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Effective Teacher Characteristics

Çetin Toraman[1]

Abstract

Societies' expectation of the education their members take is quite high. In this sence, teacher has a crucial role for the accomplishment of education. For this reason, teacher-related issues have been the subject of many researches on teacher education. With this research, a case study qualitative research process, which takes into account the actors of teacher education, has been reported on the effective teacher characteristics that are frequently studied in related literature. It is aimed to determine the effective teacher characteristics from the perspective of teachers, students, teacher candidates and teacher education experts from the field. The results of the research revealed findings that were consistent with the literature and participants of the study reported effective teacher characteristics such as 'competence in subject matter knowledge', 'teaching skills', 'personal characteristics' and 'professional development' subheadings. The effective teacher characteristics indicated by the participants are mainly accumulated under the categories of 'teaching skills' and 'personality characteristics'.

Keywords: Effective teacher, teacher training, case study

1. Introduction

Teacher has an important role when the learning-teaching process is carried out successfully. The teaching profession and teachers, in this sense, draws attention as the subject of many studies. The studies carried out in this regard in the related subject matter are based on the following criteria: "teacher qualifications", "teacher competences", "effective/ideal teacher characteristics", "teacher effectiveness", "professional development of teachers", "teacher beliefs" under the various headings examined the theme of teacher. In this study, a Delphi study process about effective teacher characteristics which is observed among the mentioned subtitles and which is the subject of many studies is explained.

In the first part of the study, the results of the relevant literature review on this subject is given. The subtitles that are emphasized in effective teacher characteristics in the subject matter research for this study are determined as "Competence in Subject Matter Knowledge", "Teaching Skills", "Personal Characteristics" and "Professional Development Characteristics". Below are some examples from the context of these subtitles.

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1.1. Competence in Subject Matter Knowledge

For the subject matter knowledge, which has an important position in the characteristics of effective teachers, subject matter knowledge in the related subject matter area (Demmon Berger, 1986; narr. Moran, 2005), knowledge of the concepts in the subject matter area (Polk, 2006) and pedagogy (Polk, 2006; Tucker & Stronge, 2005), content knowledge (Shulman, 1987) are the foreground. To illustrate, Shulman (1987: 8) emphasized that as a professional, teachers essentially must have seven types of knowledge which can be sited as 1. content knowledge, 2. general pedagogical knowledge (such as classroom management and organization, principles and strategies), 3. curriculum knowledge, 4. pedagogical content knowledge (the mixture of the teachers' own specific professional understandings and pedagogical knowledge) 5. knowledge about the learner characteristics 6. educational context knowledge (such knowledge is at a micro level, informatics belonging to group and classroom work, education management and funding at the macro level represents a range of cultural interaction), 7. educational objectives, values, and philosophical and historical reasons. Shulman (1987) describes the subject matter knowledge as content knowledge. On the other hand, Woolfolk (1998) points to the characteristics of knowledge, compassion and clarity for effective teaching, and states that the teaching style of the teacher, explanations, clarity of presentation are effective in student learning. Figure 1 presents examples to the subject matter knowledge of the teachers.

