

Interactive comment on “On teaching styles of water educators and the impact of didactic training” by A. Pathirana et al.

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1 Referee #1: Anonymous

We thank the anonymous referee for the encouraging comments. The reviewer raises two main issues:

1. UNESCO-IHE's situation with recruiting students from diverse backgrounds. Explain further and give some additional insights.
2. How the former teaching styles to which the students have been exposed to, may affect the success of following facilitator and delegator styles.

C2494

Strictly, both issues are outside the scope of this study. However, the success of any educational program depends not only on following 'better' teaching approaches, but also on understanding of the students who participates in the learning process. In this context we agree with the reviewer that these are important points that need addressing as discussion points. We propose to add a subsection titled "Learning - the flipside" between sections 5.1 Major findings and 5.2 (now 5.3) Limitations, as follows:

1.1 Learning – the flipside

The teaching style is one of the many important parameters that determine success of an educational program; in other words, the degree to which the students achieve the learning objectives. Ultimately, what matters is the quality and effectiveness of learning, which has a lot to do with the attitudes of the students. These attitudes in-turn are largely governed by their background, experiences, habits and expectations. In an organization like UNESCO-IHE the heterogeneity of the student background in terms of geographic origin, education system, professional experience, etc., it is only reasonable to assume that there are considerable differences among individual students' attitudes towards learning (Uhlenbrook and Jong, 2012).

Majority of students of UNESCO-IHE are mid-career professionals who have been working in the sector (industry, government, academia, etc.) for a minimum period of years (often much longer) after their bachelor's degree (Pathirana, 2012). They are of considerably higher average age than the post-graduate students of a classical university and, therefore, largely experienced only in the traditional teacher-led mode of education.

The need for changing teaching styles is driven by the needs of the profession of hydrology (section 2.1): Attempting to address the nature of problems that future professional have to solve and the skills they need to effectively do that. We are of firm opinion that the employment of more facilitator and delegator traits by teachers will improve ability

C2495

of the graduates to face up to these challenges. However, it is extremely important for the educator to be aware of the fact that by doing so, they may be forcing some students to get out of their 'comfort-zone'. Gradual introduction of change with careful monitoring of achieving the learning outcomes and effective mentoring programs are therefore recommended. It is also not expected that an improvement of immediate student feedback (e.g. student evaluations) as a result of such a shift may be observed. – in the short term, even the opposite might happen!

References

- Pathirana, A., Gersonius, B., and Radhakrishnan, M.: Web 2.0 collaboration tools to support student research in hydrology – an opinion, *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.* (in press), 2012.
- Uhlenbrook, S. and de Jong, E.: T-shaped competency profile for water professionals of the future, *Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci.* (accepted), 2012.

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