

What Makes a Good Teacher?

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Abstract The introduction of the new Teacher Career Model, the School Inspectorate and the Complex School Assessment imply the basic question “What makes a good teacher?” The scholars have been focusing on the issue for a long period of time. The target of the recent studies is the teachers’, school principals’ and the teacher students’ beliefs. The primary and secondary school students’ beliefs have been neglected. This study presents the results of a research in which we explore the secondary school students’ expectations of a good teacher. We carried out an anonymous questionnaire survey and asked the students to write an essay on the good teacher. The results show that the students assess their teachers in a lot of aspects. The categories of the questionnaire and the essays reveal certain personality traits and the eight teaching competences of the recently introduced Teacher Career Model. The students would like to have teachers who put a lot of efforts into helping students with acquisition. Furthermore, personal attention, dealing with the students’ problems, fair treatment and showing respect to each other take the priority in their beliefs. The results of this study regarded as the starting point of a bigger-scale research can contribute to the development of the graduate and postgraduate teacher training system in Hungary.

Keywords Teacher, Personality Traits, Teaching Competence, Students’ Beliefs, Professional Development

1. Introduction

The new Teacher Career Model was introduced in Hungary in 2011 by the Law of Public Education (Nemzeti Köznevelési Törvény). The Model is based on the basic teaching competences and gives the criteria of the good teachers at five levels. As the Model represents a new concept of assessing Hungarian teachers, several questions have been raised: What makes a good teacher? What are the most reliable aspects of the teachers’ assessment? How can we decide whether somebody is a high-quality teacher or not? The purpose of this study is to develop lists of characteristics of good teachers by examining the beliefs of the 11th graders

at our school and compare them to the criteria stated in the new Teacher Career Model and the Assessment Manual of the Hungarian Teachers and Schools. Students’ ideas are important for us. If we, teachers know our students’ views, we can use these informations in our self-assessment and professional development. On the basis of the scientific literature review we can say the lists of characteristics describing a good teacher can be divided into two groups. One focuses on the teacher’s personality traits. The other group emphasizes the teachers’ abilities, skills and professional competences. The students’, the parents’, the teachers’, the teacher students’ or the school principals’ beliefs are different concerning what makes a good teacher. Furthermore, students’ views vary and were influenced by their age, self-concept, motivation and social background. This suggests that the issue is very complex. We should accept the point of view by Boreczky Ágnes who claims that the roles of the teacher and the expectations of them are constantly changing. They are becoming more and more differentiated parallel to the changes in society [1]. In this respect, a good teacher is someone by whom the students’ reality transmitted could coincide with the students’ background culture.

2. Scientific Literature Review

In this part of the essay we are focusing on the scientific literature describing the ideal teachers. If we go back in time, we can find lists of characteristics emphasizing the roles of teachers and the personality traits referring to the ideal teachers. The earliest research dates back to the 1930’s conducted in Germany. After interviewing 10000 students, the researchers drew the conclusion that the most respected teachers are joyful, patient, friendly, understanding, objective and fair in assessing students’ achievements. The researchers continued collecting the personality traits. According to a comparative research in the Federal Republic of Germany, optimism, objectivity, patience, confidence, elegant and sportish appearance were considered to be the most important traits. The Polish believed the professional knowledge, high level of ethics, honesty, confidence, consistency, fairness, self-command and optimism made the

good teacher. The Hungarians claimed that professional knowledge, general erudition, love for children, conscience, sense of vocation, meeting high-standards, exemplary behavior, sense of pedagogy, optimism, being suggestive were essential traits for good teachers [2].

Tóth Albert collected the personality traits which make successful teachers as leaders. Six-seven-year primary-school students wrote a composition with the title "My role model". Only 10, 2 % (127 children) of the students wrote that their role model was their teacher. These students listed the following traits: 1. love for children 2. friendliness 3. objectivity, 4. teaching well, wide-scale knowledge 5. being strict, demanding and consistent 6. being joyful 7. being good-looking, elegant. Teachers were interviewed as well. In their opinions, being open-minded and honest, love for their job, consistency, being punctual, well-organized were the most important characteristics for a good teacher [3].

