Moroccan High School Students' Perceptions of a Good Teacher

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

Teachers usually take for granted that only their perceived pedagogical agendas are likely to bring about the positive outcomes they look for. However, as it has been confirmed by many studies, their effectiveness and success in their careers are highly determined by the way they are perceived by their students. This exploratory study outlines the major views Moroccan high school students hold towards a good teacher. The study was carried out through a questionnaire that was administered to 100 Moroccan high school students using convenience sampling. The obtained data were analyzed with the help of the statistical package for social sciences. The findings of this research indicated that most Moroccan high school students prioritize the affective side while they evaluate their teachers. There were also other features that evolved throughout the study.

Introduction

English language teaching has been a matter of taking into account many parameters. While selecting what to teach and deciding about how to evaluate the content occupies the big share of teachers' time and thought when they intend to teach, the failure to see how instruction takes place and how teachers are perceived render these efforts fruitless. Accordingly, Porter and Brophy (1988) claimed that "effective school learning requires good teaching, and good teaching requires professionals who exercise value judgments in constructing the education of their students" (p. 74). Besides, it has been found that learners' perceptions on both the teacher and teaching have an impact on learning outcomes (Perry, 1981; Belenky et al., 1986).

Theoretical background

The importance of students' perception on teaching

The way students perceive a good teacher has a significant influence on learning. For instance, it was indicated that students who possess high learning preferences outperform those who do not. In this respect, students with a preference for deep approaches to learning are more likely to recognize the learning potential of constructivist teaching strategies than are students with surface learning preferences, who tend to focus on the transmissive aspects of teaching and reproductive aspects of learning (Smith et al., 1996).

Characteristics of good teachers

A set of qualities has largely been discussed in the literature about what makes a good or effective teacher. For example, Ward and Grant (2011) have claimed that a good teacher creates an environment that is motivating and intriguing for the students. A good teacher brings into existence an atmosphere that is based on "respect, fairness, and trust wherein a positive climate is cultivated and maintained" (p. 341). Additionally, teachers' personality has been identified as one of the most substantial traits of a good teacher. This has been asserted by Arnon and Reichel (2009) who stated that a teacher should be "understanding and patien[t], caring, warm and considerat[e]" (p. 10).

On her part, Miller (2012) has defined a good teacher as being "passionate about the subject, creative, humorous, challenging, supportive and encouraging, careful about students' background, interest and hobbies, grammatically competent, attentive to students even after the class, fair and respectful, and not too personal."

Studies on the Characteristics of Good Teachers
Many studies have been carried out in relation to exploring the qualities of good teachers. For instance, Jamei (2016) explored the students' and teachers' perceptions of a good teacher of ESL in three different secondary schools in Malmö and found out that, from the students' perspective, a good teacher should always involve the students in lesson planning, when designing a task or selecting the methods to use while testing them on different criteria. She also added that other qualities that are required are being understanding and keen. According to her a good teacher should listen to students, and should have a sense of humor, and be strict. Simply put, the teacher's personality is one of the important required qualities of an effective teacher. This designates that students need to feel that they are being heard, and that their opinions really matter.

Another study conducted by Lupascu, Pânisoară, and Pânisoară (2014) focused on the perception of personal and professional characteristics of teachers among high school students. Lupascu et al. (2014) reported that "calm, tolerance, presence of sense of humor, friendliness, and teacher's well preparation" (p. 538) are the students' most favorable traits in a good teacher. They also found out that characteristics such as "excessive demands and authority, working without passion, uncertain explanations, ironic language and also being too tolerant" (p.538) are mostly abhorred by these students.

In a recent study, Strikwerda-Brown et al. (2008) discovered that students highly appreciate teachers who "dealt with them well, looked after their social and emotional needs inasmuch as their educational needs, and related to them in ways that respected them as people" (p.40). They also went on saying that students favoured teachers who paid attention to "their need to have efforts affirmed, mistakes sensitively corrected, and to be related to in ways that did not harm their developing sense of self. Teachers who were good communicators were highly valued, with listening being one of the key elements" (p.40).

