

PERCEPTION OF STUDENTS REGARDING SOFT SKILLS AND HARD SKILLS OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL TEACHERS IN THEIR LIVES

Liza Sharmin

Associate Professor
Department of English
Daffodil International University
liza.eng@diu.edu.bd

ABSTRACT

Traditionally, teachers are selected on the basis of hard skills. With academic excellence, one can secure teaching profession, can prepare standard lesson plans and can deliver good lectures. Still can we ensure the fact that the highest scorer will always be the best teacher? However, in this paper we will look for how much values do hard skills carry in transforming students. To become an influential teacher one must be equipped with sound interpersonal skills, strict discipline, endless managing power and thorough enthusiasm. By taking the total responsibilities of students, by proving his/her problem solving qualities, and by demonstrating his/her utmost creativity, a teacher can establish a relationship with students. All the later qualities are included into the segment of soft skills. Thus, only if a teacher, equipped with both hard and soft skills, engages the students effective teaching will take place. The current study has been conducted among 60 randomly selected students of tertiary level from different disciplines of both public and private universities in Bangladesh. They were asked to specify and explain three qualities of his/ her most influential teachers in life. After determining the keywords from their writings, they were asked to categories those under two subtitles, hard skills and soft skills. Result shows that “Reaching before Teaching”, the commonly cherished maxim in academia in the 21st significantly proves its values.

Field of Research: Teaching, hard skills, soft skills

1. Introduction:

Teachers’ responsibilities are to transform students. Thus, they need to bring changes in students’ lifestyle, thought, creative faculty, ethical grooming, behavioral pattern, mind shaping along with academic excellence.

Teaching is an adventurous journey. In this long way, teacher needs to be connected with them and to engage them to learn. As a successful life coach, a teachers must be equipped with assets like knowledge, confidence, positivity, creativity, enthusiasm, communicative competence, sense of humor, problem solving abilities etc. All these can be divided into two categories: soft skills and hard skills.

Precise and teachable capabilities which can be defined and measured, such as lesson planning, learning technical skills, typing, writing, mathematics, reading and the ability to use computer programing. On the other hand soft skills are the less tangible and difficult to measure, such as etiquette, listening and engaging learner in a classroom.

Teachers’ role has often been compared with the role of a gardener. Like a gardener a teacher also should provide proper environment and right atmosphere for the students to bloom into a cheerful and talented personality. Thus, a teacher should nurture the tender and delicate relationship with students.

2. Literature Review:

Teachers' excellent academic record, adapting teaching methods, planning of lessons encompass hard skills. The difference between hard-skills e.g. technical training and soft skills like interpersonal communication can easily be recognizable by most of the people as William (2001) stated. Soft skills, on the other hand, refers to some personal traits which effect and elevate a teacher's interactions with his/her students, performance in the classroom and viewpoints. Soft skills, according to Pachauri and Yadav (2014), can be outlined as personality traits, fluency in instruction language, habituation, good interpersonal communication and optimistic point of view about life and career. During a lecturer selection procedure, these soft skills must be an 'ordinary feature' which are supposed to be available in a good teacher (Tang & Tan, 2015). Again, Lim, Tang and Tan (2013) opine that teaching is a 'social activity' and the social collaboration between teachers and students takes place in classrooms. In addition with that, Tang, Hashim and Yunus (2014) defined teaching as a 'multifaced performance', which requires a certain amalgamation of knowledge, hard and soft skills to carry out the class tasks perfectly. Subramaniam (2013) avocated that teachers should orgnize lectures through widespread preparation and incorporating soft skills which will be intrinsically acquired by the learners.

Schulz (2008) surveyed on the significance of soft skills among a group of Namibian students and stated that soft skills complementing hard skills are the necessary prerequisites or 'technical requirements' of a job. The researcher also exhorted the teachers to pertain soft skills during their lectures as they have vital influence on the development of the university students.

It is evident that teachers have very deep-rooted and lifelong impact upon students' life. Teacher's priority, care, respect and sensitivity can help fostering self-esteem in students. Once they have developed self-esteem, they can gradually equip themselves with all necessary qualities like positive attitudes towards problem solving, decision making, taking responsibilities and keeping commitments.

