# Some Coordinates of The Contemporary Teacher Profile

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**Abstract**

*The present study outlines the role of the teacher's individual characteristics (the teacher viewed as a person) on the effectiveness of teaching. The professional knowledge, skills and attitudes need to be put in correspondence with personal traits in order to develop a reflective practice, to integrate innovation in teaching, to promote a competence-based learning process in a broader context of lifelong learning. A redefined relationship between the professional dimension and the personal dimension in the teacher's identity is essential for successfully fulfilling the educational mission of teachers related to the challenges of  the 21st century.*

## 1. Introduction

The contemporary society extends the perspectives of the roles played by teachers, with the intention to extend the vision of a learning community beyond school. The professional tasks of the teachers are expected to be performed in a more dynamic context, linking knowledge, skills and attitudes under a new significance of teacher competencies. The role of teaching should be redefined in a broader context of lifelong learning.

## 2. Kinds of competences of the teachers

Literature shows that the quality of teaching depends on many indicators such as: qualifications, teaching experience, ability to teach a specific subject- matter but also includes a few teacher characteristics not so easy to measure, but very important for student learning: the ability to build an effective learning environment, the capacity to generate a genuine teacher-student relationship, being enthusiastic about teaching, using creativity in the classroom and collaborating in an effective way with coworkers and parents (Z. Gadusova et all. 2008). Authors consider that the teachers of the 21st century should be able to: manage the students' learning opportunities, monitor the students' progression in learning, adapt the learning objectives to the students' heterogenity, motivate students for working and learning, manage teamwork, sustain school development, build an effective partnership with the local community, integrate technology in teaching, perform their professional tasks, deal with ethical dilemmas and be concerned about their own professional development.

Teaching becomes a *mobile* profession and doesn't only need a suitable subject-matter knowledge, a cultural understanding of the learning environment, a series of pedagogical skills  but also a few *updated* capacities in order to build a reflective practice, based on research and continuous professional development (E. Eisenschmidt, E. Lofstrom, 2008).

Even if a literature review shows that there are only a few studies regarding teacher- student relationship from the perspective of their individual characteristics, the influence of  the teacher's perceptions and the impact of their personality traits on teaching is still well-known, states C. Ceobanu (2013). These individual traits also play an important role in building the emotional comfort for the beneficiaries of the educational services. The author emphasizes on patience and communication skills, gender, experience, education and ethnicity as individual traits of a teacher that sustain the teacher-student relationship building.

C.Cucos (2013) suggests that there are a number of competences that should represent a teacher so that he could successfully fulfill his mission in the educational process: the axiological competence, the subject matter competence (academic competence), the didactic competence, the psycho-pedagogical competence, the relational competence, the teamwork ability, the building partnerships ability, the competence to integrate the new information technology in the teaching activity, the self-reflective competence. In fact, the author structures a teacher profile, starting from the perspective of the teacher viewed as a valuable representative of a sociocultural context, being well integrated in the scientific culture of his subject-matter, having the ability to efficiently manage some psycho-pedagogic coordinates, being able to operate in the affective-relational field in his intention to make the learning more effective, being cooperative and open to develop partnerships, being able to integrate information technology  in teaching, being concerned about a permanent improvement of the teaching activity.

Putting into practice competences should materialize, in a genuine manner, the correspondence between *to know* and *to do* in a perspective that not only defines sequentially the teaching activity but is totally integrated in the teacher's identity structure and sustains the option for a specific educational route in the process of personal and professional development, in a context of evolution from *to be* to another level of *becoming.* Being a teacher doesn't only mean to occupy a professional position anchored in the present time but it generates a need for a prospective approach, beyond *here* and *now,* in an open context, marked by socio-cultural challenges, with the intention of a continuous optimization.

