on teacher behaviours, ignoring teachers' own beliefs about, and attitudes to, teaching and the subjects they teach. In

other words, it is hard to study the meanings teachers themselves attach to teaching and their value orientation using process-product studies. As Shulman (1986a) points out, the emphasis of the studies is pragmatically on “what worked, rather than on why it worked” (Shulman, 1986a, p.13). Process-product research is also accused by the humanists of focusing on particular techniques or behaviours that can be practised by teachers, leading to prescriptive standards of practice (Shulman, 1986a). In the opinion of Shulman (1986a),“such standards would ‘de-skill’ the teaching profession” (p.29).

2.3.4 Research on teachers’ thinking

According to Leinhardt and Greeno (1986), teaching is a complex cognitive skill. Teaching skills are viewed as strategies that teachers use to facilitate pupils’ learning (Wragg 1984). Clark and Peterson (1986) also believe that teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom depends on how well they modify and change their strategies as lessons process. Expert-novice studies are one type of research on teachers’ thinking. The studies attempt to investigate the differences between the expert teachers and the novice teachers in terms of their decision-making in the classrooms. One of the examples is the study of Livingston and Borko (1989) which distinguishes the thoughts and actions of the expert teachers from those of the novice teachers. It is

hoped that the results can offer recommendations for teacher education practice.

Research has also been done to work out the roles teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, their beliefs and self-efficacy have in teacher effectiveness.

- Subject knowledge + Pedagogical knowledge

Teacher subject knowledge is widely believed to influence teacher effectiveness but not all studies show that teacher subject knowledge will affect student achievement. In the study of Monk (1994) which involved 2,800 students, a positive but curvilinear relationship between teacher subject knowledge and student achievement was found. In other words, there is a threshold effect which means that a minimal level of subject knowledge is necessary for teachers to be effective but that beyond a critical point a law of diminishing returns to operate.

Shulman (1986b) highlights the gap between teachers' cognitive understanding of subject matter content and the instruction teachers provide for students and so identifies three kinds of content knowledge. They are subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and curricular knowledge. Whereas subject matter knowledge means comprehension of the subject appropriate to a content specialist in the domain,

pedagogical knowledge means the understanding of how particular topics, principles, strategies, and the like in specific subject areas comprehended (Shulman, 1986b). Curricular knowledge, on the other hand, refers to the ways in which “knowledge is organised and packaged for instruction” (Shulman, 1986b, p.24).

- Personal beliefs

Thompson (1992) defines personal beliefs as “teachers’ conscious or sub-conscious beliefs, concepts, meanings, rules, mental images, and preferences [concerning the subject they teach]” (p.132). Philiippou and Christou (1997) believe that teacher’s personal beliefs act as a filter influencing decisions and actions made before, during and after instruction.

- Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment” (Bandura 1986, p.3). Soodak and Podell (1996) identify three factors of teacher efficacy. They are personal efficacy, outcome efficacy and teaching efficacy. A local study conducted by Chan et al (1992) found that teachers’ social self, pedagogical self and personal self are all predictors of

teacher behaviours, which in turn predict student achievement in Hong Kong.

2.3.5 A model of differentiated teacher effectiveness

Referring to the research on teacher effectiveness reviewed above, Campbell et al (2004) raise both conceptual and methodological issues and call for a more differentiated model of teacher effectiveness. Concerning the conceptual issue, one of the problems they point out is the narrow conception of teacher effectiveness because the measures of outcome are typically performance on standardised or other tests and their conceptions of effectiveness can no longer meet the needs of the changing school environment (Campbell et al, 2004). Another problem is that the process of the research does not contribute significantly to teachers' professional development (Campbell et al, 2004). Furthermore, most of the research has excluded the school-wide factors and the concept of teacher effectiveness has been developed in a generic way, drawing up a 'one size fits all' model (Campbell et al, 2004). The approaches used to examine teacher effectiveness reviewed above also face several methodological limitations. Campbell et al (2004) concerned about the methods used to measure the outcomes of teaching, the reliability of the measure of variables examined and the limited perspective of the function of teaching adopted. They, therefore, propose a multidimensional model which has five potential dimensions of

differentiation in teacher effectiveness including “different subjects and curriculum areas”, “pupils of different socio-economic status”, “pupils of different personal characteristics’, “different role activities” and “different contexts in which teachers work” (Campbell et al, 2004). They believe that a more differentiated model can provide “a more equitable and appropriate model for teacher appraisal” (Campbell et al, 2004, p.83).

To sum up, this section has shown that research on teacher effectiveness has gone through numerous periods. Studies on teachers’ characteristics, teachers’ teaching styles, teachers’ behaviours and teachers’ thinking have been reviewed. A multi-dimensional model has also been described. With reference to the concepts of teaching discussed in Section 2.1, these reviewed studies tend to focus on teaching as a science or as a craft. For example, emphasis is put on the measurements in the presage-product studies or on the practice of particular teaching skills in the process-product studies and expert-novice studies. Elements concerning personal relationships seem to be neglected. This could be an unintentional bias because of the need for a measurable focus. As suggested previously, it is better to treat teaching as a mix of a science, a craft and an art. The perspective of artistry is too important to be ignored on the theme of effective teaching. According to Harris (1998), “a good match

of effective learning and teaching gives rise to optimum results … [and]… the ability to match these two was called ‘artistry’” (p.179). The over-emphasis on the quantitative methods has created a problem that it is difficult to study the crucial aspect of teaching such as why teachers are doing what they do and, the meanings they themselves attach to teaching, and their value orientation. Consequently, there has been a call for a more subjective world of “meanings” instead of the objective world of physical things.

In the next section, attempts will be made to examine the factors which make teacher evaluation challenging.

2.4 Why is teacher evaluation a challenging task?

As Chapter 1 has justified, there are strong reasons for conducting teacher evaluation. However, evaluating teachers’ performance is not an easy job due to various problems encountered. This section attempts to examine the factors which make teacher evaluation challenging. The factors examined include the varied criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness, the different cultures, the negative school ethos and the imbalanced evaluation systems.

2.4.1 Varied criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness

One of the reasons why it is not easy to evaluate teacher effectiveness is because of the difficulty of coming up with a “standard” list of criteria. As illustrated in Sections 2.1 and 2.2, there are different interpretations of teacher effectiveness with different conceptualisations of teaching and learning.

Another reason is because of the wide range of a teacher’s job duties. As stated by Campbell et al (2004) who call for a multi-dimensional model for evaluating teacher effectiveness, teachers have a lot of roles to play. They are not only expected to teach, they are also expected to take up administrative work and some other work related to their students’ learning. Moreover, they are rarely effective in all aspects of teaching so it would be unfair if their performances are assessed only in some of the jobs they do. This never exhaustive list of criteria has made evaluating teacher effectiveness difficult.

The list of criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness also varies with time. There are reasons to believe that what good teaching currently means may not necessarily be the same as what it meant in the past. It is because research on teacher effectiveness to identify features of good teaching has gone through numerous stages. Initially, an

innovation may enhance educational outcomes, but later on the favourable effects may disappear partly or totally. Few are able to transcend time. One example is people used to believe that children learned a language best by imitation and considered mechanical drilling with students a perfect teaching skill. However, drilling has nowadays only become an alternative teaching method instead of being considered the best means of learning a language though some people may still value it. People are getting to believe that children learn better by actively constructing their own knowledge (Munro 1999). The conception of learning and hence good teaching has gradually shifted from a behaviourist view to a constructivist view. What this view means is "pupils construct knowledge during social interactions and that they gain new knowledge by connecting the new information with existing knowledge" (Vygotsky, 1978). Munro (1999) has identified some micro-behaviours required by teachers in the classroom to support a social-constructivist theory of learning, including managing co-operative group work, creating a secure and mutually supportive learning environment and supporting students to work independently.

The change in the meaning of effective teaching has been observed in Hong Kong. It was said in *the Syllabus for English (Forms I-V)* issued by the Curriculum Development Committee in 1983 that English was seen as a medium of

communication and also as a formal and linguistic system whereas the 1975 English syllabus mainly focused on the forms of the language. Nowadays, the social-constructivist approach to learning seems to be the learning approach advocated in the current junior curriculum of Hong Kong. It is based on this approach that learning principles are recommended in *the Basic Education Curriculum Guide – Building on Strengths (Primary 1 – Secondary 3)* which is prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (Curriculum Development Council, 2002a). In this Guide, there are totally 11 booklets with different topics. It is recommended in the guide that learners should be active in making meaning (Booklet 9). It is also recommended that teachers should be facilitators in the classrooms while students take more responsibilities for their learning (Booklet 3B). In the guide, students' ability is seen as dynamic and develops through continuous experiences (Booklet 3A). Therefore, students should discover and construct knowledge (Booklet 1, 3C) and understand the relationships between the new and old knowledge (Booklet 7). Furthermore, teachers should search for strengths in students and then provide suitable materials to bring out their potentials (Booklet 10). According to the guide, formative assessments, like group work, should be given more frequently to further improve students' learning (Booklet 4).

Moreover, it is stated in the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1- Secondary 3)* (Curriculum Development Council, 2002b) that schools should be encouraged to enhance learners' experience by providing opportunities for learners to use English for purposeful communication both inside and outside the classroom; making use of learner-centred instruction to encourage learner independence; making greater use of literary or imaginative texts to develop critical thinking and encourage free expression and creativity; and promoting language development strategies, values and attitudes that are conducive to effective, independent and lifelong learning. The use of IT, collaboration work or self-access language learning are also recommended (Curriculum Development Council, 2002a). All these seem to have indicated a shift moving towards the constructivist view of learning.

As mentioned in Section 2.2, Hattie (2009) stresses that constructivism is a form of knowing and not a form of teaching. He has synthesised existing literature and proposed a new perspective on that literature. He argues that "when teaching and learning is visible, there is a greater likelihood of students reaching higher levels of achievement" (Hattie, 2009, p.38). He elaborates that visible teaching and visible learning are related to

> directive, activating, and involved sets of actions and content, working with students so that their learning is visible such that it can be monitored, feedback provided, and information given when learning is successful (Hattie, 2009, p.37).

He points out that "such teaching leads to higher levels of learning, autonomy, and self-regulation on behalf of the learner" (Hattie, 2009, p.244) He also points out that it "involves more backward design" (Hattie, 2009, p245). He distinguishes the visible teaching from transmission teaching which involves primarily teacher directed instruction of tasks to all the class, suggesting uniform ways of performing them (Hattie, 2009).

Nevertheless, the criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness vary with time other than with teachers' range of work or the conceptualisations of teaching and learning. When a new approach to teaching is emerging, an old approach is fading. However, the old approach may be regaining popularity. Consequently, the criteria will never be definite.

2.4.2 Different cultures

The criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness vary with cultures, too. Every society has its own culture. In Hong Kong, Chinese students, unlike students in the West, tend to keep silent in the classrooms. This is what Hwang et al (2002) mean by "silent

Chinese student" phenomenon. Another cultural difference between Chinese and Westerners, in general, is the widely accepted norm of shame and embarrassment. Hwang et al (2002) have reported the study of Harrington (1992) that such feelings are denied and deemed to be weak traits in the West but are taught and encouraged in Chinese societies. Hwang et al (2002) add that this notion of face helps develop a competitive spirit called *kiasu* which means "afraid to lose" in the Chinese Hokkien dialect in Singapore (p.75). Hwang et al (2002) have also reported the study of Foo in 1991 that *kiasu* attitudes are also found in Hong Kong when people rush for seats on trains and buses. In short, a list of attributes for good teaching developed in the West may not be prevalent in the East, like Hong Kong.

Even people in the same country may not share views on the factors of good teaching. There was a nation-wide debate over the newest reforms to the national curriculum implemented in Japan in 2002. Tsuneyoshi (2004) noticed that some schools adopted the so-called individually tailored teaching (*shujyukudo*) recommended by the Ministry of Education whereas some other Japanese schools still insisted an egalitarian system which was internationally well-known.

As Handy & Aitken (1986) say, "nothing is value-free in education"(p.15). When

setting criteria for evaluating teaching, it is significant to take all these variables into consideration, especially when people of different cultures, with different values are involved. Consensus among all participants or stakeholders on setting the criteria is significant for a successful implementation of any teacher evaluation system. This is also the reason why teachers and students are strongly recommended to take part in the process of evaluating teacher effectiveness.

2.4.3 Negative school ethos

As said before, cultural difference may be one of the factors which determine the list of criteria for assessing teachers. In fact, cultural differences vary across schools. Beare et al. (1989) assert that every school "has a particular culture, determined by the individual values and experiences which each person brings to it, the ways in which people act and interact and the footprints they leave behind them" (p.174). This school culture or ethos seems to be what Poster and Poster (1991) call "organisational climate" (p.5).

It is logical to believe that teachers' perceptions of evaluation partly formulate this climate, which in turn, determines the outcomes of the evaluation system. Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (1995) reported the study of Zeleanak and Snider in 1974 which

found that teachers who thought appraisals were for instructional purposes would be supportive of the process and more willing to take part in the evaluating process. Oppositely, teachers who thought appraisals were for administrative purposes, e.g. contract renewal, promotion, pay rise would view the process negatively and so might not be cooperative during the assessing process. Shinkfield and Stufflebeam (1995) also reported the study of Wagoner and O'Hanlon in 1968 which found that teachers who had more positive attitudes about the appraisals were more likely to benefit. They could be more conscious with the problems identified during the assessing process and so would be better able to fix the problems, making their teaching more effective.

As it has been shown, school ethos has been partly generated by teachers. With supportive teachers, the school ethos will be more positive and teacher evaluation in the school will be more likely to be successful. In reality, teachers, however, may not be very supportive with the evaluation of their own performance. As McLaughlin and Pfeifer (1988) point out, "the most difficult problem of teacher evaluation is …… to overcome the resistance and negative attitudes that exist about teacher evaluation" (p.5). They discover that some teachers view evaluation as "a negative 'requirement' that leads to frustration or embitterment" (McLaughlin and Pfeifer, 1988, p.5).

There are some possible reasons why teachers are reluctant to carrying out evaluation, particularly self-evaluation. In fact, evidence shows that teachers tend to resist new and revolutionary ideas in teaching. Cohen (1985) has observed that the resistance may come from the idea that “every successful teacher has a vested intellectual, social, and even financial interest in maintaining the status quo” (p.35). It is possible that teachers may consider themselves professionals and so may find evaluation a way to undermine their professionalism. Some other teachers may not necessarily be against the evaluation. Their reservations may be due to the worries and fears they have got with having interviews, being observed or receiving judgemental comments and all the bureaucratic procedures they are required to go through. In either case, they tend to be reluctant to the evaluation system.

It is quite true that whenever there is an innovation, there are always tensions. These tensions are probably the results of poor communication. The success of the teacher evaluation, therefore, depends largely on the communication among participants. Not only horizontal communication within the same level but also vertical communication between levels are essential and should be promoted.

Besides a lack of communication among participants, inadequate teachers’ autonomy

may also be a cause leading to teachers' resistance to the evaluation. According to a poll conducted in 1988 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of teaching, it was found that of the 21,698 public school teacher surveyed, only 10% of the teachers felt that they had some say in the issue of teacher evaluation (Carnegie Foundation, 1988, quoted in Peterson & Comeaux, 1990). It is generally believed that if the system is a top-down imposition with little or even no teachers' ownership, it is difficult to find trust but only hostility and defensiveness between the evaluators and the teachers. Even if teachers are invited to set goals for evaluating their own teaching, they may get a feeling that they only have control over some trivial tasks but not the overall direction of the school. Due to their lack of autonomy, teachers are unlikely to welcome any kinds of evaluation.

Probably due to the same reason, teachers are also not very likely to welcome any kinds of changes. Previous evidence has shown that teachers in Hong Kong are often found rather reluctant to curriculum innovations. There have been many changes proposed in the Hong Kong curriculum context which are expected by the Government to affect, in particular, the teaching and learning of English. However, in most cases, these planned changes, especially those relating to pedagogy, have not been implemented in the classroom (Morris, 1990). One example is that teachers did

not follow the Hong Kong English Syllabus's principle of providing learner with chances for communicative use of the language in the 1990s (Lai, 1993). Another example is the implementation of the Target Oriented Curriculum (TOC) which was introduced in 1995. This carefully designed criterion-referenced scheme was expected to replace the rigours of norm-referencing with individually paced learning. Although the curriculum was originally planned to have a wide implementation from Primary 1 to Secondary level, it was eventually faded out due to the negative responses from the front-line teachers. As observed by Walker and Cheong (1996), schools in Hong Kong "face almost endless demands for change" (p.197). However, it is found that the majority of English teachers in Hong Kong have not been prepared either for changes to the curriculum or for the methodological changes which have occurred (Falvey 1995, quoted in Curtis and Cheng, 2001).

In fact, it is normal for teachers to feel anxious when trying something new as they are worried that the innovation may not work out the way they wish, not to mention the pressure they have got from their heavy workload. Instead of taking the risk, they prefer something safe. This is why it is essential to provide them with a better sense of ownership. If teachers have control over the change process, they will be more likely to accept the change and put it in their classrooms. As Pang (1998) points out, schools

should decentralise school management to the teacher level. In other words, teachers should not only be “the implementers of change” (Bailey, 1992), but also “the managers” (MacGilchrist et al, 1997). Once teachers are given more autonomy by the school management, they will be more likely to pass it onto their students. With this power-sharing, teachers and students will, certainly, get closer and effective learning and teaching should be more likely to take place.

In addition to improving the horizontal and vertical communication as well as allowing more teachers’ ownership, offering positive reinforcement may be another way to encourage teachers to take a more active role in the evaluation and motivate them to improve their performance. However, the extent to which teachers are motivated to participate and find some forms of reward through engaging with the appraisal process will vary with individuals. Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1998) argue that “if evaluation links performance with pay rather than with the professional development of teachers, then evaluation will be viewed as a potential threat which may undermine, rather than promote, the quality of teaching” (p.161). It is, therefore, suggested that research into reward mechanisms other than money, which are considered by teachers to be of value, would be worthwhile.

In short, teachers may not welcome changes including evaluation on their teaching performance. However, there are ways to minimise their resistance, such as improving the horizontal and vertical communication between the teachers and the school, providing teachers with autonomy and offering them a mechanism of reward.

2.4.4 Imbalanced evaluation systems

The evaluation system may also be a factor which makes teacher evaluation challenging. There is a general belief that judgements about teacher quality should be as objective as possible. It is probably because objectivity connotes solidity, trustworthiness, accuracy and impartiality whereas subjectivity does not. Since it is more easily agreed on, there will be little room for discretionary judgement. Many evaluation systems, therefore, are found to be qualitatively insensitive. They feature quantitative systems of points, averages, pupil outcome measures, and weightings of data in order to avoid the data from being distorted by personal feelings or prejudice (Peterson 1995). Peterson (1995) points out that this type of evaluation system attempts to avoid subjectivity by overquantification. However, he stresses that teacher evaluation decisions have to have an inherent subjectivity because teacher evaluation decisions should be made in relation to needs of clients and audiences and these needs might be ambiguous and subject to the perspective of participants (Peterson, 1995).

He even comments that those people are, in fact, subjective when they set the so-called objective system in place (Peterson, 1995).

According to Scriven (1976, quoted in Peterson 1995), subjectivity for evaluating teacher performance is not always bad. He names “decisions that are made on the best objective evidence available with inherent biases balanced, and the interested parties involved” “good subjectivity” (Scriven, 1976, quoted in Peterson 1995, p.44). In other words, subjectivity will only be considered “bad” when the decisions are unreliable, incomplete and biased, with weakly supported knowledge-claim.

Due to one’s own expectations or desires, there may never be such thing as pure objectivity. Teaching evaluation inevitably consists of human judgements, which are seldom value-free. Discussion on whether teacher assessment methods should be objectively or subjectively designed may never end. Perhaps, objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive. They are both equally important when comparing teacher performance. To make teacher evaluation systems more balanced, it may be a good idea to add more subjective/qualitative standards to the already existed objective/quantitative elements.

To sum up, it has been shown in this section that teacher evaluation is as difficult as it is important. One of the difficulties encountered when evaluating teacher effectiveness is the fact that the criteria for evaluating teacher effectiveness are not fixed. They change not only with different conceptualisations of teaching and learning or various teachers' roles but also with time and cultures. Other possible barriers for conducting teacher evaluation include the negative school ethos and the objective nature of most of the evaluation systems. Although teacher evaluation is not easy, there are strong reasons to carry out the task and there are also ways to help overcome the difficulties. In the next section, various studies reporting how teachers and students in different contexts evaluate teaching will be reviewed.

2.5 What do teachers and students consider significant when they evaluate teaching effectiveness?

It has been justified in Chapter 1 that not only teachers but also students should play an active role in teacher evaluation. Zabaleta (2007) also argues that

> the act of teaching creates an intimate and inseparable relationship between teacher and student and that this symbiotic relationship must be considered an important element in the process of evaluating and improving instruction (p. 55).

There are numerous research studies on the perceptions of teachers and students of "effective teaching". This section reports some of them in various contexts. Some of

them studied university students while some of them involved younger participants. Some of them were carried out overseas whereas some locally. Some compared the opinions of teachers and some compared the students' with their teachers'.

Yoder (1992) asked education students at the University of Botswana to identify characteristics which contributed toward the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their own primary school teachers. Fifty-four participants in the study were students enrolled in a degree programme in the Department of Primary Education at the University. All of them were experienced primary school teachers who held a Primary Teaching qualification. In addition to providing demographic information about themselves, and about the teachers whom they had identified, these participants were asked to rank 14 different teacher characteristics in one of three classes of teacher characteristic variables (personality/relationship, instruction or class management) in terms of their contribution to the perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the identified teachers. Open-ended responses about factors which contributed toward effectiveness or ineffectiveness were also solicited. In general, the findings suggested that knowledge of the subject and being able to present good lessons were, for these Botswana respondents, the sine qua non of good teaching.

Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) who also worked on student teachers came up with rather different findings. They investigated the views of 112 students who enrolled in a sophomore-level Teacher Education Programme prerequisite course at a university on their best and worst teachers' characteristics. Participants were required to write half-page descriptions of their best and worst teachers from elementary and high school, focusing on the behaviours and attitudes that made these teachers the best or worst. These descriptions were coded for six themes of teacher effectiveness: student centreness, enthusiasm for teaching, ethics, classroom and behaviour management, teaching methodology, and knowledge of subject. Data analysis indicated that the predominant theme in their descriptions of good teachers was student-centredness, followed by teaching methodology.

A recent research study which worked on teachers was conducted by Wilson et al (2008). They investigated the views of Scottish arts teachers concerning the delivery of the subject within the 5-14 curricula. Data was gathered through focus group interviews with teachers including over 200 primary and secondary teachers. Research issues included the balance of the curriculum; assessment; the specialist knowledge required to teach each subject with confidence; how the arts were valued by parents and schools; and etc. Findings showed that there were differences of the views

between primary teachers and secondary teachers in terms of confidence with teaching and assessing the arts as well as how they felt arts subjects were valued. On the other hand, they shared views on the benefits of arts education, particularly in terms of pupils' personal development.

The Chinese participants in the study of Wu (2005) seemed to believe that a good relationship with students was important to be an effective comprehensive high school teacher. Wu (2005) conducted a study which examined teaching effectiveness in Taiwan. Data was collected from 832 comprehensive high school teachers using a questionnaire which included the Teachers' Teaching Effectiveness Scale. There were 57 items in the Scale, asking teachers about their teaching performance and opinions. It was found that the levels of teaching effectiveness measures of comprehensive high school teachers were moderately high, with "good teacher student relationship" being the highest, and "teaching self efficacy" being the lowest.

The project of Stankeviciene (2007) studied the assessment of teaching quality from the perspective of graduates of Social Sciences Faculty at Siauliai University. 305 graduates took part in the study. They were invited to express their opinions about the studies and the teaching quality. It was concluded that the graduates had their own

view on the administration and development of the educational institution they graduated from and their opinions could help in creating a policy of education and practice.

Garcia (1992) worked on younger participants and examined the attitudes of fifth and sixth grade students from Chicago toward classroom climate in an effort to better understand factors that would encourage greater self-concept, higher achievement, and student and teacher behaviours. The study population included 185 fifth and sixth grade students who came from low-income families. The 60-item Classroom Climate Checklist (CCC) was administrated over a 2-day period. Findings indicated that of the three items rated as strong positive aspects of classroom climate, two were teacher-directed or teacher-caused: the teacher made the subject interesting (72%), and the students were encouraged to ask questions (72%). The third highest-rated positive item was a reflection of the students themselves in helping each other to do a good job.

Another study was carried out in a different context. Schonwetter et al (2006) attempted to define effective teaching in both the classroom and clinic for dentistry and dental hygiene students. A total of 175 dental and dental hygiene undergraduate

students nominated a total of forty instructors for teaching awards, providing a total of 695 qualitative statements reflecting their teaching in two learning contexts: the classroom and the clinic. Seven categories of effective teaching qualities were identified. They were individual rapport, organisation, enthusiasm, learning, group interaction, examinations and assignments, and breadth. Based on the frequency of the themes, effective teaching in the classroom was best defined by organisation and rapport, whereas in the clinic, rapport was the most frequently described behaviour.

Feldman (1988) compared thirty-one studies in each of which students and faculty specified the instructional characteristics they considered particularly important to good teaching and effective instruction. It was found that students and faculty were generally similar, though not identical, in their views, as indicated by an average correlation of +.71 between them in their evaluation of various aspects of teaching. In those studies with relevant data, the differences that did exist between the two groups showed a pattern of students placing more importance than faculty on teachers being interesting, having good elocutionary skills, and being available and helpful. Students also emphasised the outcomes of instruction more than faculty did. Faculty placed more importance than did students on teachers being intellectually challenging, motivating students and setting high standards for them, and encouraging self-initiated

learning.

Another study which also compared the opinions of students and faculty was carried out by Negron-Morales et al (1996). They examined teaching practices in undergraduate education by surveying 180 undergraduate students and 29 faculties, most in the school of education, at the Rio Piedras Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Factors investigated included the degree of agreement between faculty and students on good teaching practices. Significant differences were found in faculty and student perceptions about instructional practices. The practices students saw as frequently-used involved rigorous control and regulation, and those less-used included providing acknowledgement, support and prompt feedback. Practices that faculty rated as frequently-used were consistently those rated by students as least-used.

The LEAP (Learning Experience, Attitudes and Proficiency) Project which was funded by the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong started in September 1994 and ended in August 1996. The project aimed to produce detailed profiles of about 2000 first-year undergraduates in order to understand them better and to shape their future educational experiences in ways suited to their needs. Questionnaires were sent to the teachers as well as to the students to collect the teachers' perceptions on their

students' proficiency and the students' perceptions of their own proficiency separately. Students were also given an additional questionnaire on their English learning experiences and perceptions. Both unstructured and structured interviews were conducted with both groups of the participants. Samples of the students' vocabulary and writing were also collected and studied. The whole project was reported in *Hong Kong Students and their English* (Littlewood and Liu, 1996). One of the profiles described in the book was the profile of students' attitudes to English learning and use. Concerning the students' preferred learning activities and teaching methods at university, Littlewood and Liu (1996) found that the undergraduates' desire to participate in active communication in English was accompanied by an equally strong desire to have their mistakes corrected by the teacher. What was more was they had less liking for teacher guidance and explanation in other aspects of learning though they valued teacher correction.

A more recent local study conducted by Kember and Wong (2000) examined the perceptions of good and poor teaching from interviews with 55 Hong Kong undergraduate university students. The interview transcripts suggested that perceptions of teaching quality formed an interplay between the students' conceptions

of learning and the beliefs about teaching of the lecturer. The students' beliefs about learning could be placed on a continuum between passive and active learning. Their perception of the instructors' beliefs about teaching ranged between transmissive and non-traditional teaching. The quality of teaching was then conceived in four categories which were the quadrants formed by the intersections of the representations of beliefs about learning and perceptions of teaching. The quadrants were examined in turn to reveal how students with active and passive beliefs about learning conceived quality in transmissive and non-traditional teaching. Students who belonged to the quadrant containing transmissive teaching and passive learning associated good teaching with systematic step-by-step, clarity of information and trying to make students understand. Students who belonged to the quadrant containing non-traditional teaching and active learning associated good teaching with active engagement and multi-faceted teaching. For the other two quadrants, one containing transmissive teaching and active learning as well as one containing non-traditional teaching and passive learning, the students' reaction was found negative and almost all teaching was viewed undesirable. This was probably because of the mis-match between the students' belief about learning and the teachers' belief about teaching. Similar to Kember and Wong (2000), Goldstein and Benassi (2006) found that teaching would be perceived as more effective if both students and teachers shared the

same concepts of teaching and learning. They asked 278 students to rate the effectiveness of their individual teachers. It was found that Students' ratings of their teachers were higher when students and teachers agreed on their perceptions of characteristics of excellent lecturers.

In 1993, Biggs summarised the results of Boag (1989) in the book called *The Process of Learning* which he edited together with Phillips Moore. Boag (1989) wrote for *The Bulletin* after consulting academics, administrators, teachers, parents and students in an attempt to find out "what makes the great teacher'. It was found that the most important function was the teacher-as–motivator. Then, the list emphasised the interpersonal, affective and social side of teaching. The teacher-as-manager was also emphasised.

