



A paper on characteristics of effective teaching and teacher skills that create difference in students' performances: what are the related literature and studies indicating?

Hasan Bilokcuoğlu

English Preparatory School, the European University of Lefke, North Cyprus, Cyprus

Abstract

Today, it is a fact that anyone, who studies teaching at a relevant department and obtains a BA diploma, can become a teacher. Yet, here, at this point, the vital question to ask is that will s/he be able to become an 'effective' teacher?, because gaining the adjective 'effective' before the word 'teacher' is not an easy job and it is not as easy as an outsider may think. In fact, it is a very difficult and a very complicated process. Being an effective teacher requires various skills, in terms of both professionalism and characteristic features. It is obvious that having a full and in depth content knowledge is doubtlessly very important, but this is not the only one aspect of being an effective teacher.

As the related literature points out, there are various aspects that involve in 'effective' teaching, such as setting up a warm classroom atmosphere, triggering high motivation, providing a more student-teacher interaction, having high skills in communication, not only verbally, but also non-verbally, and having high self-efficacy. As for personality features, the previously conducted studies demonstrate that effective teachers own the features like creativity, positive attitude, forgiving attitude, fairness, high expectations, accepting mistakes (Walker, 2008).

Keywords: effective, effectiveness, teacher skills, teaching skills, teacher traits, student involvement, successful outcomes

1. Introduction

It is widely believed that teaching is an easy job among the other jobs, which is in fact a false thought. Teaching is not as easy as it is seen from outside. Being a teacher calls for some essential skills. Due to this reason, this present paper aims at revealing some significant information on the question "What are Effective Teaching Skills of a Teacher in Teaching?"

It should be noted that when the word 'ineffectiveness' is looked up in Oxford dictionary (2018), this definition "not producing any significant or desired effect" can be found. Signally, when it is applied to teaching, it is obvious that there is a high possibility that teachers can be effective or they can be ineffective.

It is known that when a person becomes a teacher s/he has to consider many things in order to be effective in the class. When you are asked to stand before a particular group of people to present or to teach something, you might feel that you do not know what to do, particularly the inexperienced teachers. The reasons may be that you feel you are not yet ready enough to teach, you do not know what to do, you do not know how to act or behave in the class, you do not know how to approach your students, you do not know how to start and you do not know how to develop your teaching skills in the expected way. These are the key elements that may affect your teaching style. Considering those points above, the focus of this paper will be on the "effective teacher skills" which aims at enlightening teachers and demonstrating the ways for being effective in the class. This present paper, in a way, may make teachers become more aware of their weaknesses and strengths that possibly affect their effectiveness in their teachings and their development process. After they (especially the teacher candidates and the novice teachers) read this, they will be provided with a clear vision about themselves and the way that they are used

to teaching. Thus, this paper acknowledges on the core question above, supported by the recent literature review, as well as my own views on the issue, will form the basis of this present paper.

The following part on literature review will provide a broad frame about what has been done related to the subject of this paper throughout the recent decades. First, how the effective teaching skills have been defined in the literature will be presented, followed by the specified components of effective teaching skills to be discussed through the related literature review. There will be references to different and important works in the literature that dealt with the "effective teaching skills and teacher traits". It is important to appreciate their works as they contributed a lot to this area and the studies that have been included in this paper have revealed various skills that teachers need to own to be effective in their class. The varieties and the differences in the categorizations of the effective teaching skills will be explained in the following part, as these characteristics over the years have left their places to the new skills that were found more effective than the former ones. New skills have been added over the former ones as scholars have found them worthy to conduct an investigation on; thus, this affected the alteration of the dynamics of these studies.

2. Literature Review

As it was mentioned in the previous lines, there have been a number of studies on this issue and in this paper, some of the major skills were seen worthy to be written about. Now, right below, the answer to the question, 'what are the characteristics of effective teaching?' will be attempted to be revealed, having surveyed the related literature.