A research conducted between teachers and students in 1998 revealed that a good teacher is friendly but strict, demanding but understanding, consistent, objective, unprejudiced, direct, patient, respectful, well-educated. He is a friend, a master, and has excellent subject knowledge [4].

Boreczky Ágnes classified two types of teachers at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of 1990s. Both types were described on the basis of the teachers' roles and their personality traits. One of the types was the old "scholar teacher" who was the expert of his subject, who had authority, position and who was confident, objective, kept the distance and was able to maintain the discipline. The other type was the teacher with the views of reform pedagogy. He was described as nice, patient and friendly. The research conducted in the 1990s confirmed the existence of the two types but some changes were detected such as upgrading professional knowledge and the role of the teacher as an expert in his subject. Setting a good example for the students remained very important. A new research confirmed Boreczky's conclusions that the changes in society brought about the changes in the roles of the teachers [5].

G. Donáth Blanka explored the personality traits necessary for conducting group work successfully. Her studies showed the differences between the samples taken in a closed and in an open group. If the sample covered a large number of students of different ages, the results proved to be surprisingly unified: deep professional knowledge, deep interest in the students, sense of understanding and sense of humor made the basic personality traits of the good teachers. The results were different in a closed group. In that group, the students' self-image took the priority and it had a deep impact on their relationship with other people. Successful teacher was thought to be socially positive, consistent, and mature but he was not stiff. He was able to set a good example for children and find the balance between his communication and activating students in a particular situation by being restrictive. In addition, he was able to energize his students to develop the students' intellectual,

moral, artistic attitudes and social responsibility by being flexible and lively [6].

Bagdy Emőke described different levels of teachers' roles. The sociological level is the school, the organization where the teacher works and where he contributes to the development of the organization. The level of social psychology is the recognition of the dynamics of the staff, the classes and the groups. The third level is the maintenance and development of the teacher-student relationship. According to Bagdy, the globalized information society gives the prospective of a new teacher type who is dynamic, dedicated to develop, innovative and helpful, has managerial view and is able to create trustful atmosphere [7].

The results of the former studies have a common implication. They say that all teachers' roles and personality traits are changing depending on the socio-economical changes. Mihály Ottó [8] claims that the mobility of the teachers' roles has grown in the last decades. A teacher's role has a polistruktur: a leader, an information provider, an organizer-manager, a participant, and advisor, a partner and helper. The structure is changing very quickly.

As for the results of the international literature are considered, there is a group of scholars who emphasize the importance of the personality traits. According to Martin [9], an average teacher is obedient, respectful, responsible, realistic, down-to-earth and empathic. He is able to work, all the rules are clear for him, loves consistency, computability. Rushton, Morgan and Richard [10] studied the American pedagogical elite. The authors describe them as idealists, advocates who are proud of their identity. They are energetic, enthusiastic, extrovert, optimistic, spontaneous and adaptive.

Due to being informed about the results of American researches, in the 90s, more intention was paid to the teachers in Hungary as effective human resource contributing to the social development. The origins of this kind of interest can be found in US. According to Linda Darling-Hammond, an effective teacher makes students involved in active learning process via debates, discussions, research, writing essays, assessment, experiments, making models or products in the form of searching for information, giving information and practice. He or She sets high standards clearly, gives constant feedback on the students' development, plans the learning environment consciously, makes parents involved in their children's learning process, cooperates with his or her colleagues and the staff. All these competences must be taken into consideration when it comes to organizing teacher training. These competences make future teachers active experts in their career who will be able to do routines, acquire and use new strategies in situations where old procedures do not work. Teacher training universities are not able to teach everything to teacher students, therefore their duty is to prepare them for life-long learning [11].

