

FUTURE TEACHERS DEFINING GOOD TEACHERS

Nesrin Oruç

Dokuz Eylül University, Buca Faculty of Education, ELT Department, Izmir, Turkey.
nesrin.oruc@deu.edu.tr

Every student from elementary to graduate has his/her own description of a good teacher. Some of them describe people who lecture all the time, some of them describe people who do little other than facilitate group processes, and others describe everything in between. The question of what makes a good teacher becomes a highly complicated one when it is asked to a multicultural group. 33 student-teachers from 12 different countries filled in a questionnaire and defined the qualities of a good teacher. The participants were asked to rank order the qualities of a good teacher in terms of “Background Knowledge”, “Professional Skills” and “Personal Qualities”. The results of the study reveal some interesting results between European and Turkish students’ understanding of a good teacher.

“Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach who we are.”

Hamachek (1999, p. 209).

INTRODUCTION

There are two central questions determining the pedagogy of teacher education:

- (1) What are the essential qualities of a good teacher, and
- (2) How can we help our students to become good teachers?

As professionals in the field of teacher training, we cannot answer the second question without coming up with a definition for the first question. What makes a person a good teacher?

The current climate in higher education suggests that students could be seen as primary customers who are increasingly aware of their customer rights, one of which is regularly exercised through formal and informal feedback processes. If teachers in higher education are

becoming framed as service providers, then one way to ensure the provision of a quality service is to know the expectations of customers as they enter into the service transaction. Education has typically adopted an 'inside out' approach, with those on the inside assuming that they know what students need and what they expect the teacher to give. However, successful service industries have been shown to think 'outside in'. They research what customers expect of the service and they then work to provide the service that meets those customer expectations (Sander et. al., 2000).

This article discusses two central questions determining the design of teacher education programs and the work of teacher educators: There are various reasons why such a framework may be important, especially at the present time. The first reason has to do with the changes in the aims and methods of teacher education taking place worldwide, due in part to the serious shortages of teachers. In many places and in our country, short-track teacher education programs have been introduced and more and more of the actual education of teachers is taking place inside the schools. This raises a number of questions about the quality of these programs, questions that can only be answered when we have some kind of answer to the question "what is a good teacher?" Sometimes, the complexity of this question seems to be overlooked by policy-makers.

The second reason why the two questions may be important is that in teacher education, there is considerable emphasis on promoting reflection in teachers, but at the same time, it is not always clear exactly what teachers are supposed to reflect on when wishing to become better teachers. What are the important components of this reflection?

My objective is not to present a definitive answer to these questions, but to discuss an umbrella model of levels of change that could serve as a framework for reflection and development. The model highlights relatively new areas of research, viz. teachers' professional identity and mission. Appropriate teacher education interventions at the different levels of change are discussed, as well as implications for new directions in teacher education.

Sanders et al (2000) in their study asked students to rank order the qualities of a good teacher. Below is the first place ranks' of teaching qualities across respondents:

- *Teaching skills
- *Teacher approachability
- *Knowledge
- *Enthusiasm
- *Organization

Harden and Crosby (2002) in their paper come up with twelve different roles assigned to good teachers by medical students.

