

## Attitudes with Respect to the Teacher as a Role Model to Students in the Classroom in Morocco

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the assumption about the fact that a teacher should reflect the image of the role model to his or her students in the classroom. Therefore, it endeavors to define particular key words; namely, professional development, teacher development and reflective teaching. In addition to this, it discusses the relevance of reflective teaching for teachers, students and the workplace as well as the characteristics of reflective practice while taking into consideration four major aspects; namely, ethics of caring, the constructivist approach to teaching, artistic problem solving and the teachers' love of teaching. It also provides a sample of how a role model teacher should be like. As for the practical part, two different samples of questionnaires have been designed and handed in to both teachers and students in a number of public and private institutions in Morocco.

## 1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As it is maintained by Wallace, (1991:7), a number of educators or policy makers still argue that professional development is irrelevant although there are considerable thoughts which urge the need for teacher training. The lack of students' enrollment and the increasing rate of the budget is mainly due to professional development which has caused such an interruption. However, other researchers claimed that Professional development is still perceived as something which is unimportant and far from the nucleus activity of school. Moreover, according to Nejjar (2009:5), professional development is associated with the perception and the procedure of being a lifetime apprentice. It is not only a non-stop enlightenment of professional awareness and the development of professional proficiency all the way through an individual life's vocation. But it is also an essential necessity for the sake of assuring a continuous existence and value in any occupation. Likewise, Wallace, (1991:7) argues that teacher training or teacher education is tool that could be provided by experts in the field of teaching; whereas, teacher development could be achieved by the teacher himself or herself.

## 2. TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Teacher development is about coping with the requirements of the teacher in ways that fit him or

her. It is not restricted to teaching nor language teaching. It is also about the development of a language and assistance competences, confidence-building, meditation, cultural expansion etc (Nejjari, 2009:15). However, if teachers do not take control of their teaching career, they could encounter pressure, become exhausted and they may even stagnate. For example, they experience stress particularly in their first years of teaching, or they burn-out especially at the moment when they are no more capable of being acquainted with internal or external demands as a reaction to chronic stress, or they stagnate. That is to say, they do not develop themselves professionally.

Besides, it is always argued that teaching is a challenging job in the sense that it demands an energy which ought to be physical, psychological and intellectual. Teaching is considered as an emotionally exhausting profession because students require GIVING from their teachers. However, it can also be worthwhile as long as teachers are eager to grow and expand their capacities, knowledge and going hand in hand to satisfy their students' academic needs.

Consequently, as it is illustrated by Nejjari, (2009:17-18), there are a number of steps that teachers ought to pursue so that they could improve themselves in a professional way. For example, teachers should arrange and chase a number of opportunities which could allow them boost their professional evolution.

They ought to learn from their colleagues through peer observation and work on their flaws if they have any. They ought to cooperate with other teachers of similar or different subjects so that they could learn others fields apart from their field of interest. Teachers also would learn a great deal through asking for their students' feedback. Equally important, they ought to attend or take part in conferences or professional meetings since such settings would allow them to meet and get acquainted with experts, who could help them improve professionally. Teachers ought to be interested to read in other areas besides education. They ought to improve their teaching methodologies and use new materials or amend their old ones in their teachings (Nejjari, 2009: 17-18)

### **C. REFLECTIVE PRACTICE OR REFLECTIVE TEACHING**

According to Farrell (2007:4), it refers to the moment when teachers begin to think about their work before teaching, at the moment when they teach and after they finish teaching in the classroom. It consists of ephemeral reflections which are centered on guesses and instincts or some actions which occurred in the classroom. It signifies more than momentary thoughts before, during or after a given lesson. It stands for assessing what a teacher does in the class and the reason behind doing it. In an attempt to get engaged in reflective practice, teachers ought to gather information about what occurs in their classroom, then they try to investigate and explore this information ,and after that they relate it to their basic statements and beliefs so that they can add suitable amendments and enhancements in their teaching.

