

The Image of the Teachers from the Pre-Service Students' Perspective

Dr. Merriam L. Silin

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Abstract

This study endeavors at identifying the perspective of the pre-service students on the image of the teachers, what does this show about the professional and personal qualities of the teachers in the Philippines, and how these affect their teaching success. Different images are perceived by the students, and these say something about the teachers' profession. The images emerge from the students' interaction with the teachers in the process of teaching and learning. The researcher facilitated a "draw a teacher activity" which sought to determine their view of a teacher physically and conducted an unstructured interview in a focus group discussion. It was revealed that the participants characterized the image of their teachers in terms of physical appearance and personal qualities such as wearing eyeglasses, being neat, presentable, understanding, passionate, and kind. Furthermore, differentiation was made on the teacher's gender, wherein the participants see their teachers as women with motherly care. Considerably, a teacher is also seen with good moral character and someone who abides with the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers. The image of a teacher is based on the interaction and their engagements in the school community and other stakeholders. A person's professional and personal qualities affect and determine the kind of teacher he or she will be and the effect that this will make onto their students' life. As the profession demands above standard qualification and effectiveness, the reality of the teachers in the Philippines is evident in the image, perspective, and students' success in school.

Keywords: image of the teachers, teachers' personal qualities, teachers' professional qualities, pre-service students, Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers

INTRODUCTION

Teachers take a big role in shaping the future of the world since they are the ones responsible in teaching children, who in return are the ones who will take over the world in the future. Evidently, teachers have a profound and long-lasting influence on all of their students. This influence is not limited to the teaching of academic skills, but also in improving their whole being.

The teacher-student relationship gives a preview as to how the teaching-learning process will be. The teacher, as the one who holds a major part in the establishment of a healthy connection with his students, must observe a highly respectable manner that will make his students follow him, practice ethical values that he promotes and turn submissive to the rules and regulations he will enforce.

Teacher and student, as two of the most crucial elements in the educative process, unquestionably play the most important roles in the school run. Their relationship toward one another greatly affects the planning, development, and implementation of school curricula which makes the indicators of success in education.

Every student perceives different images of an ideal teacher but what unifies them is their vision of teachers as the face of excellence. In the past few years, research was conducted and revealed that most of students commonly prefer teachers who are pleasing and attractive to their eyes; someone whom they can trust to be knowledgeable enough on the subject matter, and someone who shows high self-esteem. They also prefer teachers who possess good interpersonal skills and communication skills; someone who is approachable and compassionate. These expectations reflect the effectiveness of the teacher and imply a crucial role to be played by the teachers in the teaching and learning process.

Teacher is the most important environmental factor for student learning (Konti, 2011). Based on the study of Illiya and Simdet (2013), the image of the teacher is an important factor for the students to learn. They concluded that the more students perceive their teachers positively, the more they engage themselves in the learning process. Similarly, they also emphasized that students who are not comfortable with having the teacher around are more likely to learn lesser and fail to remember things quickly. They also said that the perception of the students toward the teacher establishes their outlook on the subject and because of this, it will dictate their readiness to learn. Any image generated, according to Kestere, Lozano, and Wolhuter (2013), is the consequence of a collection of past experiences. Calderhead (1991) as cited in Ignacio and Lydio (2021) went on to say that an image has a strong experiential base, is often related with feelings and attitudes, and can take many different forms such as broad metaphors for teaching, overall notion of a course, action models, visual image, and episodic memories.

