

English Teachers' Conception of the Good Teacher

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Abstract: This study explored English teachers' conceptions of the good teacher. Data for the study were obtained from a sample of 57 teachers of English drawn from several high schools in Addis Ababa. The data collection procedure involved asking teachers to write down the attributes that they thought are associated with successful teachers. The collected data were categorized in terms of whether they emphasized the behavioral, cognitive, or affective dimension of teaching. The study revealed that teachers are more likely to describe the attributes of the good teacher with behavioral terms. The behavioural aspect of teaching dealt with both specific teacher competencies and broader characteristics that are thought to underlie such competencies. Good teachers were perceived as task-oriented and are, therefore, well-organized, well-prepared and punctual for classes. Furthermore, the data suggested that successful teachers are those who manage to develop a relationship with students that is not stressful and that is family-like in the sense that they help, encourage and motivate students to achieve better. Definitions of the good teacher that emphasised intellectual capacity and professional competence represented the second most frequent kind of description of the effective teacher. Effective teachers were also perceived to be those that know a great deal about the subject they teach, and who constantly strive to learn more about their subject. Moreover, respondents appeared to describe successful teachers in generic terms in that they used concepts and traits that apply to all subjects as opposed to subject-specific variables dealing with language teaching and learning. Finally, the article offers a brief discussion of the extent to which the results obtained are consistent with relevant literature concerning teachers' and students' conceptions of the good teacher.

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Introduction

One overwhelming finding that emerged from research in education is that teacher characteristics represent a critical context variable that influences student learning (Dunkin, 1974). As a result, there has been a longstanding research tradition in the field of education which is characterised by the search for the qualities of an effective teacher. Work along this line is based on the assumption that there was a 'best' way to teach, and a solid understanding of this would then lead to a situation where teachers know how to be effective. Medley (1979) identified four phases in the history of empirical research on teacher effectiveness. The phases appear to represent a continuous shift in the measures and definitions of effective teaching. The first phase viewed effectiveness in teaching as an outcome of certain personality traits or characteristics of the teacher. The second generation of research on teaching assumed effectiveness to be a consequence of the teaching methods employed, while in the third phase, research was aimed at establishing the relationship between what the teacher does in the classroom and pupil learning. The last phase of research was based on the conception of effectiveness as a function of the ability of the teacher to master and use a repertoire of competencies. A more recent review of research on effective teaching focused on five basic aspects of teachers: teacher styles, teacher interactions, teacher characteristics, teacher competencies and teacher effects (Ornstein, 1995).

Research on teaching style has dealt with a range of dimensions including pattern of behaviour, mode of performance, and attitude toward self and others. Rosenshine (1979) defined teacher style in terms of content covered by students, time spent on relevant academic tasks, and quality of instruction as measured by students' achievement. He concluded that 'direct instruction' is more effective than other approaches in terms of yielding better student performance in reading and mathematics in earlier grades. Direct instruction in Rosenshine's (1979) opinion, has been conceived as involving the following:

...teaching activities focused on academic matters where goals are clear to students, time allocated for instruction is sufficient and continuous, coverage of content is extensive, the performance of students is monitored, questions are at a low cognitive level and students produce many correct responses, and feedback to students is immediate and academically oriented (P.38).

However, it should be noted that the conclusion about the superiority of direct instruction has been criticized as too simplistic by some researchers. Peterson (1979), for instance, argued that direct instruction may not be effective in achieving certain educational objectives and with certain kinds of students.

Other researchers have examined teaching effectiveness in terms of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Research along this line suggests that effective teaching is associated with a democratic style as opposed to an authoritarian one (Flanders, 1965). Another strand of research on interaction focused on how teachers treat students for whom they hold different expectations. Research on teacher expectations is based on the assumption that teachers communicate their expectations of students through verbal and non-verbal cues. These expectations affect their interactions with students which in turn affects the performance of students (Brophy and Good, 1974). Successful teachers are thought to have high expectations for their students. They also interact with their students in an enthusiastic and optimistic way. They are believed to be realistic about the potential differences between high and low achievers and recognize that teachers who maintain a rigid or stereotyped perception of students are likely to have a damaging effect on the performance and self-worth of their students (Ornstein, 1995).

