

Micro-scoping the Making of Great Teachers: Pre-service EFL Teachers' Views

Le Profile des Enseignants Qualifiés: Points de Vues des Enseignants en Formation de l'EFL

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Reçu le : 18/02/2021, Accepté le : 20/04/2021, Publié le : 25/06/ 2021

Abstract

The present study explores qualified teaching. It aims at collecting pre-service EFL teachers' views about great and qualified teaching. What is a great teacher? This is the main question leading the research in hand. 30 EFL student-teachers at the Teacher Training School of Bouzareah, Algiers, Algeria, were asked to answer the aforementioned question. Their answers were examined through the content analysis method. The traits that the sample stated were all extracted and analysed. Afterwards, the collected characteristics were tabulated, and the percentages of the recurrence of the traits were drawn. The study concludes that the most frequently mentioned traits are support and encouragement for learners (63.33%), understanding and tolerance (56.66%), then making learning enjoyable and fun (46.66%). This can imply that teachers may focus on these top three qualities in order to improve the quality of their teaching. This may also infer that a great teacher's profile is made up of a collection of both ability and personality features. It is also essential to state that this is a case study, and that the findings can be quite ungeneralisable.

Keywords: great teacher – qualified teaching – qualities – pre-service teachers – views

Résumé

L'étude présente explore l'enseignement qualifié. On vise à recueillir l'opinion des enseignants en formation initiale. Qu'est-ce qu'un grand professeur pour eux? C'est la question qui sous-tend cette recherche. 30 étudiant-enseignants du département d'Anglais à l'Ecole Normale Supérieure de Bouzareah sont invités à y répondre. Leurs réponses sont examinées par une méthode d'analyse de contenu. Tous les traits qu'ils énoncent sont extraits. De plus, les pourcentages de récurrence des traits sont tirés. L'étude révèle que

les traits les plus fréquemment mentionnés sont: le soutien et l'encouragement aux apprenants (63,33 %), la compréhension et la tolérance (56,66 %), puis le fait de rendre l'apprentissage agréable et amusant (46,66 %). L'étude implique que les enseignants peuvent se concentrer sur ces trois qualités afin d'améliorer la qualité de leur enseignement sans négliger les autres.

Mots clés: grand professeur - enseignement qualifié - qualités - enseignants en formation initiale - points de vue

Introduction

The need for good teaching has always been present, and it is skyrocketing during the current Covid-19 crisis. The number of skills and qualities required from teachers have augmented which means that the standards for effectiveness in teaching have altered. Good teaching is complex. Being a qualified teacher, interchangeably used with 'good teacher', 'skilled teacher' and 'effective teacher', can encapsulate several items like talent, mastery of subject matter, and knowledge of the science of teaching. Also, the Corona crisis and the imposed quarantine made it crucial for teachers to be proficient with ICTs. That said, it is essential to remember that there is not just one way to be a good teacher as Willingham inscribes: "*there are many ways in which one can be a good teacher*" (2009: 58). This is a rudimentary idea to mention right at the start: there is not one good teacher epitome or archetype that all teachers need to follow or be, which justifies the need for more research on good teaching. The latter is variegated with numerous kinds and paints as is the case with good learners and learning (Moore, 2000: 120). Good teaching translates into being capable of helping students learn (Brookfield, 2006), while great teaching is defined by Aloisi, Coe, Higgins, and Major as: "*that which leads to improved student progress*" (2014: 2). The two understandings are quite similar, although great teaching is deemed better than good teaching by both field specialists and the public. Thereby, this study is important because it aims to shed light on great teaching. What is a great teacher? And what makes a teacher great? The researcher hypothesises that what makes a teacher great is how much they like what they teach and who they teach. Good teaching causes learning about the subject matter whereas great teaching is committed, wise, and produces lifelong learning. These hypotheses are the general product of many readings plus experience. The latter, as many studies show, is a significant determinant that helps lead from goodness to greatness in teaching.

1. Literature Review

Students may see classroom practices from different angles. Their views prove that having good teachers is not just value added to the teaching-learning process. It becomes a right not only a privilege when teachers consider good teaching as a duty and a responsibility instead of a luxury or extra work. If we take this issue a

stage further, we shall mention that: *“Sometimes the best motivational intervention is simply to improve the quality of our teaching”* (Dörnyei, 2001: 25-26). For long, lack of motivation has been considered by teachers as a major impediment to learning, but it seems that learners have something else to say. Learners' diaries and confessions present many answers to the most persistent classroom issues. “My Stream of Consciousness” is a poem written by Siem Tesfaslase when she was a tenth-grade student at Arlington High School, Indianapolis, Indiana. In it, she begged teachers to teach her well, to help her find her own self, and to provide a *miracle* to every learner (in Costa, 2001: 222). The miracle that Siem is referring to is teachers, specifically good helpful teachers. She is indirectly saying that the solution to many problems, like laziness and absence of motivation, is the amelioration of the quality of teaching. Meanwhile, Mike, an American second grader, tried to describe what a good teacher is. He said: *“A good teacher is a teacher that does stuff that catches your interest. Sometimes you start learning and you don't even realize it. A good teacher is a teacher that does stuff that makes you think”* (in Santrock, 2006: 5). Perhaps what Mike is trying to convey is that a good teacher has enough skills to motivate and engage learners affectively and mentally, to keep their interest on, and to form good relationships with them.