In the study "The Visual Image of Teachers: A Ten-Country Perspective" by Kestere and Kalke (2014), the image refers to the phenomenon that takes place in the conscious mind as an effect on the social exposure in the form of the sign system. The study was carried out in 10 countries; Bulgaria, Greece, Mexico, Pakistan, Serbia, Slovenia, England, South Africa, Turkey, and Latvia. The difference in the cultural context was considered and still was able to come up with a similar visual image according to the following components:

gender, age, appearance, verbal and non-verbal communication features. Although there were some differences, the study came up with the following findings; students see a woman as a typical teacher, they were associated with smile, gentleness, and care. However, a male teacher was described to be more strict and stiff; when it comes to age, students depict teachers to be in the range of 20 to 60, most of the students prefer young teachers; the teacher's appearance was best revealed through the respondents' drawings. The drawings show the teachers as slender and proportionally built figures. Some female teachers were drawn without breasts and have a straight body shape. The common idea about the teacher's hair is clean, neat, and arranged in a ponytail. As male teachers were associated with beards. There were three main descriptions of teachers' clothes; classic, comfortable wear, and national costume, and when described they were viewed as polite, normal, and clean. As for the teachers' accessories, the respondent's drawings show three similarities; eyeglasses, which indicates that teachers have poor eyesight due to intensive reading; briefcase, which contains the student's papers and worksheet; and a pointer. Those accessories confirm the strong ability of a teacher to control things and they are the symbol of their power and identity in school (Mitchell & Weber, 2003). There were positive and negative attributes when describing the teachers' voice. Some respondents describe the teacher's voice to be pleasant, loving, respectful, and low, while some described it to be authoritative, slow, monotonous, demanding, boring and mannered. The voice of a teacher is one of the most important tools in teaching, it is an instrument of power (Manke, 1997). Teachers' facial expression is usually depicted to be smiling and pleasant, to express dissatisfaction and aggression teachers were drawn with eyebrow and an angry facial expression.

Similar to this, the study "The Visual Image of the Teacher: A Comparative Study" by Kestere, Wolhuter, and Lozano (2013) is about comparing the image of a teacher conceptualized by the respondents in many countries to determine the similarities and difference and the explanations for both. Furthermore, according to them several factors affect the societal status of the teaching profession: the professional group's social background, training, legal position, salary, and the degree of control over the position. The image of a teacher is developed during the social interaction in the community and at school; they develop more on the teaching and learning process (Joseph & Burnaford, 2001). The respondents of the study were fifteen-year-old students who are believed to be free from the influence of the authority. The teachers' answer was also incorporated to better comprehend the results and for them to reflect their conscious and unconscious self-perception. The typical teacher is categorized into three: the good teacher, the bad teacher, and the ideal teacher. A typical teacher's first trait was gender differentiation: the teacher was most likely a woman. They were described as lovely, polite, and sophisticated. However, they were also criticized and were described as serious and nagging while male teachers were fun and relaxed. As with regards to age, both the students and teacher who responded vary on the description of a teacher. The students depicted the teachers to be

around 30 while the teacher respondents said that teachers are about 40-50 years old. Commonly, a typical teacher is described as middle-aged, but young rather than old. There were also three categories for the typical teachers' dress: practical attire which includes pants, shirts, and jeans for men and women; classic attire that is made up of suits for women and suit and ties for men; and culturally traditional attire. In general, the consistent description of a teacher's attire is clean, neat, and appropriate. With regard to accessories, glasses, bags, and wristwatches are the teachers' trademark. Glasses indicate the studious nature of a teacher. The bag is associated with power. Watch is the symbol of attention to time. These accessories may be simple and cheap which denotes that they were in a not-so-bright-financial state or in branded name and expensive which suggests that teachers in some way make good pay or that they are conscious about what they were wearing. There is a lot of description in the teacher's voice from bad to good such as the following: energetic, soft-toned, optimistic, pleasant, kind, clear, low, deep, authoritative, frustrated, high-pitched, slow, dominant, confident, threatening, demanding, annoying, scary and loud. The teacher's place in the classroom remains unaffected, at the front where she can see everyone and everyone can see her. However, there are some improvements; the teacher now manages to walk between the rows which explains why they choose clothing that allows them to move freely. According to the teacher respondent, the teacher's image is influenced by too much work and lack of free time resulting in stress and fatigue.

This study could help in giving the teachers an idea about the common image that a teacher projects to the students and, in relation to this, how their image in the perspective of their students could affect their influence on the latter, as well as in their success in teaching. Upon having an idea about this, teachers may use the information found in this study to make adjustments in the professional and personal qualities that they project to their students for them to become more effective teachers. The future researcher who is interested in conducting a study related to this topic may also acquire useful information from this study.

