



An Empirical Study of Teacher's Expertise

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Abstract

Teacher's expertise is an under-researched area in the field of *continuous professional development* (CPD) in general and ELT education in particular. Since teaching experience in terms of number of years cannot be an indicator of a teacher's expertise, Tsui (2003) advocates that some experienced teachers may be considered expert, while others remain "experienced non-experts". Given the paucity of research on the dichotomy between experienced expert and experienced non-expert ESL teachers, this study aims to explore empirical characteristics to be served as a benchmark for becoming an expert ESL teacher. In attaining the objective, this exploratory research has used three data gathering tools namely participant observation, focus-group discussion, and questionnaire; whereas, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analytic induction. The findings of the study revealed 12 striking facts as to teachers' expertise. Of them, three are worth-mentioning here. Firstly, none of the respondent teachers were found to be using any best practices expected from an ideal ELT practitioner in their classroom. Secondly, all the respondents were found to be unaware of the required expertise shown by an ideal ELT practitioner in standard scenario. Thirdly, the study also revealed that none of the respondents had undergone any CPD programme in their professional career to improve their pedagogical, professional, and strategic competence. From remedial perspectives, the study recommends a working model of 25 expertise to be imbibed by any ELT practitioner in their ELT profession.

Keywords: expertise, expert and experience

1. Introduction

The study of expertise in teaching is very similar to the studies of expertise in other fields and in different domains. Expertise in teaching is content knowledge of subject and general pedagogical knowledge (good teaching strategies that apply to all subject, classroom management, knowledge of setting such as grouping students) (Tsui, 2005). Expertise in teaching has been motivated by need to establish the professional status of teachers by demonstrating to the general public.

In the teaching profession, expert teachers who are highly skilled pedagogically with deep knowledge of their subject disciplines play an important role in providing academic leadership in schools. Having many years of experience does not guarantee expert teaching; experience is useful only when the teacher continuously engages in self-reflection and modifies classroom techniques to better serve the needs of students. Teachers must prepare to teach a wide range of students in terms of interest, motivation and ability, some of whom may need additional assistance. Effective teachers assess needs, abilities, and preparedness on a class-by-class basis and respond to these needs accordingly.

General characteristics of an ideal teacher defined by students are “being competent in teaching activities, having fluency in speech, being expert, organized, efficient, intelligent and able to synthesize”. (Pozo-Muñoz, Reboloso-Pacheco & Fernández-Ramírez, 2000).

Considering the importance of teacher’s expertise in academia, this study aims at exploring possible characteristics found in an ideal teacher

In general, having subject, pedagogical and general knowledge are known as qualities of expert teachers (Erden, 1998). Especially professional knowledge, both the disciplinary knowledge and didactic knowledge, are important qualities of good teachers (Arnon & Reichel, 2007). However professional knowledge is to become meaningful if it is implemented logically and effectively. And teachers, in general, use their knowledge effectively as they become more experienced. What already known about how teachers develop in their understanding of what makes a good teacher as they get more experience can be found in Atay’s work. Atay (2007) find that classroom management and student engagement significantly increases as teacher get more experienced. Besides, in her study, Traianou (2006) concluded that in dealing with situation faced in the classroom, expert teachers are using a variety of pedagogical strategies and theories of learning.

1.1 Statement of the problem:

For lack of adequate appropriate expertise in teaching, teachers of AUH fail to see desirable learning outcome in the student.

1.2 Objectives:

Given the statement of the problem above, the general objectives of this study is to assess teacher’s expertise in ELT petitioners at Amity University, Haryana and the specific objectives of this study are as follow:

- to explore empirical characteristics to be served as a benchmark for becoming an expert ESL teacher
- to evaluate the degree of expertise implemented by teachers in their classrooms.

1.3 Research Questions:

- What is expertise?
- What are the main characteristics of an ideal English Teacher?
- Is there any characteristics which act as bench mark for being and expert ESL teacher?

1.4 Significance of the study:

This study aims to explore the characteristics found in an ideal teacher followed by training these characteristics in selected samples of teachers of Amity University, Haryana.

