

## The Ontology of Successful Teaching: Capturing Voices of Primary School Teachers

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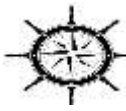
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### Abstract

*The teaching philosophies and qualities that characterize the best teacher remain contentious aspects of the multilayered educational landscape of Pakistan. The present study explores the ontological configuration of successful teaching while examining primary school teachers' beliefs and philosophies asking what are the fundamental requirements for becoming an excellent teacher who ultimately can contribute enormously to the development of both individual and collective intellectual capital. For this study, a qualitative approach of inquiry was adopted employing in-depth interviews with 33 primary school teachers (17 males, 16 females) from Rawalpindi city to elicit the grassroots perception concerning their beliefs regarding the perquisites of becoming a successful teacher. The study point to a number of traits that teachers believe are essential for successful teaching including loyalty and honesty, commitment, punctuality and passion vis-a-vis, effective communication skills, efficient classroom management, in-depth subject knowledge, and an awareness of students' issues to foster a conducive learning environment.*

**Keywords:** Primary School, Effective teacher, Qualities and Characteristics

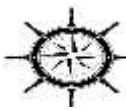


## **Introduction**

Teachers are one of the most important instruments in determining students' academic success and lifetime outcomes. The decision of pursuing teaching as the first choice and the conviction that this career can improve people's lives and society as a whole have a colossal impact on how effectively teachers perform. Therefore, it is imperative to recruit teachers who intend to enter the field with vigor and devotion aiming to improve individual existence and social structure. It is important to note that the primary purpose of evaluating teaching quality is to identify teaching praxis so that teachers can enhance their teaching philosophy and practices, rather than classifying teaching as good or bad (Liu, Liu, Stronge, & Xu, 2016; Norman, 2010). In this context, sharing only the list of key characteristics to become a successful teacher identified in several studies will not be the game changer for providing quality education to primary school students. Stronge (2018) articulates that there is still a vital task that needs to be accomplished in order to fully comprehend the important characteristics of teaching and their potential contribution to the growth of both successful teaching and teachers. These qualities include teachers' personal beliefs and aspirations, professional attitude, internal motivation, command over subjects, management skills, respect and collaboration with others, lesson planning, the process of assessment, and the ability to foster a conducive learning environment in the classroom (Stegemann & Roberts, 2016). Whitaker (2013), on the other hand, affirmed that there is not one predetermined formula for what makes an effective teacher; rather, it takes a variety of skills and characteristics to be a successful educator who can provide students with a high-quality education. Keeley et al. (2016) assert that a teacher's passion is the most crucial attribute that can create a positive change in the educational landscape.

### **Pakistani Context of the Study**

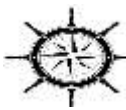
Becoming an educator and joining the profession of teaching for the sake of higher goals for today and tomorrow may have a lasting influence on society. However, due to the existing unemployment ratio among the educated youth of Pakistan, many graduates are joining the profession for the sake of the job. The majority of them do not take it as a responsibility that has deep-rooted influence for today and the coming generations (Tahir, Malik, Nawaz & Jabeen 2014). Consequently, retaining and inculcating the passion for learning, honesty, commitment and citizenship values are missing in the current and future generations. The personal motivation



of teachers instead of lasting values is linked to their promotions and financial factors. Finding and utilizing opportunities for professional fulfillment to contribute to students' intellectual and social development is not the song of today. The goal of teaching to inspire and motivate students to reach their full potential, instill values, and help them develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills is almost nowhere. It is important to note that teaching is a challenging profession that requires dedication, continuous learning, adaptability, and resilience. While numerous rewards and opportunities exist for personal and professional growth, teaching can also come with its share of demands and responsibilities (Rehman, 2002; Farooq, 1993; Zafar, 2003).

