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Qualities, personal characteristics, and responsibilities of qualified teachers in the 21st century

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Abstract

Education is critical for all elements of a person's life. Educational actors mainly involve teachers, students, school principals, and administration staff. Nevertheless, teachers are considered the most essential actors. Without teachers, the process of learning and teaching will surely come to a halt. It is not difficult to be a teacher, but it is far more difficult to become a competent one because there are numerous duties for a qualified teacher to perform. This article argues that qualified teachers in the 21st century should have various value-added qualities and responsibilities. The article discusses the essential requirements for qualified teachers in the 21st century and offers recommendations for teachers to equip themselves with knowledge, skills, and qualities required to keep pace with the fast-changing world.

Keywords: Qualified teachers; 21st century; qualities; personal characteristics; responsibilities

Introduction

Teachers are central to education. Without teachers, the learning process will come to a complete standstill (Em, 2021a). This means teachers play a vital role in the learning and teaching process. Teachers are also responsible not only for imparting knowledge but also for shaping the habits and qualities of their students. Teachers will attain educational goals by following the school curriculum using their flexible abilities (Hoeun & Em, 2021). In order to properly carry out their responsibilities, teachers must possess various traits and responsibilities.

This article aims to define qualified teachers in the 21st century. It starts by discussing various qualities of 21st-century teachers before elaborating on personal characteristics of teachers in the 21st century. The article then discusses the roles and responsibilities as well as skills needed to be qualified 21st-century teachers. It concludes that different qualities, characteristics, and responsibilities are required to be qualified teachers in the 21st century.

Qualities of qualified teachers in the 21st century

There are many qualities to become qualified teachers in the 21st century. First, qualified teachers should have expertise in the subject matter. This is a basic, widely accepted requirement for school teachers. Teachers in elementary schools, for example, should have at least a high school diploma (Bridgeland et al., 2009), while public-school teachers need at least a bachelor's degree to satisfy the teaching requirements (Broderick (2021). Some argue that teachers at upper-secondary schools should have a master's degree, and they should have significantly broad knowledge in addition to their specialization expertise (Eilers, 2021).

Second, ongoing professional development is what qualified teachers in the 21st century need. That is, they must keep themselves up to date with new educational concepts and knowledge. They should also continue to contribute to their professional development by attending short-term courses, workshops, seminars, and educational conferences while in service. A sense of commitment to the teaching profession is also required to be qualified teachers. Moreover,

they should be passionate about and devoted to it (Ingvarson & Rowley, 2017; Koster, et al., 2005).

Third, qualified teachers need to have knowledge of technology. This entails an understanding of how to operate technological devices, particularly those connected to the internet, which are essential in the 21st century. Teachers need to utilize computers to produce a plethora of valuable materials for use in the classroom, and in the 21st-century context, they must understand how to use different technological software and programs. Moreover, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in which all physical classes have been replaced by online learning, teachers are required to have knowledge of technology, particularly knowledge about how to use Zoom, Google Meet and other digital platforms needed for online learning (Em, 2021b; Heng, 2021; Heng & Sol, 2020).

Fourth, teachers need to have adequate knowledge of pedagogy. To achieve this, certified teachers must be properly trained at pedagogical schools before being permitted to take on the task of teaching. Those who have been educated in any teacher training/education institution will have a better comprehension of teaching methods and will do better than those who have not (Azam et al., 2014). Additionally, they need to have knowledge of professional traits and professional ethics which are often provided through pedagogical training (Azam et al., 2014).

Finally, another trait for qualified teachers in the 21st century is a lifelong learning mindset (Avis et al., 2018; Ingleby et al., 2011; Polydorou et al., 2021). To become better educators, teachers need to learn for the rest of their lives. This means that they can learn from different sources, and they should also engage in research since it is very critical for them to be more competent and well-informed. Involvement in research is vital (see Borg, 2013; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992) as it helps them develop their problem-solving and critical thinking skills which are required in the 21st century.

