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An Evaluation of B.Ed. (Hons) Degree Program with Reference to Employers' Demand for the Recruitment of Teachers in Private Schools of City Muzaffarabad

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify teaching skills demanded by employers of private schools in city Muzaffarabad and assess to what extent the B.Ed. (Hons) degree equips prospective teachers with these skills. The population comprised 150 private schools in city Muzaffarabad and all public and private institutions offering the B.Ed. (Hons) program. The sample included ten principals from private schools and 130 final-semester B.Ed. (Hons) students, selected conveniently. Employing a mixed-methods approach, qualitative data were initially gathered through interviews, informing the development of a 26-item Likert scale questionnaire assessing teaching skills sought by employers. Thematic analysis was employed for interview data, while questionnaire responses were statistically analyzed for mean and standard deviation. Results revealed that employers emphasized certain fundamental teaching skills crucial for effective teaching-learning processes. While most of these skills were found to be present in final-semester B.Ed. (Hons) students to a significant extent, there were some notable gaps in certain skills where students lacked confidence. Consequently, it is recommended that the B.Ed. (Hons) program curriculum be enhanced with additional courses tailored to bolster teaching skills among prospective teachers, thereby better preparing them for effective classroom instruction.

Introduction

An author Sukhder Singh stated that teaching can be defined as communication between the teachers and it has taught as far as it is exposed to conveying of the knowledge to the students, to cover practically every characteristic of education which the pupils are predictable to acquire from an instructor and which the instructor will teach them using all the teaching methods and assistance obtainable to teach. This process of teaching includes inspiration, reinforcement and personality development of the students. It is very important for a good teacher to must comprehend each and every characteristic of each of his learners to contract them consequently. Teaching can be defined in many ways but it must include the training in numerous content of study as well as the character building of pupils. The process of teaching can be also abstracted as an arrangement of solving many problems and issues and also for decision-making. It has many characteristics of a physician (Abdou, 2012).

Several interpersonal attributes and applied skills have been outlined by many authors that should be included in higher education courses (Gibs, Steel, & Kuper, 2011; MCracken, Curie, & Harison, 2015; ACGME. 2010). There are many studies by which presence of the fissure among graduate abilities and profession fundamentals and commend improved consideration of profession centered abilities. Inclusive lists of employability skills are suggested by many studies but they do not contest the employers' viewpoints,

comprehensive lists may be not more interesting but different studies prove that lists are more applicable and operative to particular occupations. These are infuriated by the inaccessibility of conclusive explanations of convenient assistances that establishments demand from the graduates (Coxx, Al Daooud, & Rud, 2013; Gibs et al., 2011; Gray, 2010; Hinchlife & Ahmed, 2012).

B.Ed. (Hons) Elementary 04-years program has been introduced in a number of universities in the country. (Munshi et al., 2013). In Pakistan, a program of B.Ed. in 1984 has started in many universities and colleges of the province of Punjab for the improvement of the vocation of teacher's education. At undergraduate level B.Ed. (Hons) degree program is ongoing in many universities. (AKBAR, 2001).

Moreover, Pre-STEP is a Teacher Education Project of USAID which is supporting the accomplishment of the B.Ed. (Hons) in different institution of higher education and regional educational departments through the Higher Education Commission (HEC). A number of specialists and investigators both from Pakistan and America predominantly from the universities of the two countries i.e. Pakistan and USA has worked in corporation to come up with an advanced structure i.e. B.Ed. (Hons) elementary degree alongside ADE to fulfil the necessities of prospective teachers for the near future (Huma, 2013; USAID, Zajonc, 2011).

Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective:

- To explore the demands of employers for the recruitment of teachers in private school.

Research Questions

- What specific qualifications and skills do employers prioritize when recruiting teachers for private schools in Muzaffarabad?

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study draw upon several key frameworks to provide a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the alignment between the B.Ed. (Hons) degree program and employers' demands for teacher recruitment in private schools.

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory posits that investments in education and training lead to the accumulation of skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing individuals' productivity and employability (David, 2000). Within the context of this study, the B.Ed. (Hons) degree program serves as the primary mechanism through which prospective teachers acquire the human capital necessary to meet the demands of the teaching profession, as articulated by employers in private schools.