Brown and McIntyre (1993) conducted a study which aimed to "explore the professional knowledge and thought which teachers used in their day-to-day classroom teaching" (p.19) in their book, *Making Sense of Teaching*. The study involved sixteen primary and secondary teachers in Scotland, focusing on positive aspects of teaching and identifying a number of major goals that the teachers in the

study had in carrying out their teaching in the classroom. Each teacher was observed and then interviewed about the observed teaching. It was found that the teachers' major concerns in the classroom were: the maintenance of states of pupil activity, pupil progress, their own action, routines and repertoires, and the conditions.

Cooper and McIntyre (1996) built on the Scottish study. They not only tested the generalisability of the previous research findings about teachers' craft knowledge, but also explored the pupils' classroom craft knowledge in the classroom in addition to the teachers' professional craft knowledge. 13 teachers and a total of 325 pupils were involved in the study. Teachers were observed and interviewed individually while pupils might be interviewed in groups, in pairs or individually. Some common aspects of teaching that were perceived to be effective were identified. They included clear goals for pupil learning; clarity of communication of lesson goals and agenda to pupil; use of preview and review of lesson content; helping pupils to contextualise content in terms of their own experience and knowledge, as well as in terms of other teaching goals and learning experiences; some willingness to allow pupils to have input into goal and agenda setting; supportive social context designed by teacher to help pupils feel accepted, cared for and valued; ability and willingness to allow for different cognitive styles and ways of engaging in the learning process among pupils, through

multiple exemplification, the use of different types of illustration and mode of presentation, and offering pupils a choice from a menu of possible ways of engaging; willingness to take into account pupil circumstances and to modify/ pace/ structure learning tasks accordingly.

Evidence was also found in the study that effective teaching seemed to "depend on the teacher's mastery of a wide range of strategies… and, importantly, the ability to evaluate circumstances that render the application of a particular strategy appropriate to student requirements" (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996, p. 131). Therefore, a continuum of teaching strategies, with the interactive and reactive ends, was suggested. Cooper and McIntyre (1996) describe that at the extreme end of the continuum beyond interactive teaching are transmission strategies, while at the extreme beyond reactive teaching are strategies for self-directed learning. When in purely interactive mode, the teacher's first consideration is the range of learning objectives that he or she has developed prior to the lesson whereas in purely reactive mode, the teacher's first consideration is his or her perceptions of students' states or interests (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996, p.126). For the transmission mode, on the other hand, the teacher's role is to prepare and transmit knowledge to students while the students' role is to receive, store and act upon the knowledge (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996, p.126). In other

words, teachers seldom depart from their planned lesson contents, making any modifications to their well-structured lesson plans by incorporating their students' input when they are in this mode. In the term used by Cooper & McIntyre (1996), no "pupil deviations" seem to be allowed (p.129). The opposite end of the continuum is the self-directed learning mode where students have the ownership in their learning. In other words, they are given autonomy in what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. The idea of the interdependence of teacher and student influence implies that "effective teaching may well involve a degree of teacher-regulated power sharing in classrooms" (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996, p.132).

Morgan and Morris (1999) reported the research carried out in ten comprehensive schools across the whole of the south of Wales between 1992 and 1997 in their book, *Good teaching and learning: pupils and teachers speak.* They conducted their "quality of learning" research by asking open-ended questions with both students and teachers. By analysing the themes and meanings embedded in that answers which the respondents gave and revealing the representativeness and frequency of the perspectives, they were able to present the data both qualitatively and quantitatively. It was found that there were some views which were shared by both teachers and students, like the importance of pedagogy. There were some other views which they

opposed to each other, like the ability of students to ‘learn more’ or ‘learn better’. They also identified some views which both teachers and students were disparate in, meaning though the views were shared to the extent that both teachers and students used the same terms, they were not shared in the same way with each other. One of the examples was about the importance and focus of interpersonal relationship factors. Another category identified by Morgan and Morris (1999) is called unilateral perspective which refers to the views exhibited by only one of the two respondent groups in answers to the questions. One of the examples was the importance of humour and having some fun expressed by students.

Another big scale research study involving a representative sample of schools and across a broad range of teachers was carried out in the United Kingdom by Hay McBer in 2000. It aimed to provide a framework describing effective teaching based on the evidence of what effective teachers did in practice at different stages in the teaching profession. Hay McBer is a management consultancy firm contracted to develop a basis for teacher appraisal in England as part of the “modernisation” of the teaching profession, envisaged in the Green Paper *Teachers: meeting the challenge of change* (1998). Without any pre-conceived views about the specific skills or characteristics that led to effectiveness in the classroom, their approach was empirical

and based on established research methods. Their work was designed to use several complementary data-collection ways from different research traditions. They analysed the career history and qualifications of the teachers, their teaching skills, professional characteristics and the climate in their classrooms. The programme included classroom observation, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, as well as the collection of personal and school data.

They regarded “teaching skills”, “professional characteristics” and “classroom climate” as the three main factors within teachers’ control that significantly influenced pupil progress, with a focus on the combined interaction of them. Concerning “teaching skills”, they identified about 40 micro-behaviours which were related to seven Ofsted inspection categories: planning; methods and strategies; pupil management/discipline; time and resource management; assessment; homework and high expectations. They also identified 16 professional characteristics which formed five clusters: professionalism; thinking; planning and setting expectations; learning and relating to others. Classroom climate was defined as the collective perceptions by students of what it felt like to be a student in any particular teacher’s classroom, where those perceptions influenced every student’s motivation to learn and perform to the best of his or her ability. The Hay McBer (2000) concluded that “teachers really

do make a difference. Within their classrooms, effective teachers create learning environments which foster pupil progress by deploying their teaching skills as well as a wide range of professional characteristics" (para 1.1.9).

Since Hattie (2009) had been aware of a long history of placing more reliance on "professional judgements" or "clinical prediction" instead of statistical prediction which is based on evidence, he developed a synthesis of more than 800 meta-analyses about influences on learning, with an explanatory story about the influences. There was an achievement continuum along which the many effects could be located. The overall effects were then quantified, interpreted, and compared, and the various moderators of the overall effects were uncovered and followed up. It was claimed that there were "evidence-informed" arguments concerning the contributions to achievement from the child; the home; the school; the curricula; the teacher; and the approaches to teaching. According to the data, the teachers' contributions included the quality of teaching perceived by the students, teacher expectation, teachers' conceptions of teaching, learning, assessment, and the students, teacher openness, classroom climate, a focus on teacher clarity in articulating success criteria and achievements; the fostering of effort; and the engagement of all students. Furthermore, aspects of teaching approaches that were associated with student learning included

paying deliberate attention to learning intentions and success criteria; setting challenging tasks; providing multiple opportunities for deliberative practice; knowing when one (teacher and student) was successful in attaining these goal; understanding the critical role of teaching appropriate learning strategies; planning and talking about teaching; and ensuring the teacher constantly seeks feedback information as to the success of his or her teaching on the students.

Hattie (2009) reported the study of Irving (2004) which asked secondary students to evaluate both National Board Certified and non-certified mathematics teachers. Some of the features of an effective mathematics teacher were identified. It was found that teachers who received higher student ratings were teachers who challenged students, who had expectations, who monitored and evaluated students' learning, and who taught the language, love, and the details of mathematics.

Hattie (2009) also reported his own studies which compared National Board Certified teachers who had passed with those just below the cut-off score (Hattie & Clinton, 2008; Smith, Baker, Hattie, & Bond, 2008). It was found that the National Board Certified teachers, compared to the non-National Board Certified teachers, were more likely, in a systematic and consistent way, to challenge students to think. They were

also found regularly promoting varied and appropriate assignments that were demanding and engaging. Other discriminators included teachers who tested hypotheses about the effects of their teaching, had a deeper understanding of their teaching and its effects on student learning, had a sense of control, had high levels of passion for teaching and learning, had deep understanding of their subject, were adept at improvisation, had a problem solving disposition to teaching, had a positive classroom climate that fostered learning, and had respect for their students.

Hattie (2009) reported that Pressley et al (2007) used grounded theory to build a picture based on interviews, analysis of test scores, and an in-depth study of the school. They concluded that "effective elementary teachers, especially those effective in promoting reading and writing, tend to… devote much of their class time to academic activity, engaging most students consistently in activities that require them to think…. Effective teachers show a strong balancing of skills instruction and holistic reading and writing activities. … Effective teachers connect content learning to reading and writing instruction….. have high expectations and increase the academic demands on their students. .. communicate high expectations for students to self-regulate and take charge of their behaviour and academic engagement" (Pressley et al, 2007, quoted in Hattie, 2009, p.222).

To sum up, there are a lot of researchers in different countries who have carried out research, exploring how students and teachers view “effective teaching”. All the studies reported above illustrate that there are both agreement and disagreement of teachers and students concerning the definitions of effective teaching in various contexts. Other than the different levels of validity in various studies, the diverse evidence is probably due to their diverse definitions of teaching effectiveness. Referring to the reported studies above, there seems to be a tendency of adopting a more qualitative way to collect the opinions of the students and the teachers so as to produce understandings which are not available to more traditional, observational and/ or outcomes focused studies.

Hattie (2009) may be right to say that “‘evidence’ is not neutral” (p.254). He cites Biesta (2007) that what counts as “effective” crucially depends on judgements about what is educationally desirable. He stresses that “achievement is among what is crucially desirable” (Hattie, 2009, p.254). This is why he is interested in and also has completed the evidence-based meta-analyses, discussed before. Hattie (2009) objects the idea that “everything seems to work” or “I’ll leave you alone, if you leave me alone to teach my way” (p.1). He points out that

> teaching may be a private matter and occurs behind a closed door but it is not possible to leave teachers alone since stories of effective teachers have provided sufficient justification for finding out what exactly an effective teacher is doing in his or her classroom (Hattie, 2009, p.1).

This section has reviewed some of the studies which explore the perceptions of "effective teaching" of the teachers and the students in various contexts. In the next section, several research questions which aim to find out the perceptions of "effective teaching" of the teachers and the students in a local secondary school will be stated.

2.6 Research questions

This chapter has explored the nature of teaching and it has argued that it is not necessary to determine whether teaching is a science or a craft/ skill or an art. It has shown that it is more sensible and reasonable to consider the three views as differing ways of conceptualising teaching. With different conceptualisations of teaching as well as learning, there are different ideas relating to the meanings of effective teaching. This chapter has also explained why it is not an easy task to evaluate teaching effectiveness. To have a more comprehensive list of the criteria for evaluating teachers, it is suggested that students as well as teachers themselves should be involved. The perceptions of teachers and students of effective teaching can help produce a more thorough understanding of what makes teachers effective. Moreover, interactions between their perceptions help explain the relationship between teacher actions and student learning. Having reported previous studies on the perceptions of students and teachers of effective teaching, it has been shown that understanding the way that teachers think about teaching is probably more important than understandings that can

be gained from observing behaviour alone. Qualitative methods seem to be more appropriate for research into effective teaching. Consequently, there are reasons to believe that it is worth conducting a research related to the teachers' and the students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness in Hong Kong. There is a particular dearth of research that addresses the topic locally. It is hoped that the research can help devise the skills required of teachers who want to strive for excellence. This, in turn, may help improve the students' learning which should be the ultimate goal of all the teachers.

To explore the perceptions of "effective teaching" of the local teachers and their students, a study has been conducted with the research question named "Do the concepts of effective aspects of teaching differ for students and teachers in Hong Kong?" Three specific research questions have been devised accordingly. They are listed as follows:

1. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the students?
2. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the teachers?
3. To what extent do Hong Kong students and teachers agree on what they see as the most effective aspects of teaching?

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of the present study is to find out how the students and the teachers in Hong Kong perceive “effective teaching”. The main research question raised in Chapter 2 is: Do the concepts of effective aspects of teaching differ for students and teachers in Hong Kong? The following are the three specific research questions devised from the main research question:

1. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the students?
2. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the teachers?
3. To what extent do Hong Kong students and teachers agree on what they see as the most effective aspects of teaching?

To answer these questions, a study was carried out in October 2008 in a secondary school in Hong Kong. This chapter describes the research methodology of the study including the paradigm and the method together with the approach of the study. It also gives details about the methods of data collection and the participants. Furthermore, it explains the procedures of the study and the analysis tools. Lastly, there are discussions on the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

3.1 Paradigm + Method

As stated by Wardlow (1989), positivism, in the social science, is based on the

assumption that there are universal laws that govern social events, and uncovering these laws enables researchers to describe, predict, and control social phenomena. In other words, positivism which is derived from the natural sciences has been applied to social issues. However, social scientists query if the scientific methods of the natural sciences should be used to study social and human issues (Smith and Heshusius, 1986). They argue that there is no such thing as objective social reality and that social inquiry should not be conducted with the methods of the natural sciences due to a fundamental difference in subject matter (Smith, 1989). Shuman (1986a) also stresses that social sciences and education are different from the natural sciences, "which is ostensibly characterised by a single dominant paradigm whose principles define 'normal science' for that field of study" (p.4). Consequently, the anti-positivist paradigm or interpretivism has emerged and become popular in the research studies which reside within the realm of social science, like education. According to Wardlow (1989), interpretivism is based on the assumption that there is no universal truth and that realism of context is important. Its principle concern is "an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself" (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p.8). It is the "uniqueness" that is important, not the "commonality" in the positivist paradigm.

The research paradigm of the present study is based in the interpretive paradigm rather than the positivist paradigm. It is because the aim of the present study is to find out how students and their teachers prioritise various attributes of good teaching and also if there are any similarities and differences in the way they evaluate teaching. Since theoretical foundations for research and specific research methods are determined by research aims (Robey, 1996), the interpretivist paradigm is found more compatible than the positivist paradigm to the present study. The metatheorectical assumptions underlying the study tend to be in line with those of interpretivism.

Unlike the notion of a mind-independent reality in the positivist paradigm (Popkewitz, 1980), the current study is found to be more compatible to the ontology of the interpretivist paradigm that both the researcher and reality are inseparable. The current study also agrees with the epistemology of the interpretivist paradigm that there are multiple realities and that how reality is perceived varies across different languages and cultures. That is to say like other studies based on the interpretivism, the current study seeks to understand values, beliefs, and meanings of social phenomena, thereby obtaining *verstehen* (a deep and sympathetic understanding) of human cultural activities and experiences (Smith and Heshusius, 1986). In fact, research within interpretivism "is not a matter of offering interpretations of reality, but one of offering

interpretations that becomes reality" (Smith, 1989, p.171). This is why Pring (2000) relates intepretivism to 'constructive paradigm' which views reality as 'a social construction of the mind' (p.47). The current study is also found to be in line with the premises of interpretivism listed by Pring (2000) who says

> every person lives in a 'world of ideas', and it is through those ideas that the world (physical and social) is constructed…... Communication with other people, therefore, lies in a 'negotiation' of their respective worlds of ideas. A consensus is reached…… New situations arise and new people have to be accommodated with different ideas, so that negotiation within 'a marketplace of ideas' never ceases and new consensuses have constantly to be reached…… Such notions as 'truth', therefore, need to be eliminated, or redefined in terms of 'consensus'…… Furthermore, the distinction between 'objective' and 'subjective' needs to be redefined…… Development of our thinking (e.g. about educational problems and their solutions) lies in the constant negotiation of meanings between people in order to accommodate new ideas, create new agreements – new ways of conceiving reality (p.50).

In practice, the present study is similar to other research studies based in the interpretivist paradigm. First of all, the sampling size was comparatively small, with 106 students and 3 teachers. Like other interpretivist studies, the study aimed to generate "the thick description" of the participants' judgements, using the term of Geertz (1973). Similar to the researchers working in the interpretivist tradition, the researcher was involved in the research, conducting a focus group interview with the student participants as well as individual interviews with the teacher participants. The procedures for analysing the collected data also aligned well with the content analysis which was described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and commonly adopted in the interpretivist research.

The following figure shows a visual presentation of one of the research procedures of Steckler et al (1992). It is Model 3 in which qualitative methods are used to help explain quantitative findings.

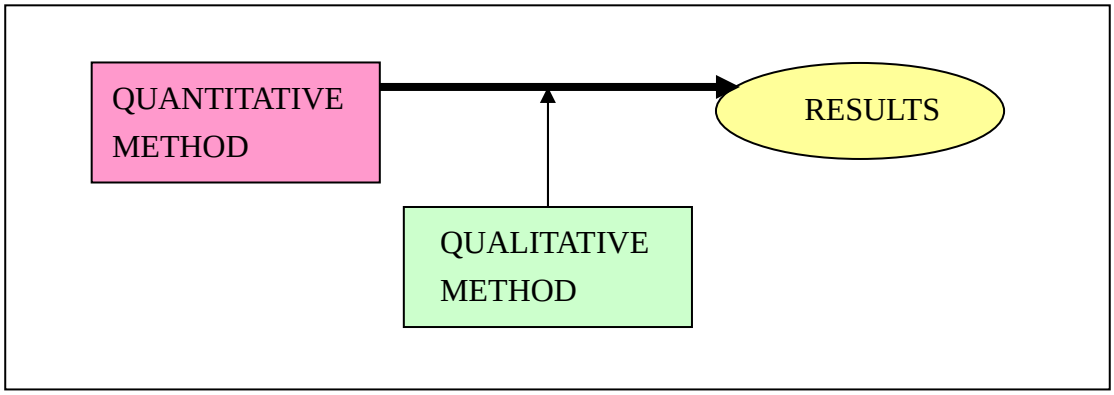

Figure 3.1: Model 3 of research procedures (Steckler et al, 1992)

According to the six advanced mixed methods research designs of Creswell et al (2003), the research design of Model 3 is a sequential explanatory one. The purpose of the model is to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a quantitative study. The model was modified and adopted to be the research design of the present study. The modified one was similar to Model 3 (Steckler et al, 1992), but differed in the way that the present study was bi-directional, meaning the qualitative methods helped explain quantitative findings and quantitative methods helped explain qualitative findings. The following figure shows a visual presentation of the research design adopted by the present study.

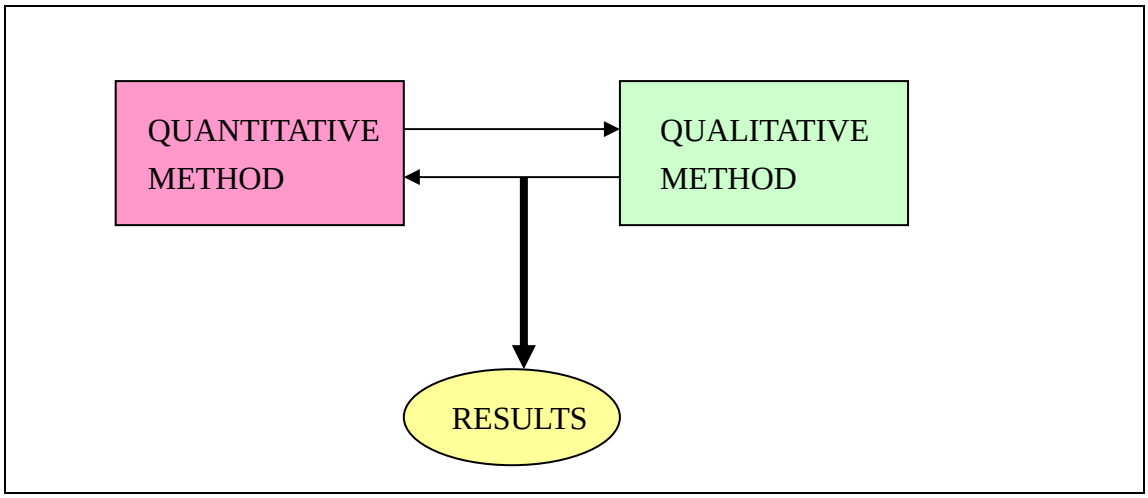

Figure 3.2: Research design of the present study

The quantitative method used in this project was a survey questionnaire (Appendix I) which measured the opinions of the participants using statistical instruments. With a given list of teaching traits, the quantitative tool aimed to come up with two sets of criteria of evaluating teaching for students and teachers. The main qualitative method used in this project was interviews, which intended to find out the views of the students and the teachers on good teaching. These two methods were used in the way that they both helped maximise desired consequences and got the research done. While the participants' priority of various teaching traits collected from the questionnaire was used to reason the participants' views expressed in the interviews, the participants' views expressed in the interviews were used to reason their priority of various teaching traits collected from the questionnaire.

Although the interpretivist paradigm is based on the idea that reality is socially

constructed and therefore, does not subscribe to the idea of an objective reality, this does not preclude the possibility that there can be systematic patterns within these social constructions. As a result, in the present study, the use of the quantitative method was not taken to imply the existence of universal laws, but rather to detect socially constructed patterns in the qualitative data. Instead of being used to generalise any "absolute truth", the research design of the present study was used to identify patterns in the qualitative data.

In terms of an inquiry into a social human problem, a quantitative research study is based on

> testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalisations of the theory hold true (Creswell, 1994, pp.1-2)

On the other hand, a qualitative research study is based on

> building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 1994, pp.1-2).

The major differences between these two methods are in the areas of data collection and analyses. Whereas quantitative research "relies heavily on numerical data and statistical analysis", qualitative research "relies heavily on verbal data and subjective analysis" (Gall, Gall and Borg, 1999, p.13). Through content analysis, like coding or

frequency counts, meanings will be given to qualitative data and through means or standard deviations, quantitative data will be made more meaningful (Gall, Gall and Borg, 1999).

With reference to the above descriptions, it is easy to understand why quantitative methods are always associated with a positivist paradigm and qualitative methods with an interpretivist paradigm. As Punch (1998) states, “quantitative research has typically been directed at theory verification, while qualitative research has typically been more concerned with theory generation” (p.15). Though the correlation is historically valid, Punch (1998) finds that “there is no necessary connection between purpose and approach” (p.17). In other words, quantitative research can be used for theory generation as well as verification, and qualitative research can be used for theory verification as well as generation. Onwuegbuzie (2006) also argues that “there is no one-to-one correspondence between paradigm and method” (p.8). Greene and Caracelli (in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) agree and point out that “though each paradigm has its own coherent set of assumptions and stances…, [they are] not intrinsically bound to a particular set of methods or techniques” (p.95).

There are, in fact, examples that qualitative research methods have been adopted in

the positivist paradigm. One of them is case studies which used to be employed in the interpretivist paradigm are now employed in the positivist paradigm, as reported by Weber (2004). Similarly, there are quantitative research methods which used to be employed in the positivist paradigm are now employed in the interpretivist paradigm. For example, inferential statistics have been used to determine whether selected behaviours of some groups manifest certain kinds of regularities. Other examples include the use of Grounded Theory by Bryman and Bell (2003) in both inductive and deductive approaches to research, as reported by Knox (2005).

It is believed that limitations of one research method can be addressed by using an alternative. For example, exclusive reliance on statistical or experimental testing of hypotheses in quantitative research can be complemented with qualitative research, which describes and illuminates the context and conditions under which research is conducted (Cook and Campbell, 1979). As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) point out,

> the goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies (p.15).

This means that a quantitative researcher can collect observational or interview data whereas a qualitative researcher can collect numerical data. This seems to be what Onwuegbusie (2000) means by a “bi-researcher”.

It may be possible to view the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods as a set of “lock and key”. It is true that they are different but they are also complementary to each other, just like “yinyang” in Chinese philosophy. “Yin” may refer to one of the research methods, meaning the passive dark female principle of the universe whereas “yang”, the other one, meaning the active bright male principle. Synergy or the interaction of these two approaches can result in more powerful effects than their individual effects.

Apparently, the research design of the present study is a mixed methods study based in the interpretivist paradigm. Creswell et al (2003) define mixed method approach as a study, which “involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study” (p.212). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) noticed that during the period of so-called paradigm wars, most investigators of social and behavioural studies had extensively used mixed methods research mainly due to pragmatic reasons. As suggested by Eisner (1981), “the field of education in particular needs to avoid methodological monism” (p.9). Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) also point out that this mixed methods research provides “stronger inferences than either mono method research can make” (p.14). Nevertheless, viewed as the third methodological movement by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), the mixed methods approach is “the

creation of bridges between the qualitative and quantitative camps" (p.x). It not only helps increase the researcher's methodological repertoire, but also enables the researchers to simultaneously answer confirmatory and exploratory questions, and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). Yin (1989) also argues that using multiple methods can increase the robustness of results because findings can be strengthened through triangulation. Nonetheless, the strengths of the mixed methods approach can be clearly expressed by Morse (2003) who says

> while specific research methods enable us to describe, understand, and explain the complexity of living by providing us with various perspectives, different methods are best designed for, and used to answer, particular types of questions. They provide us with different perspectives that enable us to best answer individual questions (p.189).

Due to all these advantages, Greene and Caracelli (2003) call for the use of the mixed methods approach within most paradigms and the present study is an example using a mixed methods approach within the interpretivist paradigm.

3.2 Approach

The approach of the present study is a case study which aims to obtain "thick description" (Greertz, 1973). As defined by Miles and Huberman (1994), a case is "the unit of analysis, …. a focus or heart of the study" (p.25). The case of the present study is a group of teachers and students in Hong Kong. In accordance with the

definition of Denzin and Lincoln (1994), it is an instrumental case study in which “a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue” (p.237). Since the issue of the present study is the views of the students and the teachers on “effective teaching”, it is hoped that the case can help improve the understanding of how the students and the teachers look at “effective teaching” in Hong Kong.

“Case Study” is frequently used in qualitative research to define a boundary around a study (Punch, 1998). Taking the time and the human resources available into consideration, a school located at Tin Shui Wan in the New Territories in Hong Kong was selected. Founded in September, 1996, it was a standard-design, aided, secular, co-educational, secondary school with a 5-5-5-5-5-2-2 class structure, indicating that there were five classes in the forms from Form 1 to Form 5 and two classes in Form 6 and 7. According to the annual report of the school in 2008, 90.8% of the students were awarded Grade E or above in at least 5 subjects (Hong Kong norm was 68.4%) in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Moreover, 82% of the students met the requirement to advance to Secondary Six. In the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination 2008, their passing rates of nearly all subjects were higher than that of the Hong Kong norm. 61.4% of the students were awarded the minimum entrance requirements for local degree courses (Hong Kong norm was

55.7%). Nevertheless, the school was labelled a school with the second banding[1] among the Hong Kong secondary schools.

The school was chosen to take part in the present study due to several reasons. First of all, there was a personal connection between the researcher and the Chairperson of the English Department of the school and so the accessing procedures were supposed to be easier. Second of all, the school had actively been taking part into various research programmes both internally and externally. As said in their mission on the school homepage, it is important to "value …… promotion of educational research ……". Furthermore, the external evaluation report prepared by the Quality Assurance Division of the Education Bureau in 2007 recognised the school as a pioneer in the educational field in Hong Kong due to the school's willingness to implement various new educational ideas into the school. Because of all these reasons, the school was selected to take part in the present study. It was believed that it would be willing to participate actively and make valuable contributions to the study.

3.3 Methods of data collection

There were three main methods for collecting data in the present study. They were "questionnaire", "interviews" and "classroom observations". They all helped clarify

meaning and verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation, serving the purpose of triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Defined by Creswell and Miller (2000), triangulation is

> a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (p.128).

Bonoma (1985, quoted in Kaplan and Duchon, 1988) stresses its importance by saying

> collecting different kinds of data by different methods from different sources provides a wider range of coverage that may result in a fuller picture of the unit under study than would have been achieved otherwise (p.575).

The quality of the data is determined by the reliability and the validity of the data collected from various methods. According to Wellington (2000), reliability means "the extent to which a test, a method or a tool gives consistent results across a range of settings, and if used by a range of researchers" (p. 200) and validity means "the degree to which a method, a test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure" (pp.200-201). In the following sub-sections, ways used to assure the quality of the data collected will be described with reference to each of the methods.

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The title of the questionnaire used in this study is “what makes a good English teacher?” Students were given a bilingual version of the questionnaire (Appendix II) while teachers were given an English version (Appendix I). The questionnaires were devised from Hay McBer (2000).

In June 1999, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in England and Wales commissioned Hay McBer to investigate the characteristics of effective teachers. The study was undertaken in a representative sample of schools and across a broad range of teachers. The approach used in the study was empirical and based on established research methods, including classroom observation, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, as well as the collection of personal and school data. Teachers’ career history, qualifications, teaching skill and professional characteristics together with the climate in their classrooms were examined. The report which was based on the investigation was regarded as “the first detailed analysis of professional qualities that underpin effective teaching” by Ms Estelle Morris, the School Standards Minister in June 2000 (Anon 2000a). Based on an analysis of what effective teachers did in practice, the 234-page report produced a model of teacher effectiveness at three different stages of professional expertise, including main professional grade, threshold

and outstanding teachers. Though the original application of the research was designed to inform the standards for threshold assessment, teachers in the UK were assessed against the model as part of the ongoing assessment of their performance throughout their careers.

According to the Report (Hay McBer, 2000), there were three main factors within teachers' control that significantly influenced students' progress. They were professional characteristics, teaching skills and classroom climate. It was the forty teaching skills under seven categories including High Expectations, Planning, Methods and Strategies, Pupil Management/Discipline, Time & Resource Management, Assessment and Homework that the questionnaire of the present study was based on.