### **2-CHARACTERISTICS OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

As it is maintained by Henderson (1992: 10), reflective teachers are regarded as expert teachers who are acquainted with their subject matter and they are capable of teaching it in an effective way. Those teachers are required to be experts in '*time management, discipline, psychology, instructional methods, interpersonal communication and learning theory*'

According to Henderson (1992:15), reflective teachers are expert teachers who know their subject matter and are able to teach it well. They must be experts in time management, discipline, psychology, instructional methods, interpersonal communication, and learning theory. They eagerly adopt their decision-making duties. They frequently think about the results of their actions. They are open to new skills and they frequently learn from their reflective experience.

As it is maintained by Henderson, (1992:15), there are a number of characteristics that teachers ought to adopt in their teaching process.

#### **A. The Ethics of Caring**

Teachers ought to care about their students and to appreciate them ethically. Ethics of caring may occur when a teacher takes time to listen and to support his or her students. This could be achieved through a dialogue. The latter is considered an effective tool where both teachers and students take part in a truthful and exposed communication since it is regarded as a decent and basic tool of learning. Ethics of caring could also exist when teachers and students work in a cooperative way. That is to say, teachers ought to act as advisors and counselors to their students in their subject of study.

#### **B. The Constructivist Approach to Teaching**

reflective teachers take into consideration the link between what he or she is attempting to teach and students' backgrounds and individual interests in addition to vital skills and academic content. Students are regarded as vigorous participants throughout the learning process. Consequently, from a constructivist point of view, learning is a multifaceted interaction which involves the past experience of every student in addition to his or her personal objects and the necessities of the subject matter.

**C- Artistic Problem Solving:** It refers to reflective teachers' ability to inquire regularly about adjusting the syllabus to students' personal backgrounds, interests and requirements. Their capacity to look for new teaching methodologies to get students' involvement. Their aptitude to continuously implement positive judgement on their students so that they could build a good quality education (Henderson, 1992:6-8). Their capability to find ways to promote an active and significant learning process.

#### **D- The Love of Teaching**

According to Zeichner and Liston (1996:6-8), teaching is a vocation which involves both thinking and feeling. It has to be regarded as a mission in which an individual is passionately committed to. They also state that good teachers discover the right methods so that they could combine their passion, conviction and judgment in their teaching.

### **3-THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

In the launching of reflective practice, Nejjar (2009:5), clarifies that teachers are dynamic members in their professional development. They have various opportunities so that they could enlarge their learning in

a variety of ways. For example, there are two ways of learning; namely, ‘inside out’ and ‘outside in’. The former takes place when teachers learn through their own reflections and actions. As for the latter, it occurs when they learn through what other people such as scholars and experts say about their topic. Furthermore, there are many advantages of reflective practice to both teachers and students which are considered as enjoyable and beneficial for them. As far as teachers are concerned, they concentrate more particularly on significant issues. They organize their time to think in a critical way. They explore, rethink and concentrate on their understandings. They discover issues deeply. They enlarge their goals, aptitude and resources. They connect more seriously with their students. They embrace a constant habit of reflection.

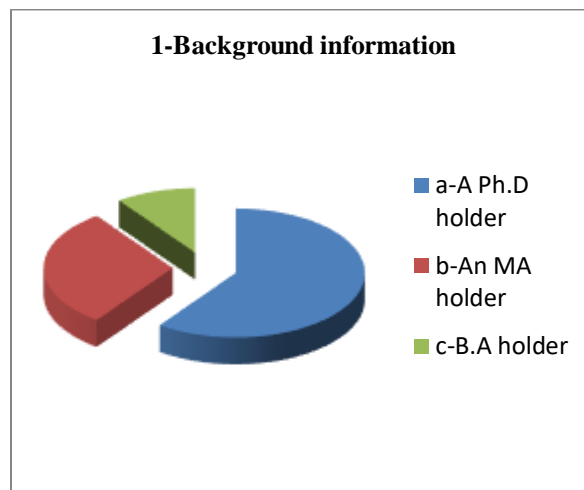
As for students and the workplace, the existence of reflective practice allows students improve and enlarge their learning experiences. They will get the opportunity to express themselves freely and openly and they will engage more through taking part in the classroom activities. In addition to this, colleagues and the institution could obtain great profit both indirectly, throughout the enhanced performance of a colleague teacher, and directly although attending professional development sessions such as workshops, conferences and internships.