Although some American scholars tried to explore the factors defining good and bad teacher, it turned out that general competences, intelligence, subject knowledge, the

level of qualification, the length of professional experience do not show correspondence with the achievements of the students. As the American society has been always conscious about the accountability in all aspects of life, the effectiveness of teachers' work became the most focused issue. It also referred to the education. It was easy to understand that the personality traits were too complex to classify teachers on the basis of certain criteria. New standards of quality were needed: teaching competences. This view can be found in the research conducted by Sági Matild, who studied how schools can make an effect on students' achievement. As she extended her attention to the teachers' activities, she published results about an effective teacher in the school principal's opinion:

1. He must develop the students' personality
2. He must deal with the students' personal needs
3. He must be adaptive in teaching students with different needs
4. He must be able to refresh his professional knowledge and skills
5. His students school results are very good
6. He must be able to keep the discipline
7. He must be punctual on his lessons
8. He should solve problems successfully
9. He should be in good terms with his colleagues
10. He is willing to take up extra duties with pleasure [12]

In 2000 s, the duality of the theories was regarded as a way to organize good teachers' characteristics remained in the work by Beishuizen et al. The authors introduced the notions of the Personality View and the Ability View [13]. The Personality View identifies personality components and emphasizes that a good teacher has balanced and mature personality with characteristics such as kindness and enthusiasm. The Ability View focuses on professional knowledge and defines a good teacher by skills, knowledge and experience [14].

Korthagen pointed out that we should avoid commitment to either on personality traits or teaching competences. These approaches are oversimplified since a teacher's personality is complex and unique. Korthagen's Onion Model demonstrates the levels of the personality. The outer layer shows the direct interaction between the environment and behavior. The inner layers reveal more differentiated perspectives. Each perspective gives a different answer to the question "What makes a good teacher?" The concept enables us to take different perspectives into consideration at the same time [15].

Falus Iván says that a teacher needs to have some basic personal characteristics: unconditional acceptance, self-acceptance, empathy, full attention to the student, emotional sensitivity, and credibility. Based on the studies by Sallai Éva, he confirms that communication skills, rich choice of behavior, quick recognition of situations, forming situations in a constructive way, conflict management, non-violence and creativity, cooperation with parents,

students and colleagues, the ability to analyze pedagogical situations and mental health are essential for being a good teacher. Besides, certain practical skills are important. They are classified in three groups: practical skills of planning, practical skills of the interactive period and practical skills of observation, analysis and evaluation [16]. On the footpath of Korthagen, Falus combines certain personality traits with skills in his theory and tries to dissolve the contradiction between the Personality View and the Ability View.

In 2010s, some new theories were emerged as to give a more detailed picture of a good teacher. They point out that the value added to the student's achievement by the teacher's work does not correlate to the teacher's qualification, the length of his practice and the number of professional development courses he had taken. It mostly correlates to intelligence, subject knowledge and teaching competences. The personality traits such as being caring, motivated, enthusiastic, cooperation with people in work correlate significantly to the effectiveness of the teacher as far as the student's achievements are concerned. These results have made the researchers examine the teacher's characteristics in a much broader context which includes the teacher's professional knowledge, skills, intelligence, interpersonal relationship with parents, colleagues and the principal and caring attitude towards his students [17].

Sahin and Cokadar's theory emphasizes the importance of the teacher's roles and make a distinction between general personal, affective roles towards students and professional roles [18]. In 2014, Ciascai and Vlad focus on the aspects of education activity, function in social group and social responsibility [19]. The function in a social group and taking social responsibility calls our attention to a new aspect of good teaching the purpose of which is to maintain good student-teacher relationship.

After the general review, we should also examine the research results focusing on the students' beliefs concerning a good teacher. Students' beliefs are very important because they get along with their teachers every day and they can express their own opinions on good and bad teaching as well. These opinions can make the teachers understand their students' realities and change their everyday practice. According to Bullock, different student groups rate the importance of certain characteristics in a different way. Personality traits, ability and student-teacher relationship emerge with varying importance. The importance of certain characteristics is different depending on age, students' academic self-concept and motivation, background and experiences [20].

