EXPERIENCE OR TRAINING: WHICH MATTERS MORE IN TEACHING THE LITERATURE COMPONENT?

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Abstract: Realising the benefits of teaching and learning Literature, the Ministry of Education has integrated it into the English language syllabus. Literature teachers play the pivotal role in the learning process. To better their teaching, they need to be equipped with necessary training and for those who are experienced, it will be an advantage. This study involved 320 English teachers in the state of Sarawak, meant to determine the influence of teacher training and experience in teaching Literature. It employed a questionnaire as the instrument and data was analysed using statistical software. The results revealed there was a significant difference in Literature teaching between those receiving training and those who did not. No significant difference was found between the three groups of teaching experience towards their pedagogical skills, proposed activities in the lesson as well as their attitudes towards Literature. This asserts that irrespective of teaching experience, Literature teachers need to arm themselves with proper training which may assist in better student engagement of the lessons. With appropriate training, teachers may benefit and utilise the knowledge gained to create more enjoyable Literature activities with effective pedagogical skills and exude positive vibes in the teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Literature, English as Second Language, teachers, training, teaching experience

INTRODUCTION

The teaching and learning of English Literature in the Malaysian English Second Language (ESL) context has evolved from being a core part of the English Language curriculum to a point of near extinction only to re-emerge in the 21st century in a stronger form (Subramaniam, 2007). The downturn of the teaching and learning of Literature is crucially indicated by the change in the instructional medium in the education system. The change has also affected the teaching and learning of Literature subject. Due to this, the Government is concerned with the situation and much have been done to overcome the issue. They come with one purpose, to promote English proficiency and the study of literature in general and involving both the primary and secondary schools.

Literature is one of the components in the teaching of English language. Apart from teaching the listening, reading, writing and speaking skills, grammar and vocabulary aspects are embedded as well in the syllabus. Literature began to be taught in the year of 2000, focusing on the teaching of novel, drama, short story and poem. The component is classified as part of the 'language for aesthetic use' learning outcome. Ministry of Education (2003) asserted that language for aesthetic purposes enables learners to enjoy literary texts at a level suited to their language proficiency and develops in them the ability to express themselves creatively. In addition, Subramaniam (2003) claimed that the component in aimed at enriching the students' proficiency level in English language via the study of prescribed texts, as well as to contribute to the personal development and character building of the students. This reiterates the aims outlined by the Ministry of Education, which are to gauge students in appreciating the texts and enriching their language proficiency.

Learning Literature in English is not easy (Chacko, 2007). This implies that learning Literature in English might be difficult since it integrates the language aspect with the content knowledge. Literature learning encompasses both, the appreciation of the literary texts and apprehension of the content. Due to this, the fear is that literature learning may distort students' interest when they have limited proficiency in the language. This was argued by Rashid, Vethamani and Rahman (2010), who said that with limited vocabulary and a lack of competence in language skills, the literature component can be a challenge for many students. As a way to resolve this issue, the importance of teachers' methodologies and pedagogies is seen crucial in the teaching of Literature. With suitable methodologies and



pedagogies, this might help in getting students interested in learning the component. The MELTA report (2012) suggested that teachers who teach literature have to be creative, develop a love for literature and be passionate about literature. Teachers who teach literature attend plays and literary events as these would add to their experience. This exposure would equip teachers with the expertise necessary in the teaching and learning of literature. With the expertise, they will be able to introduce and adopt new teaching methodologies for their classrooms. This somehow denotes that there is a relationship between attending training and courses and becoming experienced. It should be noted that the consequence of teachers equipped with necessary skills and gaining experience will lead to a better teacher-student relationship as the students will enjoy the learning process better when the teacher is able to make full use of the skills and experience in the teaching process.

