

A Passionate Teacher: Teacher Commitment and Dedication to Student Learning

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Abstract

Passionate teachers are distinguished by their commitment to achievement of their students. Commitment is an essential element of successful teaching. Committed teachers are concerned with the development of their students and they profoundly struggle how to keep students' learning. They cultivate students' curiosity and interest in learning. Showing commitment to student learning can be an important factor in motivating students. Committed teachers recognize and endeavor to fulfill their responsibilities to their students. The degree of loyalty of committed teachers have, toward their profession is one of their distinguished characters. Teachers, who are engaged in their profession and committed to students and their learning, play a crucial role in development of students.

Keywords: Passionate, Dedication, Commitment, Student Learning

Introduction

Passion matters in that it motivates and inspires the teachers. Passion is a motivational factor that affects teacher performance. It drives the teachers for a better student accomplishment. Passionate teachers create an effective learning environment and increase learning potential of students. Passion leads to creativity; therefore, passionate teachers have the ability to think and produce new notions in an easy way. Passionate teachers are committed and dedicated to their schools and a good education achievement is an outcome of this commitment and dedication.

Teacher Commitment and Dedication to Student Learning

"Those who feel the call to teach, who sense teaching is a profoundly meaningful part of their life, have a passion for teaching" (Garrison, Liston, 2004, p.1). Passion simply is defined as: "a strong inclination or desire towards an activity that one likes and finds important and in which one invests time and energy" (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet & Guay, 2008, p.978). Fried defines a passionate teacher as: "someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that change our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of the young people who come into class every day" (2001, p.44). For a high quality student learning passion is indispensable. Olson states that "when we discover and explore our passions about teaching and learning, and begin to share them with others, doors are opened, and the possibilities are

endless” (2003, p.305). One of the most important factors in the development of passion for teaching is teachers’ ongoing commitment and dedication to students and learning. Passionate teachers are fiercely devoted to their work and greatly inspire their students. “The strength of any profession depends upon the degree of commitment of its members. Teaching is no exception” (Fox, 1964, p.18). It is widely accepted that a distinguishing feature that teachers have is, their dedication and commitment to the development of student achievement. Kushman (1992) and Rosenholtz (1989) in their studies put forward the relationship between teacher commitment and student achievement. Fried (2001) supporting this idea states that there is a strong connection between passionate teaching and the quality of student learning and explains the reasons as:

1. If students know that teachers get immersed in their subjects and sets high standards for students, they take their studies more seriously. At this point, teaching ceases to be a job done by force, and turns into an inspiration for students.
2. There is little chance of building a relationship based on respect and trust between teacher and student unless a collaborative learning environment and willingness to take risks are not created.
3. Students will not have motivation to learn as long as they do not have a clear idea of how to apply things they have learnt to their own lives.

Passionate teachers know that it is their role to encourage students for an active learning and concern themselves with promoting students’ intellectual and moral development. Teachers with passionate, work with enthusiasm, their dedication and commitment increase, and they believe in the importance of their job. “There are strong empirical grounds for believing that teachers can and do make a difference and that consistent high quality teaching, supported by strategic professional development, can and does deliver dramatic improvements in student learning” (Rowe, 2003, P.27). Commitment to teaching contributes to teachers’ behaviors, attitudes, perceptions and performances (Thapan, 1986).

Committed teachers have a tendency to perform the roles effectively that their job requires and to establish a good teacher-student relationship in accordance with the professional values. This approach facilitates student learning and development of terminal behaviors. However, in the clash of the career goals and values, and the goals and values of school, the importance of dedication and commitment increases. The basic goals and values of teaching profession effectively shape student behavior change in accordance with the principles of education sciences.

Fried (1995) states that teacher passionate can be seen in three different areas.

1. Teachers may be passionate about their own subject knowledge.
2. Teachers may be passionate towards events developing in the world.
3. Teachers may have a passion for children.

Commitment to the institution in education manifests itself in identifying with the school, feeling like a part of the school, and being loyal to school. In successful schools teachers have commitment to school as well as their professions. Commitment form a basis, propulsive force, and resource in restructuring.

Education researchers list some characteristics of committed teachers and principals for their organizations as (Balci,1993, p.56):

1. Teachers constantly should talk about developing teaching approaches
2. Teachers and principals should continuously observe each other's performance, and evaluate their own performances through these observations.
3. Teachers and principals should together supply education materials
4. Teachers and principals should help each other with development of teaching approaches.

Another factor that contributes to teachers' commitment and dedication is administrative implementation. Compatible administrative implementation strengthens teachers' commitment. The desire of teachers spending more time at school, making more effort for school achievement, approving compatibility of administration are among contributing causes of commitment and dedication to school.