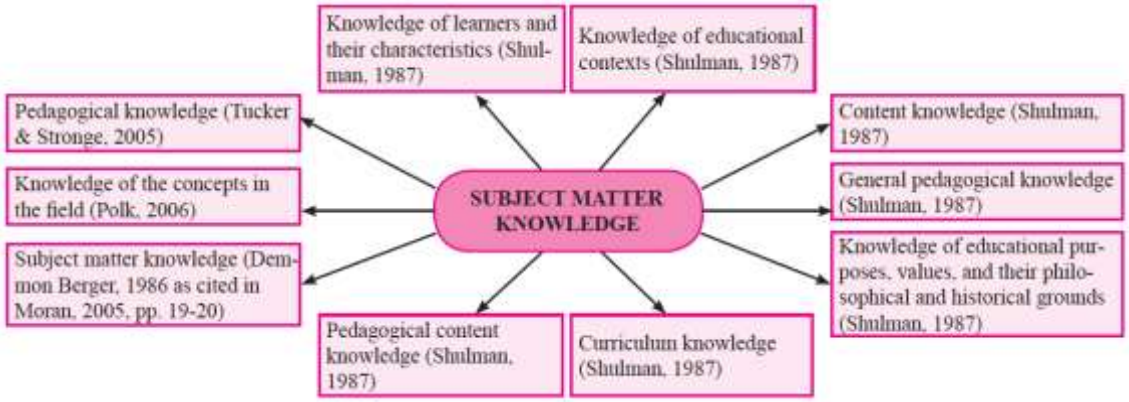


Figure 1. Examples to the Subject Matter Knowledge of the Teachers

1.2. Teaching Skills

It has often been observed that a variety of teaching skills, such as creating a positive classroom environment for effective teacher education, effectively using a variety of teaching methods or techniques, associating the subject with everyday life (Tucker & Stronge, 2005), preparing for lesson (McArdle & Coutts, 2003) are emphasized by the researchers frequently. However, when the characteristics of teaching skills are examined in general, it can be seen that they can be grouped under the titles of "Preparation for Teaching", "Classroom Management", "Learning-Teaching Strategy Methods and Techniques" and "Assessment and Evaluation".

Teaching Preparation: In the relevant literature, researchers have emphasized features such as Preparation time for teaching (Tucker & Stronge, 2005), preparation of teaching materials in small steps and with appropriate difficulty (Stronge, 2007) and preparation of materials (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008).

Classroom Management: In general, the classroom environment (Swainston, 2008), the continuity of the interest and curiosity of students (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005), the creation of a

supportive and learning classroom environment (Brophy, 2000) effective time management (Tucker & Stronge, 2005) showing exemplary behaviours (Jones, Jenkin & Lord, 2006) having an understanding of effective discipline (Jones, Jenkin & Lord, 2006; Demmon Berger, 1986, narr. Moran, 2005) are emphasized.

Learning-Teaching Strategy Methods and Techniques: In general, a lot of different features such as presenting content in a way that learners can understand and offering rich learning opportunities with a variety of activities (Tucker & Stronge, 2005); providing timely and effective feedbacks (Cotton, 2000; Danielson, 2007; Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; Tucker & Stronge, 2005); effective use of questioning technique, encouraging student participation in classroom discussions, teaching clearly and concisely, utilizing method diversity (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; McEwan, 2002; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005); considering learning styles of students, using concept maps and graphic editors (Stronge, 2007), using various strategies (Brophy, 2000; Stronge, 2007; Ozen & Durkan, 2016; Tucker & Stronge, 2005), placing practices in activities, Encouraging collaborative learning (Brophy, 2000), creating learning opportunities (Brophy, 2000; Jones, Jenkin & Lord, 2006) are emphasized in the literature.

Assessment and Evaluation: Features such as monitoring student development, stating achievement goals clearly, monitoring the tasks that are given to students and developments (Brophy, 2000; Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; Saunders, 2000; Stronge, 2007), monitoring students' learning through pre-teaching and post-teaching measures (Danielson, 2007; Tucker & Strong, 2005), effective use of measurement instruments (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008), comprehensive assessment of students (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; Polk, 2006) and also giving students the opportunity to assess themselves (Danielson, 2007) are emphasized in the related literature. Figure 2 shows examples of teachers' teaching skills in accordance with these subheadings.

