

Title

A REAL TEACHER IS ONE WHO IS ABLE TO TURN WEAKNESSES INTO
CHALLENGES OVERCAME

Author

Leidy Marcela Gómez Diosa

Program

Licenciatura en Inglés

E-mail

Leydi.gomezdi@amigo.edu.co

Course

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The classroom is the teacher's home. It is a place where the teacher begins to find the challenges that brings the teaching and learning process. This essay aims to show how the teaching practice of a teacher in high school inspired me in my vocation for teaching English, then this essay will show my first experience inside the classroom, the weaknesses that I have found during my teaching practice, and the way in which I have transformed those obstacles into opportunities.

The idea to participate in this program came up when I was in 10th Grade. In that grade, I knew a magnificent teacher called Helbert Hinestroza. He was my English teacher. This teacher made me feel a great love for languages and a big passion for teaching. Passion and love are the essential feelings that a teacher should have. Passion and love what I felt each time I saw my English teacher. He was an inspiration for me because he reflected planning, enthusiasm and dedication. Those aspects can be evidenced only if, in your internal as a teacher remains love and passion for what you do.

Moreover, the practicum was the first place where I was faced with classroom challenges. It has been meaningful because I found myself as a teacher inside the field of education. Theory learned in the university must be connected with the reality that is lived day by day in the schools, so that students have a meaningful learning. As Ausubel & Novak, 1983 say in words of Vallori (2014), "In teaching it is important to know how learners learn. If we teach in a connected and related way, most of them will learn properly. Otherwise learning difficulties may arise" (p.200). Since I began my training as a teacher, I have reflected on my work inside and outside the classroom, it was in this space where I began to understand that an ideal teacher is ruled by utopian principles and the real teacher is one who observes, analyzes designs, evaluates and executes real facts inside the field of education.

In addition, during my practicum process, I have faced difficult situations in the classroom, such as fights between students, which generates problems in classroom management. I have noticed that my voice is very quiet and in many occasions, the students from the back were not able hear the instruction, generating dispersion and distraction in the class. Disruptive behavior, classroom management, and a quiet voice have been obstacles in most classes. Those weaknesses made me think what I had to do in order to overcome them. Consequently, dealing with three kind of real problems forced me to think, be, and act as a real teacher.

To start with, disruptive behavior has been one of the most common problems in the classroom. This is due to lack of communication in the resolution of conflicts. The factors that generate disruptive behavior among students is at the time of intervening against something and the difference of personal opinions. Hardly, the students ask to speak when they argue about a specific topic. Therefore, learners talk at the same time and this generate disorder and competition in the defender who spoke first. Respect between peers in many occasions becomes complex because of the difference of their opinions, especially when they deal with social issues inside the classroom. When the students disagree with some other peers' point of view, they get upset and have hurtful and conflicting arguments. As Joyce & Well 1986 say in words of Cherif and Somervill (1995), (...) "role playing plays an indispensable part in human development and offers a unique opportunity for resolving interpersonal and social dilemmas"(p.28). Role-play is a teaching strategy, which allows students to face real situations, such as solving problems and putting themselves in someone else's shoes. As a class activity, it is pertinent to make use of it because it is a dynamic activity and allows peer interaction. According to this, I began to promote role-plays as central activity in each class. Through this type of activity, the students were able to improve their school life and they learned to ask to speak in the middle of social and academic discussions.

Second, disruptive behavior in the classroom creates poor classroom management. Planning is a key in this profession. Planning allows coherence and sequence in the teaching and learning process. It takes a lot of time but you know that your classes will not be a disaster. Therefore, a suitable plan can become a bad one, if you do not know how to control disruptive behavior. As *Robert J. Marzano, Jana S. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering (2003)* say “Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom” (p.1). Teamwork is a teaching and learning strategy that allows teachers and students a more connected communication. When teamwork is promoted in the classroom, teachers are clearer in instruction and it is easier for them to make sure that everything is precise. In this way, students develop skills for good communication avoiding social conflicts that generate bad behavior inside the class. In order to overcome poor classroom management, I applied teamwork as a teaching strategy. The teamwork allowed me to be more assertive when I gave instructions about the work to be done because I spoke team by team and, this way; there was no way to generate disruptive behavior. In addition, the learning in the classroom turned from individual to collaborative; in this manner, the students helped each other and were conscious that respecting the opinion of the other is an important basis for an accurate communication that gives rise to successful teamwork.

Third, during my personal and professional life, I have realized that hearing and observing are important to construct successful communication. To be a good listener and observer are qualities that helped me to design classes thought on students according to their likes and dislikes and most importantly, the environment around them. As *Merlin and Fialho da Costa (2015)* say

(...)“the voice must be intelligible, accessible, motivational as well as assertive and effective, since the ability to keep student's attention may be harmed if the voice is monotonous, weak or

systematically tense and also if the teacher's speech has a deviation in speed or fluency” (p.13).

Even so, the quietness of my voice at first was an obstacle in my classes because classroom management was not possible and it generated a disruptive behavior among the students. The quietness of my voice when giving instructions or explanations generated distraction in the students, normally this happens with the students who sit in the back row. When students do not listen to the instructions or the explanation of the class, they get bored and begin to perform other types of activities that do not correspond to the current class. At other times, the distraction of a single student becomes a chain to cause bad behavior in much of the class. As a result, I started practicing vocal exercises online such as to practice the breathing using my diaphragm, to distance technique for projection, laughing out-loud, and reading out-loud. These type of exercises allowed me to be more assertive in my communication with the students in such a way that most of them started showing an appropriate change in their behavior, generating a positive learning environment.

To sum up, theoretically, there are concepts around “the ideal teacher”, and sometimes teachers as me pretending become one of them, but those concepts just will be concepts if we English teachers do not go beyond and change the ideal teacher concept over the real teacher. The real teacher could be more compatible with the real context lived day by day in Medellin schools. It means, theory and practice should be related in order to be teachers coherent in our teaching practice. These problems are experienced daily in the classroom. Teachers begin to be real and not ideal when they transcend the utopian principles to the resolution of real problems that generate actions such as observing, analyzing, designing, evaluating, and executing real factors in the field of education. As a teacher, I have noticed that the teaching and learning strategies such as role-play, teamwork and

vocal exercises can help to overcome disruptive behavior, poor classroom management and low tone of voice when they are applied and practiced in a conscious way. As a result, I am a real teacher because I stopped seeing my weaknesses as such and turned them into challenges that I had to overcome consciously through teaching and learning strategies as part of my professional development.

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