

What Makes Quality Teaching? Review of Related Literature

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Abstract: Teacher quality is an essential element in every school that improves student attainment as well as an important factor contributing to student learning. Understanding of quality in teaching is at a quite early stage of development in many countries. In the review of the works of literature, it was found that there is no exact definition for quality teaching and that quality teaching is a combination of good teaching and successful teaching. Good teaching is the foundation for the idea of expertise as it is associated with the effectiveness of teaching behavior while successful teaching is wholly focused on the attainment of the learner. Again, student engagement in academics was designed to link good teaching and successful teaching. Quality teaching may differ from country to country and as such, policies geared towards teaching must be in line with quality and the role of the teacher to improve student performance.

Keywords: quality teaching, good teaching, successful teaching, student engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers are seen as role models who impart knowledge to students/learners. Teachers play an important role in students' academic performance. The quantity and quality of instructional delivery by the teacher largely have an impact on students' performance. Teaching is always meant to lead to some learning; teaching becomes incomplete without learning. Teaching is what teachers do and learning is what students do. Thus, teaching and learning can result in students' academic achievement. What then is teaching? The following are some definitions of teaching suggested by various scholars.

Teaching is a close connection between a more mature personality and a less mature one, which is aimed to further the education of the latter (Morrison, 1934). Teaching is a structure of activities involving a mediator, an end in view, and a situation including two sets of factors—those over which the mediator has no control (class size, size of the classroom, physical characteristics of pupils, etc.) and those that he can improve (way of asking questions about instruction and ways of structuring information or ideas obtained) (Smith, 1963). According to Flanders (1976), teaching is a "reciprocal contact" between student and teacher. Teaching is defined as a collaborating process, mainly involving classroom communication, which takes place between teachers and students; happens during certain definite activities (Flanders & Amidon, 1967). Again, Clarke (1970) defines teaching as activities that are planned and done to bring about change in student (learner) behavior. Green (1971) suggested that teaching is the task of a teacher, which is carried out for the progress of a child (student).

Teacher quality is an essential element in every school that improves student attainment as well as an important factor contributing to student learning. Students who have good and effective teachers tend to learn more as compared to students who have less effective teachers. Teacher quality is demonstrated in their performance in the classroom.

Globally, quality in teaching has become an international issue (Kennedy, 2008; Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Ingvarson, 2008). This has led schools in need of quality teaching. Everyone can be a teacher but not everyone can be able to raise student achievement. This clearly shows that some teachers are better than others and the reason behind this is difficult to determine. Without detailed explanation, it is very difficult to assess, reward or enhance teacher quality (Kennedy, 2008) to close the gap in the achievement of students for social justice. Understanding of quality in teaching is at a quite early stage of development in many countries. As Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) pointed out, quality teaching has become a worldwide term such that it lacks a clear meaning because it has many problems to be understood and clarified. Nonetheless, "it is important to consider teaching quality so that the most effective practices are encouraged and the most supportive condition are provided" (Darling Hammond, 2010, p. 2). In addition, teachers must be knowledgeable in teaching students who have wide-ranging learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Definition of Quality in Teaching

Defining the quality of teaching is somewhat difficult since there is no exact definition for quality teaching (Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Berliner, 2004). Despite many difficulties that have been met and settled in teachings, such as subjects and contexts, it is still difficult to get a definite definition. Everyone qualifies to be a teacher but no one has come up with the definition of quality teaching. This shows that there are differences in the definition of a qualified teacher and quality teaching. If an individual passes the requirements of becoming a teacher in his/her country, that individual automatically qualifies to teach and whether the teaching leads to student performance does not mean the teacher's method of teaching is quality. Quality in teaching is difficult to comprehend since most of the evidence is not available directly (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). According to Blanton, Sindelar, and Correa (2006), the definition of quality teaching is centered on teacher performance, teacher knowledge, and teacher creativity.

Focusing on Gilbert Ryle's concept of task and achievement senses of a term, leading researchers Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) pointed out the concept of quality teaching. With the concept of quality in teaching, task refers to good teaching and achievement refers to successful teaching. In other words, good teaching is grounded in the task sense of teaching, while successful teaching is grounded in the achievement sense of the term.