Personal characteristics of qualified teachers in the 21st century

Teachers' personality traits have a deep impact on students (Gil-Flores, 2017). There are many traits for teachers in general, but for 21st-century teachers, they need to have the following characteristics.

First, love for students is essential. Teachers must love their students the way they love their own children. This means that they must understand their students individually and try to help them to overcome their difficulties. They should also be sympathetic to their students' needs and be friendly. In addition, teachers should regard all their students as their sons or daughters because it is really helpful in the process of learning and teaching since teachers can think that they are caring for their own children (Goldstein & Lake, 2000).

Second, good behaviors and morality are required. This is another critical characteristic that teachers should possess. Since teachers' ideas and actions will have a significant impact on their students, teachers should live by good principles (Bulach, 2002). Many students will behave in the same manner as their teachers do, and it is also critical to maintain a positive personality both in and out of the classroom (Bulach, 2002).

Third, emotional stability is another trait for qualified teachers. This means teachers must be devoid of concerns, complexes, and frustrations. Teachers who are emotionally unstable will not be able to give credits to their students' work, and they may even distract their students from the process of learning (Kokkinos et al., 2005).

Fourth, to be able to express themselves clearly and articulate their views, teachers must be able to convey their opinions properly. Thus, their verbal and written communication skills ought to be effective. Besides, they often have to write many reports among other things. Thus, they must be positive about doing those things and should do them by showing their positive expression. In addition, their voice, speech, and pronunciation should also be well-communicated (Eldar et al., 2010; Good & Brophy, 1972).

Fifth, a sense of humor is a value-added trait/characteristic for teachers. Thus, teachers should have a happy demeanor and a smile on their faces. A sense of humor will aid them in overcoming difficult situations that may be humorously dismissed. For example, when they smile, they can have a positive feeling about their work (Hamachek, 1969; Wadleigh, 2013). A sense of humor can also make the students feel happy and positive with their teacher's teaching and their own learning (Hamachek, 1969; Wadleigh, 2013).

Sixth, social qualities are particularly important for being qualified teachers. In addition to having a kind demeanor, teachers must maintain positive relationships with their colleagues, students, and students' guardians as well as the other people in the community. They should have close relationships with those people to get them more involved in the education process. Only then would they be able to help their students acquire social qualities (Jordan et al., 1993; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Therefore, teachers may create a parent-teacher organization to facilitate this. Many problems may be solved by having a good relationship with parents, and teachers' relationships with headmasters and their relationships with colleagues also need to be healthy and amicable. All of these are necessary qualities of well-rounded teachers (Jordan et al., 1993; Hughes & Kwok, 2007; Nobin et al., 2013).

Finally, another important aspect of being qualified teachers is the ability to lead. Teachers should be able to effectively lead their students who are immature and require direction in different areas, including class activities, assignments, and other courses (Berry et al., 2005). When teachers are keen readers, students will undoubtedly get along with their teachers who encourage them to participate in reading activities, particularly those related to learning (Berry et al., 2005).

Roles and responsibilities of qualified teachers in the 21st century

Teaching is an important but difficult profession. It is not only about passing on information to the students, but there is more than meets the eyes. In fact, knowledge cannot be handed to students in the same way that money can. While working in schools, teachers must consider a variety of variables such as teaching students by using different techniques, evaluating students' work, and so on in order to make sure they can meet their students' needs and create a better learning and teaching environment (Djumanova & Makhmudov, 2020; Harden & Crosby, 2000). The following are some important roles and responsibilities of qualified teachers in the 21st century.

First, it is a role in teaching. This means that teachers must plan their classes on a regular basis. Moreover, they must encourage their students and employ teaching methods and approaches that are appropriate for a certain set of

students. In addition, they must always strive to enhance their teaching abilities, and they should assign students assignments and examine them on a regular basis. Thus, students' activities should be appropriately motivated and directed (Thoonen et al., 2011).

