



Students' Perspectives Towards the Ideal Teacher in Lalitpur, Nepal

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Article Info

Abstract

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This study explored students' perspectives on the characteristics of an ideal teacher in Lalitpur, Nepal. The objective was twofold: to examine students' views on the ideal teacher and to determine whether these perspectives varied based on academic performance. A phenomenological research design was employed, focusing on two secondary-level students from Lalitpur. One student was a high academic achiever, while the other struggled academically. In-depth interviews were conducted, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that students viewed ideal teachers as those who actively engaged with less interactive and academically struggling students, offering support and encouragement. In contrast, ineffective teachers were described as those who overwhelmed students with unnecessary workloads, lacked creativity, and frequently reprimanded them for their performance. The practical implications of this study's findings underscore the importance of fostering inclusive and supportive learning environments tailored to the needs of all students, regardless of their academic abilities, providing actionable insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers.

Keywords: *Ideal teacher, secondary level students, phenomenology, qualitative studies*

Introduction

In Sanskrit, the term “Guru” is derived from “Gu,” meaning darkness, and “Ru,” meaning light, symbolizing someone who dispels darkness by imparting knowledge. Teaching, an ancient practice, dates back to the Gurukul system around 5000 BC in the Vedic period, where students lived and learned under the guidance of their teacher. Formalized teaching is believed to have begun around 561 BC, with Confucius recognized as a notable private teacher. The establishment of teacher training centers became more prominent following the founding of Cambridge University during the Middle Ages (Hiresch & Chandawani, n.d.).

John Adams famously stated, “A teacher is the maker of man,” emphasizing the profound impact educators have on society. Similarly, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan noted that teachers play a vital role in transmitting knowledge and skills across generations, helping to sustain civilization (Sharma, 2011). The Alberta Teachers' Association (2012) defines teacher qualifications as the specialized knowledge, skills, and attributes required to meet educational needs. Professionalism in teaching encompasses continuous improvement, reflective practice, and active involvement in school development (Gohier et al., 2000). There is ongoing debate regarding the definition and standards of teaching excellence (Newby, 2007).

An ideal teacher should possess a deep understanding of their subject, professional teaching knowledge, and effective classroom management skills. Such a teacher fosters student responsibility and self-direction while exhibiting qualities like friendliness, tolerance, trustworthiness, and honesty (Tursman, 1981, as cited in Acocella, 2002). Tursman (1981) outlines six key attributes of effective teachers: assigning appropriate learning activities, providing clear instructions, employing varied teaching methods, using direct instruction for foundational skills, managing classrooms efficiently, and demonstrating a democratically authoritative leadership style.

Student perceptions of an ideal teacher significantly shape the learning environment and influence the educational experience (Jules & Kutnick, 1997). Formal education involves a triadic relationship among

teachers, students, and curricula. Teachers facilitate learning by delivering content through teaching-learning activities and assessing students' achievements concerning educational goals. Thus, the teacher's role is critical in guiding students and implementing curricula effectively (Paudel, 2011).

Ciascai and Vlad (2014) found that ideal teachers clearly communicate their expectations, promote in-depth learning through diverse methods, engage students in extracurricular activities, and assess them based on their knowledge. Roth, a professor at London University, noted that successful teachers interact dynamically with their class through gestures and storytelling, whereas less successful teachers tend to be more static (Dahal et al., 2012). Ryanas (1970) categorized teacher behaviors into three elements: warmth, understanding, and friendliness versus aloofness; systematic and responsible versus unplanned behavior; and creativity versus routine-bound actions. He posits that effective teachers exhibit high levels of positive behaviors while maintaining emotional stability, cooperativeness, kindness, consideration, and fairness (Dahal et al., 2012).

The process of transferring knowledge necessitates both practical skills and theoretical understanding, as teaching is an art. Consequently, identifying the characteristics of an ideal teacher remains a topic of ongoing research. This study aims to understand the attributes students believe constitute a perfect teacher. Teacher qualifications in the learning process encompass the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to effectively perform teaching duties. Thus, the central research question is: What qualities define the perfect teacher? To address this, a qualitative research design, including in-depth interviews with two students—one high-achiever and one low-achiever—will be employed. Students with achievements below 40 percent are considered low-achievers, while those above 80 percent are deemed high achievers.