The self-reflective competence, based on a critical examination of the teaching activity with the intention to improve it, is remarked by Roth (apud M. Dooly, 2009) at the level of some descriptors that link contextual learning with an efficient approach of the instructional situations, in the perspective of a *reflective practice.* The author recommends to assume *an open-minded* conduct related with the things to do, the way to act and the motivation that sustains these actions; to comprehend the implications of educational actions; to have a critical attitude associated with a permanent interrogation; to be open to a plurality of options; to develop a comparative approach of the elements involved and to analyze it even in a contradictory view; to be concerned on establishing the cause-effect relationship; the active seeking of different action perspectives; a

permanent interrogation such as: *what would happen if...?;* the orientation towards valuing the feed-back data; the analysis, synthesis and testing of different hypothesis and a behavior oriented on problem-solving.

The personal dimension is connected with the professional dimension in a unitary structure that gives an axiologic consistency to the teacher profile as a condition to a next interpretive approach of the teaching activity. In this regard Goodson (apud M. Fullan, şi A. Hargreaves, 1997) affirms that we cannot understand the status of a teacher or the specificity of the teaching activity if we do not understand first who the teacher is as a person.

## 3. Some studies about factors that generate an efficient teaching

There are many studies focused on determining factors that generate an efficient teaching. This concern becomes a study issue with the intention to identify alternative ways for the teacher's training programme optimization or for the improvement of the teaching practices.

A study focused on establishing the relationship between the personality traits of a teacher and the efficient teaching (H. Murray, J. Rushton şi S. Paunonen, 1990) regarding different types of university courses, emphasizes the influence of the types of courses on the perceived effectiveness of the teaching activities. Based on the student's ratings of the undergraduate and graduate courses, a sample of teachers, members of the Department of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario,were subjects for this investigation. The results show that the teacher's personality traits are related with the teaching activity. The above mentioned study identifies the best five predictors for teaching effectiveness: leadership, liberalism, the concern for the accuracy of the content taught, the supportive attitude and the extraversion. The type of courses is also related with the personality traits regarding the perceived effectiveness of teaching. In this regard sociability, flexibility, attention-seeking, liberalism and extraversion correlate positively and significantly with teaching rating in undergraduate courses, while the same characteristics show nonsignificant negative correlations with teaching rating in graduate courses. It is interesting that endurance, ambitiousness, orderliness and patience correlate positively with teaching rating for graduate courses while they show nonsignificant correlation with other types of courses. The impulsivity and seeking help or advice correlate significantly (positively or negatively) with performance rating in the context of teaching rating for different types of courses. Only one trait from the whole list of the analysed traits correlates significantly in all types of analysed courses: *leadership.* Researchers try to explain this result affirming that teachers with the leadership ability are flexible enough to adapt their teaching in different types of courses. The perceived effectiveness of teaching varies in a substantial manner related to the different types of taught courses even in case of the same teacher performing them.

M. Fullan and A. Hargreaves (1997) affirm that understanding the specificity of the teacher as a person would have significant effects at the level of the perceived changes in education, at the level of the teacher's personal development and at interactional level with co workers (other teachers). Even the teacher's concern and his reaction to innovation are influenced, according to the authors, by the level of his professional evolution, by his life experience, by gender, all these representing important components defining the teacher as a person.

A theoretical framework presented by G. Costas (2002) reconciles the two views that determine the effectiveness of teaching: the methodological knowledge and skills and the personality. The key

aspects mentioned by the authors that play an important role in teaching are: the self-awareness, the ability to build interpersonal relationships, the observation skills, critical thinking, the ability to use experience, contextual sensitivity, the attitude towards change, development, plurality, quality of learning, collaboration, the attitude towards superiors, the perspectives on learning, the perceived teacher/learner roles and the attitude toward professional development.

M. Fullan and A. Hargreaves (1997) consider that, in fact, all teacher behaviors are not only ways of expression of  their *technical skills* which have to be improved, but are generated by manifestations of the teacher's traits as a person. In this regard authors recommend understanding the teacher's mission and its role as a strategic component of each action in order to develop human resource and to improve the quality of teaching.

A study focused on the relationship between the teacher's personality traits and the managerial style used in classroom (N. Martin, 1995) draws attention to the fact that only one trait: the teacher's openness to change correlates significantly with the chosen managerial style. The teachers which are open to change choose a less interventionist behavior in the relationship with their students and it's very probably that they will become themselves the initiators of changes.