In addition, MELTA (2012) also reported that many English teachers have low confidence in teaching literature as they lack training and have themselves not studied literature. This implies that lacking in training leads to the teachers not having sufficient confidence in delivering the lesson, which might result in the students not being engaged in the lesson fully. Prior to that, the report even mentioned that more dynamic teaching methods which are beneficial to helping students engage with texts from different perspectives are also needed. Hence the question raised here is whether teachers are equipped with the necessary methodologies and pedagogies. What actually contributes to the teachers having sufficient methodologies and pedagogies? Do receiving training and teaching for many years entitle the teachers to have the earlier said aspects? Due to this, the study aimed to determine the influence of training in Literature teaching as well as experience in teaching Literature. The research questions are as follows;

- Is there any difference in teaching Literature based on the teachers' training?
- Is there any difference in teaching Literature based on the teaching experience?

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERATURE LEARNING IN MALAYSIA

When describing about Literature, one cannot discard the idea of language learning. Apart from engaging one in a wider selection of text, it also means to enrich the language repertoire. Shah and Empungan (2015) denoted that the incorporation of literature in English syllabus is seen as an important aspect to help learners engage in a wider reading of good works and for enjoyment and self-development. This clearly explains the relevance of Literature lessons in the teaching of English language in Malaysian Education system. Prior to that, Literature is the platform in availing the students to engage with a wide range of issues, themes and cultural settings, different from what the students encounter and experience. It also benefits students in developing their perceptions as proposed by Isa and Mahmud (2012) in which the study of these texts is meant to inculcate values and broaden learners' outlook. In addition, literature also deals heavily with the aspect of language. As asserted by Suliman and Yunus (2014), literature serves as an avenue to inculcate the reading habit among the students and it is the means helping to raise the language proficiency. This clearly demonstrates the importance of Literature in the ESL classroom, particularly in Malaysian setting. Due to that, varied choices of literary texts have been introduced in the component to further expose students with different experience and understanding. The range of texts selection will help to arouse students' interest in learning, which will also develop students' understanding from different horizons. MELTA (2012) has agreed that teachers' traditional view of literature should be transformed from focusing on merely classical texts to include more contemporary texts of various genres to cater to students' learning needs. Apart from variety of genres, various range of literary texts should also be taken into consideration in Literature lessons.

Teachers' Roles

Undeniably, teachers play a pivotal role in the learning process. Teachers are not only delivering the lesson, engaging students with the positive atmosphere in the class, but they also function as the facilitator and motivator to the students. A teacher is at the heart of the educational process and it highlights the importance of the teachers to engage students in the learning process (Suliman, Nor & Yunus, 2017). In short, teacher-students relationship is an important aspect. This is supported by Idris et al. (2007) in which teachers are at the heart of the educational process. In addition, Mustakim, Mustapha and Lebar (2014) affirmed that teachers are encouraged to create an enjoyable learning environment by developing activities suited to students. These claims reinforce the significant role played by the teachers and their significance in the students learning process. Besides this, teachers need to be ready in embracing any changes and evolution in the teaching and learning process. They have also witnessed how their roles undergo the revolution process. As put forward by Gore and Begum (2012), language teachers have to constantly update their knowledge, look for new methodology, and learn to use technology for pedagogical purpose. Concurrent to this, MELTA (2012) asserted that teachers who teach literature should be well read and open-minded in the teaching of

literature as being open-minded would help in guiding students in their analysis and interpretation of texts. This is parallel to Idris et al. (2007) who opined that teachers need to be rejuvenated with new ideas and challenges to promote renewed enthusiasm in their profession. Thus, teachers need to be equipped with knowledge and preparation in embracing the changes that will be taking place.

Hence, teachers play many roles in the education field of the 21^{st} century as denoted by Shah, Othman and Senom (2017) who stated that teachers develop beliefs about their teaching goals; teaching approaches, methods and techniques; classroom interaction patters, their roles as teachers and the learners' roles based on their previous experiences. This view is similar to MELTA (2012) whereby the selection of methods and approaches by literature teachers needs to be determined by their knowledge of theory and reading approaches and the extent to which the approaches are appropriate to the context of teaching, background of students and the subject. This reiterates that teachers ought to have the sufficient content knowledge, which will then enable them to apply suitable methods and pedagogies in teaching the lesson. When they are able to engage the students in the lesson well, the teaching and learning process will take place smoothly. Students will find enjoyment and excitement in the learning process as the relationship blooms. In reality, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2013) has also stressed on the teachers' role via the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 – 2025 in which no education system can succeed without the dedication and commitment of its teachers. It implies the teachers somehow become the foundation in the reformation of education system.