Learners are individual. Some feel the importance while teacher calls upon someone by name and gives the authority to solve an academic or classroom oriented problem. But some are motivated by the teacher's recognition like 'not challenging in public place', 'to keep faith upon the students', 'appreciating in such a way which boosted up students' confidence' etc.

3. Method:

The study is a quantitative research. There were 60 participants randomly selected from the Department of Microbiology, Pharmacy of Jahangirnagar University, a public university of Bangladesh and Department of BBA and English of Daffodil International University, a private university of Bangladesh. Data had been collected in two phases. The first survey comprised the following open-ended questions related to the most influential teachers of the students.

- a. Who is the most influential teacher in your life?
- b. Write the criteria still you can recall.
- c. How do you feel with a teacher who has excellent academic knowledge but poor interpersonal skills?

Another set of data had been collected based on the following open-ended questions where the students were asked to choose a teacher between someone with sound academic knowledge but insufficient communication skills and someone with strong communication skills but insufficient academic knowledge. The participants were also asked to mention three mandatory qualities which they expect to find in a teacher.

4. Data Analysis and discussion: Total numbers of respondents were 60

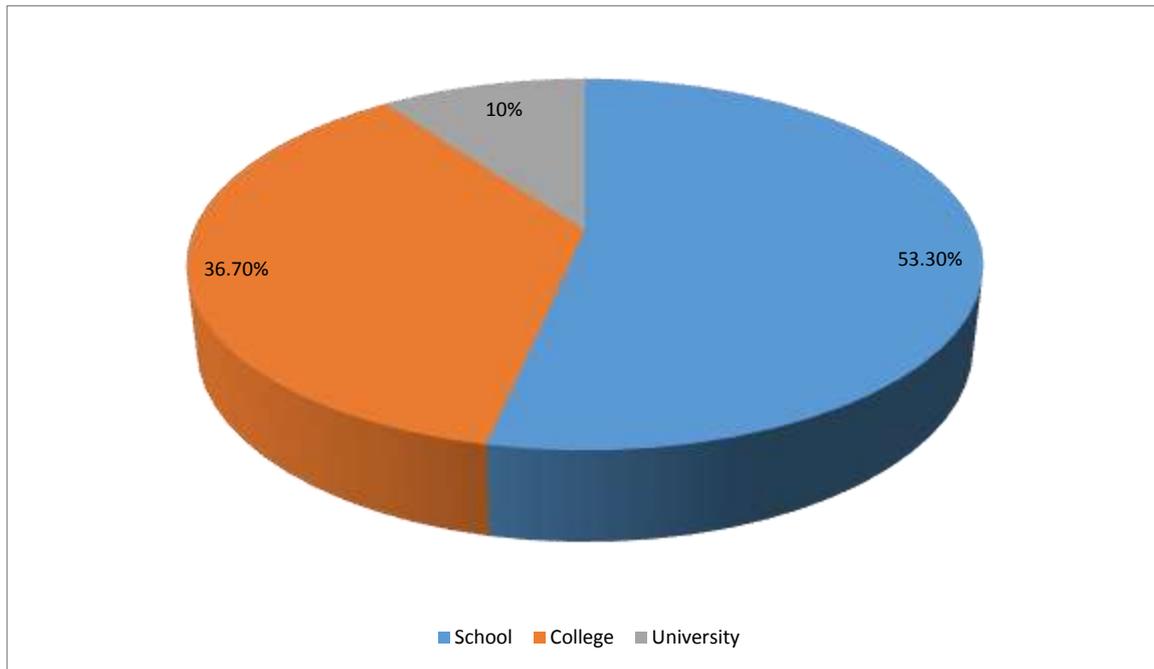


Figure -1: Showing the ratio of the institutional level of teacher

The respondents have mentioned the institutional level of the teacher they are influenced by. According to the respondents, 53.3% influential teachers are from school level, 36.7% of them are from college while 10% teachers are from their university.