Teachers play a fundamental role in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of students worldwide. However, the characteristics that define an ideal teacher often vary according to specific cultural and educational contexts. In Nepal, a country currently undergoing significant educational reforms aimed at improving quality and inclusivity, understanding what students perceive as the ideal teacher is particularly important. Insights gained from such understanding can help refine teacher training programs, influence policy decisions, and ultimately enhance educational practices and student outcomes.

The education system in Nepal has undergone substantial evolution, particularly with reforms designed to increase access to quality education (Upadhyay, 2020). The Lalitpur District, situated beside the Kathmandu Valley, is notable for its diverse student population and a mix of urban and rural educational institutions. This diversity offers a unique opportunity to examine what qualities students in this district value in their teachers.

Teachers in Lalitpur, like those elsewhere in Nepal, face numerous challenges, including large class sizes, limited resources, and varying levels of student preparedness (Sharma, 2019). Despite these challenges, the relationship between teachers and students remains a cornerstone of the educational process. Effective teachers are those who can engage students, create a positive learning environment, and support students' academic and personal development (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003).

Research on effective teaching practices consistently highlights key attributes such as pedagogical knowledge, communication skills, and the ability to motivate and inspire students (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2007). However, much of this research is based on Western contexts, underscoring the need to explore these concepts within different cultural settings. In Nepal, the cultural context, socio-economic conditions, and educational infrastructure present unique challenges and opportunities for teachers and students (Singh & Koirala, 2019).

This study aims to identify the characteristics of the ideal teacher from the perspectives of students in the Lalitpur District. By focusing on students' views, the research seeks to uncover the qualities most valued by those directly impacted by teaching practices. Understanding these perspectives can provide crucial insights for educators, policymakers, and teacher training programs in Nepal and similar contexts.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks of effective teaching and the practical realities of classrooms in Nepal. This research underscores the importance of student-centered educational approaches by integrating students' voices into the discourse on teacher effectiveness. It also highlights the need for culturally relevant teacher training programs that cater to students' specific needs and expectations in different contexts (Ainscow et al., 2006).

The findings from this study are expected to contribute to ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education

in Nepal. By identifying the attributes of an ideal teacher as perceived by students, this research can inform the development of teacher training curricula, professional development programs, and educational policies. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance the educational experiences of students in Lalitpur and beyond, ensuring they receive the support and guidance needed to succeed both academically and personally (Shrestha, 2017)

Research Questions

Despite numerous studies on student perspectives regarding ideal teachers, the following questions remain: (a) How does a student define a perfect teacher? (b) Can students' views on the perfect teacher vary according to their academic performance? To address these questions, this study explores student perspectives on what makes a perfect teacher.

Methodology

This study used a phenomenological research design to investigate secondary-level students' perspective of the ideal teacher. According to van Manen (2007), phenomenological research involves participants describing their lived experiences concerning specific phenomena, often through interviews, and is rooted in solid philosophical foundations.

The research was conducted in the Lalitpur district, focusing on secondary-level students. Two students were selected for in-depth interviews: one high-achiever and one low-achiever. The primary consideration for selecting these students was to gain contrasting perspectives on the qualities of an ideal teacher from students with different academic engagement and success levels. One student from each category was chosen from the same class in a secondary school in Lalitpur District to ensure a balanced view. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, commonly applied to qualitative data such as interview transcripts (Caulfield, 2019). The analysis followed six steps: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Firstly, interviews were conducted with two students from a community school in the Kathmandu Valley to familiarize them with the data. Initial codes were then generated and applied to the data set. Codes with similar content were grouped, resulting in categories such as 'good' and 'bad' teachers. The main themes were reviewed and refined, and subthemes were identified in the fourth step. These themes were further revised and refined in the final step. Due to the absence of empirical studies providing a framework for data interpretation, an inductive analysis approach was taken. The face-to-face interviews were thematically analyzed to produce detailed results and conduct an in-depth investigation of the issue (Smith & Osborn, 2008)

Findings and Discussion

Students perceive their secondary school teachers as less friendly, caring, and supportive than their elementary school teachers because secondary school academic outcomes are more important (Hartly, 1996; Hawkins & Berndt, 1985). In this study, thematic analysis is used and follows the six-step process. Firstly, interview is conducted with two students of the community school of Kathmandu valley in order to familiar with the data. The next step was to generate and apply initial codes to the data set. The third phase group codes with similar contents together, resulting in the expressions of good and bad teachers. Step four reviewed and refined the main themes, and subthemes were identified. They were revised and refined in the final step. In the absence of empirical studies that provide a potential framework for data interpretation, inductive analysis was conducted. Respondent view and their thematic analysis are presented below.