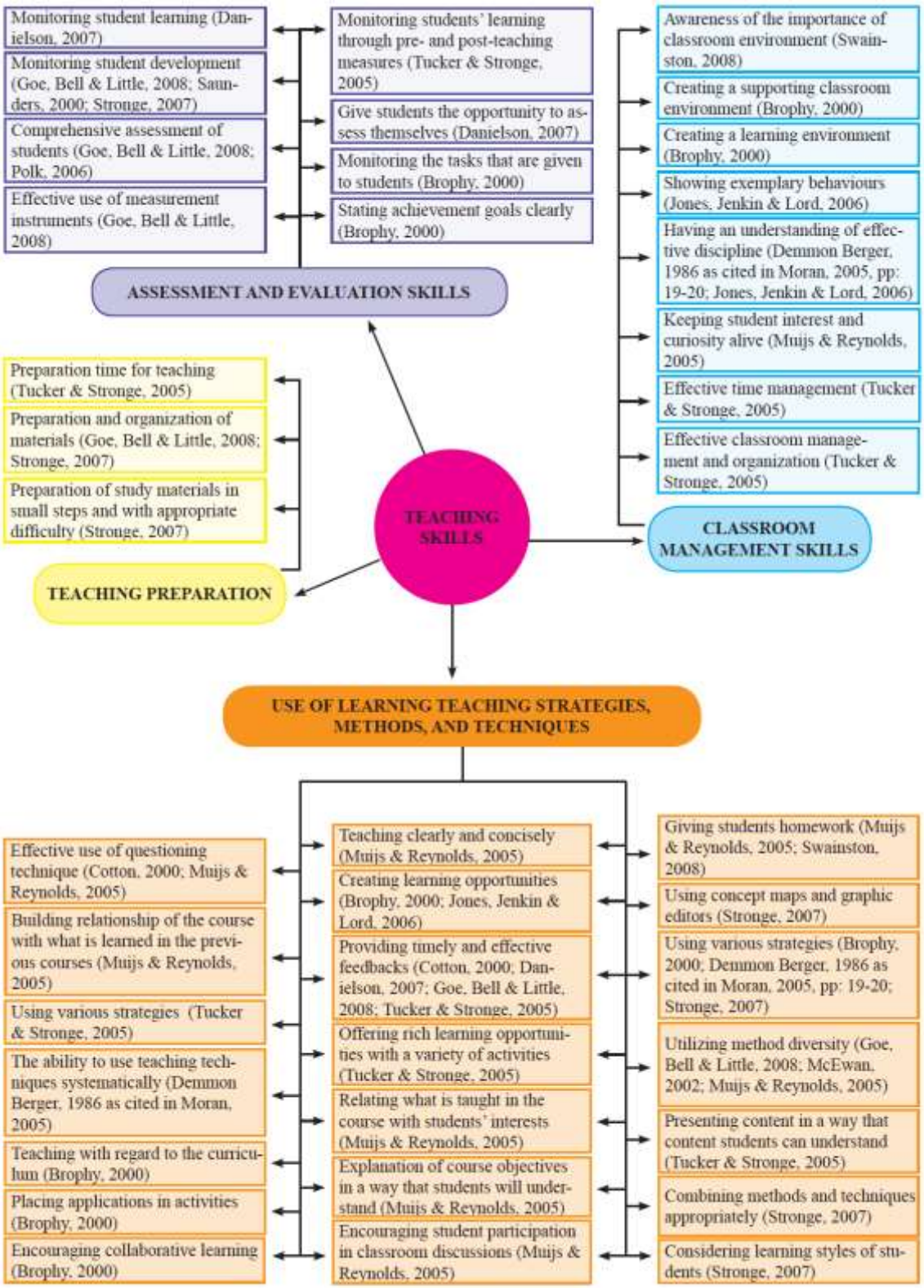


Figure 2. Examples of Teachers' Teaching Skills

1.3. Personality Characteristics

Some of the features mentioned in the relevant literature studies on effective teaching are gathered under personality characteristics title. Figure 3 contains examples of research that emphasizes the personal characteristics of an effective teacher.