From the above mentioned ratio, it is clear that in school level, teachers' acquaintance is pretty longer with the students and they being adolescent are more influenced by the emotional feelings. At this stage, teachers' soft skills can inspire and encourage them much more. Academic learning orientation are developed this time too. If a teacher becomes one's favourite, s/he will be fascinated to the subject taught by the teacher.

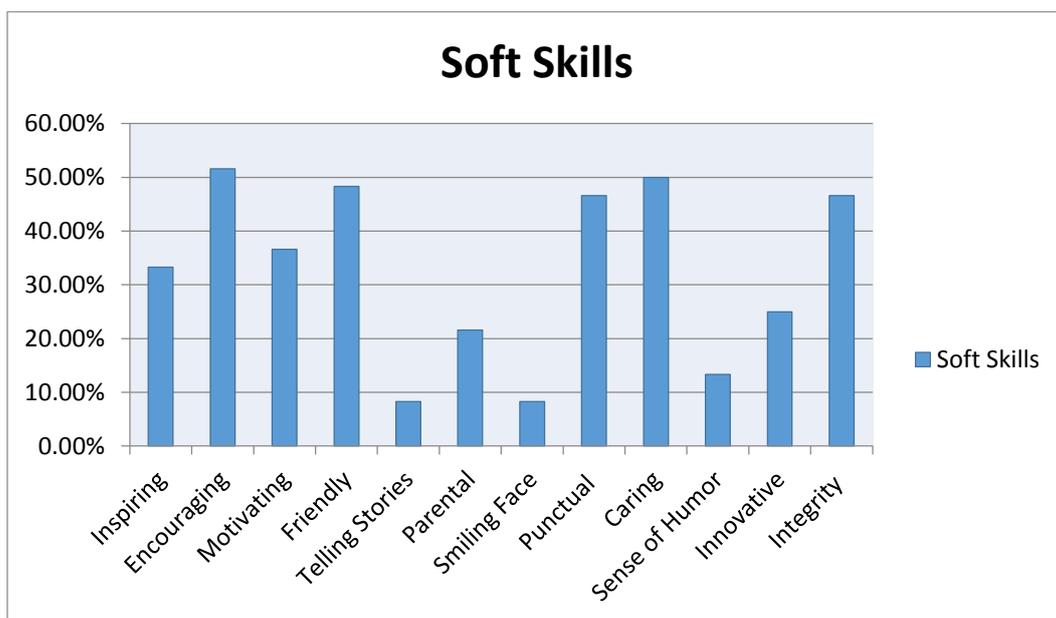


Figure -2: Showing the soft skills of an influential teacher

The students wrote about the soft skills they found in their teachers. 12 keywords derived from their responses. The 12 categories of soft skills are Inspiring, Encouraging, Motivating, Friendly, Telling Stories, Parental, Smiling Face, Punctual, Caring, Sense of Humor, Innovative and Integrity. Students found multiple soft skills in their favorite teacher. The responses were Inspiring 33.3%, Encouraging 51.6%, Motivating 36.6%, Friendly 48.3%, Telling Stories 8.3%, Parental 21.6%, Smiling Face 8.3%, Punctual 46.6%, Caring 50%, Sense of Humor 13.3%, Innovative 25% and Integrity 46.6%. Academic institutions are for meant learning. They took it for granted that teachers will teach in their own ways. While asked to pay a visit to their memory lane to search for their influential teacher, they could mention the name of the teacher who had been emotionally connected with them. Thus soft skills got their preference.

