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Teaching Methods at Their Best and Worst

 Robert Frost once said, “There are two kinds of teachers: the kind that fill you with so much quail shot that you can’t move, and the kind that just gives you a little prod behind and you jump to the skies.” The first type of teacher is an explainer who packs a lesson with loads of information that is too much for students to take in at one sitting. The second type of teacher is an enabler who takes just enough control in class to lead the lesson but lets the students explore learning on their own. During the last 15 years of being a student, I have had plenty of experiences with different types of teachers. Comparing two teachers who were of different types, I learned more and enjoyed the class more with an enabler in a modern classroom than I did with an explainer in a traditional classroom.

 I attended Yongsan International School of Seoul (YISS) from 7th grade to 12th grade (September 2005- May 2011). During my six years in YISS, I have had several good teachers that I loved and still keep in contact with, but I have also had some terrible teachers that I despise even to this day. Mrs. F was my junior year Theatre teacher and senior year British Literature teacher. She was always enthusiastic about topics she taught and eager to tell us everything she knows. She used variety of teaching techniques such as explanations, discussions, group activities, and hands-on projects such as making posters and filming skits. She always tried to find interesting supplements such as videos and fun games to incorporate into the class to make the studying environment fun for all of the students. She made great efforts into considering the three learner modes- visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic- by including different activities into the class. My learning experience with Mrs. F was a success because she inspired me to become a teacher and also made me very interested in British Literature. The fourth characteristic of adult learners by Malcolm Knowles is that adults need to be shown respect. Mrs. F was a very respectable teacher, and I think that characteristic created a positive relationship between her and her students and also a positive classroom atmosphere. She was also well-organized, approachable, and really listened to her students.

 Mr. H was my ninth grade Bible teacher. He was an explorer because most of his classes were based on explaining and lecturing. All I remember doing in his class were taking boring, long notes and memorizing my entire notebook for his exams. His classroom was the classic ‘chalk & talk’ style where he stood in front of the class and did not ask for any feedback or questions from the students. He did not have any supplements, but held a Bible in his hand and expected us to write down everything he said. His teaching style was mostly based on using our receptive skills, and I personally think this style is not effective since average retention rate for lectures is only 5%. Mr. H was very judgmental and unfair. He showed favoritism towards students who he considered smart. He did not care for features that create a positive relationship and atmosphere in the classroom. The learning experience with Mr. H was a failure because not only did I not learn anything, but I also remember hating the class and also the teacher.

 Based on personal experiences with different types of teachers, I conclude that learning is more interesting and effective in a classroom with engaging activities and a respectful teacher. Mrs. F had the qualities that make an effective teacher: empathy, authenticity, and respect. Her qualities as a teacher and her teaching methods combined together to make an effective learning environment for students of the different types of learner modes. I want to become an enabler like Mrs. F and I need to have the qualities ingrained in me so that I become an influential teacher like she was. Teaching method at its best is when the teacher steps down from being the dictator of the class and lets autonomous learning to take place.