Job Matching Theory

Job matching theory emphasizes the importance of aligning the skills and attributes of individuals with the requirements of specific job roles (Kim, Longest, & Aldrich, 2013). In the context of teacher recruitment in private schools, this framework underscores the significance of ensuring that the competencies fostered within teacher preparation programs such as the B.Ed. (Hons) degree program are congruent with the expectations and needs of employers, thereby facilitating effective job matching and enhancing overall workforce productivity.

Constructivist Pedagogy

Constructivist pedagogy emphasizes the active construction of knowledge by learners through authentic and experiential learning experiences (Kaufman, 1996). In the context of teacher education, this framework underscores the importance of providing aspiring teachers with opportunities to engage in authentic teaching contexts, reflective practice, and collaborative inquiry, thereby equipping them with the requisite skills and dispositions to navigate the complexities of classroom teaching effectively.

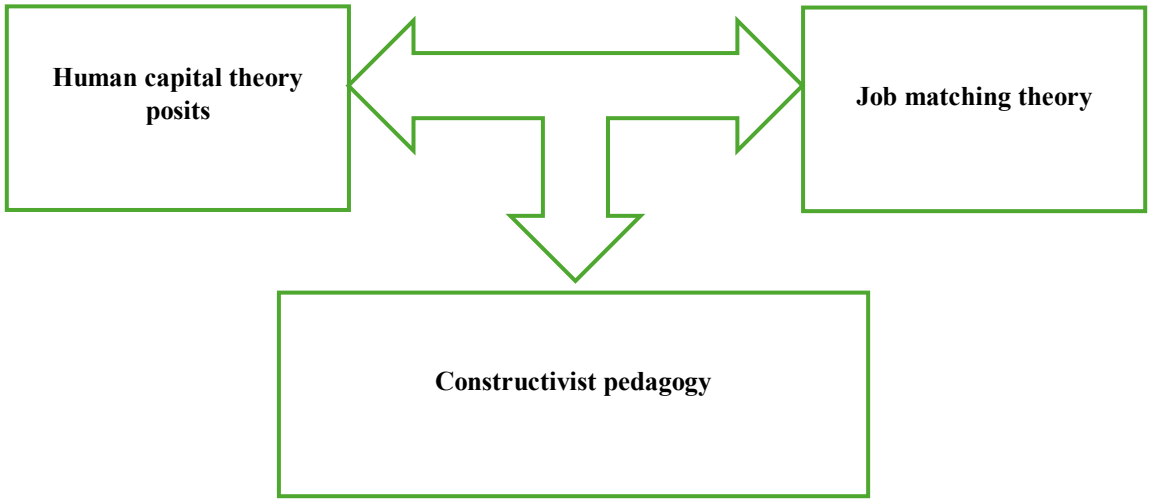


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 illustrates the interplay between the B.Ed. (Hons) degree program, employer demands for teacher recruitment in private schools, and the overarching theoretical perspectives of human capital theory, job matching theory, and constructivist pedagogy. Through this multifaceted analytical framework, this study aims to elucidate the extent to which the B.Ed. (Hons) degree program aligns with the specific requirements articulated by employers, thereby informing recommendations for enhancing the efficacy of teacher preparation initiatives in meeting the evolving needs of the education sector in Muzaffarabad.

Literature Review

Besides infrastructural deficiencies, a low teaching level is also a considerable reason for the low quality of schooling in Pakistan (Khamis & Sammons, 2004; Saeed & Mahmood, 2002; Westbrook et al., 2009). In Pakistan, the quality of primary schooling can be improved by applying the right policies concerning teachers.

The comparatively poor superiority of education could partially be recognized that for becoming a primary school teacher in Pakistan, there is no need of high level of educational qualifications. Low requirements at primary level for teachers to teach were at least 10 years of education in Pakistani schools. Professional level preparation of teachers in Pakistan was not consistent and was not established on adequate morals (NEC, 2006). In Pakistan, the specialized qualification of instructors has been addressed in all teaching techniques from the time of its initiation. For this purpose, government money has been exploited and huge numbers of skilful teachers were produced. At present time it can be said that especially at primary level, the process of recruitment of teachers has more definitely improved due to the contribution of NTS (Suri, 2016). The appearance of the NTS in the education sector of the Azad Jammu &Kashmir has eliminated the embittered and unskilled teachers that were appointed by conquering the right of somebody really eligible and proficient applicant due to the inspiration of the governmental affiliates or other inflectional officers was made (Pajankar, 2012).