**4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE TEACHER AS A ROLE MODEL IN THE CLASSROOM**

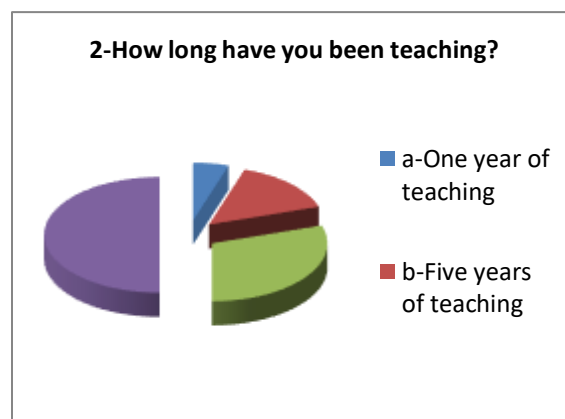
The aim behind the questionnaire is mainly to investigate on one of the most important issues with regard to higher education. The questionnaire aims to reflect whether teachers think that they consider themselves as role model teachers. The ones who care about their students’ learning process. The one who are expected to adopt convenient teaching methodologies so that their students could be provided with an effective learning skill. Besides, 100 copies of the questionnaire were handed to university professors who belong to a number of public and private institutions; namely, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Dhar EL Mehraz, Fez. Faculty of Law and Economy and the Higher School of Technology, in addition to the Moroccan School of the Sciences of the Engineer, EMSI Group in Morocco. The questionnaire has been carried out in English and French so that I could reach a higher amount of feedback from university professors in Fez.

**1. Teachers’ Perceptions towards the Teacher as a Role Model to his or her Students in the Classroom**

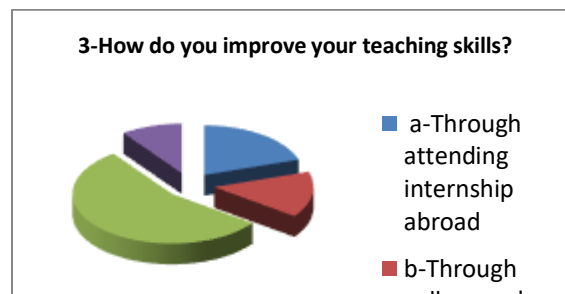
*Data Analysis: A Questionnaire*



Apparently, most of my respondents are PhD holders, whereas, 30% of them are MA holders and only 10% are B.A holders

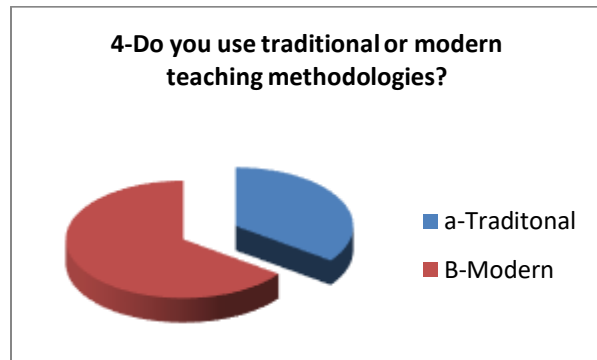


The majority of my respondents have been teaching for more than 10 years while 30% have been teaching for a decade; this means that they have acquired a huge experience in the field of education and teaching. 15% opt for five years and only 5% for one year of teaching.

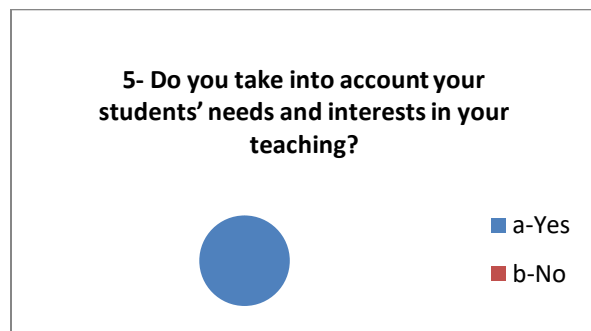


The majority of my respondents believe that they improve their teaching skills through attending and participating in workshops and conferences in Morocco and abroad. However, 20% claim that they often attend internships abroad, whereas 15 % state

that they improve themselves through consulting their colleagues and scholars so as to benefit from their professional experiences too.