Good teaching means teaching that takes into consideration the moral defense and logical principles of teaching practice. Thus, the content being taught meets the standards of discipline in terms of both adequacy and completeness. The method used must be following the age, be carried out morally, and be done to enhance the competencies of students associated with the content being taught. Effective teaching behavior becomes the basis of good teaching and is described as the idea of teacher expertise. Hence, good teaching could be observable when the direct instructional model of teaching is in progress. When teaching in the task sense is done well, it is regarded as good teaching. Successful teaching is teaching that yields the desired outcomes. Students acquire skill, knowledge, and understanding at an acceptable and reasonable level of proficiency when they are involved in classroom activities. Initially, students' scores on the standardized test were used to identify effective or less effective teaching behaviors. In doing so, teachers who were observed using an instrument with primarily low-inference behavioral measures and the data obtained were compared statistically to get more detail about effective teaching behavior. Successful teaching highlights more on certain types of settings and contexts of learning and teaching. When teaching results in learning, it is regarded as successful teaching.

With good and successful teaching, teaching can be done well but not successfully. This is because if a teacher disciplines a student with a cane for performing poorly in an exam or for answering a question wrong in the classroom as a means to enhance students' performance or students' attentiveness in class, this will motivate the student to learn to avoid being punished by the teacher leading to successful teaching. Though it made the student learn, the act is unacceptable because society frowns upon it.

Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) define the quality of teaching as follows:

"Quality teaching is what you are most likely to attain when there is readiness and determination on the part of the learner, a supportive social surround, a suitable opportunity to learn, and good practices employed by the teacher. They argue that quality teaching comprises good teaching and successful teaching; the absence of the other makes it impossible to fully define quality in teaching. Again, quality teaching could be understood as teaching that produces learning. Teaching can occur but any claim that such teaching is quality teaching depends on students learning what the teacher is teaching and also the teacher taking into consideration the morally defensible methods" (p. 16).

This definition differentiates between what is done by the teacher with what is learned by the student. Furthermore, Berliner (2005) agrees that the quality of teaching consists of two different concepts, i.e., good teaching and effective teaching. Berliner (2005) defines quality in teaching as “A high-quality teacher shows evidence of both good and effective teaching”. Good teaching occurs when subject standards or norms are met, therefore it is normative whereas effective teaching is about attaining goals, about student learning, what they should have grasped in the classroom or a particular subject.

According to Wechsler and Shields (2008), what is suggested by Fenstermacher and Richardson on the teaching practice cannot be discussed outside the actual setting in which it happens. This is because, in Fenstermacher and Richardson’s view that good teaching practices are essential for students learning to occur, as well as there must also be (1) learner willingness and effort, (2) supportive social surround, (3) an opportunity to teach and learn. They argue that the educational community needs to move from a pencil and paper definition of teaching quality to one that is operational in all schools and classrooms. Wechsler and Shields suggested a more general definition as the basis for developing a quality-based teacher development system: “High-quality teaching occurs when teachers come to the classroom with a rich toolkit of craft knowledge and skills that they utilize following a set of effective practices, and which lead, over time, to student learning. High-quality teaching occurs in a supportive environment where teachers work as part of a professional community within a workplace that fosters continuous learning on the part of children and adults (p. 5)”. Teaching for understanding focuses on cognitive, affective, and social to transmute learning into purposeful actions that are planned and managed carefully (Loughran, 2012). He highlighted the pedagogical objectives that are closely linked to professional knowledge about the practice and how it can be used to support students’ learning. Loughran defines quality in teaching as:

“Quality in teaching is when activities, procedures, and strategies are developed and used by teachers to encourage selection, attending and processing. Quality in teaching is not about using a teaching procedure just to break up the normal classroom routine; it is about using a particular teaching approach for a particular reason” (p. 82).

Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2010) postulated that teaching quality is in part a role of quality teacher and strongly determined by the context of instruction. “Teaching quality refers to strong instruction that enables a wide range of students to learn” (p. 3). Strong instruction should meet the needs of discipline, learning objectives, and the needs of learners in a given setting. It implies that a quality teacher may be unsuccessful in a context where there is a mismatch between the demands of the situation and teacher knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 4; Berliner, 2005; Fenstermacher & Richardson, 2005; Ingvarson, 2008). High-quality teachers in a country may not be high-quality teachers in other countries. In fact, “Defining quality always requires value judgments about which disagreements abound” (Berliner, 2005, p. 206).

Characteristics of Quality Teaching

The explanations above indicate that leading scholars share the same view on the component of quality teaching, which is a combination of good teaching and successful teaching. Below is a detailed description of the components.