The review of the literature makes us draw the conclusion that the question "What makes the good teacher?" is rather complex. The answer depends on not only the people who are asked but their social background and the time when they are asked. The teachers' personality traits, professional skills are as important as their attempts to maintain good student-teacher relationship. This study focuses on the students' beliefs on these three aspects.

3. Materials and Methods

The research recently conducted focuses on the secondary school students' beliefs about good teachers. The goals of the research are:

1. to find out what makes a good teacher according to the students
2. to make the students aware how important it is to assess their teachers' quality on a wide basis of criteria
3. to compare the results with the teaching competences of the Teacher Career Model and the criteria of the Assessment Manual of the Hungarian Teachers and Schools.

The hypotheses are:

1. The students are aware of the fact that characteristics of a good teacher can be described on the basis of a great number of aspects.
2. The students add more aspects to those listed in the questionnaire survey.
3. The aspects formed by the students coincide with teaching competences listed in the Teacher Career Model.
4. The categories found in the Assessment Manual of the Hungarian Teachers and Schools [21] coincide with the categories of the student questionnaire survey.

The sample was not representative. The sample consisted of two groups of students. A class of grade 11 students (22) from a prestigious secondary school located in the seat of Heves County filled in a questionnaire. Another class of grade 11 students (21) from the same school wrote a composition.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. In the first one, the students had to rate the importance of 32 categories (personality traits and teacher's activities) on a Likert scale (1=the least important, 5=the most important). The categories were given by us. The format of the questionnaire was like:

What makes a good teacher? Rank the following categories on a scale of importance.

He/ She is objective. 1 2 3 4 5

He/ She is consistent. 1 2 3 4 5

This part gave us quantitative data. We calculated the average of each category and then we made a rank of the characteristics. In the second section of the questionnaire, the students had a possibility to form their own ideas about an ideal teacher in the form of a written composition. We gave the chance to our students to add more aspects of a good teacher. The number of the words was not limited. We analyzed the composition and searched for categories describing a good teacher which were not mentioned in the first section. If the students used the same category given in the first section, we did not count it.

Another class of grade 11 students (21) wrote a composition with the title "What makes a good teacher?" There were no prompts for the students. They could express their ideas freely. We read through the compositions and wrote down the characteristics the students mentioned. Each

characteristic was given a column and characteristics which were repeated were sorted into each column. We repeated this action until all compositions had been read through. The data got from the composition provided quantitative data for our research. We used the frequency of the characteristics to make a rank of importance.

The study was conducted during class time. Both groups had 45-45 minutes to do the questionnaire and to write the composition. Students were told not to include their names.

4. Results

The first table shows the categories describing a good teacher ranked on the first five places. The second table shows the categories ranked on the last seven places.

Table 1. The most important categories in the questionnaire

rank	category	mean
1.	makes the students understand the teaching material	4,59
2.	objective	4,50
3.	good-looking	4,18
4.	pays attention to the students, helps with their problems	3,64
5.	encourages the students	3,59

Table 2. The least important categories in the questionnaire

rank	category	mean
26.	checks the students achievement regularly	3,59
27.	consistent	3,31
28.	disciplines the students very often	3,13
29.	thinks that keeping the school rules is the most important	2,68
30.	pays an exceptional attention to the students who are very talented	2,54
31.	the students play a lot on his lessons	2,50
32.	gives a lot of homework	2,27

According to the students, a good teacher makes them understand the teaching material, is good-looking and objective, pays attention to the students, helps with their problems and encourages them. They do not think that regular checking the students' achievement, being consistent, disciplining them, keeping the school rules, dealing with the most talented students, playing on the lessons and giving a lot of homework are important.

