THE ROLES OF A TEACHER IN THE CHANGING WORLD

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Being a teacher is more than doing a job. Its definition is found beyond the classroom. A teacher’s role goes afar from just standing in front of a four-cornered classroom (Zeiger, 2015). This is the same as saying that actual classroom teaching does not confine the teacher merely in the classroom and that his/her role is multi-faceted. This role makes an assurance that a school will go perfectly well ensuring the success of the teaching and learning process.

Zeiger states that a teacher plays several roles. He/she does planning, instructions, student interaction, and other professional duties. These are merely the initial tasks of a teacher. He/she plans the lessons and what happens in the classroom. It directs the teaching and learning process towards the ultimate goal of the institution, that is, the attainment of not only understanding the theories but also putting them into practice. The proper lesson planning will define the quality of instructions and the most appropriate reception from the students. As diverse as he/she is, a teacher is as well tasked to do other duties called for by his/her profession: attending seminars, meetings and trainings, home visitations, peer teaching and information transfer as the case maybe.

As teaching English as a second language is never an easy work to do, an ESL teacher primarily is expected to identify the problems that go with it and how to deal with them as dictated with a teacher’s teaching methods (Mitchell, 2013). An ESL traditional classroom environment require several duties from a teacher (Lewis, 2000). For one, strict use of English in the classroom is practised. This is thought to be the best way to learn it as a second language as practice is the best teacher. The more students are exposed to the language, the more likely they will learn it. Second is the learning of
grammar in ways that the students will not only learn but will enjoy as well in the process. This is done in such a way that the students are provided with activities that will make learning a complicated language into a more fun manner. It is as then expected that the teacher makes the classroom a more conducive place to study by giving the teaching process a different look through assuring the students that they are integral part of the educational process. Being the centre of this process, they are motivated to participate in the learning by giving them words of encouragement that will inspire them to learn more. With these, a teacher then must play the role of an inspiration from which students draw motivation from.

In addition to the multi-level tasks of a teacher is to teach English in a foreign land. Sue (2013) stated the roles that one is expected to do as an educator. As part of the institution, he/she has to deal with the school, the teachers and administrators in the school. He/she shall work in accordance to the rule of the school to where he/she belongs. As a professional, he/she ought to attend activities that will enrich knowledge and eventually carry them out to the good of the learners. In the website of the State of Victoria’s Department of Education and Training, it is expected that a classroom teacher knows the “ins” and “outs” of his/her profession. He/she engages in trainings and programs that will cater to his/her needs to achieve student progress to its maximum potentials. This is not only confined to the learners but to his/her fellow educators as well whose aims are the same. As a teacher, this means that he/she has the power to influence both the students and the teachers as well. In an article from the TESOL International Association, an ESL teacher is tagged as someone who shares his/her expertise to students. This means that as the source of knowledge, he/she perfectly knows his/her craft and when and how to share them. With this expertise goes the responsibility of sharing them to others for the purpose of spreading the knowledge from one teacher to another, from one class to another.
In the article Modern Teaching Skills (2013), enumerated were skills that a traditional teacher does. One must have a commitment to his/her teaching profession. This includes accumulation of learning skills necessary for transfer of learning. This also means as well that he/she is capacitated to do everything to create a teaching environment conducive for learning. He/she has the ability to deal with students justly. Finally, one has to create a good working relationship with peers, helping them out with how teaching and learning should be all about.

All these and probably more are what the teacher roles are about. But as time changes and the world passes so fast, the need to reinvent teacher roles is inevitable as the needs of students change as well. Sue (2013), states the vital roles that a teacher plays in the 21st century classroom. In this time and age, a teacher is not just a mere lecturer but a facilitator, not just dictating the flow of the classroom but also creating an opportunity for a productive classroom developing the students’ potentials. He/she must be in control of the classroom situation knowing what and how to teach lessons. Since ESL is at times a complicated task to do, it is on the capacity of the teacher to encourage and motivate learners to do better. This is only possible when the teacher knows exactly what ESL is. To ensure the effectivity of the teaching process, the teacher must be able to assess the student development and identify whether the process is working well or not. He/she arranges lessons and activities that will be the best for the students, making sure he/she takes part in every step of the way and reassuring that students will be given assistance in order for them to learn more. As teacher roles must evolve (Fenner, 2013), a teacher has to perform a three-fold role: an expert who knows what his responsibilities are and what to do with them; a consultant who has the ability and knowledge and who is ready to share them with his/her colleague; and a trainer who extends help and aid to others in addition to his/her students.