In addition, this study aims to know the image of a teacher from the perspective of pre-service students, the similarities and differences of their opinions. The study is also motivated to show the professional and personal qualities of the teachers in the Philippines according to the participants and how this affects teaching success.

METHODOLOGY

In conducting the research, a qualitative research method was utilized using the unstructured interview method and focus group discussion. The unstructured interview method consists of open-ended questions based on the questions given by the researcher. The questions were paraphrased during the process of the interview and the participants were free to answer the questions in any way they choose. Before conducting the research,

the researcher developed a framework to run the process accurately. She first asked for their consent and discussed the ethical consideration of the said research. She established a time limit and the prepared the place where the respondents would feel comfortable in doing the “draw a teacher activity” and in answering the questions during the focus grouped discussion.

Focus group discussion is a way of gathering participants with the same experiences and interests. The first step done was to identify the main objectives of the meeting to be conducted, second the researcher prepared the questions, third is the identification of the purpose of the activity or its significant, fourth was to plan the different ways of recording the data appropriately, and the fifth was identifying the participants. The participants answered the questions posted and guided by the researcher who encouraged each one to participate actively.

The researcher provided pencils, coloring materials, and bond papers for the “draw a teacher activity”. It sought to determine how each participant with the same experiences and interests but with different perspectives view a teacher visually.

The focus group discussion was conducted at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. There were six participants in the study, five of them were female and the other one is male. The participants were selected through convenient sampling in the class enrolled in the program Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English. Their ages range from 17-18 years old.

During the participants' vacant time, they were asked to illustrate the image of a teacher in their own perspective and an interview through a focus group discussion was administered after the activity. They were given 10 minutes to illustrate and 3 minutes to answer each question to determine their image of a teacher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Image of a Teacher

When asked of their image of a teacher, Pre-service student 1 answered that a teacher is intelligent, and this is associated with her wearing eyeglasses. The teacher is also neat and well-groomed that is why she wears a lipstick; her hair is neatly tied up and she wears a uniform (a skirt and a blouse). A teacher as reflected in the drawing carries her things for school such as books, notebooks etc. which connotes her readiness and willingness to teach her students in the classroom. Also, a teacher for Pre-service student 1 characterizes the values and embodies the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers. For her, a teacher shows openness to the opinions of others and elicits quality and diverse response of the students.

For Pre-service student 2, his image of a teacher is based on how he looks at himself. His image of a teacher is someone who wears eyeglasses and has a beard, like him. Aside from that, a teacher for him wears a simple uniform and carries a bag. He is also described as polite, understanding and is very focused onto the student's welfare. Accordingly, the teacher is expected not only to teach the academics but also to inculcate values and skills necessary for them to succeed in life.

For Pre-service student 3, a teacher should be female, who stand tall, wears eyeglasses, and carries a lot of things with her. She wears eyeglasses because this is an indication of her continuous learning and self-improvement. A teacher cannot give what she does not have and so being a lifelong learner allows her to provide the best teaching for her learners, which affects her eye vision and thus she uses eyeglasses.

Pre-service student 4 described her image of a teacher as an old woman who wears eyeglasses. Her old age is brought upon by her passion for teaching. For Pre-service student 4, a teacher should be intelligent enough to pass on information and knowledge to her students. She is passionate in doing her work even though it is hard. Some students are afraid to participate in class discussion and share their opinions because they see their teacher as intimidating and strict. That is why for Pre-service student 4, a teacher should have a good sense of humor and understanding to her students.

The image of a teacher is someone who wears red lipstick, with kind eye looks, clean brows, and in ponytailed hair. She also wears a uniform, holding several books and a bag. A teacher carries herself presentably though she has piled of work to do and problems to face. For Pre-service student 5, she believes that a teacher must have high regard for morality and has to set a good example for all of her students.