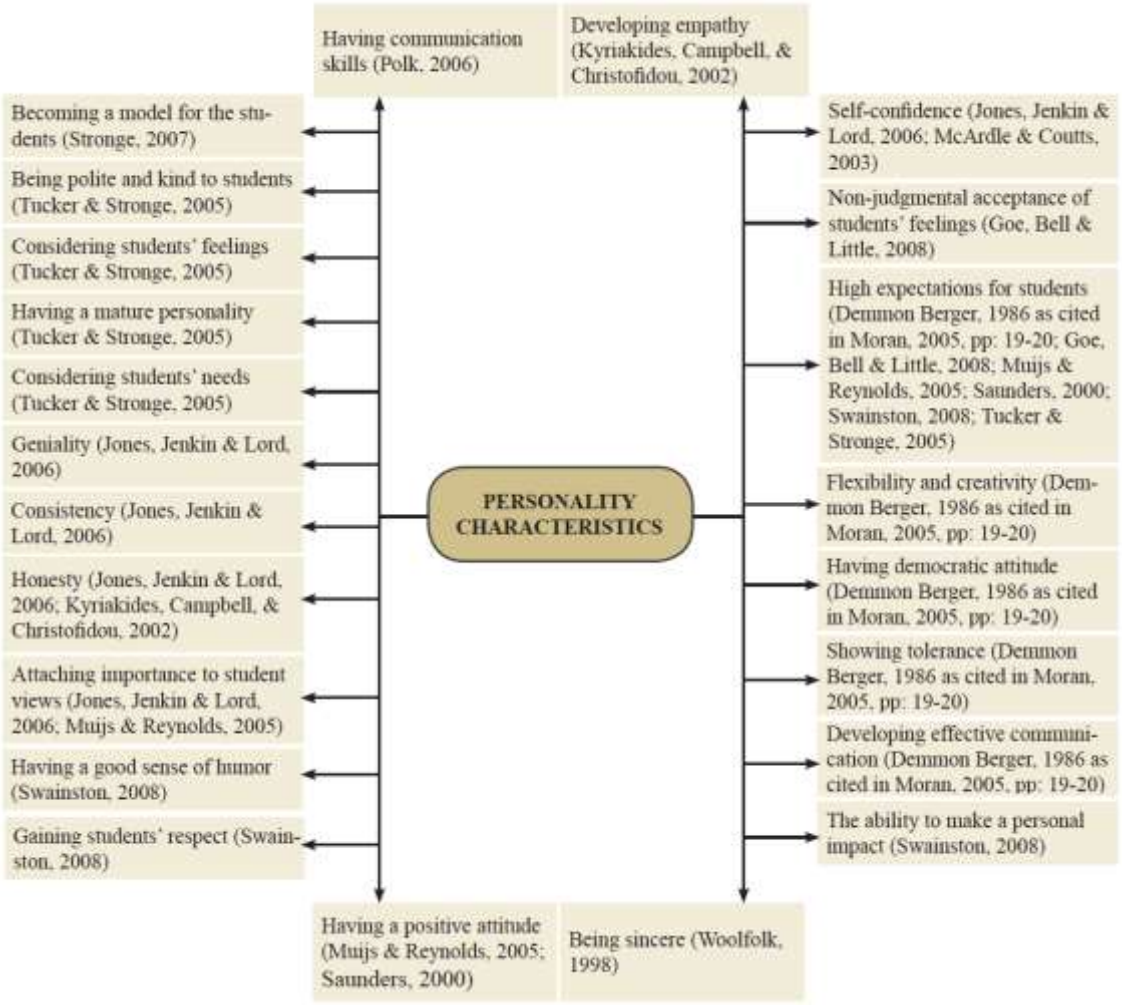


Figure 3. Examples of Personal Characteristics of an Effective Teacher

As seen in the figure, features such as being good humoured, consistent, self-confident of the teacher, giving importance to the students' opinions (Jones, Jenkin & Lord, 2006), effective communication skills (Polk, 2006), being sincere (Woolfolk, 1998), having a positive attitude (Muijs & Reynolds, 2005; Saunders, 2000), having high expectations for students (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008, Muijs & Reynolds, 2005, Saunders, 2000, Swainston, 2008, Tucker & Stronge, 2005), having the ability to empathize (Kyriakides, Campbell & Christofidou, 2002), accepting the feelings of students without judgment (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008), being a model to students (Stronge, 2007), having confidence (McArdle & Coutts, 2003); being flexible, creative and tolerant, have a democratic grip (Deamon Berger, 1986, narr. Moran, 2005; Ozen, 2015), giving importance to students' feelings and needs (Tucker & Stronge, 2005), influencing students (Swainston, 2008) are notable as the features that researchers emphasize in this context.

1.4. Professional Development

It has also been seen that special features of the teacher's professional development are emphasized in the screening of the effective teacher. Attention to personal development, awareness of life-long learning (Polk, 2006), monitoring research on occupation (McEwan, 2002), collaborating with colleagues (Goe, Bell & Little, 2008; Stronge, 2007), investing in own education, participation in conferences and in-service trainings (Stronge, 2007) are attracting attention in this context. In summary, constant professional development is gaining importance for the teaching profession nowadays, as information is increasing rapidly and life-long learning is getting more and more important. Figure 4 presents examples of research on the professional development characteristics of the effective teacher.

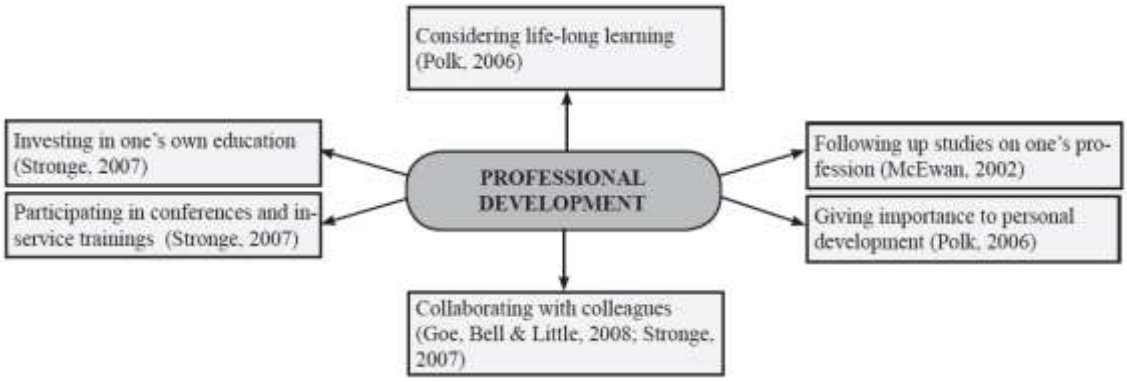


Figure 4. Examples of Professional Development Characteristics of the Effective Teacher

It is seen that the features of effective teachers that have been offered so far and found in the field are quite detailed. It should be noted here that in most of the studies, one or several of the properties and groupings given in this study are collected together. By taking advantage of the present study, a case study qualitative research was designed and implemented to describe 'effective teacher characteristics' for secondary school teachers.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study is a case study qualitative research. Besides, the study includes descriptions based on the literature in a wide spectrum. An examination of the literature on the concept of "effective teacher" was carried out.

2.2. Research Group

Maximum variation purposive sampling method was used in this research. In maximum variation purposive sampling, the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. On the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the population, a judgment is made about which subjects should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research. For example, in research on effective teaching, it may be most informative to observe expert or master teachers rather than a sample of all teachers. To study school effectiveness, it may be most informative to interview key personnel rather than a random sample of the staff (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Research has been conducted on a purposeful sample of volunteer, easily accessible individuals to participate in the survey.

The groups in this study that are referred for idea on the effective teacher characteristics are;

- ✓ 139 teachers from various branches working at 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th classes of public schools affiliated to Ministry of National Education in Ankara
- ✓ 402 students studying at 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades of public schools affiliated to Ministry of National Education in Ankara

Both the teacher and the student groups have been selected to have schools in the province of Ankara, a province in the Middle Anatolia, with various income levels and the volunteer aspect of the participants.

- ✓ 207 students (prospective teachers) studying at the faculties of education at three state universities.

Teacher candidates were selected as students from different geographical regions in different geographical regions, from different teaching departments and from different classes.

- ✓ 14 teacher education experts in the workshop environment

Two professors, one associate professor, two assistant professors, one doctor teaching assistant, three research assistant doctoral student academicians in the department of Curriculum and Instruction, two Curriculum and Instruction Ph.D. teachers in the Ministry of National Education, an assistant professor in the department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Measurement and Evaluation in Education an assistant professor, a research assistant and a Ph.D. joined to the workshop. The workshop was carried out in two stages all day with the participation of a total of 14 teacher education experts, researchers and consultants.

- ✓ 5 teacher education experts in order to collect all the results for the final list of the characteristics of effective teacher

Unlike other expert groups, teacher education expert group consisting of four experts from the Curriculum and Instruction Department in the Faculty of Education and an expert from the department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling of a university in Ankara.

