



## PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF IDEAL TEACHER BEHAVIOURS (II). PILOT STUDY

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the current investigation is to describe the portrait and the teaching behaviours of the ideal teacher. For the inquiry, a number of 76 subjects (high school and faculty students) answered a 40 items questionnaire based on literature. Results evidencing the behaviours of the teacher are presented, emphasizing few significant opinion differences between high school and university students in respect with the behaviours of the ideal teacher.) The respondents appreciate that the ideal teacher promotes the deep learning throughout various strategies and also throughout evaluation.

**Key words:** ideal teacher, teaching behaviours, inquiry

### 1. The teaching profession and the professional excellence

The concept of teaching describes a social process that implies "the specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes designed to provide unique service to meet the educational needs of the individual and of society" (The Alberta Teaching Association, 2012).

Built and developed in time, the didactical profession needs to be exerted in a responsible and autonomous manner (Gohier et al., 2000, p.87). This reference highlights three aspects that need to be analysed referring to the teaching occupation:

- *The education activity:* the schooling relationship with the students; the interactive and reflexive mediation implied by the teaching-learning process; the efficient utilization of education means; the evaluation of the learning process.
- *The functioning of the teacher in a social reference group involve:* the promotion of the school culture; the relation to the school curriculum; the interaction and cooperation with the colleagues, the families of the students and other partners from the education process; working in a social reference group involves the need of professionalism in relation with other speakers.
- *The social responsibility of the teacher:* the special role of the teacher is evidenced in his contribution to the school institution and curriculum; the elaboration of school projects; the redefining of the social mission of the school.

Conceptualisation of professionalism remains unclear (Edwards, 2010, p. 3). In relationship with the teaching profession the professionalism involves reflexivity, expertise, the assumption of self-perfecting, professional relationships with every other person directly or indirectly involved in the teaching process and active involvement in the development of the school institution (Gohier et al., 2000, p.87; ).

The teaching excellence as well as its description throughout standards or competences are issues argued by the educators community (Newby, 2007, p.120-121; Skelton, 2013, p.3).

The curricular documents from various countries operate for the description of the didactical profession by means of different concepts: a) competence standards (Department of education and training of Western Australia, 2004; UK Department of education, 2013); b) competences/ referential of competences (MEN, France, 2013); c) professional standards (New Jersey Department of Education, 2013).

Regarding the standards, the documents elaborated by the Ministry of Education, British Columbia state that "Standards are not detailed descriptors of teaching competency or conduct. There are statements of principle upon each the detail can be built. Standards should be succinct and convey to the reader on overall sense of the work that teachers do (competencies) and the way in which they are prepared". The Department of Education, UK (2011, revised 2013) mentions that "The standards set out clearly the key areas in which a teacher should be able to assess his or her own practice, and receive feedback from colleagues". More general, European Commission define professional standards for teachers as being focus on what teachers are expected to know and be able to do (2013, p.15). Gonczi et al. (2010, p. 206) specify that competent performance implies the mobilizing of knowledge, cognitive, and practical skills, as well as attitudes, emotions, values, and motivations

Perrenoud (1999, cited by Clivaz et al. (2008 p. 97) and Levy-Leboyer (2009, p. 22) define the teaching competency as the capacity to mobilize different cognitive resources (attitudes, personality traits and knowledge) to handle a certain type of situation/task. Levy-Leboyer shows that the before mentioned resources do not have to be regarded as a summum but as a system that works different for different situations/tasks (2009, p. 22). Guillemette & Gauthier (2008, p. 2) highlight the fact that the competences can not be taught or transferred from teacher to student but they are the result of the experience: "Acquérir de nouvelles compétences n'est donc plus une activité antérieure au travail ou qui se déroule à côté du travail. Elle se réalise au cours même du travail et par son intermédiaire". As a consequence, it is highly explicable the effort made by teacher training specialists to bring the professional competences system to the requirements of the society. As an example, the Ministry of Education from UK, updated in 2013 the referential of competences which now requires 19 professional competences from a teacher. These are grouped into four categories: integration in the educational system, possession and integration of knowledge, teaching expertise and professional development.