Rogers (1997) recommends language, what is said by the teacher to students, as a viable elementary means to sustain good teacher-learner relationships which can in turn keep learners engaged. Thanks to effective use of language and feedback, teachers can strengthen the bonds with their learners. One example of how the teacher's language impacts students is the following confession: *“When asked what it was that teachers did that put him off learning, he commented, “the way they look at me” and was criticized, mostly “for almost anything” he did”* (Nandigam, 2010). The student is referring to body language and eye contact which are part of the teacher's language. Bochner, Duchesne, Krause, and Mcmaugh (2010) also discuss the teacher-student relationship: how it is a source of emotional engagement which supports classroom engagement. In few words, it is a decisive factor in engaging or disengaging learners. Other factors that have a saying in engaging learners are meeting learners' needs and wishes besides letting them choose and generate their own learning experiences (Nuthall, 2007). Delpit (1997) argues that is it even the right of learners to learn according to their preferences.

The Hungarian-American psychologist Csikszentmihalyi Mihaly has an interesting article (1997) in which he wrote his findings from asking people who their best teachers are and why. He found out that they are the passionate ones, the ones who project zeal and dedication. He reported that enthusiasm is a key feature of great teaching as it shows teachers' love and commitment to what they are doing; it is what makes the difference in teaching. Dörnyei shares the same view.

He describes the enthusiastic teachers as: “*the ‘nutcases’ whose involvement in their areas of expertise is so excessive that it is bordering on being crazy*” (Dörnyei, 2001: 32). Extreme enthusiasm is sometimes featured as wild and crazy; likewise, doing things from outside the box but from inside the heart is frequently characterised as weird or insane. Students notice all that. Some of them end up categorising a teacher’s professional identity and style, or coining some pedagogies and methods. For instance, “*tough love*” is the name that Mohamed Hussain gives to what he describes as “*the most effective teaching method of all*” (2011: 17). Hussain talks of how tough his teacher, Mr. Seltzer, was. He set high standards and expectations by treating them as responsible mature individuals. Hussain recites:

“Mr. Seltzer held us to extremely high standards. Still, he was never boorish or a jerk to us. We could see his affection and regard for us despite his sternness. He once commented to me that he had many children, and it was not until later that I realized that he was talking about his students. To Mr. Seltzer, we were his children and he expected us to be amazing and not disappoint him: just what he’d expect of his own children. In turn, all of his students — those who loved to learn, and even those who were not particularly motivated to do so — tried their best to live up to his standards” (Ibid., p. 18).

Mr. Seltzer’s tough love paid back. His method, though tough, was appreciated by his students because they could read care in his verbal and non-verbal languages. Moreover, David Etienne (2011: 25) thought about care as the primary characteristic when describing Mr. Jean Pierre, his favourite teacher, and stressed the fact that he cared about his students as humans and persons rather than only about fulfilling his job for payment. Etienne revealed:

“[H]e was also the kind of teacher who taught us how to survive in life. He took the time to tell us how to conduct ourselves in an office environment, how to shake someone’s hand at a job interview, and how to stay focused even when everything might seem to be against us. [...] He made me realize that you can impress someone for a little while by dressing fancy, but a smart, educated mind can make a much longer-lasting impression” (Etienne, 2011: 25).

In fact, Mr. Jean Pierre sought to prepare his students for life. He conglomerates the qualities that many learners wish to meet in their teachers. Languay and Strachan have enumerated these attributes based on the responses of learners. Amongst what they counted are care towards students, encouragement, understanding, help, and “*Making it so you want to come to school and enjoy being with your teacher and friends*” (Languay and Strachan, 2011: 126). These attributes might also be what students first check in a teacher. Matter of fact, research has proved that students start evaluating teachers in the first 10 seconds of meeting them. Not just that, they can quickly detect the affective climate in the classroom and sense the kind of rapport they have with their teacher (Hattie and Yates, 2014: 28). The latter’s communication behaviour transmits to learners what they need to know about who their teachers are (Gorham, Peck Richmond, and Wrench, 2009: 206).

1.1. Relevant Studies

David Hudson (2009) entitled his book: *Good Teachers, Good Schools: How to Create a Successful School*, in which he talks of how different partakers influence learning and school, like teachers, lead teachers and senior leaders, the school's staff, curricula, discipline, ICT, and parents. It can be seen, though, that he is hiding an equation in that title: good teachers equal good schools or good teachers make successful schools. Amongst all the factors that affect learning and schools and that he elucidates in the book, he put focus right in the title on teachers. It is hard to escape the conclusion: teachers are what matters most to learning.