Since Pakistan gained its independence in 1947, every government (civilian and military) has shown great interest in issuing education policy documents, however, their implementation remains an unsuccessful story. Resultantly, there has been little advancement in the field of education, particularly in the area of primary education. According to the reports by the government of Pakistan and international agencies approximately, there are between 23 and 24 million primary school-aged children who are not enrolled in school. These children are enactments of economic, social, and security challenges for Pakistan. Despite having 183000 primary schools and 507000 teachers, Pakistan is unable to enroll these children, falling short of the goal of universalizing primary education (Government of Pakistan, 2021). This is due to a number of factors, including outdated curricula, politics in education, corruption and malpractices, authoritarian regimes, and poor teacher competence. Young children should receive a free, high-quality education, but the system is run by democracy and development elites who do not care about the public education system because their kids are enrolled in private schools (Zafar, 2003)

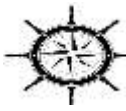
In addition, investment in teachers' professional development is key to progress in the entire spectrum of socio-cultural life (Tahir, Malik, Nawaz & Jabeen 2014). Effective instructors must be able to adapt their teaching strategies to the ages of their students, the available resources, and evolving curricular needs while working in a continuously changing environment. They need to possess sufficient knowledge of the subject matter and acquire an in-depth understanding of professional and pedagogical competence (Collinson 1999; Hanushek and Luque 2003; Harris and Sass 2011; Luschei and Chudgar 2011; Wayne and Youngs 2003; Jadama, 2014). Teachers



also require certain soft skills which include empathy, patience, creativity, reflection, and digital skills.

Several studies show a positive relationship between teacher experiences and student achievement (Wayne and Youngs 2003). Adaptability, continuous evaluation and workplace environment affect teachers' performance. Being adaptable and flexible allows an individual to explore various learning theories and modes of teaching. Creativity goes hand in hand with adaptability. Whether one teaches first graders or doctoral students, it is important to think outside the box and find novel solutions to challenges and problems, which will enable one to meet a wide range of students' needs. Being creative as an educator will also help to foster creativity among students an essential skill, they need for countless career paths. However, these skills are missing in the majority of teachers working in primary schools in Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2021).

Another unpleasant aspect of Pakistan's educational tragedy is the government's focus on higher education at the expense of primary education. The neglect of primary education has created gaps between educational institutions at various levels. This can be easily seen in the performances of students coming from elite schools and public schools (Government of Punjab, 2002) and attracted parents towards the private sector. The majority of the students are in public schools, lack of genuine interest and positive interference from the government is pushing back Pakistan as compared to several countries in the South Asian region in terms of literacy rates and primary education universalization targets. The budget allocation is near to 2 percent of GDP since the establishment of Pakistan which has further deteriorated the situation, and above all the allocated budget has not been utilized by the heads of primary schools because of financial incompetence. The education system, hence, has failed to raise the nation economically, politically and socially. Assessment practices that may trigger learning are almost flawed, promote rote learning with the addition of unfair practices. Moreover, the examinations are influenced by external and internal forces which have encouraged the trend of illegal practices. Moreover, the examination system promotes rote learning and cramming which negates the space for the intellectual development of learners with respect to critical thinking, reflection, analytical skills and problem-solving (Rehman, 2002; Farooq, 1993; Zafar, 2003).



The infrastructure of rural schools is worse than urban schools with respect to the playgrounds, classrooms, offices, furniture, boundary walls, etc. (Government of Punjab, 2004). Many schools lack the most basic amenities, such as classrooms, boundary walls, restrooms, and clean water. In addition to this, parents' involvement in students learning and school matters is mostly missing (Shah, 2003; Saleem, 2002; Shahzadi and Perveen, 2002). The net product of the existing scenario is the poor quality of education and an increase in the dropout rate at the primary level in Pakistan because of poor financial provision and teachers' capacity challenges (Rasheed, 2004).

### **Aim of the Study**

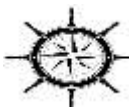
The primary objective of the study is to examine primary school teachers' beliefs and philosophies regarding the fundamental prerequisites for becoming an excellent teacher.

### **Methodology of the Study**

In this study, the qualitative interpretive paradigm was adopted to gather primary data from the personal experiences of primary school teachers. The interpretive paradigm allows capturing multiple aspects of joining the teaching profession and becoming a successful teacher. The in-depth interviews were conducted in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad to explore the opinions of primary school teachers on what they think are crucial characteristics of successful teachers as well as the challenges they encounter in their teaching careers. The interviews were conducted in the Urdu language since the teachers of public sector schools were not proficient in the English language. Interview questions were open-ended and respondents were encouraged to provide their opinion. Oral consent was taken from the respondents prior to conducting the interview. Furthermore, all of the participants received assurance that their privacy and anonymity will be ensured.