1. Literature Review

An ideal teacher's teaching effectiveness is strongly concerned with his expertise in teaching. Teacher's expertise gains vital importance in students' understanding and motivation towards the lesson. Besides it, teaching of any subject becomes much effective and more systematic only when the teacher is fully aware of the aims and values of the teaching of any particular subject. we have to understand the aims and value of teaching Considering the importance of teacher's expertise.

Many studies have investigated the characteristics of ideal teachers which most strongly impact students' learning and achievement (Demmon-Berger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et al., 1993; Lowman, 1995; Witcher et al., 2001). These studies asked students to identify effective teacher characteristics by means of self-report questionnaires or interviews.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) reported 15 characteristics of effective teachers in two categories: management and instructional techniques and personal characteristics (Demmon-Berger, 1986). These characteristics were found among the teachers who tended to be good managers, use systematic instruction techniques, have high expectations of students and themselves, believe in their own efficacy, vary teaching strategies, handle discipline through prevention, are caring, are demographic in their approach, are task oriented, are concerned with perceptual meanings rather than with facts and events, are comfortable interacting with others, have a strong grasp of subject matter, are accessible to students outside of class, tailor teaching to student needs, are flexible and imaginative.

Lang et al. (1993) developed a list of 32 characteristics of effective teachers through interviews with college teachers, and asked 167 participants (administrators, chairpersons, college teachers, and students) to identify and rank three characteristics considered important to teaching. They found that the teachers rated 16 characteristics significantly different from the students and that the overall difference was significant. The mean ratings for three characteristics including being knowledgeable of world events and knowing students and teaching them in ways which they learn best were higher for student respondents, whereas the remaining 13 characteristics including knowing the subject well and encouraging students to learn independently received higher mean ratings from teacher respondents.

In a similar manner, Lowman (1995) found that exemplary teachers excelled in one of the two dimensions: the ability to generate intellectual excitement and interpersonal rapport in students. To confirm this study, Lowman (1996) further investigated 500 teaching awards nomination letters from the students at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and found 39 descriptors of effective teacher characteristics. Even though all but six of the 39 descriptors fit into the two-dimensional model of effective teachers, Lowman argued that the data fit better when two more dimensions of motivation and commitment were added to the two-dimensional model. The four dimensions found in order of weight were intellectual excitement (16 items), interpersonal concern (10 items), effective motivation (7 items), commitment to teaching (2 items), and others (4 items).

In order to better understand the characteristics of effective teachers, efforts were made to find constructs in a long list of effective characteristics. Witcher et al. (2001) examined pre-service teachers' perceptions about the characteristics of effective teachers by asking the participants to identify, rank, and define three to six characteristics that excellent teachers possessed. They found a total of 125 characteristics which were classified into the following six categories in order of endorsement rate: student-centeredness (79.5%), enthusiasm for teaching (40.2%), ethicalness (38.8%), classroom and behavior management (33.3%), teaching methodology (32.4%), and knowledge of subject (31.5%). Among the demographic variables, gender made the strongest contribution to the participants' responses with females endorsing learner-centeredness and males endorsing classroom and behavior management.

More recently, Koutsoulis (2003) identified 94 characteristics of effective teachers by 25 high school students in Cyprus. Koutsoulis found that the 94 characteristics could be classified into three categories: human characteristics such as the ability to show understanding and teacher friendliness; communication characteristics such as the ability to communicate with students and to handle teacher-student relations; and teaching and production characteristics such as making lessons interesting and motivating and teacher's subject matter knowledge. Another finding of this study was that students at different achievement levels understood teacher effectiveness differently. The low achieving students endorsed more human and communication characteristics than the high achieving students, whereas the high achievement students acknowledged more teaching and production characteristics than their counterparts did.

Khojastehmehr & Takrimi (2009) conducted a study to identify teacher effectiveness factors, according to the perceptions of the English teachers in Khuzestan. Participants were 215 male and female secondary school English teachers, selected by a multistage sampling method. A 36-item researcher-constructed questionnaire was administered to these teachers, asking them what characteristics they thought effective English teachers should possess or demonstrate. A Principal Component Analysis was used, which yielded the following four factors: (a) instructional strategies (15 items), (b) communication (social) skills (8 items), (c) personal characteristics (8 items), and (d) knowledge (5 items).