Many researchers, practitioners, and parents know that, and even though there are three acknowledged sources of motivation for learners: the society we live in, the teacher, and the method (Harmer, 2001: 51-52), previous studies managed to show that: *"the single most important factor determining the quality of the education a child receives is the quality of his teacher"* (Cooper and Ryan, 2010: 164). Zoltán Dörnyei is one of the contemporary researchers who dealt with the topic of motivation vastly. He has an identical opinion to that of Cooper and Ryan, thinking that the teacher is on top of the list of what exerts an influence on learners and their learning (Dörnyei, 2001: 32). Undoubtedly, students are affected by more people and factors not just the teacher; still, the study of Arends and Kilcher confirms that: *"[T]he ultimate arbitrators of success in our schools are classroom teachers, the literally millions of talented individuals who open their classrooms every day, plan lessons, make assignments, and monitor what their students learn"* (Arends and Kilcher, 2010: xxi). These talented individuals known as teachers take many instructional decisions hoping to *"maximize their students' learning"* (Aceves, Haager, and Klingner, 2010: 1). Their practice is influenced by a multitude of elements. Their effectiveness and ability to do well are controlled by contextual factors in which teachers have no say, like the school's atmosphere, the society's culture, and the nation's educational policies (Ibid.). Yet interestingly, good teachers can manage well only with what they are and what they believe and do.

In his book section named "What Good Teachers Have in Common", Daniel Willingham, a cognitive psychologist, writes about what makes teachers effective. *"Style,"* he says, *"is what the students notice"* (Willingham, 2009: 50). Obviously, there are other elements to teachers' effectiveness, but style may include them all. Willingham clarifies by giving an example about college teachers who habitually receive their students' evaluation by the end of the course. Students write notes about their professors' teaching performance. Many schools and colleges have ready fillable forms which are distributed to students. These forms contain *"items as "The professor was respectful of student opinions," "The professor was an effective discussion leader," and so on, and*

students indicate whether or not they agree with each statement” (Ibid.). Having studied the statements and questions of these surveys and students’ replies, researchers found out that many items are repeated and concluded that the surveys could be summed up in two statements because *“the questions really boil down to two: Does the professor seem like a nice person, and is the class well organized?”* (Ibid.). These two items fall within style because the first, niceness, is a personal style, whereas the second, organisation in work, refers to a professional style. To recapitulate, Willingham is one of the researchers who wondered about good teachers and what makes them so. He asserts:

“Ask ten people you know, “Who was the most important teacher in your life?” I’ve asked dozens of people this question and have noticed two interesting things. First, most people have a ready answer. Second, the reason that one teacher made a strong impression is almost always emotional. The reasons are never things like “She taught me a lot of math.” People say things like “She made me believe in myself” or “She taught me to love knowledge.” In addition, people always tell me that their important teacher set high standards and believed that the student could meet those standards” (Ibid., p. 144).

Having asked similar questions, other researchers noticed different things. Being asked about good teachers does not always find an immediate answer. Wragg (1974) besides Atkinson and Moore (1998) found that many applicants for initial teacher education courses have some difficulty in citing their good teachers and what made them so. Even when they fare to decide, the participants seem to struggle when asked to elaborate on their good teachers’ qualities (Atkinson and Moore, 1998; Moore, 2000: 120; Wragg, 1974). Usually, the applicants begin stating the personal features of their *“fondly-remembered teachers”*, like humour, fairness, commitment, contagious enthusiasm, and efficient communication; however, these descriptions are done *“in the very vaguest of terms”* (Ibid.). The professional traits, like classroom management, lesson planning, and assessment are seldom recalled (Ibid.). The researchers suggest that it is partly due to the invisibility of professional attributes to students (Ibid.). It could also be drawn to the fact that students state what impacts them personally. This is in line with what Atkinson and Moore (1998) call *“the teacher as charismatic subject”* where focus is on the personality of the teacher, that is on their personal style which implies that good teachers are born not made (Atkinson and Moore, 1998; Moore, 2000; Wragg, 1974). This is true to the extent where teachers do not work on their style, but a certain number of teachers do work on their personal and teaching style improving it over their career years.

Furthermore, according to many studies, forming *“emotionally close, safe, and trusting”* relationships with students comes with the territory of being an effective teacher (Wentzel and Wigfield, 2009: 301). The latter’s personality and style afford for caring teacher-student relationships. Caring and trust in the classroom context correlate with meeting students’ affective and cognitive needs. The *“process that meets fundamental needs of students”* is partially the process of

successful teaching as perceived by Wlodkowski (1978: 59) who also deems that when learners are unable to focus on learning or simply do not want to learn, it is very likely because there are other unsatisfied needs blocking them from learning. There is evidence from Abraham Maslow's paper: "A Theory of Human Motivation" (1943), or The Hierarchy of Needs, that four main types of needs come before the cognitive ones (the basic physiological needs, safety and security needs, belonging needs, and self-esteem needs), and as long as these are not satisfied, learners cannot pay full attention to learning (Burden and Williams, 1997: 33). Another probability why students do not want to learn is that teaching "*neglects, satiates, or threatens*" the students' present need state (Wlodkowski, 1978: 59). Indeed, when students complain about a certain teacher, it is most probably because s/he is not meeting their learning needs. Consequently, a good teacher to them is the one who meets their needs. Tisome (2009: 1) writes about this on the first page of his doctoral thesis, saying that teachers have to meet both academic and emotional students' needs because it paves the way for the establishment of a safe and positive classroom atmosphere. Such an environment is primordial for learners to thrive and pursue their self-actualisation needs, their goals and ambitions (Ibid.; Burden and Williams, 1997: 35). All in all, the talk about similar studies boils down to the fact that:

"Good teachers are our strongest resource, and only by enhancing and tapping into that resource can we create successful learning communities. One colleague in Virginia asked the principal of her child's school, "What have you done in the past year to nurture and inspire the teachers in your school?" This question may seem unusual juxtaposed with today's seemingly omnipresent question: "How are your school's test scores?" (in Scherer, 2003: 158).