### **Population and Participants of the Study**

A purposive sampling technique was applied to gather the views of 33 primary school teachers including 17 males and 16 females. These teachers were working in the schools of Rawalpindi city.



## Respondents Profile

### Section 1: Demographics (N=33)

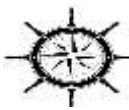
Table 1

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	17	51.5
Female	16	48.4
<b>Type of School</b>		
Pubic Private	13	39.3
Private	12	36.3
Semi govt.	8	24.2
<b>Qualifications</b>		
Matric	3	9.0
FA, FSC	1	3.0
BA, BSC	9	27.2
MA, MSC	10	30.3
BS (Hons)	3	9.0
M.Phil	5	15.1
Ph.D	2	.6.0
<b>Experience</b>		
1-5 Year	6	18.1
6-10 Years	7	21.2
11-15 Years	10	30.3
15 Years or Above	10	30.3

### Analysis of Data

We recorded the interviews with the consent of the participants, and after that, the recordings were distributed among the team members for transcription. All the members of the research team decided on verbatim transcription. The transcriptions were revised by removing repetitions, improving grammatical structures and maintaining communication coherence by matching with the intent of respondents by listening to the recording repeatedly. For ensuring the validity and credibility of the data, the refined transcriptions were sent back to the respondents for the sake of correction and addition of any missing points.

At the next stage, we applied open coding and categorical coding for placing and connecting similar and related concepts in the same category. When a complex sentence contained more



than one idea, it was divided into several units as recommended by Flick (2006). According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), consistently comparing and contrasting the codes may ensure refinement and clarity in the categories. The next step is immersing in the ideas and concepts for drawing major and sub-themes of the study. All of the participants received assurance that their privacy and anonymity will be ensured.

### Perceptual Analysis of Successful Teaching

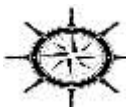
Teachers of both genders were questioned about the most important quality required to become a successful educator. The drawn themes are presented in the subsequent diagram:

Figure 1



#### Loyalty and Honesty

A dominant majority of the respondents believe that being trustworthy and loyal is the most important trait for becoming a great teacher. Loyalty is a passion to stand steadfast in a challenging situation and be ready to sacrifice self-interests. It is a passion for ‘living in school and in students’ and keeping the interest of students and the institution as the top priority. Moreover, commitment to the profession is triggered by loyalty and honesty, otherwise, the challenges in the performance of the duties derail teachers and they take it as a burden and feel



bored in the performance of their duties. Above all, only monitoring and accountability without the passion of loyalty and honesty cannot produce the desired results for enhancing performance. Only loyal and honest teachers take teaching not as a commercial but as a life-winning activity that may become full of pleasure and a step towards self-actualization. Consequently, the challenges in the performance of a job will not be a challenge but a step to fly higher and higher in nurturing, caring and supporting the budding flowers. It enables them to speak the truth (speak the truth) to themselves, to students and to school leadership. One of the respondents viewed the effects of loyalty and fairness on dealing with students in the following words:

“When teachers act fairly, they treat all of their pupils equally without taking into account factors like family background or academic standing. Fairness is a fundamental human requirement”.

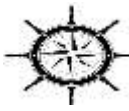
Hard work and personality traits are also emphasized by the respondents. Teachers’ habits, behavior, manners, and communication pattern are closely observed by their students. Therefore, they need to be truthful and treat kids with respect.

### **Commitment, Punctuality and Passions**

The entirety of life, including education, is energized and infused with the blood of one's passions. It is crucial to be enthusiastic about learning new things and experimenting with ideas if one wants to be a successful teacher. Professional passion provides interest, enjoyment and pleasure to the teaching undertakings. It equips the teacher to maintain the pupils' interest for sustained intellectual growth. Teaching is not imparting information but rather building the character and conduct of students which requires commitment, punctuality and passion. Committed teachers continually strive to make their classrooms better places for everyone in addition to having a passion for their profession and loving to teach. A passionate teacher frequently inspires the classroom with enthusiasm, delight, and anticipation, gets students involved, and encourages them to learn. Hence, a teacher's excitement encourages pupils' interest and increases their desire to study.