The initial decision to proceed with the questionnaire was based, primarily, upon the researcher's assessment of its face validity. Furthermore, the issues Hay McBer Report (2000) addressed were similar to what the present study was intended to explore. Last but not least, the forty teaching skills had been used in the United Kingdom previously. In fact, a pilot study was carried out to help maximise the validity of the questionnaire because unclear questions or ambiguous statements could

be revised after the pilot study took place.

To serve the same purpose, the students' version of the questionnaire was written in both English and Chinese so that all students understood what they were asked for and should be better able to provide the information that the questionnaire was intended to measure. The bilingual questionnaire could also help reduce the cultural bias since the original forty teaching skills were not developed for use with the Chinese participants in Hong Kong. Open-ended questions were provided for maximising the coverage of the area that was intended to measure. To reduce bias which might threaten the validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaires were self-completed so that interviewer bias which might lead to a "response effect" when participants tended to seek out answers to please the interviewer could be eliminated. To further eliminate bias, the student participants were required to complete the questionnaires in the school so that no other people apart from the students would complete the questionnaires. Self-completion of the questionnaires also helped assure a high response rate.

The test for Conbach's Alpha was carried out with the data from the main study, not with the data from the pilot study. It was understood that this was a high risk strategy

but the risk was taken due to the time and resource constraints. If more time had been allowed, the test would have been carried out on a separate data set before the questionnaire in the main study was administered. The result of the test (Appendix IV) showed that the value of Conbach's Alpha (a) was .923. Since .70 is generally accepted in various social science researches, the questionnaire was considered a reliable tool, with an acceptable consistency or repeatability of the measure.

To help maximise the reliability of the questionnaire, participants of the study were provided with a quiet environment for completing the questionnaire so that a consistent degree of concentration could be maintained. The reliability of the questionnaire was further assured as a pilot study was conducted to reduce any overly long statements which might discourage the interest of the participants in completing the questionnaires.

There are two parts in the questionnaire. Part I of the questionnaires asked both of the students and their teachers to indicate the degree of importance of the forty traits to them using an attitude scale of 1 to 3 where "1" indicated "not very important", "2" indicated "important but not essential" and "3" indicated "absolutely essential". Participants were also invited to answer several open-ended questions. Based on the

same list given, students were asked to evaluate the teaching performance of their English teacher and teachers were asked to evaluate their own teaching in Part II.

3.3.2 Interviews

A focus group interview and individual interviews were conducted for the students and the teachers respectively after they completed and returned the questionnaires. Post-lesson interviews were also conducted for individual teachers after their lessons were observed.

Concerning the quality of the data collected from the interviews, the concepts of reliability and validity are found not very appropriate. It is because these constructs are generally considered tools of the positivist paradigm. They are based on the principles which are not compatible to the interpretivist paradigm. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the terms 'trustworthiness' and 'authenticity' instead to replace the concerns of qualitative researchers for reliability and validity. Trustworthiness means "defensible" (Johnson, 1997, p.282). It also means "how an inquirer can persuade his or her audiences including self that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). In short, it means establishing confidence in the findings. According to Cooper (1993), it is not

easy to devise hard criteria for judging the authenticity of the data collected from interviews but the detail, precision and logical consistency of the data collected strongly suggest authenticity. In order to maximise the authenticity of the interview data, measures adopted by Cooper and McIntyre (1996) were generally employed in the present study. Those measures which were derived from humanistic psychological principles included empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). For 'empathy', the researcher showed the participants that she was willing and able to emphathise with their expressed views so as to show them that their opinions were understood and accepted. For 'unconditional positive regard', the researcher tried to give the participants a sense of comfort and security by showing an overt sense of liking and interest in the participants as individuals, through both verbal and non-verbal cues. For 'congruence', the researcher kept asking for clarification of contradictions and inconsistencies in the participants' opinions in order to motivate the participants to present honest responses. The researcher also adopted "repeat probing" which was used by Cooper and McIntyre (1996), trying to invite the participants for clarification or elaboration later in the interview when the participants failed to do so at the beginning of the interview.

In the following sub-sections, the individual interviews conducted with the teacher

participants and also the focus group interview conducted with the student participants will be described. Moreover, measures taken to maximise the trustworthiness or authenticity of the data collected will be mentioned.

- **Individual interviews with teachers**

Individual interviews allow one-to-one interactions between the researcher and the teachers. The aim of arranging interviews with individual teachers after they completed and returned the questionnaires was to collect teachers' further opinions on the data obtained from the questionnaires whereas the aim of arranging interviews after each classroom observation was to help teachers recall their in-lesson thinking and discuss the aspects of their teaching which they believed helped their students learn best in the observed lessons.

The interviews took a semi-structured form. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) point out that structured interviews aim at "capturing precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behaviour within pre-established categories" whereas unstructured interviews are used "in an attempt to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorisation" (p.366). Therefore, the semi-structured interviews conducted in the present study should be located somewhere in the middle

of the continuum. It was based on a schedule of some pre-established questions which dealt with the participants' responses to the questionnaire collected earlier in advance of interviewing.

Field relations, defined by Cooper (1993) as "the nature and quality of the relationships that the researcher develops with the subjects of the study" (p.325), are important in motivating participants to reveal their authentic thoughts and concerns. One way adopted by the researcher to establish appropriate field relations in the present study was to avoid presenting herself as an authority figure, as suggested by Cooper (1993). This could be made possible by a suitable accessing procedure. Before making any formal approaches to the Principal of the school involved in the study, the English Chairperson was approached on an informal basis. Only when three teachers agreed to take part in the study, was the school Principal approached with a formal written request to conduct the research (Appendix III).

There were ways to encourage the teacher participants to share their opinions about the topic. One of them was to treat them as experts, emphasising their expertise (Cooper, 1993). According to Cooper (1993), it is important to establish a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the teachers in working out their

views. An example is given below to show how the researcher worked with the teacher to figure out the meaning of "scaffolding" by asking the teacher for clarification or elaboration.

Researcher:	*…let's talk about scaffolding. Can you explain some more and give some examples?*
Teacher B:	*Mmm… scaffolding, the word looked a bit complicated but this only means just a step, to have clear steps.*
Researcher:	*…yes but do you think…*
Teacher B:	*They can go to the next step and finally they can produce the products you want them to do, yes, scaffolding, just steps, so to make sure that they have a good structure of the lesson and learn it finally. If the teacher misses any steps, which is…… maybe proved to be important, they cannot go to the last step.*
Researcher:	*Are you saying guidelines are important?*
Teacher B:	*Yes, guidelines, steps, yes.*

In order to find out the teachers' interpretation of "scaffolding", the researcher asked the teacher for explanations. It was when the teacher elaborated her explanations did the researcher confirm that "scaffolding" meant clear guidelines to the teacher.

The other side of the "subject as expert" coin is the researcher's credibility (Cooper, 1993). According to Cooper (1993), it is important for the researcher to be able to offer teachers some insights into aspects of classroom life rather than solely relying on the teachers for information. It is because this not only helps motivate teachers to talk but also helps minimise the chance for teachers to give plausible but inauthentic

responses (Cooper, 1993). An example is given below to show that the researcher had been aware of the classroom of Teacher C. In the dialogue, Teacher C was self-evaluating her own teaching performance.

Teacher C*:*	*I don't have a wide variety of problem-solving technique….it's difficult to do so.*
Researcher*:*	*but you've tried your best about spelling, giving students tips to solve the problem, right?*
Teacher C*:*	*Yes.*
Researcher*:*	*I still remember one example when you asked them about the spelling of joystick, you reminded them of your name.*

The researcher in the above example reminded the teacher that she did possess some problem-solving skills as she used her name, 'Joy', to hint her students about the spelling of "joystick". In this way, the researcher intended to show the teacher that she might have underestimated herself.

Besides clarifying the inconsistencies or conflicting responses, the researcher tried to avoid interruption during the interviews to help maximise the trustworthiness of the data collected as the substantive content of the interview would not be directed by the interviewer but the interviewees (Cooper, 1993). To minimise threats to the authenticity of the data collected, the transcription of the interview dialogues were prepared and compared by one additional researcher who was a qualified and experienced English teacher. Moreover, the final version of the transcript was sent

back to the interviewees for verification. (Refer to Appendices VII, VIII & IX for tapescripts) To further improve the authenticity of the interview data, other data methods of collection including questionnaires and classroom observation were adopted for triangulation since triangulation is considered a strategy for increasing the trustworthiness of the findings, as discussed before.

To serve the same purpose, a pilot interview was run beforehand for the researcher to practice her questioning skills so as to avoid asking any leading or ambiguous questions. The pilot interview also allowed the researcher to practice a method of "informant" style (Powney & Watts, 1987, quoted in Cooper, 1993). The rationale of informant interviews is that the interviewer allows the shape and direction of the interview to be determined by the unfolding pattern of the interviewees' responses (Cooper, 1993). During the pilot interview, the researcher also tried to avoid judging the participants in order to motivate the participants to share their opinions, without worrying to be criticised and commented on.

- **Focus group interview with students**

A focus group interview which was also semi-structured was arranged for the students after they finished and returned the questionnaires. Its aim was to provide

opportunities for the researcher to observe a large amount of interaction among the students on “effective teaching” in a limited period of time. It was believed that a lot of in-depth information about how students viewed “effective teaching” could be obtained from the interaction.

The focus group interview is defined by Krueger (1988, quoted in Lankshear, 1993) as an interview when “people who possess certain characteristics provide data of a qualitative nature in a focused discussion” (p.1987). It is based on a fundamental philosophical stance that “attitudes and perceptions relating to products, services or programs are developed in part by interaction with other people” (Krueger, 1988, quoted in Lankshear, 1993, p.1987).

What happened was the researcher gathered a group composed of students of the same form, and allowed them to discuss “good teaching” freely, with minimal direction. It was about establishing and facilitating a discussion rather than interviewing a group of participants. A focus group interview may look like a form of group interviewing but it is not exactly the same as group interviewing, which involves interviewing a number of people at the same time with an emphasis on the questions and responses between the interviewer and the interviewees only. Focus groups, on the contrary, put

the emphasis on "[the] interaction within the group based on topics that are supplied by the researcher" (Morgan, 1997, p.12). Vaughn et al (1996) add that the job of focus groups is to obtain opinions of various participants, not to judge or comment the opinions.

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) refer the word, "focus" to an interview which is limited to a small number of issues. They also refer the word, "group", to a small assembled group which allows genuine discussion among all its members. According to Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981), it is this genuine discussion or interaction that can help describe how and explain why people behave as they do in focus groups. As Morgan (1988) remarks, "focus groups are useful when it comes to investigating what participants think, but they excel at uncovering why participants think as they do" (p.25). This might be what Greertz (1973) means by 'thick description', mentioned in Section 3.1.

The significance of interactions in focus groups has been widely recognised. Kitzinger (1995) believes that interaction is a key feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants reflects their views of the world, the language they

used and their values and beliefs about an issue. He goes on to say that the discussions involved allow the exchange of opinions, personal reactions, and experience among members of the groups (Kitzinger, 1995). Kitzinger (1995) adds that interactions enable participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understandings of their specific experiences. This is how participants are able to form their opinions. Like Brodigan (1992), Vaughn et al (1996) agree that it is the group discussion that distinguishes focus group research from other kinds of qualitative research. Morgan (1988) also says that the hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that will be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (p.12).

With respect to focus group interviews, reliability means how internally consistent the opinions of the individual respondents are. However, this aspect does not seem very applicable to focus group interviews, like other qualitative methods. It is because the focus group interviews with the students are not meant to collect consistent opinions of the respondents. Whether or not the respondents' views are consistent does not really matter in focus group interviews as respondents will evaluate and reconsider their views under the influence of the views of other group members. It is not quite necessary for them to have "fixed" opinions on the topic. As Hillebrandt (1979)

observes, although some participants may come to the interview with predetermined opinions, others may be more malleable. Krueger (1988, quoted in Lankshear, 1993) also agrees that participants' opinions can be formed with the direct or indirect input of others and may vacillate or change over periods of time. It is the open exchange of different perceptions which may trigger new opinions or reinforce present convictions that is valuable in focus groups. This process of opinion formation is, in fact, a key characteristic of focus groups.

Another evidence to show that the issue of reliability does not bother focus groups much is the common use of open-ended questions in focus groups. There is a trade-off in terms of the amount and the reliability of the data generated by open-ended versus closed-ended questions. It is generally agreed that the more open the questions are, the richer the amount of the data will be but the less reliable the data may become. Open-ended questions are more popular in focus groups since it is more important for focus groups to draw valid conclusions about the topic under discussion than to replicate findings across many focus groups.

Although consistent findings were not really necessary in focus group interviews, homogeneous groups were still adopted in the present study because they were more

likely to yield similar results and so could help gather collective opinions. Therefore, students of the same level were the target participants of the study. However, problems might arise when individual view was distinguished from group view. Since the aim of the focus group interview in the present study was to collect opinions to reason the data from the questionnaires, focus should be put on both the collective opinions and the individual opinions. Gibbs (1997) points out that "[participants] are speaking in a specific context, within a specific culture" (p.4), and so sometimes it may be difficult for the researcher to distinguish an individual message from a collective one. The example below illustrates how a collective idea was gathered in the focus group interview with the students when the exclusive use of Cantonese, the students' first language in the English lessons, was discussed.

Researcher:	*… What do you think about using Cantonese in the English lessons?*
Student 1:	*I think it should be all English because if the teacher uses some Cantonese, it seems that students will be spoiled, that may not help develop their listening and speaking skills, I think if it's all English, we will be forced to use English and that's how we learn the language.*
Researcher:	*How about the others' opinions?*
Student 2:	*I think…I want to listen to more English in the lesson…*
Student 3:	*I think it's necessary to use Cantonese because students have different levels. If the teacher starts with all English, weaker students will find it hard to follow so even just a little bit of [Cantonese], that's good.*

Student 4:	*If the teacher uses all English, we will know the way we should speak English, we can also learn more vocabulary from the teacher.*
Researcher:	*Are you saying there will be more examples for you to follow?*
Student 4*:*	*(nodding)*
Student 5*:*	*I think if there are difficult vocabulary items, teachers should use simpler English to explain first. If students still can't understand the word, teachers should then use Cantonese. Students should try English first, Cantonese should be used when students really can't understand the English.*
Researcher:	*Cantonese should be the last resort?*
Students:	*(nodding)*

As said before, the constructs of "trustworthiness" and "authenticity" should be used to replace the concepts of reliability and validity when conducting qualitative methods, like focus group interviews. In other words, how believable are the views of the respondents? It is generally believed that participants are more likely to be frank and honest in focus group interviews than they are in one-to-one interviews because the focus is on the group rather than the individual. Vaughn et al (1996) also find that the pull for social desirability or a tendency to impress the researcher may be diminished by the setting of focus groups.

However, Byers and Wilcox (1991) observe that participants may not give their true feelings in order to avoid embarrassment if they find their feelings different from those of the other participants. The situation may be even worse when people of lower

rank in terms of the power hierarchy are asked to comment on people of higher rank, like students and teachers in the present study. Students were always perceived as being vulnerable when serving as research participants because of their lack of social power. Their subordinate status might make them feel that it was inappropriate for them to comment on a given topic related to the super-ordinate group member, their teachers. To reduce the status difference, developing field relations mentioned earlier was adopted. It was believed that authenticity was more likely to reach a satisfying level as soon as trust had been built up. Hence, the researcher paid several visits to the school and met some of the students informally outside the classroom, combining "approachability and trustworthiness" (Cooper, 1993). It was hoped that the researcher could avoid presenting herself as an authority figure with an official status related to the school.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) agree that trust between the researcher and the participants can be developed with a prolonged engagement and that the participants can be treated as co-researchers. In order to offer the student participants a sense of control over their involvement in the study, the researcher was planning to allow them to fix a date and time for the interview. However, it was finally not successful as a total of 15 students from three classes were involved and there were clashes with the students'

extra-curricular activities. A timetable which fitted every single participant was not possible. Finally, an interview which was not in lesson time was arranged. During the interview, students were treated with the same respect and understanding as their teachers. Cantonese, the mother tongue of the participants, was used as the main medium in the discussion. The students were also assured that the data collected from the interview would be kept confidential.

Concerning the authenticity of the data collected, it was assumed that one should have a conscious and deliberate intention to have a desire to lie and express wrong opinions. Since the students were informed of the aim of the study at the beginning of the interview, they should understand that there were no conflicts of interests and it was not very likely that they would intend to fabricate the data. It was true that the participants might not even know the information they provided was inaccurate. They might be convinced that the information they gave was right when they expressed their opinions. What is counted as the “truth” and what is counted as a “lie”? To what extent does the “truth” reflect “reality”? It may not be as significant as expected. Sikes (2000) stresses that the goal of focus groups, a qualitative research, is often not so much “truth” telling. The data collected is considered true in the sense that they reflect the participants’ perspectives at the time they tell their stories. In interviews,

participants' views are supposed to be based on their own subjective perception and so their perceptions are claimed to be accurate by them. It is what Sikes (2000) means by the respondents' "genuine subjectively perceived reality". Sikes (2000) also points out that based on the postmodernist thinking, people tell different stories at different times in different circumstance and to different audiences and so it is not sensible to insist on capturing and representing actual reality through the research process.

Group dynamics in focus group interviews may present some particular problems. It is possible that one single participant or a small group of participants may dominate the whole group. On the other hand, some other participants may be too shy to speak. The problems may be more obvious in Hong Kong as Asian people are generally considered more reserved and tend to keep their opinions to themselves (Hwang et al., 2002). Voluntary involvement in the present study could help minimise the chance that the participants felt reluctant to talk. In order to ensure that all the participants had a chance to express their views and avoid any dominations, the researcher kept asking, *"how about the others' opinions?"* or *"other students share the same ideas?"* or asking individual participants, *"you agree?"* To further encourage passive participants to express their views on the topic, the researcher emphasised that the interview was an informal talk where the participants were free to express their views

not only at the beginning but also in the middle of the interview. She also reminded the participants that there was no right or wrong answer to the questions addressed in the interview.

Bias is a major threat to the quality of data collected. The quality of the data collected from the interviews depends very much on the interactions between the key players: the participants with each other in focus group interviews. The interactions may contaminate the data due to the impact their views have on each other. However, it is also because of this impact that makes the ideas collected from focus groups valuable, as discussed before. The researcher may also be a source of contamination. She may have contaminated the results both intentionally and non-intentionally. Kennedy (1976) highlights some sources of bias that threaten the researcher's objectivity. One of them is "personal bias" when the researcher welcomes and reinforces views which are consonant with his or her own. Another one is "the need for consistency" when the researcher welcomes and reinforces views which are internally consistent within the participants. It would be desirable if a professional moderator could be hired. However, due to limited funding, the researcher of the study had to act as the moderator. To minimise the impact of the researcher's bias, the researcher tried to guide the participants in the interview without manipulating them. Below is an

example showing how the researcher tried to keep distant and objective, without controlling the participants.

Researcher:	*You mentioned there should be more activities in the lesson, there should always be something new, what kind of activities do you think the teacher should organise in the lessons?*
Student:	*There must be a lot of small group discussion, … small groups, more interesting.*
Researcher:	*What else? What other activities do you like?*
Student:	*Competitions.*
Researcher:	*Competitions, mmm*

In the example, the researcher tried to encourage the student participants to offer their views instead of imposing her own views on the participants.

The researcher also kept summarising the ideas during the interview and asking students for confirmation. Similar to the interviews with the teachers, interruptions were avoided so that the substantive content of the interview was directed by the students. The following example illustrates how the researcher tried to clarify the idea of a student in the focus group interview when they discussed the significance of the teaching experience to a teacher. The aim of the researcher was to retain the idea of the participants, with minimum distortion.

Researcher:	*How about teaching experience? Is it also an indicator?*
Student 1:	*Not necessarily. If the teacher uses the same teaching method all the time, he or she may not catch up with the updated methods to cater the different needs of the students, the students will then not like it.*
Researcher:	*So you mean the teacher should always update themselves, actually one of the points mentioned in the questionnaire is that teachers should be hard-working. They need to develop themselves all the time, is that what you are referring to?*
Student 1:	*(nodding).*

Misinterpretation of the respondents' ideas could also be a reason for invalid data. One source of misinterpreting data might come from the error of translation. Mistakes might be made when the researcher translated the recording to English. It was difficult to conceptualise the narrative information obtained and then summarise it accurately and reliably. Written transcripts could also be interpreted wrongly. In order to maximise the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation, the students' mother tongue was used as the medium at the meeting. The interview dialogue was then translated from Cantonese to English word by word. The translation process was a multi-layer process of checks and reviews. Besides the researcher who acted as the original translator, an additional researcher who was a qualified and experienced English language teacher was invited for cross-checking the translation and the interpretation of the data. Typos, inconsistencies and missing text were identified to ensure the quality of the translation though error or stylistic differences might still occur as the

two researchers were not professional translators. The two translations would then be compared based on grammar, typography, word choice and etc. Finally the original researcher would use her discretion to prepare the final version. (Refer to Appendix VI for tapescript) Nevertheless, the concept of “reflexivity” (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1983) was taken into consideration. Besides making attempts to eliminate the effects of the researcher in the study, the impact of the researcher on the research findings was recognised.

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) notice that the usefulness and validity of focus group data are generally affected by the extent to which, participants feel comfortable about openly communicating their ideas, views or opinions. Therefore, group dynamics could have positive effects on enhancing the participants’ willingness to talk. A relaxing, comfortable, supportive and non-judgemental environment was prepared to minimise the unnatural setting due to the audio-tape or video-tape recording. The group was also seated in a way that could provide maximum opportunity for eye contact with both the moderator and other group members. Furthermore, refreshments were prepared for the same purpose. Below is an example showing how the researcher tried to ease the participants.

Researcher:	*You've mentioned "teach with heart", caring, enthusiastic, wow, right spelling! That's good. Polite, I guess it's similar to respect, students should greet teachers and teachers should also greet students.*
Students:	*(nodding)*
Researcher:	*One even mentioned "beautiful". Opinions? Is that what a good English teacher should be? Appearance is important?*
Students:	*(laughing) No.*
Student 2:	*not too short for male teacher.*
Researcher:	*(laughing) how can you set a standard?*
Students:	*(laughing)*

In fact, the researcher carried out a pilot focus group interview with several students of the same form who were "comparable respondents" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p.27). During the pilot interview, the researcher practised being a facilitator of the group. She explained the aim of the study, outlined the topics to be addressed and controlled the direction of the discussion. She tried to remain distant and objective but offered empathy and a positive regard for the students. She also tried to allow a free-flowing discussion but at the same time interrupt if the discussion became too unfocussed.

3.3.3 Classroom observations

The classroom observations in the present study were considered "participation observations" which were defined by Goetz and LeComppte (1984, p.109) as observations in which "the researchers take part in the daily activities of people,

reconstructing their interactions and activities". Even though the researcher did not actually take part in the classroom activities, she did walk around and show interest in the students' work. There were also non-verbal communication between the students and the researcher, like smiles. The students were fully aware of her presence in the classroom. According to the categories of observations identified by Creswell (1994), the researcher played the role of an observer of participants since her role of a researcher was known. She could be somewhere along the continuum of a full-participation and a non-participation. She did not simply observe but was engaged in some kinds of social interactions with individual students, making differences in the situation. In fact, the act of observing alone could be a kind of participation in a passive way.

The aim of the classroom observations was to double-check the teachers' responses to the questionnaire as it was believed that the teaching skills considered more significant in the questionnaire should be found more frequently in the teaching behaviors of the teachers in the classrooms. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), observations can yield depth and/or breadth, enhance consistency and validity when added onto other research. Hence, they are another method of data collection which helps triangulate the data collected from the questionnaires and the interviews.

Two classroom observations, each of which lasted about 30 minutes, were arranged for each of the teachers. The observations were scheduled in two consecutive weeks so as to avoid clashes with the school's test week. The limited number of classroom observations might have affected the analysis of the study and also the conclusions drawn from the analysis in the way that the data might not be sufficient enough to be representative. More classroom observations would have been arranged if the school schedule had allowed. Though there is never a perfect number, a prolonged engagement certainly helps guard against misinformation or distortion and identifies inconsistencies, not to mention that it enables the researcher to establish relationships to reduce the influence of his/her presence (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

During the observations, the researcher not only checked the behaviours of the teachers against the teachers' self-evaluation in the questionnaire but also took notes. All the lessons were video-recorded with the help of a technician. In order to help maximise the trustworthiness of the data collected from the class observations, recordings of the observations were watched repeatedly by the original observer as well as a second observer who was a qualified and experienced English teacher. The two sets of results would then be compared. (Refer to Appendices X, XI & XII for tapescripts)

3.4 Participants

Through the Chairperson of the English Department of the school involved, three Form 3 English teachers were approached and invited informally for taking part in the present study. Upon their agreement, a written request was sent to the Principal (Appendix III) for approval and three groups of students, with a total number of 106, together with their English teachers were formally invited to participate in the project.

3.4.1 Students

There were 51 boys and 55 girls. They were all Chinese, studying in the junior secondary level (Form 3) with an average age of 14. They came from three of the five Form 3 classes which had similar academic standard. They were labelled Form 3A, 3B and 3C. Details about the participating students are given in the following table.

Table 3.1 Demographic information about the participating students

Class	Number of Students	Gender (M for Male, F for Female)	Age Range	Nationality
3A	30	14 (M), 16 (F)	13-15	Chinese
3B	39	21 (M), 18 (F)		
3C	37	16 (M), 21 (F)		

The present study adopted the criterion sampling for selecting the participating students in order to satisfy the criterion that the participants got little, if any, experience of learning in institutions other than typical secondary schools, e.g. private tutorial schools. Students of senior forms, like Form 4 and 5 classes were not chosen due to the fact that most of them might have got experiences of studying in the private tutorial schools. Their perceptions of “effective teaching” might not be focused on the

formal teaching in secondary schools. Junior secondary classes were chosen instead. It was assumed that they had not got any exposure to other teaching apart from the one in their school and so their perceptions of “effective teaching” were presumed to be “pure” and not “contaminated” yet. Form 3 classes were chosen instead of Form 1 or 2 because it was believed that students of Form 3 were better able to express themselves and their opinions collected would be more valid. Due to the time constraint, only three out of five Form 3 classes were involved. One of the remaining two classes which did not take part in the study was invited to participate in the pilot study.

3.4.2 Teachers

The three participating teachers were Ms A, B and C who were the English teachers of Form 3A, 3B and 3C respectively. They were all qualified English teachers. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 to 7 years, with a range of 3.5 to 6 years in the present school. They taught the same class for at least two years. Details about each of the participating teachers are given in the following table.

Table 3.2 Demographic information about the participating teachers

Teacher	Gender	Qualifications	Overall years of teaching experience	Number of years at the present school	Number of years teaching the same class
A	Female	Degree in Education with English as the main elective	5.5	5	2
B	Female	Degree in Translation, Postgraduate Diploma in Education	7	6	2
C	Female	Degree in Translation, Postgraduate Diploma in Education	4	3.5	3

3.5 Procedures

There are totally three main phases in the present study, Phase 1, 2 and 3.

3.5.1 Phase 1

At Phase 1, five students in each of the three classes were invited for a semi-structured interview where they were asked for their views on “good teaching”. The whole interview was audio-taped. Students were asked questions like the following:

- Can you recall the content of the English lessons you have recently had?

- Can you describe anything that happened in any of these lessons that helped you understand the content of the lesson?
- Was there anything the teacher did that was of particular help to you in the lessons?

The English teachers of the students were also invited for another semi-structured interview where they were asked similar questions as follows:

- Can you recall the content of the English lessons you have recently had?
- Can you describe any episode during one of these lessons that you think went well from a teaching point of view?
- Was there anything you did that you think helped to make the lessons go well?

Based on the input collected from the interviews, a list of the features of a good English teacher was prepared. The list was then compared to the one of Hay Mcber Report (2000). It was found that the forty teaching skills of the Report (Hay Mcber, 2000) covered all the points mentioned at the interviews. Hence, the forty teaching skills formed the main part of a questionnaire to be used at Phase 2.

3.5.2 Phase 2

At Phase 2, students of all the three groups were given a bilingual version of the questionnaire (Appendix II) prepared at Phase 1 to fill in without the researcher's presence in their classrooms while their English teachers were given an English version (Appendix I) of the same questionnaire to complete in the staff room. A time which did not interfere with normal class proceedings was selected to administer the questionnaire.

All of them were required to do two tasks. First, they were required to rank the importance of forty teaching traits with a three-point scale, using a scale of 1 to 3 where "1" indicates "not very important", "2" indicates "important but not essential" and "3" indicates "absolutely essential". They might add their own items. Based on the same list given, students were also required to evaluate the teaching performance of their teacher and teachers to evaluate their own teaching. All the questionnaires were collected and analysed, using statistical measurements. Two sets of the significant aspects of teaching were then ready. One set of the criteria came from the students and the other from the teachers. Several open-ended questions were also asked to collect additional opinions from the participants. The information collected at this stage provided a platform of discussion at the next phase.

