

TEACHERS' ATTRIBUTES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the traits of professional teachers in general and English teachers in particular. To accomplish the purpose, the principal research question for this study is: What qualities make English teachers professionals? Therefore, this paper presents the qualities of professional English language teachers. For this, qualitative method has been adopted. Purposive sampling was chosen to get in-depth information. An unstructured interview technique was adopted to collect data with five English teachers. The analytical approach I have used is inductive. The article focuses attention on the attributes of teachers which play a pivotal role in making them professionals in teaching and learning process. The professionals are ones who not only have the academic degree but also have training, knowledge of the contents, competence and confidence in performing the job. They are critical and creative. They present and publish, and love learners, community of practice and profession.

Key words: Teachers, Qualities, Teaching, Effectiveness and Professionalism

Introduction

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to be of direct or indirect benefit to the individual, group or school which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. It is the process by which, alone and with others, teachers review, renew and extend their commitment as change agents to the moral purpose of teaching; and by which they acquire and develop critically the knowledge, skills, and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with children, young people and colleagues throughout each phase of their teaching lives (Day, 2004).

The qualities of a professional

teacher are: the ability to develop relationships with their students, patient, caring, and kind personality, knowledge of learners, dedication to teaching, and engaging students in learning (Craft, 2002). Another key to engaging students and improving their learning is to treat each student as an individual, by being empathetic and understanding to what may be going on in their lives. As a teacher, do I have these qualities? Do other teachers possess these qualities?

Teacher is at the core of any teaching and learning process. Researchers and academics have affirmed that teachers' professional development is a process along a continuum of learning and is about ongoing professional growth (Craft, 2002). A teacher has an important role to play in

our effort to relate education to national development and social metamorphosis. The teacher is the backbone of the educational system, the maker of mankind, and the architect of a society. In recent years, federal set up government has focused more attention on the issue of teacher quality. Teacher quality is the ability of standards for better performance. To my understanding, the term professional development may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers and educators to improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill and effectiveness. In a similar vein, According to Bolam (1993), teachers' professional development refers to any professional development activities engaged in by teachers which enhance their knowledge and skills and enable them to consider their attitudes and approaches to the education of children, with a view to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process.

Eleonora (2003) presents these following ideas on professional development of teachers:

Professional development is based on constructivism in which teachers are taken as active learners. Professional development is perceived as long-term process as it acknowledges the fact that teachers learn over time. Teacher professional development takes place within a particular context. Teacher professional development is closely linked with school reform and a teacher is taken as a reflective practitioner. Teacher professional development is conceived as

a collaborative process and it is different in diverse settings.

To my understanding, self-reflection is a person's ability to reflect on their own needs, desires and interests that can lead to self-acceptance as well as academic success. Teachers who are reflective of their own strengths, weaknesses and characteristics as a teacher and are intentional about improvement are better able to encourage the same level of self-reflection from their students. Professional teachers also make learning enjoyable by educating students in a way that is engaging and appeals to students' interests. When students enjoy learning, they are more likely to participate in the classroom, perform better academically and value continued education (Day,2004).

Pertaining to teacher professional development, Pandey (2012) mentions that being with professional makes a professional. A good teacher is a life-long learner He or she shows a positive attitude and motivation towards learning. Professionalism can further be linked with experiences, expertise, training, reflective practice, critical thinking, creative writing and leadership skills. A willingness to share knowledge and experiences with others is another good quality of a teacher. Passion is infectious. Love of a subject matter inspires a person to learn more, dig deeper, and think harder about it, so passion inspires deeper knowledge. Professional teachers are those that clearly love their subjects and pass that passion and desire to learn more on to their students (Day, 2011). Every teacher wants to be good, but what exactly are the qualities that

make a good teacher? What are the skills, talents, and characteristics, and can they be taught or learned? As an English teacher I have been teaching English more than 25 years. I experience that teachers are not adequately aware of teachers' attributes for their professional development. Those who know, are not practicing much in their teaching context, content and conduct.

At this backdrop, I have a curiosity to explore professional qualities of teachers. Who are the professionals? Can I call myself a professional? Are English language teachers professionals? And what traits are required to be a professional teacher? These are my nascent curiosities which I am going to explore in this paper.

