

Students Voice What Makes Teachers Ideal

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1 STUDENTS' VOICE: WHAT MAKES TEACHERS IDEAL?

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Abstract: Topic about ideal teachers is an interesting educational issue to discuss. Some studies have shown a strong relationship between teachers' behavior with students' motivation which promotes effective learning as shown by ideal teachers. A number of studies concern the importance of ideal teachers' pedagogic knowledge for pursuing effective teaching; meanwhile, some others view personality traits and interpersonal relationship between teachers and students as important factors that promote effective teaching. Despite the fact that a number of studies have been spent on investigating ideal teachers, little is known about essential aspects underlying the concept of ideal teachers. By involving students of different study programs (50 students), this study aims at investigating essential aspects underlying the construct of ideal teachers and to what extent students of different study programs perceive such a construct. To answer these research questions, qualitative data are obtained by asking a number of students to make essays based on writing prompts provided. These data are then analyzed thematically as to construct a questionnaire. Factor analysis is conducted to assess the quality of the questionnaire prior to its distribution. In this study, descriptive statistics and T-Test are employed to analyze quantitative data.

Keywords: *ideal teachers, effective teaching, pedagogic knowledge, personality traits and interpersonal relationship*

INTRODUCTION

The construct of ideal teacher is complex involving inter-related variables. Numbers of studies (Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Henderson, Fisher, & Fasher, 2000; den Brok, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2004; Maulana, Opendakker, Brok, & Bosker, 2013) show a strong correlation between teachers' behavior with students' motivation which promote effective learning. Hattie (2003) has specifically addressed teachers' 30% contribution to students' achievement.

Broadly speaking, ideal teachers should be the one who are able to carry out effective teaching (Coe, Aloisi, Higgins & Major, 2014). Shulman (1987), and Antecol, Eren and Ozbeklik (2012), for example, have affirmed the importance of teachers' knowledge for pursuing effective teaching. Shulman (1987) states that teachers' knowledge includes content knowledge, pedagogic content knowledge (the ability to contextualize, situate, and personalize the content for the learners), general pedagogic knowledge (principles and strategies of classroom management and organization regardless of content matter), curriculum knowledge (materials and programs that are the 'tools of trade' for teachers), knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and contexts (the group, the classroom, the district, the community), knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values.

Other researchers who have conducted their studies in Asian countries, Middle East and Europe see that it is personality that plays an important factor promoting effective teaching (Das, El-Sabban & Bener 1996; Arnon & Reichel 2007; Telli, Brok & Cakiroglu, 2008; Singh and Singh, 2012). Their findings



show that the personality traits are predominantly affecting students' perspective about ideal teachers. In fact, this factor has outnumbered some other aspects such as teacher's subject mastery, communication skill in the views of students from India and some Middle East countries. Another study by Delaney, Johnson, Johnson & Treslan (2010) has also found the importance of personality (respecting the students) in delivering effective teaching both for on-campus and distance courses.

Some personality attributes were also found in the study by Mullock (2003). Having studied 42 postgraduate TESOL students about their views of what constitutes a good teacher, she found five characteristics of ideal teachers: attitudes and behavior towards students (28%), teachers' personal characteristics and attitudes (22%), content knowledge (10%), and broader educational goals and skills (9%) and pedagogical content knowledge (32%). To some extent, the first attributes (attitudes and behavior towards students and teachers' personal characteristics and attitudes) could be somewhat deemed as the personality attributes. The attribute of attitude and behavior towards students refers to being sympathetic, encouraging students and treating them with courtesy and respect, and possessing cross-cultural knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, the attribute of teachers' personal characteristics and attitudes refers to having a sense of humour, being generous, being patient, having enthusiasm for the subject, and 'loving teaching', and keeping up to date in knowledge and skills.

Other studies (Brekelmans, Slegers, & Fraser, 2000, Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005; Maulana, Opendakker, Brok & Bosker, 2011) see that teachers' behavior affect students' learning. These authors mention that fostering favorable psychosocial characteristics of learning environment in terms of teacher-students interpersonal relationship with the students is worth considering. In short, these authors generally see that interpersonal teacher behavior is an important aspect of classroom learning environment as it is related to student cognitive and affective outcomes. Teachers who exhibited more positive behaviors in their daily interactions with students facilitate the development of favorable attitudes and better achievement among students, while negative teacher behaviors (e.g., uncertain and dissatisfied behaviors) produced the reverse effect.

Although the topic of ideal teachers has been extensively studied, the fact is that no similar topic deals with Indonesian's context. The present study is situated in Ma Chung University, involving groups of students from English and non-English Study Programs. The present study examines: Which aspects constitute ideal teachers? To what extent do the views of ideal teacher differ among students as a whole group?