"What have you done in the past year to nurture and inspire the teachers in your school?" can translate to: what have you done to help teachers become better, to contribute to the making of good teachers? The original question infers that good teaching is a matter of continuous progress, one that demands assistance from other professionals. It is also a question whose answers offer clues for this research, for how we can prepare and make good teachers. Therefore, it is elemental to seek further perspectives and views about the making of good teachers. Even if previous research said its word about it, the constantly-altering variables in the world of education compel us to re-seek what people think of qualified teaching.

2. Method

2.1. Research Questions

As mentioned in the introduction, the two main questions for this research are:
Question 1: What is a great teacher?

As the circumstances change in the educational circles and in the whole world, what greatness in teaching takes needs to be adapted accordingly. Furthermore, students' and teachers' views to this matter have been changing; thus, this study aims to explore recent ideas about the issue.

Question 2: What makes a teacher great?

This study wishes to collect the perspectives of pre-service teachers about what helps a teacher improve their performance.

2.2. Context and Sample

This study was conducted with 30 EFL pre-service teachers from the Department of English at Ecole Normale Supérieure, Bouzareah (ENSB), also known as the Teacher Training School, Algiers, Algeria. The participants were third year students whose age was between 20 and 24 years old. Both genders were included in the study, yet the majority are women (28). The investigation took place in May and June of year 2020. The students who participated had one semester in face-to-face instruction and the second one in online learning. Conducting this research among students at a teacher training institute was thought to be more relevant to the purposes of the study because they can represent both students and teachers. Choosing third year students was due to their availability, easy access, and willingness to contribute. Hence, the choice of these student-teachers was specific, and the sample was a convenience one.

As to the sampling procedures, 150 pre-service teachers were asked to participate. 98 of them agreed to participate, yet only 30 ended up seriously submitting their writings. No payment was needed, and because the survey was held online and the world was in lock-down, no institutional agreement was required. However, the researcher tried to abide by research ethical standards all along the study.

2.3. Data Collection Procedures

The corpus of this study was gathered through one qualitative research tool: writing free passages. It is said that: "*The research method of collecting free essays and utilising correspondence analysis to represent conceptual items and groups of participants seems promising*" (Asscher, Beishuizen, Bouwmeester, Hof, and Putten, 2001: 201). This technique was used because it is a potential research tool that brings together important qualitative data. The main aim of using it was "*to deepen our understanding of what students think about good teachers*" (Ibid., p.185). Thereby, participants were asked to write free answers to the following questions: What makes a teacher great? What is a great teacher to you? The questions were posted on Google classroom. The pre-service teachers

were given a week to submit their answers. Their participation consent was obtained prior to sending them the task.

It is essential to note that this is a case study, and that the findings are not necessarily generalisable. This is due to the inclusion of a reasonably small-size sample, a qualitative presentation of findings, and an independent content-analysis of data. While the researcher is trying to pursue objectivity and reliability, these two cannot be fully reached in a case study that requires mental analysis and interference of the researcher at some points.

2.4. Methods of Data Analysis

The exploratory and descriptive nature of this study led us to the use of content analysis. It is a method that suits qualitative data as it allows their scrutiny and categorisation. The content analysis method is used in order to study participants' replies, determine the characteristics that are used in their writings, and identify similarities and correlations in the descriptions, lists, and anecdotes that student-teachers suggest. In general, the qualitative data analysis is done through presenting, extracting, then scanning data for repetitive traits, words, and ideas. It can also be done through comparing findings from research instruments to findings from the literature review. Because this is a qualitative study, we will rely on displaying pieces of the participants' writings as they are rich with data and self-explanatory. The replies of the participants were long and extensively-explained, so instead of sharing them all, the researcher sought to provide their concise analyses. After examining participants' writings, the findings will be tabulated and some statistics will be generated.