Purpose of the Study

Professional development has been a buzz word in the field of teaching and learning. The related stakeholders have started discussing on the professional attributes of teachers. Therefore, professional traits are essential to be a professional teacher in an institution. The purpose of this study is to explore the professional qualities of teachers in general and English language teachers in particular.

Research Questions

The principal research question for this study is: What makes English teachers professional? The subsidiary research questions are:

- Who are teachers?
- What professional traits are needed to be the teachers?
- How does professionalism develop?

Method of the Study

This article follows a qualitative method. Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). I have deployed both secondary and primary data. I have reviewed the available literature and I have taken an interview to generate first hand data. To answer the research question, I have received information from five English language teachers teaching in Kathmandu district. Qualitative method has been adopted to derive the answer to the research question. The data analysis process is inductive in nature. Purposive sampling is chosen to get an in-depth information (Creswell, 2015). The study has been conducted in a small scale of sample. Therefore, the result cannot be generalized to a larger extent. Pertaining to the qualities of professional teachers, I have presented the themes on the basis of the information I have collected, analyzed and interpreted from the respondents.

Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative method follows inductive data analysis method. Qualitative research rapidly gathers huge amounts of data and early analysis reduces the problem of data overload by selecting out significant features for future focus (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Interpretation is assigning meaning to the available data. Therefore, I have carried out analysis and interpretation in the following sub-heads.

Content Knowledge

I understand that ability is nothing without opportunity. Academic qualification is a means to achieve the opportunity of teaching. In this connection we should not forget the fact that commanding people are always demanded more to open the door of opportunity (Pandey, 2012). Furthermore, Teacher C says:

Academic qualification helps teachers to get an opportunity or entry in the teaching profession. Fluency and accuracy maintains the better command of English language teachers.

Training and Experience

Now, in this connection let's have a look at the opinion of Teacher A:

Experience helps language teachers to become much more confident in presenting the mountain of materials while teaching. Adequate training helps teachers to get new knowledge and skills in teaching various aspects of language.

There is no doubt that the English language teacher should be trained. Training provides good skills, knowledge and strategies to teach effectively. It is said that a poor teacher tells, an average teacher explains, a good teacher demonstrates and the best teacher inspires. In this connection, what I would like to say is that experience is the best teacher. A person with experience can envision the future. I think that life is the collection of experiences. It is through experiences that a language teacher can create a new dimension of knowledge. As we know that practice and experience is the best teacher. It is training that helps

language teachers provide skills to handle and tackle problems with great curiosity (Negi, 2016).

Punctuality

A professional teacher is the mixture of so many qualities. She or he should have positive attitude, planning, managing and teaching skills to become a professional English language teacher (Day, 2004). Regarding the punctuality of a professional teacher, Teacher B who is an M.A. in English and has been teaching for twelve years says:

To my perception and observation English language teachers should be good in managing the time. They should be punctual, up to date, creative, productive, reflective and constructive. They should be responsible to create conducive environment for better learning.

A professional teacher should create favourable environment so as to cultivate the seeds of knowledge both on the part of students and teachers (Pandey, 2016). As we know that fortune favors the brave. In that sense, the English language teachers should be courageous enough in tackling the difficult situation.

Respect, Commitment and Devotion to the Profession

Regarding this, here is a perception of teacher A who has fifteen years of experience in teaching the English language to the learners, explains how the sense of respect to the profession plays a crucial role so as to become a professional teacher:

I have deep respect, faith and

dedication towards my profession as a teacher that makes me a professional teacher. I am fully satisfied with my profession and I am actually proud of my profession. My honesty and long term commitment to teaching gives me a sense of professional teacher.

The theory of motivation helps language teachers develop professionally. Intrinsic theory of motivation says that when there is inner desire in the case of becoming a professional teacher, sense of respect and devotion prevails towards profession. Here, I really agree with Khera (2001) who says that desires become strong when they are supported by devotion, dedication, direction, determination and discipline. It is respect and commitment towards profession that decides the real professional development of teachers. The devotion of time is very crucial on the part of teachers. One should be committed to accomplish the task.

In my opinion, commitment leads towards success. A professional teacher is committed towards language teaching. Then and only then she or he can meet the objectives. From the view of teachers' commitment, Glatthorn (1995) asserts that teacher professional development is what a teacher attains as a result of obtaining experience and exploring his or her teaching systematically.