METHOD

The writer who is also teaching in a writing class assigned the students to write an essay about "My Ideal Teachers". To help students develop their ideas into the essay, some prompts were given such as what qualities the ideal teachers have; examples for each of these qualities; what impact it will have on the students when the teachers have such qualities. About 35 personality attributes were eventually identified. These attributes were used as guidance to make the questionnaire. All questions were designed on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement apart from demographic information. The independent exploratory



factor analyses were conducted on the questionnaire to maximize variance and help the interpretation of constructs deduced.

The population of the present study involved all Ma Chung students; meanwhile, the samples were purposively drawn: students from A Study Program (N= 17), students from B Study Program (N= 17), and students from C Study Program (N= 23). For data collection techniques, this present study used descriptive statistics: frequency distribution and ANOVA.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Question 1: Which aspects constitute ideal teachers?

As we conducted the factor analysis, there were four qualities that teachers should have: caring, creative, humble and tolerant. The factor structure of questionnaire with Cronbach's α value and the number of items was as follows for all questionnaire items and factor loadings (see Appendix 1): caring ($\alpha = 0.886$) n =6, creative($\alpha = 0.834$) n = 5, humble ($\alpha = 0.858$) n =5, and tolerant ($\alpha = 0.853$) n= 4. The presentation of the personality aspects of ideal teachers along with the indicators, components and communality is in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Four Factors Rotated Component Matrix for the Questionnaire

Aspects	Indicators	Component				Communality
		1	2	3	4	
Caring	3. Never use harsh words	.732				.765
	20. Be fair in giving assessment	.675				.724
	9. Be friendly	.611				.644
	18. Pay attention to the underachievers	.607				.710
	15. Care for the students	.604				.648
	8. Respect the students	.542				.634
Creative	28. Create interesting favorable class		.768			.723
	10. Be kind		.736			.688
	30. Encourage the students to study		.700			.622
	4. Do not get angry easily		.531			.629
Humble	24. Give motivation		.510			.568
	23. Good relationship with the students			.782		.769
	7. Humble			.722		.765
	14. Never hesitate to apologize			.696		.672
	5. Admit their own mistakes			.626		.657
Tolerant	21. Students feel comfortable			.513		.520
	2. Be good examples				.822	.788
	11. Have sense of humor				.672	.762



16. Never impose the students		.633		.713
1. Have tolerance to students' mistake		.592		.660
Eigenvalue	10.052	1.433	1.127	1.048
Variance explained (100%)	50.262	7.164	5.633	5.241
Accumulated variance explained	50.262	57.462	63.059	68.301

First of all, ideal teachers are demanded to have a caring personality. Teachers are considered caring when they are able to exhibit concern and empathy for their students. In addition, they have to be able to help all students with their study, especially the underachievers. With their patience and polite language, teachers share their attention to all students equally. They do their best to avoid favoritism and hence all the assessment process takes places fairly. Student A says about caring aspect of ideal teacher's personality:

"Teacher has a noble goal of providing knowledge to students. Therefore, students need to be guided and assisted when in difficulty in order to achieve that goal. For example, when they're learning English, they may be difficult in pronunciation; it is the duty of teachers to guide them so that they can speak with correct pronunciation. In this process it takes patience by the teachers. Don't scold the students but give some motivations for the students to be better. An ideal teacher should be able to give fair scores to all students. However, it does not mean that since they have good scores, then they get special treatment. An ideal teacher should give priority to students who are lacking in any subject. For what it means if the teachers only teach students who have already smart? It is very useless"

In addition, ideal teachers are also demanded to be creative when they teach the students in the classroom. Creativity requires that the teachers have ability to create favorable teaching and learning activities in such a way that enables the students to undergo new experience. Novelty is likely to promote student's learning motivation and avoid boredom. To do so, teachers need to have good preparation: relevant teaching materials, clear teaching objectives, different kinds of teaching methods, and teaching media. Student B has mentioned about teachers' creativity:

"I think, it will be better if kindness is followed by creative. When you do everything creatively, I believe your creation will be great! Just imagine, when you can transform every assignment into an interesting thing. Maybe it can be a project, or anything which the students will like it more. We all know that no one likes assignment, but if you as a teacher make it into an interesting one, trust me, students will never get bored when doing your assignment. Creative can also mean when you deliver the material, don't only give a speech about the material, maybe you can show some videos and pictures which are related to the material. You can even divide the class into some groups and let the students do some discussions."