The greatest amount of the literature on teaching effectiveness reflects research efforts aimed at establishing teacher characteristics that constitute successful teaching. In fact, work along this line has led to the identification of a range of teacher behaviors and attitudes which are thought to lead to increased student academic achievement. For instance, review of research on teacher characteristics by Ornstein (1995) suggests that researchers have used literally thousands of descriptors to define the good teacher over the years. Attempts to organise the numerous teacher behaviours deemed desirable by researchers into manageable lists have produced a variety of categories of characteristics that deal with the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills involved in teaching. After reviewing and synthesizing some 50 years of research, Barr (1958) listed 12 characteristics of successful teachers. The following list, despite its age, continues to be regarded as the most comprehensive and useful definition of the characteristics of effective teachers:

1. Resourcefulness. Originality, creativeness, initiative, imagination, adventurousness, progressiveness.
2. Intelligence. Foresight, intellectual acuity, understanding, mental ability, intellectual capacity, common sense.
3. Emotional stability. Poise, self-control, steadfastness, sobriety, dignity, non-neuroticism, emotional maturity, adjustment, constancy, loyalty, easy-going realism in facing life, not excitable, stable, integrated character.
4. Considerateness. Appreciativeness, kindness, friendliness, courteousness, sympathy, tact, good-naturedness, helpfulness, patience, politeness, thoughtfulness, tolerance.
5. Buoyancy. Optimism, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, gregariousness, fluency, talkativeness, sense of humor, pleasantness, carefreeness, vivaciousness, alertness, animation, idealism, articulateness, expensiveness, wit.
6. Objectivity. Fairness, impartiality, open-mindedness, freedom from prejudice, sense of evidence.

7. Drive. Physical vigor, energy, perseverance, ambition, industry, endurance, motivation, purposefulness, speediness, zealousness, quickness.
8. Dominance. Self- confidence, forcefulness, decisiveness, courageousness, independence, insensitiveness to social approval, self-sufficiency, determination, thick-skinnedness, self-reliance, self-assertiveness.
9. Attractiveness. Dress, physique, freedom from physical defects, personal magnetism, neatness, cleanliness, posture, personal charm, appearance.
10. Refinement. Good taste, modesty, morality, conventionality, culture, polish, well-readness.
11. Cooperativeness. Friendliness, easy-goingness, geniality, generosity, adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness, trustfulness, warm heartedness, unselfishness, charitableness.
12. Reliability. Accuracy, dependability, honesty, punctuality, responsibility, conscientiousness, painstakingness, trustworthiness, consistency, sincerity.

Perhaps partly in response to the lack of agreement in defining teacher characteristics, some researchers (e.g. Medley et al, 1984) recommend the use of the term teacher competencies. One important feature of teacher competencies is that it deals with what the teacher does in the classroom and with specific, discrete behaviours as opposed to broad characteristics or teaching patterns (Ornstein, 1995). The specific variables associated with teacher competence include being a good manager, using systematic instruction techniques, knowing one's subject matter, preventing discipline problems and being task-oriented (Medley et al, 1984).

Research that focused on measures of student outcomes or achievements has revealed several variables associated with effective teaching. According to Rosenshine and Furst (1971), the following five teacher processes are likely to lead to positive outcomes or student gains:

1. Clarity of teacher's presentation and ability to organize classroom activities;
2. Variability of media, materials, and activities used by the teacher;
3. Enthusiasm, defined in terms of the teacher's movement, voice inflection, etc.
4. Task orientation or businesslike teacher behaviours, structured routines, and an academic focus;
5. Student opportunity to learn, that is, the teacher's coverage of the material or content in class on which students are later tested.

While much of the research on teaching comes from what is often known as the process-product research, there is now an increased understanding among educators that a more complete knowledge of how teaching affects student achievement calls for a deeper understanding of the thought processes and belief systems of the main actors i.e. students and teachers. Wittrock (1986) stressed that a cognitive model of teaching which takes into account the perceptions, attitudes, value systems and personal philosophy of teachers and students is likely to lead to a deeper understanding of the effect of teaching on students. Such a shift away from the behaviourist model of teaching has prompted a range of studies that sought to explore the belief systems of teachers and students (Orton, 1996; Borg, 2001; Raths, 2001).