3.5.3 Phase 3

At Phase 3, a focus group interview was conducted with the students in one of the classrooms in the school. Fifteen students, including five students from each of the classes, participated voluntarily in the interview. It was convened to discuss what constituted good teaching in order to gain more insights into the data collected at Phase 2 in the presence of the researcher as the moderator. In order to make sure that the students would be able to express what they thought, Cantonese which was their mother tongue was used in the interview. The whole interview which lasted about one hour was both audio-taped and video-taped. It was then translated and transcribed based on the process described in Section 3.3.2.

At the same phase, individual interviews which lasted half an hour were conducted with the three teachers separately. Moreover, two classroom observations, each of which lasted about 30 minutes, were arranged for each of the teachers so that the researcher could check on the performance of the teachers against their responses to the questionnaire. A brief talk which lasted about 15 minutes was conducted right after each observation to let the teachers recall which parts of the lessons they found effective. The lessons observed were video-taped whereas the interviews were audio-taped. Since English was the exclusive language used in the interviews, the

conversations with the teachers were transcribed only, without translation. The following table summarises the work done at various phases.

Table 3.3 Procedures of the study at different phases

Date	Phase	Work done
Early October 2008	Pre-Phase 1	• Paying informal visits to the school
	Phase 1	• Talking with five Form 3 students and their English teachers separately to gather their opinions on the features of a good English teacher • Devising a questionnaire from Hay Mcber Report (2000)
Mid October 2008	Pre-phase 2	• Conducting a pilot study
	Phase 2	• Inviting students of three Form 3 classes together with their English teachers to complete the questionnaire prepared at Phase 1
Late October 2008	Pre-phase 3	• Conducting pilot interviews
	Phase 3	• Conducting a focus group interview with fifteen students • Conducting individual interviews with three teachers separately • Arranging classroom observations for teachers and conducting post-lesson talks

A pilot study was conducted before the main study was administrated in Phase 2 based on the belief that the questionnaire used in the second phase of the study could be improved by careful planning. The procedures of the pilot study were listed as follows:

Table 3.4 Procedures of the pilot study at pre-phase 2

Date	Phase	Work done
Mid October 2008	Pre-Phase 2	Identify pilot participants ↓ Send out invitation letter ↓ Fix date, time and place for the pilot study ↓ Administer the pilot study ↓ Note the problems while making clarifications or/and giving explanations to the student participants ↓ Collect feedback from the teacher participant ↓ Modify the questionnaire

Since the basic criterion for selecting pilot participants was that the participants should be members of the relevant population, the pilot participants were chosen from the remaining two Form 3 classes which did not take part in the main study. To save time and administrative support, only five students and one teacher were chosen and their participation was voluntary. These pilot participants would not take part in the main study. It was because they had already filled in the questionnaire and they would

have attempted the task twice, unlike the other participants if they were involved in the main study. To ensure that all the student participants had never read and filled in the questionnaire, the pilot participants would not take part in the main study. Another reason why the pilot participants were not involved in the main study was that the pilot study aimed to “pre-test” or “try out” the questionnaire, it was not necessary to include the data collected.

Although the participation was voluntary, an invitation letter was sent out to the pilot participants for obtaining their consent. They had the right to decline the invitation before the pilot study was conducted. A date was fixed once all the letters had been returned. A time which did not clash with their classes was chosen and a classroom was arranged for conducting the pilot study.

The pilot study was conducted in the same way as it would be conducted in the main study, except that the researcher would administer the pilot study whereas the class tutors of the three classes would administer the main study. It was mainly because the researcher was required to make clarifications or/ and give explanations to the pilot student participants. When the main study was being conducted, the researcher would not be present so as to eliminate her effect on the data collected.

During the course of the pilot study, all the clarifications made and explanations given were noted for the purpose of evaluating the questionnaire. The time used to spend on completing the questionnaire was also recorded so as to estimate the time required to complete the main study. Feedback from the teacher participant was collected after the pilot study with the students was finished.

Three main amendments were made to modify the questionnaire. Concerning the instructions, some words were put in italics in the first part of the questionnaire as some of the student participants found them difficult to follow if they were not. The words included: *"not very important', "important but not essential" and "absolutely essential"*. In the second part, "how you feel about your English lessons" were used to replace "how you evaluate your English lessons" after the teacher participant expressed that she did not feel very comfortable with the word, "evaluate". Concerning the aspects of teaching, some very minor amendments were made to the Chinese translation to improve the comprehension of the statements to the student participants. There were also some spelling errors, like "own" in #6.

After the modifications were made, the questionnaire was improved in the sense that it was easier to comprehend. Consequently, the participants in the main study would

be more likely to rank the aspects of teaching accurately. This was important as the interview in the following phase was based on the ranking of the teaching aspects. If the information collected from the questionnaire was not accurate, conducting interviews at the following stage would be meaningless. In that case, the underlying beliefs of the participants could not be identified as far as their responses to the questionnaire were concerned.

One more modification concerning the data-collecting routine was made. Instead of asking the students to pass the questionnaire to the teacher through their classmates, it was proposed that the questionnaires would be collected by the class tutor from individual students. It was because the participants were not very willing to pass on their questionnaires to other participants according to the observation in the pilot study.

It was true that pilot studies could not guarantee success in the main study but it was believed that they could help increase the likelihood. A little time invested on the pilot study should pay off in terms of the main study being well thought through.

The following table shows the procedures of the pilot interviews conducted before the

main individual interviews with the teacher participants and the focus group interview with the student participants in Phase 3.

Table 3.5 Procedures of the pilot interviews at pre-phase 3

Date	Phase	Work done
Late October 2008	Pre-Phase 3	● Conduct a pilot interview with the pilot teacher participant ● Conduct a pilot focus group interview with the five pilot student participants

Pilot interviews were held, one with the pilot teacher participant and one with the five pilot student participants. The main aim of the pilot interviews was to give the researcher practice in the research process since the researcher was not a professional interviewer or a professional moderator. The interviewing skills of the researcher were significant not only in motivating the participants to talk but also in eliciting the participants' authentic thoughts and concerns. The researcher would practise to be a facilitator, with the "informant style", meaning allowing a free flow of the interview unless the interview got unfocussed. She would try to be objective and distant on the one hand but offer empathy and positive regards on the other hand. The pilot interviews also enabled the researcher to find out if the questions she asked were capable of eliciting the data she intended to collect. If not, amendments were made and amended questions would be asked in the main interviews. Moreover, the researcher would not have to refer to the pre-established list of questions in the main

interviews if she was familiar with them after practice in the pilot interviews. This could enable her to adopt a more relaxed approach in the interview which in turn, would help elicit the data she intended to collect.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed by different means which will be explained below.

3.6.1 Quantitative data

The quantitative data collected from the study was analysed with the help of statistical instruments so as to work out the mean scores of each of the teaching skills for the students' group and the teachers' group. Comparisons could then be made between the lists of effective teaching skills of the teachers and the students.

To identify some number of distinguishable groups or clusters out of the 106 students, hierarchical cluster analysis, one of the most common clustering methods used in research of social sciences, was employed in this study. According to McNabb (1983), cluster analysis is "a generic label for a number of statistical processes used to group objects, people, variables, or concepts into more or less homogeneous groups on the basis of their similarities" (p.333). Thus, cluster analysis should be able to group the

participants of the present study into a number of clusters based on the level of similarity of their views on good teaching.

3.6.2 Qualitative data

The data collected from the interviews was dealt with qualitatively. Basically, the analysis consisted of the three activities described by Miles and Huberman (1994). They were data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/ verification which were supposed to occur concurrently. The analysing process started with transcribing the recordings, which was then followed by summarising salient findings. Reference was also made to the representative quotations from the tapescripts. Selection of quotations from the interviews was mainly based on the principle of relevance. Below is an example showing how a quotation is selected due to its relevance to the question addressed.

Researcher:	*Why do we need a teacher, then?*
Student 3:	*It's easy for me to memorise things if there's interaction between the teacher and the students.*
Researcher:	*(facing Student 4) You agree?*
Student 4:	*When we interact with the teachers, we don't need to learn by rote, especially for students with learning difficulties.*

In the above example, the quotation of Student 3 was noted as it was directly related to the question asked by the researcher. Additional information given by Student 4

would also be included.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues like privacy, confidentiality or anonymity were considered throughout the whole study. Consent was obtained from all the participants who were willing to share their views on the topic. They all had the right to freely decide whether to take part in the study and the right to withdraw at any time without punishment. They were all assured that the information they gave would be kept confidential and also would only be used for the present study. All tapes and transcripts of the interviews were retained by the researcher so that its circulation was limited and no third parties would get access to the information acquired.

Before starting interviews, all participants were informed of the purpose and uses of the meeting. When recording equipment was used, they were acknowledged with its presence. Students were also encouraged to keep what they heard during the focus group interview confidential. When reporting data, individual students were numbered and pseudonyms (A, B, C) were given for individual teachers so that no information would be given concerning which individual provided which data.

All in all, the basic ethical principle was that no participants would be abused and exploited, especially those vulnerable groups, like students who were involved in the study. Their voices were listened to and their contributions were recognised, as the teacher participants'.

3.8 Limitations

No study is perfect. The present study was no exception, it was not without flaws. First of all, recording in the interviews or classroom observations sometimes was difficult because participants sometimes interrupted one another and talked over each other. Second of all, the small number of participants significantly limited the generalisation of the data to a larger population. Luckily, the aim of the study was not to generalise the data collected but to elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes, and ideas of the respondents. As Brotherson (1994) states,

> qualitative research does not have a goal of 'truth statements', but rather descriptions of patterns present in the data so that other investigators could make decisions about the 'fit' or match of those patterns to other contexts (p.115).

If generalisation is to be made, the rationale about generalisation resulting from multiple case studies may apply to the use of multiple focus groups (Yin, 1989). What it means is generalisation is still possible to attain by conducting multiple focus groups on the same findings even if it may not be the goal of the study. In addition,

the analysing process was complex and time-consuming due to the open-ended nature of the data collected. It took an extensive amount of time to transcribe the data. Although some key findings were apparent, some of the more subtle findings took more time and required extensive examination of the data. The job of interpreting written data was also demanding as there was a potential for inaccuracy. Last but not least, time constraint was always a problem and there was always a non-exhaustive collection of data. If time allowed, all classes of the same form could have taken part in the study or even students of various forms so that a more comprehensive picture could have been gained for the school's perceptions of "effective teaching". If time allowed, more focus group interviews could have been arranged and so more students could have participated. If time allowed, more classroom observations and longer interviews with the teachers could have been arranged.

This chapter has described the research methodology of the study including the paradigm and the method together with the approach of the study. It has also detailed the methods of data collection and the participants. In addition, it has explained the procedures of the study and the analysis tools. Finally, the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study have been discussed. In the following chapter, there will be a report and a discussion on the findings of the present study.

Endnote

School banding is a means of academic grouping in Hong Kong, categorising students based on their school's previous academic achievement. Band 1 denotes higher academic ability, Band 2 middle academic ability and Band 3 lower academic ability.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

This chapter reports the findings of the present study which explores the students' and the teachers' perceptions of "effective teaching" in Hong Kong. A detailed discussion on the findings will follow.

The main research question of the study is: Do the concepts of effective aspects of teaching differ for students and teachers in Hong Kong? Based on the findings obtained, the question will be answered by responding to the following three specific research questions:

1. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the students?
2. What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the teachers?
3. To what extent do Hong Kong students and teachers agree on what they see as the most effective aspects of teaching?

110 questionnaires were distributed to the student participants and 3 to the teacher participants for completion. The teachers' questionnaire (Appendix I) was an English one whereas the students' (Appendix II) was a bilingual one. All the questionnaires returned except four of the students' questionnaires because the four students were either absent or not available on the day when the questionnaires were administered. Of those 106 returned students' questionnaires, one of them was not complete. It was

found that aspects of teaching from #12 to #29 were not circled. The student might have missed the whole second page. Other than that, the remaining data of the questionnaire was all included in the final analysis.

The first parts of the questionnaires asked the participants to rank the importance of forty teaching traits with a three-point scale ranging from 1 to 3 where “1” indicates “not very important”, “2” “important but not essential” and “3” “absolutely essential”. They might add their own items. The quantitative data was then statistically processed to work out the mean scores of each aspect of teaching for both the students and the teachers. Two sets of criteria then came up, one from the students and the other from the teachers. Cluster analysis was also conducted for the 106 participating students to examine the variation among them. The second part of the students’ questionnaire was an evaluation of their English teacher’s performance whereas the second part of the teachers’ was a self-evaluation of their own teaching performance.

To gain more insights into the data collected from the questionnaires, a focus group interview which lasted about 60 minutes was conducted with students. 15 students from three Form 3 classes took part in the interview voluntarily. For each of the teachers, an individual interview and two classroom observations followed by

post-lesson talks were arranged. Each of the interviews lasted about 30 minutes. Each of the classroom observations also lasted about 30 minutes and each of the post-lesson talks lasted about 15 minutes. After translating the script of the students' interview from Cantonese to English, both the scripts of the students and those of the teachers were transcribed. Two researchers were involved in the translation and transcription processes, as described in Chapter 3.

Looking back, the present research was not finished without difficulties. First of all, the survey had been cancelled once due to an urgent school event upon the researcher's arrival. Furthermore, some of the students were absent from the survey as they were required to take part in a school club activity. Because of the same reason, the students' focus group interview could not last long. Teachers who participated in the study were also found too busy to afford a longer conversation with the researcher.

In the following sections, the students' findings will be reported first, followed by the teachers' before their findings are compared. Finally, there will be a detailed discussion on the salient findings of the study. It has to be noted that findings of this study must be handled with cautions as they cannot claim to be a representative sampling of relevant research. However, they do report the experiences of 106

students and 3 teachers of the study, collecting their opinions on “effective teaching”.

4.1 Findings

The ranking of the effective aspects of teaching given by the students and that given by the teachers will be reported before their rankings are compared.

4.1.1 What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the students?

Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 show the “most” and the “least” effective aspects of teaching respectively ranked by the students. The number with “#” shows the aspect number listed in the questionnaire whereas the number in “( )” indicates the mean score of the aspect, with a continuum from “1” indicating “not very important”, to “2” “important but not essential” and “3” “absolutely essential”.

- **Aspects of teaching considered “most” effective by the students**

The following table (Table 4.1) lists the aspects of teaching which received at least 2.5 for their mean scores from the students.

Table 4.1 Mean Scores from Part I of Students' Questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?) - The "most" effective aspects of teaching listed by students

#17	Teachers give clear instructions and explanations.	(2.70)
#23	Teachers treat students fairly.	(2.63)
#5	Teachers use various strategies to motivate students.	(2.60)
#9	Teachers have necessary materials and resources ready for the class.	(2.58)
#13	Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods.	(2.56)
#28	Teachers use an appropriate pace.	(2.56)
#35	Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up.	(2.56)
#27	Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning.	(2.55)
#12	Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson.	(2.54)
#18	Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement.	(2.53)
#20	Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson.	(2.52)
#30	Teachers focus on understanding and meaning.	(2.51)

Referring to the report of Hay McBer (2000), the forty teaching traits are under seven categories including High Expectations, Planning, Methods and Strategies, Pupil Management/Discipline, Time & Resource Management, Assessment and Homework. It was shown from Table 4.1 that most of the "most" effective aspects of teaching listed by the participating students fell into the category of Methods and Strategies, including aspects #12, #13, #17 and #18.

Students overwhelmingly believed that giving clear instructions and explanations (#17) was an extremely essential aspect of an effective teacher. During the focus group interview, they spent quite a lot of time discussing the role Cantonese, their mother

tongue, played in the English lessons. The students' views varied. Some of them thought that their development of various language skills would be hampered if the English teacher used Cantonese in the class whereas some thought that they would understand the lesson more if the teacher gave explanations in Cantonese. One of them simply pointed out that he just wanted to hear more English and learn more vocabulary items. As he said,

> *If the teacher uses all English, we will know the way we should speak English, we can also learn more vocabulary from the teacher.* (Student 2)

They all seemed to view their English teacher as a model, an example of good English from whom they could learn a lot. One student simply said,

> *I think teachers are our examples. We follow what they say or do. If they have made a pronunciation mistake or a grammatical mistake, we will make the mistake, too*. (Student 3)

Another one also said,

> *If the teacher speaks Hong Kong English, students will follow and foreigners will not understand.* (Student 4)

One student admitted that she was not a student with self-discipline and

> *had to be exposed to English by force*. (Student 1)

She went on to explain that

> *that is how we learn the language.* (Student 1)

She also said that

> *teachers would spoil their students if they did not use English exclusively in the lesson*. (Student 1)

On the contrary, one student pointed out that it was necessary for English teachers to use Cantonese so as to meet the needs of students with various English standards. He

observed that weaker students found it hard to follow in the class if the English teacher solely used English. He said,

> *if the teacher starts with all English, weaker students will find it hard to follow so even just a little bit of [Cantonese] is good.* (Student 5)

One student even took learning Chinese with English as an example to justify the use of the learners' first language in learning a foreign language. He said,

> *… just like foreigners, when they learn Cantonese, there's some English, they won't start with Cantonese straight away so I think we need some Cantonese when learning English. Otherwise, students will find learning not interesting*. (Student 7)

A girl tried to end the debate by suggesting that teachers should start explanations with simple English and use Cantonese as the last resort to ensure students' understanding. As she said,

> *teachers should use simple English to explain first. If students still can't understand the word, the teacher will then use Cantonese. Students should try English first, Cantonese should be used when students really can't understand the language.* (Student 6)

All students at the focus group interview supported the second most effective aspect of teaching ranked in the questionnaire. That was "teachers should treat students fairly" (#23). They explained that being fair to students meant showing respect to students. This seemed to be similar to one of the effective aspects of teaching mentioned in the study of Cooper and McIntyre (1996) that teachers should provide "supportive social context to help pupils feel accepted, cared for and valued" (p.158).

Students added that they would not pay much respect to an authoritarian teacher. This aspect seemed to be related to the teacher's personality rather than to the teaching performance of the teacher. Other "non-teaching" characteristics mentioned by the students in the questionnaire included being *"friendly", "approachable", "caring", "sincere", "helpful" and "kind"*. All these ideas looked like the "individual rapport" in the study of Schonwetter et al (2006), reported earlier. Their emphasis on the teachers' interpersonal and affective side also seemed to echo with the results of Boag (1989). During the interview, students also mentioned *"responsible"* and explained *"being honest"* listed in the questionnaire was something related to "teaching with a heart" which appeared to mean "enthusiasm for teaching" in the study of Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) as well as the study of Schonwetter et al (2006). An example was given by a student at the interview:

> …… *when students make mistakes, teachers should keep explaining until students fully understand.* (Student 11)

In other words, according to the students, teachers should be patient when teaching their students and the patience came from their enthusiasm for teaching or the responsibility they held for their students. This could be what "high levels of passion for teaching" referred to in the studies of Hattie & Clinton (2008) and Smith, Baker, Hattie, & Bond (2008) reviewed in Chapter 2. To them, some of the characteristics of an effective teacher looked similar across subjects. No matter what subjects the

teacher taught, these students believed that there were some common characteristics related to the teacher's personality that made him/ her effective.

During the interview, when the issue of "professionalism" was brought up, students all stressed the importance of an effective teacher to behave well outside the classroom. They all seemed to have very high expectations for their teachers' behaviour. Besides "*honesty*" mentioned previously, some comments collected from the students' focus group interview included:

> *……a good teacher should not only teach at school…they should behave themselves… don't let student see them do something wrong.* (Student 10)

One of them gave a specific example that teachers "*should not use foul language*". In other words, students seemed to have some strict codes of behaviour for the teachers and teachers were expected to have a strong moral responsibility to guide their students on the right path. This idea appeared to be very much the same as "ethicalness" mentioned in the study of Aagaard and Skidmore (2002).

69 out of 106 students agreed that it was absolutely essential for teachers to use various strategies to motivate students (#5). To motivate students to learn English, students first pointed out that the teachers themselves should be interested in the target language. As one of them voiced out,

> *if the teacher has no interest in learning English, he or she can't encourage [us] to learn English*. (Student 9)

This point was missing from the previous studies reported in the literature review. Students added that they could tell whether the teacher was really interested in the subject. They said teachers would be "*very absorbed in their work"* if they were really interested in the subject. One of them also said that English teachers who were interested in the subject would use English all the time.

They also listed a number of ways which teachers could use to motivate them to learn English, e.g. *teaching daily-life English other than textbooks*. They also said that they could learn more from an interactive English lesson than a lesson which focused on rote learning. As one of them said,

> *it's easy for me to memorise things if there's interaction between teacher and students*. (Student 12)

Others agreed and even pointed out that interactive lessons would benefit students with learning difficulties more as they did not need to learn by rote.

During the interview, they repeatedly stressed the important role played by the teachers. However, they could also see the importance of independent learning. When asked why independent learning was so important, one of them clearly explained:

> *…in daily life, we can get more exposure to English, e.g. reading newspaper.* (Student 2)

This student went on to say that

> *[we] should not rely on the time in the class only as there's only 1.5 hours per day but the rest of the day, it's all Cantonese, it's easy to forget what's learnt in the English lessons*. (Student 2)

Students said at the interview that they would try to learn English on their own because of their teachers' encouragement other than their own interest. They added that they would seek their teachers' help when they got problems with their self-learning. They also mentioned that good teachers should sacrifice their own time to help students, like helping students with their homework on the phone or via SMS/ emails. They all seemed to be aware of the accessibility of high technology. However, they did not really make best use of the technology. It was because when asked whether or not they would use English when sending messages to their English teachers, one of the students replied:

> *I'd better not answer this question.* (Student 14)

This seemed to indicate that the student would not use English when communicating with his English teachers. When asked if they often learned the language on their own, they just laughed and did not give any verbal responses. Therefore, they might not take the initiative to learn English even if they all agreed that it was their responsibility to take charge of their own learning.

"Teachers should have necessary materials and resources ready for the class" (#9) was

ranked the fourth in the list. Referring to the materials and resources ready for the class, they elaborated that the teacher should know the standard and the needs of the students. One of the students explained,

> *if the student's standard is relatively low, and the teacher teaches something too challenging, then the student's foundation will not be strong and how can he or she learn? If the student's standard is high but the teacher has given him or her something easy, that will also affect the student's study*. (Student 7)

However, they did not go further to request their teachers to take individual differences into consideration when preparing materials and resources.

Other aspects of teaching found in the students' list included "Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up" (#35). At the interview, students did not particularly discuss any misconceptions they had had before. Instead, they brought up the importance of a good discipline in the lessons. One of them said,

> *if one student is sleeping and the teacher doesn't say anything, other students will follow suit*. (Student 1)

Consequently, it was important for teachers to be alert and watch what students were doing in the class. Another one added that

> *if the discipline is poor…students cannot learn well even if they want to….* (Student 13)

Their concern about the classroom management seemed to agree with the finding of the study of Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) who found classroom and behaviour management one of the themes of teacher effectiveness.

“Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students’ learning” (#27) was another aspect of teaching listed in the students’ “most” effective list. This aspect could be related to the “pedagogy” which was mentioned in the study of Morgan and Morris (1999) reviewed in Chapter 2. One further point made by the students was that the teacher should always keep themselves updated with various teaching methods. It was elaborated by one of the students in the focus group interview:

> *if the teacher uses the same teaching method all the time, he or she may not catch up with the updated methods to cater the different needs of the students and the students will not like it*. (Student 12)

“Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods” (#13) was also on the list. When asked what kinds of activities or learning methods they preferred in the English lessons, they all mentioned “*small group discussions”*, “*competitions”*, “*movies”* and *“songs”*. One of them even raised, “*learning outside classrooms”* or “*experiential learning*”. All these coincided with the points they made when they revealed that they could learn more from interactive lessons and lessons about daily life. As one student stressed,

> *when we interact with the teacher, we don’t need to learn by rote.* (Student 3)

This “interaction” idea was also valued by the students in the study of Schonwetter et al (2006). It was quite surprising to find that these students seemed to have a clear understanding of what “interaction” meant. They seemed to understand that

interaction was a two-way communication instead of a one-way communication from the teacher to the students. It was possible that they had been exposed to the term and the concept before from their teachers.

During the interview, students added a lot of examples about how teachers could provide students with opportunities to enhance students learning, e.g. *interviewing foreigners or debating or participating in Speech Festival and Choral Speaking*. Their responses were all positive when asked if they were willing to join the activities.

For "Teachers use an appropriate pace" (#28) which they ranked the sixth in the list, they expressed their concern about the time management of their teachers. Besides, they emphasised the importance of a relaxing environment for learning a foreign language. According to the students, other than making jokes, one way to create a relaxing environment was to avoid assigning too much homework and not conducting too many quizzes. One of the students revealed his anxiety of tests:

> *The most important thing is not too many tests, today, there's a test, the next day, there's another test, … tests make me nervous*. (Student 7)

Another student added that tests would make the atmosphere of the classroom tense,

> *I'll be too scared to even speak up…[if the classroom atmosphere was tense]*. (Student 15)

At the interview, students also discussed the benefits of both positive and negative reinforcement. For positive reinforcement, they found a small gift a very effective reinforcer and for negative reinforcement or punishment, they still found it helpful in their learning, depending on the nature and the frequency of the mistakes. The idea of reinforcement was seldom mentioned in the previous studies reported in Chapter 2. This could be because of the traditional Chinese culture that children will be rewarded when they are good but will be punished when they are bad.

Also found in the students' list were "Teachers involve all the students in the lesson (#12)", "Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement" (#18), "Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson" (#20) and "Teachers focus on understanding and meaning" (#30).

During the interview, students had a discussion on whether or not qualifications could tell how well a teacher knew about the subject knowledge. One student expressed her opinions and commented that,

> *… some people may get to the university with a minimum requirement and they still may not be good at the language….* (Student 10)

In contrast, another student pointed out that

> *but… Principal will not employ people who can teach well but haven't got a degree….[because]Principals may not be confident in these people.* (Student 1)

Nevertheless, one student argued that qualification could be an indicator of the teachers' subject knowledge and believed that a degree should be a basic requirement of a teacher. As he said,

> *… qualification … may not guarantee but at least it can be an indicator.* (Student 8)

Unlike the findings in the study of Yoder (1992) or the study of Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) mentioned in Chapter 2, the students in Hong Kong did not seem to value the subject knowledge of their teachers much. As one student pointed out that

> *… qualification can only prove his or her English standard….* (Student 6)

Another student also said,

> *… a dumb person may not be a good teacher but he or she may be good at the subject.* (Student 12)

This could imply that the students knew that there was something else a good teacher required other than the qualification or his/ her subject knowledge. One student explained,

> *the most important thing is whether the teacher can teach students to learn*. (Student 5)

Another one added,

> *… how much you've [i.e. the teacher] learnt is one thing, whether or not you can apply what you've learnt to help students learn is the other thing*. (Student 13)

To them, teacher's subject knowledge was not as important as how the subject

knowledge was passed on to them. This idea was close to that of Shulman (1986b) who believes that teachers are required to possess “pedagogic knowledge” besides the subject matter knowledge and curricular knowledge because they need the understanding of the subject knowledge before passing the knowledge to their students.

The findings reported above were found consistent with the responses students gave to the open question in the first part of the questionnaire. They were invited to name the top three qualities of a good English teacher. The qualities they mentioned could be easily categorised into five areas: teachers’ subject knowledge (e.g. *high English standard, good pronunciation with suitable intonation*), teachers’ qualifications (e.g. *university graduates, studied overseas*), teachers’ personal qualities (e.g. *willing to teach, understand students and a good listener*), teachers’ teaching methods (e.g. *organise more activities, use daily-life examples*) and others (e.g. *praise students’ efforts, manage classroom well*).

In fact, not all students gave responses to the question. A total of 13 out of 106 students did not give any responses. Seven came from Class A, 2 from Class B and 3 from Class C. Those who gave responses to the question generally did not offer

detailed information. Most of them only copied from the list of the forty aspects in the questionnaire. Some of their responses were even found vague. For example, they mentioned that a good teacher should *"know English"* or *"use good teaching strategies*" or even just "*be good*". However, they did not give any specific information about what they meant by "know English" or "good".

Referring to the students' lists of the "most" effective aspects of teaching in Table 4.1, there was evidence that students preferred rather teacher-oriented lessons. They would like to have a teacher who had full control of the class, like preparing materials and resources for the class, giving instructions and explanations, using different teaching methods, providing activities, correcting mistakes, offering learning chances, involving all students and keeping students on task. In short, they preferred a strong teacher role. This seemed to contradict with the findings of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2, like the study of Aagaard and Skidmore (2002) or the local study conducted by Littlewood and Liu in 1996. The students' wish for a full-control teacher is further illustrated in Table 4.2 below.

- **Aspects of teaching considered "least" effective by the students**

The following table (Table 4.2) lists the aspects of teaching which received 2.3 or less

than 2.3 as their mean scores from the students.