3. Results

When pre-service teachers were asked what makes a teacher great or what is a qualified teacher to them, their answers were rich and long. They evoked several traits and teaching practices. Some of them organised their answers in a passage like std1. The analysis of her writing produces seven main traits: caring, humanistic, helpful, understanding, passionate, a guide, and an advisor. The second participant, sought to describe his best teacher and referred to five features: supporting, helpful, encouraging, unforgettable, besides being someone who believes in students' potential. Meanwhile, the third participant drew a metaphor for teachers who believe in their students. She wrote: *"For me a great teacher is a Treasure Seeker. I believe that a teacher cannot be great until he makes it to the treasure. It is your own student, your student's core. A great teacher is an explorer [...]"*. Std3 tried to highlight the core of teaching. The comparison she built between teaching and treasure seeking is quite pertinent

because teaching can be regarded as seeking treasures and unfolding them. The respondent included many characteristics in her passage. She mentioned being purposeful patient, encouraging, passionate, hopeful, and understanding. Another metaphor was brought by std4. She compared the teacher to a window as can be read in the following excerpt: *“A teacher is a window through which many young people will see their future. [...] He/she has to let the students think, use their minds to solve problems by their own, make them comfortable with sharing their ideas, and help them build self-confidence [...]”*. Std4 said that a great teacher is inspiring, well-organised, clear and effective in lesson explanation, understanding, warm, accessible, caring, passionate and patient. In other quarters, a skilled teacher loves both teaching and learning, has good classroom management, knowledge of subject matter and of varied teaching methods and techniques. A great teacher is a good listener and a good relationship builder. Incontestably, some of these traits have already been mentioned in the literature review.

For her part, the next student-teacher thinks that a great teacher is like a friend or a psychologist. Part of her reply is displayed in the following: *“For me, a great teacher is a friend that is to say “the one who can see what happens behind your smile or your sadness depending on your mood, a friend or we can call him a psychologist”. A great teacher is the one who asks this question: “why is this student participating and why the other is not?”[...]”*. To std5, a great teacher is talented; s/he knows how to transmit knowledge as well as how to play and make learning fun. S/he attempts to understand learners and the way they learn. This signifies that s/he is someone who keeps learning. The next respondent believes that a great teacher is a lifelong learner as indicated here: *“A great teacher learns and keeps learning with his students; she/he is not shy of something she/he does not know. I believe a great teacher is creative [...]”*. The participant thinks that great teachers are creative and daring. Thus, teachers who are willing to improve their practice, as std6 suggests, can do it by continuous practice and openness to incessant learning. This is also in line with the hypothesis set by the researcher at the beginning of the paper. Std7 agrees with this as she says that she does not like teachers who pretend to know it all. Her reply reads: *“[...] I think that a great teacher is a kind nice person. In other words, she/he never belittles her/his students; she/he is always humble and never arrogant whatsoever. I hate know-it-all teachers! These surely are not the great ones”*. Patience, kindness, niceness, respect, humbleness, and knowledge are the attributes ascribed to great teachers by the participant. To this participant, they are the ones who do not think of themselves superior to learners. They do not think they are in competition with learners, or as std8 expressed, in a battle. Std8 shows the big picture to teaching: educating people and helping them be better humans. She reveals that a great teacher is humanistic, that is, s/he cares about the whole learner not just their academic success like Burden and Williams

(1997) explicate. Other qualities mentioned by std8 are respectful, caring, positive, supportive, and helpful. However, unlike the previous participants, std9 observes that great teachers are not only found in class. She wrote:

“A great teacher does not have to take courses in teaching, study for hours, or read tons of books. A great teacher can be your mother, who never heard of ZPD, but provided you with the necessary scaffolding to show you how to bake a cake. A great teacher can be you father, who never read about Skinner, but offered you reinforcement to help keep up your good work at school [...].”

Std9 perceived numerous skills and talents in great teachers. She affirms that they know how to make students feel and how to listen, which evokes what Daniel Goleman (1995) calls emotional intelligence. Hence, according to her, good teachers, have good emotional intelligence and are good listeners. They provide relevant and significant learning as Carl Rogers recommends (1959), and they encourage mistakes. They practice motivation and reflective teaching. They constantly re-assess their teaching and deeds. The tenth respondent takes learner-centredness into account. She considers a great teacher the one who actively involves learners in their learning, the one whose teaching is real-life oriented, and the one who is humanistic. The latter implies that the teacher cares about learners' feelings and builds decent relationships with them (Burden and Williams, 1997). Some participants designed lists of what makes a teacher great, like std11 whose list is in what follows:

- Always willing to learn and get developed.
- Prioritizes his students.
- Motivates.
- Inspires.
- Gives learners space to express themselves and LISTENS.
- Not too serious! He makes jokes and spreads good humour so that all his students get engaged.
- Knows what his students need and want. He knows when someone is passing through difficult times.”

Std11 restates some of the features that her classmates already mentioned like being a lifelong learner, a motivator, an inspirer, and a good listener. She incorporates the elements of fun, learner centredness, and learners' needs. A great teacher, in her opinion, knows his learners' needs, understands them, and constructs learning around them which puts the learner at the centre of the process. One other aspect that has not yet been cited is responsibility. Std12 alludes to it in the coming excerpt: *“In my humble opinion, the great teacher is the one who feels responsibility to raise successful citizens in society [...].”* Std12 restates that a good teacher is a good listener and relationship builder. She includes items like being a good communicator, being friendly, approachable, and appreciated by most students. The latter is re-mentioned by the next participant who also thinks that an excellent teacher is appreciated by