Experienced Versus Novice Teachers

Teaching experience reflects on the duration that teacher has been in the service may develop the experience. In further discussion, we shall examine the difference between experienced teachers and novice teachers. Hsu (2009) defined novice teachers as those who are still undergoing training, who have just completed their training, or who have just commenced teaching and still have very little experience behind them. On the other hand, Gatbonton (2008) asserted that experienced teachers are those with many years of teaching behind them at least four to five years. This implies that novice teachers are still new in the teaching and learning process as compared to experienced ones who might have been teaching for more than 5 years.

As argued by Hsu (2009), experienced teachers might consider a wider and more varied range of instructional options in response to student cues while novice teachers interpret learner initiations and deficient responses as obstacles, and they focus mainly on maintaining the flow of instructional activities and worrying about the appropriateness of instructional strategies. As noted earlier, experienced teachers are capable of seeing things in a broader scope unlike novice teachers who put emphasis on the lower scale of issues. In addition, Hattie (2003) claimed that experienced teachers concentrate more on what the teacher is doing and saying to the class while the novices concentrate more on students' behaviour. This may infer that students become the focus of the novice teachers as the result of lacking experience in classroom management.

On top of that, experienced and novice teachers can be differentiated in many ways. Abbas and Niloofar (2012) defined experienced teachers as having a tendency to use strategies based on their experience while novices with less experience in teaching think differently. Furthermore, experienced ones were found to plan both long-term (overall curriculum) and short-term (lesson plan) while novices tended to focus on short-term planning. Novice teachers were also found to see the class as a whole as compared to their counterparts who perceived the class as comprised of unique individuals. However, Abbas and Niloofar (2012) denoted that the perceptions of experienced and novice teachers as to the effect of motivation on teachers' efficacy are not different.

Unal and Unal (2012) claimed that experienced teachers identify the establishment of classroom management as one of the major goals that needs to be accomplished in the first week of the year. This opposes the novices who cite classroom management as one of their most serious challenges. Adding to this, Meyer (2003) put forward his comparison between the experienced and novice teachers. He believed that the novices lack experiences to organise their thinking into useful constructs for making predictions about future events. On the opposite, the experienced teachers have well-developed knowledge bases and organizations that are responsive to multiple external and internal cues and are highly linked allowing for flexible patterns of organization and problem solving. He even added that novice teachers reinforce their conceptions of prior knowledge and its importance in learning by the strategies employed to find out about their students' prior knowledge.

Teacher Training

In ensuring the teaching and learning process takes place on the right track, teachers need to equip themselves with the content knowledge to enable the dissemination of the curriculum to the students. Having said that, pedagogical knowledge should also be mastered by the teachers. As argued by Kavenuke (2013), the role of quality, qualified and effective teacher is invaluable that one may fail to come up with proper expression to express the magnitude of their significance in its exactness. Teachers teaching the component should be equipped with the pedagogical skills, rich with various types of activities to be conducted in the class as well as possess positive attitudes in teaching the component. A study by Aziz and Nasharudin (2010) claimed that most teachers do not know the best method or approaches to teach Literature. This somehow affirmed the study by Subramaniam, Hamdan and Koo (2003) whereby only 42% out of 500 respondents in the study assured that they have sufficient knowledge on the methodology of teaching Literature. In addition, Yunus and Suliman (2014) found out that almost half of the respondents in their study agreed that they instructed the students to copy notes from the resource books. Sii Ling and Chen (2016) demonstrated that teachers preferred information-based approach in their Literature teaching and years of teaching was not an influencing factor in employing the literature teaching approaches.

