

What characteristics of a Teacher Impress Students Most?

—an Investigation of the Activity My Favorite Teacher

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Abstract—From the perspective of qualitative research, the present study investigates the characteristics vocational college students' favorite teachers have by interview, based on the activity my favorite teacher. It is found out that students' favorite teachers have such characteristics as cultivating students not only through teaching, making full use of the love for them to stimulate students, being warm-hearted, and being good at creating a relaxing classroom atmosphere. Such characteristics show that emotional factors play an important role in students' development. As a result, the author suggests that teachers should focus on emotional control.

Keywords—vocational colleges; students' evaluations of teaching; characteristics; emotional control

I. INTRODUCTION

"The most important purpose of teaching evaluation is not to prove whose teaching is the most welcome, but to improve their teaching." [1] Teaching evaluation, widely applied in China's colleges, is a very important means by which college authorities learn about teaching and its quality so that teaching management modes can be timely adjusted and teachers can be required to improve teaching. More and more attention has been drawn to the result of teaching evaluation, and it has been widely used in teachers' professional ranking, rating, further study etc. for reference. And at the same time, college authorities also carry out various forms of commendation activities in order to publicize advanced teachers, one of which is carried out like this: in a vocational college, the honorary title my favorite teacher is awarded to the top 10 teachers among the top 30 teachers selected based on the teaching evaluation scores of the previous two semesters

The activity my favorite teacher has been recognized by the faculty in this vocational college, and has exerted a positive influence on them. Even so, it has also received some criticism. And the arguments are mainly about such aspects as that teachers loved by students don't mean their good quality of teaching, that teachers with good quality of teaching may not be loved by students, and that teachers who are not strict with students and make their wishes easily satisfied are more likely to be popular than the ones with a strong sense of responsibility and strict requirements for students. While teachers are arguing with each other, they also have doubts about the fairness, the

rationality, the representativeness and the authority of teaching evaluation.

If the activity my favorite teacher goes well, more teachers will apply themselves to the classroom teaching with great energy and students' learning initiative will be greatly improved, which are good for the formation of a good teaching and learning atmosphere and help to improve the quality of the classroom teaching. Therefore, it is very important to sum up the characteristics vocational college students' favorite teachers have in order to further extend this activity.

In this study, qualitative research is used to obtain detailed information through in-depth interview between researchers and students. And then, the research subject will be analyzed and expounded according to the obtained information.

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS STUDENTS' FAVORITE TEACHERS HAVE

A. The Subjects

When selecting the subjects, this study fully take into account such factors as their gender, grades, sources of admissions (students enrolled among the ones participating in the National College Entrance Examination or regularly-enrolled students, students among the ones participating in the Provincial Skills Examination or technically-inclined students and solely-enrolled students from secondary vocational schools to higher vocational colleges or solely-enrolled students), and their evaluation experiences. As a result, the subjects are typical of the students in this vocational college so that the reliability and the validity of the study can be ensured. The subjects of the study are six students randomly selected in this vocational college (Table 1).

TABLE I. THE SUBJECTS

| | Gender | Grades | Sources of Admissions | Evaluation Experiences (Times) |
|-----------|--------|-----------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Student A | Male | Freshman | regularly-enrolled student | 1 |
| Student B | Female | Freshman | technically-inclined student | 1 |
| Student C | Male | Freshman | solely-enrolled student | 1 |
| Student D | Female | Sophomore | technically-inclined student | 3 |
| Student E | Male | Sophomore | solely-enrolled student | 3 |
| Student F | Female | Sophomore | regularly-enrolled student | 3 |

B. The Contents

This study investigates the characteristics vocational college students' favorite teachers have using the self-edited interview outline and makes a summary of them. The interview is conducted on a one-to-one basis in order to make sure of the authenticity and reliability of the information. Through the collation of the interview records, the author finds out that in terms of students' favorite teachers, their opinions can be summarized as follows:

1) Students' favorite teachers shouldn't just be content with the imparting of knowledge.