In the second section of the questionnaire, there were some categories which did not appear in the first section: devotion, passion, sharing the teacher's experiences with the students, the similarity of the teacher's and the students' beliefs, the teacher's respectful attitude towards the student's beliefs, loud and articulate speech, being goodhearted, finishing lessons on time, keeping to the point in his explanations and being realistic. These categories appeared only once.

All these categories justify the first hypothesis that the

students assess their teachers regarding a lot of aspects. However, the categories given in the first section of the questionnaire (32) helped the students in their decisions. The second hypothesis has been justified too: the students mention additional categories for describing a good teacher, although each new category was mentioned only once by different students (10 categories-10 students). In the second section of the questionnaire, most of the students repeated the categories from the first section. We can claim that they were influenced by the aspects given in the first section.

The second goal of this research was to find out how the categories ranked in the questionnaire cover the professional requirements stated in the Teacher Career Model. The model lists 8 teaching competences:

1. Professional tasks, disciplinary, subject and content knowledge.
2. Planning pedagogical processes and activities, reflective learning
3. Supporting learning
4. Developing the students' personality, individual treatment, integration of students with special needs and students of socially disadvantaged background
5. Supporting the development of sense of community, respecting social and cultural differences, developing the class as a community
6. Continuous analysis and assessment of pedagogical processes and the development of students' personality
7. Professional communication and cooperation, solving problems together
8. Professional commitment and responsibility for professional development [22].

In the first and the second section of the questionnaire, the students ranked all together 42 categories. 8 categories referred to personality traits. We did not relate them to the teaching competences. The remaining 36 categories were the indicators of the 8 teaching competences. The third table shows the teaching competences ranked by the students filling in the questionnaire.

Table 3. The most important competences

What makes a good teacher?		
rank	competence	frequency
1.	3.	10
2.	4.	7
2.	6.	7
3.	7.	5

All these data justify the 3. hypothesis: the categories mentioned by the students cover all 8 teaching competences. The most preferred competences are: 3. competence (Supporting learning), 4. competence (Developing the students' personality), 6. competence (Continuous analysis and assessment of pedagogical processes and the students' personal development 7. competence (Professional communication and devotion, solving problems).

The next step was to compare the categories with those of the Assessment Manual of the Hungarian Teachers and Schools. The fourth table shows the categories of the 2. Supplement of the Manual and the categories evaluated by the students in the questionnaire. The categories in the questionnaire contain all 32 categories which we gave to the students.

Table 4. The assessment manual and the questionnaire categories

	Assessment manual	Categories in the questionnaire
1.	he is determined and suggestive on the lessons	devotion, passion
2.	the structure of his lessons is logically well-constructed	the student knows how to prepare for the next lesson, the lessons are full of varied activities
3.	sets high but achievable standards	sets high- but achievable standards, student knows how to prepare for the next lesson
4.	checks the students' homework regularly	gives a lot of homework, the student knows how to prepare for the next lesson, the teacher is consistent
5.	pays exceptional attention to talented students	pays exceptional attention to talented students
6.	gives extra time to the slow students to practice	gives extra time to the slow students to practice
7.	-	respects the students' beliefs
8.	there is discipline on his lessons	keeps discipline, he is consistent
9.	-	respects students, encourages them, sets a positive example for them
10.	-	he is objective
11.	declares clear expectations before oral presentation and tests	his expectations are clear, he is consistent
12.	always checks and corrects the tests in time	he is always punctual
13.	he is helpful on the lessons	pays extra attention to slow students
14.	he is always helpful out of classes	pays extra attention to slow and more talented students

The categories of the questionnaire with the exception of three cover the categories of the Manual. These three categories (respects and encourages the students, gives a positive example to the students and is objective) are not included in the Assessment Manual. The second conclusion is that 3, 4, 6, and 7, competences are the most important in both documents. On the basis of this conclusion, the 4th hypothesis has been justified, such as the categories of the Assessment Manual with the exception of three categories coincide with the categories ranked and added by the students.