In terms of teacher attitude and personality, it is clear that the most pleasant personalities do inspire the students more, as Cooper and McIntyre (1996: 157) ^[3] point out 'many

people believe that the teacher's personality is the most critical factor in successful teaching. If teachers have warmth, empathy, sensitivity, enthusiasm, and humour, they are much more likely to be successful than if they lack these characteristics'.

It is without a doubt that if a teacher is passionate about his job he is doing will surely encourage and inspire students to learn the subject. If a teacher shows no interest and hold a poor attitude towards teaching, then, in turn, will have no influence on the students and s/he will become a bad role model for them.

Effective teaching also considers the students' learning styles and the ability to implement these into lesson planning. Effective teachers are aware that not all the students learn in the same way. It is known that some learners are kinesthetic, some are visuals, and some are aural, etc. Considering different learning styles of students and being prepared for different learning styles will surely encourage students to learn in a way that comes quite natural to them. An effective teacher will provide a variety of options for the best learning experience. With regard to being an effective teacher, employing different models of teaching is a significant technique and can be seen as an important teacher skill.

The concept "good teaching" has been defined differently according to different characteristics that the researchers took into consideration. In Brian's paper (as cited in Zhang, n.d.) there is a distinction between the "core qualities" and the "enhancement qualities" of a good teacher. The core qualities, which Brian (n.d.) suggested were; knowledge, communication, interest and respect. The enhancement qualities that Brian (n.d.) talked about are, asking questions, answering questions, setting the right goals, good attitudes, appropriate amount of content, creating trust, creating knowledge holes to fill, bring research to classroom, understanding students' psychology and problems, time management, treat students as typical people and knowing rights of students.

It can be understood that teachers characteristics can be distinguished to a certain extend either according to the core qualities or the enhancement qualities. As pointed above; on the one hand, the core qualities can multiply within: knowledge, communication, interest and respect.

Firstly, preparation was seen one of the important skills of a good teacher. It was found important to be explained and analyzed in detail. Zhang (n.d) says that a quality of teaching begins with a solid and a mindful preparation. He also adds that a deficient preparation leads to unsuccessful or ineffective teaching in education. According to Zhang, despite the fact that the teacher might not relatively be strong in the dimensions of teaching, like interactions and communications, a well enough preparation can pave the way for a successful teaching. Zhang (n.d) also suggests that 'how considerate of the preparation of the teaching determines how much successful the teaching will be.' (p.1). That is to say, preparation is one of the important measures of being effective in teaching since a successful preparation can equally affect the effectiveness of your teaching. To put it another way, without forming the outline of your lesson, the way that you teach cannot be taken account as effective teaching as the success level of teachers depends on how their preparations are well-established. Nevertheless, the preparation is not the only characteristic; the other one is 'engaging students in learning'.

Zhang (n.d.) pointed that teachers` engaging students in learning is regarded as another crucial factor in teaching. Students are expected to participate actively in the learning process. Considering this fact, teacher's role becomes essential in getting students engaged in learning. It is believed that students can understand better and learn well when they reflect how much they learned from the teacher. Therefore, engaging students in learning is considered as an effective teaching skill that provides students opportunity to use the knowledge they gain actively. This was not the only study dealt with this subject area, there have been other studies contributed to this subject area (the features of effective teaching) and developed it with different frames. For example, McBer (2000) ^[15] provided a framework describing effective teaching skills, namely: high expectations, planning, variety of teaching strategies, pupil management and etc. The pupil management was selected to be extended respectively in the following paragraphs.

It is important to draw attention to this quote: "lighthouse effect" – being fully aware of everything that is going on in the classroom and having 360° vision" stated by McBer (2000) ^[15]. According to this statement, teachers should completely be aware of the dynamics that change in the classroom and have competence to control all of these alterations that can affect pupils' learning.

In another study conducted by Bulger *et al.* (2002) ^[2], pointed out four most important variables of teacher-effectiveness, namely, (a) Clarity, (b) Engagement, (c) Enthusiasm, (d) Outcomes. It can be figured out that the categorization is different considering effective teaching but the purpose of all these points are same as the former ones. They are put together to identify what makes a teacher effective. The variable, enthusiasm, was chosen among them to be emphasized, as follows.