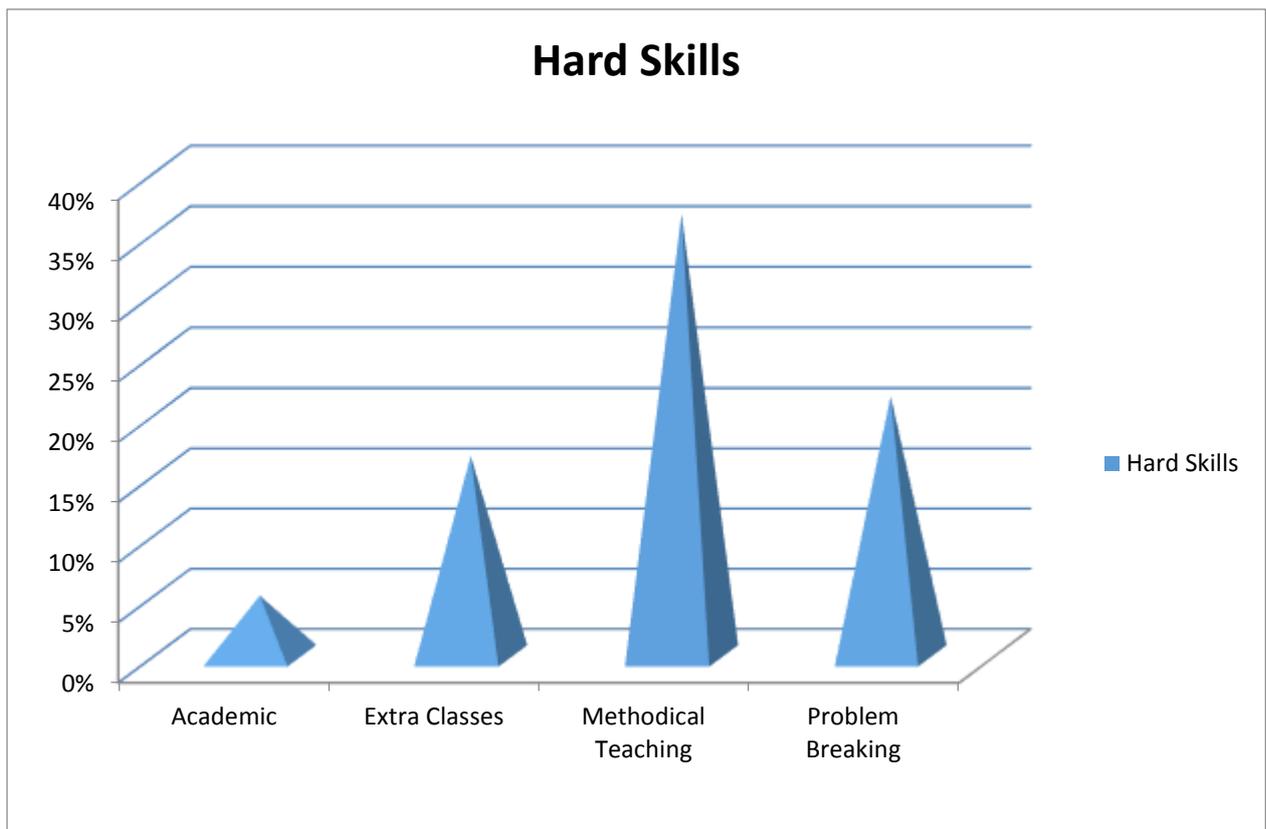


Figure -3: Showing the hard skills of an influential teacher

The hard skills identified were made into key words and were sorted as Charismatic academic technique, Taking Extra Classes, Methodical Teaching and Problem Breaking. The responses were 5% Academic, 16.6%, Taking Extra Classes, 36.6%, Methodical Teaching and 21.6% Problem Breaking. The students were found to recognize 5% amazing teachers remarkable for charismatic teaching. 36.6% teachers had been attached with them due to adapting diversified and activity based methods in classroom settings. Problem breaking and tacking extra classes are two more hard skills recognized by the students in this respect.