First Respondent: His name is Ramu (name changed). Mahendra Bhrikuti Secondary School is the name of his school. He started schooling in Kathmandu this year. He was studying at Bardiya before coming to the Capital city. He had three years of gap and did not study anywhere then. As a result of financial difficulties in his family. his father is a Rickshaw Driver in the countryside. He has worked hard and made him join the school. he has cleared his studies with good marks up to 7th grade. Currently, he is living in someone else's house, where he is doing household chores and studying.

He is an average student who has passed, securing 40% (approx) marks in his academic years. Government schools are not too good, and there is no suitable environment to study at them. It is not a compulsion to go to school regularly.

In my opinion, teachers should have good qualities. A good Teacher should love and affectionately treat every student, treat all the students equally, and not discriminate. Teachers should be helpful towards students and always talk to us, being kind and with nice gestures. I feel that just a simple smile by the teacher while talking to us makes a great difference.

Likewise, the perfect teacher should not be angry towards the students. They should treat us equally. They should not only give more attention to talented students but also give every student equal opportunity. I also feel that too much homework should not be given; it should only be given the required and right amount of work, and the respective teacher should thoroughly check the homework done by the students. Teachers should always encourage the average or below-average students and not only focus on the good ones. I like a teacher with the qualities mentioned earlier.

I have a teacher named Kulbahadur, and he is my personal favorite. He focuses on teaching average students like us, giving us equal opportunities as good students. He checks homework, teaches us to do it correctly, and also gives feedback if not done. I feel like all the other teachers should be like Kulbahadur, sir. I have a huge respect for him, and I like him a lot. I feel that a good teacher must have many good qualities. They should be good academically and have a good knowledge of the curriculum they teach. They should always be punctual and also teach in the easy language that everyone can understand. For example, he should make us understand Nepali if we do not understand English. I feel that all students do not have the same qualities, and their understanding and knowledge level differs. Average students like us who work and go to school do not have enough time, so I feel that we need good support and guidance from our teachers who know our situation.

Second Respondent: This is Hari Bahadur (name changed), who reads in class 9. His school is in Kathmandu, and he has studied in the capital city since 4th grade. He studied at Dadeldhura until 4th grade. He qualifies as an above-average student in the school and gets good grades on his exams.

Teachers Should Have Good Qualities. *I am pretty interested in maths and science-related studies, so I have found teachers who are interested in these subjects. I especially like maths and physics teachers because I understand every bit of the curriculum taught by them. I like them due to their friendly behavior, good experience in the related field, cheerfulness, and the energy they carry on them. They promote interactive learning, group work, and presentation and treat all students equally. They give us extra marks if we perform well in the classroom. As a result, they take notes that reveal how they performed.*

Likewise, I do not like teachers who are biased toward a particular group of students who prioritize girls more, do not do their job well, and are poor in their respective fields. I also do not like teachers who unnecessarily scold students, give needless loads of work, and are always grumpy.

Teachers who do not interact with the children in an excellent manner, who give more priority to theoretical knowledge than applied knowledge, who prioritize and give more attention to girls, and who usually punish boys are the qualities of a bad teacher.

Similarly, good teachers behave friendly, interact with students, treat every child equally, are focused and determined in their work, and give their best to help us understand.

Good Teacher

Professional skills and knowledge

Both participants emphasized that teachers have a reasonable manner. They explain the lesson until they make every child understand the content and teach the lesson by coding with simple things; they also reported that we can freely ask questions and explain in detail so he is a good teacher. They use exciting ideas and skills as a teaching method to make them understand easily. According to Tursman (1981), teachers should have clear directions to keep their focus. Teachers can apply different methods to their lessons.

Subjective knowledge

A good teacher can be defined as an experienced teacher with good knowledge of the subject matter. H/she should make each of the children clear about the content of what has been taught. That is why I like such a teacher, both students reported. They also added that they should be good academically and have a good

knowledge of the curriculum that they teach. They should always be punctual and teach in an easy language that everyone can understand.

Explanation skills

Both students emphasized that good teachers should have explanation skills and use straightforward language. They should promote interactive learning, group work, and presentation and treat all students equally. Straightforward language and speech help children get the most out of the content. New methods, exciting ideas, and qualitative discussion are integral to teaching.

Starts lesson interesting

They both emphasized that a good teacher starts their lesson interestingly with curriculum-related small, interesting talks or even a joke and also teaches cheerfully.