When we got to this point in our survey, we had to face with a dilemma. All the data we got from the questionnaire justified our hypotheses, but what if the students were strongly influenced by the questionnaire itself. How could we get a more objective and reliable picture about the good teacher? At this point, we decided to ask students of another class (21 people). We went into the classroom, sorted out

clean sheets of paper and asked the students to write a short composition about the good teacher. We did not give them any guidelines for the composition.

The students (21) mentioned 40 categories in their compositions. There were 13 personal traits. The remaining 27 categories were compared to the competences of the Teacher Career Model. The categories ranked as the most important were:

Table 5. The most important categories in the compositions

rank	category	frequency
1.	supports learning	10
2.	is objective in assessment motivates the students	10
3.	maintains the discipline prestigious	6
4.	loves his job	5
5.	consistent	4

All the 8 teaching competences were implied in the categories mentioned by the students in their compositions. The sixth table shows the teaching competences on the rank of importance.

Table 6. The most important competences in the compositions

What makes a good teacher?		
rank	competence	number
1.	3.	7
2.	4.	7
2.	7.	5
3.	8.	4
	6.	4

The most significant competences were supporting learning (3. competence), Developing the students' personality, individual treatment, integration of students with special needs and students of socially disadvantaged background (4. competence), Professional communication and cooperation, solving problems together, (7. competence), Professional commitment and responsibility for professional development (8. competence), Continuous analysis and assessment of pedagogical processes and the development of students' personality (6. competence).

Table 7. The compositions and the questionnaire

rank	composition (1-5. place)	questionnaire (1-5. place)
1.	understanding	supports learning
2.	helpful	good-looking
3.	supports learning	objective in assessment

4.	objective in the assessment	helps the students to solve their problems
5.	motivates the students	encourages students
6.	strict	has a good sense of humor
7.	is able to keep the discipline	
8.	prestigious	

If we compare the most important categories including personality traits of the students' survey questionnaire and those of the compositions, we can see that supporting learning, being objective in assessment and being helpful were all present in the composition and the questionnaire at one of the first five places. The students named mainly the same categories in both cases. Supporting learning (3. competence) was the most important category. Professional communication, Development of the students personality (7. competence), Development of the students' personality, individual treatment, integration of students with special needs and students of socially disadvantaged background (4. competence) and Professional commitment, responsibility for professional development (8. competence) were also the parts of the students' expectations towards a good teacher.

5. Summary

After analyzing the results of the questionnaire survey and the written compositions, it is obvious that the students assess their teachers in different aspects. Three aspects evolving from the scientific literature review such as personality traits, 8 teaching competences and factors contributing to good teacher-student relationship which have been detected in the survey and the compositions. Supporting learning (3. competence) is the most significant category. Therefore the students need teachers who put a lot of efforts into helping students with acquisition. Furthermore, personal attention to students and willingness to help them, fair treatment, and respect to each other take priority in the teacher-student relationship.

The basic teaching competences of the Teacher Career Model and the indicators of the Assessment Manual of the Hungarian Teachers and Schools can be detected in the results of both the questionnaire survey and in the written compositions. Hopefully, by filling in the survey and writing the composition, students have become more conscious about the fact that their assessment is very important for their teachers. The widespread use of the questionnaire survey or the written composition could be advisable to make students prepare for the role of their teacher's assessors. Both students and their teachers will benefit from it.

6. Conclusions

Our study has covered approaches towards the criteria of the good teachers. The review of the research literature

proved to give a wide view of different approaches emphasizing either personality traits or teaching competences. The topic is relevant and requires public interest. The former studies focused on teachers', school principals', and teacher students' beliefs. The students' beliefs have not been given so much scientific interest. Our study concentrates on the students' beliefs about the good teacher. Although it is not representative, and we should admit that the type of the school, social factors and the age of the students can modify the results, it can be the starting point of a thinking process. It will be worthy carrying out a bigger-scale research and using the results in the long-term process of rethinking the graduate and postgraduate teacher training system.

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