Seldin et al., (2010) indicate the criteria for evaluation of competence in teaching and of excellence in teaching. The Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto (2012) describes the evaluation of teaching competency for the staff involved in the university teaching process. According to this document, the teaching competency assumes the stimulation and incitement of intellectual and cognitive progress of the students, the initiation of the students towards inquiry, discovery based learning and research process, possession of strong communication skills, preoccupation for the students' learning progress, the proving of academic integrity and adherence to grading standards of the division and to the ethical standards of profession and creation respectively. The cited source also mentions that the teaching excellence also involves high teaching skills, efficient educational leadership and a great creativity and innovation with respect to teaching. This innovation regards the development of new teaching processes, materials and forms of evaluation, the utilization of new technologies and media for teaching purposes, the elaboration of innovative materials (textbooks and/or teaching guides) development of new courses and/or reform of curricula, utilization of research to develop new practices and the involvement of the students in the research process for significant contribution to pedagogical changes in a discipline. (ibidem).

For obtaining a clear definition of the professional excellence, our preoccupation should be directed to the competences which offer a more detailed perspective towards it. The sole utilization of the competency standards for defining the concepts of profession and professionalism offers only a limited, general perspective to it.

## **2. The efficient teacher and the ideal teacher of the section**

Dinçer, Göksu et al. (2013, p.2) show that the term efficient can have various meanings. Describing the teaching profession, the definition of the term depends on the personal, experiential, socio-economic and cultural field based aspects of the person who defines them.

Hassel (2009, citing Spencer & Spencer, 1993) use an iceberg type graphical organizer to illustrate the competences of the efficient teacher. At the top of the iceberg is placed the qualification (certification, grade) of the teacher and lower, but above the floating line the professional competences and practices. In the unseen part of the iceberg, the one with the bigger volume, Hassel places the deep

competences represented by the thinking patterns and the recurrent behaviours. The latter ones are those that support the deep learning (example: the utilization of research for the improvement of the teaching practices, the frequent evaluation of the students and the using of the results to stimulate their progress, etc).

Stronge, Tucker & Lindman (2004) and Stronge (2007) grouped the qualities of the efficient teacher as follows: a) prerequisites of effective teachers; b) the teacher as a person; c) classroom management and organization; d) organizing for instruction; e) implementing instruction and f) monitoring student progress and potential. The cited sources present besides the qualities a set of bad behaviours that are followed by a not efficient teaching process called "red flags of inefficient teaching". Stronge (2007, p.136) highlights that "red flags do not necessarily signal an ineffective teacher, just a behaviour that needs improvement".

Sybouts (1994), cited by Syed Shafqat Ali Shah (2009, p.10) also states the behaviours of the efficient teacher based on more than seventy-four research studies. These behaviours are: demonstrating commitment to academic goals; creating a climate of high expectations; functioning as an instructional leader; being a forceful and dynamic leader; consulting effectively with others; creating order and discipline; marshalling resources; using time well; evaluating results (ibidem).

The teacher's behaviour in the course room must be in agreement with his professional competences and with the situation (the teaching activity). The relationship to the didactical activity (visible for high school and university students) allows the identification of some professional behaviours. Therefore the teacher knows well his subject, the syllabus and the methodology, clearly states the learning objectives, is organized, has high expectations regarding his students, motivating them to learn. Moreover the professor centres his teaching methods on his students, uses the evaluation to project the progress of the students and promotes partnerships with the students, parents and colleagues. All these behaviours must include: the assuming of academic goals; creating a supportive and with high expectations climate; functioning as an instructional leader; consulting and collaborating with others; discipline management; the rational selection and utilization of resources; using time well; evaluating process and results.

### 3. Rationale

Many students choose a carrier thinking at a teacher whose image and behaviour they valorised and subsequently copied. This study attempts to define the 'ideal' teacher as perceived by school and university students from Romania. It is hoped that the outcome of this research would signal to researchers and teacher trainers, behaviours of the teacher valorised by the subjects, serving as a starting point for an ulterior thorough research.

