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Credibility of Teachers - The Decisive Aspect in Building the Credibility of the Institution

Volume: 6

Issue: 4

Month: April

Year: 2019

ISSN: 2321-788X

Received: 16.03.2019

Accepted: 30.03.2019

Published: 02.04.2019

Citation:

Padmini, P. "Credibility of Teachers - The Decisive Aspect in Building the Credibility of the Institution." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2019, pp. 47-51.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v6i4.378>



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Abstract

The constructed credibility of an institution is primarily dependent upon how the institution is perceived by others. Knowledge and expertise of subject matter, honesty of intent, and concern for others all play into the credibility of an educational institution. There are different criteria generally used by the community to consider an institution a credible one. Credibility in education includes a wide range of issues like the credibility of the teacher, credibility of instructional resources, the credibility of information, and the credibility of research material.

Of all these, the most crucial one is the credibility of the teacher. It is important for a credible institution to have dedicated and qualified teachers. Of course in all the institutions they follow certain prescribed norms for appointing teachers and naturally only qualified teachers are employed. However it is important to probe a little deeper and ask ourselves whether we need qualified teachers or credible teachers. a teacher is always considered the best source of knowledge. In such a situation the credibility of the teacher becomes more important.

A credible teacher is expert and trustworthy person who shapes his pupils. This paper aims to identify and analyse the different factors that would enable the credibility of a teacher and how this credibility of the teacher becomes the decisive aspect in building the credibility of the institution.

Keywords: Credibility, Expertise, Trustworthiness: Attitude, Skills, Quality Upgradation

Based on Aristotle's concept of ethos, the concept of credibility can be described as "believability." Of all the qualities that are needed for the successful functioning of an educational institution, credibility is the most essential one. The constructed credibility of an institution is primarily dependent upon how the institution is perceived by others. Knowledge and expertise of subject matter, honesty of intent, and concern for others all play into the credibility of an educational institution. There are different criteria generally used by the community to consider an institution a credible one:

1. Cent per cent results in public exams with a few toppers at least
2. Good infrastructural facilities for teaching and learning
3. Good record of games and sports
4. Maintenance of good discipline
5. A dynamic principal
6. Dedicated and qualified teachers

The UGC has suggested that all the universities should undergo NAAC process to establish credibility in our country and abroad. So far about 20 universities and 260 colleges have volunteered themselves for assessment and accreditation to NAAC. The status gained through the above process has been made public through the print and electronic media available in our country. Credibility in education includes a wide range of issues like the credibility of the teacher, credibility of instructional resources, the credibility of information, and the credibility of research material.

Of all these, the most crucial one is the credibility of the teacher. It is important for a credible institution to have dedicated and qualified teachers. Of course in all the institutions they follow certain prescribed norms for appointing teachers and naturally only qualified teachers are employed. However it is important to probe a little deeper and ask ourselves whether we need qualified teachers or credible teachers.

In higher education, there are about 160 universities and about 11,000 colleges in our country. One of the feasible ways to improve the quality of education or excellence in education in all these institutions is by ensuring the credibility of teachers. Clearly, any discussion of higher education needs to distinguish between two basic and distinct concepts: learning, on the one hand, versus credibility about having learned. Learning is and always has been available all around us, at every age and life stage, often inexpensively or even for free. And yet, a teacher is always considered the best source of knowledge. In such a situation the credibility of the teacher becomes more important.

A credible teacher is expert and trustworthy person who shapes his pupils. An experienced, qualified, intelligent, skilled, and dynamic teacher can be called an expert and a teacher becomes trustworthy when he or she is honest, fair, unselfish, and caring as well. Though credibility involves more belief than fact it seems most prevalent and necessary to attain within the classroom setting.

Expertise

As far as the question of competence or expertise is concerned, it is not enough if the teacher is well versed in the subject matter but he should also be able to successfully transmit the knowledge to his pupils. If a teacher fails to deliver the subject matter in a way that is logical and meaningful to the student, credibility will be lost. The commonly expected quality in a teacher is that the teacher should have interest and mastery over the subject matter that he is to teach to the students and be well conversant with various techniques of teaching. In order to enhance credibility in delivery of material teachers must possess good classroom management skills, have the ability to answer questions, possess a broad range of

information, and have the ability to explain complex material well.

A credible teacher dynamically presents his/her self in daily interactions with students and the curricular activities. Teachers must present material in a manner that excites the students about the topic of discussion. Diversity in delivery of instruction, use of technology, games, discussions, and investigations are all methods that lend diversity to presentation of material. However, even the most exciting method of instruction can fail to excite students when the teacher is not enthusiastic in the delivery.

Trustworthiness

A teacher is a second parent of his student. As a parent the teacher should truly care for the student, care for the success of the student in and outside the class. Teachers who work to develop this trust must develop relationships with their students that foster teacher-student dialog. They know their students. This knowledge extends beyond the academic abilities of the student. The teacher should know about the student's home life, learning style, special abilities, and any extracurricular activities the student may participate in. If at all possible, teachers should make attempts to attend outside events that their students are involved in. In addition, teachers who are consistent and fair with classroom discipline, work to include all students in activities, treat all students the same, and do not embarrass students are more likely to develop trustworthiness with their students. In order to teach well, the teacher should have adequate knowledge of psychology. The teacher should not be a rigid follower of one and the same method in all types of situations. He should experiment several things.