Being humble is another aspect of ideal teachers. Being humble indeed demands teachers not only to be low profile but also to be willing to accept criticism from others. In reality, this personality trait is difficult to demonstrate since people generally tend to protect and defend their face. In this study, humbleness is related to willingness to admit the mistakes and to apologize, initiatives to establish good relationships with the students, and the ability to speak politely so that students feel comfortable during the class. Student C has mentioned something about humbleness:



"The teachers have to have a good sense of humor but strict and disciplined, can laugh about himself when making a mistake by himself (accepting that they can make a mistake, and does not hesitate to apologize to their student), simple and humble, enjoyed spending time with the students, and want to interact (or at least listen) to their students beyond academic or school matter. The ideal teachers is the one who is like a friend to the students, whom the students can confide easily without the fear to be ridiculed or criticized, even giving some possible solution or advice"

Student D mentions her comments about being humble.

"..A teacher should have good temper, does not easily get mad, and is a highly motivated person. He or she is also an open person who always wants to develop him of herself and accept critics from others. An ideal teacher will not think that he or she is the best one, the one who is always true and the one who doesn't need advice from other people in his or her surroundings. An ideal teacher realizes that he or she is also a normal human being, same like others who has positive and negative sides".

At last, ideal teachers should be tolerant. In this respect, teachers are demanded to be forgiving. Steven has mentioned something about being tolerant.

"At last, an ideal teacher doesn't take a revenge for his students when they make some mistakes. As a teacher should be able to forgive and forget the mistakes of the students. For example, when students are late in collecting assignments, as a teacher may be can give them compensation and warn them not to be done again. After that, the teacher not remember their mistakes in the next meeting".

Question 2

To what extent do the views of ideal teacher differ among students as a whole group?

ANOVA was used to explore the test of significant differences of the students from English Department and those from non-English Departments in assessing their lecturers in each study program - in terms of their view about to what extent they view that their teachers are caring, encouraging, humble and tolerant to them across their study programs.

Table 2. The Results of ANOVA Students Perception about Teachers Performance across the Study

No	Variables	Group	Programs		F-Value	p-value
			N	Mean		
1	Caring	English Dept.	17	20.22	.070	.792
		Non English Dept.	40	19.85		
2	Creativity	English Dept.	17	16.82	3.76	.057
		Non English Dept.	40	17.07		
3	Humble	English Dept.	17	18.23	.000	.997
		Non English Dept.	40	16.82		
4	Tolerance	English Dept.	17	13.29	5.61	.021
		Non English Dept.	40	13.27		

From Table 2 above, three of the four aspects tested by ANOVA have no significant difference: caring (p = .792), creativity (p = .057), and humble (p = .997). This finding implies that teachers' performance across the study programs were relatively the same in the views of all students. This indicates that the personality of each lecturer at the department relatively did not differ from one another in



the eyes of a good student²¹ of the department of English and non- English Letter study programs. Nevertheless, we notice that there was significant difference in terms of tolerance variable between English Letter Study Program and non- English Letter Study Program. This implies that the students view that teachers of English Letter study program are seen more tolerant than those of non- English Letter study programs.

This study found that personality¹⁴ plays an important role in the teaching and learning process in the views of the students. Caring, creativity, humbleness and tolerance are among the attributes that underlie the aforementioned personality. To the students⁷ they enjoy having the teachers with those attributes. These teachers are likely to create favorable teaching and learning atmospheres so that students are motivated to learn (asking questions, giving comments, showing ideas in the discussion, etc.).

The findings of the present study imply that being a dominant figure in the classroom is no longer relevant for the teachers to do. Littlewood (2003) in his research finds that most students in all countries question the traditional authority structure of the classroom. Moreover, most students in all countries would like to see themselves³ as active participants in the classroom learning process. Marton, Watkins & Tang (1997) have reported that many sixth-form students in Hong Kong would like to adopt a more independent approach to their learning but feel that current teaching approaches prevent them from doing so. Chalmers and Volet (1997) also report how successfully Asian students adapt to more independent modes of learning when they take up studies in an Australian setting.

With regard to Asia students' perception, Littlewood (2000) says that the overall message that emerges is that Asian students do not, in fact, wish to be spoonfed with facts from an all-knowing 'fount of knowledge'. They want to explore knowledge themselves and find their own answers. Most of all, they want to do this together with their fellow students in an atmosphere which is friendly and supportive.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

One important factor to obtain successful learning and teaching process concerns how teachers are able to acquire essential personality attributes such as caring, creative, humble and tolerant. Teachers with this personality are viewed as figures who are able to create favorable learning atmosphere where the students become motivated to learn (being independent learners, taking initiatives, etc).

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