### 4. Methodology

The current study represents an constatative research made in the year 2014.

#### 4.1. Sample

The questionnaire was applied to a number of 76 subjects, high school and university students, in a written, face to face inquiry. The participation was voluntary. A number of 53 subjects were high school students at Colegiul Tehnic Aiud, 13 undertake bachelor's degree studies and 10 master studies at the "Babeş-Bolyai" University.

#### 4.2. Instrument and Procedure

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was about the respondents' background and gender. The second part contains 40 items structured in three categories: personal traits (8 items), attitudes (7 items) and general behaviours (2 items), the teaching behaviour (22 items), one item regards general aspects. The questionnaire used for this inquiry is based on the above mentioned references and the Teacher Behaviour Inventory.

The subjects were asked to appreciate on a five steps scale (5 = Total Agreement, 1 = Total Disagreement) 20 affirmations regarding their ideal teacher, selected from the questionnaire. This selection takes in considerations only the items referring to teacher behaviors.

### 4.3. Results

The answers of the high school and university students generate a very similar profile for the ideal teacher.

**Table 1.** The answers of the students on the items: „The ideal teacher always gives good grades” (Item 8) and "The ideal teacher gives grades suitable to the student’s knowledge” (Item 9).

Appreciation	Item 8		Item 9	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	26,42%	47,83%	3,77%	0,00%
2	22,64%	21,74%	7,55%	4,35%
3	26,42%	13,04%	5,66%	8,70%
4	13,21%	13,04%	15,09%	13,04%
5	11,32%	4,35%	67,92%	73,91%

The answers show that almost half of the high school students (49,06%) and more than half of the university students (69,57%) disagree in respect with the affirmation that a teacher always gives good grades. Regarding the item 9, similar percentages of high school and university students (83,02% high school and 86,96% university students) agree that the ideal professor appreciates the students in a fair manner.

Regarding the way the teacher includes homework in the teaching activity, the answers are summed by Table 2. 43,40% of the high school and 30,43 % of the university students do not agree that the ideal teacher gives a lot of homework and almost half of the high school and more than three quarters of the university students disagree that the ideal teacher never gives homework (49,06% high school and 82,61% university students).

**Table 2.** The answers of the students on the items: “The ideal teacher gives a lot of homework” (Item 10), “The ideal teacher never gives homework” (Item 11).

Appreciation	Item 10		Item 11	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	26,42%	13,04%	37,74%	52,17%
2	16,98%	17,39%	11,32%	30,43%
3	39,62%	56,52%	28,30%	8,70%
4	16,98%	4,35%	11,32%	8,70%
5	0,00%	8,70%	11,32%	0,00%

**Table 3.** The answers of the students on the item: „The ideal teacher dictates the whole class without any interruption” (Item 17).

Appreciation	Item 17	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	30,19%	73,91%
2	35,85%	8,70%
3	18,87%	4,35%
4	9,43%	0,00%
5	1,89%	13,04%

Both high school and university students strongly disagree with Item 17. About 66% of the high school and 82% of the university students consider that the ideal teacher does not use dictation as a mean of transmitting information for an entire class.

**Table 4.** The answers of the students on the items: “The ideal teacher uses many schemes for explanations” (Item 18), “The ideal teacher realizes many experimental activities with the class” (Item 19) and “It is important for a teacher to organize activities in which students work in small groups (3-6 persons)” (Item 20).

Appreciation	Item 18		Item 19		Item 20	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	3,77%	4,35%	1,89%	4,35%	11,32%	0,00%
2	5,66%	0,00%	7,55%	0,00%	9,43%	4,35%
3	22,64%	26,09%	20,75%	17,39%	35,85%	30,43%
4	30,19%	30,43%	35,85%	39,13%	20,75%	26,09%
5	37,74%	39,13%	32,08%	39,13%	22,64%	39,13%

Approximately 70% of the high school and university students consider that the ideal teacher employs many schemes and experimental activities during his lessons. Opinion differences appear regarding Item 20. While 43,40% of the high students consider that it is important for a teacher to organize activities in small groups, more than 65% of the university students consider the same.