Bulger *et al.* (2002) ^[2]. Point out that your students will hate to learn it on the condition that you hate to teach it. On the contrary, your students will love to learn on the condition that you love to teach it. Truly, teachers' enthusiasm seems to be the most crucial factor that has been regarded as the measurement of teachers' effectiveness. It seems to be important because of the fact that if a teacher cannot establish rapport with his/her students and cannot show his/her willingness to teach, parallelly it cannot be expected from students to love learning or approach affirmatively towards learning.

It was defined in the very early pages of this paper that throughout the decades, by the conducted research studies, the variety was brought up into this subject area and the definition of effectiveness found new forms from context to context. In the following part, it will be aimed to touch upon the students` point of view related to the components of effectiveness in teaching. For this reason, you will find different studies describing the factors that are regarded as effective teaching skills; namely, humorous, knowledgeable, organization, management of time, lecture and the classroom, involvement of students. In the following paragraphs, these effective teaching skills will be explained in detail.

It is observable that learners prefer teachers being humorous in teaching. It is apparent that teachers being friendly regarded as influential factors on teaching. Furthermore, humour, as believed, enables teachers to establish positive environment. According to students' points of view, humorous teachers are the ones who are kind-hearted, witty,

greeting, flexible, cheerful, enthusiastic, sympathetic, supportive, smiling, and they are the ones who make jokes. Teachers are expected to implement sense of humour through jokes and accept them in the classroom provided that students do not feel the sense of fear in their learning processes.

Knowledgeable- another characteristic- was described as being a teacher who should have enough and deep knowledge in the subject matter. In order to do this, teachers need to love their profession and the subject itself. Moreover, in Gurney's study (2007) ^[9], it was pointed out that reflective teachers can have pleasure in sharing the knowledge by creating a reflective classroom in which the knowledge is shared; both students and teachers can become learners who work together to reveal the world of the subject. He also states that the teacher who has passion and eager to share his knowledge without conditions will provide a basis for the effective classroom. Where there is knowledge stands; on the other side, organization stands as an important element of effective teaching. The following paragraph will be based on this concept.

Delaney *et al.* (2010: 48) ^[6] point out that:

“Students prefer instructors who are organized in their lectures and online content, in their approach to the subject matter and in their dealing with students. An organized instructor's actions include having lectures prepared; using clear visual aids; being coherent in the class, providing a course outline; and providing feedback consistently throughout the course”

When learners know what is expected from them, they will know how much time and efforts are needed. That means that learners want to be informed about what is expected from them in a clear and organized way because students want to be acknowledged about how much effort and time they will spend in the lesson. For example, students want to be given feedback regularly that enhances their learning and participation. Students also describe that teachers should prepare lesson in a well-organized way that include clear objectives and arranged activities. According to these expressions above, it can be said that teachers are expected to be prepared for every situation in the classroom. In other words, those teachers, who are unplanned, inadequate for the subject and not prepared for the lesson, are not defined as favourite teachers of the students. In short, it is suggested that if teachers are well organized, who prepare a lesson by knowing the objectives of the lesson, by arranging the activities and making considerations on the possible situations, can be considered as effective teachers. It should be given special attention to the management of time, lecture, and the classroom as well. In this paper, the need of including this skill becomes an important point.

Teachers' ability to gain control over the time, lecture and the classroom environment is so essential. Teachers are seen as detectives in the classroom who are aware what is going on during the lesson. Teachers are, in a way, the controller and the organizer of the classroom. Teachers are supposed to prevent misbehaviours in the class that pupils may tend to do. Furthermore, teachers' role is to diminish the disruptions in the classroom that may negatively affect the learning of the pupil, according to McBer (2000) ^[15].