Good Teaching

Good teaching is the foundation for the idea of expertise as it is associated with the effectiveness of teaching behavior. Expertise, they say, is a result of extended training that “alters the cognitive and physiological processes of experts to a greater degree than is commonly believed possible” (Berliner, 2004, p. 726). Scholars have identified several characteristics that could explain good teaching. These characteristics can be classified into three elements (Wechsler & Shields, 2008). First, good teaching is defined by what teachers bring to the classroom, thus teacher characteristics. Some of the teacher’s characteristics are content pedagogy, especially how to develop higher-order thinking skills that could be recognized by training and certificate; content knowledge in the areas they teach; teacher’s experience, and general intelligence and verbal ability. In addition, adaptive expertise is used to solve pedagogy problems that enable the teacher to make decisions about what is likely to work in a given setting in response to students’ needs (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Berliner, 2004). Verbal and intelligence aptitude help teachers to organize and explicate ideas, as well as observe and think logically (Wechsler & Shields, 2008, p. 3; Darling Hammond, 2010, p. 2). Teacher characteristics are regarded as personal resources (Kennedy, 2008). Personal resources include (1) beliefs, attitudes, values, and (2) personality traits. The first is deep-rooted in culture with the assertion that all students can learn, taking into consideration a positive attitude

towards the diversity of learners. Some personality traits are extroversion or introversion, calm or anxious, decisive or indecisive, determined or indecisive.

Second, good teaching is defined by what teachers do in the classroom, which is the teaching practice. Good teaching is using the rational and moral method, i.e., morally defensible practice. Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) categorize these methods into three elements of good teaching. The first element, the logical acts of teaching include such activities as defining, demonstrating, explaining, creating, correcting, and interpreting. This implies good teaching must encompass a detailed explanation as well as creativity and interpretation of the content under discussion. Psychological acts of teaching, the second element, comprise such things as motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning, and evaluating. The quality teacher understands students and learning process and how to develop it, which include how to evaluate and support learning, how to assist students who have learning difficulties, and how to support the learning of language and content for those who are not already proficient in the language of instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The third element, moral acts of teaching include such moral traits as honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, trust, respect, and fairness. The teaching must comprise a morally acceptable practice. According to Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), good teaching occurs when each of the elements meets or exceeds the standards of adequacy that attach to each category of activity. "Good teaching is about creating real opportunities for students to begin to determine for themselves how their knowledge needs to be structured and reconstructed to enhance the quality of their learning" (Loughran, 2012, p. 61).

Third, good teaching is defined as what students attained from learning, i.e. desired outcomes. Good teaching is a practice that is noted to be associated with student test scores. The test can be used to accurately determine how many students learn each year so that it becomes a key measurement of teacher effectiveness using the value-added model (Haskins & Loeb, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Kennedy, 2008).

Successful Teaching

Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) suggested that how students react to teaching is an essential part of quality teaching, but whether students learn what is taught makes it successful teaching. Thus, successful teaching is wholly focused on the attainment of the learner. Components of successful teaching are the willingness of students to learn and put in much effort to learn; social environment support both from family, community, culture; support and help from peers; and adequate facilities, time, and resources. High-quality learning needs students' attentiveness and participation (Loughran, 2012; Elmore, 2004). Each student should bring on board the background knowledge and belief, question, add new knowledge and reorganize their understanding based on the phenomenon being studied. They also have to participate actively as well as work together with friends to construct meaning. The teacher is required to make the learning environment enjoyable for students to learn which can increase student achievement.

Student Engagement

A construct was designed to link successful teaching and good teaching, which is referred to as student engagement in academics. According to Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), academic engagement is learner-sensitive directed towards the student; structured as a measure that was strongly affected by good teaching and leading to student achievement. In other words, good teaching is learner-sensitive, while successful teaching is learning-dependent. Elmore (2004) suggested that students should be involved, encouraged, follow, willing, connected, and other ways to be able to learn and it requires the teacher to involve them in an activity that leads to learning.

2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the review of the pieces of literature, it was found that there is no exact definition for quality teaching and that quality teaching is a combination of good teaching and successful teaching. Quality teaching may differ from country to country. According to Senge (2006), every country needs to determine a well-defined meaning of quality teaching and its characteristics generatively. Therefore, researchers need to reflect on international experience to get a clear and comprehensive understanding of quality in teaching. Good teachers 'have deep knowledge of the subjects they teach, and when teachers' knowledge falls below a certain level it is a significant hindrance to students' learning' (Coe et. al. 2014, p. 2). Quality teaching must take into consideration the morally defensible practice. For instance, many years ago in Ghana, it was accepted for a teacher to discipline a student with a cane or spank them because of poor performance, lateness to school, absenteeism among others. It was accepted because parents approved of it since they had an adage that

“spare the rod and spoil the child”. Currently, it is not allowed for a teacher to spank a student since it is unacceptable. Therefore, teachers’ goals must be geared towards student achievement by making the learning environment enjoyable for them to learn. It is difficult to get a definite definition for quality in teaching. The authors realized that teachers must be knowledgeable in their field of expertise as well as be creative in handling students. Doing so can somewhat be associated with quality teaching. In short, based on all the reviews from several scholars it is seen that quality in teaching is a relative term.

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