Most of my respondents claim that they use modern teaching method more than the traditional one because the former methods provide them with considerable input and they can go hand in hand with all the various types of their students' learning strategies. They also claim that students do relate to the modern methods since they are exposed to them in their everyday lives. That's why the modern methods of teaching are the ones more appealing and motivating to students.



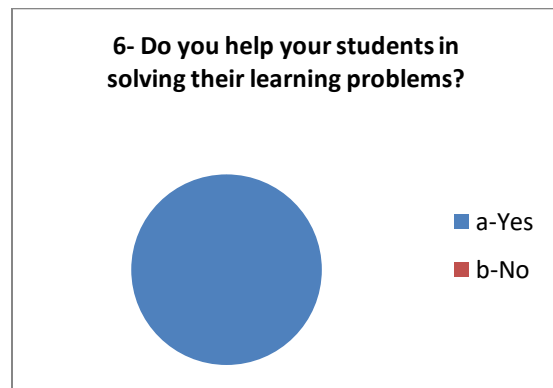
Most of my respondents argue that they do take into consideration their students' needs and interests in their teaching and in designing the curriculum.

One of my respondents points out:

*“I had the opportunity to teach at home land and abroad English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that focuses mainly on students' needs and aspirations within the course. These very needs should be known prior through students' assessment and evaluation then during the teaching operation, the teacher has to adopt and adapt his or her pedagogy according to the background of his or her students”.*

Another one says:

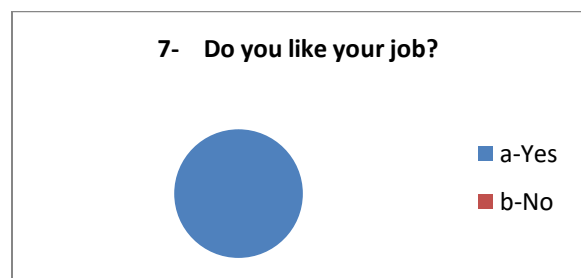
*“The most vital aim in teaching is to motivate students and to draw their attention and arise their curiosity towards the subject we're teaching. To do that we need to find ways to relate the students' real lives needs and interests to the classroom atmosphere so that they can feel that the classroom and the learning process as a whole is not strange or weird”.*



All my respondents claim that they do help their students overcome their learning problems. They state that they explain more and they provide them with other materials so as to facilitate their understanding of a given subject.

One of my respondents states:

*“Among the teacher's essential roles in the classroom setting is that he/she is an observer and a learning problem solver. To fulfill these roles the teacher first notice then he/she tries to find a way to help students develop their own learning styles and strategies. Teachers also tend to help their students develop a degree of self esteem so that they can be confident enough to participate in the teaching learning process. Teacher can also help students by providing them with the appropriate exercises and tasks or activities that he or she sees as appropriate for putting an end to a certain learning problem”.*



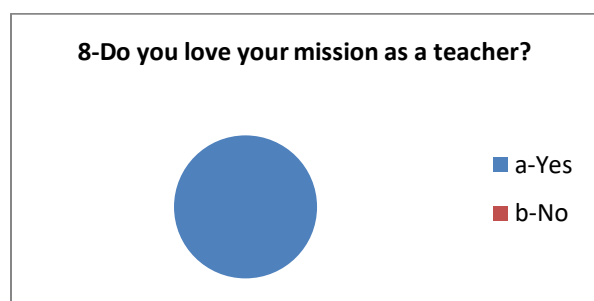
All my respondents obviously clarify that they like their job. They do care about their students' needs and satisfaction. They think that it is an exciting job and it provides them with a decent living.

One of my respondents states the following:

*"I believe that the nature of the job is tiresome but I like being a teacher because it is a noble career".*

Another one claims:

*"I always teach with a smile on my face and a joke from time to time. Through time, teaching becomes an enjoyable activity rather than a heavy duty".*



All my respondents clearly state that they do love their missions otherwise, they would not be teaching for more than ten years.

