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TESOL Essay #1

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What it means to be a Well-Qualified Teacher

English is the world famous language and plays an important role in everywhere. Most countries offer a curriculum of learning English in school in a wide variety ways. Since the importance of learning English is getting more significant, becoming a well-qualification English teacher is also getting more attention in our society. What it means to be a well-qualified teacher? Based on what I have learned in TESOL class, students’ successful acquisition is related to how teachers do and treat students, because students have different characteristics, interest, and learning level.

I remember I started learning English when I was 6th grade. There was no English class in school, but my mother sent me a private academy after school. I had to memorize tons of vocabularies even before I was able to speak. The teacher always read out loud some words and sentences from the textbook. Then students, including me, were sitting in a chair and following the words through eyes and taking notes that teacher wrote on the blackboard. Memorizing words were definitely not fun without any activities. It was a jug and mug traditional Korean education system which would not be the same as current education system. Since that time, I lost interests of learning English and became a really quiet student in English class. Of course, my English score in school hit the bottom. I have had many different teachers while I was attending school, but everyone was similar. However, everything changed after I took a program in the states.

I had a chance to take a course in the states, but I thought this course would not be different to the classes I have attended in Korea. However, Melisa, the teacher of the course, was different. Everyone in the classroom barely knew each other and the air was really cold at the first day of the class. She brought up an icebreaker game every beginning of the class for the first week. I enjoyed the class which I have never done it before. It was totally different atmosphere I had felt in English classes in Korea. Melisa’s class was not just chalk and talk, lecture based and/or teacher centered, but there were more variety of activities, group work, and student centered. Melisa was not an explainer as Korean teachers I had in the past, but she was an enabler.

There are several reasons that I remember Melisa as a well-qualified teacher based on what I have learned from the first week of TESOL program. First, she was an Enabler. There are three types of teacher, which are Explainer, Involver, and Enabler. Compare to the explainer who let students take notes and convey information through lectures, enabler knows how to manage students, let the students learn themselves, and be there as a guide. At the first time, the way she led the class was not familiar with me, because it was completely different to the Korean English class I attended in the past. As time goes by, I got used to it and also my passion and interest to the English class got bigger and bigger.

Second, Melisa knew what qualities make an effective teacher: Empathy, Authenticity, and Respect. The class itself was designed for ESL (English Second Language) students, so people were from many different countries and cultures such as China, Korea, Turkey, and etc. She always put herself into the students’ shoes, treated us truly, and respected us all the time. She never asserted her authority as a teacher.

Third, Melisa used both receptive and productive skills including reading, writing, listening and speaking: Integrated Skill Approach. When I attended to English classes in Korea, the curriculum was based on reading, listening, and grammar. But the portion of reading and grammar was extremely higher than listening, and I never had a chance to have speaking activities. Teachers forced students to memorize tons of grammar rules and to find answers. We had to take quizzes and exams for grammar. In contrast, Melisa offered us to use all the language skills the same time through activities. For example, we read a book and watched a movie based on the book. We discuss about the differences between the book and the movie in class. After that, we wrote a journal and gave a presentation, and then classmates gave feedback to each student. These kinds of activities could arouse students’ interests and passion to attend class and motivation to learn.

Through the experience in Melisa’s English class and learning theories in TESOL class, students can be affected by teachers. Every student has different personality, interests, and different level of learning English. Therefore, teachers should better put themselves in students’ shoes, understand their different personalities and level of learning, and know effective teaching methods. In the future, I want to be an English teacher. Based on what I learned in TESOL class, I will apply various teaching techniques and try to be an enabler rather than an explainer. Also, I will create rapport between students and me in the future teaching. If I apply these theories to the real field what I learned in TESOL and put a lot of effort myself, I believe I can be a well-qualified teacher.