most students probably because s/he does the job well. Indeed, std13 focuses on being understanding and tolerant towards students, all in being versatile in teaching strategies to meet the diverse learner profiles. Meanwhile, std14 re-highlights relationships, motivation, humour, and fun. Zeal and passion are pointed out one more time. Std15 assumes that the skilled teacher knows how to rise his students' self-esteem as well as their academic performance. S/he is an unforgettable difference-maker. Likewise, std16 approves that great teachers are memorable as they love teaching, understand learners, and are able to discern which role to play and when. Otherwise speaking, she is hinting to emotional intelligence. She does not stop here, but she adds that they are great relationship builders thanks to their good listening and communication skills. Furthermore, effective teachers make learning enjoyable and involve all learners. The seventeenth contributor answered the research questions succinctly. She listed that a great teacher is kind, compassionate, humanistic, and positive. S/he is an inspiring relationship-builder. The explanation she provides to the latter reads: *"A great teacher bridges gaps and builds relationships, friendships, and a community. Everyone looks at a great teacher and wants to be like them"*. The trait of relationship building has been evoked by many respondents, same as inspiration. On reflection, these two come to mind quickly after hearing the question: what makes a teacher great? Std18 gauges that: *"This question is one of the simplest yet most difficult ones at the same time since it does not have an absolute answer"*. This participant confessed that she cannot come up with a full description of what makes a great teacher, yet she maintains that they have great professional knowledge, and enumerates a set of great teachers' personality traits. She regards strong personality and leadership as essential ones in the profile of a qualified teacher. To her, s/he is wise, mature, respectful, and humble. What is more, they offer advice to learners whenever required. Similarly, std19 finds that a great teacher is the one that students trust and rely on for guidance. They are the teacher who is *"warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring"*. She thinks that great teachers are good listeners which explains why they are good at counselling their learners when needed. The subsequent respondent opted for reciting the story of her teacher. She narrated:

"In high school, I was taught by a woman called Mrs. Kessira, believe me words are not enough to describe her. Although she was old and sick, she did her job well, she had a great impact on us as students. She knew how to control the class. She was not that serious. From time to time, she laughed with us. Unconsciously, you find yourself respecting her; she used to say: "no one gets out of this door until you all understand the lesson". She really did her best to transmit the information and we all noticed that. This is what made us all concentrate during her class, literally all of us used to follow and listen to every word she said. She was friendly. The best thing is that she remembers all her students' names and their relatives whom she taught. When she calls my name and asks me about my sister who used to be her student, I feel so close to her. When she notices that someone has a problem,

she does not hesitate a second to help. So, if you ask me what is a great teacher to me, I will say: Mrs. Kessira.”

In the light of how the participant depicted her teacher, we can comprehend that a great teacher is impactful, friendly, engaging, caring, and helpful. S/he makes sure everyone understands, and is good at transmitting knowledge. S/he is serious yet knows how to use humour and fun in the lesson. To this participant, a great teacher does her/his job well, is efficient at classroom management, and knows students' names besides who they are.

Std21 notices that great teachers teach well. They are purposeful, determined, and clever. They can easily and quickly adapt their lessons to learners' needs which might mean that they have accumulated enough experiences and encounters. Continuous learning is once again brought to attention by std22 who deems great teachers to be lifelong learners. They unwaveringly endeavour to inculcate this trait on their students as they teach them to learn passionately and persistently. Meanwhile, std23 sums up great teaching in the way students are treated. Another time, the great teacher is viewed as the humanistic one who deals with learners as human beings, cares for them, and understands their feelings (Moskowitz, 1978; Stevick, 1990). S/he is a good listener, a motivator, and a facilitator that accompanies the learning journey. Once again, these traits recall emotional intelligence. While diversity of teaching procedures has been discussed by participants several times, this is the second time merging seriousness with laughter and fun is being mentioned by the sample. Being unforgettable, too, has been mentioned many times. The next pre-service teacher began her answer with a statement about it: *“The synonym of the great teachers is the unforgettable teachers; the teachers who you describe as great, you cannot forget them [...]”*. Like std23, std24 thinks that the way the teacher treats students says a lot about them. The great teacher advises, cares, encourages, motivates, inspires, impacts, involves learners actively, and forms strong relationships with them. S/he is creative and original, humanistic with solid principles.

For her section, the twenty-fifth student-teacher to take part in this investigation listed caring, supportive, positive, humble yet respected, challenging, creative, and lifelong learning as traits of great teachers. Like a previous participant, std25 declared that the research question is not as easy as it might seem. The following is a segment of her long submission: *“When I first read the question, I was like: “ok, that is easy and it is going to take only 10 minutes of my time”. Later, I realised that it is more than what I thought [...]”*. Std25 insists that great teachers have knowledge of educational psychology and learners' profiles. Being a passionate teacher is one of the features that have been proposed many times so far. Both std25 and std26 re-mention it. Std26 underlines the importance of being able to establish a safe classroom environment in a great

teacher's profile. She sees that a great teacher is the one who values and respects learners. S/he cares about learners and believes in them. Similarly, std27 asserts that a great teacher has faith and trust in learners' potential. S/he loves to teach which causes learners to love learning as s/he provides relevant learning, profitable feedback, and active involvement. This type of teachers listens well to learners, understands them, encourages their learning, and allows mistakes. Like many other pre-service teachers, std28 contemplates that great teachers love their job, make learning enjoyable, believe in learners and listen to them. To him, they are organised, serious yet nice and smiley, tolerant and understanding, motivating and encouraging, fair, and inspiring. They leave a long-lasting mark which makes them unforgettable.