Table 4.2 Mean Scores from Part I of Students' Questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?) - The "least" effective aspects of teaching listed by students

#31	Teachers focus on factual memory.	(1.60)
#8	Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students.	(1.82)
#40	Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework.	(1.91)
#24	Teachers work well with other members of staff.	(2.16)
#10	Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum.	(2.20)
#11	Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson.	(2.20)
#6	Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.	(2.23)
#34	Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding.	(2.24)
#2	Teachers encourage high standard of accuracy.	(2.25)
#7	Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson.	(2.28)
#3	Teachers encourage high standards of presentation.	(2.30)

Referring to the seven categories of the forty teaching traits listed in the report of Hay McBer (2000), most of the "least" effective aspects of teaching listed by the participating students fell into the category of High Expectations, including #2, #3, #6 and #7. It could be because students preferred more "lenient" teachers who did not expect too much from them. They might think that they would get a better chance to have a pass in that case.

From Table 4.2, it was easily found that students did not require their teachers to discuss the teaching plan with them (#8), nor did they require their teachers to explain the learning objectives they would gain from the homework (#40). They seemed to believe that if the teacher was in control, he or she did not have to share his/ her plans or objectives with them. Probably due to the same reason, they did not care if the teacher would review what had been learnt at the end of the lesson (#11) or if teachers would link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum (#10) or if the teacher would draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson (#7).

All these items seemed to be concerned with the "meta-learning" mentioned in Section 2.2. They showed that the participating students were not very much willing to reflect on their learning approach or the nature of the learning task set. This finding did not seem to agree with some of the identified effective aspects of teaching listed by Cooper and McIntyre (1996, p.158) including "clear goals for pupil learning, clarity of communication of lesson goals and agenda to pupil, use of preview and review of lesson content, helping pupils to contextualise content in terms of other teaching goals and learning experiences", not to mention "some willingness to allow pupils to have input into goal and agenda setting".

With their trust on the teachers, the students of the study were not eager to be in charge of their own learning. It would not really bother them if their teachers did not allow them to have a say in their own learning (#6). This lack of student-centreness could also be due to the authoritarian image of their teachers. This finding again did not agree with the one found in Cooper and McIntyre (1996), probably due to cultural differences. It is generally agreed that Chinese students tend to be shy and passive, like the “silent Chinese student” phenomenon of Hwang et al (2002) mentioned in Chapter 2. Normally, they will sit quietly in the classroom and receive what their teachers feed them instead of challenging the decisions made by their teachers. This so-called “spoon-feeding” education requires the “obedience” which is highly recognised in a Chinese society, like Hong Kong. Unlike the English students studied by Cooper and McIntyre (1996), the students of the present study did not really mind whether their teachers “shared power” with them. Based on the same mindset, the participating students found “Teachers encourage high standards of presentation” (#3) not very essential. They might think that it was not their job to present ideas in the class and so it was not necessary for their teachers to encourage them to give presentations of high standard.

Students’ less emphasis on “Teachers encourage high standard of accuracy” (#2)

suggested that students preferred a teacher who did not have high expectations from them even if they had high expectations from their teachers. As explained previously, this might be because they would like their teachers to be lenient enough to give them a pass. If their teachers encouraged or expected high standard of accuracy from their work, they might worry that they would easily fail in their assessments.

Furthermore, since the students did not think that teachers should link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum (#10), they might probably not value the relationship between individual lesson and other English lessons or lessons of other subjects. As a result, they might treat English as a subject rather than as a medium of instruction.

Referring to “Teachers focus on understanding and meaning” (#30) in Table 4.1, it was not difficult to understand why “Teachers focus on factual memory” (#31) was ranked the first in the “least” effective list in Table 4.2. The data collected from the questionnaire was found consistent with that from the interview. Students in the focus group interview repeatedly expressed that they did not like rote learning. What mattered to them seemed to be comprehension, not memorising without understanding.

According to Table 4.2, students generally did not find teachers' use of tests, competitions, etc in assessing understanding (#34) effective. A few students repeatedly mentioned in the focus group interviews that tests made them nervous and that if the classroom atmosphere was tense, they could not get concentrated. However, one of them opposed to their opinions and stressed the importance of tests. This student said,

> *but…if there's only one single test, you won't get a second chance if you fail.* (Student 4)

For competitions, they seemed to prefer using them for making the lessons interesting instead of checking comprehension. As reported before, one of the activities they preferred in the class was competitions. Unlike some of the findings in the study of Irving (2004) or Pressley et al (2007), students of the present study did not really like challenges and they did not prefer assignments which were demanding.

The reason why "Teachers work well with other members of staff" (#24) was ranked quite high in the students' list of the "least" effective aspects of teaching could be because students focused a lot on their teachers and themselves. They considered their learning with the teachers a personal process and so did not think that it was absolutely essential for their teachers to work well with other members of staff. They did not seem to be aware of the significance of the support system offered by people

other than their teachers.

- **Variations among students**

In order to identify the variations among the participating students, cluster analysis was conducted. The analysis results were based on the ranking obtained from the first part of the students' questionnaire. Students were grouped based on the similarities of their responses to the forty aspects of teaching.

Referring to the dendrogram produced by the hierarchical cluster analysis with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), two groups of variables (clusters) were identified. 102 out of 106 cases/ students belonged to the first cluster; and the remaining 4 cases/ students (i.e. student # 23, 44, 46 and 55) belonged to the second cluster. According to the analysis results, it was found that over half of the scores of each student in Cluster 2 given to the forty aspects of teaching were "1", indicating "not very important". In contrast, around half of the scores of each student in Cluster 1 were given "2" or "3", indicating "important but not essential" or "absolutely essential" respectively. The following table (Table 4.3) summarises the results.

Table 4.3 Two clusters of students with reference to their responses to the 40 aspects of teaching

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
101	102	103	104	105	106				

Key

	Cluster 1 (students who found at least 50% of the forty aspects of teaching either "important but not essential' or "absolutely essential"
	Cluster 2 (students who found at least 50% of the forty aspects of teaching "not very important"

After examining the rankings given by the students in the second cluster, it was found that all the four students who belonged to Cluster 2 labelled at least 20 out of 40 aspects of teaching listed in the questionnaire "not very important". One of them was Student 44 (S44) who considered only two out of forty aspects of teaching "absolutely essential". Another one was Student 46 (S46) who considered only five out of forty aspects of teaching "absolutely essential". Students 23 (S23) and 55 (S55) even found none of the aspects "absolutely essential". This could mean that they might know what the most important factors were and so a thorough examination on their "absolutely essential" aspects of teaching was carried out. Table 4.4 shows the aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential" by the four students in Cluster 2.

Table 4.4 Aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential" by the four students in Cluster 2

Student Number	Aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential"
S23	Nil
S44	Teachers work well with other members of staff. (#24) Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework. (#40)
S46	Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson. (#11) Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson. (#12) Teachers focus on factual memory. (31) Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding. (#34) Teachers follow up homework previously set in the lesson. (#39)
S55	Nil

As said before, Student 23 (S23) and 55 (S55) did not find any one of the aspects given "absolutely essential". For Student #44, all the aspects of teaching he or she considered effective fell into the "least" list of all the participating students (Table 4.2) while for Student 46 (S46), four out of five aspects of teaching he or she considered effective fell into the "least" list of all the participating students (Table 4.2). In other words, while the participating students generally found that it was not that important for teachers to work well with other members of staff (#24), explain what learning objectives students would gain from homework (#40), review what students learnt at the end of the lesson (#11), involve all of the students in the lesson (#12), focus on factual memory (31), use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding (#34), and follow up homework previously set in the lesson (#39), both Students 44 (S44) and 46

(S46) found them all “absolutely essential”. This could be explained by the different values or attitudes they had from those of their 102 fellow students.

To further investigate into how these four students were different from the other 102 students, their individual responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire were thoroughly examined. It was hoped that some aspects of teaching which were more effective to them could be identified. Their personal opinions about the top qualities of a good English teacher and the effective aspects of their English lessons are listed in the following table.

Table 4.5 Responses of Cluster 2 students to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?)

Student	Top qualities of a good English teacher	Aspects of English lessons that help them learn best
S23	• explain clearly • answer students’ questions patiently • *do not over-generalise*	• *Use pictures for explanations*
S44	• read aloud in the class • make best use of English • speak fluent English • have a good learning attitude	• *copy vocabulary items to learn spelling* • use English exclusively in the lessons
S46	Nil	Nil
S55	• pass life experiences to students • study overseas or self-learn to further develop professionally	• *provide bilingual textbooks* *provide students with free dictionaries*

Note: responses in italics are not mentioned by any other students

Referring to the above table (Table 4.5), it was found that students in Cluster 2 relatively seldom mentioned the personal qualities of the teachers as the other 102 students did. While those 102 students in Cluster 1 repeatedly listed the personal qualities of a good teacher, like *responsible, enthusiastic, passionate, caring, polite, humorous, patient, helpful, fair, encouraging, organised, honest, kind, nice, approachable, and understanding,* only Student 23 (S23) in Cluster 2 mentioned *patience*. This might suggest that the four students in Cluster 2 tended to value their teachers' skills more highly than their personalities. They seemed to be more concerned with the technical issues. Their approach to learning could be more instrumental. It was very possible that they were more confident in their own learning than other student participants and so needed less personal support or reassurance from their teachers.

The instrumental focus of Cluster 2 students might explain why Student 44 (S44) recognised the importance of their teachers' relationship with other members of staff (#24). He or she might consider poor relations between staff a hindrance to effective teaching and learning. The technical focus of Cluster 2 could also be illustrated by Student 55 (S55) who mentioned some aspects of the teacher development in the questionnaire, including studying overseas or learning independently.

As discussed before, the majority of the participating students lacked the strategies of meta-learning (Watkins & Biggs, 1995). However, students in Cluster 2 seemed to be aware of these meta-learning strategies. For example, Student 44 (S44) was concerned about the reasons for doing homework instead of just doing homework without asking why (#40). Student 46 (S46) was also aware of the importance of a review at the end of the lesson. (#11) or the follow-up work of homework previously set (#39). They all seemed to be able to reflect on their learning approach or the nature of the learning task set. This suggested that members of this cluster were probably not only more confident but also more self-directed in their approach to leraning than the majority of their peers.

In terms of the three learning strategies mentioned in Chapter 2, there were reasons to believe that the four students in Cluster 2 tended to focus on the deep learning strategies which involved both the relational processes and elaborated processes. For example, Student 46 (S46) noticed the importance of an end-of-lesson review (#11) which required integration of at least two separate pieces of given knowledge, information, facts, or ideas as well as the follow-up of homework assigned (#39) which required students to go beyond the given information, knowledge, or ideas. The stress that Student 46 (S46) put on using tests or competitions to check their

understanding (#34) could further illustrate his or her focus on the deep learning strategies. For Student 44 (S44), he/she seemed to be well aware of his/her learning intention as he/she would like to understand the learning objectives behind the homework assigned to him/her. In the questionnaire of Student 23 (S23), it was said that the top qualities of a good teacher included explaining clearly, answering students' questions patiently and not over-generalising. It was also said in the questionnaire that using pictures for explanations helped him/her learn English. All these responses suggested that Student 23 (S23) tended to focus on explanations which required deep learning strategies including both relational and elaborated processes. However, it did not mean the students in Cluster 2 ignored the surface learning strategies which involved reproduction of taught materials. It was because Student 44 (S44) listed the use of reading aloud and spelling exercises in the questionnaire. Student 46 (S46) also found factual memory (#31) "absolutely essential". All these examples provided evidence to illustrate a balance of both surface and deep learning strategies.

Student 55 (S55) seemed to take one step further and focus on his/her own constructed realities, probably based on his/her surface and deep knowing. He/She did not find any one of the forty aspects of teaching "absolutely essential". He/She would

rather like his/her teachers to pass on their life experiences to him/her. His/Her request for bilingual textbooks and free dictionaries suggested that Student 55 (S55) might support individualism which is a view that knowledge and expression is personal and unique, using the term of Alexander (2003, quoted in Hattie, 2009). His/Her value might contradict with most of his/her classmates who appeared to support Community which is a view that learning and doing is collaborative in a climate of sharing and caring (Alexander, 2003, quoted in Hattie, 2009). His/Her value might also contradict with some of his/her classmates who tended to support Collectivism which means learning together rather than in small groups, with common ideals and knowledge (Alexander, 2003, quoted in Hattie, 2009). He seemed to prefer learning on his/her own or independently. According to the four levels of knowledge introduced by Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001, quoted in Hattie, 2009), it was very likely that Student #55 already reached the level of meta-cognitive knowledge which refers to knowledge about his own cognitive processes (knowledge) and the monitoring of these processes (skillfulness) instead of factual knowledge or conceptual knowledge or procedural knowledge. In the words of Hattie (2009), Student #55 might have become his/her own teacher.

Nonetheless, if the four students in Cluster 2 were to form groups, three groups would

be formed. While Student 44 (S44) and 46 (S46) should be in two different clusters, Student 23 (S23) and 55 (S55) who did not identify any “absolutely essential” aspects could be in the same cluster. A second Cluster Analysis conducted only for these four students indicated the same findings. Follow-up interviews could be arranged to further explore why these four students ranked the forty aspects of teaching in the way they did.

With reference to the Cluster Analysis results, 102 students who belonged to the first cluster ranked the forty aspects of teaching similarly. It was not too difficult to explain their agreement as they had been studying in the same school for over two years. Almost all of them lived in the same neighbourhood. They had families of similar social and economic background. In other words, they had been exposed to a very similar culture, a culture unique to the students living in their neighbourhood and studying in their school. Hence, it was not surprising to find that their mindsets were very much the same, including their opinions about what made a good English teacher. Since it was assumed that the same case also applied to the students of Cluster 2, this meant that the differences between Cluster 1 and 2 were very likely to do with the individual differences between them, specifically their orientations towards learning. Those students in the second clusters were more confident and self-directed in their

approach to learning. They needed less personal support and reassurance from their teachers. On the contrary, their fellow schoolmates required a heavy dependence on the teachers.

The students in the second cluster seemed to resemble the undergraduates in the study of Littlewood and Liu (1996) reported in Chapter 2 who had less liking for teacher guidance and explanation. They also seemed to resemble some of the undergraduates in the study of Kember and Wong (2000) who belonged to the quadrant containing non-traditional teaching and active learning. These students associated good teaching with active engagement. They can be labelled “proactive” students. On the other hand, the students in the first cluster looked like the students who belonged to the quadrant containing transmissive teaching and passive learning. They associated good teaching with systematic step-by-step, clarity of information and trying to make students understand. They can be labelled “passive” students. The following table (Table 4.6) lists the differences between these two groups of students.

Table 4.6 Differences between passive and proactive students

	Passive Students	Proactive Students
Characteristics	● Insecure ● Depend heavily on teachers	● Confident and secure ● Prefer self-directed learning
View of learning	● Collectivism/ community	● Individualism
Learning strategies	● Not aware of meta-learning, mainly surface learning strategies	● Meta-learning, with both surface and deep learning strategies
Focus of effective teaching	● The personal qualities of the teacher	● The instrumental or technical qualities of the teacher
Preference of teacher	● A strong teacher role	● A teacher who is willing to allow autonomy

Referring to the above table (Table 4.6), passive students often feel insecure and they have heavy dependence on their teachers. They think that learning is like working collaboratively with each other in a community where sharing and caring are important or a collective activity in which all the participants have common ideals and knowledge. They lack meta-learning strategies and surface learning strategies are their main learning strategies. When they evaluate teachers' performance, they focus on the personal qualities of the teachers. Overall, they do not want to take charge of their own learning and so prefer a teacher who is able to control it. In contrast, proactive students prefer self-directed learning. They feel confident in themselves and find that learning is something individual. They are aware of meta-learning, practicing not only surface but also deep learning strategies. When evaluating teachers' performance,

their focus is on the instrumental or technical aspects rather than the personal ones. Overall, they like learning independently and so prefer a teacher who is willing to release ownership, imposing less control on their learning.

- **Section review**

In this section, the students' lists of the "most" and the "least" effective aspects of teaching were reported and discussed. In general, the students who participated in the study agreed with the list of Hay McBer (2000) as well as some of the effective aspects of teaching identified in the previous studies reported in Chapter 2. They also listed several effective aspects of teaching which were not explicitly mentioned in the reviewed literature, like teachers' own interest in the subject, use of positive and negative reinforcement and pedagogical subject knowledge.

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One big difference between the participating students' lists and the findings of the previous reports was their preference for high teacher control. While student-centreness was highly valued in the reports reviewed, it was not very much valued in the local context. The majority of the participating students did not mind whether or not their teachers released the ownership of their learning. Even though they seemed to recognise the importance of independent learning, they still relied quite a lot on their teachers. They viewed their teacher not only as a model they could

learn from but also as a person they could put their trust on. As a result, they did not care much if they had autonomy in their learning or not. This might imply that there was a relative lack of self-confidence and a strong sense of dependence on the teachers among the majority of the students. These students belonged to the first cluster. They tended to focus on the surface learning strategies and were considered "passive" students. There were four students in the study who seemed to be more active and tended to focus on the deep learning strategies. They belonged to the second cluster and were considered "proactive" students. One of them seemed to value individualism and even moved beyond the surface and deep learning to the constructed or conceptual learning.

In the next section, the teachers' lists of the "most" and the "least" effective aspects of teaching will be revealed.

4.1.2 What aspects of teaching are considered effective by the teachers?

Three teachers participated in the study. Table 4.7 shows the ranking of their "most" effective aspects of teaching. The number with "#" shows the aspect number listed in the questionnaire whereas the number in "( )" indicates the mean score of the aspect, with a continuum from "1" indicating "not very important", to "2" "important but not

essential” and “3” “absolutely essential”. Since only three teachers participated in the study, the mean score for each of the aspects was quite close to each other. Instead of listing the top ten aspects of teaching considered effective by the teachers, the top sixteen will be listed.

- **Aspects of teaching considered “most” effective by the teachers**

Referring to the seven categories of the forty teaching traits listed in the report of Hay McBer (2000), it was found from the table (Table 4.7) below that most of the “most” effective aspects of teaching listed by the participating teachers fell into the category of Methods and Strategies, like the participating students. The aspects of teaching which belonged to Methods and Strategies included #12, #13, #15, #17 and #19.

Table 4.7 Mean Scores from Part I of Teachers' Questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?) - The "most" effective aspects of teaching listed by teachers

#6	Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.	(3)
#20	Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson.	(3)
#38	Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson.	(3)
#1	Teachers encourage high standards of effort.	(2.67)
#3	Teachers encourage high standards of presentation.	(2.67)
#4	Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students.	(2.67)
#5	Teachers use various strategies to motivate students.	(2.67)
#12	Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson.	(2.67)
#13	Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods.	(2.67)
#15	Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding.	(2.67)
#17	Teachers give clear instructions and explanations.	(2.67)
#19	Teachers listen and respond to students.	(2.67)
#22	Teachers praise good achievement and effort.	(2.67)
#35	Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up.	(2.67)
#36	Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work.	(2.67)
#37	Teachers encourage students to do better next time.	(2.67)

As shown in Table 4.7, the three teachers overwhelmingly considered "providing students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning (#6)", "keeping students on task throughout the lesson (#20)" and "setting homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson (#38)" "absolutely essential". These were the only three teaching aspects which all the three teachers agreed on.

First of all, all teachers agreed that they should provide their students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning (#6). One of the teachers claimed at the interview that she was very “easy-going” in teaching:

> *I was a bit easy-going in teaching, I just let them do what they wanted to do*….:. (Teacher B)

Another one admitted at the interview that she hated passive students. As she said,

> *I really hate [passive] students… just, like a sponge, absorbing… [without asking questions]*. (Teacher A)

However, little evidence was found from the class visits that their students were given chances to take charge of their own learning. The observed lessons were rather structured and rigidly planned.

For Teacher A, she checked answers for the exercises about tenses with her students in both class visits. With a timer, she checked the time for every single task she assigned to her students. She walked around while her students were doing the tasks. She also explained differences between various tenses and presented tense markers. Teacher B also seemed to have a standard organisation of her lessons. She started the lessons with a warm-up exercise and then she asked students to read a passage before doing exercises. After that, she checked answers. She might have a final task to consolidate what students learnt. Borrowing the word from Vygotsky (1978), she emphasised the importance of “scaffolding” which meant “clear steps” to her. As she said,

> *[students] can go to the next step and finally they can produce the products you want them to do, yes, scaffolding, just steps, so as to make sure that they have a good structure of the lesson and learn it finally.* (Teacher B)

For Teacher C, it was observed that she also followed a similar procedure, with a lead-in activity at the beginning and a consolidation activity at the end.

There was little, if any, voice from the students. Students still looked like the inferior group while the teachers the superior. Students had no say but followed what they were asked to do by the teachers, the authority. The authoritarian image of Teacher A was shown in the interview when she said,

> *I can't tolerate that my students misbehave, I can't tolerate students who don't focus in my lesson.* (Teacher A)

Although Teacher B once said that she was quite easy-going in teaching, she later mentioned at the interview that she would not allow her students to do whatever they wanted because

> *… just let them do whatever they want to or I cannot be sure … what they have learnt in the whole lesson.* (Teacher B)

At the individual interview, Teacher B also described her students as students who were

> "*not …… self-disciplined …… to do things on their own*".

She added that her students only

> "*produce the products [she] want[s] them to do*". (Teacher B)

The authoritarian image of Teacher C emerged when she revealed at the interview her concern about the classroom management. As she said, it was important for her to stay alert in the classroom so that students would not be *"doing something else"*. She also gave an example about her students' sleeping problem in the class:

> *I usually will feel angry, … I will ask them to wake up, and maybe wash their face.* (Teacher C)

These examples could illustrate the power of the three teachers who took charge of their students' learning. The responsibility of the students was simply to follow their teachers' commands, without any queries or objection. There could be several reasons to explain why the teachers did not act the way they claimed they would or the way they really believed in. First of all, there might be simply not enough evidence. Since only two lessons of each teacher had been observed, it was possible that the students might have more ownership in their learning in some other lessons.

The other reason might be because the teachers had constraints to do what they believed in. Even if they believed that students should have a say in what they learnt and how they learnt it, the teachers had to cover the school syllabus and follow the scheme of work agreed at the subject meetings. They might not be allowed to share power with the students. As said by Teacher A at the interview,

> *I need to rush through the work and tests, exams, and dictations, all these things*. (Teacher A)

Teacher A also sounded anxious when she mentioned at the interview that teachers were required to prepare reports on the students' English folders for file inspection conducted by the Chairperson of the department. Teacher B also found constraints in allowing her students to have more says in their learning process. She mentioned at the interview that she would not be certain with how much her students learnt if she allowed her students to do what they wanted to. Furthermore, she sounded pressured to conduct tests when she said,

yes, it's uniform, the whole form had to do it. (Teacher B)

The culture issue might also be a reason why the teachers did not seem to be willing to offer their students autonomy in their learning. In the Chinese culture, teachers, like parents, were supposed to know what the best was for their students and students were always expected to respect and follow what their teachers arranged for them. Teachers might believe in the students' learning autonomy but in reality, they might end up with the traditional teacher-student relationship, with little room for sharing the power in the classrooms.

Last but not least, the teachers might have a different interpretation of the word, "responsibility". Teacher A expressed her views at the interview that she believed in students' responsibility in learning. As she said,

> *I believe that students have responsibility in learning. If they didn't pay effort, they cannot learn anything*. (Teacher A)

The "responsibility" she mentioned appeared to be the duties students had to do or the "effort" students needed to pay in their learning, not the power they had to make decisions for their own learning. Consequently, not only the students had high expectation of their teachers, the teachers also had high expectation of their students, in the sense that they wanted their students to be serious with their studies, follow their instructions and work hard. Their interpretation of "responsibility" seemed to be in line with a collectivist position instead of an individualist one, using the terms of Alexander (2003, quoted in Hattie, 2009).

The strong teacher role could also be illustrated by the dominant use of the interactive teaching strategies observed in the class visits. Referring to the Transmission-Interactive-Reactive teaching strategies of Cooper & McIntyre (1996) described in Chapter 2, the three teachers who were involved in the study tended to position themselves at the interactive mode, with the direction towards the transmission end of the continuum. At the post-classroom observation talks, teachers explained that they always fixed the lesson objectives based on the demands of the curriculum and planned the lessons with reference to their students' previous knowledge.

For Teacher A, evidence was found to show that she applied the interactive teaching strategies and put her students' needs or interests into consideration when planning her lesson. She explained at the interview that she intended to give her students a challenging exercise when she planned the lesson because she would like her students to identify a problem first and then get an incentive to learn. Evidence of some reactive teaching strategies was found in one aspect of Teacher A's lessons. Teacher A claimed at the interview after her second observed lesson that she adjusted her lesson plan by providing her students with some more explanations on the two tenses after she learnt in the lesson that her students were not as good at the tenses as she expected. In that case, Teacher A modified the lesson plan with her perceptions of the students in the classroom.

Interactive teaching strategies were also applied by Teacher B who took her students' previous knowledge into account when planning her lessons. She explained after one of her observed lessons that she designed a classification activity which required her students to make use of some vocabulary items related to Science they learnt before. One episode of reactive teaching strategies was found in a lesson of Teacher B about "conservation". Teacher B, first, showed her students different stages of Tin Shui Wai where their school was located at and discussed how the nature had been damaged

with her students. Towards the end of the lesson, instead of asking her students to continue with the language exercises about “I would rather… than…” and “I prefer……”, she changed her lesson objectives and told her students what a Chinese philosopher said about “conservation”. This part of the lesson was not pre-planned. It was later in the lesson that the teacher found it more meaningful and interesting to raise the issue instead of doing language exercises planned and it ended up a very inspiring discussion between the teacher and the students.

Teacher C comparatively used teaching strategies towards the transmission mode. Every step she took in the lesson seemed to follow the plan she had prepared before the lesson. In her first observed lesson, Teacher C asked her students to role play several conversations. She then gave feedback and explained meanings of new vocabulary items to her students. In her second observed lesson, she equipped her students with the language for a final comparison exercise by doing a listening task and a spelling game. There were some interactive teaching strategies observed in one of the lessons of Teacher C when she designed a comparison activity involving mobile phones. She explained at the interview that she decided to use mobile phones because she thought her students would find mobile phones interesting.

Referring to the two episodes which showed pieces of evidence of the reactive teaching strategies, the reactive teaching strategy of Teacher A did not seem to look exactly the same as that of Teacher B. While Teacher A changed her lesson plan because she was not satisfied with her students' performance, Teacher B changed her lesson plan because she would like to add something new but related to the lesson. It was, therefore, suggested that the reactive teaching strategy of Teacher A was regarded as "student-initiated" whereas that of Teacher B was regarded as "teacher-initiated".

Nevertheless, almost no aspects of the observed lessons showed any more evidence of reactive teaching strategies of the teachers, not to mention evidence of the self-directed learning. Referring to Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2, all the three teachers tended to stay at the interactive mode of the continuum, directing towards to the transmission end, with limited evidence of reactive teaching strategies and even no evidence at all of self-directed learning. This is shown in the figure below (Figure 4.1).

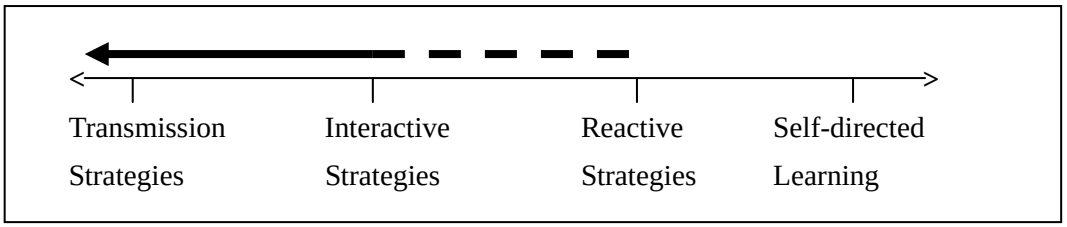

Figure 4.1 Teaching strategies of the teacher participants relating to the continuum of teaching strategies (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996)

Key: less frequently adopted teaching strategies
more frequently adopted teaching strategies

Overall, the participating teachers were not very much willing to negotiate with their students about a wide range of decisions relating to their teaching and learning experiences.

Referring to the secondly ranked item in the "most" effective list (Table 4.7), quite a lot of evidence collected from the classroom observations showed that teachers did very best to keep their students on the tasks throughout the lesson (#20). In one of the lessons of Teacher A, students were actively involved in a competition on tenses. For Teacher B, students were very excited about a classification game in one of her lessons and fully engaged in a discussion on how to conserve the nature in another lesson. In Teacher C's lesson, students were greatly occupied when asked to compare two brands of mobile phones. Teacher C explained the importance of keeping students on task at the interview. She said,

> *….you need to listen carefully and watch carefully to make sure everyone is on task and whether they can finish the work or not.* (Teacher C)

Concerning "setting homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson (#38)", evidence was collected from both the classroom observations and the individual interviews with the teachers. During the class visits, it was not uncommon that teachers were checking answers with the students. Some of the exercises had been assigned to the students before as the homework or as the class work. Teacher A also said at the interview that

> *… homework is necessary and on everyday basis, actually, … it can be related to what we've talked.* (Teacher A)

The remaining thirteen aspects of teaching in the list were considered "absolutely essential" by two teachers. All of them were spotted in the class visits except "Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students (#4)". In the classroom observations, teachers seldom assigned students challenging tasks. This finding did not very much agree with those reported in Chapter 2, like Irving (2004), Hattie & Clinton (2008), Smith, Baker, Hattie, & Bond (2008), and Pressley et al (2007). It was because students in these studies preferred teachers who challenged them.