Proper methodology and pedagogy is essential in order to maximise the teachers' capabilities in the class. Teacher must be given training and coaching so that they will be capable in demonstrating lessons, especially to those whose option is not the English language. Continuous training will equip the teachers with skills about various kinds of methodologies and pedagogies in teaching the component. Vikaraman, Mansor and Hamzah (2017) asserted that training and development programmes for the human resources in education institution are proven essential needs to the improvement of the entire educational institution. With the training given, teachers will be able to upgrade themselves with the current and more beneficial techniques in teaching the component. This will indirectly better the students' understanding of the component. Adding to that, Vikaraman, Mansor and Hamzah (2017) said in recent years' programmes such as expert knowledge sharing, professional learning community, coaching and mentoring, in-house trainings or workshops, peer reviews, lesson studies (in schools), on job observations and action research are some measures taken within the job context. Parallel to this, Shah, Othman and Senom (2017) claim that classroom practices are influenced by the interaction between teachers' beliefs and several dimensions such as schooling, professional training and contextual factor. This shows that professional training and mentoring will better the teaching and learning process. The teachers might have the content knowledge needed but with the current advancement evolving rapidly, the knowledge possessed might not be sufficient. In relation to this, some of the teachers might not be majoring in the subject. They are assigned to teach the subject which might be their minor or even not of their option at all. This is the where training and mentoring appears to be important. The experienced teachers or even the Education Officers can guide these teachers and supply them with necessary training and coaching. As proposed by Bipinchandra, Shah and Aziz (2014) citing Goh and Kwong (2010), sustained language training programmes are essential to improve the quality of the non-option English language teachers. This shows how essential the training is for the teachers.

METHODOLOGY

This is a quantitative study, employing a questionnaire as the research instrument. This research design is chosen in order to gather the respondents' data on the topic. As asserted by Denscombe (2003), a quantitative study uses numbers and can present findings in the form of graphs and tables, so it conveys a sense of solid, objective research. The items were adopted and adapted from two studies, namely Abdullah et al. (2007) as well as Hwang and Embi (2007) for the items in the instrument. The instrument was validated and 320 English teachers teaching in the state of Sarawak were involved as the respondents of the study. The questionnaires were sent to the respondents and it took about three weeks for the completion of the data collection. T-test and ANOVA were utilised in the data analysis procedure, using the SPSS Version 21.

FINDINGS

Experienced versus Novice Teachers

The ANOVA test has been executed to gather the findings. There are three groups for the teaching experience. The first group is those who have been teaching for 1 to 10 years. This is then followed by those who are in service between 11 to 20 years. 21 years and more has been classified as the third group. The results of this test are discussed below.

Relationship between Teachers' Pedagogical Skills and Teaching Experience

Table 1 ANOVA result for Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

Variance	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2	0.180	0.090	0.825	0.439
Within groups	317	34.610	1.09		
Total	319	34.790			

Significance level of 0.05

The above table further explains the relationship between the three groups and the pedagogical skills. However, the result denotes no significant difference exists between the three groups. This is shown via sig. = 0.439 (p > 0.05) and F value (2, 317) = 0.825. Thus, it is found that there is no significant relationship between teachers' pedagogical skills and teaching experience.

Relationship between Teachers' Proposed Activities and Teaching Experience

Table 2 ANOVA result for Teachers' Properties	posed Activitie.	5			
Variance	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2	0.487	0.244	1.772	0.172
Within groups	317	43.566	0.137		
Total	319	44.053			

Significance level of 0.05

The above table further explains the relationship between the three groups and the proposed activities. However, the result denotes no significant difference between the three groups is detected. This is shown via sig. = 0.172 (p > 0.05) and F value (2, 317) = 1.772. Thus, it is found that there is no significant relationship between teachers' proposed activities and teaching experience.

Relationship between Teachers' Attitudes towards Literature and Teaching Experience

Table 3

ANOVA result for Teachers' Attitudes towards Literature

Variance	df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2	0.604	0.302	1.369	0.256
Within groups	317	69.974	0.221		
Total	319	70.578			

Significance level of 0.05

The above table further explains the relationship between the three groups and the attitudes towards Literature. However, the result denotes that there is no significant difference between the three groups. This is shown via sig. = 0.256 (p > 0.05) and F value (2, 317) = 1.369. Thus, no significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards Literature and teaching experience is found here.