One of the fundamental qualities of a teacher is self-control. Success comes to those who practice self-discipline in their daily tasks. The regularity of students reflects the punctuality of teachers. A dominant majority of the respondents concurred that being on time is crucial to





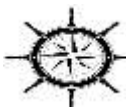
teachers' success. Additionally, on-time teachers are able to manage their workload well, which is a significant sign of efficient time management. Students and the community are impacted by these attributes. Empathy is a useful tool for figuring out what drives learners' actions and creating aids to help them.

### **Collaborative and Cooperative Attitude**

Collaboration defined as "joint work" or "working for a common objective", has been emphasized by the respondents. One of the answers made the analogy that just as the components of the human body work together to function properly, similarly in order to achieve the targets of the organization, its members ought to collaborate and connect with one another. It enables individuals and groups to work together towards a common objective or for mutual gain. Successful collaboration triggers learning from one another and is an effective way of solving problems. Collaboration prerequisites include mutual interaction, tolerance, respecting disagreements, and providing space and trust and these qualities eventually play a pivotal role in the development of self-awareness, teamwork, collective responsibilities, and shared purpose planning.

Two distinct behaviors—behaving like a boss and behaving like a team leader in a group—can plant the seeds of cooperative or hostile situations. Politeness and respecting others are the foundation stone of collaborative work. It promotes trust, friendly relationships and confidence among the team which is valuable to achieve the learning targets and overcoming challenges. Vygotsky, the famous social constructivist, has emphasized the role of society and 'more knowledgeable others' for success in learning. For the complete management of a child's life, a teacher must engage with parents while addressing academic, behavioral, and administrative difficulties at school. They need to realize that human beings are not the same and they possess different temperaments in reference to their preferences. The teacher is required to deal accordingly for developing consensus and moving for the collaborative activities. For this purpose, the teacher must be a lifetime learner and learning material is scattered all around.

### **Communication Skills**



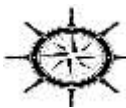
Effective communication is one of the most crucial abilities for the teacher which has been highlighted by the respondents. Effective communication is necessary to keep relationships with coworkers, managers, and clients. For instructors to be successful, they must have strong communication skills enabling them to effectively communicate with colleagues and students. Teachers who have effective communication skills can better understand their pupils and establish enduring bonds with them. Also, successful classroom management and conflict resolution can be facilitated by instructors with strong communication skills. Parents and pupils must be able to communicate with teachers.

The most important quality of teachers is that they must have effective communication skills. Because teaching is all about listening, speaking, reading and writing. Without communication skills, a teacher is not able to perform the business of the profession in guiding, mentoring, and facilitating students.

### **Understanding Learners**

One of the most important traits of a great teacher is an understanding of the students. There are pupils in the class who come from different linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic origins. As a result, it is the teacher's duty to comprehend each student and address their concerns. They must have patience and be open to accepting pupils that have emotional instability, diverse origins, and learning difficulties. In order to tackle the issues with a cool head, good instructors must work in collaboration with parents, other teachers, and specialists. Because each student in the class comes from a distinct socioeconomic and academic background, their problems are unique and call for unique answers. They cannot, therefore, be guided by a paradigm that works for everyone. As a result, different levels of comprehension are anticipated for each student. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate patience in classroom management.

At the basic level, the teacher must comprehend the personalities, preferences, and other characteristics of the kids. For young children, hands-on learning with teaching tools that engage their five senses is the best method to learn. Young children are inherently curious about the world around them. Instructors who frequently offer creative classwork are more likely to see higher-order cognitive talents in their pupils (problem-solving, critical thinking, making



connections across subjects). And when teachers mix creativity with teaching approaches, the results are even better as the ability to tackle the students is the most important quality to become a teacher.