One of my respondents clarifies that:

*"I believe that when a teacher is doing his or her job in a correct way; that is, he or she is always present for his or her students and he or she is trying somehow to make a difference in their lives. Hence, I think that it is a noble mission with a noble reason".*

Apparently, the majority of my respondents seem to be samples of role model teachers in the sense that they adopt the four major characteristics of a reflective teacher. For example, concerning the first one which the ethics of caring, all my respondents believe that they do care about their students' needs and interests in the classroom. As for the constructivist approach to teaching, they illustrate that their methods of teaching vary from traditional to modern though the second method is the one which is more welcomed by their students as it makes the lesson more comprehensible than the traditional method of teaching. In addition to this, they may change their methods of teaching for the sake of get their students involved in the classroom. As

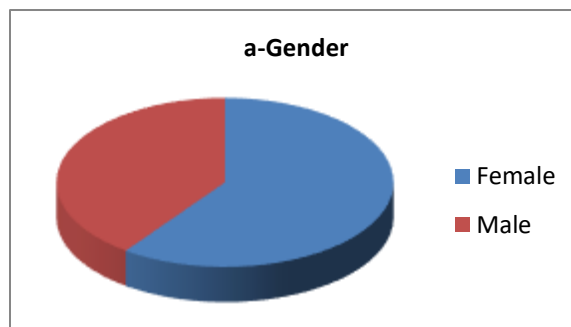
far as the art of problem solving, teachers argue that they continuously advice their students on how to learn and understand a given topic or a subject. They claim that they are always present for their students. Finally, concerning the love of teaching, most of my respondents obviously state that they would not have spent decades in the field of education and teaching if they do not like what they are doing.

## 2- Students' Perceptions towards the Teacher as a Role Model to his or her Students in the Classroom

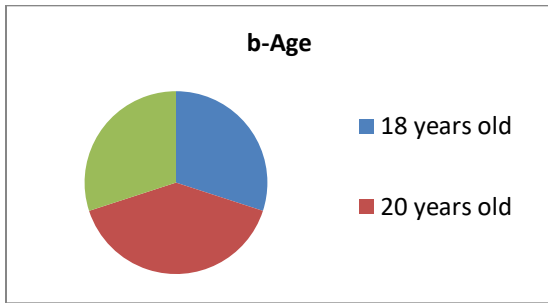
### Data Analysis: A Questionnaire

The purpose behind this investigation is mainly to reveal whether students have a role model teacher. The one who cares about his or her students' learning procedures. The one who is expected to adopt convenient teaching methodologies so that his or her students could be provided with an effective learning skill. Besides, the questionnaire has been carried out in English and then translated orally into French and Arabic so as to reach a great number of students. It includes 100 copies and the return rate is 90%. The respondents are students of the Higher School of Technology in Fez in addition to students of the English department at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University. Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and Faculty of Law and Economy of Dhar EL Mehraz, Fez, in addition to the Moroccan School of the Sciences of the Engineer, EMSI Group in Morocco. One hundred questionnaires have been distributed and the return rate is 90%. The respondents have been so cooperative and honest in their answers. The questionnaire has been distributed via my respondents' emails and Facebook accounts.

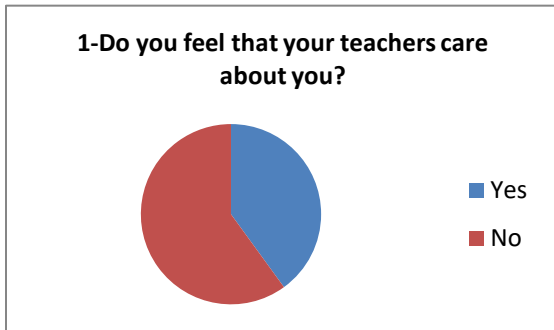
#### a- Background information



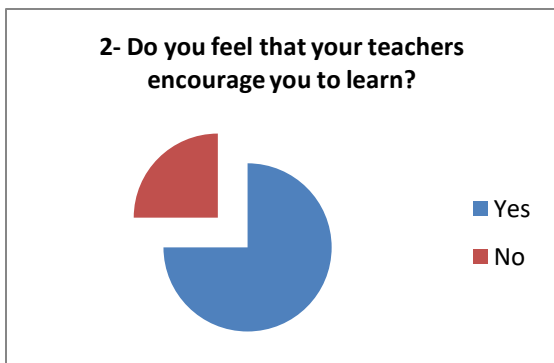
Apparently, the majority of my respondents are females as it is shown below in the diagram, whereas 40% are males



Most of my respondents are 20 years old, whereas 30% are 18 years old and 30% of them aged more than 20 years old.