There have also been some studies that looked at the issue of effective teaching from learners' and teachers' perspective (Freeman, 1996; Bailey, 1996; Nunan, 1996). It is argued that investigating the characteristics of the teacher from the student's perspective is a legitimate undertaking since the learner's perception of what constitutes a good teacher is seen as a critical variable determining the effect of teacher characteristics on student learning. Thus, some studies examined the views of students about what constitutes a good teacher. In such studies, students were asked about the kind of teachers they liked and from whom they could learn best. An earlier review by Bernard (1965) shows that pupils in first to eighth grade considered the following characteristics as desirable:

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- Good teachers have a democratic and cooperative attitude.
 - They are kindly toward and considerate of individuals.
 - They are patient.
 - Their interests are varied.
 - They are pleasing in appearance and manner.
 - They are fair and impartial.
 - They have a sense of humour.
 - They are consistent in behaviour and have good dispositions.
 - They take an interest in pupils' problems.
 - They are open-minded and flexible.
 - They make use of recognition and praise.
 - They are unusually capable in their subjects. (p. 470)

It is also interesting to note that high school students mentioned similar teacher characteristics as constituting "the good teacher". These include:

- Is helpful in schoolwork.
- Is cheerful and good humoured.
- Is companionable.
- Is interested in and understands pupils.
- Stimulates interest.
- Has control of the class.
- Is impartial.
- Avoids sarcasm and nagging.
- Is businesslike.
- Has a pleasing personality.

The finding that the viewpoints of younger school children and those held by high school seniors are quite similar suggests that difference in age has little impact on students' judgment of the qualities that make an effective teacher.

It is also noteworthy that several of the qualities mentioned by students elsewhere are also used by Ethiopian students in their definition of the good teacher. A study conducted by Darge (2000) has provided valuable

information about the perceptions of high school students in Ethiopia. In the study, Darge surveyed the perceptions of students in terms of what they considered desirable and undesirable characteristics of English and Maths teachers. In the study, 43 students drawn from three grade levels, namely 9, 10 and 11 served as sources of data. Data on students' views about the characteristics of the good teacher were elicited through interview. One major finding of the study was that students hold a clear view of what constitutes a good and a bad teacher with the list of characteristics disliked by students being longer than that they liked. As regards teacher characteristics the students liked, the study revealed the following

- Activity-orientedness : the ability to provide practice opportunities.
- Responsiveness: readiness to entertain questions from students and provide sufficient explanation.
- Expressiveness: the ability to use language clearly and effectively.
- Supportiveness: the ability and willingness to involve students in the lesson.

The study (Darge, 200) also showed that the students were also capable of articulating teacher behaviour which they judge to be counter-productive. Students tended to associate bad teachers with one or more of the following:

- Derisiveness- this included all sorts of harsh treatment against students.
- Incompetence-included lack of mastery of the subject and failure to deliver content effectively.
- Abuse of class time-in the sense of failure to use class time wisely
- Poor classroom management-this referred to failure to control the class and prevent disruptive behaviour.
- Restrictiveness-this means failure to provide enough practice opportunities for as many students as possible.
- Bias against female students-this also included the tendency to perceive girls as less educable.
- Wrong pace-keeping the pace of the lesson too fast or too slow for students.

- Punitiveness-this referred to the tendency to punish students for every slight mistake they make.
- Non-responsiveness-defined as failure to provide students with adequate and the right kind of guidance and support

Darge (2000) observed that, in spite of some striking similarities in several areas, some of the findings also failed to be consistent with what the literature says about the characteristics that students elsewhere like and dislike. While the students in *Darge's* study shared the importance attached to teacher characteristics such as impartiality, clarity, mastery of subject matter, communicativeness and the ability to control classroom behaviour of students, they also tended to differ in terms of the emphasis they placed on the provision of practice opportunities, responsiveness and supportiveness. *Darge* argues that such differences may be attributed to the unique contextual and cultural features and constraints that characterise the setting in which students have to learn.

Investigation of the views of teachers themselves about the attributes of an effective teacher represented another strand of research in the area. Tomlinson (2003), for instance, asked a group of 30 Malassyan teachers and teacher trainers about their views of the good language teacher. The procedure used to generate data on their perceptions involved two activities. The first one required participants to say what they think are the main characteristics of the good language teacher. This procedure produced the following list of traits: being adaptable, knowledgeable about the target language, innovative, positive, motivating, proficient in the target language, enthusiastic, enjoyable, and creative.

The second method involved asking respondents to rate the characteristics of a good teacher on a scale of 1-5. The data showed that the subjects considered traits such as *having positive self-esteem, being able to take initiative and base teaching on the needs, wants and responses of their learners* as characterizing the good teacher. Attributes such as "has authority" and "is able to cover the textbook in the time allocated" were,

however, rated low by the teachers. The pattern that emerged from the data suggested that many of the attributes defining the good teacher were related to personal attitudes and characteristics rather than to expertise in theory and practice in language teaching.