Day (2004) in this regard demonstrates that teachers with a passion for teaching are those who are committed, enthusiastic and intellectually and emotionally energetic in their work with children, young people and adults alike.

Confidence

In this connection, Teacher B who is an M.A. in English, has been teaching for twelve years, says:

A professional teacher should have command and control over the subject matter. She or he should have adequate knowledge; skills of English language, methods of language teaching, command on subject matter, confidence, encouraging personality, motivating ability, reflective attitude, etc. to become a professional teacher.

I think that good teachers have a complete understanding of the ESL content they teach in sufficient depth to convey the information in meaningful ways to the students. I believe that a professional teacher is competent and confident over the language. These qualities can be gained through reading (Day, 2004). The confident dealings and discussions lead towards success.

Motivation

At this juncture, Teacher A who has fifteen years of English teaching experience in the higher secondary school says:

Interest gives way to curiosity. When we become curious we become serious and sensitive to learn and teach more. The result of interest brings effectiveness in teaching and learning.

Obviously, in order to have a motivated class, the teacher should be intrinsically motivated. "A teacher who is intrinsically motivated to learn has a good chance to get students to seek the intrinsic rewards of learning" (Morrow, 2004). There are many ways for teachers

to motivate students, but if the teachers cannot be motivated themselves, then there is a little hope that they can ask the students to be something that they cannot be (Pandey, 2008).

Fluency and Accuracy

Professional teachers believe that fluency and accuracy in language determine the power, position and prestige of a teacher. They are indispensable vehicles to command over language. The flow of fluency matters a lot in language (Pandey, 2012). Able and agile teachers deserve these qualities. They actually determine the quality of a professional teacher. Pertaining to this Teacher E says:

Teaching ability, fluency and accuracy in the language, competent in the English language, rich vocabulary power, abilities to explain difficulties with real life situation, native speaker's like pronunciation, capacity to handle the class, good skill to display the materials related to the subject, friendly and reflective nature to involve with students in teaching action are the qualities of English language teachers.

A professional teacher correctly produces the grammatical sentences with accurate pronunciation. The flow of fluency over the subject matter is a prime requirement so as to be a better professional teacher (Harris, 1998).

Having Ethics, Sense of Human Values and Communication Skills

A professional teacher should be ethical. She or he should be able to decide what is right and what is wrong. She or he

should possess high morale to edify as a professional and valuable creature. Teacher D in this connection, says:

Ethics and human values help the language teachers to shape positive attitude and high morale. Better incentive motivates language teachers towards the profession. Job security maintains continuity to the profession. Planning helps teachers to make their teaching effective, productive and successful. Finally, the knowledge of methods, techniques and strategies help them to bring varieties and novelty in language teaching.

I feel that a good professional English language teacher is someone who cares, shares and dares. She or he cares about her or his own students and tries to give them everything new in English language. She or he shares her or his own ELT teaching experiences with colleagues and tries to cope with all new findings in ELT world, and she or he dares to teach the English language effectively and efficiently (Pennycook, 2004).

Teacher as a Learner

Let's see the following perception of Teacher B, who is an M.A. in English and has the experience of twelve years in teaching English, in this regard:

A professional English language teacher should have the characteristics of a good student. A teacher is a learner in the teaching and learning process. Learning is a must. There is no limitation of perfection.

Learning is a life-long process. This theory of learning says that learning is a continuous process. I believe that a professional teacher is a learner. Only a good learner can teach the language class effectively. The result of preparation is always sweet. He or she is in a constant quest for knowledge. He or she keeps up in his or her specialty areas, and has the insight to integrate new knowledge. He or she takes knowledge and translates it to students in a way which is comprehensible to them, yet retains its originality. Pandey (2012) says that a professional teacher is a good reader. As we know the fact that a good reader is a good leader. A good writing comes only after a good reading. A professional teacher has to learn much so as to tackle the situation.

Methodological Knowledge

Teacher D who is an M.Ed. in English and has the five years of experience in teaching English in this connection makes the following remarks:

English language teachers should have innovative knowledge. They should be rich in language materials. They should use teaching materials easily and effectively before the readers. In this modern world one should use modern technology like computer, language lab etc.”