Teachers should manage the students kindly because teachers' approach towards students is so crucial for them. The dynamics in the classroom change accordingly how the

time is managed. Those teachers who use time unwisely may not be able to establish good and memorable closure during the lesson; consequently, it decreases the effectiveness in the teaching. Teachers who are good at enhancing the learning with the combination of all these components were described as effective teachers by students.

It was given importance to the students' involvement in the learning process. Teachers are supposed to have an ability to get close to the students to encourage them to be active in learning. Involvement of students refer to how much a teacher interact with the students and treats them positively to grab their attention and make them active rather than passive in the classroom. According to these lines above, teachers can engage students by facilitating activities such as assignments, using positive feedback, asking students questions about the new topic that they are interested in, being interactive and motivating, as stated by Delaney *et al.* (2010) ^[6].

Teachers should try to get students' trust, courage them to get closer to teacher and classmates. Additionally, if teachers help learners to participate autonomously, actively and establish a warm setting for the students in the classroom, if teachers choose topics that attract learners' attention; if a teacher knows students' emotions, interests, needs and personality, then the teachers will be able to be effective in his/her teachings. All of these qualities stated above seem to be key components of being an effective teacher.

3. Some Significant Studies

As Hammond *et al.* (2005) ^[10] highlight ‘good teachers understand what students everywhere confirm: teaching is not just talking, and learning is not just listening. Effective teachers are able to figure out not only what they want to teach, but also how to do so way that students can understand and use the new information and skills’ (p.88)

A study conducted by Lupascu *et al.* (2014) ^[13] displays the significant characteristics of effective teachers from two aspects: personal and professional characteristics. Their study points out that teenage students think the effective teachers should have various traits, such as being calm, having tolerance, having sense of humour, being friendly, being well-prepared; whereas both the male and the female students showed disagreement with the features of a teacher who uses ironic language, imprecise explanations, teaching with no passion, and being over tolerant.

Another study done by Vialle and Tischler in 2009 ^[23] points out some important characteristics of the gifted teachers, as personal-social characteristics, teaching strategies/approaches, and intellectual characteristics.

Some other components of effective teachers were listed by Valica and Rohn (2013) ^[22] who highlight that effective teachers have moral and ethical responsibilities, pedagogical-psychological, didactic-methodological competences, and self-developing competence.

Ralph's study (2003) done in a Canadian university in which students from various departments, such as Physical education, Business, Sociology, and Education were asked to rank the given 32 hypothetical instructor profiles, developed by Marsh and Bailey (1993) ^[14]. The study identifies five traits of effective instructors, such as desire to develop, knowledge of material, management of the environment, commitment to learners, and collaboration

with others.

Conducted by Walker (2008) [24], a longitudinal, qualitative, quasi-research that took 15 years, discovers 12 traits of effective teachers, like preparation, affirmative attitudes, high expectations, creativity, fairness, personal touch, creating a sense of belonging, accepting mistakes, sense of humour, showing respect to students, being forgiving, and being compassionate.

Mehrbadian, *et al.* (2014) [17], investigate the features of the capable teacher from the eyes of 220 students through a questionnaire in which students reported that effective teachers are, knowledgeable (90.5%), interested in teaching (78.9%), have eloquent presentation (77.3%), accepting criticism (75.5%), and flexibility (71.4%).

Another study conducted by Delenay (2009) points out five significant features of teachers, suggested by a population of 450 students from a Canadian high school, are discovered to be knowledgeable, humorous, respectful, patient, and being organized.

In 2003, a study done by Koutsoulis in Cyprus reveals 94 traits of effective teachers in which the researcher divides the features into three major categories, such as human characteristics (ability to display understanding and teacher friendliness), communication characteristics (ability to communicate with students and to manage teacher-student relations), and teaching and production characteristics (making courses motivating and interesting). The study also reveals that successful students responded more to the teaching and production characteristics; whereas weak students acknowledged the human and communication characteristics more.