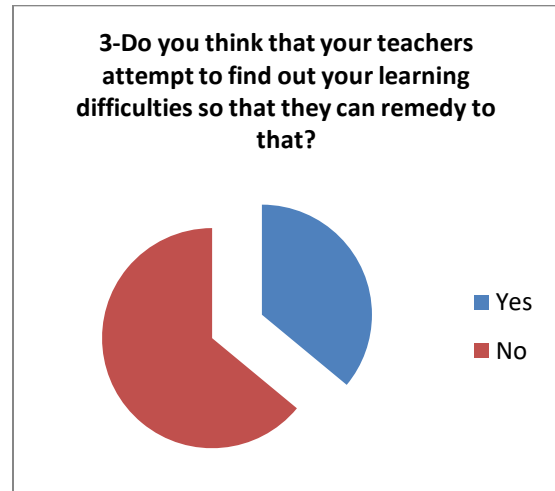


60% of my respondents claim that their teachers do not care about them as they care only about money that they will get at the end of the month, whereas, 40% confirm that teachers do care about them and that some of them usually try to do their best to raise students' motivation to learn and self-esteem in the classroom.

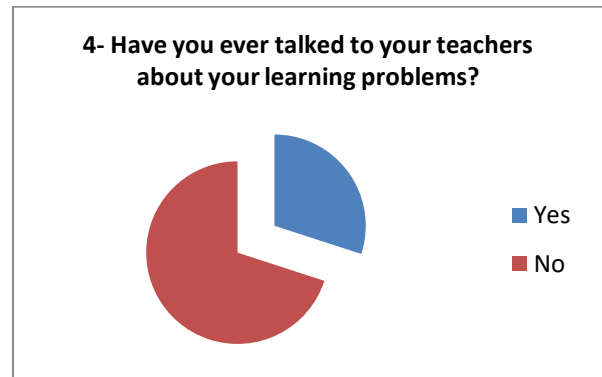


It seems that 75% of the respondents really feel that their teachers encourage them to learn while 25% disagree. One of my respondents points out:

*“I think that there are some of our teachers who try to involve us in their teaching methodologies in order to push us to talk and express ourselves freely”.*



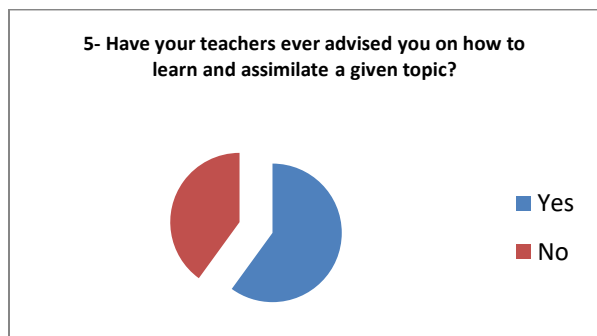
The majority state that teachers do not try to find out their learning difficulties and they do not provide us with the opportunities to talk about our learning difficulties. There are some teachers who are harsh with us; they even treat us as nothing and they humiliate us openly in class, a fact which reduces our self-esteem.



Most of my respondents point out that they have never talked to their teachers about their learning problems because they think that they are shy and they may lose their words when they address their teachers. One of my respondents claim:

*“I once talked to my teacher about something which I did not understand in his lectures. And he called me STUPID. From that incident, I never talked in his lectures”.*