Second, it is the need to prepare lesson plans before every lesson. To become effective teachers, they must carefully prepare their lessons in advance. First and foremost, they should organize their teaching schedule. Then they need to figure out how much work they need to get done in a given time frame. They must also be well-prepared for their teaching to meet the aims and objectives of each lesson, and they are also responsible for planning the activities of each lesson for the students. It is also necessary to arrange daily-teaching activities, and they must plan ahead of time how they will employ teaching materials and all the stages of the learning and teaching sequences (McGhie-Richmond & Sung, 2013).

Third, it is a role in organizing. Teachers are responsible for organizing a variety of events at school. They have to get the school plans in order. They should inspect the classrooms to ensure proper equipment is in place. They must organize chairs, distribute teaching equipment, and keep the area tidy and clean. They must plan instructional work by dividing the syllabus into sections, classifying students, creating a timetable, and organizing co-curricular activities. Aside from that, library studies, laboratory work, sports, and other activities require adequate organization that should be done by teachers (Powers, 2004; Stronge et al., 2004).

Fourth, it is a role in supervising. This simply means that teachers are responsible for managing and overseeing a variety of jobs and activities. They are responsible for monitoring students' attendance, daily work, homework, work habits, and behavior. They are also responsible for maintaining the school's rules and regulations, and they could be required to oversee students at the hostels in some cases (Calaby, 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2019).

Fifth, it is a role in guiding. That is, teachers need to guide their students to perform different activities. Not only do teachers need to watch over their students and guide them to do their work, but they also need to assign those

responsibilities, such as course selection, homework, and other study activities to their students. Teachers also need to give special attention to all students, especially those who need extra attention (Cangelosi, 2013).

Sixth, teachers need to play a role as an evaluator. This suggests that they should assess their students' work and involvement on a regular basis. Evaluation helps shed light on the work of the teachers and the accomplishments of the students. The evaluation will reveal flaws in the teaching and learning process, allowing teachers to take appropriate corrective action. Teachers are responsible for administering home tests and reporting to parents and headmasters on the development of the students. Promotion policies must be devised in light of the evaluation. For example, those who work hard and bring success to most of the students must be praised and promoted (Chan & Luo, 2020; Hollenweger, 2011).

Finally, teachers need to play a role as a recordkeeper to keep track of the students' progress on a variety of topics and activities. Teachers may also be expected to keep track of school data such as the property register, equipment supply, and book distribution. They must also prepare annual reports on numerous activities and functions carried out during the year (Herring, 2007).

Additional 21st-century skills for teachers

Areas mentioned above, there are various qualities, personal characteristics, and responsibilities for qualified teachers. However, in this 21st century, teachers need more skills in addition to those discussed earlier. According to Binkley et al. (2012), these important skills relate to "assessment task, information literacy, critical thinking skills and civic knowledge" (p. 17). Table 1 presents additional 21st-century skills that qualified teachers should possess.

Table 1. Additional 21st-century skills for teachers

Additional 21st-century skills for teachers
• Critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information
• Research skills and practices, interrogative questioning
• Creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression
• Perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability, initiative
• Oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening
• Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, facility in using virtual workspaces
• Information and communication technology (ICT) literacy, media and internet literacy, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming
• Civic, ethical, and social-justice literacy
• Economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism
• Global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism
• Scientific literacy and reasoning, the scientific method
• Environmental and conservation literacy, ecosystems understanding
• Health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, and public health and safety

Source: The Glossary of Education Reform (2016, para. 2).

Conclusion

Overall, behind the skills for qualified teachers in the 21st century is the idea that teachers must teach their students the most related, valuable, and in-demand skills. For a practical reason, contextualizing teaching techniques to improve learning progress with needed skills must be applied in today's schools. Basically, students in the 21st century must be oriented to survive and succeed in the 21st-century society. In this case, teachers in the 21st century must guide their students and equip them with relevant skills required to function in an economy driven by the new form of competitiveness, knowledge,

information, and technology. Therefore, qualified teachers in the 21st century need to have broad knowledge and skills as well as certain characteristics and responsibilities needed for 21st-century teachers.

In conclusion, given the nature of this review article, it is recommended that more research should be conducted to find out what students think their teachers should do in the context of the 21st century to make the teaching and learning process more effective, engaging, and meaningful.

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