A report from 2011 of the *National Center for Education Information* based on a questionnaire survey, using a sample of 1000 subjects (teachers employed in the USA public schools), establishes some coordinates of the teachers' perceptions on their professional competence, starting from the following dimensions: the ability to teach a specific subject- matter, the ability to organize the instruction, the classroom management, the ability to interact with other teachers, the ability to maintain discipline in the classroom, the ability to motivate students, the time management ability, the ability to interact with superiors (C.E. Feistritzer, 2011). A comparative approach of these dimensions, anchored in two different time references: first-the moment of debut in the teaching career, and second-the moment of the development survey, emphasizes on a few significant differences regarding the dimensions: the ability to organize the instruction, the classroom management, the ability to maintain discipline in the classroom, the ability to motivate students and to manage the  instructional time. The subjects of the study relate these differences with the experience gained during the years of teaching experience.

M. E. Krisko (2001) suggests the perspective of a *teacher-leader* as a key factor of the school culture, which generates the transformation of the school in an efficient learning community. The author's opinion is based on the results of a study which identifies a few descriptive categories related to the *teacher-leader* perspective, according to the future teachers' opinions, in correspondence with teachers' perceptions (teachers working in different levels of the educational system) or perceived by educational leaders (the study was developed in Orlando, Florida, USA). After the descriptors grouping, the researchers obtained a few categories associated with the perspective of *teacher-leader*: creativity, effectiveness, sense of humor, flexibility, ability to develop interpersonal relations, *intrapersonal sense*  (intrapersonal reflective ability), orientation towards lifelong learning, assuming risks ability.

The results of a study, related to the students' perception on the efficiency of the teaching style (S. Young, D.G. Shaw, 1999), confirm the theoretic models present in the literature, underlining the role of the following dimensions: efficient communication, building an agreeable learning context,

concern for students learning, students motivation, course organizing. The study also emphasizes that the perceived teachers' efficiency is determined also by the degree of their respect for the students, by their concern for learning and the value of the taught content, as perceived by the students.

A study on secondary education teachers in Greece shows that the perceived effectiveness in teaching is related to: the teaching flexibility in the instructional process, the social abilities used in communication, a friendly attitude towards educational beneficiaries, an open-minded perspective on teaching, pedagogical tact, a student supportive attitude, respect and sense of humor (K. Koutrouba, 2012). These characteristics define the teacher as a person.

Not only the attitudes but also the personal values play an important role in the effectiveness of teaching. The results of a study (F. Bektas, A. Nalcaci, 2012) focused on the personal values of teachers candidates that predict their attitudes towards teaching, determined a significant positive relationship between personal values and the attitudes towards teaching. These results are important for education decision-makers in order to promote and share values in the field of the school organizational culture: sharing, respect, responsibility.

The findings of a study on higher education teachers prove that conceptions on teaching are very important in the process of improving teaching and learning and that the conceptual change approach is a good choice for the teachers' continuous development (A. Ho, D. Watkins, M. Kelly, 2001).

Paraphrasing D. Tripp (2012) who considered that even if good teachers use good techniques in teaching, it doesn't mean that using a good technique produces necessary a good teaching, we can affirm that even the efficient teachers have a good management of their professional skills, a good management of professional skills doesn't necessary generate an efficient teaching because of personal traits that mediate the relationship between the professional skills and the effectiveness of teaching.

## Conclusions

We can easily see that the personal traits involved in determining teaching effectiveness, mentioned in the studies above, are anchored in the attitudinal domain. It means that the quality of teaching depends on the quality of teachers' attitudes. An efficient learning environment is an effect of a student-centered teaching environment. The interaction with students has to be mediated by friendliness, respect, an open-minded approach, interpersonal and intrapersonal sensitivity and a permanent axiologic interrogation.

Developing an environment for building a genuine teacher profile requires a reconsideration of the educational policies regarding the initial teacher training and the continuous professional development of teachers, in an axiologic perspective of strengthening the attitudinal domain which sustains the orientation of teaching actions and reflections.

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