2.3. Data Collection

In this study, the data were obtained via open ended questions form, workshop and interview. With open enden question, the data were obtained from teachers, prospective teachers and students. With workshop, the data were obtained from the teacher education experts. After analysis of the data in question, another group of five teacher education experts was formed and via interview the last form of the list was given. Data collection is explained in detail in the following section.

The data collection process of the research can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ The question "In your opinion, what qualities should an effective teacher have?" was asked to 139 teachers in open-ended format. The responses were taken.

- ✓ The question "In your opinion, what qualities should an effective teacher have?" was asked to 402 studens in open-ended format. The responses were taken.

- ✓ The question "In your opinion, what qualities should an effective teacher have?" was asked to 207 teacher candidates in open-ended format. The responses were taken.

- ✓ The list of effective teacher characteristics was constructed with the data obtained from teachers, students and prospective teachers via open ended question after being analyzed with content analysis.

- ✓ Workshop was held at Gazi University with the participation of teacher education experts in February 2018. The workshop process was directed by a faculty member of Anadolu University, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education. The brainstorming method was used for the participants' views in the workshop. In the first round of the workshop participants were asked about the question: "How do you define an effective teacher? What are the most important features you need to be an effective teacher? When responding to this question, consider your student and teacher life, teachers in your community, if you remember the examples, write them briefly". Participants were asked to write their opinions on cards distributed. The cards collected from the participants were prepared and presented as a poster to be seen by all the participants by the three workshop members. In the second round, which started afternoon, there was a discussion process focused on information on the prepared cards. Two focus groups were formed at the end of the workshop, which was held in the afternoon, the focus groups discussed the emerging views during the time they were given and finalized the list of effective teacher characteristics.

- ✓ The list of effective teacher characteristics that was obtainded from the workshop was combined with the list formed with the data gathered from teachers, students and teacher candidates before the workshop.

- ✓ The list of effective teacher characteristics became a list that included over 250 characteristics. In order to organize and simplify the list for possible future studies, another group of five educational experts was formed. With this group, it was aimed to gather similar characteristics and group these characteristics under the categories.

- ✓ The group composed of 5 experts from teacher education was gathered. These experts held a session. Data collected in all other stages of this session were examined. The categories and characteristics previously formed with content analysis were evaluated. The evaluation was conducted in two steps. In the first step, five experts discussed on the results and organized the list. In the second step, the list was sent to the experts via an e-mail and the experts were requested to evaluate the list and give its final form seperatedly.

2.4. Data Analysis

Opinions of teachers, prospective teachers and students determined by open-ended questions about "effective teacher" characteristics were analyzed by content analysis method. The main goal in content analysis is to reach the concepts and associations that can explain the collected data. Firstly the conceptualization of the data collected in the analysis, then the organizing in a logical way according to the emerging concepts, and the categories explaining the data should be determined accordingly (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

Teachers, prospective teacher and students' opinions were analyzed independently from each other. The opinions of teacher education experts were reported at the workshop. Content analysis was applied for this report. Finally, all analyzes were combined. Five categories were

formed after the content analysis. These are; subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, classroom management skills, personality characteristics and professional development characteristics. The categories and characteristics under them were presented to opinions of five teacher education experts group. The group members gave their opinions for the last organization of the list. The categories about effective teacher characteristics took their last form after the group's opinions.

3. Findings

As a result of the analysis of opinions from all participants in the research, "Effective Teacher Characteristics Framework" was determined in general. The opinions of all the participants were gathered under five categories: competence in subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, classroom management skills, personality characteristics and professional development characteristics. These results have shown that participants have given priority to 'teaching abilities' and 'personality traits' in the context of 'effective teaching' characteristics. The features that emerge under the five dimensions are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Framework of Effective Teacher Characteristics