The theory of constructivism helps language teachers to come with novel ideas, techniques and strategies. A professional English language teacher should use new, novel and innovative methods while teaching. The use of technology is a must to facilitate teaching and learning process. A good teacher can use many techniques

while teaching the language to the students (Freeman, 2007). To my understanding, use of materials can materialize the memory of the taught items on the part of students and teachers. A mountain of materials helps students motivate towards teaching and learning activities.

Teacher as a Problem Solver

In this connection, Teacher E who is an M.Ed. in English has been teaching for ten years, makes the following opinions:

When I feel problems I can teach better. If I take problems slightly I can't learn more. Naturally, if I can't learn more I can't solve the problems raised by the students.

Problem based learning approach is dominant to give solution of a problem. A teacher's ability is identified through problem solving skills. A language teacher has to problematize the problems. While analyzing the above remarks a language teacher to my perception has to deal, discuss and solve the problems which come across in the time of teaching and learning process. A good language teacher should see an answer in the problem. After all human beings live on hope. A professional teacher to my understanding is a solver of a problem. Classroom itself is a complex world of problems. A teacher always gives special attention to the problems that the students often face in the teaching and learning process (Pennycook,2004).

Reflective Practitioner

In this connection teacher D who is an M.Ed. in English has been teaching for five years, makes the following statement:

Teachers must evaluate their performed work, analyze the situation they have lived through; explore the understandings they have brought through their work to prepare themselves for their future action into the classroom. Reflective practices help professional teachers to correct their ill practice.

The reflective theory believes in planning, action and reflection. Research on effective teaching over the past two decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth (Harris, 1998).

I think that teaching is a reflective job. There is hardly any bigger joy than the joy of reflectivity. The job of teaching is the collection of experiences. Experience is the best reflective teacher. Teaching is a reflective process (Underhill, 1991). Reflective practices help professional teachers to correct their ill practice.

Teacher as a Planner and an Evaluator

A professional teacher is a planner. He or she plans the subject matter to be taught. If a teacher enters the class with full preparation, he or she meets the objectives of teaching (Underhill, 1991). In this regard, Teacher A says:

Planning helps teachers to make teaching effective, productive and successful. A professional teacher has to plan the knowledge of methods, techniques and strategies that help him or her to bring varieties and novelty in language teaching.

I feel that good professional teachers plan their teaching on the basis of recent, relevant and pedagogical

research. They establish expectations for students that are clear, challenging and achievable. They use a wide variety of fair and consistent assessment strategies and instruments for diagnostic, formative and summative evaluation. They relate assessment strategies and instruments to learning objectives, content and tasks (Pandey, 2016).

Mission and Vision in Language Teaching

In this regard, Teacher B says:

Vision and mission help language teachers to be much more specific to attain the goals of language teaching successfully. The balance between work and life helps teachers to give enough time for personal growth which will ultimately lead to professional development.

After doing a close analysis of the aforementioned response, what I can understand is that translating vision into action is very essential in order to become a professional English language teacher. They make teachers become specific in their planning and executing the plans. Vision and mission help language teachers to be much more specific to attain the goals of language teaching successfully (Pandey, 2016). Regarding this, I remember the saying that is "Poor eyes limit your vision but poor vision limits your action." I feel that vision without action is merely a dream, action without vision just passes the time; vision and action together can change the world. A person with vision can be visionary while functioning the leadership skills.

Balance between Work and Life

A professional teacher maintains balance and relation between profession and life. Otherwise it is very difficult to attain success in life. So as to live a healthy and quality life one should make a beautiful harmony between profession and life (Harris, 1998). In this connection Teacher C, who is an M.A. in English, has been teaching for twelve years, says:

The balance between work and life helps teachers to give enough time for personal growth which will ultimately lead to professional development. However, it is truly difficult to maintain life and work.

I believe that a good professional teacher is someone who can learn from his students, who can learn with them, and for them. She or he also must be honest in his or her relationships with students and proud enough about his or her own value to work, from there, on helping his or her students to build their own self esteem in their life. One who can maintain balance between work and life is a successful English language teacher. It is generally believed that a person who manages people is a leader and a person who manages herself or himself is a good leader.

Accountable, Patience and Trustworthiness

A professional teacher should be accountable, dutiful and trustworthy towards his or her profession. It is very difficult to earn trust but it is easy to break it. If a teacher is trustworthy she or he can be highly dependable. The level of belief

system can be materialized. Teacher E says:

A professional teacher should have sincerity and love to one's profession. He or she should be transparent in his or her dealings, discussions, delivery and decisions. Moreover, he or she should earn trust among students, parents and teachers as well.

What matters in the life of an English language teacher are care, concern and curiosity, The matter of patience, purity, passion and perseverance is always greatly required so as to be a professional teacher. It is through experiences that a language teacher can become a professional one. Long-term devotion and commitment are equally important to become a professional teacher (Negi, 2016).

Positive, Analytical and Conceptual Thinker

Pertaining to positive, analytical and conceptual thinker Teacher D says:

Commitment, confidence, trustworthiness, respect, subject matter knowledge, qualification, training, experience, devotion, determination, positive and problem-solving attitudes, analytical thinking, conceptual thinking, drive for improvement, information seeking, initiative, flexibility, accountability, and passion for learning etc. are the qualities of a professional teacher.

I think that my interpersonal relationship with friends and seniors made me successful to achieve various objectives during my student life as well as

in my teaching profession. In my opinion leadership does not mean that we talk loudly; we chant good slogans and we try to influence people for our personal motives. I think leadership is inner quality of a person which makes him or her work with others in team and has some positive influence on the team members to function in a certain way for the betterment of the members and society. I feel that positive attitude determines the academic altitude. Positive teachers think positively and enthusiastically about people and what they are capable of becoming (Pennycook, 2004).

Creative and Sense of Humor

A professional teacher is versatile, innovative, and open to new ideas. He or she strives to incorporate techniques and activities that enable students to have unique and meaningful new experiences (Day, 2004). To my understanding, good professional teachers have a sense of humor and use humor as part of their teaching methods. Humor, used properly, can be a powerful addition to any lesson. He or she creates humour to remove the tiredness. Sense of humour creates curiosity in learning. In this case, teacher B says:

Some of the key elements of a professional teacher are: positive thinker, good communicator, dependable, personable, organized, committed, motivated, compassionate, flexible and creative, reflective, knowledgeable, and sense of humor.

It is generally agreed that failure is the pillar of success. A language teacher should be creative. He or she should have a

sharp sense of humour to make the lesson really interesting and pleasing. Human beings are both creative and inventive people (Dhami, 2015). Particularly, the English language teachers can sharpen their horizon of knowledge through creative doings. They have to spread the humour to entertain and motivate the learners.

To my understanding a good teacher can make a world of difference in a student's life, impacting everything from their classroom learning to their long-term success. Being able to engage students with humor, creative lessons and a strong classroom presence is an important part of what makes someone a good teacher

Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to explore teachers' attributes for professional development. The study was delimited with 5 English teachers only. I have also deployed my personal and professional experience to substantiate the study. From the available literature, first hand and secondary data, it can be concluded that professional teachers possess the qualities of subject matter knowledge, commitment, interest and motivation, reflective practice, experience, qualification, punctuality, positive attitude, planning, pedagogical, communication and problem solving skills. Professional teachers need to be able to work in a constantly evolving environment and adjust their teaching methods based on the age of their students, the resources available and changing curriculum, practices and requirements. More importantly, professional teachers are the learners and accountable to their

profession. They have passion towards their profession. Professional teachers are lifelong learners (Richards & Farrell, 2005). In fact, ongoing education is a requirement for teachers of every school. Known as professional development, this education -- usually in the form of workshops, seminars and training courses -- helps teachers stay up to date with new trends and learn fresh strategies, techniques and methods for classroom challenges. The overriding idea behind professional development is that increased knowledge helps teachers improve student achievement. That is

because professional development focuses on what each teacher needs to fine-tune his or her classroom practice. A professional is one who has an academic degree, training, content, competence and confidence. He or she is critical and creative. He or she presents and publishes, and loves learners, community of practice and profession.

This study contributes to maintain pedagogical, policy, training, sociological and research implication. Moreover, it assists to become a professional and motivational teacher.

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