Given this background, it would be interesting to find out the extent to which the views about the good teachers documented in the literature are universal among teachers; or whether or not perceptions of teacher quality are coloured by contextual factors including cultural differences. The main objective of this study was therefore to explore what Ethiopian teachers think concerning the attributes of a good teacher. More specifically, the study was intended to answer the following questions:

1. What attributes do English teachers emphasise in defining the good teacher?
2. What is the nature of the perceptions held by English teachers about the good teacher?

The present study is important for some reasons. First, the literature suggests the possibility of variations in desirable teacher characteristics, i.e., perceptions of the good teacher may vary and are likely to be coloured by difference in cultural and other contextual aspects of the setting in which the teacher works. Second, much of the research in the area was conducted in the context where the teaching profession is dominated by the female population (See Ornstein 1995) as opposed to the situation in Ethiopia where there are far more male teachers than females. Third, while we have some information about how Ethiopian students feel and react to the presence or absence of certain characteristics considered important, no study appears to have been conducted locally to document what teachers themselves say about the qualities of a successful teacher. The present study is, therefore, hoped to fill the gap and contribute towards our understanding of the perspectives of the teacher.

Methodology

Participants

The data for this study were obtained from teachers of English drawn from seven high schools located in what used to be known as Zone 4 in Addis Ababa: In April 2001, the teachers attended a two-day ELT methodology workshop organized by the then Zone 4 Education Office. The present writer had the opportunity to take part in this workshop as a trainer, and took advantage of the occasion to gather data for a project aimed at exploring views of English teachers on various aspects of teaching and learning. Thus, the 83 teachers who happened to be in the workshop were asked to complete questionnaire at the end of the workshop. They were allowed to take the questionnaire home when the conference ended. After a few days, the teachers were contacted through their respective representatives who were able to collect 66 copies of the questionnaire completed by the teachers.

Of those who returned the questionnaire, 11 were female and 55 were male. All the participants taught English in the secondary schools of Addis Ababa. The teachers had from 1 to 35 years of experience with a mean of 14 years. The sample included 53 BA holders, 3 MA holders and 10 diploma holders.

Data Collection

The study reported here is based on a subset of data generated for a bigger project aimed at exploring various aspects of English language teaching and learning in Ethiopian schools. The data was gathered questionnaire designed to cover different areas and issues covered by the project. The questionnaire consisted of five sections devoted to different aspects of their experience. The first part asked respondents to provide personal details such as sex, qualification, teaching experience and grade level of classes they taught. The second section was intended to elicit data on their use of English and/or the students' mother tongue in the classroom. The third

section asked respondents to rate the effect of certain teacher behaviours on classroom climate. In the fourth section, the participants were asked to identify the kind of student they considered the easiest for them to succeed with and provide reasons for their responses. The last part of the questionnaire upon which the present study is based required participants to make a list of the attributes that they thought are associated with the effective teacher. It should be noted that no attempt was made to probe and find out why they valued certain characteristics more than others. In hindsight, though, it should be admitted that this could have produced a much richer set of data

Since the study sought to assess the perceptions of teachers, it was felt necessary to adopt a less structured approach to data collection. Thus, instead of providing teachers with a list of characteristics identified in the literature, they were asked to write down what they thought the attributes of the good English language teacher were. The idea was to freely explore their beliefs, value systems and personal philosophy through an open-ended question. This approach was also considered more appropriate for this particular study in terms of allowing the generation of data that might be context or culture-specific.

This study is, therefore, based on a subset of data which was elicited through one of the unstructured items that were included in the questionnaire. Of those who returned the questionnaire, 57 responded to the question "what are the characteristics of the good English teacher?" Nine teachers skipped the item which generated the data for this particular study.

Data Analysis

The responses of the subjects were then analysed using a conceptual framework adopted from Bernard (1965). According to Bernard, personality is all that a person is and might be and includes knowledge, skills, attitudes as well as the perceptions one has of other people. Thus, responses were categorized based on whether they emphasized the cognitive, affective, or

behavioural traits of a teacher's personality. Decision on where a certain response falls was guided by the key term used in defining the good teacher. For instance, the response "praises students" was classified as behavioural because the word refers to being able to do or behave in a certain way. However, this category was also extended to cover broader characteristics and patterns of behaviour such as *being helpful or friendly to students*. Responses such as "has good knowledge of his subject", "is well-versed in his subject", "is competent" etc. were treated as falling in the cognitive domain. Responses such as "loves his subject", "is devoted to his work", "has job satisfaction" were treated as referring to the affective dimension of teaching.