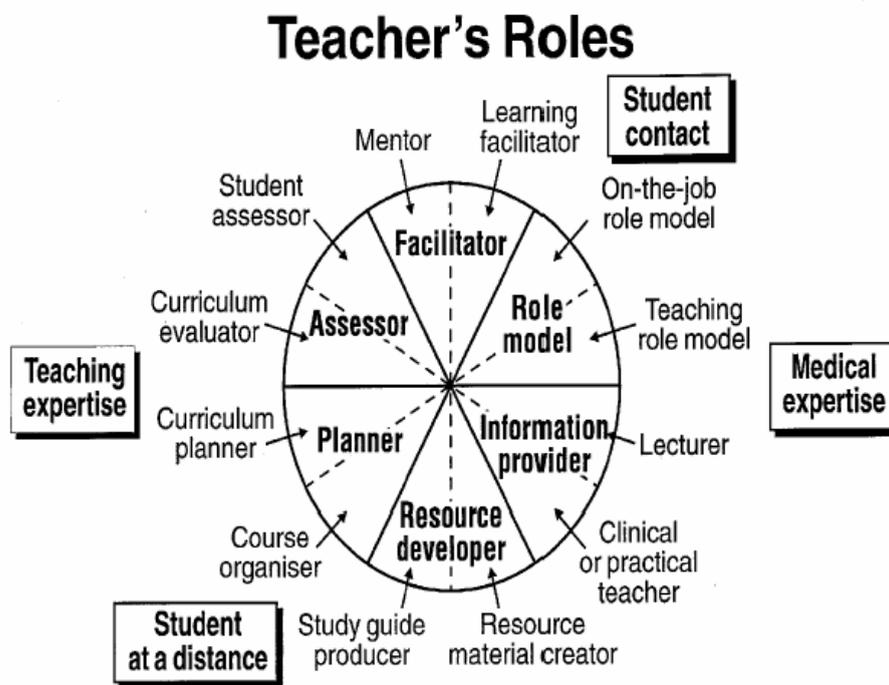


Figure 1: The twelve roles of the teacher

Research on students' definitions of "good teachers" suggests that they are dependent on a number of factors: Culture (Shank et al., 1996; Twale et al., 1997); gender (Walker et al., 1994); age (Levine, 1993); university type (Shank et al., 1995) and field of study (Stevenson & Sander, 1998).

In another study by Warrington & Younger (1999), reasons for boys' underachievement in England and Wales were sought and from the possible reasons, definitions of a good lesson and

a good teacher were produced. After 3 years of single sex group interviews it was understood that boys and girls had different definitions.

BOYS

- A Good Sense of Humor
- Fairness
- Approachable
- Teacher motivating students
- Teacher who talks about subjects other than work (Sports, music)
- Classroom management

GIRLS

- A Good Sense of Humor
- Fairness
- Approachable
- Self-motivation
- Teacher should not be too friendly
- Self-discipline

THE STUDY

As was stated by Shank et al., (1996) and Twale et al., (1997) culture is among the factors that shape students' expectations. Therefore, in a sense it is possible to say that the study in hand is, in a way, comparing the understanding of a good teacher of university level students in the European Union (EU) member countries with that of Turkish students.

Participants:

Three Faculty of Education students each from different departments of eleven EU member countries participated in the study. These countries were: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain. In total there were 33 European students. Other than the European students, the study included 34 Faculty of Education students from Turkey, an EU candidate country, participated. In total 67 Faculty of Education Students participated.

Instrument:

The instrument used for the study was developed by the researcher from existing literature on teacher training. It had two parts. Part A consisted of a 5 Scale Lickert Type Questions which had 26 statements and Part B involved asking the participants to rank order the qualities of a good teacher in terms of:

Background Knowledge,
Professional Skills, and
Personal Qualities.

The reliability of the instrument was tested on SPSS 1,3 version and the Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.83 which is considered to be reliable.

Data Collection:

Data were collected in Braga, Portugal where the researcher and the participants came together for an IP LORENA Erasmus Project. The name of the Intensive program was LORENA goes EUROPE: From Local, Regional and National Identities to European Identities. Data collection took 25 minutes. The questionnaire was conducted by the researcher.

Data Analysis:

All the analyses for the study were done with SPSS 1,3 Version on the computer by the researcher.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The analyses of the data reveal that European students and Turkish students do not differ very much from each other in their definition of a good teacher. Below the results of some of the questions from the questionnaire are presented.

When we have a look at item 16 which asks for the ability of the teacher to inspire learners, we see that both European and Turkish students agree on the topic. 42,4 % of the European students agree, 57,6 % strongly agree with the statement. The percent of the Turkish students is almost the same. 47,1 % of the Turkish students agree and again 47,1 % of them strongly agree with the statement.

Table 1. Able to inspire learners

		Frequency	Percent
(European)			
Valid	4	14	42,4
	5	19	57,6
Total		33	100,0
(Turkish)			
Valid	3	2	5,8
	4	16	47,1
	5	16	47,1
Total		34	100,0

As for the statement “excellent communicator” the consistency between the European and Turkish students continues. As can be seen below, the percentages are again almost similar. Both groups agree on the importance of a good teacher’s being an excellent communicator.

Table 2. Excellent Communicator

		Frequency	Percent
(European)			
Valid	4	16	48,5
	5	17	51,5
Total		33	100,0
(Turkish)			
Valid	2	1	2,9
	4	16	47,1
	5	17	50,0
Total		34	100,0

Being well-organized was another statement presented to the participants. Here the participants seem to have different views on the topic. For the European students being well-organized does not seem to be a very important characteristic, since only 10 students (30.3 %) strongly agree with the statement; however, for the Turkish students 26 Turkish students (76.5%) strongly agree with the statement.

Table 3. Well-Organized

		Frequency	Percent
(European)			
Valid	2	1	3,0
	3	2	6,1
	4	20	60,6
	5	10	30,3
Total		33	100,0
(Turkish)			
Valid	4	8	23,5
	5	26	76,5
Total		34	100,0

Below we see another discrepancy between the European and Turkish students. Being firm but friendly, according to the results obtained, is not a very favorable characteristic of a good teacher for the European students whereas it is an important one for the Turkish students. None of the Turkish students chose to disagree with this statement; however, 2 European students strongly disagreed, 7 students disagreed with the statement.

