

Pupil Perception of Good and Bad Teachers in Botswana Senior Secondary Schools

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Introduction

Fafunwa (1967:82) has noted that "of all the educational problems that beset the African countries today, none is as persistent or as compelling as the one relating to the training of a competent teacher" (my emphasis). This problem is still as compelling in the late 1980's as it was in the 1960's. Admittedly, the numbers of trained teachers have increased and the numbers of competent teachers have, hopefully, gone up too. The problem is still compelling because the successful implementation of development projects in each African country largely depends on there being competent or good teachers in that country. ("competent" and "good" are used inter-changeably in this discussion). It is teachers who are expected and required to provide trained manpower to man the various aspects of a nation's economy and positively orientate children towards the local environment so that they become useful citizens as adults. The National Commission on Education (1977:127) in Botswana stated that "the quality of teaching is the most important influence on the

quality of the education provided in schools". Because of his/her importance "a good teacher... is cherished by and indeed an asset to his society" (Kapaale, 1982-84:1). But it is not easy to distinguish the competent or good teacher from the incompetent or bad one. Jackson (1966:9) observed that "almost all the noble crusades that have set out in search of the best teacher and the best method - or even a better teacher and a better method - have returned empty-handed". Bridges (1986:5) found out that from an administrative point of view an incompetent teacher fail to:

1. Maintain discipline
2. treat students properly
3. impart subject matter properly
4. accept advice from superiors
5. produce the intended or desired results in the classroom.

Doyle (1983:28-33) reviewed several studies on the subject and came out with the following characteristics of a good teacher:

1. presents subject matter clearly
2. keeps materials relevant
3. maintains classroom atmosphere conducive to learning
4. has genuine interest in students
5. is approachable
6. is friendly towards students
7. respects students as persons
8. is enthusiastic about his subject
9. has a sense of humour
10. seems to enjoy teaching

Perrott (1982:2) presents a list of characteristics similar to Doyle's on the good teacher. He says a good teacher is:

1. warm and understanding
2. organised and businesslike
3. stimulating and imaginative

Hamachek (1975:33-42) reports a study done on high school seniors in the United States of America. Among the many characteristics these pupils mentioned were that a good teacher:

1. is helpful in school work
2. explains lessons and assignments clearly
3. has a sense of humour
4. is impartial
5. is approachable
6. knows subject matter.

These are some of the characteristics which have been attributed to the competent or good teachers in some countries. Probably these are the characteristics that teacher education programmes attempt to promote in student/teachers.

Purpose of the Study

Much of the research that has been carried out on characteristics of a good teacher has been done in contexts that are far and different from Southern Africa. The study, therefore, is an attempt to bring the subject nearer home and get local characteristics attributed by Batswana students to good teachers on one hand and to bad ones on the other. Its findings should be of benefit to many present and future teachers in the

region. Generally, it was to get the opinions of pupils instead of those of teachers because pupils' responses relied on the experiences of the actual lessons they went through every day conducted by actual teachers in different subjects.

Another aspect of the study is to afford teachers a chance to get feed-back on their performances as teachers from pupils. Rarely are pupils given an opportunity at the end of a term and/or year to say what kinds of behaviours they like or dislike in and from their teachers. Yet being the "victims" of the teachers' actions students are probably in a much better position to give this type of feed back to their teachers. Furthermore, many teachers in the field seldom have the time to observe one another's lessons with a view to discussing those lessons afterwards. Staff-room discussions tend to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of pupils rather than those of teachers. This leaves, for many teachers, the Inspector from the Ministry of Education as the main source of occasional feedback concerning their teaching behaviour. This kind of study therefore provides valuable feedback - the views of the consumers of the product-to the teacher educator, teacher and student teacher alike.

Methodology of the Study

The questionnaire

A seven-item questionnaire was distributed to 300 pupils from four secondary schools. Out of the three hundred (300) copies of the questionnaire sent out, two hundred and sixty-five (265) were returned. Of these, thirty-four (34) were unusable because they were badly filled in. This left two hundred and thirty-one (231) usable questionnaires (a 77 percent return rate).

Respondents

Four secondary schools with senior classes were involved in this research. The schools were randomly selected. Senior pupils were chosen because they were more mature and therefore capable of giving considered responses to questions concerning their teachers.

