

## CHARACTERISTIC OF GOOD TEACHERS: GRADE EIGHT STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the characteristics of good teachers according to the perception of grade eight students in Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts. 100 grade eight students from various villages of this district were selected using random sampling method for this study. This study was carried out using qualitative and quantitative research methods at the centers of Special Intensive English Language Teaching (SIELT) programme for three months. Through questionnaire, interviews, and discussions, the qualitative validity of this study was proved while the marks obtained by the students in term examinations in the particular teachers' subject were analyzed qualitatively. The study revealed that ability to explain lessons clearly, teaching subjects humorously, expressing love, gentleness and kindness, pleasant personality, encouraging students, and being flexible are the chief characteristics of good teachers and the students hate the teachers those who scold them frequently while implementing strict rules and regulation in the class. According to the survey, ability to explain lessons clearly is the most important characteristic of a good teacher. Also majority of the students feel that teachers should be humorous and they should express their love and gentleness in and outside the class instead of expressing harshness when interacting with them. It is noted that, even though some teachers are strict in the class, the students love them as they can explain lessons clearly. Thus, this study recommends certain qualities that should be developed by the teachers in order to provide child centered education as Educational philosopher John Dewey pointed out in his Utilitarianism theory.

**Keywords:** characteristics of teachers, child centered learning and teaching, successful outcomes

### INTRODUCTION

Traditionally teachers play a vital role in producing competent students to the world. If the students like a teacher, he/ she automatically starts to love the subject. Then it continuously becomes as his/her favourite subject. At the same time, if a student does not like one teacher, there is a great risk of hating the subject taught by the teacher too. Thus, teachers directly influence the performance and outcome of the teaching process as well as in a student's life. Even though the required subject knowledge is expected in the first place from the teachers, there are certain other characteristics that lead the teaching process towards successful outcomes. The characteristics of teachers become favourable in many places while certain characteristics affect students psychologically and at the end it becomes failure in the whole process. In the rapidly changing world, the expectations too change. If the teachers do not provide what and how the students expect from them, it will be utter failure. While the students like and respect some teachers, certain

teachers are hated by the students. This study is based on the question that is students do not like certain characteristics of teachers so that they lose the interest in their subjects. Thus, this study will identify the favourable and unfavourable characteristics of teachers and it will recommend certain characteristics that should be adapted by the teachers for the successful outcomes of teaching and learning process.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out the important characteristics of teachers from students' perspectives
2. To find out the unfavorable characteristics of teachers from students' perspectives

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Saovapa Wichadee in her research paper titled 'Characteristics of effective English language teachers: The perspective of Bangkok University students' points out the importance of preparation and being ready for the lesson to be an effective English language teacher in the class. Further she points out that the students perceive their teachers as effective teachers if they are well prepared only. Further Aksoy (1998) points out that students' perspective is, a good teacher must have good teacher – student relationship than the personality and instruction of the teacher. Scrivner (2009) states that students expect the teacher to possess specific characteristics such as "friendly, forgiveness, respect, compassion, fairness, attitude, comprehension"

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted with 100 grade eight students from Mullaitivu and Vavuniya districts as random samples. The students were interviewed by the researcher at the centres of Special Intensive English Language Teaching (SIELT) programme. In the interviews, they were asked to speak about their subject teachers they like most and continuously, the reasons were also noted one by one by the researcher. It was found out that they do not like certain teachers coming to their classes. The students hate them. Thus, the reasons for their hate were also questioned. Through this interview, the characteristics of all sorts of teachers have been brought into consideration.

Questionnaires were also used for this study. Through it, why the students like certain teachers, why the students do not like certain teachers, what the students expect from the teachers in and outside the classroom, the expectations of the students in teaching lessons, expectations of the students during the correction, expectations of the students on the teachers' comments after the correction, in which manner the students expect the questions to be asked by the teacher in the class, what the students expect when the teacher is dealing with other fellow students, when the students raise doubts and questions, when explaining lessons, and characteristics of teachers' language, facial expressions, and the manner how the teachers conduct the classes were analyzed.

Attendance of the students, marks obtained in the particular teachers' subjects in a term examination were also analyzed to see if there is any direct connection between the characteristics of the teachers and students' performances. Through the discussion with the parents, it was found out that there are certain favourite teachers for their children. The students often study such teachers' notes at home and they respectfully speak about them with their parents, friends, and relatives. Also they pointed out that their children do not like certain teachers even though they are very good in their subjects. Thus, the characteristics of all sorts of teachers were noted from the discussion with parents for this study.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

The findings revealed that there are certain characteristics expected by the students from the teachers. They are: ability to explain lessons clearly, teaching subjects humorously, expressing love, gentleness and kindness, pleasant personality, encouraging students, and being flexible. 80% of students say that their favourite teachers can explain the lessons in the class very clearly and systematically. As their teachers explain lessons part by part in a systematic way, they say that they could understand the lessons easily so that they all prefer and respect such teachers in the first place. Also they point out that if the teachers teach lessons humorously, they listen to the teachers carefully without losing their concentration in the class. Thus, teaching with humour falls in the category of teaching technique.

While 20% of the students' first preferable characteristics of the teachers are humour in teaching, and expressing love, gentleness, and kindness in and outside the class, 90% of the students mention them in the first place as their most preferable teachers' characters. The students expect that their teachers should express their love, gentleness, and kindness in the following instances; in asking questions, during explaining lessons, during the interaction with the students inside and outside the classroom, giving comments over the correction, during the marking process of the exercises, when the students raise questions and doubts, and dealing with other fellow students. The students attentively look at their teachers' facial expressions, body language, and the manner of using language and behavior pattern in order to experience the love, affection, gentleness, and kindness of the teachers. If they fail to receive them in the first hand, the readiness for the lesson is

lost. Then, the students could not receive the content knowledge from the teachers as the students' perception blocks the readiness for the lesson.

About 50% of students think that teachers' pleasant personality enables them to like the teacher and the subject. Another considerable number of students say that they like the teachers those who continuously encourage them by being flexible in the class.

The study revealed that certain characteristics of teachers are not preferred by the students. They are; scolding the students frequently in the class, conducting the class always keeping the face seriously, inability to teach lessons in an understandable manner, giving inadequate exercises, and lack of interaction with the students. Even though certain teachers are strict in the class, the students like them as they can teach the subjects in an understandable manner as the students expect.

When analyzing the students' attendance to the class, and their performances in the term examinations, it revealed that students regularly attend the classes of their favorite teachers. Also they do all the home work and maintain the exercise books neatly without failure. In term examinations, they have gained more than 60 out of 100 marks in their favourite teachers' subjects while they have gained below 50 marks in the subject where they do not like the subject teachers. Thus, teachers' characteristics directly affect the students' attendance and performance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study recommends certain characteristics that should be developed by the teachers in order to focus child centered education. All the students expect that teachers should explain lessons clearly in an understandable manner. Further, the students expect love, gentleness, and kindness from the teachers in addition to their subject knowledge. Students also prefer the teachers to conduct classes humorously with required level. Thus, teachers of this region, should give special attention when preparing lesson plans to teaching techniques, and the manner of exposing themselves in the class in addition to developing their subject knowledge for successful teaching and learning.

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