With the development of society and the gradual deepening of the teaching reform, great changes have taken place in the function of education. Teachers' professional roles are becoming more and more abundant, and more and more comprehensive, varying from the traditional teacher role having a single function to the new teacher role with multiple

functions. In today's classroom, students are the center of teaching while teachers appear in the presence of students as a tutor, a companion, and a supporter of their study, or a stimulator of learning interest, or a guide of their self-development, not as a single transmitter of knowledge, which leads to the improvement of the relationship between teachers and students. And at the same time, with the reform of China's enrollment policy, the student diversity has been typical of vocational colleges, students differing greatly from each other in learning foundation.

As for the problem that teachers who instruct well are certain to score high in teaching evaluation, and vice versa, the students interviewed all agree that teachers who don't consider students' needs, and neither adjust the teaching contents, nor change the teaching methods according to students' learning situations, and who do not pay attention to emotional factors may not be popular with students, though they are dedicated, serious-minded, and do well in teaching (Table 2).

TABLE II. RECORDS OF THE INTERVIEW

| Students | Ideas |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student A | Teachers instruct well, but if their teaching styles and personalities are not accepted by us, it's hard for them to score high in teaching evaluation. |
| Student D | If teachers with high levels of teaching are unwilling to be close to us, they are less likely to get high scores. Our favorite teachers are the ones who can not only teach well but also join us. |
| Student E | I value teachers' abilities to teach and get along with us, because these two points can decide whether we can acquire knowledge and whether we are interested in learning. |

2) Students' favorite teachers are the ones who can make full use of the love for them to stimulate students.

At college, lots of teaching requirements used in high school, such as previewing before class, participating in classroom activities in class, and reviewing after class, are still in use. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lot of difficulty thoroughly implementing these requirements. Therefore, how students are taught to grasp the essence of such requirements and voluntarily put them into effect challenges teachers.

As we all know, students' love for teachers can be transferred to the courses taught by them. So, what characteristics of teachers are more likely to impress students? Based on the reading of the related literature and the sorting of the records of the interview, the author finds out that teachers who can understand, accept students and willingly communicate with them are more welcome. In addition, teachers with easy-going, humorous personalities and a strong sense of responsibility are more popular with students as well. Hence, the students interviewed feel that teachers should take measures to make full use of the preference for them to stimulate students (Table 3).

TABLE III. RECORDS OF THE INTERVIEW

| Students | Ideas |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student B | As a technically-inclined student, I don't think I'm welcome in class, so I often feel a sense of discrimination against me. And generally speaking, in class, our teachers don't care whether we are attending to them or whether we're doing anything related to the teaching. If our teachers communicate more with us, show greater patience for us and accept us more actively, I'm sure they can win love from us and that we will change ourselves as much as we can. |
| Student D | As a technically-inclined student, I deeply feel the significance of teachers' attitude to us. If teachers take a positive attitude to us, we will be fond of them and such affection will also be transferred to the courses taught by them. |
| Student E | I am a solely-enrolled student. I feel teachers should also learn to get along well with us, which will attract us to their lectures. |
| Student F | I am a regularly-enrolled student. I think that if teachers are considerate and responsible, we will show them much affection, which can stimulate our keen interest in their lectures. |

3) Teachers with benevolence are more likely to be admired by students.

There is little doubt that many objective factors existing in vocational colleges, such as different sources of admissions, students' weak learning foundation, lack of innovations in teaching modes and contents, the negative impact of the new

media etc., are the main causes of stress for the classroom teaching management. Then, how to relieve stress has become an urgent problem for vocational college administrators and teachers. Of course, through strict management, some problems in the classroom teaching can be resolved to a certain extent, but it seems to be impossible for this goal to be achieved only by strict management.

When asking students the question "How do you evaluate teachers?", the author notices that teachers' understanding of them, teachers' love and respect for them and teachers' diligence can move and stimulate them most. And when evaluated, teachers are usually much admired for such qualities (Table 4).

TABLE IV. RECORDS OF THE INTERVIEW

| Students | Ideas |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student B | Nowadays, most teachers lack communication with us, and during a semester, not many of our names can be remembered by teachers. As a result, there seems to be a sense of deep alienation between teachers and us. I feel that teachers' remembering our names is not only a way to show respect for us, a way to understand us, but also an important expression of love for us. Of course, it's not very hard to remember our names. Therefore, when evaluating teachers, I care much about it. |
| Student C | Teachers' behavior and mental conditions can inspire as well as move us. If I'm required to rank the influential factors necessary for students' development, I will rank "teachers' sense of responsibility" and "teachers' warm-heartedness" first and second, because the responsibility affects not only our learning, but also the formation of students' psychological qualities such as healthy personality. |
| Student F | Of all the characteristics of a teacher, I think the sense of responsibility is the most important, because it can guarantee the improvement of not only our comprehensive qualities but also our interest in learning and the quality of teaching. |

4) Teachers good at building a relaxing classroom atmosphere are students' favorite.