Methodology
Based on the exploratory nature of this study, a questionnaire was administered to 100 Moroccan high school students using convenience sampling. The obtained data were analyzed with the help of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The purpose of this research was to explore students' perception of 'a good teacher'. The results obtained in this respect will provide data about the most important features to be commonly agreed upon by high school students. This study was guided by three main research questions which were set to find out the qualities that make a teacher good according to Moroccan high school students.

   a) How do Moroccan high school students perceive good teachers?
   b) Which features in the teacher make them good or bad?
   c) Is students' perception of good teachers determined by a single parameter in the teacher'?

Results
The results of this study indicated that Moroccan high school students' perceptions were based on a set of criteria: humanistic aspect, teaching competence, teacher's pedagogical preference, teachers' appearance, teacher disciplinary code, teachers' attitude, teacher's ability to boost excellence, leadership and autonomy. Concerning the humanistic aspect, as table 1 reveals, the majority of informants stated that a good teacher is someone who is humorous (54.4% strongly agree, 43.33% agree). In addition, most of them (74.44%) agreed that the teacher should be patient. Besides, caring for students' feelings is considered an important quality of good teachers (54.44% strongly agree, 4.33% agree). Moreover, to be flexible or tolerant is perceived as a favorable quality of the good teacher among students (60% strongly agreed, 1.11% strongly disagree). In line with this, many participants disagreed that a good teacher is someone who talks badly to students (75.56% strongly disagree). The same remark applies to being biased or unfair. 73. 33% strongly disagreed to have a teacher with such a quality. On the other

hand, the majority perceived a good teacher as being fair/democratic (75.56% strongly agree, 1.11% strongly disagree), kind or nice (53.00% agree, 45.00% strongly agree) and helpful (67.78% strongly agree, and only 1.11% disagree).

However, a big portion of responses didn't appreciate teachers who were violent (7.78% strongly agree, 74.44% strongly disagree), authoritative (50% strongly disagree, 23.33 % disagree), and teasing students (62.22 % strongly disagree, 37.78% disagree)

Table 1: Humanistic aspect

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Humorous	49	54,44	39	43,33	1	1,11	1	1,11
Patient	0	0,00	67	74,44	0	0,00	23	25,56
Cares for students' feelings	49	54,44	39	43,33	0	0,00	2	2,22
Flexible/tolerant	54	60,00	35	38,89	0	0,00	1	1,11
Talks badly to students	0	0,00	2	2,22	68	75,56	20	22,22
Biased/unfair	0	0,00	0	0,00	66	73,33	24	26,67
Fair/ democratic	68	75,56	19	21,11	2	2,22	1	1,11
Kind/nice	45	45,00	53	53,00	1	1,00	1	1,00
Helpful	61	67,78	27	30,00	1	1,11	1	1,11
Violent	7	7.78	1	1.11	67	74.44	15	16.67
Authoritative	10	11.11	14	15.56	45	50	21	23.33
Makes fun of students	-	-	-	-	56	62.22	34	37.78

With respect to the teaching competence or pedagogical practice, as described in Table 2, the majority of students favored teachers who give feedback (44.44%strongly agree,42.23% agree) prepare lessons well (78.89%strongly agree,2.22%disagree), and involve all the students(71.11%strongly agree,2.22% disagree). They also appreciate instructors who create good learning environment (74.44 %strongly agree, 3.33% disagree), use games and different resources (67.78%strongly agree, 1.11%disagree). Moreover, a large number of them opted for those who encourage students to work in groups (63.33%strongly agree, 2.22% disagree) and are attentive to students' responses and comments (63.33 %strongly agree, 1.11 % agree). However, high school participants seem to dislike teachers who stick only to the textbook (11.11%strongly agree but 52.22% disagree). Instead, they attributed 'good' to teachers who are active (74.44% strongly agree, 00 % disagree), knowledgeable (78.89% strongly agree, 1.11% disagree). Added to these qualities are teachers who are self-confident (53.33%strongly agree, 43.33%agree) and speak fluently and clearly (74.44% strongly agree, 3.33% disagree).