The findings denoted no significant relationship between the three groups with the three dependent variables. The first variable, which is the pedagogical skills indicates that the 11 to 21 years group scores the highest mean score (3.23), followed by 1 to 10 years group (3.20) and the lowest scoring group is the 21 years and more group (3.17). Though it was initially claimed that the 21 years and more group would be the most skilful as they are the experienced ones, the result turned out to be the other way around. With the experience that they have, they should be better in teaching Literature, compared to the other two groups. However, it seems that the middle group (11 to 21) is more equipped with the pedagogical skills.

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In terms of the proposed activities, the group that scored the highest mean score is the 11 to 21 years group (3.11), followed by 1 to 10 years group (3.10) and finally the 21 years and more group (3.03). The ranking is similar to the earlier finding on pedagogical skills. For this variable, it was predicted that the novice group (1 to 10) might be on the advantage since they are still new in the teaching field. In fact, some of them have just graduated and they might have fresh ideas on how to conduct the activities in Literature lessons. Moreover, they might acquire more current skills in getting the students to enjoy the Literature lesson. However, the expectation was misleading. It is the middle group (11 to 20) who seem to have better proposed activities in Literature lessons.

Last but not least, the attitudes towards Literature was also measured. The group that scored the highest mean score was the 11 to 21 years old group (3.08), followed by 1 to 10 years old group (3.06) and the lowest scoring group was the 21 years old and above group (2.98). This reflects the findings from the previous two variables. Initially, it was predicted that all groups might possess similar attitudes towards Literature. However, the result revealed the differences though it was insignificant. Thus, it is assumed that the middle group (11 to 20) possesses more positive attitudes towards Literature as compared to the other two groups.

To summarise, the findings indicate teaching experience has no influence over the pedagogical skills, proposed activities as well as attitudes towards Literature. This strengthens the study by Sii Ling and Chen (2016) in which years of teaching was not an influencing factor in employing the literature teaching approaches. On the other hand, the finding is somehow against the differences outlined between the experienced and novice teachers by Unal and Unal (2012) and Abbas and Niloofar (2012). This study also shows that experience is not a factor contributing to the difference in the level of readiness among the teachers. This seems to oppose the claim put forward by Hattie (2003) that experienced teachers concentrate more on what the teacher is doing and saying to the class while the novices concentrate more on students' behaviour. However, an interesting point to ponder is that among the three groups of teachers with varying teaching experience, the second group (11 to 20 years of teaching experience) denotes the highest mean score for all the three dependent variables, followed by the first category (1 to 10 years of teaching experience) and finally the third group or the senior group (21 years and more of teaching experience).

Teacher Training

As for teacher training, there are two categories, those who receive the training for Literature and those without the training. The training can be received in the pre-service stage or in-service stage. The aspects studied are the same as on teacher experience.

Relationship between Teachers' Pedagogical Skills and Teachers' Training

Table 4

T-test result for pedagogical skills and literature training

Scale	Literature Training	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	Sig.
Pedagogical	Yes	183	3.269	.3244	4.599	.000
Skills	No	137	3.103	.3147		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the pedagogical skills scores for the teachers with Literature training and the opposite. It was found that there was a significant difference in the scores for the teachers with training (mean=3.269, s.d=.324) and those without training (mean=3.103, s.d=.315); (t=4.599, p=.000). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta squared=0.062).

Relationship between Teachers' Proposed Activities and Teachers' Training

Table 5

T-test result for proposed activities and literature training

Scale	Literature Training	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	Sig.
Pedagogical	Yes	183	3.144	.3715	3.801	.000
Skills	No	137	2.989	.3540		

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the proposed activities scores for the teachers with Literature training and the counterpart. It was found that there was a significant difference in the scores for the teachers with training (mean=3.144, s.d=.372) and those without training (mean=2.990, s.d=.354); (t=3.801, p=.000). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta squared=0.043).

Relationship between Teachers' Attitudes and Teacher Training

Cable 6 F-test result for teachers' attitudes and literature training							
Scale	Literature Training	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	Sig.	
Attitudes	Yes No	183 137	3.165 2.870	.4636 .4258	5.818	.000	

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the attitudes scores for the teachers with Literature training and those without. It was found that there was a significant difference in the scores for the teachers with training (mean=3.165, s.d=.464) and those without training (mean=2.871 s.d=.426); (t=5.818, p=.000). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta squared=0.096).

The results have indicated the significant difference in the three variables between those who have received training and those who have not. The training has somehow assisted and prepared the teachers in terms of their pedagogical skills, activities in the lesson and attitudes towards Literature lessons. With the training received, it helps the teachers to better deliver their lessons and engage themselves well in the classroom practice. As MELTA (2012) reported, teachers who teach literature attend plays and literary events as these would add to their experience. This exposure would equip teachers with the expertise necessary in the teaching and learning of literature. With the expertise, they will be able to introduce and adopt new teaching methodologies for their classrooms. This is also supported by Shah, Othman and Senom (2017) who claim that classroom practices are influenced by the interaction between teachers' beliefs and several dimensions such as schooling, professional training and contextual factor. Furthermore, professional training is one of the key elements that lead to a better teaching and learning process. This supports the Ministry of Education (2013) efforts where training for teachers is ongoing to build their skills level against each of the competencies expected of a teacher.

Undeniably, teachers have the content knowledge for the lesson. However, updating ourselves by attending trainings and courses will eventually enrich and enhance their skills as asserted by Petras, Jamil and Mohamed (2012) that great stress is placed on the in-service training of crucial subjects (such as mathematics, science, ICT and English), as well as on the improvement of the daily teaching practice by changing the learning environment, including the use of ICT tools in the classroom, and English as a language of instruction. The result also indicated that training provided affects the teachers' performance in the teaching of Literature. When they are well-trained and equipped with necessary training, they will be able to maximise their potential in the teaching, especially for those who are non-option. This rebuts MELTA report (2012) that many English teachers have low confidence in teaching literature as they lack training and have themselves not studied literature. This is where training and coaching are deemed crucial for their personal development, which will then exude their confidence in delivering the lesson. Training and coaching from the experts or experienced teachers will somehow instil the confidence in the teachers about their teaching methodologies or even their content knowledge. This is parallel to Bipinchandra, Shah and Aziz (2014) citing Goh and Kwong (2010) who found that sustained language training programmes are essential to improve the quality of the non-option English language teachers. Hence, equipping teachers with on-going training will indirectly enhance their teaching skills, regardless of the English option or non-option teachers. This is in view with Ministry of Education (2013) whereby teacher will receive the best training possible, from the time they enter the teacher training programmes to the point of retirement

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

To sum up, the study has shown that between teaching experience and teachers training, the later one has a bigger impact in the teaching of Literature although MELTA (2012) claimed that there is a connection between the two in which teachers who teach literature attend plays and literary events as these would add to their experience. Training serves as an important aspect that will better and enrich the classroom practices employed by the teachers in teaching the lesson. This will then develop a good rapport between the teachers and students as the later one enjoy the teaching and learning process better, similar to the teachers. In addition, MELTA (2012) suggested that other stake-holder initiatives in JuKu

providing training and development to literature teachers include the involvement of teachers in literature oriented NGOs to share resources and create a network that would help them in the teaching and learning of literature. The study indirectly implies that years of experience might not be a contributing factor in the teaching of Literature. Having said that, teachers need to be optimistic about undergoing necessary trainings and courses to develop their competencies and skills in teaching the lesson. This highlights the notion that schools as well as the Ministry of Education should be more active in organising a series of training and courses to equip the teachers with necessary methodologies, pedagogies as well as content knowledge of the syllabus. Teachers, regardless of years of experience should be pro-active in attending courses and training organised for their own betterment.

To conclude, when teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies, it will better their teaching which indirectly affects the learning process of the students. A point to ponder here is that Ministry of Education (2013) has argued that no education system can succeed without the dedication and commitment of its teachers and no true reform can occur without taking the needs of teachers into serious consideration and looking for ways to nurture and sustain excellence. In tandem, Malaysian education system needs to undergo a comprehensive transformation if it is to meet the ambitious vision and aspirations (Suliman, Nor & Yunus, 2018). Thus, teachers have a crucial role pertaining to the development of the education system so as to provide the quality education as put forward in Goal 4 of the Sustainable Goals Development, which is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The role played by the teachers also encompasses their relationship with the students, aims at enhancing and creating a better and conducive learning environment.

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