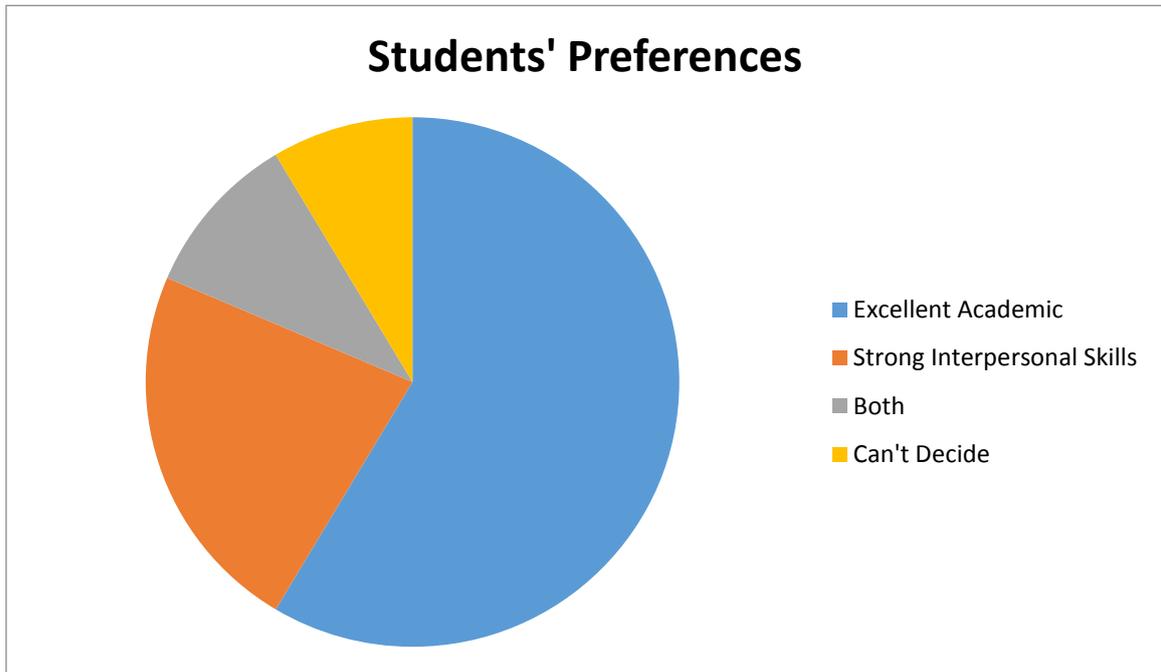


Figure -4: Showing students' preferred ratio of soft skills and hard skills

The students were given questions like whether they prefer a teacher who has excellent academic knowledge but poor interpersonal skills or a teacher with very strong interpersonal communication but lacks in sound academic knowledge?

According to the results of the survey, 6.6% students preferred that teachers having excellent academic, 55% preferred teachers with strong interpersonal skills.

In the same survey results, 25% students preferred teachers should have a blend of both of these two qualities while 13.3% students in the survey could not decide any category of teachers in their opinion.

5. Model of an influential teacher:

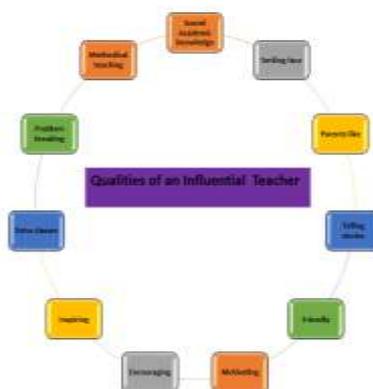


Figure – 5: Showing qualities of an influential teacher

Inspiring: A teacher who can inspire students is remembered for long. To prove the potential of students, teachers' inspiration works like magic. Students inspired by their teachers can achieve wonderful things in their way to success.

Encouraging: Encouragement from teachers has a unique impact upon the students. Encouragement is a factor for creating long term influence of students- teacher rapport. Teachers' inspiration can bring a massive improvement even in the life of an inattentive students.

Motivating: For maximizing students' potentials, the role of teachers' motivation is worthy. By being a motivational teacher, you can help patronizing a students' bright academic and successful professional career.

Friendly: A course taught by a friendly teacher is very attractive and enjoyable thus effective. Students can perform better in a class where there is no tension of being scolded or punished.

Telling stories: Stories can create a spell and wonder. Utilizing this wonderful way, a teacher can help her students to develop a better understanding, appreciation and respect for the life, livelihood and practice of people of other land and clime. Thus analogy can enhance the range of knowledge, comprehending power, comparing and contrasting abilities of the students in an easy and interesting way.

Parents like: Teachers' parents' like acceptance and forgiving tendency ultimately help students to learn even from mistakes.