Data Presentation

3.1 Definition of the good teacher: The three dimensions of personality

In response to the question that required them to list the attributes associated with the successful teacher, participants identified 193 items that revolved around a wide range of teacher characteristics. Some respondents listed as many as ten characteristics while many of them produced lists that consisted of between 3-5 items. The shortest description contained only one item. The attributes were stated in terms of the three dimensions: cognitive, behavioural, and affective. Table 1 below presents data on the distribution of the attributes mentioned by the respondents in describing the qualities of the good English teacher across the three categories:

Table 1: Frequency of Attributes Involving Cognitive, Behavioral, and Affective Dimensions

Dimension	Number of Words	%
Cognitive	43	22.3
Behave	142	73.6
Affective	8	4.1
Total	193	100

The data revealed that a significant proportion of the attributes identified by the respondents emphasized the behavioral dimension of a teacher's personality. For example, of the 193 attributes nearly three quarters, i.e. 142 were stated in behavioral terms. That is to say, the definition of the good English teacher was stated in terms of what s/he does inside and outside the classroom as well as in terms of broader characteristics such as being helpful, patient, etc. Traits that emphasized the cognitive dimension of teacher quality represented the second biggest category, accounting for a little less than one quarter of the items listed. As indicated in Table1, 43 (22 %) of the attributes fell into the category of cognitive dimension. That is to say, the participants made reference to a certain aspect of the intellectual capacity of the teacher in terms of mastery of subject matter and skill in organizing instructional material and presenting it to students. A very small fraction of the attributes involved the affective dimension.

The data suggest that teachers did not consider the three dimensions as mutually exclusive. In fact, the teachers seemed to think that effective teaching demands personality traits and characteristics that may be described in terms of more than one dimension. For instance, one teacher identified seven traits representing a mix of the three dimensions as follows. The good teacher:

- Knows his subject well
- Has the ability to present lessons clearly
- Tries to improve his English
- Uses a variety of techniques to present his lesson
- Gives ample opportunity for students to participate
- Doesn't depend on a textbook
- Loves his students and his subject

While most of the respondents produced a list shorter than the one in the example above, it is interesting to note that they tended to include at least two dimensions in their lists.

Inventory of some Frequently Mentioned Characteristics

This section presents details about the attributes identified by teachers. It also provides some information about the frequency with which certain specific attributes occurred in the data with a view to showing their relative degree of popularity among teachers.

Behavioural Dimension: What the Good Teacher does or is like

As indicated in Table 1, the bulk of the attributes identified by respondents fell into the category of behavioural dimension. However, a closer look at the data suggested that there were two types of behavioural attributes. The first set of behavioural attributes is best described in terms of what is known in the literature as teacher competencies. They tended to refer to more specific and concrete aspects of teacher performance or behaviour in the classroom. Slightly over half (52 %) of the data on behavioural dimension appeared to stress such teacher competencies. Table 2 presents some aspects of teacher behavior that are perceived as characterizing the effective teacher.

Table 2: Data on Teacher Competencies: What the Good Teacher does

No	Teachers Behavior	Frequency
1	Prepares well before class	18
2	Is punctual	7
3	Motivates students to participate	6
4	Gives students opportunity to participate	6
5	Uses a variety of ways to make lesson successful	6
6	Presents lessons clearly	5
7	Helps students with problems	5
8	Corrects class work and homework	4
	Total	57

Other such attributes with more than one mention included the following. 1) Makes use of student's experience; 2) prepares relevant material; 3) uses target language in class; and 4) monitors students' progress.

It is also interesting to note that the data on behavioral aspects of the attributes consisted of a range of diverse qualities mentioned only once. For instance, the data included responses such as treats all students fairly and equally; gives equal attention to all students; checks attendance; praises students for correct response; offers guidance; creates conducive environment for learning. It should, however, be noted that these attributes are thought to be complemented and to co-exist with other teacher qualities.