**Table 5.** The answers of the students on the items: „It is important for a teacher to establish and communicate from the beginning the rules that have to be respected by the students” (Item 21) and „It is important for a teacher to always communicate his expectations” (Item 22).

Appreciation	Item 21		Item 22	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	3,77%	4,35%	5,66%	8,70%
2	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%
3	7,55%	4,35%	15,09%	4,35%
4	15,09%	13,04%	18,87%	8,70%
5	73,58%	78,26%	60,38%	73,91%

It can be seen that all students appreciate the teachers that clearly inform them of the rules necessary to be respected for their activities (88,68% high school and 91,30% university students) and regarding their expectations (79,25% high school and 82,61% university students).

**Table 6.** The answers of the students on the items: „The ideal teacher always offers answers to the questions of the students” (Item 24) and „It is important for a teacher to encourage the students to have self initiative” (Item 25).

Appreciation	Item 24		Item 25	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	1,89%	4,35%	0,00%	4,35%
2	1,89%	0,00%	1,89%	0,00%
3	9,43%	8,70%	0,00%	4,35%
4	16,98%	30,43%	18,87%	13,04%
5	69,81%	52,17%	79,25%	78,26%

The answers show that 86,79% of the high school students and 82,60% of the university students valorise a teacher that always offers answers to their questions and that 98,11% of the high school, respectively 91,30% of the university students consider that a teacher should promote the initiatives of the students.

**Table 7.** The answers of the students on the items: „It is important for a teacher to insist with explanations on subjects that are not clear for the students by repetition, rephrasing or changing the approach” (Item 26), „It is important for a teacher to check periodically if the students understood” (Item 27) and „The ideal teacher clearly explains the working algorithm for exercises, problems, experiments, etc” (Item 28).

Appreciation	Item 26		Item 27		Item 28	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	3,77%	4,35%	0,00%	4,35%	0,00%	8,70%
2	0,00%	0,00%	5,66%	4,35%	5,66%	0,00%
3	16,98%	4,35%	9,43%	4,35%	11,32%	4,35%
4	11,32%	26,09%	16,98%	34,78%	37,74%	8,70%
5	67,92%	65,22%	67,92%	52,17%	45,28%	73,91%

The high school and university students highly appreciate the behaviours of the teacher that uphold the understanding of the students by means like repetition, explanation rephrasing or using a new approach (79,25% high school and 91,30% university students), clear explanations of the working algorithm (83,02% high school and 82,61% university students) and periodical examining of the understanding of the studied content (84,91% high school and 86,96% university students).

**Table 8.** The answers of the students on the items: „It is important for a teacher to explain the real life applications of the notions he transmits” (Item 31), „It is important for a teacher to also give information complementary to the information found in textbooks” (Item 32) and „The ideal teacher offers his students the opportunity to also attend out-of-school activities” (Item 33).

Appreciation	Item 31		Item 32		Item 33	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	3,77%	4,35%	1,89%	4,35%	1,89%	4,35%
2	5,66%	0,00%	5,66%	0,00%	5,66%	4,35%
3	24,53%	17,39%	24,53%	4,35%	1,89%	13,04%
4	28,30%	30,43%	22,64%	43,48%	18,87%	26,09%
5	37,74%	47,83%	45,28%	47,83%	71,70%	52,17%

The results show that 66,04% of the high school and 78,02% of the university students consider to be important for a professor to explain the real applications of the information he transmits. As well, high percentages of the subjects consider that a teacher should also transmit to the class complementary information to the one in the textbooks (67,92% high school and 91,30% university students). Moreover, 90,57% of the high school and 78,26% of the university students consider that the ideal teacher should allow the students the possibility to be part in out-of-school activities.