Sub-Dimension	Characteristics	(f)
Competence in Subject Matter Knowledge	Gives detailed information about the subject in the course when necessary	25
	Gives responce to questions of students that require additional information (deepening/detailing)	51
	Directs the students to resources where they can get additional information about the topic	27
	Supports teaching with various resources	29
	Uses the sample variety related to the subject	39
Teaching Skills	Explains the course in an understandable way	132
	Makes the lessons enjoyable	147
	Uses various methods and techniques to evaluate	117
	Teachs according to the level of the students	93
	Uses various teaching methods and techniques (experimenting, playing, asking questions, sightseeing, etc.)	86
	Benefits from appropriate learning strategies (repeat, oversight, concept maps, etc.)	22
	Utilizes appropriate teaching strategies (discovery learning technique, presentation, etc.)	53
	Implements teaching principles in the lesson (abstract, concrete, closely related to life, easy to navigate, etc.)	5
	Uses instructional technologies in the lesson	23
	Considers the individual differences of the students	46
	Reproduces incomprehensible topics	28
	Works with individuals and/or groups	26
	Uses appropriate teaching materials	8
	Encourages students to learn	19
	Uses feedback at the appropriate time and frequency	7
	Takes into account the learning styles of the students	2
	Establishes interdisciplinary relationships in the teaching of subjects	1
	Supports students' creative ideas	5
	Develops the learning potentials of learners (learning ability)	6
	Practices the plan effectively	5
	Provides attendance of students	36
	Uses the appropriate variety and frequency of reinforcement	5

Table 1. (continued)

Sub-Dimension	Characteristics	(f)
Classroom Management Skills	Uses time effectively in teaching process	44
	Communicates effectively with students, teachers, parents, school administrations etc...	145
	Guides students	61
	Motivates the students	41
	Uses classroom management approaches	39
	Behaves democratic	30
	Has anger control	13
	Creates a positive learning environment	7
	Uses the language effectively in written and/or oral expression	57
	Takes care to treat students equally	1
	Values his students greatly	38
	Produces solutions to the problems that arise in the class	105
	Takes initiative when necessary	2
	Follows the responsibilities to his/her students	3
	Follows student development	58
Personality characteristics	Becomes a role model for students	61
	Loves his profession	92
	Be genial	148
	Be fairness	151
	Be patient	65
	Be respectful	63
	Be intellectual	40
	Be humorous	39
	Has empathy skills	79
	Has a positive attitude towards their students	30
	Be reliable	29
	Be honest	22
	Be warm-hearted	16
	Be investigative	2
	Gives attention to clothing and appearance	14
	Be responsible	4
	Be leader	13
	Be consistent	3
	Be stabile	2
	Be open to criticism	10
	Be self-confident	7
	Has a social personality	6
	Be self-giving	4
	Be sincere	4
	Be observer	4
	Be tolerant	132
	Cooperates	2

Table 1. (continued)

Sub-Dimension	Characteristics	(f)
Professional Development Characteristics	Gives importance to professional development	10
	Follows the developments in the subject matter area	29
	Be open to innovation	31
	Follows the updates	27
	Produces original ideas	5
	Programs for professional development	5
	Tends to learn life-long	3
	Participates in professional activities related to the subject matter area	3
	Does team work	4
	Behaves in accordance with ethical rules	3
	Makes self-evaluation for professional development	3

The list of effective teacher characteristics which is in the scope of this study is determined to harmonise with the literature. In the subject matter knowledge competence dimension, it is stressed that teacher should direct students to proper resources, explain the topic plainly and appropriately, and take students' level into consideration.

One of the most important feature of a professional teacher is to teach and maintain educational activities properly. In this study, in teaching skills dimension, planning the teaching, using proper approach to the topic that is given, using diverse methods and techniques, paying attention to the learner spesifications and supervising how much has been learnt have been stressed.

One of the major characteristics of a teacher who is competent in subject matter knowledge and has the ability to share this knowledge, convert it to the students is that he or she prepares a proper environment for education. This situation was also mentioned by the participants of the study. Diverse characteristics such as creating a positivie ambiance, motivating students, following the responsibilities he presentes to students, observing the development in his students are mentioned in classroom management skills.

Teachers have to be good models for their students in order to be trustworthy, just, intellectuel, lider and open to criticism. Such characteristics are a teacher's personal characteristics. In this study, such characteristics have been stressed.