Of the 142 attributes that were considered as emphasizing the behavioural aspect of successful teaching, 68 (48%) dealt with broader characteristics or personality traits. Table 3 below presents data on this sub-category:

Table 3: Data on Broader Characteristics: What the Good Teacher is like

No	Percentage traits	Frequency
1	Willing/ready to help students	9
2	Neat	8
3	Responsible/duty minded	5
4	Friendly/fair	8
5	Has respect for students	4
Total		34

Other personal traits which were thought as defining the good teacher and with more than one mention were the following:

- Caring
- Patient
- Open-minded/flexible
- Motivated
- Optimist
- Disciplined

Further qualities in this sub-category included being *orderly, resourceful, kind, considerate, ethical, and enthusiastic*. It was observed that the bulk of responses falling in this category stressed teacher qualities associated with creating a more supportive and positive social climate for the student.

Cognitive Dimension: What the Good Teacher Knows

The second most popular category dealt with the cognitive dimension which was defined in terms of professional competence, knowledge and expertise in subject matter, pedagogy, psychology etc. The table below presents data on this.

Table 4: Data on the Cognitive Dimension of Teacher Quality

No	Cognitive Dimension	Frequency
1	Knows his/her subject well	25
2	Engages in continuous effort to achieve professional growth	9
3	Was a good knowledge of whom she/he is teaching	6
4	Has a good knowledge of how to teach	3
Total		43

As indicated in Table 4, reference to mastery of subject matter was considered as one of the most important qualities defining the successful teacher. Teachers used phrases and words such as “competent”, “knowledgeable”, “capable” “has profound knowledge of subject” “good academic background” “well versed in the subject” “well acquainted with the subject matter” in defining the successful teacher. It is also interesting to note that responses that emphasized the ability to understand the needs, interests, feelings and problems of students accounted for a significant number of the responses in this category.

Falling in this category were also responses that suggested the need for efforts at continuous professional growth as an expression of commitment and positive attitude to the profession. As seen in Table 4, responses which value continuous professional growth represented the second biggest type of descriptions in this category. The data showed that involvement in such activities as experience sharing, reading extensively, making efforts at keeping abreast with the latest development in the field, trying to expand one's language resources through different means were regarded as some of the qualities that distinguish successful teachers from their less successful counterparts. Perhaps surprising is the finding that relatively fewer references were made to the knowledge of the "how of teaching" (pedagogy) compared to the knowledge of the "what" of teaching (subject matter).

Affective Dimension: What the Good Teacher thinks of others and the Profession

The third category of responses dealt with what teachers think of their students, and their profession. Table 5 presents data on this aspect of teacher quality.

Table 5: Data on the Attitudes of the Good Teacher

No	Attitude	Frequency
1	Has positive attitude towards his/her profession	5
2	Loves his/her students	3
Total		8

Attitude towards the profession constituted another important sub-category. They felt that the good teacher is someone who is satisfied with his/her job and content with what s/he has. The good teacher was also seen as loving and respecting his job. Further, the good teacher was defined in terms of his or her perceptions of other people, especially students. Responses falling in

this sub-category emphasized qualities such as loving and caring attitude towards the students one is teaching. Such responses stressed the need for teachers to regard their students as their own children and to act in a manner becoming of a good parent.

The nature of Teachers' Perception of the Good Teacher

The data obtained were revisited with a view to examining the nature of the perceptions of the good teacher held by the respondents. One area assessed involved the scope or breadth of the conceptions. Thus, the data were re-classified in terms of the 12 characteristics listed by Barr (1958) in order to determine the scope of their perceptions. The following table presents data re-analysed for this purpose:

Table 6: Distribution of Attributes across different Ingredients of Effectiveness

No	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Rank order based on frequency
1	Intelligence	63	32.6	1
2	Reliability	48	24.9	2
3	Considerateness	37	19.2	3
4	Drive	10	5.2	4
5	Attractiveness	8	4.1	5
6	Cooperativeness	8	4.1	5
7	Resourcefulness	7	3.6	7
8	Emotional stability	5	2.6	8
9	Objectivity	4	2.1	9
10	Buoyancy	2	1.0	10
11	Refinement	1	0.5	11
12	Dominance	0	0	12
	Total	193	100	