Of the two hundred and thirty-one pupils who responded correctly to the questionnaire, eighty-nine (89) were girls and one hundred and forty-two (142) were boys. Table 1 shows their distribution among the four schools by sex and average age. (Letters are used in place of actual school names).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Among the Schools by Sex and Age

School	Girls	Boys	Total	Average Age
A	25	35	60	17.0
B	15	47	62	18.5
C	27	41	68	17.5
D	22	19	41	17.6
TOTAL	89	142	231	

From Table 1 it can be noted that differences in total number of pupils within sexes, among the schools (except for school D), and in average age are not very large. Because they were randomly selected one can safely say that the opinions of these pupils are fairly representative of the opinions of the rest of the senior secondary school pupils in the country.

Analysis of Responses

From the pupils' point of view, the questions were sensitive. As a result some of the pupils filled in the questions about the teacher they liked most and left the part about the teacher they did not like blank. Rather than filling in the part one pupil wrote: "I do not want to embarrass anybody". Another one wrote: "I don't hate nobody, so do not try to make me hate some of the teachers cause I don't hate nobody".

Table 2 : Frequency of Choice per Alternative Response

Questionnaire item	Girls	Boys	Total
1(a) Is the teacher you like most a female?	39 (43.8%)	28 (19.7%)	67
1(b) Is the teacher you like most a male?	50 (56.2%)	114 (80.3%)	164
Total	89	142	231
3(a) Is the teacher you do not like most a female	31 (35.5%)	50 (35.7%)	81
3(b) Is the teacher you do not like most a male?	57 (64.7%)	90 (64.2%)	147
Total	88	140	228

NOTE: Three pupils, a girl and two boys, did not complete Question 3.

**Table 3 : Frequency with which Different Subjects were Mentioned
In Response to Questions 2 and 4**

	Question2	Question 4
Subject	Teacher liked most	*Teacher disliked most
English	35	21
History	32	15
Mathematics	27	38
Biology	26	18
Setswana	24	27
Physics	20	18
Geography	16	27
Development Studies	15	5
English Literature	14	7
Agriculture	7	3
Home Economics	5	6
Chemistry	5	30
Woodwork	2	3
Technical Drawing	2	0
Religious Education	1	10
Total	231	228

NOTES:

- * Three pupils did not indicate the subjects taught by the teacher they disliked most.

Question 2: What subject does the teacher you like most teach you?

Question 4: What subject does the teacher you do not like most teach you?

Table 4 : Distribution of Responses to Question 5

	Girls	Boys	Totals
a) I understand better the subject taught by the teacher I like most.	84 (94.4%)	126 (88.7%)	210
b) I understand better the subject taught by the teacher I do not like most.	5 (5.6%)	16 (11/3%)	21
Total	89	142	231

NOTE:

Question 5: Of these two teachers, the one you like most and the one you do not like most, whose subject do you understand better? (circle one below).

Discussion of Responses**Sex and Being Liked or Disliked**

The data in Table 2 do not seem to permit us to make a definite statement as to whether or not sex has an influence on the teacher's being liked by most pupils. For, whereas the male teacher comes out as the most liked with a frequency of one hundred and sixty-four (71%) in Question 1, he is also in the lead in Question 3 as the teacher disliked most with a frequency of one hundred and forty-seven (64.5%). The female teacher is lagging behind in both questions with frequencies of sixty-seven (29%) and eighty-one (35.5%) respectively.

The above pattern is the same even when the responses are analyzed according to schools. The male teacher is leading in both questions in all schools except school D Question 1 where amongst the girls, the female teacher has a frequency of sixteen as against six for the male; and school A Question 3 where amongst the girls, the female teacher has a frequency of thirteen as against twelve for the male and a

frequency of twenty-three as against twelve for the male amongst the boys.