At this modern times, teacher images play an important role in his/her teaching profession. A teacher’s image in the community has the power to shape what students
think of him/her. This will influence what a teacher knows and how that image defines his/her teaching. He/she has to be competent and equipped with improved and new teaching skills. With globalization, teacher roles are becoming more modernized as well. A teacher must be an innovator, trying out things that are products of the modern times. This include being open to technology as the world and the students are becoming more and more dependent to information and communication technology, so one must keep abreast with it. This goes without saying that a teacher must go with the flow since most students are into this technology and must be open to the idea that learning at this age is not solely confined in the classroom, that learning happens even beyond the school, hence a teacher must be sensible enough to understand that the students nowadays are becoming more and more learned and a teacher must keep up with them. This may mean participating in community services which is becoming an apparent part of the school and the learning environment as well. Globalization and modernization influences the changes in teacher’s roles in the classroom. A teacher is a massive source of learning. This is dictated by his/her rich experiences and these are not merely about classroom, but life lessons most importantly (Teach: Make a Difference).

As teachers’ roles are seen as multi-faceted, what then makes good teachers? Even teachers themselves find difficulty in identifying the kind of roles they play in class. In a recent discussion made in EDUC7032 class, students (who are teachers themselves) when asked which role they play in their respective classes, were uncertain about their responses. Some said they are all these teachers in different parts of the process: passive technicians, reflective practitioners and transformative intellectuals.

As new teachers, there is apparent tendency to be a passive technician for the aim is to see the attainment of specific goals. This is easily measured when objectives are targeted and achievement is geared towards following strictly the tasks contained in the program. This happens when a teacher designs his/her lessons to how it is intended to be following certain syllabus and program of work. The question is, is there anything
wrong with being a passive technician? For an ESL teacher, when the transfer of another language is the target, it is essential that the teacher must be certain about what he/she teaches and going through the process on a structured pattern is one way of getting things done easier and more efficiently. But for how long? There may not be a specific time frame, but the teacher must be observant enough to see how the students are progressing with the kind of teaching he/she is giving them.

For some, they are the reflective practitioners, seeing the importance of knowing what his/her principles are in relation to the teaching and learning process. This is when the teacher plays the role of an inspiration and model in class when he/she becomes an innovator and an expert source of learning. This becomes so when students are exhibiting needs beyond what the classroom has. As reflective practitioner as he/she is, a teacher can easily see that need thus directing the teaching into that focus. But, it takes a lot of effort to personalise the learning considering the materials and the diverse strategies asked for from the change of teaching process. How prepared is a teacher to take that change? Or can he/she be that observant to see that need? Will the teacher be ready to take that challenge?

Finally, for others they are the transformative intellectuals who are willing to take the learning to the next level that is, getting the students ready for the society they belong as better citizens and members of the community. Acknowledging that there is more than classroom teaching, a teacher sees the essence of his/her role in the community. With this he/she can relate the teaching process to what the students need in relation to what the society requires. But then, there is again the question of the effectivity of the process to be done or used in the classroom. With it be enough to equip the class to get them ready for the world outside the school? Is the teacher himself/herself ready? How efficiently can he/she deliver the teaching and learning process?

In summary, each teacher plays different roles in his/her entire professional life, the kind of which depends on his/her orientation. The choice is his/hers. But taking into
account the nature of students, it must be imperative that as they change, teachers must take the challenge of coping with those changes. Education is a lifelong learning, thus the roles teacher plays is inevitably gets reinvented from time to time because in the end, students leave the school and fulfil their dreams and their success will somehow depend on how their teachers prepared them in the bigger world ahead of them.

References:


