

The Effects of Teacher Commitment on Student Achievement: A Case Study in Iraq

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Abstract

Teacher commitment is an internal force that derives teachers to invest more time and energy in keeping up involvement in the school. This willingness of promoting the school creates emotional link between teachers and the school which ultimately inspires teachers to seek ways to enhance teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment to allow students to reach their targets. Commitment to teaching is a crucial factor to contribute to the achievement of students. In addition, passion has a motivating factor; therefore, it is a significant need for high quality learning and teaching. Passion is seeking for the new, and experiencing new ideas. Passion is on the basis of effective teaching. Passion which is indispensable for learning and teaching facilitates learning thorough desire and enthusiasm it creates. Passionate teachers via creating effective learning environments endeavor to increase learning potentials of their students. This study explores the role of teacher commitment in student achievement and focuses on differences passionate teachers make, and points out the effects of passion on effective learning and teaching.

Keywords: Passion, Passionate Teacher, Effective Learning and Teaching, Commitment

1. Introduction

Commitment is a psychological attachment to an organization in which people give their loyalty to its values and goals. Teacher commitment is the emotional bond teachers demonstrate toward their work. Teacher commitment has been recognized as one of the most critical factors in effective teaching. Thereby, teachers with high level of commitment can make a difference to the learning and achievement of their students. Committed teachers are affiliated with the school they work for and they invest their time and energy in promoting their school. Teacher commitment is associated with creating an effective learning environment in which students enhance their abilities for greater achievement. Teacher commitment is an internal force that drives teachers to show enhanced job performance (Tsui & Cheng, 1999).

In the same vein, passion that committed teachers have, is caring and learning new things. Passion is motivation and seeking for the new. It is the inclination somebody shows towards

an activity in which he/she invests time and energy (Carbonneau, Vallerand, Fernet & Guay, 2008). Learning, experiencing new things and passion are closely related to each other. Day (2004) states that passion is associated with hope, commitment, caring and enthusiasm. Passion is a significant factor as it inspires and motivates teachers.

Passionate teachers are characterized by excitement about ideas that can change the world for the better, enthusiasm that can make a difference to achievement of learners and commitment to their intellectual capacities and work performance. Thus, passionate teachers always seek to bring about change not only in their teaching profession but also promoting learning. They like the job they are performing (Zehm & Kottler, 1993). It should be noted that passion is one of the most critical factors for effective education. Passion sustains enthusiasm and energy of teachers for the teaching profession. It contributes to creativity; hence passionate teachers have more thinking skills and can come up with new ideas. A strong connection between passion and teacher commitment has been drawn (Day, 2004). Teacher commitment includes commitment to the school, students, teaching profession and professional knowledge (Tyree, 1996; Yong, 1999; Huber, 1999).

2. Teacher Commitment and Effective Teaching

Teacher commitment has been considered as a passion to the work. Passion is at the core of effective education. Day (2004) argues that passion is a need for a high quality education. Passion encourages teachers to act as it is source of motivation (Vallerand, 2007). For that reason, passionate teachers can create excitement for learners to achieve better. Hargreaves (1997) points out that without passion all pedagogical approaches fail. Therefore, the effect of passion on learner achievement is widely recognized. Hansen (2001) in his attempt to define passionate teacher states that passionate teachers can encourage learners to become more willing and accomplish better. Fink (2003) stresses that learners achieve better as long as they care and are enthusiastic for learning.

Firestone and Pennell (1993) maintained that commitment to teaching is an effective route to the development of teaching practice. Commitment to teaching gives teachers the responsibility to explore constantly new ways of teaching to develop learning experiences of students. Teachers with commitment have the potential to provide students innovative instructional strategies that can lead to better achievement. Moreover, committed teachers through encouraging students to involve in school activities can create zealous learners. Teacher commitment is essential to high quality teaching and it includes commitment to the school, students, career continuance, professional knowledge base and teaching profession (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004). Figure 1 shows the factors teacher commitment contributes to.

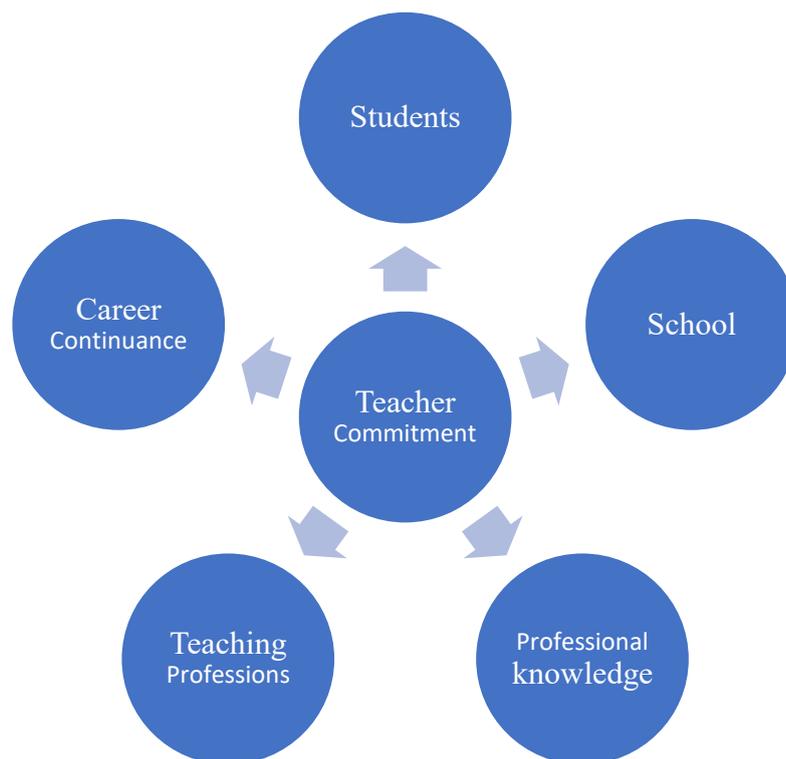


Figure 1: Factors teacher commitment contributes to. Based on Crosswell & Elliott, 2004

Committed teachers like working with their students and cares about their development. These teachers profoundly struggle for efficiency in teaching and learning through employing different approaches. Without love of profession, teaching cannot be conducted effectively. Teachers with high level of commitment are in love with teaching (Garrison & Liston, 2004). Besides, they have respect for students and it is noteworthy that they build strong relationship with their students which is a hallmark of great teachers. Committed teachers always seek for continuous professional development. It is believed that teachers who have commitment to their profession work collaboratively with other teachers to nurture the learning of the students. Discussing education materials, development of teaching approaches with other teachers in the school inspires teachers to promote intellectual development of their students. These factors not only influence effectiveness of teaching but also efficiency of learning (Coladarci, 1992).

Teacher commitment is at the core of quality education. It has influence on promoting teaching profession, work performance, school and student achievement (Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Committed teachers constantly look for instructional strategies that will help learners understand better.

Commitment to teaching profession allows teachers to change their teaching practices to facilitate in the classroom. Enhanced job performance is a crucial criterion for establishing an effective learning environment for students in which students are engaged in learning. Next, committed teachers develop a loyalty to the school they work for and they exert considerable effort for the school. All these components help students reach their school goals and affect their achievement.

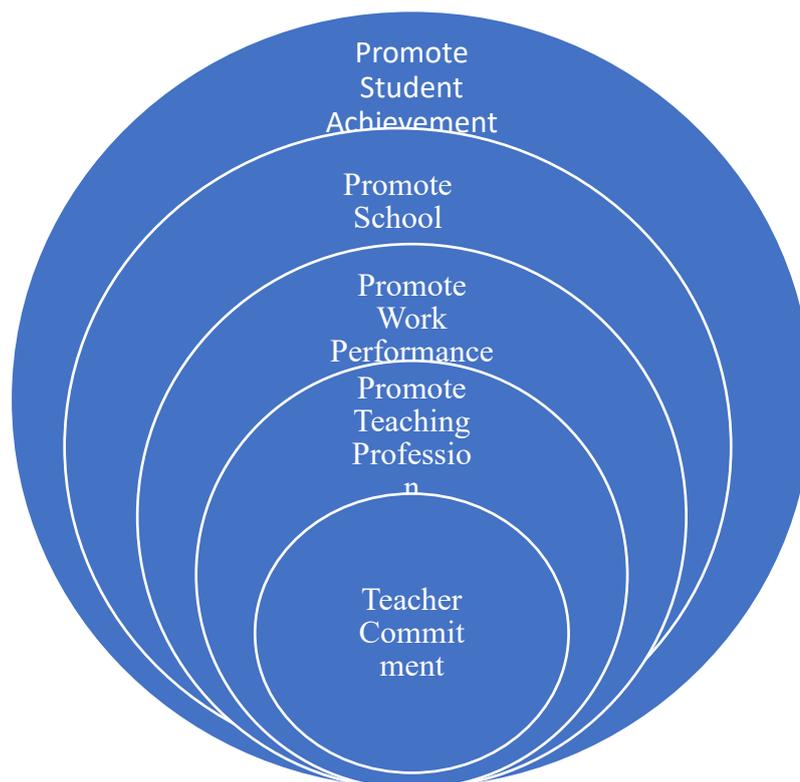


Figure 2: Teacher commitment is at the core of quality education

Figure 2 indicates that teacher commitment is at the core of promoting teaching profession, work performance, school and student achievement. Teacher commitment is an essential component for quality education. Commitment provides teachers the love, desire and energy they need to perform better. Committed teachers are thought to be more satisfied with teaching and always strive for accomplishing a good instruction (Somech & Bogler, 2002). They are concerned about their performance and always seek for high standards to perform teaching properly. Their loyalty to the school is unquestionable and their inclination towards accomplishment of school goals is apparent (Carbonneau et al., 2008). Student achievement requires attention of teachers and teacher commitment affects student accomplishment. Committed teachers always strive for excellence to make a difference in the development of students (Dannetta, 2002). They care for their professional development and attend to teaching and learning effectively. It is fundamental to understand the needs of students in education. Teacher commitment is an important factor that draws attention of teachers to the needs of students. At the same time, these teachers know how to encourage students to participate in the learning process. It is likely that encouragement to active participation is a means to motivate students achieve better.

3. Teaching with Passion

It is noteworthy that passion is a contributing factor in education. It not only pushes teachers to teach effectively but also drives students to learn efficiently. Teaching with passion brings about care, motivation, and willingness which are indispensable elements in a learning environment. It is true that techniques employed while teaching make difference in the learning process but the role of passion while teaching influences learning more. Passion has a motivating factor that allows learners to pay more attention to learning.

Fried (2001) argues that there is a strong link between passionate teaching and effective learning and lists the reasons as:

- 1) If learners see that teacher cares about what he/she is doing then the students take learning process seriously. At this point, teaching is no longer a job done by force but turns out to be an inspiration for learners.
- 2) Unless a learning environment that includes cooperation is created, respect and trust between teacher and learners cannot be built.
- 3) Unless learners know how to adopt things they have learnt in their real lives, their motivation towards learning cannot be increased.

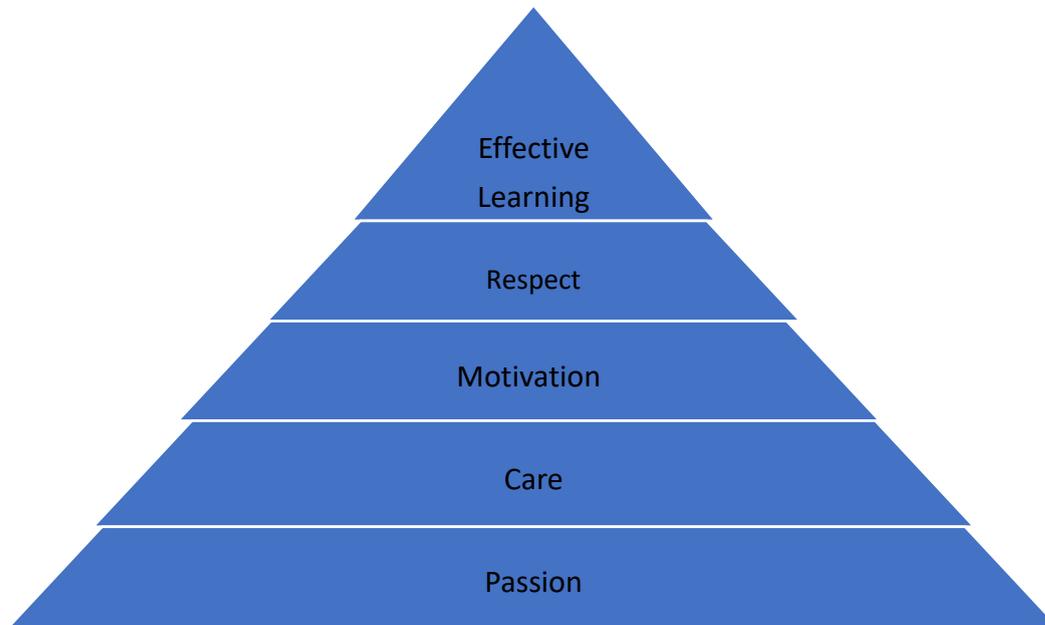


Figure 3: The link between passionate teaching and effective learning. Source: Author

Passionate teachers are well aware that it is their responsibility to encourage learners to achieve thus they always care about their teaching performance and development of their students. They know that effective teaching motivates learners. These factors are important in that they build respect between teacher and the learner.

Day (2004) lists the five features passionate teachers have as:

- 1) Deep subject matter knowledge, teaching techniques and the ability to build empathy with their students.
- 2) Passionate teachers care about their students and see them as an important part of their job.
- 3) Passionate teachers always reflect on their goals and beliefs and motivate learners.
- 4) Passionate teachers are able to understand people around them. Effective teaching requires the use of knowledge and emotion simultaneously.
- 5) Passionate teachers are hopeful.

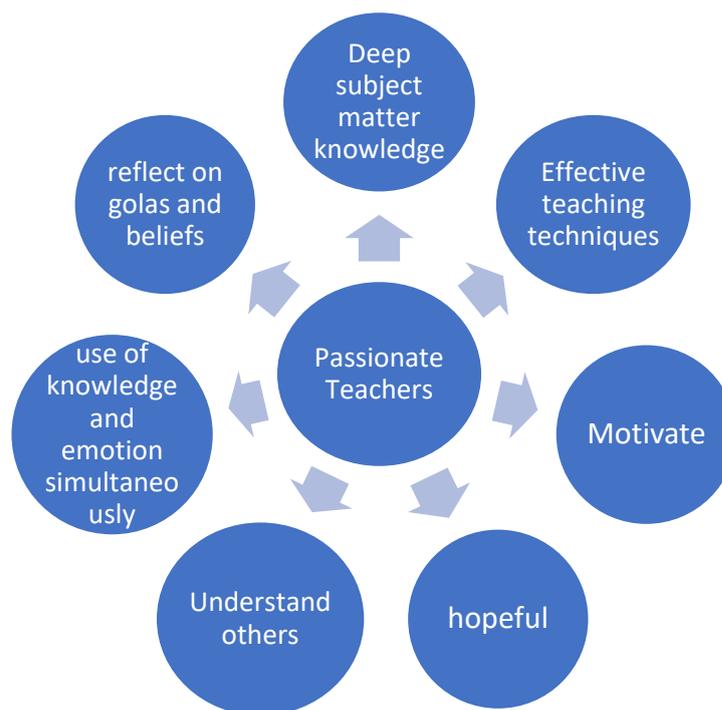


Figure 4: Features of passionate teachers. Source: Author

Passionate teachers cooperate with their students about classroom decisions to involve them in the learning process. They help their students produce quality work and endeavor to enable them to develop good habits of work. Passionate teachers focus on the needs of students and take great responsibility to prepare the students for the future. The love passionate teachers have for teaching motivates them to make difference in the lives of their students. The emotional attachment to their profession enables them to reflect on their goals and beliefs in their job. Passion sustains their commitment to the profession and aids them to contribute to the learning of their students.

4. Commitment and Teaching with Passion in Hizmet Movement Schools

Hizmet Movement schools have been providing education in many countries in the world. It is true that these schools are successful and make great contributions to the countries where they are located by educating generations with great achievements. In Iraq for instance, Hizmet Movement schools are one of the leading education institutions. In order to understand what makes these schools successful, an interview with 100 students from different schools were carried out. The goal of the interview was to reveal the major characteristics of these schools and the teachers who work in them. The interviews lasted from 5 to ten minutes with each student. Students were interviewed in their own schools mostly in the break times after obtaining permission from the administration. As a researcher I got in touch with the alumni office and asked for phone numbers of our graduate students from high schools. I called 80 graduates and 60 of them responded. I could not meet 10 of them as they were busy on the day of the interview; thereby totally I interviewed 50 graduates. The graduate students were interviewed either in their offices or we met in public places. I asked the students what were some major characteristics of their teachers were, whether their teachers had friendly attitudes towards students, what the main reason for the students to love their schools was, what kind of things contributed to their success at school.

The table below shows the number of students and graduates who were interviewed for the study.

Table 1:
Student Profiles

School	Total number of students	Total number of male students	Total number of female students
Secondary School	25	14	11
High School	25	13	12
Graduates	50	22	28
Total	100	49	51

All the interviews were carefully transcribed. 94 students reported that their teachers had always respect towards the students, 92 students reported that their teachers always cared about them, 91 students reported that the teachers were always ready to listen to the problems of the students, 90 students reported that their teachers always motivated them for better achievement, 89 students reported that their teachers were committed to the school and the students, 88 students reported that their teachers were always teaching passion. These responses suggest that teachers who work in Hizmet Movement schools in Iraq are committed and teach with passion in order to enable their students achieve well.

Major Factor	Students (N= 100)	Frequency
Respect	All students	.94
Caring	All students	.92
Listen to the problems	All students	.91
Motivate	All students	.90
Commitment	All students	.89
Teaching with passion	All students	.88

I remember my teachers always motivating us. They always found something to push us to perform better not only at school but also in life (Graduate student).

I had broken my leg at a time during exam week. As the course was very important, the teacher came to my house and taught me (Secondary school student).

Even though I had graduated from high school, my teachers from the Hizmet School had continued to support me educationally in my university life. The fail rate of my university was 1/3 and it seemed to appear that I would be part of those doomed to drop out of university life due to my lack of attendance and motivation. My previous teacher however was determined for this to not be the case and would be considerably involved in my studies and aware of assessments and their dates. I particularly remember a phone call I received from my teacher where he organized to meet up and help me in my upcoming quiz at the university library. I told him I was going to come but didn't end up doing so. A night before the quiz was due, my teacher came to my house and insisted that that we complete the quiz together. We had spent four hours together and had received a distinction for the quiz. If that quiz had not been completed, I would have certainly failed the subject. The impact of my teacher's determination to ensure that I pass my studies sparked a motivation and ultimate determination within in relation to my studies and at this current time I am University lecture at a private university. (Graduated student)

At teen life, it is rather common for a young person to act at times in a delinquent manner towards teachers. I would constantly stand up to my teacher when I was at school, but the teacher was always remained silent and never complained about my manners. Now, I feel very ashamed of what I did to him. (High school student)

Whenever we committed mistakes, our teacher would not tell us to our faces in direct manner. Instead, he would provide us with advice and recommendations, and endeavored to provide solutions to any wrongdoings, rather than by verbal disheartenment. (High school student)

Initially I wasn't a brilliant student. Understanding course content was a difficult task for me and the teacher was aware of that. Therefore our teacher would provide with free extra classes after school. Although he was not obliged to, he gave me extra lessons. (High school student)

My teacher would make a presentation at our home to my parents concerning my class participation, results, assessments, behavior and attitude which regulated my class attitude because I did not want to embarrass my parents in these presentations. (High school student)

When I was in high school I was living in a dorm. We had some difficulties with physics subject. It was about midnight we called our teacher he came and started to explain. I did my best to get a very good score to please my teacher who sacrificed his sleep for me (High school student).

5. Conclusion

Teacher commitment is a motivational force that inspires teachers to invest more time and energy in student achievement. This willingness of promoting student accomplishment inspires teachers to seek ways to enhance teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment to allow students to reach their goals. Teacher commitment is a crucial factor that impacts student achievement. Committed teachers devote themselves to their students, school and teaching profession. When teachers are involved in developing their teaching profession, they can influence student accomplishment. Teachers with high level of commitment also motivate students to involve in school activities. Once students take part in learning activities, they stand a better chance to develop their achievement.

Passionate teachers love the job they are performing. They care about the development of their students and constantly seek for new ideas to better their learning. Passionate teachers are aware of things around them and reflect on them skillfully in their job. They take their job seriously and are very sensitive about habits their students develop. They work cooperatively with their colleagues and students and engage their students in the learning process.

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