The participating teachers even seldom asked challenging questions, like problem-solving questions. Little evidence was collected in all the participating teachers' classrooms. It was not surprising since all the three teachers did not deny their incompetence in this aspect at the individual interviews. Teacher A agreed that different kinds of questions allowed her students to reflect more or understand more as she says,

> *…different levels of questions….. require them to think in various levels, yes, if I can probe some higher order of thinking for students, it will help them to reflect more or understand more….* (Teacher A)

However, she thought direct questions were appropriate for asking questions about tenses. Teacher B confessed that she seldom adopted problem-solving techniques which required critical thinking as she believed that her students were not capable of the high level of thinking. She said,

> *I think problem-solving skills require them to have a higher level of critical thinking but the type of students that we're teaching is they they have to follow the teacher strictly and you have to give the instructions clearly…… so I seldom do that kind of problem-solving skills……* (Teacher B)

Teacher C simply admitted that she wanted to improve her problem-solving techniques as she said,

> *I don't think I have a wide variety of problem-solving techniques.* (Teacher C)

However, evidence was found for "teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding (#15)". For example, Teacher C asked a

second question in one of the lessons when no students gave her any responses to her first question. She asked, "*what did you find in the hi-tech shop*?" first and then tried, "*what did you see*?" when the students were silent. She tried to paraphrase her questions in order to make the question easier for her students.

After reporting the "most" effective aspects of teaching listed by the participating teachers, the next table will show the teachers' "least" effective aspects of teaching.

- **Aspects of teaching considered "least" effective by the teachers**

The following table (Table 4.8) shows the teachers' "least" effective aspects of teaching. Due to the similar mean scores of some of the aspects, there are twelve instead of ten aspects of teaching in the list.

Table 4.8 Mean Scores from Part I of Teachers' Questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?) - The "least" effective aspects of teaching listed by teachers

#31	Teachers focus on factual memory.	(1.33)
#16	Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques.	(1.67)
#24	Teachers work well with other members of staff.	(1.67)
#26	Teachers finish the lesson on time.	(1.67)
#34	Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding.	(1.67)
#10	Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum.	(2)
#27	Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning.	(2)
#28	Teachers use an appropriate pace.	(2)
#29	Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students.	(2)
#30	Teachers focus on understanding and meaning.	(2)
#32	Teachers focus on skills mastery.	(2)
#40	Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework.	(2)

Referring to the seven categories of the forty teaching traits listed in the report of Hay McBer (2000), it was shown in Table 4.8 that most of the "least" effective aspects of teaching listed by the teachers fell into the categories of Time & Resource Management as well as Assessment. There were totally five aspects of teaching which received less than "2" for their mean scores from the teachers. They are #31, #16, #24, #26 and #34. The teachers' ranking could be explained and discussed with the help of the interview scripts with the teachers.

First of all, the reason why the teachers put “factual memory” (#31) and “problem-solving techniques” (#16) on the top of the “least” significant list could be given by Teacher B:

> *factual memory? Maybe I’m teaching language, maybe it’s not a content subject. If they can use a language flexibly, I think that will be more important, …… if they use it, that means, they know it, they understand it …… I think problem-solving skills require them to have a higher level of critical thinking but the type of students that we’re teaching is that they have to follow the teacher strictly… so I seldom use that kind of problems-solving skills or activities.* (Teacher B)

The lack of evidence found in the classroom observations relating to the teachers’ problem-solving techniques was reported previously when discussing “Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students” (#4). The participating teachers seldom challenged their students with tasks of various difficulties since they thought that their students were not intelligent enough. They had high expectations from their students but only in the sense that they hoped their students would be serious with the studies, not in the sense that they would maximise the challenge of the learning goals they set for them. In fact, they would rather design easier materials for their students to learn.

The reason used to explain why “Teachers work well with other members of staff” (#24) in the students’ “least” effective list could be used to explain why the same aspect of teaching was in the teachers’ “least” effective list. Like their students, the

participating teachers might find their students' learning a personal process between both of them and focused so much on their students that they did not think working well with their colleagues was a crucial factor attributing to their students' effective learning. Such an idea that teaching was a private activity between the single teacher and his or her students matched the teacher-centred approach which seemed to be generally adopted by the participating teachers.

Besides, "Teachers finish the lesson on time" (#26) was another aspect which received less than 2 for its mean score. For "Teachers use test, competitions, etc. to assess understanding" (#34), Teacher B pointed out at the interview that she seldom used tests. She went on to explain:

> *if the teacher uses tests too frequently, it is a kind of discouragement because this discourages them to do better.* (Teacher B)

The other teachers also expressed that the tests their students were given were part of the students' overall assessment. This could suggest that they did not want to use tests to assess their students' comprehension but they were required to have tests for their students because of the school policy.

Starting from the sixth rank, all the aspects of teaching got "2" as their mean scores. This meant that teachers generally considered them "important but not essential". It

could be because there were so many other more effective aspects of teaching listed in the questionnaire that the teachers found these aspects not as effective as the others. It could also be because of the fact that only three teachers were involved in the study and so the mean scores of some of the aspects would be very close to each other. “Teachers use an appropriate pace” (#28) was an example. Though this aspect received “2” as its mean score, it was discovered that all the three participating teachers had totally different views on the aspect. It was, therefore, necessary to examine the variations among teachers in the next part.

- **Variations among teachers**

It was quite evident that the three teachers who participated in the present study did not always hold similar views, referring to Table 4.7 and 4.8. A more in-depth examination on their diverse views was conducted and the findings are reported in this part. Table 4.9 below shows the participants’ choices of their “absolutely essential”, “important but not essential” and “not very important” aspects of teaching.

Table 4.9 Aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential", "important but not essential" and "not very important" by the three participating teachers

Teacher A

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40

Teacher B

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40

Teacher C

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
36	37	38	39	40

Key

	Aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential"
	Aspects of teaching considered "important but not essential"
	Aspects of teaching considered "not very important"

After checking the data in Table 4.9, the teachers' agreed views concerning the effective aspects of teaching can be summarised and presented in the following table (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 Agreed views among teachers concerning the effective aspects of teaching

Aspects of teaching considered *"absolutely essential"* by all three teachers
#6 Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning **#20** Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson **#38** Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson
Aspects of teaching considered *"important but not essential"* by all three teachers
#10 Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum. **#27** Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning. **#29** Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students. **#30** Teaches focus on understanding and meaning. **#32** Teachers focus on skills mastery. **#40** Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework
Aspects of teaching considered *"not very important"* by all three teachers
Nil

It was shown in the above table (Table 4.10) that there were only three aspects of teaching which all the three teachers considered “absolutely essential”, as reported before. Furthermore, only six aspects of teaching were considered “important but not essential” by all of them. This lack of agreement among teachers is further illustrated in the next table (Table 4.11) which shows their diverse opinions.

Table 4.11 Diverse views among teachers concerning the effective aspects of teaching

Aspects of teaching considered ***“absolutely essential”*** **by two teachers but** ***“less important ”*** **by one teacher**
#21 Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately.
Aspects of teaching considered ***“absolutely essential”*** **by one teacher,** ***“important but not essential”*** **by one teacher and “*****not very important*****” by one teacher**
#28 Teachers use an appropriate pace.

It could be seen from the above table (Table 4.11) that teachers held very different views on two teaching aspects. They were “Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately” (#21) and “Teachers use an appropriate pace” (#28).

Referring to Table 4.9, Teacher B and Teacher C found it “absolutely essential” to correct bad behaviour immediately (#21) but Teacher A found the aspect “not very important”. In fact, all the three teachers expressed their concern about classroom management at the interview. Even if Teacher A found it not very important to correct her students’ bad behaviour, she admitted that she would not tolerate her students who

did not concentrate in her lessons. She stressed that students got to be told when they made mistakes or they would easily be spoiled. Teacher B and C might be even more serious about the issue. The emphasis Teacher B put on this aspect might be because she had high expectation of herself and so would also have high expectation of her students. It was not difficult to expect that she would like her students to behave as she kept saying her students' behaviours in the class would affect her teaching. For Teacher C, her concern about the aspect was shown at the interview when she pointed out that it was important to stay alert in the class. As she says,

> *some of them…, maybe, if you can't listen carefully or watch carefully, they will, maybe doing other things, and doing other subjects, maybe hurrying up with they homework, maybe they are having the test in next period, maybe they will just do revision with other subjects so you need to listen carefully and watch carefully…you can't just look at the blackboard……*(Teacher C)

For using an appropriate pace (#28), teachers had an even wider variation. They prioritised this particular aspect of teaching differently. While one of them (Teacher C) found it "absolutely essential", one found (Teacher A) it "important but not essential" and one found (Teacher B) it "not very important". During the class visits, it was not difficult to see that Teacher A was a person who was conscious with time as she kept a timer in the classroom. Whenever her students started a task, she checked the time using the timer. For Teacher B, she also expressed the importance of time

management at the interview as she did not want to miss anything. However, she might not be as worried about the time as Teacher A or C. It was because she mentioned that pace might not be a problem once students had got used to it. Teacher C was the one who worried about time management most. It could be because she was relatively not as confident as the other two teachers. At the interview, she pointed out that

> *we don't have enough time,……When the bell rings, you can't just keep the students.* (Teacher C)

The variation among the three teachers of the present study was quite wide concerning the aspects of teaching they found more effective and the aspects of teaching they find less effective. Referring to the reported findings above, there were reasons to believe that the concepts of teaching among these teachers differed quite a lot. This could be mainly due to their different perceptions of effectiveness. The following are the separate profiles developed for the three individual teachers.

Profile of Teacher A

With reference to the demographic information given in Chapter 3, Teacher A was a female teacher who graduated with a degree in Education with English as her main elective. She had 5.5 years of teaching experience. She spent totally five years in the

school involved in the study and she had been teaching the same class for two years. Teacher A comparatively looked like a person who found teaching basically a science among the three participants because she talked more about theories. She mentioned in the talk after her first observed lesson that her lesson was supposed to be based on the communicative approach but she got to focus more on the grammar due to the fact that her students were not able to have a firm grasp of the language. This showed that she was not a teacher who just followed the research-based theories. Instead, she would take the context, her own classroom into consideration. Furthermore, it was found at the interview that Teacher A comparatively mentioned more terms used in the educational research than the other two teachers did. Besides "*communicative approach*", she mentioned "*form*", "*meaning*", "*semantic differences*", "*reflective*" *and* "*deep thinking*". Concerning learning theories, evidence showed that Teacher A tended to believe in the cognitive approach. During a class visit to one of her lessons about tenses, Teacher A asked her students quite a lot of questions about the differences between two tenses. At the post-classroom observation talk, she emphasised that she would keep asking her students why. She further explained that she was planning to do a lot of questioning with different levels so as to help her students "*understand the idea in a better sense*". She also added at the interview that she was still working on improving her questioning skills. Referring to the

Transmission-Interactive-Reactive teaching strategies of Cooper & McIntyre (1996), Teacher A tended to practise interactive strategies, with some reactive strategies. Based on the data collected, Teacher A was found confident in herself as a teacher. It was because when she described how her students got actively involved in drama learning, she sounded proud of herself and claimed that she managed to have motivated the students: *I think I do motivate the students to a certain extent.*

Profile of Teacher B

Teacher B was a female university graduate in Translation with a postgraduate diploma in Education. She had 7 years of teaching experience, of which six years in the present school and two years in the same class. She tended to believe that teaching was an art. It was because she appeared to find teaching intuitive, just like an art as she kept talking about how the students' reactions to her teaching affected her teaching in return at the interview. She was also willing to change the last part of one of her lesson plans. Instead of working on some grammar rules, she drew her students to focus on the issue of preserving environment as it occurred to her during the lesson that the discussion would be more interesting and inspiring than the prepared language exercises. She seemed to be aware that everything in the classroom was not certain and she could make changes whenever she thought it was necessary.

Furthermore, Teacher B appeared to be a person who stressed feelings a lot, like other art-oriented people. When asked how she felt about her class after the second class visit, she just kept saying *"very positive, very positive"* before going to the details of the class. When she was asked to suggest areas for improvement in her teaching, Teacher B honestly confessed that she occasionally got impatient and lost her temper in the class. She seemed to behave like an artist, generally focusing a lot on her own emotions. Teacher B also seemed to have beliefs in the humanistic approach to learning because she stressed at the interview that she would believe her students had known the rules and understood the rules if they could use the language. She also kept emphasising the importance of knowing her students' lives if she wanted to motivate them to learn. Like Teacher A, Teacher B tended to practise interactive strategies, with some reactive strategies of the Transmission-Interactive-Reactive teaching strategies (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). Teacher B was a teacher who had high expectations of herself as she declared at the interview that she set a very high standard to herself and admitted that it was not easy for her to have a perfect lesson due to various constraints. She simply said in the interview that *"I've got high standard"*.

Profile of Teacher C

Teacher C was also a female degree holder of Translation with a postgraduate diploma

in Education. She got 4 years of teaching experiences overall, with 3.5 years in the school involved in the study. She spent totally three years with the same class. Teacher C relatively looked like a person who treated teaching as a craft because she recalled her own experience as an English learner in the interview. She said that she found reading aloud very useful for her students to learn English since that was the way she learnt the language herself. As she said, *"… when I was a young student in secondary school, I didn't have much chance to read aloud, …"*. Furthermore, Teacher C seemed to believe very much in practice. She repeatedly asked her class to practise some conversations. To her, practice made perfect. She even suggested giving her class a demonstration if time allowed. In that case, Teacher C acted like an expert and her students acted like novices who tried to imitate her speaking skills. Therefore, she tended to believe that learning a language was like learning a craft or as skill. Teacher C appeared to believe in the behaviourist approach to learning as it was found in the class visits that she asked her students to carry out a lot of speaking and writing practice followed by her positive or negative reinforcement. She seemed to maintain the "favourable" behaviours with suitable reinforcement. Comparatively, Teacher C tended to practise transmission strategies more often than did the other teachers with reference to the Transmission-Interactive-Reactive teaching strategies of Cooper & McIntyre (1996). Teacher C was found not so confident in herself. She once

commented at the interview that she found it difficult to ask problem-solving techniques as she said that she always asked straight forward questions instead of those questions which required her students to think critically. As she admitted, *"I don't think I have a wide variety of problem-solving techniques"*. This might be consistent with her craft orientation towards teaching.

Nevertheless, it is worth carrying out further examination on the teachers' life histories. This can help understand their choices of the aspects of teaching which they think attribute to the effectiveness of teaching. Table 4.12 below summarises the individual profiles of the three participating teachers.

Table 4.12 Individual profiles of the three participating teachers

	Teacher A's Profile	**Teacher B's Profile**	**Teacher C's Profile**
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Total teaching experience	5.5 years, with 5 years in the present school	7 years, with 6 years in the present school	4 years, with 3.5 years in the present school
Time with the class	2 years	2 years	3 years
Concept of Teaching	Tends to see teaching as a science	Tends to see teaching as an art	Tends to see teaching as a craft or a skill
Concept of learning	Tends to believe in the cognitive approach to learning	Tends to believe in the humanistic approach to learning	Tends to believe in the behaviourist approach to learning
Teaching strategies	Mostly interactive with some reactive teaching strategies	Mostly interactive with some reactive teaching strategies	Mostly Transmission with some interactive teaching strategies
Other observation	Confident in herself as a teacher	Has high expectations of herself	Not very confident in herself as a teacher

- **Section review**

In this section, the teachers' lists of the "most" and the "least" effective aspects of teaching were reported and discussed. Similar to their students, teachers of the present study basically agreed with the aspects of teaching listed in the Hay McBer Report (2000). Also like their students, the teachers seemed to project a teacher-centred classroom as an effective classroom even if they all agreed that it was important for students to be responsible for their own learning. The role they played in the classroom was like a boss, controlling everything related to their students' learning. Seldom were students found to raise their hands and express opinions on their learning during the classroom observations. The dominance of the teacher-centred approach in the participants' English classrooms could further be indicated by the teaching strategies of the participating teachers with reference to the continuum of transmission-interactive-reactive teaching strategies suggested by Cooper & McIntyre (1996, p.119). Evidence showed that the teachers of the present study tended to stay at the interactive teaching strategies, with very limited evidence for the self-directed learning.

Like the participating students, not all the participating teachers ranked the forty aspects of teaching equally. There were variations among the three teachers concerning the significance of the given aspects, probably due to their different personal beliefs. While one tended to see teaching as a science and believed in the cognitive approach to learning, one tended to see teaching as an art and believed in the humanistic approach and one tended to see teaching as a craft or a skill and believed in the behaviourist approach to learning.

After reporting the “most” and the “least” effective aspects of teaching identified by the students and the teachers, comparisons will be made in the following section.

4.1.3To what extent do Hong Kong students and teachers agree on what they see as the most effective aspects of teaching?

The following table (Table 4.13) shows the quantitative data collected from the first parts of the participants’ questionnaires. It has to be noted that the total number of students for some aspects of teaching may not be 106 due to the fact that some students did not give responses to some particular aspects of teaching.

Table 4.13 Quantitative data from Part I of students' and teachers' Questionnaires (What makes a good English teacher?) – Rankings of the effective aspects of teaching by the students and the teachers

Students' rank order by level of importance (1=not very important, 2=important but not essential, 3=absolutely essential)	**Mean rating**	**Aspects of teaching**	**Degree of effectiveness**	**Teachers' rank order by level of importance (1=not very important, 2=important but not essential, 3=absolutely essential)**	**Mean rating**	**Aspects of teaching**
1	2.72 (n=105)	Teachers give clear instructions and explanations. (#17)		1	3.00 (n=3)	Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. (#6)
2	2.64 (n=105)	Teachers treat students fairly. (#23)		2	3.00 (n=3)	Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson. (#20)
3	2.60 (n=105)	Teachers use various strategies to motivate students. (#5)		3	3.00 (n=3)	Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson. (#38)
4	2.58 (n=106)	Teachers have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class. (#9)		4	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers encourage high standards of effort. (#1)

5	2.56 (n=105)	Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods. (#13)		5	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers encourage high standards of presentation. (#3)
6	2.56 (n=105)	Teachers use an appropriate pace. (#28)		6	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students. (#4)
7	2.56 (n=106)	Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up. (#35)		7	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers use various strategies to motivate students. (#5)
8	2.55 (n=105)	Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning. (#27)		8	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson. (#12)
9	2.54 (n=105)	Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson. (#12)		9	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods. (#13)
10	2.53 (n=105)	Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement. (#18)		10	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding. (#15)
11	2.52 (n=105)	Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson. (#20)		11	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers give clear instructions and explanations. (#17)
12	2.51 (n=106)	Teachers focus on understanding and meaning. (#30)		12	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers listen and respond to students. (#19)
13	2.50 (n=105)	Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work. (#36)		13	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers praise good achievement and effort. (#22)
14	2.49 (n=105)	Teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives. (#14)		14	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up. (#35)

15	2.48 (n=106)	Teachers focus on skills mastery. (#32)		15	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work. (#36)
16	2.48 (n=102)	Teachers finish the lesson on time. (#26)		16	2.67 (n=3)	Teachers encourage students to do better next time. (#37)
17	2.48 (n=105)	Teachers structure the lesson to use the time available well. (#25)		17	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately. (#21)
18	2.47 (n=106)	Teachers encourage high standards of effort. (#1)		18	2.33 (n=3)	Teacher encourage high standard of accuracy. (#2)
19	2.46 (n=106)	Teachers encourage students to do better next time. (#37)		19	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson. (#7)
20	2.46 (n=104)	Teachers listen and respond to students. (#19)		20	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students. (#8)
21	2.45 (n=106)	Teachers focus on applications in real-life settings. (#33)		21	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class. (#9)
22	2.44 (n=105)	Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding. (#15)		22	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson. (#11)
23	2.39 (n=105)	Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately. (#21)		23	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives. (#14)
24	2.39 (n=105)	Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students. (#29)		24	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement. (#18)

25	2.39 (n=106)	Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students. (#4)		25	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers treat students fairly. (#23)
26	2.39 (n=106)	Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson. (#38)		26	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers structure the lesson to use the time available well. (#25)
27	2.36 (n=106)	Teachers follow up homework previously set in the lesson. (#39)		27	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers follow up homework previously set in the lesson. (#39)
28	2.35 (n=105)	Teachers praise good achievement and effort. (#22)		28	2.33 (n=3)	Teachers focus on applications in real-life settings. (#33)
29	2.33 (n=105)	Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques. (#16)		29	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers use an appropriate pace. (#28)
30	2.30 (n=105)	Teachers encourage high standards of presentation. (#3)		30	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum. (#10)
31	2.28 (n=106)	Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson. (#7)		31	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning. (#27)
32	2.25 (n=106)	Teacher encourage high standard of accuracy. (#2)		32	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students. (#29)
33	2.24 (n=106)	Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding. (#34)		33	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers focus on understanding and meaning. (#30)
34	2.23 (n=105)	Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. (#6)		34	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers focus on skills mastery. (#32)
35	2.22 (n=106)	Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson. (#11)		35	2.00 (n=3)	Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework. (#40)

36	2.20 (n=106)	Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum. (#10)		36	1.67 (n=3)	Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques. (#16)
37	2.16 (n=104)	Teachers work well with other members of staff. (#24)		37	1.67 (n=3)	Teachers work well with other members of staff. (#24)
38	1.91 (n=106)	Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework. (#40)		38	1.67 (n=3)	Teachers finish the lesson on time. (#26)
39	1.82 (n=104)	Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students. (#8)		39	1.67 (n=3)	Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding. (#34)
40	1.60 (n=106)	Teachers focus on factual memory. (#31)		40	1.33 (n=3)	Teachers focus on factual memory. (#31)

Key: n=total number of participants

The above table (Table 4.13) gives the number of students/ teachers who chose each of the three options for each of the forty aspects of teaching. With the total number of the students or teachers participated, the total mean scores for each aspect of teaching were worked out, one from the students' group, one from the teachers' group.

Referring to the seven categories of the forty teaching traits listed in the report of Hay McBer (2000) including High Expectations, Planning, Methods and Strategies, Pupil Management/Discipline, Time & Resource Management, Assessment and Homework, it was discovered that the participating teachers and students found the teaching traits of Methods & Strategies most important. It was because most of the aspects of teaching which received over 2.5 from the two participating groups as their mean scores belonged to this category including "Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson" (#12), "Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods" (#13) and "Teachers give clear instructions and explanations" (#17). Two other aspects of teaching which received over 2.5 from both groups of the participants included "Teachers use various strategies to motivate students" (#5) and "Teachers keep students on tasks throughout the lesson" (#20).

A clearer and more in-depth examination on their differences as well as similarities

was necessary. The categories of Morgan and Morris (1999) mentioned in Chapter 2 including shared perspectives, disparate perspectives, opposed perspectives and unilateral perspectives were useful. Some of the aspects mentioned by the participants of the present study could be identified to fit into the four categories of learning and teaching perspectives. References were not only made to the data collected from the questionnaire but also to the data collected from the interview and the classroom observations.

As reported previously, both groups of participants agreed that teachers should provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning (#6) even though the quantitative data showed the opposite. This aspect of teaching was, therefore, grouped under an additional category called “Paradoxical” perspective. It will be listed together with the four ready-made categories in the upcoming table.

The mean scores for each aspect of teaching were carefully compared. In order to have a clear picture of the agreement and the disagreement between the students and the teachers, some requirements were set. For the aspects of teaching grouped in the category of Shared Perspectives, the difference between the mean scores received from the students and those from the teachers was required to be less than “0.1”. For

the aspects of teaching grouped in the category of Opposed Perspectives, the mean score received from one of the participating groups was required to be under “2” whereas the mean score received from another group was required to be over “2”. Moreover, the difference between the two mean scores was required to be over “0.5”.

- **Similarities and differences between students and teachers concerning their perceptions on the effective aspects of teaching**

The following table (Table 4.14) shows the agreement and the disagreement between the students and the teachers concerning the forty aspects of teaching with reference to the categories of Morgan and Morris (1999). The mean scores for each aspect of teaching are given in the brackets after the aspect, with the first one from the students and the second one from the teachers. Aspects of teaching given in bullets were identified by the participants of the study, not from the given list of the aspects in the questionnaire.

Table 4.14 Classification of the students' and the teachers' effective aspects of teaching using the categories of Morgan and Morris (1999)

Shared perspectives	**# 2** Teachers encourage high standards of accuracy (2.25, 2.33) **# 7** Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson (2.28, 2.33) **# 17** Teachers give clear instructions and explanations (2.72, 2.67) **#40** Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework (1.91, 2.0) ● Good teacher-student relationship ● Positive and negative reinforcement
Disparate perspectives	**#5** Teachers use various strategies to motivate students (2.6, 2.67)
Opposed perspectives	**#8** Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students (1.82, 2.33) **#16** Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques (2.33, 1.67) **#26** Teachers finish the lesson on time (2.48, 1.67) **#34** Teachers use test, competitions, etc. to assess understanding (2.24, 1.67)
Unilateral perspectives	● Teacher's appearance (by one student) ● Teacher's interest in English (by students) ● Teacher's knowledge about the British culture (by one student) ● Teacher's passing on life experience to students (by one student)
Paradoxical perspectives	**#6** Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning (2.23, 3).

* *Additional category to the classification of Morgan and Morris (1999)*

The aspects of teaching belonging to each of the five perspectives will be discussed below.

Shared perspectives

Four aspects of teaching listed in the questionnaire were identified to fit into this category. They included "Teachers encourage high standards of accuracy" (#2), "Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson" (#7), "Teachers give clear instructions and explanations"(#17) and "Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework" (#40). It was clearly seen that the students and the teachers shared views on some of the aspects in the category of High Expectation, Methods & Strategies and Homework.

Two other aspects of teaching in this category were identified from the interviews. Besides "positive and negative reinforcement", there was "a good teacher-student relationship". Not only students kept talking about the importance of being friendly and approachable to be an effective teacher at the focus group interview, teachers also recognised the importance of having a good relationship with their students. For example, Teacher B said at the interview,

> *we have had a quite good relationship and they understand my way of teaching.* (Teacher B)

Teacher C also said at the interview,

> *… the good relationship with them … helps the teaching, they will just listen to you if they think you are a friend of theirs, … they won't play tricks on you during the class time.* (Teacher C)

In fact, Teacher C used very simple words to describe what she thought she should do with her students:

> *love students… the basic thing to teach.* (Teacher C)

Disparate perspectives

"Teachers use various strategies to motivate students" (#5) was classified into the category of disparate perspectives. The participating students and teachers found motivation important for learning a language in different ways. While students tended to focus more on the activities inside the classrooms, like competitions, songs and movies, teachers tended to focus more on the activities outside the classroom. For example, Teacher A suggested online learning, You Tube video, TV programmes and drama class. Teacher A also mentioned at the interview after the first class visit that students had to make mistakes to realise their problems before getting an incentive or motivation to learn. Apart from games and jokes, Teacher B was aware that it was necessary for her to understand the lives of her students in order to motivate them. As she said,

> *I think the teacher should know the life of their students very well. Sometimes I use the topic of their daily issues, let's say: idols of their daily life, [In this way, I] arouse their interest to start a conversation, to start a topic first.* (Teacher B)

In general, the teachers' strategies of motivating their students did not seem to be restricted in the classroom. They seemed to have a wider repertoire of strategies than

their students did.

Opposed perspectives

Four aspects of teaching listed in the questionnaire were identified to fit into this category. They included “Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students” (#8), “Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques” (#16), “Teachers finish the lesson on time” (#26) and “Teachers use test, competitions, etc. to assess understanding” (#34). In other words, the participating students and their teachers did not share their views on the aspects of teaching in the category of Planning, Methods & Strategies, Time & Resource Management, and Assessment.

It was because the participating teachers would like to discuss the lesson plan with their students at the beginning of the lesson so as to give them a better idea about what they were going to learn in advance. However, most of the students except those of Cluster 2 did not seem to find it necessary and appreciate it.

As discussed before, teachers admitted they seldom applied problem-solving techniques. They seemed to find their students not cognitively smart enough for the

more critical learning strategies. They were not very willing to offer their students challenging and demanding tasks to do. It was shown from the ratings of Cluster 2 students that two of them found not being challenged by their teachers at all as they gave the lowest rating to their teachers' problem-solving techniques.

Furthermore, teachers were found not as worried as their students concerning the time issue though they all realised that time was always an issue. They were also found more eager than their students to use tests or competitions for motivation to learn rather than assessing understanding though they were aware that tests were part of the whole curriculum. In fact, some of the participating students expressed their concern about assessments at the focus group interview. They preferred tests or competitions for fun but they also understood that it was part of the school policy to include assessments into their learning process.

Unilateral perspectives

Four aspects of teaching were identified for this category. They were all suggested by the students, not the teachers. Three of them were found in the responses given when they were asked to give the top three qualities of a good English teacher in the questionnaire while one of them was raised at the focus group interview.