Table 2: Teaching competence/pedagogical practices

	Strongly agree		agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Giving feedback	40	44,44	38	42.23	4	4,44	8	8,89
Prepares lessons well	71	78,89	17	18,89	0	0,00	2	2,22
Involves all students	64	71,11	22	24.45	2	2,22	2	2,22
Creates good learning environment	67	74,44	18	20.01	2	2,22	3	3,33
Uses games and other resources	61	67,78	27	30	1	1,11	1	1,11
Encourages students to work in groups	57	63,33	31	34.45	0	0,00	2	2,22
Attentive to students' responses and comments	57	63,33	32	35.56	0	0,00	1	1,11
Using only the textbook	10	11,11	22	24.45	11	12,22	47	52,22
Active/ creative	67	74,44	23	25,56	0	0,00	0	0,00
Knowledgeable	71	78,89	18	20,00	0	0,00	1	0,00
Speaks clearly and fluently	67	74,44	20	22,22	0	0,00	3	0,00
Self-confident	48	53,33	39	43,33	0	0,00	3	0,00

The findings in Table 3 explored students' attitudes towards teachers' monitoring of students' learning, evaluation, and grading system from a cultural perspective. The results in Table 3 indicated that the majority of the informants agreed (41.11%), and strongly agreed (17.78%) that a good teacher does not tolerate cheating, whereas 28.89% of the informants strongly disagreed, and 12.22% of them disagreed with the item stating that a good teacher does not tolerate cheating. As for giving high marks, the majority of students (86.77%) attributed giving high marks to a good teacher. Conversely, only 13.33% of the informants stated that giving high grades does not necessarily correlate with being a good teacher. Similarly, 77.78% of the participants reported that a good teacher is someone who gives the students what they deserve. Yet, some of them (22.22%) opposed such idea and disagreed that a good teacher gives students what they deserve only. When it comes to giving a lot of homework, the majority of the informants strongly disagreed (41.11%) and disagreed (24.44%) with being assigned a lot of homework. In contrast, 26,67 % of the students agreed and 7,78% strongly agreed that a good teacher gives a lot of homework. In the same line of reasoning, 66.66% of the informants either strongly disagreed or disagreed with being assigned no homework. However, 18,89 % of the participants strongly agreed and 14,44% of them agreed that a good teacher is the one who assigns no homework.

Table 3: Attitudes towards monitoring learners' learning progress

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Does not tolerate cheating	16	17,78	37	41,11	26	28,89	11	12,22
Firm	12	13,33	32	35,56	39	43,33	7	7,78
Loves his/her job/doesn't feel boredom	77	85,56	13	14,44	0	0,00	0	0,00
Admits making mistakes	47	52,22	35	38,89	3	3,33	5	5,56
Gives high marks	48	53,33	30	33,34	1	1,11	11	12,22
Gives the student only what they deserve	32	35,56	38	42,22	7	7,78	13	14,44
Gives a lot of work	7	7,78	24	26,67	37	41,11	22	24,44
Gives no homework	17	18,89	13	14,44	40	44,44	20	22,22

Promoting excellence and creating a good learning atmosphere is of paramount importance. In this respect, all the items listed in Table 4 received high positive percentages, and were all perceived as preeminent. As indicated in Table 4, the majority of the students revealed that a good teacher is someone who: 1) makes the students enjoy learning (strongly agreed = 65,56 %; agreed = 32,22%), 2) encourages and motivates learners (strongly agreed = 83,33%; agreed = 16,67%), 3) expects students to be good (strongly agreed = 62.22%; agreed = 27.78%). Correspondingly, the results revealed that the majority of the informants strongly agreed (51,11 %) and agreed (36,67%) that a good teacher encourages critical thinking. Besides, according to the participants' responses, a good teacher cares for students' success (strongly agreed = 64.44%; agreed = 31.11%). Finally, most of the respondents (96.66%) perceived a good teacher as someone who encourages autonomy.