Lastly, Pre-service student 6 views a teacher as a woman wearing eyeglasses, with neat uniform and has pleasing personality. Her physical appearance indicates her seriousness in the profession and how organized she is in doing her work. Accordingly, she is also required to know the profession and the field where she is engaged to. A teacher, for Pre-service student 6 is someone who can be looked up to by her students as they are their role models in many aspects of their lives. A teacher is also expected to be visionaries, helping students to see their potentials in the fulfillment of their future aspirations.

The results based on the answers of the participants for the questions about the image of the teachers imply that the image of a teacher can affect his/her students' life and learning. These results are related to the findings of Illiya and Simdet (2013) that the teacher's image is a significant factor in student's learning.

The data collected in the focused group discussion of the pre-service students is a manifestation of how an aspiring educator describes the image of the teachers. Their answers share commonalities in terms of the physical and character aspect of a teacher. According to five out of six pre-service students a teacher often wears eyeglasses because for them wearing one is an indicator that a person is intelligent, Participant 3 emphasized that the reason why teachers often wear eyeglasses is that their vision becomes blurry due to intensive reading and obtaining of knowledge. Furthermore, the participants added that for them, the teacher is someone who wears simple but neat and presentable uniform which depicts how disciplined they are. The only difference in terms of describing the image of a teacher is their gender. Among the six participants, Participant 2 described a teacher as a man while the other five represented the teacher as a woman.

When it comes to their characters, the pre-service students shared their thoughts about the traits of a teacher. Participants 2, 3, and 4 believed that a teacher is someone who understands, passionate and kind. On the other hand, Participants 5 and 6 mentioned that a teacher is someone who possesses good moral character in which they serve as the model to their students. While Participant 1 answered that a teacher should display the qualities exemplified in the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers.

The result is similar to the study conducted by Kestere and Kalke (2014), which was administered in 10 different countries. The respondents describe the image of a teacher in terms of the physical aspects and the qualities that they possess. The same is true with the findings of the comparative study by Kestere, Wolhuter, and Lozano (2013) wherein the respondents describe a professional teacher with the differentiation in terms of gender, appearance, and personal qualities. This differentiation of what an image of a teacher would look like is based on the social interaction they made in the school and the community just like what Joseph and Burnaford, (2001) had explained.

The Professional and Personal Qualities of the Filipino Teacher

A teacher's professional and personal attributes affect and determine the kind of teacher they will be. As the profession demands above standard qualification and effectiveness, the reality of the teachers here in the Philippines is evident in the image, perspective, and student's achievement obtained on their end.

A professional teacher sees herself as somebody who can affect change which is called a sense of efficacy since she is considered as a specialist of the subject matter knowledge that she teaches and on how she teaches or termed as pedagogical knowledge. With this effectiveness of the teacher is based on her individual professional qualities. Furthermore, personal attributes which include the traits that constitute one's personality and finally define who he is as a person.

Teachers are held to a higher standard than other professionals. The personality they exemplify shows the impressions they exhibit towards students and their colleagues. Their poise, facial expression, bearing, and manner of dressing have an impact on their interaction with their students and colleagues. Authoritarian, weak, dynamic, or “magnetic” personalities have been identified to teachers. These personalities must be authentic and normal, free of pretenses and artificiality. They have to be reliable, true, and genuine. Although research has shown that a variety of personal and professional characteristics are linked to higher levels of student achievement. It is a fact, that more effective teachers have verbal abilities, content awareness, pedagogical knowledge, credential status, ability to use a variety of teaching techniques skillfully, and enthusiasm for the subject (Tucker & Stronge, 2005).

In the focus group discussion, Pre-service student 2 described that a teacher exhibits her professional qualities the most by abiding the “Article 11, of R.A. No. 7836, otherwise known as the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994 and paragraph (a), section 6, P.D. No. 223, as amended, the Board for Professional Teachers hereby adopts the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers”. The Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers states,

Teachers are duly licensed professionals who possess dignity and reputation with high moral values as well as technical and professional competence in the practice of their noble profession, and they strictly adhere to, observe, and practice this set of ethical and moral principles, standards, and values.