In this age of democracy, there is a need of teachers with democratic attitude. Only a teacher having democratic outlook of life can succeed these days. The teacher should understand the pupils well and have healthy relationship with them. The teacher should first of all show respect to them and they in turn will show all the more respect to him. The teacher has to be with the students and be amidst the students all the time. The teacher should show due regard to every child. Every teacher should have co-operative attitude. The teacher's profession

is such that he/she is expected to remain over and above any type of prejudice. A teacher becomes more credible when he/she has the ability to bond with students, to understand and resonate with their feelings and emotions. A credible teacher is one who is able to communicate on the students' level; to be compassionate with them when they are down and to celebrate with them when they are up

Teacher is the window through which many young people will see their future and through this window they should see only good and pleasant things. So the teacher who is truly a nation builder should be a man or woman of high moral character. The teacher should not be a slave of passions and emotions. The teacher should lead his students in every aspect.

Positive Mental Attitude

A Teacher should be able to think more on the positive and a little less on the negative. To keep a smile on your face when things get tough; to see the bright side of things; to seek to find the positives in every negative situation are the skills which a teacher should master. A person who is open to change is always positive. The only real constant in life is change. Teachers should realise that there is a place for tradition but there is also a place for new ways, new ideas, new systems, and new approaches. A creative teacher who follows innovative techniques can be successful in motivating the students by using creative and inspirational methods of teaching. A teacher who is different in approach stands out from the crowd.

Presentation Skills

Success as a teacher is determined by the ability and skill in communicating the message. It is very important that the teacher is good in presentation skills which are integral elements of the complex craft of teaching. Students are visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learners. A teacher should be adept at creating presentation styles for all three. The body language is main communicator that has to be positive at all times. Like a great orator the teacher should be passionate while speaking. But at the same time should know that discussion and not lecturing stimulates greater feedback. A more recent factor receiving notice by scholars is that of teacher

immediacy, which refers to the use of communication behaviours (e.g., movement, enthusiasm, use of gestures, humour, vocal variety) that reduce both the psychological and physical distance between two individuals. Whether at the conscious or unconscious level, a student's perception of the teacher's ethos has an important impact on how he or she will react to the teacher and how effective the teacher will be in the classroom (Haskins, 2000).

Upgrading the Quality of Teachers

Upgrading the quality of Teachers is more important and this can be done in two ways. One is a teacher on his/her own should do this and the other way is the institution and other professional bodies enabling teacher upgrading. A teacher is an acknowledged guide or helper in the processes of learning. A teacher's role may vary between cultures. Academic subjects are emphasized in many societies, but a teacher's duties may include instruction in craftsmanship or vocational training, spirituality, civics, community roles, or life skills. So content competence and pedagogical competence alone is not enough for a teacher. As Karl Menninger puts it, "What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches". Most teachers have little control over school policy or curriculum or choice of texts or special placement of students, but most have a great deal of autonomy inside the classroom. He can use this autonomy and strive to give quality education to his pupils. The quality of the educational service depends on the quality of the teachers. It is essential for the teachers to prepare well for their work and they are expected to extent and revitalise their skills throughout their career. Since teaching is about promoting learning, the teacher must educate the learners how to secure wellbeing and the means to achieve educational progress. A teacher should be a constant learner. According to Horace Mann "a teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on cold iron". Once a teacher he or she is always a student. Learning for a teacher and for other professionals as well, does not end with a diploma. A teacher has to keep on studying to keep abreast of new developments in his/her area of teaching, about present-day learners, about new methods, and about education in general.

Teaching is a divine job that requires earnest dedication to work. One should have heard the saying that an ordinary teacher teaches, a good teacher instructs and an excellent teacher inspires. If a teacher enters a class without prior preparation he or she cannot inspire but can only turn off the students, and de-motivate them. As Gail Godwin says, "Good teaching is one-fourth preparation and three-fourth theatre". The teacher should have nine ethical principles that are the guide lines for a teacher in the educational institutions. 1. Content Competence 2. Pedagogical Competence 3. Dealing with sensitive topics 4. Student Development 5. Dual relationships with students 6. Confidentiality 7. Respect for Colleagues 8. Valid Assessment of students 9. Respect for Institutions.

The teacher should also upgrade his or her knowledge of technology. Technology can be well used by a teacher to teach the students. It is a medium. Using it will not be helpful for the teachers but how they use it that is critical. But technology is not a magic bullet. They should look for the opportunity to use those tools that makes the learning environment better for students.

Besides self training in-service training is a must for teachers to promote their teaching aptitude both in theory and practice. Teacher upgrading is the major responsibility of the Government's Professional and official bodies of Education like The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and University Grants Commission (UGC). Quality improvement in teacher education has to be one of the prime assignments before such councils.

These bodies should provide periodical training for teachers in their particular disciplines and pedagogical techniques. Teacher education is a continuous process, and its pre-service and in-service components are inseparable. In this way, District Institutes of Education (DIETs), College of Teacher Education (CTEs) and Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) have been established to upgrade teacher training institutions. There were demands by teachers, teacher educators and educationists to have a separate authority for teacher education to maintain quality. In this direction, the establishment of a statutory, the National Council

for Teacher Education (NCTE) is indeed laudable. Curriculum development and related matters should be taken into account in the in-service training of teachers. Class room atmosphere and surroundings too are more important. Working conditions of teachers such as class size, working hours/days and other supporting conveniences are very important to sustain the interest of the teacher in a class. So these things have to be taken care of.

Teachers should be allowed to participate in interactive, thought-provoking and practical seminars to get a clear idea of the new trends and methods in teaching and curriculum development. This would provide insightful information on teaching techniques and strategies and to critically evaluate one's teaching philosophy and methodology. This would create more qualified, effective and motivated teachers, who will improve the standard of the pupils.

Last but not the least teachers' salaries too play a vital role in the upgrading the quality of the teachers. Remuneration should be high enough to attract promising young people to the teaching profession. The National Policy on Education (1986) and its revised version (1992) state that the status of teachers reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society. It is said "No pupil can rise above the level of its teachers." The government and the community should endeavour to create conditions, which will help, motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lines.

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