### **Classroom Management**

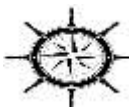
The teachers viewed classroom management as an important factor in the effective teaching-learning process. They have also emphasized about time management is the most important factor in teaching. Management may be described as the process of completing the job or activities necessary to achieve an organization's goals in an efficient and effective manner. Classroom management refers to the measures instructors take to create and maintain an atmosphere that promotes students' academic achievement as well as their social, emotional, and moral development.

### **Subject Matter Knowledge**

Command on content knowledge has been emphasized by teachers. It is a famous saying that a burning candle can burn another candle. A teacher is required to be a voracious reader and a passionate learner. Then, he/she will be able to understand and apply the latest developments in the field. It is not easy to meet these requirements in a meaningful way if you do not understand what has been required to become a teacher. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the material they are teaching, and they should use this expertise to prepare engaging lectures for their students.

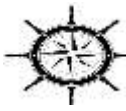
### **Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings of the current research provide the perceptual analysis of teachers pertaining to essential qualities. Loyalty and honesty emerged as the core traits that enable teachers to form and sustain meaningful connections with their profession and students. Teachers that display commitment and honesty in the classroom generally acquire the trust and respect of their pupils, resulting in a more productive and enjoyable learning experience. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) found that "honesty and integrity are central to effective job performance." Similarly, Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) discovered in their study that "loyalty and honesty are important components of organizational citizenship behavior." Teachers who are honest and loyal to their pupils are more likely to establish a safe and helpful learning environment. Students



may be encouraged to take chances, ask questions, and participate in important debates as a result of this. As a result, student motivation and academic success may improve (Allen et al., 2019). Furthermore, individuals' dedication and tenacity toward their aims as the enactment of commitment are also vital for a successful teacher. The necessity of being on time and fulfilling deadlines are important denominators of this commitment. Commitment, punctuality, and enthusiasm are crucial attributes for instructors to provide a pleasant and engaging learning experience for their pupils. Teacher commitment is positively related to student engagement and academic achievement. Similarly, studies have indicated that timely and organized teachers are more likely to produce an effective and efficient learning environment (Brouwer et al., 2019). Furthermore, teachers that are enthusiastic about their subject matter are more likely to inspire and encourage their pupils (Green et al., 2018).

The teachers also suggested that collaborative and cooperative behaviors are necessary for creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers who exhibit collaborative and cooperative behaviors in the classroom are more likely to establish a pleasant and supportive learning environment. Johnson and Johnson (2013) found that "cooperative learning promotes positive interdependence among students, which can lead to increased academic achievement." Furthermore, collaborative instructors are more likely to develop novel teaching tactics and enhance their professional practices (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012). Additionally, excellent communication is one of the key prerequisites, according to respondents, for teachers to be successful in their endeavours. Teachers who interact with their students clearly and effectively are more likely to foster a good and engaging learning environment. Wubbels and Brekelmans (2017) found that "effective communication is an important component of teacher-student interactions." Similarly, Hattie and Timperley (2007) discovered in their study that "feedback and communication are essential components of effective teaching." Teachers who give students feedback and clearly articulate their goals are more likely to increase student learning outcomes. The strategies and practices used by instructors to establish a positive and effective learning environment are referred to as classroom management. A secure and supportive learning environment requires effective classroom management. The respondents also highlight the critical importance of classroom management. Weinstein et al. (2018) found that "classroom management is a critical component of effective teaching." Effective classroom management

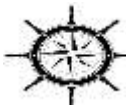


practices increase the likelihood of creating a good and engaging learning environment. This can boost student enthusiasm and academic success. Subject area expertise is required for effective teaching. Teachers who understand their subject matter thoroughly are more likely to provide interesting and meaningful learning experiences for their pupils. Shulman (1987) discovered that "content knowledge is the foundation of effective teaching." Understanding students is also important for effective teaching. Teachers who understand the needs, interests, and abilities of their students are more likely to create a supportive and engaging learning environment. According to a study by Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), "understanding the learner is an important part of effective teaching".

In conclusion, teachers who demonstrate loyalty and honesty, commitment, punctuality and passion, cooperative behavior, effective communication skills, efficient classroom management, and subject knowledge and understanding of students' issues are more likely to create a positive and engaging learning environment for their students.

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