As indicated in Table 6, three characteristics, namely *intelligence*, *reliability* and *considerateness* represented the three most frequent descriptors of the good teacher. Together, they accounted for 76.7 % of the total. The three least frequent categories were *dominance*, which was defined in terms of self-confidence, assertiveness, self-sufficiency and determination etc. There was no response that dealt with this psychological trait. *Refinement* in the sense of morality, exemplary behaviour, good taste, being cultured was the second least mentioned attribute. The third least popular attribute was *buoyancy*, which was defined in terms of cheerfulness, animation and expressiveness. The remaining six characteristics namely *drive*, *attractiveness*, *cooperativeness*, *resourcefulness*, *objectivity*, and *emotional stability* together accounted for less than a quarter of the attributes used in defining the good teacher. Given the finding that over three-quarters of the total responses dealt with *intelligence*, *reliability* and *considerateness*, it appears that the perception of the good teacher held by teachers in this study was rather limited in terms of scope. This is also evident in the fact that eight of Barr's 12 categories of the characteristics of effective teachers each attracted fewer than ten responses (Table 6).

Of the three most frequently used descriptions, *intelligence* accounted for the greatest proportion of attributes identified. Teachers considered a solid understanding of the subject taught as an important ingredient of successful teaching. Another aspect of intelligence that was emphasized by teachers concerns knowledge of how to teach students. A few of the attributes relate to the ability of teachers to use a variety of methods to present their lessons. They also placed greater stress on the ability to assess the needs of students and tailor their teaching to their needs.

The second biggest category, namely *reliability*, contained ingredients of effective teaching which emphasized dedication and self-discipline on the part of the teacher. The data in this category contained responses which amplify the need for teachers to be punctual, to plan lessons properly, to take roll call regularly, and check student work more frequently. With respect to the third most popular category, *considerateness*, teachers appeared to

give higher value to attributes associated with the ability to create a more supportive school environment for their students. Successful teachers were defined in terms of their readiness and willingness to respond positively to the social and academic needs and problems of their students.

In addition to the tendency for the conceptions of teachers to be relatively narrower in scope, a closer look at the data also suggested that teachers were more likely to describe effective teaching at the general level. This means that they tended to use concepts and skills that seem to apply to all subjects as opposed to specific attributes associated with language teaching. Although the data contained descriptions of the good teacher as they relate to language teaching, for instance in terms of the ability to correct students' errors in grammar and pronunciation, the bulk of the descriptions involved generic aspects of teaching that are believed to have universal applicability across school subjects and grade levels.

Discussion and Conclusion

A few observations can be made based on the findings in the present study. The first observation is that some of the major patterns of perception of the good teacher that were revealed in the present study generally tend to be consistent with those reported elsewhere in the literature. This is particularly true of qualities such as having a good knowledge of one's subject and being sensitive to the needs and wants of students (Tomlinson, 2003). The picture that emerged is also consistent with the high value placed in the literature on qualities such as the desire for continuous professional growth. The data in this study would seem to suggest that teachers tend to share the widespread view that a successful teacher is one who is actively engaged in translating the philosophy which emphasizes the need to fight off the temptation to stand still and the risk of mental decline (Bernard, 1965). A good teacher, it is argued, is one who is convinced that excellence in teaching is not inherent. Nor is it something that one can hope to achieve merely through a one-time training. It is a lifelong process involving a

tremendous amount of continuous work, many hours of reflection, and a well-planned professional goal.

Another important point to note is that some of the findings in this study are in agreement with students' definitions of the good teacher. For instance, the data in this study lends support to the general finding that the successful and well-liked teacher has such characteristics as being democratic, cooperative and fair. The perception of students that the good teacher is friendly and considerate of individual students seems to be shared by teachers, too.

Finally, it is important to note that some of the results of the present study also suggest the possibility of some attributes to be more valued than others as a function of the broader context in which teachers operate. In this regard, mention should be made of the relative popularity of *reliability* among teachers. The presence of such responses which stress the need for teachers to be duty-conscious, to discipline themselves and act responsibly (all of which are requisite qualities for success in all careers) tend to suggest that lack of commitment and motivation may be a big problem in the teaching workforce in the country. In fact, this interpretation is in agreement with the widespread public concern that a great proportion of the teachers in the country joined the profession not because they chose to be teachers but because circumstances forced them to take up the job. This may not be the case elsewhere.

In sum, the findings in this study have shown that there is a tendency for certain characteristics and values to be upheld universally by teachers regardless of differences in background. It is also clear that there is a meeting of minds between teachers and students about a number of traits which lead to success in school. Finally, it seems that apart from those universally accepted qualities documented in the literature, teachers may also use context-specific aspects which may be prompted by the unique environment in which they are required to function.

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