Smiling face: Smiling face of a teacher upholds a signals of positivity and easy going tendency for the students. An influential teacher should make his/her smile inexpensive and stern face expensive.

Punctual: As a role model of the students, a teacher should stick to being on time. Following him/her, the students will automatically be punctual.

Caring: A teacher who cares students discovers the weaknesses, strengths and interests. So they can help assessing the mind-map and can help developing self-esteem of the students. Students never forget these types of contributory teachers.

Sense of humor: Inside the classroom the teacher interprets materials. Outside the class, teachers'-students' familiarity, addressing have got deep influence in their relationship. Teachers' sense of humor does not only make learning attractive but also life significant.

Innovative: Teachers are change makers. Teachers' innovative idea in problem solving, presentation, use of technology help learners having diversity in learning.

Integrity: A teacher must maintain fairness, impartiality, objectivity and commitment. Teaching with integrity refers to ensure the practice of one's own values. In fact, students follow what we practice more than what we advise.

Academic excellence: Teachers are the embodiment of bright merit. Knowledge dissemination is their first responsibilities. Thus teachers must has love and passion for their own area of study.

Methodical teaching: Method are the tools for a teacher. Efficient teacher are expert in handling the required tools in accordance with the teachers' comprehending level of the learners.

Problem breaking: There are the problems, predictable and unpredictable. It's a technique of the teacher to simplify a complex issue for the students. The teacher also gives clarification of the problem so that the ground is prepared for solving.

Extra classes: If and when it is necessary for the students, the teacher should not be hesitant to take extra time in form of class or counseling hour. A teacher's assurance can help the learners feel comfortable and safe for making up the lacking or limitations.

List comparing the qualities of current and traditional Influential teachers:

Qualities of Influential Teachers Form the current study	Qualities of Influential Teachers From Larissa Albano(2013)	Qualities of Influential Teachers Maria Covey Cole, Stephen M.R. Covey
Sound Academic knowledge	Comprehensive knowledge	Passionate about his subject
Methodical teaching	-	Asked poignant question
Problem breaking	-	-
Extra classes	-	-
Inspiring	Giving a positive refrain	He was a student before a teacher
Encouraging	-	-
Motivating	-	-
Friendly	-	-
Telling stories	Use anecdotes	Story teller
Parents like	-	-
Smiling face	smile	-
Punctual	Forgiving, gives space to learn from mistakes	-
Caring:	-	-
Sense of humor	-	-
Innovative	-	-
Integrity	-	-
-	Active, he moves, never sits down	--
-	Formal dress	-
-	Consider students as people/ respect	-
-	Democratic	-

6. Conclusion and Recommendation:

On the basis of observation and experience from the current research the following recommendation can be made for the well-equipped "would be" teachers:

- i. Have sound academic knowledge. Prepare an achievable objective before handling a course. Be aware of students' needs, if possible, of individual needs.
- ii. Create relationship with the students and maintain the relationship. Keep connected outside the class, through Facebook, messenger and phone. If possible communicate with their parents to create a triangular relationship.
- iii. Be a technology lover. Use video lecture, Google classroom, Moodle, Power point etc.
- iv. Engage the learners with fresh and updated activities and try to prepare them self-learners.
- v. Perform in the class and try to be the real life hero.
- vi. Practice innovative ideas and let them prove their potential by solving problem independently.
- vii. Appreciate authentically.
- viii. Encourage, inspire and reward the learners.
- ix. Practice ethics and appreciate team building and leadership qualities.

A teacher needs wide-ranging academic background for availing a teaching position. But to help learners growing and fulfilling their desired goals and by this way, and to ornament own career, s/he needs to be equipped with so many soft skills. The current study has been conducted so that besides

hard skills, the 'would be' teachers can recognize the prominence of these soft skills and can nurture properly to get satisfied by students' achievements which is ultimately his or her own success. The impact of soft skills, in the mind of the students, is deep. Hence, putting emphasis upon those skills one can furnish a teacher's qualifications to bridge the gap between a teacher and an influential teacher.

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