Just like other professions, teachers have to keep their information and competences dynamic. They have to be willing for continuous education, lifelong learning, and diuturnal professional development. The resuls show that continuous development is vital for teachers as well.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study, which seeks an answer from the point of view of teachers, teacher candidates, students and academicians to the characteristics of effective teachers, are consistent with the literature on this subject. As a result of the research, the data on the characteristics of the effective teacher obtained with the views of the participants were collected: competence in subject matter knowledge, teaching skills, classroom management skills, personality characteristics and professional development characteristics.

According to the results of the research, effective and experienced teachers have reached the results that they have improved themselves in the subject matter (Losee, 2014), they have

mastered the subject they teach (Leger, 2014) and they have sufficient knowledge in their subject matter (Şahin, 2011). As the teaching skills of the teachers in the research results; (Leger, 2014), to use technology in the classroom (Losee, 2014; Şahin, 2011), to create a well-organized and student-centered classroom environment, to make effective evaluations (Leger, 2014, Lupascu, Pânisoarâ & Pânisoarâ, 2014), to be able to effectively manage the classroom, to provide classroom order and discipline, to be able to discover individual differences of the students and to provide learning opportunities according to their learning speed and format (Şahin, 2011). Among most important features seen in effective teaching are; expressing the purpose of the lesson, keeping the student active, loving the job, taking into account the student interests and abilities, and establishing a good relationship/harmony with the students (Çakmak, 2009). In the study of Smith (2009), it was found that effective teachers conveyed concepts clearly, that students individually learn, create a safe learning environment, create accountability for their own learning in their students, and have effective management skills.

In the diverse studies, it is found that the effective teacher should be calm, tolerant, humane, sincere and friendly (Lupascu, Pânisoarâ & Pânisoarâ, 2014). According to the teachers' opinions, a techer should be a model with behaviors towards the effective teacher environment and students, and be good moral (Şahin, 2011). Effective teachers are compassionate and helpful (Leger, 2014). In Smith's (2009) study, effective teachers establish a tolerant relationship with their students. Research has shown that effective teachers are in a positive communication with their colleagues and students, love their profession, adopt new technology and try to improve themselves, and show positive attitude towards their professional development (Losee, 2014).

Whenever an effective teacher is referred to in this research, the most important features are listed in the teaching skills and personality characteristics. Likewise, Walker (2008) in his study, notes that being creative in delivering the lesson, being fair in grading of the students, possessing a friendly personality and giving respect to students are listed as characteristics of an effective teacher. Unlike the notable researchers of effective teacher literature (Kyriakides, Campbell & Christofidou, 2002; Muijs & Reynolds, 2005; Stronge, 2007), in this research, "making the lesson enjoyable", "the teacher being full of love" and "geniality" features are listed for the effective teacher. Lupascu, Pânisoarâ and Pânisoarâ (2014) states that effective teacher should be friendly to teacher, Leger (2014) points that effective teacher should be compassionate and helpful. Making the lesson enjoyable is more important according to the students, and it is in the interest of professionals (teachers, prospective teachers and teacher education experts) who transfer the lesson in an understandable way, appropriate level giving, technical use of the method.

It is notable that the characteristics of professional development are not on the agenda of prospective teachers. Candidates who have just acquired teaching profession information may not have considered that the information needs to be updated over time. On the other hand, in Lafci Tor’s (2017) study, candidates specifically focused on the idea that the classroom harmony and is a sign for a quality education. Likewise, in this study, the use of various learning and teaching strategies is at the forefront of specialists who are also receiving features such as teacher candidates and teacher education experts, lectures related to teaching principles, and the use of reinforcements. Teachers and students are more concerned with problems such as repetition of incoherent issues.

The personality traits that have the greatest number of frequencies in the stated characteristics are the ones that have the highest frequency. This should be related to the degree to which the effective teacher and personality characteristics are integrated. The features in this section have been frequently stated by teachers, students, teacher candidates and teacher education experts.

Effective teachers' characteristics obtained as a resut of the study can be used in order to develop scales, control lists, observation forms. This study was conducted with teachers, students and teacher candidates of secondary school level. Replications of different educational levels or with different samples will contribute to revise the characteristics of effective teachers. Ministry of Education increasingly works to develop teacher quality. There is also a division at the ministry for the purpose of implementing this goal. The results of this study will also be beneficial for the works conducted at the Ministry of Education.

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