A teacher who practices this lawful oath in the teaching profession from skill competence to content mastery, social relations, and limitations is a real professional in her field, and will eventually gain respect from his students.

On the other hand, Pre-service students 1,3,4,5, and 6 responses do not differ as to what a professional teacher’s qualities are. According to Pre-service student 2, the personal qualities of a teacher are being “easy-going” or being carefree which contradicts others perspective of the teacher’s professionalism. A teacher is at her best personal quality when she is at ease with herself and shows off her individuality and personality.

Sense of humor and being funny is the best personal quality according to Pre-service student 3 making them approachable in the eyes of the students. Pre-service student 4 appreciates how patient and understanding the Filipino teachers are as their personal quality. Adding to that, despite the naughtiness and laziness of students, teachers feel responsible to bring out the best of their potentials. Pre-service student 5 also agrees with the extreme patience teachers demonstrate, stating that Filipino teachers never complain and give up about the load and time of work being a teacher inside and outside

the classroom demands. How a teacher acts as a role model and inspires students to be at their best was found impressive. Pre-service student 6, best personal quality centered on the values that a teacher as a person obtained in her upbringing and how family-oriented they are. During the discussion, she even mentioned that she looks at a teacher's family background which reflects her personality and the experiences and stories that she tells in class. The teacher's attributes, attitude, values, and character are evident from the interaction and communication that transpired between the teacher and the students inside and outside the classroom. Such characteristics determine the professional and personal qualities of a teacher that affect teaching and classroom considerations. Basing their response to the qualities they have observed and experienced from their own respective teachers.

The level of respect given to the teacher is earned from her character and behavior. Her way of handling and socializing with students, display of hard work, and patience earns appreciation. An article was written by Narvaez (n.d.) titled "*The Filipino Teachers: Mirrors of Heroism, Fount of Excellence*", expressed the deep connection and attachment students and teacher-adviser forms by being the "second parent" at school which is the stereotype, norm, and role of teachers within the society. Efficient teachers cannot be reliably categorized based on what school they went to, whether they are licensed, or (after the first few years) how long they have taught, according to RAND Education (n.d.), a nonprofit research organization, the best way to measure teachers' effectiveness is to look at their on-the-job results, including what they do in the classroom and how much progress their students make on achievement tests. Filling the weight of technical qualities over teaching. It is the management of the teaching and learning knowledge base and the use of this knowledge to direct teaching practice. Best teaching practices are incorporated, and they can be used to educate in classrooms and interact with students in the school environment. They also exercise dispositions and abilities to approach all facets of the job with a reflective, collaborative, and problem-solving mindset. Teachers see teaching as a lifelong process and develop the necessary dispositions and skills to improve his own ways.

The response of one Pre-service student about professional qualities generalizing it to be the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers translates to them as being aware of the requirement in being a professional teacher in the Philippines; believing to put it in the actual practice of the profession. This shows that within Filipino schools, teachers are perceived and best remembered for their personal qualities, nonetheless, the effectiveness of content instruction inside the classroom. Students spend at least six hours in school with their classmates and teachers and it is typical for attachment, rapport, and emotional investment to develop as students look up, respect, listens, and obey teachers.

The Image of Teaching Success

The participants gave various answers to the question, “How do these professional and personal qualities of a teacher affect teaching success?”. Pre-service student 1 suggested that a teacher must be intelligent and well-groomed for her students to learn and gain more knowledge. According to Pre-service student 2, if the teacher follows the Code of Ethics and she is easy-going, students will eventually respect her. As a result, she will be able to teach and impart the lessons to her students successfully. In addition, Pre-service student 3 believed that students like funny teachers; they tend to listen and pay attention to funny and humorous teachers because they are easy to approach. Pre-service student 4 mentioned that a Filipino teacher is understanding and passionate as they do not give up on their students even though the students display negative behavior in the class. A teacher who understands her students also see their potentials which they themselves cannot see. Furthermore, Pre-service student 5 stated that if the teacher’s physical appearance is presentable and she exemplifies high morality, she will be viewed by the students as role model. If the students see her as a role model, they will be encouraged to learn and do more in class. On the other hand, Pre-service student 6 believed that if a teacher is family-oriented, she will be able to share it with her students. Students will learn from the wisdom and experiences the teacher conveys and incorporates as she deals, interacts, communicates, and teaches her students.