Std29 asked the research question to her family members and reported each one's answer. The answers of her family are not different from what the other participants dictated. A great teacher to them is a lifelong learner, someone who cares for learners and is available when needed. S/he is a sound teacher-student relationship builder. Last but not least, her sister thinks that s/he needs to be cool and easy-going. The answer of std30 brings many items together. In a long list, she referred to all the characteristics mentioned earlier.

3.1. Statistics and Data Analysis

As could be read previously, many traits were re-stated by the participants. They agreed on many and differed in some. Table 1 shows the statistics obtained after analysing all traits. The latter were organised in categories based on what they mean. They are ordered from the most to least stated. In the second column figures the number of participants who pointed out one of the traits. The last column is for the percentages of those participants.

Table 1. Findings from Participants' Writings about Great Teachers' Traits

Traits	Number of participants	Percentage
1. Supporting, encouraging, motivating, advises, guides, counsels	19	63.33%
2. Humanistic, understanding, tolerant	17	56.66%
3. Fun, uses humour, plays, makes learning enjoyable, relevant and real-life oriented	14	46.66%
4. Unforgettable, inspiring, impactful	13	43.33%
5. Good listener, good communicator	11	36.66%
6. Caring compassionate, attentive	11	36.66%
7. Passionate, loves teaching and learning	10	33.33%
8. Knowledge of psychology and pedagogy / diversity of methods	9	30%

9. Warm, kind, nice, cool, easy-going, smiley, friendly, appreciated	9	30%
10. Organised, talented, clear, effective, facilitator, professional, teaches well	9	30%
11. Helpful, available, approachable	8	26.66%
12. Lifelong learner, explorer	8	26.66%
13. Knows students, their needs, and/or differences	8	26.66%
14. Believes and trusts	7	23.33%
15. Good relationship builder	7	23.33%
16. Strong classroom management skills, knowledge of how to treat students	6	20%
17. Creative, daring, original, smart, challenging	6	20%
18. Involves learners actively, engages them, puts them at the centre	6	20%
19. Emotionally intelligent	5	16.66%
20. Patient and calm	5	16.66%
21. Strong personality, leader, mature, wise, charismatic	4	13.33%
22. Subject matter knowledge	4	13.33%
23. Purposeful, determined	3	10%
24. Hopeful, positive	3	10%
25. Humble	3	10%
26. Fair	2	6.66%
27. Encourages mistakes	2	6.66%
28. Respectful	2	6.66%
29. Responsible	1	3.33%
30. Self-evaluating	1	3.33%

3.2. Discussion

It is essential to mention that the participant pre-service teachers have modules where they study teachers' roles, good teachers' features, and learning theories that might have influenced their answers and the terminology they employed. While we tend to think that a great teacher is by definition a difference maker, one participant only mentioned this feature. A teacher does not need to cause huge change or take heroic steps to be considered great. The difference s/he may bring is prompted by the support, motivation, understanding, tolerance, and joy they provide. The excellence of a teacher lies in how the latter treats students and how

s/he listens and communicates with them. In a nutshell, the findings of this investigation are in line with the ones from the review of literature.

Bill Smoot interviewed fifty-one great teachers about learning and teaching. Their responses to his questions were diverse, but he noticed universals. *“More than once,”* he wrote, *“I heard a phrase only slightly different from something said in an earlier interview”* (Smoot, 2010: xi). One of those universals is how they consider teaching more than a job just like the sample of this study does; to many of them it is a mission, *“a combination of serious purpose and sacred commitment to that purpose”* (Ibid., p. xii). One teacher said that she did not choose teaching, it chose her (Ibid.). The calling of teaching and learning, as with many other jobs, can be enormous and compelling; nonetheless, many teachers do it out of love not because of the obligation. Smoot expands that deep total presence in one’s teaching is called devotion or dedication which is one characteristic of great teachers that the respondents brought up at least ten times. Some call it: *“authentic presence in the classroom”* (Ibid.) or integrity. It is as if the teacher is mostly her/himself in teaching, they are *“so deeply in their element”* (Ibid.). Smoot carries on analysing the authentic classroom presence of those teachers; he notices that they have not necessarily been like that since the onset of their career. It is one of the lessons teaching experiences build. Teachers acquire over experience a *“sense of belonging in the classroom”* (Ibid.) that allows them to be truly themselves in teaching, and to feel comfortable in class. Therefore, some of the commonalities in great teachers’ answers about teaching is passion, authenticity, and devotion. This is in line with what std1 wrote: *“I think a good teacher is the one who does not consider “teaching” only as a job but someone who is passionate about it”*. David Weston treated these items as well as flexibility in teaching. For him, it is about being perceptive to learners’ needs. In a TEDx talk (2015), he asked the following question: *“How do we develop great teaching?”*. After research and reflection, he suggested four ingredients: perception, knowledge, practice, and spirit. He also suggested four ingredients to develop great teaching which are: diagnostics, problem solving, collaboration, and professional culture.