Analyzing pupils' responses according to the sex of pupils still gives us this hazy picture. We find that in Question 1 more girls, 56.2 percent, like the male teacher most. Yet in answer to question 3, the male teacher still comes out with more girls, 64.9 percent, as the most disliked teacher. The boys responses present this same picture: 80.3 percent are for the male teacher in Question 1 as against 19.7 percent for the female teacher, and 64.2 percent in question 3 as against 35.7 percent for the

Table 5: Distribution of Responses to Question Six

things that favourate teacher does	Frequency
1. Gives clear explanations in lessons	19.0
2. Understands pupils' problems and is willing to help	7.8
3. Is kind and gentle	7.6
4. Is patient	7.0
5. Is active and shows interest in the subject	6.2
6. Does not favour some pupils	5.8
7. Allows discussions and is willing to answer questions	5.3
8. Does not miss lessons without reasons	4.8
9. Is cheerful	4.8
10. Passes jokes in lessons	3.7
11. Is polite and respects pupils	3.4
12. Is punctual for lessons	2.9
13. Does not beat pupils	2.9
14. Gives parental advice	2.3
15. Gives home work	2.3
16. Gives tests	2.2
17. Is tidy/smart/neatly dressed	2.2
18. Is serious with his work	2.0
19. Marks homework and tests on time	1.8
20. Gives notes	1.3
21. Teaches in his/her spare time	1.3
22. Is beautiful/good looking	1.3
23. Is not strict	0.9
24. Does not give tests by surprise	0.6
25. Does not poke nose into pupils' affairs	0.4
26. Is able to spot questions likely to be asked in examinations	0.2

NOTES:

Question 6: List all the things that the teacher you like most does that make you like him/her more.
Three pupils did not answer this question.

Table 6: Distribution of Responses to Question Seven

Things that least favourite teacher does	Frequency
1. Does not give clear explanations in lessons	14.4
2. Is lazy and boring	10.4
3. Is harsh/rude/cruel	7.9
4. Is short tempered	6.8
5. Favours some pupils	6.0
6. Does not allow discussion and is not willing to answer questions	5.4
7. Misses lessons without giving reasons	5.2
8. Takes a long time to mark tests and homework	5.0
9. Is strict	4.5
10. He/she beats	3.6
11. Does not understand pupils problems	3.6
12. He/she teases pupils	3.3
13. Goes off the subject matter when teaching	2.5
14. Comes to lessons late without reasons	2.4
15. Gives too much homework	2.2
16. Does not respect pupils	2.2
17. Does not give notes	2.0
18. Pokes nose into pupils' affairs	2.0
19. Is proud/boastful/showy	1.8
20. Does not give tests	1.6
21. Is untidy/Shabbily dressed	1.4
22. Is impatient	1.4
23. Is fault-finding	1.3
24. Does not control the class well	1.1
25. Does not speak loudly	0.8
26. Goes to discos	0.6
27. Gives tests by surprise	0.5
28. Is ugly	0.3
29. Falls in love with pupils	0.1

NOTES:

- * Question 7: List all the things that the teacher you do not like does that make you not like him/her.
Three pupils did not answer this question.

female. These responses do not seem to be so much a reflection of pupil preferences for the teachers based on sex as of differences in the numbers of teachers of each sex in the school system. They seem to suggest that there are more male teachers than female teachers at senior levels in secondary schools. Hence the higher frequencies for the male teacher in both questions than for the female teacher. This however, is an area which needs further research to confirm or disprove this interpretation of these responses. But when the responses of the seventy girls who commented on the female teacher are analyzed in terms of the female teacher only, and those of the two hundred and four boys who commented on the male teacher in terms of the male teacher only, something different emerges. Here, we find that there are more girls, 56 percent, who say they like the female teacher most than those who say they dislike her most, 44 percent. When it comes to the boys and the male teacher there are again more boys, 56 percent, who say they like him most as against 44 percent who dislike him most. From this pattern of responses it would seem that the majority of pupils prefer to be taught by a teacher of their own sex. This, too, needs to be clarified by further research.

Subject Taught and Being Liked or Disliked

Responses in Table 3 do not present a straight forward case either. We note that all common and main subjects offered in senior secondary schools feature in the Table. In answer to Question 2 English comes out with the highest frequency of thirty-five as the subject taught by the teacher pupils like most. English is followed by History with thirty-two, Mathematics with twenty-seven, Biology with twenty-six Setswana with twenty-four, Physics with twenty, Geography with sixteen and the list goes down to Religious Education which has a frequency of one.

However, in Question 4 English is ranked high again with a frequency of twenty-one making it fifth as the subject taught by the teacher pupils dislike most. Yet it has the

highest frequency in Question 2. History has a frequency of thirty-two and is ranked second in Question 2. In question 4 it comes out eighth with a frequency of fifteen. Mathematics, which is ranked third in Question 2 with a frequency of twenty-seven, is ranked first in Question 4 with a frequency of thirty-eight.