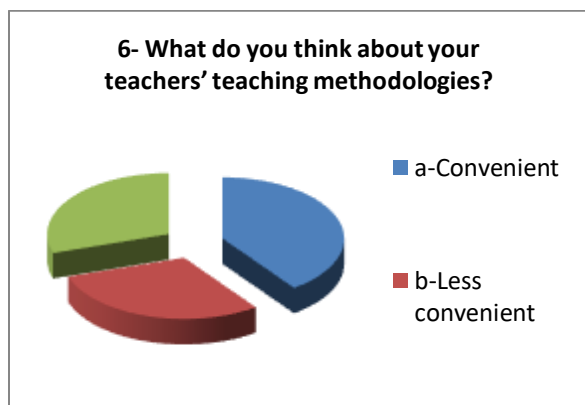




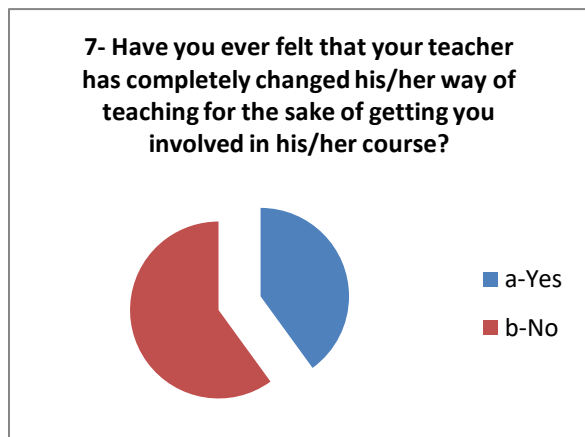
Apparently, 60% of my respondents illustrate that their teachers advise them on how to learn and assimilate a given topic while 40% state the opposite.

One of my respondents points out the following:

*“Yes, I think that our teachers of English are the best indeed. Their lectures are always vivid. They all the time advise us to read books so as to improve our English language”*



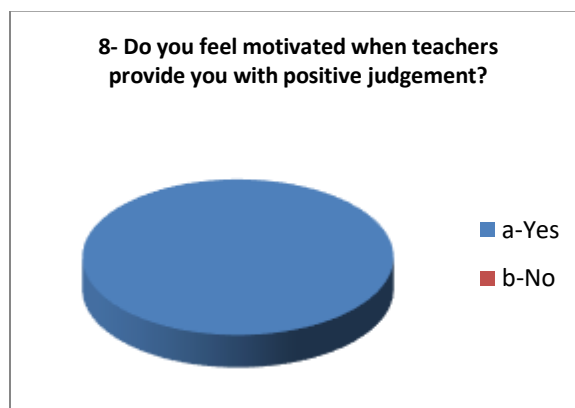
Most respondents point out that the methods that their teachers use are certainly convenient, whereas 30% opt for less convenient and 30% illustrate that they need to be improved.



60% of my respondents obviously believe that their teachers are doing their best through changing their methods of teaching once in a while for the sake of getting their students involved in their courses, whereas 40% think that their teachers’ methods of teaching is so traditional and it ought to be reconsidered and improved.

One of my respondents state:

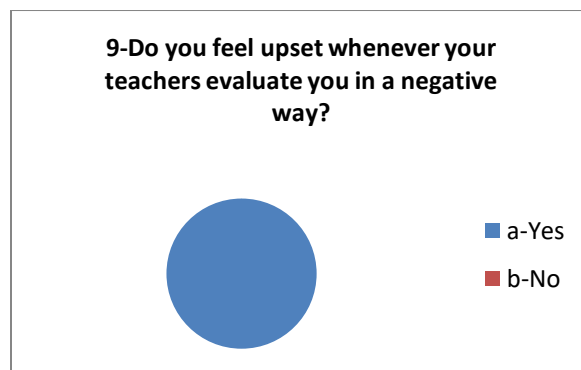
*“I think that our teachers ought to think about changing their way of teaching because we are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a world of globalization and technology. That traditional method of teaching through lectures should change”*



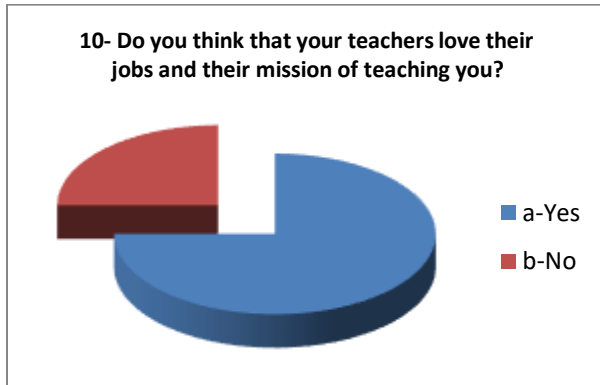
Apparently, all my respondents clarify that they like when their teachers provide them with positive judgement. They think that teachers ought to encourage them to take part in the class. And that committing mistakes is part of learning too.