Looking at the studies conducted a couple of decades ago; it can be observed that there are some significant studies on the issue. For instance, employing observations, Medley (1979) [16] keyed out five traits to define effective teacher, such as capacity to decide, the utilization of effective methods, pleasant atmosphere creator, owner of desirable individual characteristics. Additionally, Wortuba and Wright (1975) [25] suggested the traits of an effective teacher, as follows: being enthusiastic and knowledgeable in teaching subject matter, organized presentation, being flexible in employing different teaching strategies, affirmative attitude towards learners, being fair in assessment, and being effective in communication.

A meta-analysis study done by Feldman (1988) [7] among 31 investigations in which students and teachers highlighted characteristics of good teaching and effective instruction discovered that students pointed out that the significant teachers are; being available, helpful, interesting, and having good eloquent skills.

Good and Brophy in 1994 [8] highlighted that effective teachers are described as the one who makes the most of the instructional time, provides material in the way that meets learners' needs, monitors progress, and provides chances for learners to apply newly developed skills and concepts.

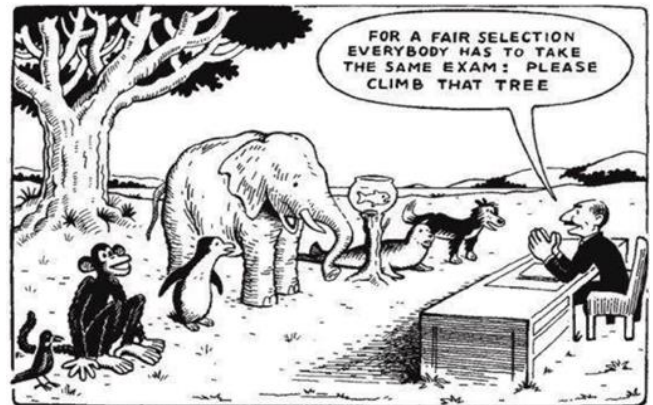
According to Cotton (1995) [4] who suggested that teachers are effective on the condition that s/he pre-plans curricula, who provides definite expectations for learners, who adopts students to lessons with care, and who are distinct and focused in his/her instruction.

At last, it is worth mentioning the requirements of humanistic language teaching. According to Stevick (1990) [20], the requirements of a humanistic language teaching are as follows:

- A firm command of the language being taught;
- A proper training in language teaching methodology;
- A proper understanding of teacher's emotional intelligence;
- A realistic understanding of learner's language needs; and
- An understanding of learner's cognitive and affective requirements, personality, etc,

To illustrate this concept in education better, I would like to share the picture below that tells a lot about the concept of humanism in education:

To illustrate this concept in education better, I would like to share the picture below that tells a lot about the concept of humanism in education:



(Picture credit: <http://www.jeremychin.com/thegoods/tickled/tickled-449>)

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, as it is presented, being an effective teacher is really a hard task and it goes through difficult processes. Effective teachers are required to own not only great personal skills, but also professional skills. Despite the fact that having deep knowledge in the content which is taught is quite essential, it cannot be sufficient for being an effective teacher. As the related literature and the studies show, (classroom and time) management skills, organizational skills, communication skills, and teaching strategies are what count for being effective in teaching. As it is presented in this paper, high quality teaching and teachers are broadly acknowledged to be one of the significant factors in achieving successful learning outcomes. To be able to achieve this, it is quite necessary to have teachers who have fully developed pedagogical knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and values. For effective teaching and successful outcomes, a teacher should reach his/her full potential both as an individual and in terms of professionalism. To conclude, it is worth bearing in mind a significant study done by Stronge and Tucker (cited in Holland, 2003) [11] which points out that the students, who went through three straight years with an effective teacher, displayed significantly better achievement (60%) than those unlucky ones with an ineffective teacher. It is obvious that an ineffective teacher may potentially spoil a learner's possibility of becoming academically prosperous.