Though “appearance” was named as one of the top qualities of a good English teacher in a questionnaire, some of the students expressed that they did not like beautiful teachers and explained,

> *… a beautiful person may spend too much time and focus too much on her appearance, putting on make-up…* (Student 11)

Another student even joked that students might easily get distracted if teachers were too beautiful. Nonetheless, students expressed their views at the focus group interview that inner beauty was more important than the outer one but they emphasised that a tidy and pleasant appearance was still expected from a teacher.

Students also mentioned that knowledge about the British culture could help make a teacher more effective. This might be explained by the reason that students found learning the British culture important for learning English and that they expected their teachers would share some of the British culture with them.

As said before, students seemed to have high expectations for their teachers’ behaviours. They not only expected their teachers to be knowledgeable in the language, they also expected their teachers to be “perfect” in areas other than the subject. That was why they hoped that their teachers could pass on their life experiences to them. There were reasons to believe that an effective English teacher

shared some of the characteristics of teachers of other subjects. There could be some universal features that teachers of various subjects should possess in order to be effective.

Another aspect that was identified for the category of unilateral perspectives was the teacher's own interest in English. The students at the focus group interview overwhelmingly agreed that teachers should be interested in English if they were to be effective. They added that teachers who had no interest in learning English could not encourage them to learn English.

Paradoxical Perspectives

This is an additional category to the four categories of Morgan and Morris (1999). Opposed perspectives which are, in fact, shared in similar fashion by both teachers and students belong to this new category. In this study, "Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning" (#6) was found to fit into this category.

Statistically, this aspect of teaching was ranked at the top of the teachers' list. The mean score it received from the teachers was "3". This meant that all three teachers

found it absolutely essential to provide their students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. In contrast, the mean score it received from the students was only “2.23”. This meant that the students generally found this aspect of teaching important but not essential. However, it was reported in the previous section that both the teachers and the students, in fact, had a consensus on this aspect. Although the teachers claimed that students should be responsible for their own learning, they were still in charge of their students’ learning. Similarly, students still relied on their teachers a lot even if they recognised the importance of self-learning.

To sum up, both the students and the teachers of the present study did not rank the forty aspects of teaching equally. There were some aspects of teaching which they had opposite views on though there were also some aspects of teaching which they had similar views on. However, even if they agreed that teachers should use various strategies to motivate students, the strategies suggested by the students were not the same as those suggested by the teachers. Furthermore, some of the effective aspects of teaching mentioned by the students were not mentioned by the teachers. Overall, they were all concerned about Methods and Strategies and an effective classroom they both perceived appeared to be a teacher-centred one.

- **Comparisons of the teacher's self-evaluation with the students' evaluation of the same teacher**

In the following paragraphs, comparisons will be made between the teacher's self-evaluation and the students' evaluation of the same teacher. Based on the same list given in the first part of the questionnaire, students were asked to evaluate the teaching performance of their teacher while teachers were asked to evaluate their own teaching in the second part of the questionnaire. The following table (Table 4.15) shows the strengths as well as the weaknesses of individual teachers identified by their students and themselves.

The strengths identified by the teachers or the students refer to the aspects of teaching they give "4" which means "strongly agree" whereas the weaknesses identified refer to the aspects of teaching they give "1" which means "strongly disagree". In other words, the aspects of teaching listed in the "strengths" columns (S) are the aspects which the teachers and the students find "effective" and the aspects of teaching listed in the "weaknesses" columns (W) are the aspects which the teachers and the students find "not effective" except "Teachers focus on factual memory (#31)". As reported previously, both groups of the participants did not value factual memory and so if they put "1" for #31, it means that teachers do not focus on factual memory and so it

should be regarded as a strength, not a weakness of the teacher. According to the following table (Table 4.15), all three classes found that their English teachers did not focus on factual memory. Moreover, both Teacher B and C agreed with their students.

Table 4.15 Strengths and weaknesses of the three participating teachers' teaching performance

Aspects of Teaching	**Class A**				**Class B**				**Class C**			
	T		**Ss**		**T**		**Ss**		**T**		**Ss**	
	S	**W**	**S**	**W**	**S**	**W**	**S**	**W**	**S**	**W**	**S**	**W**
1. Teachers encourage high standards of effort.	●		●		●						●	
2. Teachers encourage high standards of accuracy.												
3. Teachers encourage high standards of presentation.												●
4. Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students.		●										
5. Teachers use various strategies to motivate students.					●						●	
6. Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.		●						●				
7. Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson.	●							●				

Table 4.15 Strengths and weaknesses of the three participating teachers' teaching performance

Aspects of Teaching	Class A				Class B				Class C			
	T		Ss		T		Ss		T		Ss	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
8. Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students.				●		●		●				●
9. Teachers have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class.							●				●	
10. Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum.				●		●		●				
11. Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson.	●							●		●		●
12. Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson.			●								●	
13. Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods.											●	
14. Teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives.						●					●	
15. Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding.							●			●	●	
16. Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques.										●	●	

Table 4.15 Strengths and weaknesses of the three participating teachers' teaching performance

Aspects of Teaching	Class A				Class B				Class C			
	T		Ss		T		Ss		T		Ss	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
17. Teachers give clear instructions and explanations.							●	●	●		●	
18. Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement.						●						
19. Teachers listen and respond to students.	●								●		●	
20. Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson.	●								●		●	
21. Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately.						●	●	●	●		●	
22. Teachers praise good achievement and effort.			●						●		●	
23. Teachers treat students fairly.											●	
24. Teachers work well with other members of staff.						●					●	
25. Teachers structure the lesson to use the time available well.						●	●					
26. Teachers finish the lesson on time.			●				●				●	
27. Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning.						●						

Table 4.15 Strengths and weaknesses of the three participating teachers' teaching performance

Aspects of Teaching	Class A				Class B				Class C			
	T		Ss		T		Ss		T		Ss	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
28. Teachers use an appropriate pace.							●				●	
29. Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students.	●						●			●	●	
30. Teachers focus on understanding and meaning.	●						●				●	
31. Teachers focus on factual memory.				●		●		●		●		●
32. Teachers focus on skills mastery.	●					●						
33. Teachers focus on applications in real-life settings.								●				
34. Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding.	●		●			●	●					
35. Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up.	●						●					
36. Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work.	●		●				●				●	
37. Teachers encourage students to do better next time.	●										●	
38. Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson.	●							●				

Table 4.15 Strengths and weaknesses of the three participating teachers' teaching performance

Aspects of Teaching	Class A				Class B				Class C			
	T		Ss		T		Ss		T		Ss	
	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W	S	W
39. Teachers follow up homework previously set in the lesson.	●					●		●	●			
40. Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework.				●		●		●				●

Key: "T"= Teacher, "Ss" = students, "S"= the strengths identified, "W"=the weaknesses identified

Referring to the number of strengths identified by the students and the teachers, it was discovered that they did not have a similar rating. While Teacher A recognised more strengths of herself than her students did, both Teacher B and C relatively recognised fewer strengths of themselves than their students did.

For Teacher A, she identified totally fourteen strengths and only two weaknesses of herself but her students identified six strengths and four weaknesses. Of those strengths identified, there were three aspects of teaching (#1, #34, #36) which both Teacher A and her students found "effective". However, these three aspects were not the "most" significant aspects identified by both of the groups. For the weaknesses identified, Teacher A did not agree with her class at all. The weaknesses specified by the students did not match those specified by Teacher A. Referring to her own weaknesses, Teacher A would like to be better able to use tasks of different degree of

difficulty to challenge her students (#4) and to provide her students with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning (#6). These two aspects were, in fact, considered "absolutely essential" by Teacher A herself in the first part of the questionnaire. It was very likely that she considered these two teaching aspects so significant that she regarded them as her weaknesses which always needed improvement.

For Teacher B, she identified only two strengths but thirteen weaknesses of herself. On the other hand, her students identified twelve strengths and also twelve weaknesses. The reason why not many strengths were identified by Teacher B herself could be due to the high standard she set for herself. As she claimed at the interview,

> *I've got high standard, … I … high expectation of my students, …even to myself and I think it's very very difficult to have a perfect lesson.* (Teacher B)

She also claimed that she strived herself to do better. She went on to explain,

> *… sometimes I organised a lesson to be perfect but finally it turned out to be a bit less than perfect or just so… so or it's just a satisfactory lesson.* (Teacher B)

She admitted that she seldom had perfect lessons and when she looked back after each lesson, she always found the lessons not good enough. She further explained that it was not only because there was always room for improvement, but also because of her students. As she said,

> *another reason is it depends on the students, I always have afternoon classes with [them]. They're a bit tired… their reaction also affects my performance.* (Teacher B)

Teacher B seemed to be talking about the idea of the interdependence of teacher and student mentioned in Chapter 2 (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). The students' responses to the teachers might affect the teachers' decisions in the class which might, in turn, affect the teachers' teaching performance. None of the strengths identified by Teacher B were considered "effective" by her students except #31. Her students found her excellent in other areas. Not only was there variation between the students and Teacher B concerning the teacher's strengths, but also there was variation among the students. Almost half of the class found "Teachers give clear instructions and explanations" (#17) a strength of Teacher B, another half found it a weakness. Similarly, half of them found "Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately" (#21) one of her strengths, another half found it one of her weaknesses. Teacher B seemed to have more agreement with her class concerning the weaknesses. She shared views with her students that she needed improvement on four aspects of teaching (#10, #21, #39 and #40). Of these four aspects, both "Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum" (#10) and "Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework" (#40) were found to be in the list of their shared perspectives.

For Teacher C, she identified six strengths and five weaknesses of herself while her students identified twenty-one strengths and five weaknesses. Teacher C, comparatively, agreed more with the students relating to her strengths in the classrooms. There were six aspects of teaching (#17, #19, #20, #21, #22 and #31) which both of them found “effective”. Moreover, two of these aspects were considered effective by both the students and the teachers. One was “Teachers give clear instructions and explanations” (#17) and one was “Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson” (#20). For Teacher C, there was only one aspect of teaching which both her students and she would like to have improvement. They both thought that there was room for improving #11 aspect of teaching (Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson). When asked why there were not too many “4” for herself, Teacher C laughed and replied that it was because she was being honest. Quite obviously, her students would think that Teacher C under-rated herself.

In short, Teacher A seemed to have over-rated herself while Teacher B and C seemed to have under-rated themselves. At the interviews, it was observed that both Teacher A and B looked more confident than Teacher C did. This finding seemed to coincide with the teachers’ profiles developed in Section 4.1.2. Where did Teacher A’s

confidence come from? Was Teacher B too self-critical and was Teacher C's lower self-evaluation indicative of poor self-esteem? Due to the time constraints, not much further information had been collected. It would be interesting if information about their life histories could be collected so that all these questions might be answered.

The teachers' life histories could also provide information for explaining the consistency between the students' evaluation and the teachers' self-evaluation. It might also be useful to examine the "most" effective aspects of teaching identified by the participants. The next table (Table 4.16) shows the "most" effective aspects of teaching identified by the students and the teachers in each of the three classes. The list was worked out by comparing Table 4.9 with the rankings of the three individual classes (Appendix V). Aspects of teaching which received 2.5 or above as their mean scores from the students and also identified "absolutely essential" by the teachers were highlighted.

Table 4.16 The "most" effective aspects of teaching identified by the students and the teachers of Class A, B and C

Class A Students' "most" effective aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential" by Teacher A
#5 Teachers use various strategies to motivate students. #17 Teachers give clear instructions and explanations. #20 Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson. #35 Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up. #36 Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work.
Class B Students' "most" effective aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential" by Teacher B
#9 Teachers have necessary materials and resources ready for the class. #23 Teachers treat students fairly.
Class C Students' "most" effective aspects of teaching considered "absolutely essential" by Teacher C
#5 Teachers use various strategies to motivate students. #12 Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson. #13 Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods. #14 Teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives. #15 Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding. #17 Teachers give clear instructions and explanations. #18 Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement. #19 Teachers listen and respond to students. #20 Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson. #25 Teachers structure the lesson to use the time available well. #28 Teachers use an appropriate pace. #35 Teachers recognize misconceptions and clear them up. #36 Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work. #37 Teachers encourage students to do better next time.

Comparing the three classes in the above table (Table 4.16), it was found that Teacher C agreed on far more effective aspects of teaching with her students than the other

two teachers did. There were totally fourteen aspects of teaching which Teacher C and her students both agreed on but there were only five for Teacher A and her class or only two for Teacher B and her class. This could suggest that with a better agreement on the aspects of teaching, it would be more likely that the teacher's self-evaluation was consistent with his/her students' evaluation. This finding seemed to agree with the study of Kember and Wong (2000) as well as that of Goldstein and Benassi (2006).

There were also reasons to believe that students who shared more views on the effective aspects of teaching with their teachers might learn better than those who did not. Referring to the students' academic results collected from the school which participated in the present study, students of Class C got higher marks in their first term examination, conducted one week after the research was carried out. They got 60.4 as their average English language score whereas students of Class A got 58.5 and students of Class B got 57.4. Though these scores were very close to one another, it was possible that students learnt better if they perceived "effective teaching" in a way similar to their teacher's.

To sum up, Teacher A tended to over-rate herself whereas Teacher B and C tended to under-rate themselves. In addition, Teacher C's self-evaluation was found more

consistent with her students' evaluation. This could be due to the fact that Teacher C had more agreement on the effective aspects of teaching with her students. Their better consensus on the effective aspects of teaching might result in a better academic result of Class C.

This section has reported and compared the "most" and the "least" effective aspects of teaching ranked by both the students and the teachers. It has also compared the teacher's self-evaluation with the students' evaluation of the same teacher. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is no intention to over-generalise the findings of the present study. However, the findings do involve the participation of 106 students together with their 3 teachers. Their opinions are worth studying and paying attention to. In the next section, a discussion will be made based on the salient findings reported in this section.

4.2 Discussions

As stated before, the main research question of the present study is: Do the concepts of effective aspects of teaching differ for students and teachers in Hong Kong? In the previous section, the question has been addressed by reporting the findings of the study. As parallels have been drawn with the literature throughout the chapter, the key

analytical issues will be drawn together in this section. They will be discussed one by one below.

- **Integrative use of the approaches to identifying the meaning of effective teaching**

It was said in Chapter 2 that different approaches were adopted to identify the meanings of teaching effectiveness and it was possible that they could all co-exit. Referring to Section 4.1, the participants of the present study have produced a list of criteria for evaluating teaching effectiveness and the list is found to comprise most of the approaches mentioned.

Apart from the Hay McBer Report (2000) which is a process-product research study, other approaches have been identified in the list of the participants' effective aspects of teaching. For the presage-product approach, both the students and the teachers believed that psychological features could make a teacher effective. For example, students mentioned "being sincere, honest, helpful, kind, caring, ……" for the requirements of an effective teacher at the focus group interview. For teachers, Teacher C stressed the importance of loving students in her questionnaire and Teacher B admitted at the interview that she had to improve her patience in the class. Various

teaching styles can also be identified. Referring to the dichotomies mentioned in Chapter 2, teachers of the present study tended to be “directive’ instead of “non-directive’ and “traditional” instead of “progressive”. In other words, their lessons tended to be “teacher-centred” instead of “student-centred”. As described before, their lessons were found highly structured, with the teacher dominating the classrooms and students having little, if any, say in their own learning. Attention was also paid by a student to the teacher’s pedagogical knowledge, stressing the notion that teaching was a complex cognitive skill.

All in all, the findings of the study reinforce the idea that different approaches need not be incompatible or mutually exclusive. Even if one approach which used to be popular is fading out, it does not mean that it has no strengths any more. It may still be adopted somewhere. Similarly, the currently most popular approach may fade out and be replaced some days. There is no reason why all these approaches cannot be used integratively.

- **The “invisible” learning and teaching situation in Hong Kong**

Referring to the visible teaching and learning of Hattie (2009) introduced in Chapter 2, the teaching and learning situation in Hong Kong does not seem to be very visible.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be considered rather “invisible”.

According to Hattie (2009), visible teaching and learning take place “when learning is the explicit goal” (p.22). However, the findings of the study showed that the participating teachers seldom shared the learning goals they had set with their students. Furthermore, visible teaching and learning take place “when [the goal] is appropriately challenging, when the teacher and the student both (in their various ways) seek to ascertain whether and to what degree the challenging goal is attained” (Hattie, 2009, p.22). The findings of the study illustrated that the teachers did not challenge their students very often mainly because they found their students not cognitively ready for difficult tasks which required more critical thinking or deep learning strategies. Visible teaching and learning also take place “when there is deliberate practice aimed at attaining mastery of the goal, when there is feedback given and sought” (Hattie, 1990, p.22). Based on the findings of the study, there might be sufficient practice but whether suitable feedback was offered by the teachers was not clear. Hattie (2009) stresses that it is necessary to have “active, passionate, and engaging people (teacher, student, peers, and so on) participating in the act of learning” (p.22) if visible teaching and learning are to take place. However, the current findings suggested that the majority of the students were not active enough

and they depended heavily on their teachers. Like what Hwang et al (2002) said in Section 2.4, they behaved like other “silent Chinese students”.

Based on the definitions of visible teaching and learning of Hattie (2009), there are reasons to believe that the aims and the means of teaching and learning in Hong Kong are rather “invisible”. However, it is possible for them to be more “visible” with the implementation of the new 3+3+4[1] academic reform. It is because recommendations made in the *Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide – The Future is Now: from Vision to Realisation* (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2007) seem to echo with the suggestions Hattie (2009) has made about visible teaching and learning.

First of all, seven learning goals of the curriculum framework are given in the first booklet of the Guide called *The Student Programme to Achieve the Vision of the New Academic Structure*. One of the goals is to enable students to acquire skills which are necessary for being life-long learners. Another goal stated is to enable students to develop positive attitudes towards learning. The surface, deep and constructed/ conceptual learning strategies seem to be the skills students need in order to be life-long learners. Furthermore, the engagement or passion of students in learning Hattie (2009) talks about seems to be associated with the positive attitudes mentioned

in the local educational booklet. Booklet 1 also explains the guiding principles for designing the new curriculum framework. One of the principles is a balance between breadth and depth. Another principle is to help students learn how to learn or develop their enquiry-based/ self-directed learning. These principles coincide with the deep and constructed/ conceptual learning strategies or a more student-centred approach to teaching advocated by Hattie (2009).

In Booklet 3, *Effective Learning and Teaching*, the teachers' challenges for realising the rationale underlying the New Academic Structure reform are discussed. Teachers are advised, in the booklet, to develop students' thinking and problem-solving skills. This again reinforces the importance of developing higher level or more critical learning strategies in the new curriculum. However, teachers are advised not to eliminate Direct Instruction, as suggested by Hattie (2009). One of the main reasons, given by the booklet, is that the approach may be most relevant when the objectives are to teach explicit procedures or fact. Furthermore, other learning strategies such as enquiry-based approach may not be well suited to conveying information, especially if the students have little background knowledge.

Besides being viewed as a "direct instruction" or an "enquiry", teaching is viewed by

Booklet 3 as a “co-construction” which involves teachers and their students in interaction. As it is said in the booklet, “the teacher is as much a learner as the students” in this approach (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2007, p.5). This view resembles the principle of Hattie’s (2009) visible teaching and learning. It is also said in the booklet that the power relationship in the classroom is unusual in the sense that teachers and students are of “equal status” and both contribute to the general building up of knowledge. This “power-sharing” idea is not only very similar to the one mentioned by Cooper and McIntyre (1996), but also very similar to Hattie’s (2009) analogy of teachers as the students and students as the teachers.

Booklet 3 also recommends creating a “learning to learn” school culture through the teachers’ professional learning, as Hattie (2009) does. The booklet suggests carrying out joint enquires or evaluations with colleagues, building up social capital through learning, supporting and talking with one another, engaging in critical and responsive learning through reflection, self-evaluation, experimentation and responding to feedback, and valuing both teachers’ professional learning and student learning. All these suggestions should be supported by Hattie (2009) who proposes a computerised system of Hattie et al (2007) for teachers “to set targets for their students based on the students’ prior progress, then creating a dialogue among principal and teachers about

the desirability of these targets, and then closely monitoring the success of achieving the targets" (p.241). This kind of discussions among teachers about teaching is like the discussions of a collaborative sharing team. In short, it is advised that professional development should be supported through a range of formal and informal training opportunities. As said in Booklet 10, it is "not just a matter of providing short-term training courses or add-on activities for teachers, but a continuous and interactive process making a sustainable impact on schools" (Quality Assurance Division, Education Bureau, 2007, p.1).

All in all, the aims and the means of the learning and teaching in Hong Kong are currently rather "invisible" according to the findings of the study but it is suggested that they can be more "visible" with the implementation of the new academic reform. The concern is whether or not the western ideas, like the visible learning and teaching of Hattie (2009), can easily be imported from the west. If not, why? This will be discussed in the following point.

- **Incompatible western's perception of effective teaching**

Referring to the previous point, the new academic reform can help make the learning and teaching situation in Hong Kong more "visible" in the sense of Hattie (2009).

However, can the idea of Hattie (2009) easily be accepted and implemented in Hong Kong? There have been difficulties in importing educational ideas from the western culture to the eastern one, like Hong Kong. As reported earlier, the main difference between the findings of the present study and the existing literature is the participants' preference for teacher-centred approaches. The student-centred approaches advocated in the western countries do not seem to be popular among the participants of the study. Both participating groups opted for a strong teacher role though they did not seem to share the view quantitatively. This "paradoxical" aspect is considered an additional perspective to the categories of Morgan and Morris (1999). The participating teachers were found to be authoritarian in the classroom even if they claimed that their students should be provided with more chances to take responsibility for their own learning.

It is generally agreed that teachers' knowledge base may comprise information about how they acquire knowledge themselves. As said in Chapter 2, they may recall their own learning experiences (Ramsden, 1993). The preference of the participating teachers for an authoritarian image could be explained by how they were trained to be a teacher and how they were taught when they were students. Whereas the western culture praises defiance, the Chinese culture praises obedience. In the western

countries, children are always encouraged to make queries or even challenge the authority. On the contrary, questions are seldom welcome in a Chinese society. Chinese children are expected to follow what they are told to do without asking why. This may be the way that the teachers of the study have been brought up. Therefore, even if they find it logically sensible to release ownership to their students, they still have a deeply held belief that their students should respect them, without challenging the decisions they make in relation to teaching and learning. This has illustrated the complexity of the relationship between the eastern and western cultures as they apply in the area of education.

Instead of rejecting the western ideas, the teacher participants openly espoused their support for them. This contradiction could be because the teachers have experienced a dissonance between their cultural preference for authoritarian approaches and their awareness that this is incompatible with the literature they may have read. When these western ideas conflict with their deeply held cultural beliefs, their cultural impulse is likely to be much stronger than the received wisdom from the western texts. To reconcile with the confusion, they build up a home-grown approach: they will display a surface respect for the western authorities, whilst, in practice, adhering to their core, culturally based belief system.

In fact, the conventional wisdom established from the educational research findings in the western countries concerning good teaching or good learning may be driven by ideology rather than evidence. People may follow the so-called principles blindly without taking cultural variations into consideration. For example, surface approach to learning is generally perceived as a low-level approach whereas deep approach a high-level one. In fact, surface learning strategies do not have to be inferior and deep learning strategies may not always be better. As Watkins (1996) points out, “failure to find the predicted correlations with academic achievement may be a reflection that deeper approaches to learning are not always rewarded by academic grades” (p.13). The situation in Hong Kong may have been misinterpreted by the westerners. Although surface strategies seem to be a common approach to learning among the students of the present study, it does not have to mean that they are all rote learners rather than deep learners. Volet and Renshaw (1996) report the findings of Biggs (1994) that western observers have been incorrect in calling the surface strategy “rote” learning in the sense of learning “without understanding”. They also report the interview data from Tang’s (1991) as well as Kember and Gow’s (1990) research which show that Hong Kong students do not simply rote learn unprocessed information but attempt to understand the new information in a systematic step-by-step fashion first and then memorise the information deeply as a means

towards understanding. It is possible that the surface strategies popular among the students of the present study are equated with “deep memorising”, using the term of Tang (1991). Further work is, certainly, necessary to determine whether the participating students practise rote learning or meaningful memorisation when using surface learning strategies.

All in all, findings generated in the western contexts are not necessarily applicable in the local context. The western perception of effective teaching may not be compatible with that found in Hong Kong. There may be alternative interpretations of “effective teaching” apart from the dominant one in the western countries.

- **A more active role of students and teachers in teacher evaluation**

As said previously, one reason why the western theories are not easily imported to Hong Kong may be due to their incompatibility with the eastern belief. Another reason may be because the practice of teachers is influenced by the teachers’ sense of having to conform to the school or the Government. Under the top-down approach to the educational administration, theories are always imposed on the teachers rather than initiated by the teachers themselves when they are under a bottom-up approach. How much teachers can achieve seems to be constrained by the context in which they

work. As reported before, teachers of the study expressed their anxiety at the interviews about the duties they were assigned for. It looks as if they also have to obey a higher authority. If the higher authority does not share power with the teachers, how can it be possible for the teachers to share power with their students? The centralised and top-down system of the educational administration not only constrains the teachers but also the students in Hong Kong.

Justifications for the teachers' self-evaluation and the students' evaluation of their teachers have been given. Both teachers and students should be given a more active role in teacher evaluation. Their contributions can be regarded as a form of empowerment. The findings of the study have illustrated that it is worth inviting them in evaluating teaching effectiveness as both of the groups have provided useful and helpful ideas on the topic. For the students, they were found solemn and participated actively at the focus group interview. They seemed to have realised that they were doing something important and so took it seriously. For the teachers, they tried very best to squeeze time for the interviews and were open-minded to discuss their weaknesses. The findings generated from the study may not be huge in quantity as the sampling size is not very big. However, the findings are certainly beneficial to all the people involved, not only to the researcher for the sake of the study but also to the

students and the teachers. For students, they have been given a chance to discuss issues which concern them. For teachers, they have been given an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching. As suggested in Chapter 1, it is worth conducting teacher evaluation with their involvement. After all, they are the key characters of the process. This form of empowerment may allow teachers and students more freedom in trying out theories that may benefit learning. Therefore, giving students and teachers more autonomy can help make the western ideas and the eastern beliefs more compatible with each other.

To change the whole school culture is not easy. This requires willingness and commitment from every single person in the school, including the Principal and all members of staff. It is hoped that the “learning to learn” school culture can be created so that staff can be involved in decision-making and their professional knowledge can be used in the formulation and evaluation of school policy. It is important that teachers are open to the new ideas and willing to be wrong (Hattie, 2009). Principals and all members of staff should, therefore, work together to create an environment “where error is welcomed as a learning opportunity, where discarding incorrect knowledge and understandings is welcomed, and where participants can feel safe to learn, re-learn, and explore knowledge and understanding” (Hattie, 2009, 239).

- **Students' perceptions of effective teaching**

Referring to Section 4.1.1, two clusters of students were identified among the students who participated in the study. The majority group was labelled "passive" and the minority group was labelled "proactive". Taking their different characteristics into consideration, they should prefer different teaching strategies. Since proactive students value the freedom offered to them, they should tend to opt for self-directed learning along the continuum of teaching strategies from Cooper and McIntyre (1996). They have confidence to study independently and so require minimal control from their teachers. On the contrary, passive students would like to be controlled by their teachers and so should be more likely to prefer transmission strategies. There may be a mis-match between the passive students' perceptions of effective teaching and the non-traditional teaching strategies or between the proactive students' perceptions of effective teaching and the traditional teaching strategies. The figure (Figure 4.2) below shows their preferred teaching strategies.

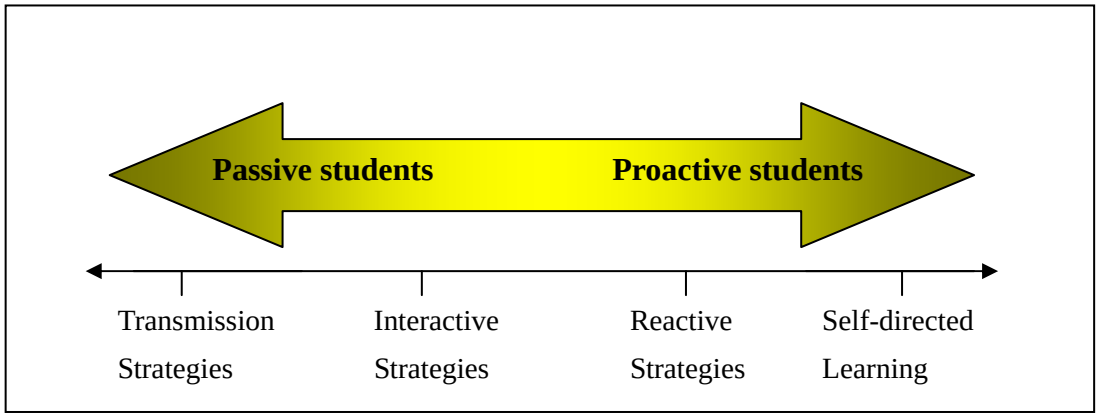

Figure 4.2 Preferred teaching strategies of passive and proactive students

- **Teachers' perceptions of effective teaching**

Similarly, teachers of the study should also have their favourite teaching strategies due to their different beliefs in teaching. Even though the three participating teachers generally practise interactive teaching strategies, they do not share the same tendency on the continuum of transmission-interactive-reactive teaching strategies (Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). While one teacher practises transmission strategies more often, the other two practise integrative or reactive teaching strategies more often. For reactive teaching strategies, some can be student-initiated whereas some teacher-initiated. It is possible that teachers with similar concepts in teaching practise similar sets of teaching strategies. The following figure (Figure 4.3) proposes the teachers' preferences for their teaching strategies.