Applied various teaching and evaluation methods

They promote interactive learning, group work, and presentation and treat all students equally. They give us extra marks if we perform well in the classroom. As a result, they take notes that reveal how they performed.

Attitude and values

Both respondents reported friendly behavior and giving equal opportunity to all students, which makes a good teacher. Gender discrimination in this study: One student said a good teacher should give equal opportunity to all students and that there should be no gender discrimination, but another respondent did not say that.

Friendly behavior

Students emphasized that friendly behavior is another quality of a good teacher. We need good support and guidance from our teachers, who know our situation. They also emphasized that good teachers do not discriminate between students.

The above participants' views show that subjective knowledge, friendly behavior, and gender-equitable behavior are the qualities of a good teacher. Likewise, those who apply various methods of teaching and evaluation, as well as explanation skills, make perfect teachers. Like this, Kalkan and Emine Dagh have shown that the ideal teacher provides suitable and fun lessons, does not discriminate between students, is friendly and calm in communicating with them, and ensures discipline and democracy in the classroom (Kalkan, F & Dagh, E, 2021). It suggests that through encouragement and validation, teachers' appreciation can help students believe in themselves (Frymier & Houser, 2000). It also strengthens their motivation and effort (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). I conclude that students should feel that their teachers take an active interest in them and that their decisions and work matter.

Bad Teacher

Quality of teacher-student relationship students used three sub-themes, gender bias, antipathy, and bad manners, to describe their relationship with a lousy teacher. In other words, they reported that Teachers who do not interact with the children in a friendly manner, who give more priority to theoretical knowledge than applied ones, who prioritize and give more attention to girls, and who usually punish boys are the list of qualities of a bad teacher. It has been shown that mutual feelings of antipathy between students and teachers can lead to maladaptive behaviors (Abecassis et al., 2002; Peterson, 1991). This research found that students generally disliked some teachers, for example, when they perceived preferential treatment toward certain students, which reduced their motivation to attend classes and participate in discussions (Raufelder et al., 2016).

A teacher who prioritizes sand gives more attention to girls and usually punishes boys, which is the list of qualities of a bad teacher. They reported that the teacher equally sympathizes with all students from different backgrounds. Moreover, they focused on all students while teaching. Similarly, teachers who interact with the students in a bad manner and give Priority to theoretical knowledge Who gives more priority to theoretical knowledge than applied ones are bad teachers, they said.

Conclusion

Based on my study and the views of my participants, I would like to conclude as follows: From students' points of view and their perspectives, the ones who prioritize students who are not active in class, are not interactive and do not show their creativity, those who give unnecessary loads of work, scold the children and are always grumpily defined as a lousy teacher

Being a good teacher in itself is not an easy task. The definition of a perfect teacher can be written in long pages, but according to my participants, certain factors qualify them as a good teacher. The one who creates their classroom in a cheerful environment by different means are those who are very interactive among students. use their special skills, interesting ideas, and methodology in teaching and give their best to what they do. The teacher shouldn't be biased and prioritize among students. The teacher should always treat every student in an equal manner and also should give more focus to their average and below-average students. They should always try to solve their every problem and misunderstanding. Tons of unnecessary curriculum-related works should not be given and they should always present cheerfully to students. Interactive learning and good behavior should be promoted. They should present in a classroom in a wise and cheerful manner keeping all the personal stress aside. The study of the views of secondary school students on ideal teachers shows that a child differentiates a teacher in a good and bad manner by his academic skills, cheerfulness, indiscriminating thoughts, and good behavior with the students.

Being a teacher myself, I should be a good teacher. I should not prioritize among students, cheerfully present myself, make a good impression on the students, use my skills and knowledge, or use curriculum-related exciting topics to make things simpler and help every child understand. Unnecessary angeriness, violent behavior, and irrelevant arguments with the students are some of the things that should be avoided in a classroom. Teachers should be updated with the curriculums and subjects they teach. Easy means of gathering information, such as the internet and social media, can also be helpful for ideas and their self-upgrade.

This research analyzed students' perspectives of the ideal teacher in Lalitpur, Nepal, contrasting the views of high- and low-achieving students. It revealed that ideal teachers provide encouragement, personalized support, and foster an inclusive learning environment. High achievers emphasized the need for structured guidance, while low achievers valued empathy and additional support from teachers. The study suggests that student performance influences these perceptions, underscoring the importance of adaptive teaching strategies. These findings align with existing theories of student-centered learning and highlight the need for teacher training programs that address diverse student needs in the classroom.

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