Perception allows the teacher to know and read what is going on in the classroom and to understand students’ emotional and cognitive states (Weston, 2015). Besides, it helps increase the second ingredient, knowledge. *“Really great teachers”*, says Weston, *“have amazing knowledge. They understand the anatomy of learning. They understand the journeys that we take children through”*. They keep learning and growing both their subject matter and general knowledge as many respondents said. They also have great practice. They know how to manage a class, when to talk, when to stop, what questions to ask and how to ask them, how to explain, and how to bring *“students working together in exciting and interesting ways”* (Ibid.). The last but perhaps most important ingredient, Weston thinks, is spirit or what is inside the teacher. That is, great teachers love learning

and teaching, love seeing students on task, reaching the aha moment, and improving. The teacher's spirit is what absorbs them in helping their students passionately, in radiating the joy of learning and the pleasure of teaching, and in carrying on with patience on the tough days (Ibid.). All these have been referred to by the respondents.

The professional culture is the fourth component Weston proposes to develop great teachers. If such a culture is at disposal, then teachers will be working in places and systems where they can thrive, a culture wherein they collaborate with colleagues and experts to solve problems. Yet, they also take time to think, reflect, and problem-solve individually in order to personalise learning situations to their learners and environment. But to do that, they need diagnostics, that is, to know their learners and to understand their needs (Ibid.). They might also try to understand what learning is, what it includes, and how the whole teaching-learning process functions.

4. Implications of the Study

Although this is not a comprehensive study and its results cannot be generalised, some implications can be elicited from its findings. In essence, teachers who wish to hone their practice can work on the characteristics mentioned in Table 1. Furthermore, the study at hand might have an implication to teacher training programmes. The latter try to develop many skills in the trainees; they can dedicate more parts and efforts towards growing the qualities that appear in Table 1. More focus can be aimed at the traits with the highest percentages.

This study demonstrates that teachers' personality traits influence their performance as teachers. Thereby, the initial selection of future teachers might be based on the candidates' personality traits and potential teaching aptitudes like tolerance, compassion, helpfulness, patience, positivity, respectfulness, love to learn and teach, and organisation.

Being a qualified teacher does not equal being a perfect one nor does it denote not making mistakes and errors. Indeed, Robert Rose confirms that: "*Teachers have to recognize that they always are going to have problems, no matter how good they are*" (2001: 258). One of the participants elaborated on this. She envisaged that:

"A modern issue that faces us as teachers is the amount of high expectations people nowadays have of "great teachers". If you do not know what I am talking about, just google "what is a great teacher?", you will be surprised –and saddened- by all the difficult, almost impossible, requirements (great teachers stay past school hours, great teachers are friends with their students everywhere, are committed to schools, are involved in all curricular and extracurricular activities, know everything about their subject material, are strong, are flawless, etc). This whole matter makes teaching a Utopia that no matter how hard we work, we can

never reach. Therefore, I suggest we become realistic and do what we CAN only, and evaluate ourselves more often (without scolding oneself).”

The last statement in the preceding excerpt can serve well as an implication. It is professional to pursue improvement and seek betterment in teaching. Nonetheless, as teachers are urged to not stop learning, their flaws, mistakes, and failures need to be allowed and encouraged just as skilled teachers are expected to allow and encourage them with learners. After all, it can be inferred that great teachers are lifelong learners who keep making mistakes because they keep trying new things to enhance and upgrade their performance.

Finally, it is probably rare that anyone becomes a great teacher this way: “*Look at this great teacher here, just copy that*” (Weston, 2015). Despite the fact that it might help, it takes more than following lists and copying models. Weston (2015) thinks that the qualities of great teachers cannot be copied or imitated. This is quite similar to what std11 wrote: “*I do not believe that we should follow every single advice/step in order to be great teachers.*” Knowing all qualities and trying to duplicate them does not necessarily lead teachers to ameliorate their practice. However, trying to stay true to the self can help (Palmer, 1998)

5. Conclusions and Further Research Directions

To reconnect the dots together, the present study collected future teachers’ prescriptions for great teaching. They informed this study about the qualities they find foundational in a qualified teacher’s profile. On top of what they listed, we can read imparting support, motivation, encouragement, tolerance, understanding, humanity, fun, humour, inspiration, and listening. Other essentials they stated are love for teaching and learning, kindness, lifelong learning, knowledge of content, learners, teaching methods, and educational psychology, and the ability of forming sound relationships with learners. The lens through which the informant pre-service teachers view great teaching are not necessarily the same other colleagues, teachers, or academic experts use. Hence, future research might redirect the same study with different samples and populations. It would also be beneficial to delve into each characteristic and search how it can be cultivated by individual teachers or nurtured by teacher training programmes.

In synopsis, this study attempted to analyse the making and profiles of great teachers through student-teachers’ views. Its findings might be of service to teacher education and teacher professional development.

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