DİNÇER et al. (2013). In a study proposes the four common characteristics of an effective English language teacher. The four categories are as follow: socio-affective skills, pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge and personality characteristics. They state that an English language teacher should have socio-affective skills, pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge and personal qualities for better language teaching and learning. In addition, an effective English language teacher should have a balanced combination of these four main aspects.

Badawood in a survey studied the features of effective English teachers as viewed by English language teachers and high school students in Saudi Arabia. The study consists of 17 English language teachers and 17 secondary school students, all from Saudi Arabia. The study depended on the descriptive approach to evaluate English teacher's language proficiency, pedagogical knowledge and socio-affective features. The results assert that the teachers advocated socio-affective skills, English proficiency, and pedagogical knowledge in order of importance, whereas the students advocated English proficiency, socio-affective skills, and pedagogical knowledge. (2015).

Recently Ahraf & Anuar conducted a study to discover the students' and instructors' perception of effective teaching characteristics as well as investigating the distinction between them as perceived by 137 students and six instructors in a Community College in South-eastern United States. Using the Teacher Behavior Checklist (TBC), students and instructors in vocational education were asked to rate the 28 teacher qualities that they considered effective teaching. (2016).

In sum, the studies on effective teaching summarized above revealed that some of the characteristics of effective teachers were universal, that other characteristics were group dependent, and that numerous effective characteristics could be classified into a few categories including subject matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and socio-affective skills, with different endorsement rates according to groups such as teachers and students, male and female students, and high achieving and low achieving students. But no empirical study was done to observe the teacher in action, the students' perceptions towards their teachers teaching.

2. Methodology

2.1 Subjects of the study:

ELT practitioner at Amity University and the students.

2.2 Sampling Technique:

The data collection sampling is convenience sampling based on the available data and subjects.

2.3 Methods of data collection:

This exploratory research has used three data gathering tools namely participant observation, focus-group discussion, and questionnaire.

2.4 Methods of Data analysis:

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and analytic induction

3. Discussion and analysis

2.5 What is expertise and who is an expert?

According to oxford dictionary, expert is used in both noun and adjective forms which means a person with extensive knowledge and ability; as an adjective expert is extraordinarily capable or knowledgeable while expertise is used in noun form and means great skill or knowledge in a particular field. (Oxford Dictionary, Eighth Edition). when a teacher is equipped with expertise, he is an expert. Moreover, in many expertise studies, expertise is seen as a *state* of superior performance achieved after a number of years of experience and practice and it is characterized by efficiency, automaticity, effortlessness and fluidity. Hence, the notion of ‘expertise’ is often bound up with years of experience. While experience is a necessary condition for the development of expertise, it is not a sufficient condition.

As it is mentioned briefly in introduction, studies highlight many features that characterize expert teachers, which include extensive pedagogical content knowledge, better problem solving strategies, better adaptation for diverse learners, better decision making, better perception of classroom events, greater sensitivity to context, and greater respect for students.

Several studies stress the importance of the knowledge teachers hold, highlighting that in addition to assimilating academic knowledge, students also need to incorporate knowledge derived from experiential and practical experiences in the classroom. Research also shows that variations in ‘opportunities to learn’ in teacher preparation are related to differences in student achievement while teacher knowledge is certainly a component of teacher professionalism, professional competence involves more than just knowledge. Skills, attitudes, and motivational variables also contribute to the mastery of teaching and learning. Blömeke and Delaney (2012) proposed a model that identifies *cognitive abilities* and *affective-motivational characteristics* as the two main components of teachers’ professional competence.