Pre-service student 3 counts the personal quality of how a teacher inspires and encourages students and shares her stories from experience. Pre-service student 4 and 5 look at teaching as the noblest profession, for teaching is the profession that creates other profession.

It is a fact that a teacher is the root of all the professions in the world. So at least one student of all her students, she can touch that one student and who knows that one student may be the next president of the Philippines and that will have an impact to the student and that student will be the way of the teacher to make the difference to the world. The teacher is not just a guide; she’s the guide to help change the world, to produce people that will change the world. (Pre-service student 5)

Pre-service student 6 added that teacher greatly influence their students. They are looked up to and serve as role models.

Based on the responses of the Pre-service students, it can be gleaned that the intellectual skill, physical appearance, and values of a teacher are very important in the teaching success. This is supported by Arend (1986) when he said that the term “efficient teaching” has a wide range of definitions. Different people have different connotations about what makes a good teacher. Some suggest a teacher can build good rapport with

the students. While some think of a successful teacher as someone who has a strong command of their subject matter. Accordingly, the physical appearance of a teacher has an impact to her students. A teacher's charismatic personality makes her stand out and attracts students' attention and makes them listen to her during class time. Moreover, Yunus, Malik, and Zakaria, (2012) also stated that the teacher's interpersonal skills make her popular with the students and help her to establish rapport with them. The teaching-learning process is focused on students and teachers interacting directly. The teacher must be skilled in interpersonal skills in order to accomplish this task effectively and efficiently. Similarly, Kellner (2002) believed that the skills required for a teacher to present effectively in a 21st-century classroom are being a role model, reflective practitioner, agent of change, motivator, counselor, supporter, communicator, learner, visionary, leader, risk-taker, and collaborator.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

It is always assumed that teachers are perfect. Students always look up at teachers for inspiration and most of the time, a role model. Teachers always protect their dignity and credibility because it is their role to have a good image in the society. People look at teachers as responsible for everything a student or a child should and would be.

Based on the result, students prefer teachers who are pleasing in outward appearance. Teachers who possess self-confidence and obvious knowledge of the subject they teach are often the favorite ones. It is significant for a teacher to have a good image. Having a good image and character as a teacher creates big impact on students' learning and future.

In the teaching-learning process, teachers' image is a significant factor. The environment also plays a vital role to determine their behavior. A conducive environment to teaching and learning is the responsibility of the teacher with the help of other stakeholders.

Pre-service students also looked up to those teachers who follow the code of conduct written in the Code of Ethics. A teacher who practices the lawful oath of being a teacher tends to be respected more by the students. They are respected based on the behavior they exhibit. This is seen on how the teachers engage and interacts to students and on how the teachers act as second parent to the students. Accordingly, the deep connection and attachment of the teacher and student-adviser is seen as being the second parent at school which is the stereotype, norm, and role for teachers within the society.

The effectiveness of the teacher cannot be judged from the school where they are from or their number of experiences in teaching or whether they are licensed or not. The best way to assess the effectiveness of the teacher is through their job performance in the classroom. On how the students show their progress and their achievement. Based on the

responses of Pre-service students, effective teaching can be shown from the intellectual skills, physical appearances, and values exhibited by the teachers.

Every student has their perspective of an image of a teacher and their effectiveness in the teaching-learning process. As they say that “teachers are the root of all the professions in the world and that no one can say where the influence of a teacher can go but one thing is for sure, teachers can change the world”.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Merriam S. Silin is an Assistant Professor 4 under the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education of the College of Education at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines. She teaches English, Professional Education, and Research subjects. She also handles Practice Teaching subject. She completed her Master of Arts in Education at Arellano University, Manila and Doctor in Education Management at Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

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