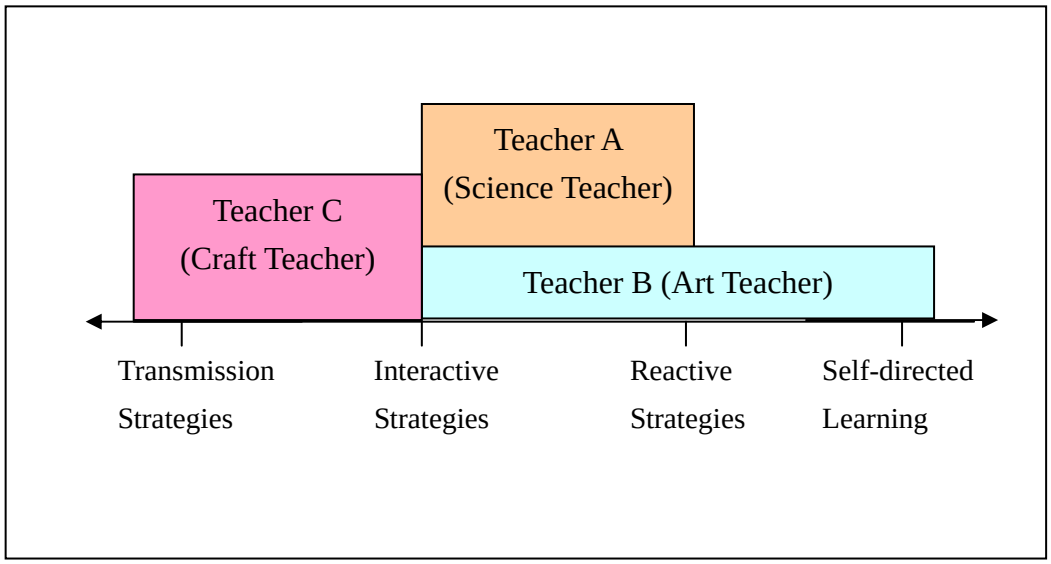

Figure 4.3 Preferred teaching strategies of the teachers

The reason why teachers who see teaching as a science or an art tend to practise

interactive or reactive teaching strategies may be because “science” teachers always refer to the research theories when planning their lessons and “art” teachers are always creative and do not mind making changes even during their lessons. There are reasons to believe that “art” teachers are more likely to move one step further towards self-directed learning than “science” teachers as art seems to stress the importance of personal responses and so may be more closely related to student-centred approaches. On the other hand, teachers who see teaching as a craft do not stress the research theories and they are more conservative to allow any changes in the lessons. They would rather focus on transmitting the knowledge to their students who are supposed to practise over time in order to gain knowledge.

- **Matching the perceptions of students and teachers**

The preferred teaching strategies of both the teachers and the students can be shown in the next figure (Figure 4.4) after combining Figure 4.2 with Figure 4.3.

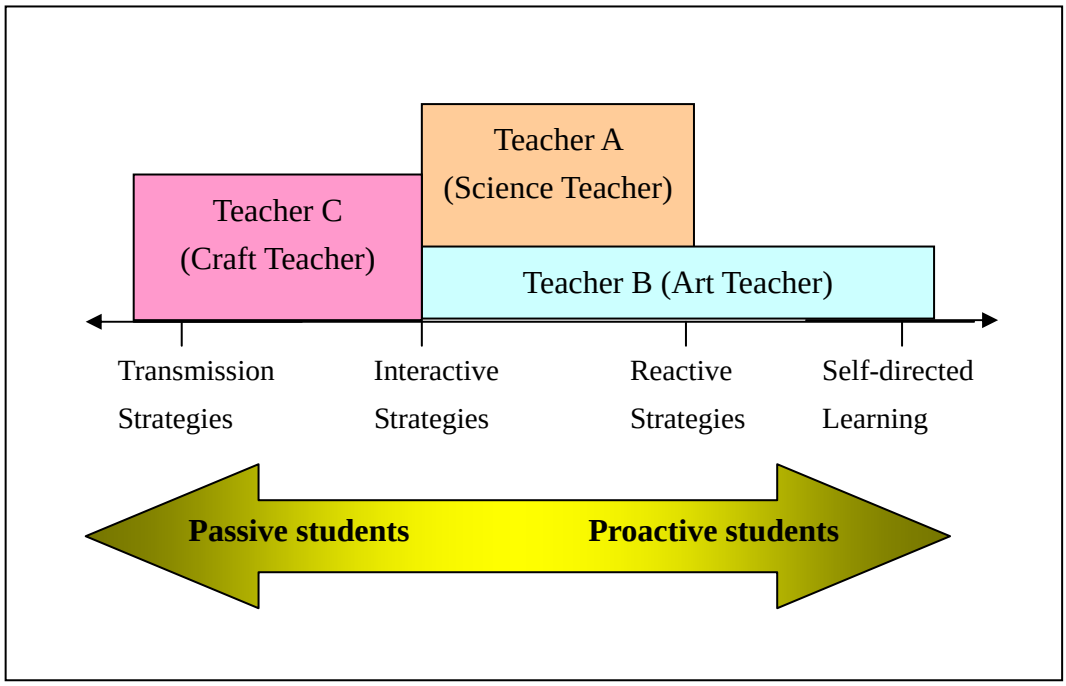

Figure 4.4 Preferred teaching strategies of students and teachers

Based on the above figure (Figure 4.4), there are reasons to believe that passive students match with "craft" rather than "art" teachers while proactive students match with "art" rather than "craft" teachers. The following figure (Figure 4.5) shows the preferred teachers of passive and proactive students.

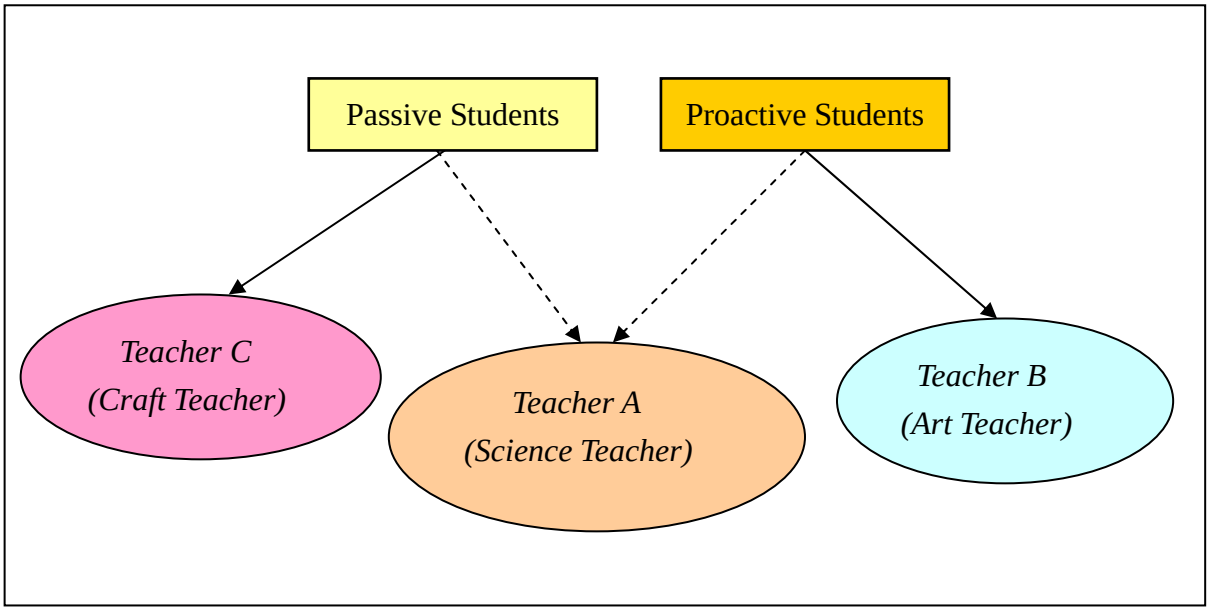

Figure 4.5 Preferred teachers of passive and proactive students

Since passive students do not want to take charge of their own learning, they prefer taking orders and following what they are ordered to do and so like “craft” teachers who are experts to them. What they need to do is imitate the behaviours of the “craft” teacher. They may also like “science” teachers who may project an authoritarian image because science might be taken to imply a more rigid view of knowledge, with the teachers being the arbiters of what is right and wrong. It is unlikely that passive students prefer “art” teachers. On the other hand, proactive students are more likely to be fond of “art” teachers. It is because proactive students are not passive with their learning. They may like “art” teachers who are creative and will reflect on their teaching performance as art is concerned with imagination. They may also like “science” teachers who can be considered creative as they are supposed to keep themselves updated with the new theories from the research. It is unlikely that they will be fond of “craft” teachers.

- **Teaching as a mix of a science, a craft and an art**

Referring to the point previously made, it would be better for teachers to see teaching as a mix of a science, a craft and an art so that they can adopt the teaching strategies preferred by their students and help maximise learning. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are no reasons why the three views of teaching cannot coexist. They are just

three differing views of conceptualisation of teaching (Figure 4.6).

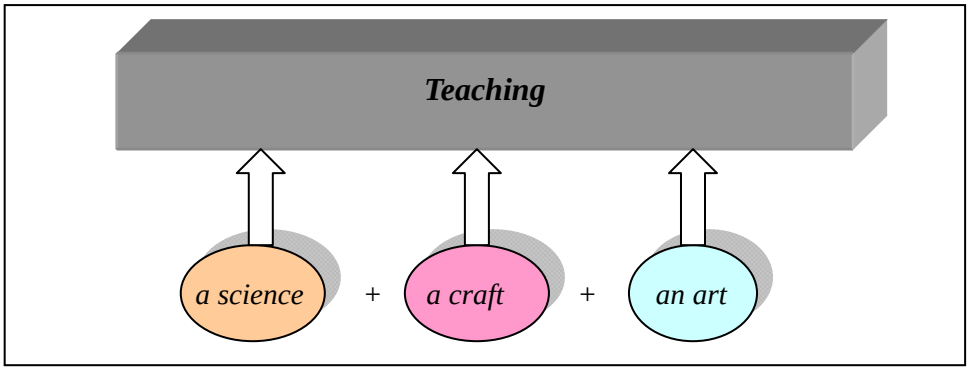

Figure 4.6 Comceptualisation of teaching

In fact, there has been evidence in the present study suggesting that teaching is not solely a science or a craft or an art, but a combination of the three of them. First of all, it is not difficult to find that both the students and the teachers see teaching as a craft. It is because they basically agree with the forty teaching skills listed in the questionnaire and the most effective teaching skill identified by both of them is that teachers should give clear instructions and explanations. Both of the participating groups have also mentioned the usefulness of reinforcements to maintain a desirable behaviour or to terminate an unacceptable behaviour. Students have even expressed repeatedly that they view their teachers as a model whom they will imitate. All this evidence illustrates the participants' view of teaching as a craft.

Concerning research theories, they may not be explicitly articulated and teachers may not be consciously aware of them. However, it is quite certain that teachers are

applying them in their classrooms. For example, it is found from the study that the teaching of one teacher is based on the cognitive approach to learning whereas one's teaching is based on the humanistic approach and one's teaching on the behaviourist approach. These theories implicitly form the teachers' knowledge base. Students have also mentioned that teachers should update their teaching methods from time to time in order to cater their different needs or simply to avoid boring them. Therefore, it is quite clear that both the students and the teachers see teaching as a science.

For teaching as an art, the willingness of the participating teachers to openly discuss their strengths and weaknesses has indicated their view of teaching as an art. It is because reflection is an important element of teaching as an art and teachers are, in fact, reflecting on their own teaching while evaluating their performance. One teacher has even raised the issue of interdependence between the teacher and the students in the classrooms, showing how unpredictable teaching can be and how important it is for teachers to apply what they have learnt appropriately in the real-life situations. For students, some of them have mentioned that qualifications and experience are not sufficient to make a teacher effective. This may imply that there is something else which an effective teacher needs and that is probably artistry.

All in all, there are reasons to believe that teaching is a combination of a science, a craft/ skill and an art, as suggested in Chapter 2. Moreover, it is very possible that all of them basically form the knowledge base of an effective teacher.

In this chapter, results of the present study have been presented and the research question has been answered by responding to the three specific research questions. Salient findings have also been discussed. The final chapter will summarise the whole study, draw implications in relation to the teaching and learning situation in Hong Kong and make suggestions on future studies.

Endnote

The 3+3+4 new academic reform means a period of three years for both the junior and senior secondary education and a period of four years for the university education.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the whole project will be summarised. Then, implications of the research results will be drawn to the teaching and learning situation in Hong Kong and finally, future studies will be suggested.

5.1 Summary

This study aims to find out how the teachers and the students in Hong Kong conceptualise “effective teaching”. The participants were three classes of Form 3 students and their English teachers in a secondary school located at Tin Shui Wai in the New Territories.

First of all, fifteen students and three teachers were asked for their views on “good teaching” at two separate semi-structured interviews. Their ideas about the features of a good English teacher were compared to the findings of Hay Mcber (2000) and a questionnaire based on the features was prepared. Next, a total of 106 students from the three classes and their English teachers were given the questionnaire to fill in. The students’ questionnaire was written in both Chinese and English while the teachers’ was an English one. Both of them were required to rank the importance of forty teaching traits with a three-point scale, using a scale of “1” to “3” where “1” indicated

“not very important”, “2” “important but not essential” and “3” “absolutely essential”. Students were also required to evaluate the teaching performance of their teacher and teachers to evaluate their own teaching. After that, the mean scores of each of the forty aspects of teaching were calculated using statistical instruments. Rankings of the “most” and the “least” effective aspects of teaching by the students and by the teachers were worked out. Finally, a focus group interview conducted with fifteen students was convened to gain more insights into the data collected from the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher as the moderator. Cantonese which was the mother tongue of the students was used in the interview. The whole interview which lasted about one hour was both audio-taped and video-taped. It was then translated and transcribed by an additional researcher for verification. On the other hand, individual interviews which lasted half an hour were conducted separately for the three participating teachers. Two classroom observations were also arranged, aiming to check the teacher’s performance against their responses given in the questionnaire. A brief talk which lasted about 15 minutes was conducted right after each observation so that teachers could recall which parts of the lessons they found effective. The lessons observed were video-taped whereas the interviews were audio-taped. English was the exclusive language used in the interviews and so the conversations were not translated but only transcribed before they were interpreted by

an additional researcher for verification.

Both participating groups of the study basically agreed with all the teaching traits listed in the report of Hay McBer (2000) under the seven catergories including High Expectations, Planning, Methods and Strategies, Pupil Management/Discipline, Time & Resource Management, Assessment and Homework. They generally thought that **"**Teachers use various strategies to motivate students" (#5), "Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson" (#12), "Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods" (#13), "Teachers give clear instructions and explanations" (#17) and "Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson" (#20) the "most" effective aspects of teaching. These were the aspects of teaching which were found in both of their "most" effective lists. They would also like to add two more aspects to the original list including a good teacher-student relationship and good use of reinforcements. There were some effective aspects of teaching which were mentioned by the students only, not the teachers, like teacher's appearance, teacher's interest in English, teacher's knowledge about the British culture and teacher's life experience.

The effective aspects of teaching identified by both participating groups generally agreed with the findings reported in the previous studies, such as pedagogy, classroom

management, interaction, enthusiasm and rapport. The main difference identified between the previous literature and the present study was the participants' preference for a teacher-centred approach. While student-centreness was highly valued in the reports reviewed, it was not very much valued in the local context. Even though the students of the study seemed to understand the importance of independent learning, they generally did not mind whether or not their teachers would release ownership of their learning as they trusted their teachers so much that they counted a lot on them. Like their students, the participating teachers seemed to regard a teacher-centred classroom as an effective classroom. The role they played in the classroom was like a boss, controlling everything related to their students' learning.

The reason why both participating groups prefer a teacher-centred approach may be due to the cultural differences. It may also be due to the teachers' practice which is restricted by the top-down and centralised educational administration. Not only the students but also the teachers find it necessary to obey a higher authority. No one except 'the stronger ones' is confident enough to resist the system, asking for more autonomy.

Although the participating students basically agreed with the teaching traits identified

by the report of Hay McBer (2000), they did not really rank the forty aspects equally. There were differences in terms of the values or attitudes between two main groups of students. The majority of the students were found insecure and relied heavily on their teachers. They focused more on the surface learning strategies. On the contrary, there were students who were found more confident and were more aware of meta-learning. They focused more on the deep learning strategies. The former group of students could be labelled “passive” whereas the latter group “proactive”.

There were also variations among the participating teachers. Two of them tended to practise interactive and reactive teaching strategies while one tended to practise transmission teaching strategies with reference to the teaching strategies proposed by Cooper and McIntyre (1996). Furthermore, the three teachers did not share their concepts of teaching and learning much. While one tended to see teaching as a science and believed in the cognitive approach to learning, one tended to see teaching as an art and believed in the humanistic approach and one tended to see teaching as a craft or a skill and believed in the behaviourist approach to learning.

Even if all the three participating teachers agreed that it was absolutely essential for students to be responsible for their own learning in the questionnaire, little evidence

was found in the interviews or in the classroom visits that they allowed their students to take charge of their learning. This has reflected a cultural phenomenon in Hong Kong that the teachers in Hong Kong display a culturally derived sense of respect for authority in their apparent acceptance of the western ideas about how they should relate to their students.

Comparing the self-evaluation of the teachers with the students' evaluation of their teachers, a teacher tended to over-rate herself whereas others tended to under-rate themselves. Information about the teachers' life histories could help explain why some of the teachers were over confident whereas some under confident in themselves. There were reasons to believe that the self-evaluation of a teacher would be more likely to be consistent with the students' evaluation of the same teacher if there were more shared effective aspects of teaching between the students and their teachers. The reliability and the validity of the evaluation would also be maximised due to their consensus. Evidence also showed that students were more likely to get better results if their perception of "effective teaching" resembled their teacher's.

It was concluded that the aims and the means of the teaching and learning in Hong Kong could be regarded as "invisible" based on the definitions of Hattie (2009). Even

if the new academic reform encouraged a more visible learning and teaching, the western idea might not be easily implemented in Hong Kong, like the student-centred approaches, mainly due to their incompatibility with the eastern beliefs. It was argued that there could be alternative understanding of “effective teaching” other than the dominant one in the western countries. Teachers together with their students should also be allowed to contribute more in teacher evaluation. The varied perceptions among the students and among the teachers suggested that proactive students might prefer teachers who conceptualised teaching as an art or as a science whereas passive students might prefer teachers who conceptualised teaching as a craft or as a science. This reinforced the idea that it was sensible to treat teaching a mix of a science, a craft and an art. The findings of the study also agreed with the idea that approaches to identifying the meanings of effective teaching could be used integratively and so no single approach should receive all the attention.

This section has summarised the whole thesis. The following section will give the implications the thesis has for the local teaching and learning situation.

5.2 Implications

Referring to the issues raised and discussed in Chapter 4, some implications can be

drawn in relation to the teaching and learning situation in Hong Kong. It has to be noted that the scale of the study should be taken into consideration when references are made to the following recommendations.

First of all, the decision-makers of the educational policies in Hong Kong should be open-minded enough to accept various approaches to identifying the meanings of effective teaching. It is because the findings of the study show that the approaches can be integratively used and there is no one perfect approach. Hence, it is not sensible for the decision-makers to advocate or even boost one single approach and ignore the others.

Moreover, research theories should not be taken for granted, especially those generated in the western countries, like the visible teaching and learning of Hattie (2009). Cultural differences should be taken into consideration as it has been found from the study that the western theories may not be compatible with the eastern beliefs. To find out whether the theories are applicable in the local context, teachers should carry out action research. Hence, teacher trainees should be developed with the skills of conducting action research. Awareness should also be raised among the trainees that there may be a contradiction between the western theories they have

learnt from the literature and their own deeply held eastern beliefs.

In order to encourage teachers to take the initiative to try out the theories, it is important that the theories are not imposed on them by a higher authority. More ownership should be released. In that case, teachers will become agents of change instead of victims of change, using the terms of Johnson and Hallgarten (2002). This will certainly involve a lot of hard work and teachers will increasingly be burdened with new pressure. With increased responsibilities, they may be considered working in a goldfish bowl since they will be held directly accountable by both the profession and community (Brown 1997, p.95). However, they will, at the same time, be offered new opportunities for personal advancement, satisfaction and development (Brown 1997, p.95). These seem to be what effective teachers should be striving for throughout their career of teaching. Richards (1994) may be right that "there is no such thing as good teaching. There are only good teachers. [It is because] teaching is only realised by teachers; it has no independent existence" (p.28).

Offering teachers a more active role in evaluating their own teaching performance is a form of empowerment. Empowered teachers are more likely to release freedom to their students. In fact, the participations of students and teachers in teacher evaluation

have been justified and their usefulness has also been recognised based on the findings of the study. Hence, both of them should be given a more active role to play. Students should also be given more opportunities to communicate with their teachers since they may perceive effective teaching differently from their teachers do and a particular group of students may be fond of a particular group of teachers. Through communications, compromises can be made between the students and the teachers. It is believed that students and teachers who have similar perceptions of effective teaching are more likely to make learning and teaching effective.

Since it is very likely that teachers will be more effective if they view teaching as a combination of a science, a craft and an art, it is advised that such a view of teaching should be developed in the teacher education and development. For pre-service teacher training programmes, it is suggested that local student teachers should be provided with more knowledge about the updated research-generated theories. Similarly, the practicing teachers should be provided with the updated research in order to develop professionally in their in-service training programmes. In other words, more emphasis should be put on the educational theories in the teacher training curriculum. It is also suggested that all local student teachers should be assigned a mentor during their teaching practice as teaching can also be a craft or a skill. For the

practising teachers, it may be a good idea if classroom observations can be arranged so that teachers are allowed to visit their peers' classes and learn from each other. With more practice, teachers are more likely to gain expertise. In addition to research theories and teaching experiences, an element called artistry is also necessary to make teachers effective. Though further investigation is necessary to find out more about the element, it would always be a good idea for teachers to work collaboratively, sharing reflections on their teaching regularly.

In this section, some implications have been drawn in relation to the teaching and learning situation in Hong Kong with reference to the discussed issues in the previous chapter. In the last section, some future studies will be recommended based on the findings of the present study.

5.3 Suggestions for future studies

In future, the revised list of effective aspects of teaching could be used for evaluating teaching effectiveness in the school of the present study. A study which compares the learning outcomes of the students using the list for evaluating teachers with those using their current checklist could be conducted. This can help check if the list is a better tool for distinguishing more effective teachers from less effective teachers than

the current checklist.

The same study could be carried out in other local secondary schools so as to find out if the situation of the present study is representative. If it is found that surface learning strategies are also common among other students in Hong Kong or self-directed teaching strategies are also not common among other teachers in Hong Kong, it may be necessary for the government to take remedial action, such as allocating more resources on promoting the innovative view of teaching and learning. If it is not, further investigation could be made into why the surface learning strategies are common among the students or why the self-directed teaching strategies are uncommon among the teachers of the school involved in the present study. Is it because of the cultural variations?

Similar studies could be conducted in other local contexts, like the universities or the primary schools for exploring if students and teachers in different educational contexts perceive “effective teaching” differently. This could give more insights into the definition of “effective teaching”.

As suggested before, further studies relating to the life histories of the teachers would

be helpful for examining the variations among individual teachers' lists of the significant aspects of teaching. Further studies relating to the perceptions of the four students in Cluster 2 could also be conducted to investigate into why they ranked differently from the way their fellow students did.

It would also be interesting if similar studies could be conducted to compare the perceptions of "effective teaching" between male and female students or between male and female teachers.

This chapter has summarised the whole thesis and drawn some implications the thesis has for the learning and teaching situation in Hong Kong. With reference to the findings of the thesis, future studies have also been recommended.

Appendix I
Questionnaire (What makes a good English teacher?) for teachers

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ENGLISH TEACHER?
Questionnaire (Teacher's version)

This survey aims to find out your views on "good teaching". There are two parts.

Part 1: What makes a good English language teacher?
Please use a circle to indicate the importance of the following teaching skills, with "1" for "not very *important*", "2" for "*important but not essential*", and "3" for "*absolutely essential*".

	Aspects of Teaching	
1	Teachers encourage high standards of effort.	1 2 3
2	Teachers encourage high standards of accuracy.	1 2 3
3	Teachers encourage high standards of presentation.	1 2 3
4	Teachers use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students.	1 2 3
5	Teachers use various strategies to motivate students.	1 2 3
6	Teachers provide students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.	1 2 3
7	Teachers draw on students' experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson.	1 2 3
8	Teachers explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to students.	1 2 3
9	Teachers have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class.	1 2 3
10	Teachers link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum.	1 2 3
11	Teachers review what students have learnt at the end of the lesson.	1 2 3
12	Teachers involve all of the students in the lesson.	1 2 3
13	Teachers use a variety of activities/ learning methods.	1 2 3
14	Teachers apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives.	1 2 3
15	Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to probe students' knowledge and understanding.	1 2 3
16	Teachers encourage students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques.	1 2 3
17	Teachers give clear instructions and explanations.	1 2 3
18	Teachers provide students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement.	1 2 3
19	Teachers listen and respond to students.	1 2 3

20	Teachers keep students on task throughout the lesson.	1 2 3
21	Teachers correct bad behaviour immediately.	1 2 3
22	Teachers praise good achievement and effort.	1 2 3
23	Teachers treat students fairly.	1 2 3
24	Teachers work well with other members of staff.	1 2 3
25	Teachers structure the lesson to use the time available well.	1 2 3
26	Teachers finish the lesson on time.	1 2 3
27	Teachers use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning.	1 2 3
28	Teachers use an appropriate pace.	1 2 3
29	Teachers allocate their time fairly amongst students.	1 2 3
30	Teachers focus on understanding and meaning.	1 2 3
31	Teachers focus on factual memory.	1 2 3
32	Teachers focus on skills mastery.	1 2 3
33	Teachers focus on applications in real-life settings.	1 2 3
34	Teachers use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding.	1 2 3
35	Teachers recognise misconceptions and clear them up.	1 2 3
36	Teachers mark or/ and give feedback to students' written work.	1 2 3
37	Teachers encourage students to do better next time.	1 2 3
38	Teachers set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson.	1 2 3
39	Teachers follow up homework previously set in the lesson.	1 2 3
40	Teachers explain what learning objectives students will gain from homework.	1 2 3

Are there any other teaching skills which you find important in the English lessons? Please name them in the columns below.

41		1 2 3
42		1 2 3
43		1 2 3

Can you name the top three qualities of a good English teacher?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Part II: What do I do in my English class?

Please grade each of the following statements using “1” for “strongly disagree”, “2” for “disagree”, “3” for “agree” and “4” for “strongly agree” to illustrate how you feel about your English lessons.

	What do I do in my English class?	1(strongly disagree)…… 4 (strongly agree)
1	I encourage high standards of effort.	
2	I encourage high standards of accuracy.	
3	I encourage high standards of presentation.	
4	I use tasks of different degree of difficulty to challenge students.	
5	I use various strategies to motivate students.	
6	I provide my students with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.	
7	I draw on my students’ experiences or ideas relevant to the lesson.	
8	I explain a clear plan and objectives for the lesson at the start of the lesson to my students.	
9	I have the necessary materials and resources ready for the class.	
10	I link lesson objectives to the overall curriculum.	
11	I review what my students have learnt at the end of the lesson.	
12	I involve all my students in the lesson.	
13	I use a variety of activities/ learning methods.	
14	I apply appropriate teaching methods to achieve the objectives.	
15	I use a variety of questioning techniques to probe my students’ knowledge and understanding.	
16	I encourage my students to use a variety of problem-solving techniques.	
17	I give clear instructions and explanations.	
18	I provide my students with practical activities which have a clear purpose improving their understanding or achievement.	
19	I listen and respond to students.	
20	I keep my students on task throughout the lesson.	

21	I correct bad behaviour immediately.	
22	I praise good achievement and effort.	
23	I treat my students fairly.	
24	I work well with other members of staff.	
25	I structure the lesson to use the time available well.	
26	I finish the lesson on time.	
27	I use appropriate opportunities to enhance students' learning.	
28	I use an appropriate pace.	
29	I allocate my time fairly amongst my students.	
30	I focus on understanding and meaning.	
31	I focus on factual memory.	
32	I focus on skills mastery.	
33	I focus on applications in real-life settings.	
34	I use tests, competitions, etc. to assess understanding.	
35	I recognise misconceptions and clear them up.	
36	I mark or/ and give feedback to my students' written work.	
37	I encourage my students to do better next time.	
38	I set homework to consolidate or extend the coverage of the lesson.	
39	I follow up homework previously set in the lesson.	
40	I explain what learning objectives my students will gain from homework.	

Can you name three aspects of your English lessons which you think help your students learn best?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What are the aspects of your English lessons, if any, that you would like to see improvement in your teaching in future?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Thank you very much for your help!-

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