WHAT CAUSES TEACHER ANXIETY?

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It can be commonly observed that people get anxiety attacks whenever they encounter situations which are not usual to their daily lives. Some experiences that trigger anxiety would be speaking in front of a crowd or an individual. Another reason would be the experience of being observed, evaluated, or monitored closely. Normally, manifestations of such anxiety would be sweaty palms, stuttering or unorganized ideas. Even the expression of ideas is affected. Individuals find it hard to say words or compose sentences. Admittedly, this is also true to teachers.

Teachers facing numerous students every day and cooperating with superiors during classroom observations also experience anxiety attacks. This is termed as teacher anxiety. Commonly, this anxiety is present to neophyte teachers or teachers who have limited experience of handling a huge class. Not only does the day-to-day grind of the classroom discussion contribute to teacher anxiety but also classroom observations. The experience of having another person sitting inside the room and closely monitoring, observing and keeping notes on the lesson proceedings are enough to trigger teacher anxiety (Ameen, Guffey, Jackson, 2002).

Generally speaking, teacher anxiety is deeply rooted in the theory of social anxiety (Leary & Kowalski 1995). This is where the individual fear the response of the observer towards what he or she in executing or displaying. In the attempt to please or conform with the expected outcome of the observation, the individual struggles to ensure that every part of the performance is well and good. The same way goes with the teacher.
During classroom observations or demonstration teaching, the teacher experience fear that he or she might commit a mistake.

There are situations that even if there is no observer around, the teacher still feels anxiety inside the classroom. This may manifest if the teacher very well knows that he or she has a student or a group of students who are genuinely bright or intelligent. Being conscious of the details and information delivered in a classroom that is composed of intellectual individuals, the teacher should be on her toes in ensuring that he or she is well prepared on whatever questions, clarifications or situations his or her students might bring in.

What can be done to ease teacher anxiety? It is close to impossible to eliminate teacher anxiety. Even well-seasoned, teachers feel anxiety in situations they are not regularly familiar with. This may be an on the spot observation or demonstration teaching or a question raised out of nowhere but somehow has relevance to the lesson discussed. Though teacher anxiety can not be eliminated, it can be controlled.

Proper preparations prior to the lesson in one key element in dampening teacher anxiety effects. Calming down and analyzing the question is also a good way of decreasing the level of teacher anxiety. Creating a comfortable atmosphere inside the classroom gives great benefits as well. Lastly, trusting the teaching capabilities and self-evaluation after every lesson is sure to provide courage and encouragement in defeating teacher anxiety.

Teacher anxiety can be a powerful force that yields two effects towards the success of the teacher. It may serve as a challenge to the teacher to overcome and be used as a vital lesson in dealing with classroom activities. On the other hand, it may serve as a demoralizing agent to teachers having negative results and feedbacks. The teacher may not be able to detect either of the effects of teacher anxiety but one thing is for sure. It is up to the teacher how he or she will manage his or her feelings and experiences to be able
to gain knowledge and develop into a better teacher capable of delivering worthwhile teaching-learning experiences to the students.

References:


Ameen, EC., Guffey, DM., Jackson C., (2002), Published online (201), Evidence of teaching anxiety among educators, Volume 78, Issue 1, Journal of Education for Business, retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/08832320209599692