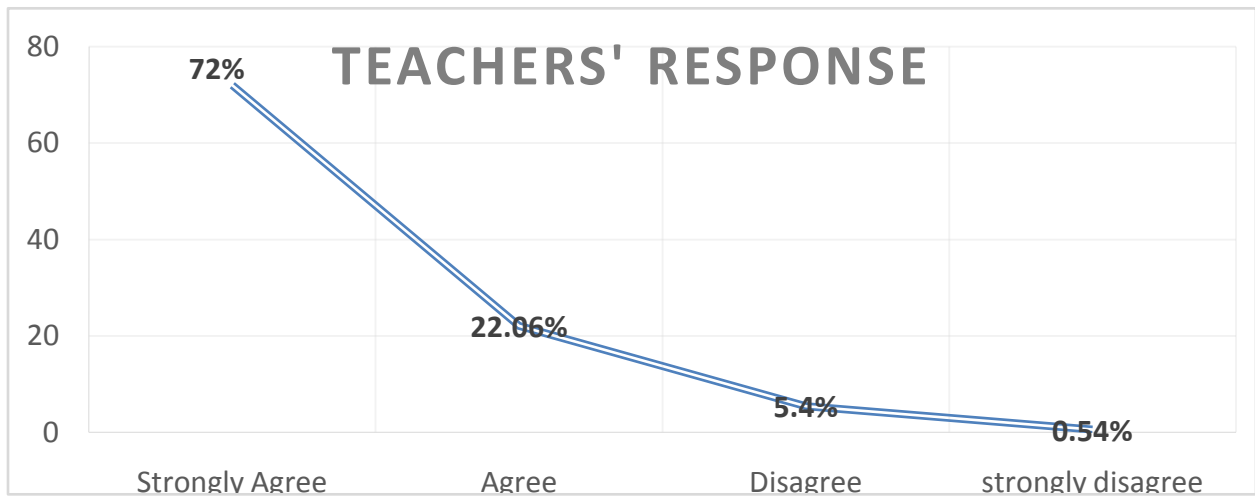
3 Major Findings

Characteristics of an expert teacher

After circulating questionnaires, observing teachers' lectures and reviewing related literatures, we came up with the follows 25 must expertise for an expert teacher.