Teacher Education Program in Pakistan

All over Pakistan, B.Ed. (Hons) degree program which is considered as a Master' degree has been guaranteed by 2018 for higher secondary and secondary levels. This degree program has eliminated some other courses which include PTC and CT etc. (Govt. of Pakistan, 2009). That is why there was a new program aroused in August 2008 with association of HEC by USAID funded and that was 4 years and 2 years program with B.Ed. (Hons) and associate degree of education (ADE). This program is also considered as pre service teacher education program. Its key determination was to create a modern establishment for education of educators. It highlighted to create of better capable instructors who must be in the favour of teaching as a student-centered environment (USAID Teacher Education Program, 2011). A new layout was presented by Pre-Step, Pakistan (2010), according to these layout entitlement standards for enrolment in the program of B.Ed. (Hons) is for those pupils who have at least 12 years of schooling with at least second division/ 65% attained marks. Only those students who are meeting these mentioned standards can be able to register themselves for B.Ed. (Hons) degree program. In Pakistan it was planned to offer a B. Ed (Hons) program which is equivalent to Master's degree. It was also scheduled to change PTC and CT with B. Ed (Hons) (Govt. of Pakistan, 2009). Keeping in view the

planning, in 2008, an elementary program was initiated by the USAID project with the name of B. Ed (Hons) along with two years degree program which is also called an Associate degree in Education (ADE). It was known as the name of Pre-STEP with the collaboration of the Ministry of Education as well as Higher Education Commission Pakistan.

Curriculum of the Program

RITES (Regional Institutes of Teacher Education and Government Colleges of Teachers Education) and many universities are offering B.Ed. (Hons) degree program. In this program, those subjects are included in the curriculum which is related to the instruction of teachers and curricular practices. The curriculum of this teacher education program contains all those subjects which are very vital components of teacher education. Hence, the purpose of the courses of this program of teacher education is to make the students foreseeable teachers authorized to their teaching potential. The modern structure of studies deliberate for the Four-year degree program has encompassed a constant and consistent arrangement including i.e. some progressions' subjects, courses of basic primary Education, courses of Specialized Teaching, and a proper establishment of Common Education Central courses to encompass ability in different contents in at least two disciplines of knowledge. Another most important thing includes in the course of B.Ed. (Hons) is teaching practicum in schools (Rationalization Study, 2010).

Following a standardized format, a new scheme of studies was planned for this four-year program. The standard format consisted of content courses, professional courses, general courses, and field experience. It is very useful to improve the abilities and understanding of teachers on the basis of innovative set of courses that includes advanced methods of teaching used in classrooms as compared to conventional and ancient practices (MOE, 2009).

Purpose of the Program

According to Ramzan, Iqbal, and Khan, (2013), the purpose of the pre-service Teachers' education project was to develop improved and accomplished, talented teachers and also focuses on high performances of teachers. According to new policies, for elementary school teachers, B.Ed. which is equivalent to a bachelor's degree was considered the nethermost requirement for teaching. It was meant to improve the standard of teacher education in Pakistan by producing proficient teachers who are comfortable in student-centered education (USAID Teacher Education Program, 2011). For this purpose, it was emphasized that instructors of teaching training institutes must be provided professional training, prepare up-to-date curriculum, and provide proper guidance and resources which are relevant to teachers (Jamil, Tariq & Jamil, 2013). Ramzan, Iqbal, and Khan (2013) stated that 75 colleges of education, and 5 public institutions of higher education were nominated for this determination and two programs were presented for prospective teachers. An innovative curriculum relevant to the current perspective was planned (Ali, 2012).

B.Ed. (Hons) degree is being offered in Government Colleges of Teachers Education) and in departments of education at Universities (Rationalization Study, 2010). Through the perception of prospective teachers, the study in hand intended to find out the effectiveness of the course guides and their practical implementation in the classrooms. In this way, the researcher tried to highlight both the positive and negative aspects of the above-mentioned programs.