Biology is fourth with a frequency of twenty-six in Question 2, and sixth, with a frequency of eighteen in Question 4. Setswana is fifth in question 2 with a frequency of twenty-four, and third in Question 4 with a frequency of twenty-seven. Physics is ranked sixth in both Questions with about the same frequencies: twenty and eighteen. Religious Education presents an interesting, case in the sense that it is ranked last, fifteenth, in Question 2 with a frequency of only one as one of the subjects taught by the teacher liked most. Yet it is ranked ninth in Question 4 with a frequency of ten as one of the subjects taught by the teacher disliked most.

We are here faced with another grey area that needs clarification through further research. For, basing on these data, we cannot confidently say if you teach English, History, Biology, Development Studies and English Literature, you are automatically going to be the most liked teacher in the school. The fact is some of these subjects have appeared in both questions with equally relatively high frequencies. One cannot say with certainty that if you teach Setswana and Physics, you will have half of the class liking you most and the other half disliking you most or; that if you teach Home Economics, Woodwork and Technical Drawing, your classes will have neutral attitudes towards you since these subjects are ranked very low and each has about the same frequencies in both question. The cases of Chemistry and Religious Education where frequencies are much lower in Question 2 than they are in Question 4 may well be a reflection of the pupils' attitudes towards these subjects rather than towards the teachers who teach the subjects. One statement the data seem to allow us to make with some certainty is that the subject a teacher teaches has very little or no influence on his/her being liked or disliked most by pupils.

Teacher Whose Subject Peoples Understood Better

The responses to Question 5, Table 4, present fewer problems. Two hundred and ten (90%) of the respondents have indicated that they understand better the subject taught by the teacher they like most. Only twenty-one (21%) say they understand better the subject taught by the teacher they dislike most. One wonders, however, whether even these twenty-one all marked the response they wanted to. For at least seven of them contradict themselves in Question 7 which asks them to list the characteristics of the teacher they dislike most. For instance, one pupil wrote: "He is poor at teaching". Two wrote : "He comes unprepared". Another two wrote: She finds it difficult to explain what she teaches". This is despite the fact that they say these are the teachers whose subjects they understand better.

Table 4 shows that 94 percent of the girls and 89 percent of the boys understand better the subject of the teacher they like most.

In both Tables 5 and 6 the percentage frequency distribution has been obtained by adding up all the frequencies in each Table, dividing each frequency by the sum of the frequencies, and then, multiplying the quotient by one hundred.

It is interesting to note that in addition to wanting a teacher who is able to explain things, has a good grasp of the subject matter and all those other things that go with the cognitive domain, pupils are also looking for a humane teacher who treats them as fellow human beings. This is made clear by the fact that at least nine of their characteristics in Table 5 and at least ten in Table 6 are in the affective domain. It should also be noted that no pupil has said he or she likes or dislikes a teacher most because of the sex of that teacher; or because of the subject the teacher teaches.

It is the manner in which a teacher handles his or her subject and the class which

determines whether that teacher is going to be liked or disliked by the pupils in that class. Some pupils feel very strongly about the behaviour of some teachers. One pupil wrote;

"He is lazy, he comes in class and sits like a rotten pumpkin".

Another wrote; "His presence is no better than his absence".

One wrote; "She is notorious for denying me the chance to ask questions where I do not understand".

Another wrote; "He returns our tests after 10 years",

Yet another wrote; "After a test he throws our papers at us".

Conclusions and Recommendations

Three conclusions have been drawn from this study. The conclusions are that:

1. the subject taught does not seem to be a major factor in determining whether or not a teacher will be liked by pupils;
2. pupils understand better the subject taught by the teacher they like than they do the one taught by the teacher they do not like;
3. for a teacher to be liked by pupils he/she has to combine and display both cognitive and affective abilities in his/her behaviour as a teacher.

Recommendations

Two recommendations have been made. Firstly, there is need for further research to establish whether sex has an influence on pupils preference for teachers. This aspect has not come out clearly in this study as has been shown in the discussion above. Secondly, teacher education programmes need to cultivate and stress the importance

of the affective domain as much as they do the cognitive domain. For being a good or competent teacher in the estimation of pupils depends on both.

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