5. References

1. Brain M. (n.d). Emphasis on Teaching. What is good teaching? Retrieved from <http://www.bygps.com/eot/eot1.htm>
2. Bulger SM, Mohr DJ, Walls RT. Stack the deck in

- favour of your students by using the four acs of effective teaching. *Effective Teaching*, 2002a; 5(2). Retrieved from <http://uncw.edu/cte/et/articles/bulger/>
3. Cooper P, McIntyre D. *Effective Teaching and Learning: Teachers' and Students' Perspective*. Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996.
 4. Cotton K. *Effective schooling practices: A research synthesis. 1995 Update*. School Improvement Research Series. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995.
 5. Delaney JG. *High School Students Perceive Effective Teachers*, 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.mun.ca/educ/faculty/mwatch>.
 6. Delaney J, Johnson A, Johnson T, Treslan D. *Students' perceptions of effective teaching in higher education*. St. John's, NL: Distance Education and Learning Technologies, 2010. Retrieved from http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference/Resource_library/handouts/2825_1_10H.pdf
 7. Feldman KA. *Effective college teaching from the students' and faculty's view: matched or mismatched priorities*. *Research in Higher Education*, 1988; 28:291-344.
 8. Good T, Brophy J. *Looking in classrooms* (6th ed). New York: Harper Collins, 1994.
 9. Gurney F. *Five factors for effective teaching*. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*. 2007; 4(2):89-98.
 10. Hammond LD, Bransford J, LePage P. *Preparing teachers for a changing world: what teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 2005; p.88.
 11. Holland GR. *To Build a Better Teacher: The Emergence of a Competitive Education Industry*. Westport: Praeger, 2003.
 12. Koutsoulis M. *The characteristics of the effective teacher in Cyprus public high school*. A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, Illinois. 2003; 21-25.
 13. Lupascu A, Panisoara G, Panisoara IO. *Characteristics of effective teacher*. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014; 127:534-538.
 14. Marsh HW, Bailey M. *Multidimensionality of students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness: A profile analysis*. *Journal of Higher Education*. 1993; 64:1-18.
 15. McBer H. *Research into teacher effectiveness. A model of teacher effectiveness*, 2000. Retrieved from http://ateneu.xtec.cat/wikiform/wikiexport/_media/form_gest/equips_directius/st02/bloc_5/5_rr216investigacio_professors_eficients.pdf
 16. Medley D. *The effectiveness of teachers*. In P. L. Peterson, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Research on teaching: Concepts, findings, and implications* (pp. 11-27). Berkeley, CA:McCutchan, 1979.
 17. Mehrabian F, Karimi Z, Dadashkhah Z, Rafizadeh A, Slemi K. *Characteristics of the capable teacher from the viewpoint of the students at Faculty of Health, Guilan University of Medical Sciences in 2013*. *Educ Res Med Sci*. 2014; 2(3):26-29.
 18. *Oxford dictionaries*. Oxford University Press. *Ineffectiveness: not producing any significant or desired effect*, 2018. Retrieved from http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/ineffective?q=ineffectiveness#ineffective__7
 19. Ralph EG. (ed.) *Effective college teaching: Fresh insights and exemplary practices*. New York: Nova Science, 2003.
 20. Stevick EW. *Humanism in language teaching. A critical perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
 21. Stronge JH, Tucker PD. *Handbook on Teacher Evaluation*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, 2003.
 22. Valica M, Rohn T. *Development of the Professional Competence in the Ethics Teachers*. 4th International Conference on New Horizons in Education. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2013; 106:865-872.
 23. Vialle W, Tischler K. *Gifted students' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers*. In D. Wood (Eds.), *The Gifted Challenge: Challenging the Gifted* (pp. 115-124). Merrylands, Australia: NSWAGTC Inc, 2009.
 24. Walker RJ. *12 Characteristics of an Effective Teacher*. NC: Lulu Publishing, 2008.
 25. Wortruba TR, Wright PL. *How to develop a teacher-rating instrument: A research approach*. *Journal of Higher Education*. 1975; 46:653-663.
 26. Zhang D. (n.d). *What forms good teaching?* Retrieved from <http://users.monash.edu.au/~dengs/teaching/GCHE/part2-1.pdf>