Teacher Education according to National Education Policy (2009)

Preceding studies showed that in Pakistan, most of the time application of policies left anticipated but the pamphlets of these policies were the consequence of comprehensive exploration. That is why these policies fail to achieve their stated goals and never any policy was prosperous in accomplishing its objectives because consequences are impossible without implementation (Ahmed, 2012). Moreover, it was recommended by National Education Policy (2009) that curriculum of school must be comprehend as student-centered instruction and extra-curricular capabilities will also be developed in students because it is the needs of teacher education programs. Furthermore, it is approved by the National Action plan (1998-2010) that a very significant thing required for teachers is continuous professional improvement, the significance of teacher training, and consistent training.

GOP, (2009) noticeably suggested some crucial needs such as the educational qualifications, an acquaintance of contents related to specific subjects, proficiency, abilities, and obligation of the instructors and these all factors actively influenced on education of teachers" (p. 41). While deliberate the teacher's accomplishment position and teacher training, hardly everything was accomplished. However, an analysis of Western collected works recommended that it is not only in the state of Pakistan where guidelines and strategies were not exactly applied as they were scheduled. It can be said that to discover well-constructed and comprehensible proposals of policies are inadequate to achieve anticipated consequences also in other developing countries; consequently, Pakistan is no exemption" (ICG Asia Report, 2004).

Materials and Methods

The study has taken place in the city of Muzaffarabad. The qualitative method approach has been used.. The purpose of this study was to investigate the demands of employers of private schools in the city of Muzaffarabad and identify to what extent B.Ed. (Hons) degree produced these necessary skills in prospective teachers.

The population comprised of this study was the principals of 130 private schools in the city of Muzaffarabad (Retrieved from Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Muzaffarabad) and all students who were enrolled in B.Ed. (Hons) final semester in public and private institutes of Muzaffarabad city was the part of the population of this study.

Sample Size

For the selection of the participants, Principals of 10 private schools were selected by convenient sampling method as a sample of this study from a total population of 150 private schools.

The whole population of 130 students enrolled in the final semester of B.Ed. (Hons) program in all private and public institutes of the city Muzaffarabad was the sample of this study.

Research Instrument

For qualitative data collection, an interview schedule was developed in light of the literature review. There were open-ended questions for exploring the perceptions of principals of private schools. The interview was semi-structured and was developed to know the demands of employers of private schools regarding multiple skills for teaching. The responses of principals were recorded. As a result of that interview, a close-ended questionnaire was designed for quantitative data collection. Technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) the development and validation of an assessment instrument for preservice teachers Journal of research on Technology in Education were adapted and change to this study context.

Data Collection

Data collection through Interview

I have started data collection by personally visiting private schools for conducting the interviews. The interview has been taken with the principals of private schools to identify their demands for recruiting teachers at school. This semi-structured interview contained questions about recruitment policy, qualifications of teachers, and skills that are necessary for a teacher. Permission of recording interviews was granted to them and recorded their interviews on a mobile phone. Each interview was about 20-25 minutes. The interview was consisting of some open-ended questions. I have asked them to tell those skills which are demanded by school employers for the recruitment of teachers in their school. Principals' responses have been analyzed qualitatively.

Data collected through the interview was analyzed qualitatively. I have analyzed it by creating themes of responses of schools' employers. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-16) was used for the analysis of data collected through the questionnaire.

The data analysis was descriptive and the mean was find out to examine that to what extent demanding skills for teaching are present in final-semester students. The tables were also formulated and displayed in the result section.

Results and Discussions

Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke, 2006 presented that thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

The researcher used six-phase guides as a foundation for conducting thematic analysis. These phases are as follows:

- **Phase 1:** In the first phase interview of each member was transcribed by hand. Then that transcript was read and re-read for attaining meanings and patterns. Relevant things are picked up and irrelevant things are eliminated from transcription.
- **Phase 2:** In this phase, the researcher identified repeated things and organized similar things at the same place. The relevant data were labeled with a specific name.