Table 4: Boosting leadership and success

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Makes the students enjoy learning	59	65,56	29	32,22	1	1,11	1	1,11
Encouraging/motivator	75	83,33	15	16,67	0	0,00	0	0,00
Expects students to be good	56	62,22	25	27,78	2	2,22	7	7,78
Model/leader	45	50,00	41	45,56	1	1,11	3	3,33
Encourages critical thinking	46	51,11	33	36,67	3	3,33	8	8,89
Cares for students' success	58	64,44	28	31,11	0	0,00	4	4,44
Encourages autonomy	65	72,22	22	24,44	2	2,22	1	1,11

As shown in Table 5, the majority (96.66%) of the informants strongly agreed and agreed that a good teacher is someone who talks with students outside the classroom. Moreover, most of the participants (97.78%) favored a teacher who calls students by their names (strongly agreed = 57.78%; agreed = 40%). In the same way, the results indicated that a good teacher, according to the informants, is someone who offers opportunities for students to talk about their problems (strongly agreed = 36.67%; agreed = 51.11%). However, some of the informants (12.22%) were unlikely to favor such idea. Expectedly, respect was perceived as a sign of a good teacher (strongly agreed = 84.44%; agreed = 15.56%). Also, the majority of the informants agreed (46,67%) and strongly agreed (33,33%) that a good teacher shares his/her personal experience with students. On the other hand, 20% of the respondents did not support this idea.

Table 5: Good rapport

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Talks with students outside the classroom	50	55,56	37	41,11	1	1,11	2	2,22
Call students by their names	52	57,78	36	40,00	1	1,11	1	1,11
Offers opportunities to talk about their problems and	33	36,67	46	51,11	4	4,44	7	7,78
Respects students	76	84,44	14	15,56	0	0,00	0	0,00
Shares with students his personal experience	30	33,33	42	46,67	5	5,56	13	14,44

As shown in Table 6, 35.56% of students agreed and 13.33% of them strongly agreed that a good teacher is someone who is firm, whereas 43.33% of the participants strongly disagreed and 7,78 % of them disagreed on such trait. As for a teacher who is charismatic, the majority (83.33%) of the respondents strongly agreed (58.89%) and agreed (34.44%) that a good teacher has to be charismatic. In contrast, only a minority (6.66%) stated that a good teacher does not necessarily need to be charismatic. More importantly, 73% of the informants strongly disagreed with the

idea that a good teacher is someone who is authoritative. However, there were some of the participants (26.67%), who stated that a good teacher has to be authoritative.

Table 6: Personal traits

	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Firm	12	13,33	32	35,56	39	43,33	7	7,78
Authoritative	10	11,11	14	15,56	45	50,00	21	23,33
Charismatic	53	58,89	31	34,44	2	2,22	4	4,44

Discussion and Conclusion

This research explored the perception of personal and professional characteristics of teachers among high school students. The students favor different features such as humor, niceness and kindness, knowledge, fairness and the like in a teacher to be called effective.

Concerning the humanistic aspect, students highly prefer a teacher who is fair/democratic, helpful, flexible/tolerant, patient, humorous, and nice. In contract, they do not favor a teacher who is biased and violent. They also express their discontent of a teacher who either talks badly, or makes fun of them. This backs up the humanistic approach that envisages learning not only as a cognitive act per see but also as an operation where human relations prevail between the teacher and the learner.

In terms of the pedagogical feature, students' pinpoint knowledge, students' involvement, creation of positive learning environment, lesson preparation, fluency and clarity, and creativity as the main favorable characteristics of an effective teacher. This designates the fact that students, despite their age, can distinguish a good teacher from a non-good teacher on a reasonable basis.

Showing interest in one's job was characterized as one of the main features of a good teacher. The informants also appreciate teachers who admit making mistakes. Moreover, students favour teachers who give high grades, which is culturally bound. Simply put, students lag behind the conviction that good marks will guarantee them joining sophisticated institutions to continue their higher studies believing that such thing will assure them a bright future. Others consider good marks as the only way to avoid parental rebuke.

Regarding personal traits, all participants agree that being charismatic is on top of the main tenets a good teacher would have. However, they showed refusal to being authoritative as a quality in the teacher. This implies that while they appreciate dialogue for example to solve frequent problems in the classroom, students like a teacher who has a strong personality as a way to guarantee an optimal classroom management.

For enhancing students' excellence and success in the learning process, students perceive an effective teacher as someone who motivates and encourages students, promotes autonomy, makes students enjoy learning, cares for students' success, encourages critical thinking, and expects them to be good. This reflects a deep awareness among students of the importance of promoting leadership and excellence as major components in a positive learning process. This also implies that teachers should not dismiss these elements from their teaching agendas.

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