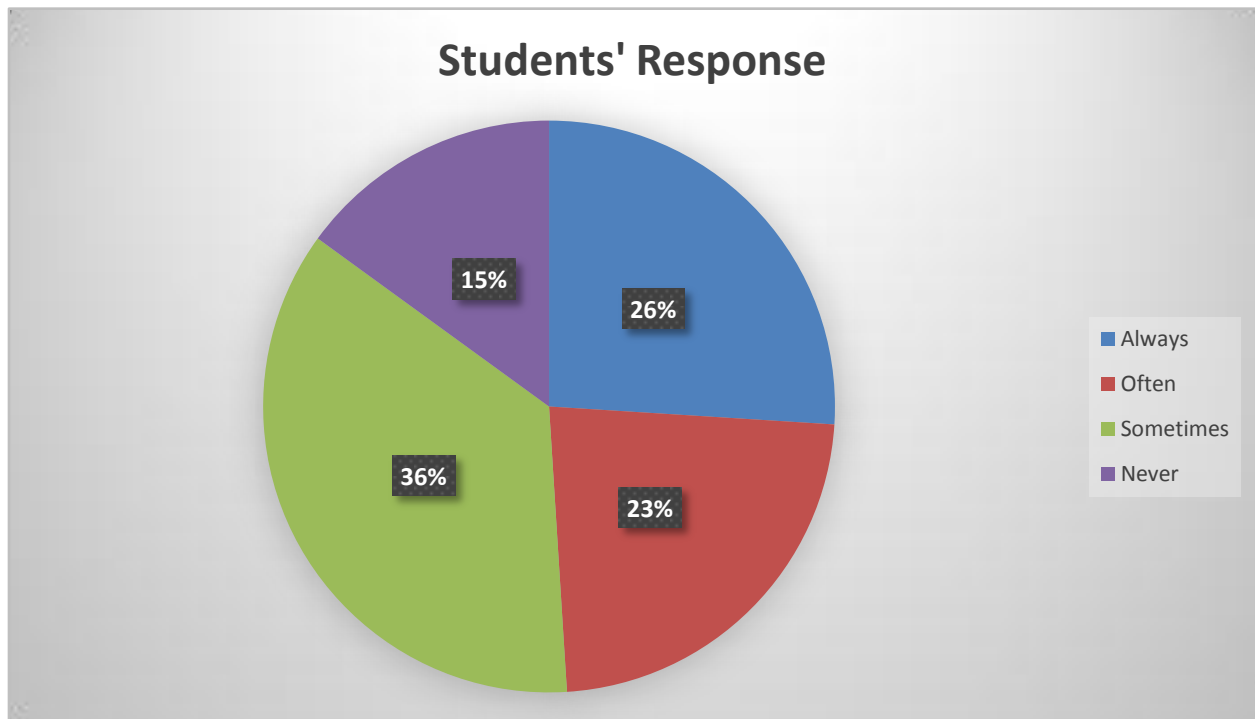
1. expert teachers adopt a problem-solving posture in the calss.
2. an Expert teacher is a better decision-makers.
3. an expert teacher is proficient in establishing an optimal classroom climate for learners
4. an expert teacher has a good context knowledge of his class.
5. an expert teacher is skillful enough at monitoring student problems and providing constructive feedback.
6. expert teacher is passionate about teaching and education.
7. an expert teacher engages students in learning and motivates their self-efficacy, and self-esteem as learners.
8. an expert teacher has positive influences on students' achievement.
9. evaluates the students' understanding.
10. explains by pantomime, Drawing, visual aids and clarifies with translation.
11. provides examples of own or others if textbook examples are insufficient or ambiguous.
12. establishes a link between students' needs and language outside the classroom.
13. explain his objectives
14. designs questions clearly.
15. Explains with relevant examples from outside as per the class level.
16. Integrates evaluation and teaching.
17. manages to keep the class arranged and engaged.
18. smiles often and remains cheerful
19. has access to internet to keep himself update to improve teaching methods
20. has a healthy competition with his well-known colleagues and EFL teachers?
21. has flexibility and supportive mentality.
22. has the ability to interact with uninterested students.
23. consults with peers.
24. willing to Study about new teaching approaches and methods.
25. undergoes Continuous Professional Development (CPD) periodically.

We put all of above mentioned characteristics in a questionnaire and circulated to the English teachers to know the teachers' perception about and their response was as following.



As indicated in the chart, selected English teachers were strongly agree up to 72%, were agree with up 22.06%. they disliked 5.4% percent of the characteristics and the value for strongly disagree was 0.54% which very small number. Overall, up to 94.06% they believed that these qualities are must for and English teacher in a classroom.

After observing the teachers' responses, we circulated the questionnaire to the students of the selected teachers to know up which extent do teachers' implement the given characteristics and the students' response was as the following chart.



After analyzing the students' response, we found a huge gap between the teachers' and the student's responses. According the students, their teachers were unable to meet their expectation.

Finally, we decided to observe the selected teachers in action and observed their teachings. Sadly, our observation was very similar to the students' response.

After analyzing all the responses from the teachers, students and our own observation, we came to know that thought teachers believe that the given characteristics are must for an English teacher, and they must be having possessing some of them, but they do not implement in real scenario while teaching.

1. Conclusion

To conclude, the paper has tried to attain its two objectives(i) to explore empirical characteristics to be served as a benchmark for becoming an expert ESL teacher (ii) to evaluate the degree of expertise implemented by teachers in their classrooms. To summarize the findings, it is important to mention two striking facts. firstly, the findings found 25 empirical characteristics to be served as a benchmark for becoming an expert ESL teacher. Secondly, the result found that the ELT practitioners at Amity University Haryana, were unable to meet their student's expectation in their teaching. Moreover, the findings revealed that due to lack of adequate expertise, ELT practitioners are unable to implements certain required expertise for an ELT practitioner while teaching. As a result, they cannot see the desirable outcome of their teachings in the students.

Limitations

The samples for this study were taken from Amity University, Haryana and it size was smaller as well. Hence, it is difficult to generalize the result of the second findings of this study for all ELT practitioners in India and Afghanistan.

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