- **Phase 3:** In this phase researcher combined identified codes, compare these codes with a theme, and create their association.
- **Phase 4:** In this phase, the researcher refined the theme and identified whether these themes are related to the research question or not.
- **Phase 5:** In this phase, the researcher gave a suitable name to each theme which defined it properly.
- **Phase 6**: In this phase, data was analyzed and present final interpretation of these generated themes.

Interpretation of Thematic Analysis

This portion describes the themes which are constructed from the whole text of interviews. The themes and their interpretation are presented below:

The researcher has asked some open-ended questions to the employers of schools. It was about a 20-25 minutes interview. The researcher first asked about the recruitment process of the school. Most of them answered that "they use to give an advertisement for the job and also mention their requirements for that specific job". Furthermore, some of them said, "firstly we design a written test for teachers. When they qualify for that test then they are called for demonstration and interview. After that we hire teachers in our institute". One of them said, "We hire teachers based on demonstration and interview". After this discussion researcher has come to her main questions and asked what type of skills you demand and examine while hiring teachers at your institute. They answered in different ways. Most of them highlighted teaching skills that are necessary for a teacher and they especially demanded from teachers. Based on their response researcher created the following themes:

Teaching Methodology

Most of the participants had their main focus on teaching methodologies that a teacher used in class. Their responses related to teaching methodologies are the following:

One participant said, "Multiple methods of teaching are very essential for an effective teaching-learning process". One respondent said, "According to my opinion activity method is the best method for better learning of students. And we mostly prefer this method at the primary level because at this level students learn with activities".

One participant said, "Students learn in a very better way when they are taught in such an environment where they can actively participate in their class".

One respondent said, "Different methods of teaching are essential for teaching students. It depends on the teacher when and where he thinks that which method of teaching is suitable for learning and sometimes it also depends on the topic".

One of them said, "There must be a classroom discussion method for student's better learning and this method enhances group learning and learning by themselves". One of them stated, "Sometimes there is also need for lecture method and often some teachers frequently used lecture method with other methods of teaching for an understanding of students".

One respondent said, "A teacher must have pedagogical knowledge because this knowledge provides complete instructions for choosing different methodologies, skills, learning activities, and diverse technologies for effective learning".

Furthermore, one participant highlighted lesson planning. He said that "We provide a complete format of lesson planning to teachers and they plan lessons according to that format".

Above mentioned statements are the responses of the school's employers. Almost every participant has talked about different teaching methods which are used in class. Most of the participants referred to activity and classroom discussion methods and considered these two methods as effective methods at the school level. Moreover, pedagogical knowledge is just like a tool for a teacher and it helps out teachers to select meaningful tasks and activities which are easily understandable for all students. According to their point of view, a teacher must have some knowledge of pedagogy because this knowledge enables a teacher to choose suitable methodologies for an effective teaching-learning process. Some of them also emphasized lesson planning and its implementation in class within time.

Classroom Management

The second important skill which is demanded by school employers is classroom management skill and this skill is very essential to become a good teacher. Responses of the school's employers are the following:

One participant said, "Maintaining discipline is a very essential factor for a better classroom environment. A teacher must have such abilities by which he or she can maintain discipline in their class and institute".

One participant said, "Maintaining discipline is an art of teachers. By this they can create an effective learning environment in their classroom and institute".

One of them said, "If teachers want to handle their students and improve their learning then they must maintain discipline in their classes".

One participant said, "Time management is also the most important thing for a teacher and he must be punctual and committed to his duties". Furthermore, one respondent said, "A teacher should complete his duties and tasks within time because students always examine and follow their teachers in every situation. One of them said, "A teacher should be careful about time and plan things according to the time he gets for a specific class".

One respondent said, "A teacher should be aware to handle special students in class. He must have such types of activities and tasks by which he can handle this kind of situation in the class".

Above mentioned statements are responses of school employers related to discipline, time management, and handling students in class. The researcher gave the name Classroom management to all these aspects. These responses show that classroom management is an important factor and these skills are demanded by school employers. Most of them focused on discipline because it is the most crucial thing in any organization. And in school, discipline plays a great role in the teaching-learning process and in creating a good environment for the school. The second thing which is highlighted by most of the participants is time management. A good teacher always plans things according to time. According to my opinion, if a teacher is not punctual, he can never make his students be punctual.