With the wide application of modern education technology and the variety of teaching means, there are more and more sources for students to obtain information and students can enjoy not only changing methods of learning but also extended learning locations. Nevertheless, the classroom teaching is economical, high-efficient, and can meet the needs of different students, so it is still the main location where students acquire knowledge. But due to the negative effect of some subjective and objective factors on students [2] - [4], they have little interest in learning and lack learning initiative. And nor are they willing to participate in classroom activities. As a result, there is little interaction not only between teachers and students but also between students, which leads to the tediousness of the classroom atmosphere. The poor classroom atmosphere depresses students and makes teachers feel bored, which has a bad effect on the classroom teaching. In the face of such classroom teaching situations, some teachers do nothing but grumble and complain, but some teachers are active in learning about the reasons, seeking countermeasures and even making lots of changes in addition to understanding, tolerating, and

accepting students. Teachers' different mentality and approaches result in different classroom atmosphere, and cause two quite different results: one is that teachers and students feel quite strange to each other, not only making the classroom atmosphere more depressing, but also increasing students' weariness, which leads to the constant decrease in teaching evaluation and the other is that there is more and more harmonious relationship between teachers and students, not only making the classroom atmosphere more relaxing, but also stimulating students' learning motivation, which results in better and better teaching effect. When asked the question "What kind of classroom atmosphere makes you feel relaxed?", all the students interviewed express their strong desire for a relaxing classroom atmosphere (Table 5).

TABLE V. RECORDS OF THE INTERVIEW

| Students | Ideas |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Student A | I'm weak both in learning foundation and in learning initiative, so I always feel nervous in the classroom, but our teacher understands us and often shares with us some of his personal experiences in teaching to encourage us. And at the same time, he often designs such learning tasks as involve the hottest news that we enjoy so as to arouse our interest in learning, and reduce our anxieties. The tasks are of great educational significance to us, and we are required to finish them in groups. And the teaching methods are changeable. Therefore, when learning in such classroom atmosphere, we feel relaxed and we like such teachers as he very much. |
| Student C | As a solely-enrolled student, I don't have good learning habits. Perhaps, such an identity sometimes makes me feel a bit self-contemptuous. Our teacher always tries to create a democratic and happy teaching atmosphere in order to enhance our self-confidence and arouse our enthusiasm for learning. When designing teaching activities and organizing classroom teaching, he will make every effort to consider our situations. As far as teaching evaluation is concerned, my idea is very simple and direct, that is to say, I will highly evaluate whoever makes me learn more easily and more happily. |

III. SUGGESTIONS OF CONTROLLING EMOTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Based on the activity my favorite teacher, the author investigates the characteristics students' favorite teachers should have. And through analyzing these characteristics, the author finds out that whether teachers attach importance to emotional control or not plays a vital role in students' healthy development and the improvement of the teaching effect.

As is known to us all, teachers' emotions have rich connotations, including emotions related to teaching materials, emotions related to students, emotions related to the classroom, emotions associated with teaching equipment, and emotions associated with digital technology. The normal release of these emotions can help stimulate students' enthusiasm for learning and improve the classroom efficiency. Therefore, teachers should focus on emotional control. Meanwhile, emotional control is also the core element of their physical and mental health. In this case, teachers should learn how to turn the teaching process into a research process, thus effectively

relieving the relevant pressure and further promoting their own development.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

As is shown in teaching practice, students' learning motivation needs to be stimulated and teachers' career development needs to be promoted.

The above analyses show that favorite teachers in vocational colleges should have such characteristics as understanding students, showing care for students, accepting students, having a strong sense of responsibility, being able to adapt themselves to the needs of different students, and being willing to help students grow and develop. Students' understanding of the connotations of the activity my favorite

teacher helps to define the good qualities in career development pursued by vocational college teachers, and to decide on how they develop themselves.

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