Table 4. Firm but Friendly

		Frequency	Percent
(European)			
Valid	2	2	6,1
	3	7	21,2
	4	13	39,4
	5	11	33,3
Total		33	100,0
(Turkish)			
Valid	3	6	17,6
	4	14	41,2
	5	14	41,2
Total		34	100,0

The second part of the questionnaire was the ranking part where the participants were asked to rank order some features of a good teacher in terms of: background knowledge, professional skills and personal qualities. Below we see the results of the ranking part for each feature. The first number represents the Turkish students and the second one the European students.

Table 5. Background Knowledge

	1	2	3
Fluency within different academic areas	3-4	1-4	4-1
Experience and ability to relate it	9-10	7-7	6-6
Content knowledge	12-4	8-5	4-6
Cultural sensitivity	2-4	2-6	4-5
Up-to-date information about practice area	2-6	12-2	8-9
Academic background	6-1	3-4	4-1
Personal experiences with L2	-2	1-3	4-3

As with the first part of the questionnaire, there are also similarities and differences between the European and Turkish students. For example, twelve Turkish students have stated the content knowledge to be the most important background knowledge. However, only four European students have ranked the same quality as the most important.

Table 6. Professional Skills

	1	2	3
Class management skills	12-10	6-8	6-5
Knowledge of assessment	2-1	1-	3-4
Ability to respond/communicate appropriately	9-8	11-11	9-2
Clear expectations	2-5	5-5	5-4
Clear syllabus	-	2-1	3-3
Command of age and level appropriate methods and materials	9-5	8-4	7-9
Knowledge about where to find resources	2	1-3	1-4

Table 7. Personal Qualities

	1	2	3
Respect for individuals	11-9	4-1	3-5
Awareness of others' feelings	5-2	3-2	2-
Enthusiasm/energy/passion	6-8	9-8	4-2
Interest in student motivation	2-4	2-2	-4
Flexibility	2-3	1-8	5-3

Patience	1-2	-2	5-6
Sense of humor	1-2	2-2	5-7
Work ethic/hardworking	4-	1-1	3-
Confidence	2-	8-1	2-2
Organization/time management	-1	3-2	5-1
Interesting personality	-	1-2	-1

A summary of the above tables would be as follows:

Top 5 Qualities for European Students

- Enjoys and respects students, motivates and inspires, creative and innovative (4,70)
- Enthusiastic about teaching (4,61)
- Able to inspire young people (4,58)
- Manages behavior well (4,55)
- Knowledge of subject matter, excellent communicator (4,52)

Top 5 Qualities for Turkish Students

- Knowledge of subject matter (4,91)
- Well-organized (4,76)
- Enjoys and respects students (4,68)
- Enthusiastic about teaching (4,65)
- Manages behavior well, motivates and inspires (4,62)

As can be understood easily, there does not actually seem to be many similarities between the two groups. Knowledge of subject matter, for example, is the first most important feature for the Turkish students but the least important for the European students. Below is a list which is a combination of the Turkish and European students' rank orders. When we list the features according to the percentages we see the knowledge of the subject matter as the most important feature followed by "enjoys and respects students".

- Knowledge of subject matter
- Enjoys and respects students
- Motivates and inspires

- Creative and innovative, enthusiastic about teaching
- Manages behavior well

The last analysis conducted was a t-test. The researcher wanted to compare the two groups and see if the results obtained were statistically significant. The t-test results reveal that the two groups did not actually differ from each other in terms of their choices. As the table below presents the results are not statistically significant.

Table 8. T-test Results of Two Groups

sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
,981	-1,371	65	,175

As was stated above culture is one of the factors that affect the definition of a good teacher among many others. However, the study in hand has contradicted the existing literature in the sense that both the European and Turkish students' preferences or definitions on the qualities of a good teacher match with each other. There might be various reasons of these findings one of which to be the participating students departments. All Turkish students participated in the study were from English Language Teaching Department, however, European students came from a variety of departments, such as Preschool Education, Mathematics, etc.

No matter what the reasons for the results are, one important thing to consider here is that everything depends on the person who stands in the front of classroom. As Heschel (1983, p. 62 cited in Massoussi, 2002) states, the teacher is not an automatic fountain from which intellectual beverages may be obtained. He is either a witness or a stranger. To guide a pupil into the Promised Land, he must have been there himself. When asking himself or herself: Do I stand for what I teach? Do I believe what I say? He or she must be able to answer in the affirmative. What we need more than anything else is not *textbooks* but *textpeople*. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that the pupil reads; the text that they will never forget.

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