Content Knowledge

The third and most important thing is content knowledge. Almost every participant emphasized that a teacher must have content knowledge of various subjects to teach students in a class. Their responses regarding content knowledge are the following:

One respondent said, "According to my perspective, a good teacher should be multi-intellectual. He must know various subjects". One of them said, "A teacher must have clear concepts about the subjects which he teaches in the class".

One of them said, "Teachers must have a grip on their subject".

One participant said, "At the school level teachers should be multidimensional for understanding the subject matter".

One participant said, "Teachers should be aware of the whole curriculum and also evaluate and choose suitable things for better learning of their students".

One participant said, "According to my opinion a teacher must have content knowledge of English subjects because now a day's almost all subjects are in English. Therefore, they should have command over English so that they can teach other subjects easily".

Furthermore, one participant said, "Without content knowledge, a teacher can never teach effectively even if he knows the methodologies".

Above mention, responses are related to content knowledge. Participants gave different perspectives related to content knowledge. Most of them emphasized that teachers must know different subjects. It is crucial to have content knowledge of various subjects because at the school level teachers have to teach different subjects. Knowledge of English subjects is also important. Most of them highlighted English subjects because according to their perspective if they know English subjects they can easily teach other subjects. Teachers need to have a grip on the subjects they teach because without this they can never convey their knowledge to their students. Furthermore, an employer also demanded from teachers to be multidimensional and multi-intellectual. Through this skill, they can

handle different aspects of classrooms easily. All these responses show that content knowledge is a basic thing for teaching. Many aspects of content knowledge were presented by employers and they demanded such attributes and skills from their teachers.

Assessment

Another important thing is assessment. Only assessment can measure how many objectives of learning are fulfilled both by teachers and students. Most of the participants emphasized the ways of assessment. Their responses related to the assessment are the following:

One participant said, "It is very important for a teacher to know how to develop various types of tests". Furthermore one of them said, "It depends on teachers how they assess the learning of their students and what type of test they want to take from their students. So they must be aware of different ways of assessment".

One respondent said, "Teacher must know the ways of scoring tests. For essay-type tests, a teacher should design a rubric and then do scoring according to it".

One participant said, "We focused not only on academic assessment but also on the behaviours of students. So a teacher should be aware of not only academic assessment but also about assessment of aptitude of students because good manners and behaviour are also essential for better learning environment".

Furthermore, one participant said, "A teacher must be aware that when and where which type of assessment will be suitable. Because learning can be assessed when the right ways of assessment have chosen".

Above mentioned responses are related to assessment. These all responses indicate that in the teaching-learning process, assessment has an important value. Learning is not ineffective without the right way of assessment. Developing suitable tests and their scoring is crucial for an effective teaching-learning process. Through the assessment of students, a teacher can also assess his method and ways of teaching and can improve his methodologies in a better way. Participants highlighted academic and aptitude assessments. These both are necessary for students because the purpose of education is to bring changes in behaviours. So teachers must be focused on their behaviours with their academic learning.

Communication Skills

Communication skills play a great role in the teaching-learning process. Many participants highlighted that well communication skills are essential for becoming a good teacher. Both types of communication, verbal and non-verbal are necessary to illuminate any opinion. Without good communication skills, teachers can never perform their roles effectively.

Their responses related to communication skills are the following:

One participant said, "We prefer both English and Urdu as the medium of instruction in our school. According to my opinion, teachers must be bilingual. They must have command in both English and Urdu language so that they can convey their points in a better way".

One respondent said, "Teachers should be confident so that they can present anything in front of people and they can gain people's attention during their presentation". One participant said, "Good verbal communication is very essential for a teacher to convey their point to students, teachers, parents, and other people. Furthermore, one respondent said, "If a teacher has good communication skills, they can easily handle any situation.

Above mentioned responses are related to the communication skills of teachers. All respondents emphasized communication in both English and Urdu language. Good communication skills are necessary for a teacher. For becoming an effective teacher, confidence is very essential. If teachers are not confident, they can never present their self effectively. Employers of schools emphasized some valuable aspects related to communication skills which they considered significant and demanded these skills from their teachers. Above mentioned aspects show that for effective teaching all of these are crucial. So teachers should be trained in such a way by they can improve their skills of communication more effectively.

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