What Makes a Good Teacher?

Веренич Ирина Михайловна
преподаватель
ГГУ им. Ф. Скорины, Беларусь, Гомель E-mail: irenevr@mail.ru

“What makes a good teacher?” Many different people were asked the question. In no particular order, these are some of the qualities mentioned in their replies. Teachers must:

- make their lessons interesting;
- love their job;
- have their own personality and not hide it from their students;
- have lots of knowledge, not only of their subject;
- be passionate about teaching, and patient, adapting to the level of the students;
- be strict, friendly, and interesting;
- be passionate and intelligent;
- teach grammar clearly;
- not rely on the course book only;
- know students’ individual needs;
- help students to make progress;
- be kind, funny, and stimulating;
- have energy, and an original teaching style;
- know their students and students’ names [1, p.33];
- be fair, honest, well-organised, approachable, and non-judgmental;
- have a sense of humour;
- inspire confidence and enthusiasm;
- show respect;
- empathise with students’ problems;
- give clear, positive feedback etc. [2, p.23].

Good teachers care more about their students’ learning than they do about their own teaching. The way that teachers talk to students — the manner in which they interact with them — is one of the crucial teacher skills, but it does not demand technical expertise. It does, however, require teachers to empathise with the people they are talking to. Experienced teachers also use physical movement: gestures, expressions, mime [3, p.3].

Of course, teachers have to know their subject — this is essential — but it is not enough. No teacher knows everything about the language they are teaching and never will. Teachers also have to know how to teach. They must have an awareness of effective and successful methodology. Students expect their teachers to plan lessons so that learning becomes interesting, challenging and varied.

Teachers must know the subject. They must know how to teach it, and they have to know the people that they are teaching. So, find out about the students — the people — that you are teaching: what they like

and are interested in; and what they don't like and are not interested in. Find out about their previous learning experiences. Find out what their expectations are of the course you are going to be teaching. Find out what their aims are. Ask them about themselves: their country, their culture, their interests. Speak to them outside class. Speak to them inside class. Listen to them. Show an interest in what they are saying. Show an interest in them as human beings. Be approachable. Help and support them. Be friendly. Respond to their needs. Be tolerant. Be patient [1, p.35].

There are three core teacher characteristics that help to create an effective learning environment. These are:

■ respect (a positive and non-judgmental regard for another person);

■ empathy (being able to see things from the other person's perspective, as if looking through their eyes);

■ authenticity (being oneself without hiding behind job titles, roles or masks).

When a teacher has these three qualities, the relationships within the classroom are likely to be stronger and deeper, and communication between people much more open and honest. The educational climate becomes positive, forward looking and supportive. The learners are able to work with les fear of taking risks or facing challenges. In doing this, they increase their own self-esteem and self-understanding, gradually taking more and more of the responsibility for their own learning themselves [2, p.24].

Of course, to be a successful teacher teachers have to like their job. They should be able to motivate their students and make lessons fun. A dash of humour would be good, too. The ability to explain something complicated in a clear way is important. Having patience, creativity, and good communication skills are an advantage, too [1, p.36].

Bibliography

1. David Riddell, Teach English as a Foreign Language. — Macmillan, London, UK, 2010. — 364 p.
2. Jim Scrivener, Learning Teaching. — Macmillan Books for Teachers, Oxford, UK, 2005. — 435 p.
3. Jeremy Harmer, How to Teach English. — Pearson Education Limited, England, 1998. — 212 p.