One of my respondents says that:

*“I believe that teachers’ positive judgement certainly increases our self-esteem and self- confidence as well”.*



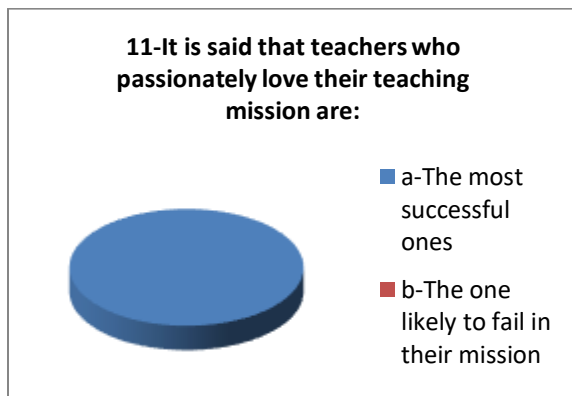
100% of the respondents obviously state that they feel disappointed whenever their teachers evaluate them in a negative way. They assume that there are teachers who consistently criticize their students publicly so that they would be laughed at by their classmates



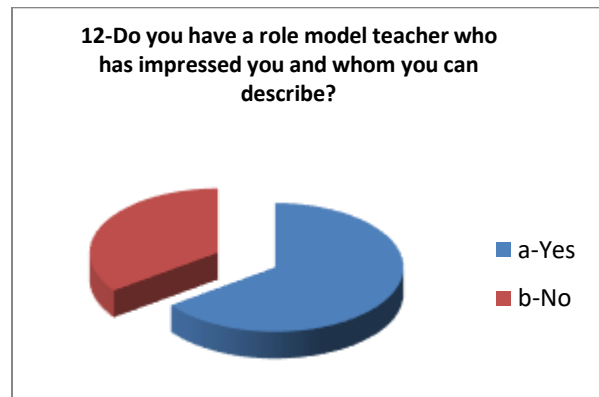
The majority of my respondents believe that their teachers do love their jobs and their mission of teaching otherwise they would not have spent years and years in the field of teaching and education.

One of my respondents says that:

*“I think that there are some teachers whom you feel that they teach with passion. They are all the time smiling and laughing. Their lectures are so vivid and everybody takes part in class”.*



It seems that most of my respondents clarify that teachers who teach with passion and who love their mission are the most successful ones because they think that involving students in class is the best way for them to comprehend the subject and to interact extrovertly in class.



The majority state that they do have many role model teachers who have left a great impact on their lives as individuals. Some of them have already decided to be future teachers and to do their best to become role models of their students in the future.

To conclude, students believe that their teachers often care about them in the classroom. They do not have the right to judge their teachers due to the huge number of students in the class. They also state that teachers change frequently their teaching methodologies so that their students could take part and be active in the classroom. Besides, students clarify that their teachers ought not to criticize them openly in the classroom so that their classmates will not make fun of them. They also point out that there are some teachers who are so generous in the sense that they always advise them and guide them whenever they feel stuck or whenever they do not understand certain issues in the subject matter. Lastly, concerning the love of teaching, students claim that teaching is a noble mission. Also, teachers would not teach for decades if they do not love what they are doing.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Apparently, through the analysis of both teachers’ and students’ questionnaires, it can be deduced that teaching is a noble mission. It provides teachers with respect from their students and the surroundings as well. As our Prophet (PBUH) had illustrated: *“a teacher could be a Prophet”*. Consequently, taking into account the four major characteristics of a reflective teacher, it turns out that teachers always do their best to meet their students’ needs and interests. They frequently take into consideration the traditional and the modern teaching methods so as to attract their students’ attention and thus the latter could easily grasp their subject matters. Nowadays, teachers and students have become academically closer to each other than the past decades, a fact which may improve the quality and quantity of the teaching and learning methods for both teachers and students.



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