Among the factors that decide teachers' commitment and dedication degree are: interaction between teachers, teacher-student relationship, the quality of the work teachers do at school, the compatibility of school administration. Teachers who have commitment to school display such attitudes as: being proud of the school he works for, evoking a desire to work harder, being interested in the future of the school.

Fried (2001) lists ten basic characteristics of a passionate teacher as:

1. likes working with young people, and takes an interest in knowledge and ideas
2. that students lack knowledge and skills cannot be an excuse to decrease his feeling of compassion for them.
3. cares about students
4. is aware of world issues, and current events in the classroom and effectively reflects them in his works at school
5. is serious and has sense of humor.
6. tolerates absurd and meaningless things that students exhibit in their behaviors but at the same time critical and very attentive to manners that students must have.
7. avoids condemning ideas of unpopular and young people and attempts to create a culture of mutual respect.
8. takes risks; therefore, as much as any person makes mistakes but derives lessons from mistakes rather than ignore them.
9. endeavors to establish and maintain a learning environment where students can learn from their mistakes.
10. takes his missions seriously and reflects his ideas and beliefs clearly.

Croswell and Eliot (2001, p.2) state that teacher commitment is multidimensional and some external factors may influence commitment degree:

- 1) the school or organization
- 2) students
- 3) career continuance
- 4) professional knowledge base
- 5) the teaching profession

What makes a teacher great?

Fried points out what makes a teacher great is(2001, p.54): “This caring about ideas and values, this fascination with the potential for growth within people, this fervor about doing things well and striving for excellence”.

Some important features of a great teacher:

1) Passion for teaching and learning: teaching with passion will enable students to understand effectively. Hargreaves writes: “ Pedagogical changes fail, when they do not engage the passions of the classroom” (Hargreaves, 1997, p.18). Passionate teachers observe the quality of learning achievement of students carefully and feeling that efficiency in learning is not accomplished, endeavor to teach using different approaches.

2) Respect for students: To build a better relationship respect for students as individuals and learners is essential in teaching profession. If students see the teacher as caring, their willingness to learn enhances.

3) Love of his profession: In the rapidly developing world, without love of his profession improvement in his field for the teacher does not occur. Passion stems from teacher’s love of his profession. Passionate teachers have a profound love for teaching. “Perhaps they are in love with every aspect of teaching” (Garrison and Liston, 2004, p.1). A great teacher is informed about new developments in his field and tries to keep abreast of them to advance his skills and knowledge base. Exhibiting enthusiasm for the subject matter that he is teaching will feed students’ excitement and interest. Teacher’s primary goal is to cultivate students’ curiosity for efficiency in learning. One of the most significant requirement to teach effectively is good knowledge of subject matter the teacher is teaching. Ferguson and Womackl (1993) write: “effective communication of content knowledge is a hallmark of good teachers”

4) Being aware of the worth of schools in students’ lives: A school is a place where students not only learn but also gain real life experiences. Therefore, passionate teachers do leadership in every corner of the school in every field of learning.

5) Teacher cannot make any concessions to occupational ethics: Great teachers have some occupational ethics that they never divert from. They educate students in accordance with this approach.

6) Willingness for changes: Great teachers always search for continuous professional development. They always desire to be a good teacher and seek to enhance the effectiveness of teaching. Hansen writes: “A teacher who really ‘knows and believes’ that teaching is

worthwhile will likely conduct him-or herself differently from a teacher who has lost faith in the endeavor or who resorts to expediency in the face of challenge” (2001, p.56).

7) Willingness for Reflection: Great teachers reflect on their commitment to student achievement through seeking an opportunity to share the things they have learnt.

8) Organizational Skills: Great teachers have effective organizing skills. They know the right thing to do. A passionate teacher knows and believes in what he does.

9) Good communication is the foundation of a successful relationship: Great teachers use verbal and nonverbal communication skills effectively in giving instructions, feedback and providing students with knowledge. Rather than what they say, great teachers convey more messages to students through gestures, voice tones and their locations in the classroom. A passionate teacher knows how to speak to students’ hearts and minds.

10) Collaboration: Great teachers collaborate with their colleagues in the work environment to promote student learning.

Conclusion

Passionate teachers are those who make great changes in our lives. Their beliefs and vigorous actions make us realize our inner values and bewitch us. Passion contributes to teacher’s motivation and performance. Passionate teachers have an affect on student achievement. There is a strong correlation between passionate teaching and successful student learning. Commitment, a sense of adherence, is a key factor that influences learning process of students.

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