**Table 9.** The answers of the students on the item: „Each teacher believes that his subject is the most important” (Item 38).

Appreciation	Item 38	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	18,87%	8,70%
2	5,66%	21,74%
3	16,98%	47,83%
4	24,53%	13,04%
5	33,96%	8,70%

More than half of the high school students agree that a teacher considers his subject to be the most important (58,49%). In contrast, only 21,74% of the university students agree with Item 38.

**Table 10.** The answers of the students on the item: “A book is more useful than a teacher” (Item 40).

Appreciation	Item 40	
	High school students (N <sub>1</sub> =53)	University students (N <sub>2</sub> =23)
1	37,74%	52,17%
2	30,19%	26,09%
3	20,75%	13,04%
4	5,66%	0,00%
5	5,66%	8,70%

The results show that only about 10% of the subjects agree with the affirmation from item 40, the one states that a book is more useful than a teacher.

#### 4.4. Discussions

The portrait outlined by the answers of the subjects is presented in Table 11. Only the items with agreement percentages of over 85% were considered.

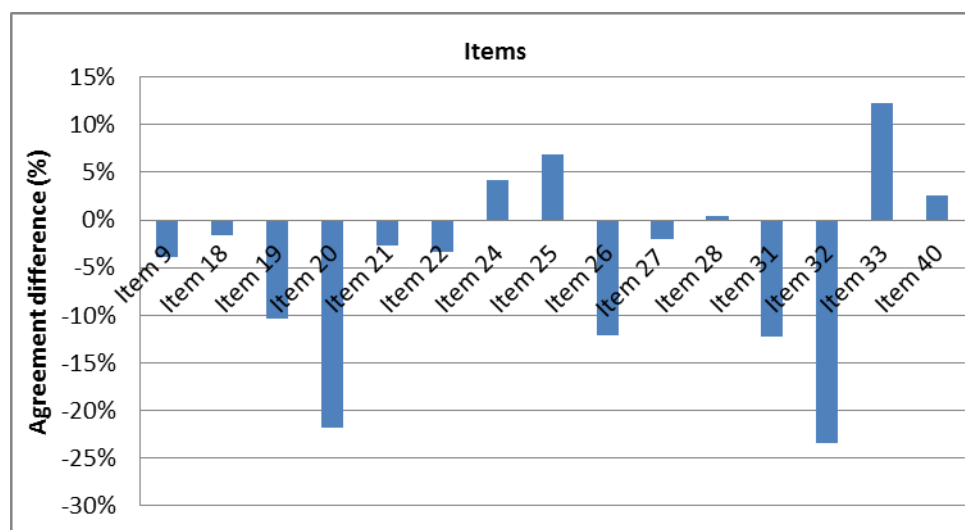
**Table 11.** The hierarchy of the ideal teacher’s behaviours based on the agreement expressed by the subjects (over 85 % of the subjects expressed their agreement)

High school students	Rank	University students
It is important for a teacher to encourage the students to have self initiative (Item 25)	I	It is important for a teacher to insist with explanations on subjects that are not clear for the students by repetition, rephrasing or changing the approach” (Item 26)
The ideal teacher offers his students the opportunity to also attend out-of-school activities (Item 33)	II	It is important for a teacher to explain the real life applications of the notions he transmits (Item 31)
It is important for a teacher to establish and communicate from the beginning the rules that have to be respected by the students (Item 21)	III	It is important for a teacher to check periodically if the students understood” (Item 27) „It is important for a teacher to always communicate his expectations” (Item 22).
The ideal teacher always offers answers to the questions of the students (Item 24)	IV	It is important for a teacher to encourage the students to have self initiative (Item 25)
	V	The ideal teacher uses many schemes for explanations (Item 18)

The portrait of the ideal teacher as understood from the answers given by the subjects differs when seen through the eyes of a high school student from the one of a university student if the criterion

considered is the agreement of over 85 % of the respondents. The high school students valorise a teacher that encourages self initiative and involves them in out-of-school activities, a teacher that establishes clear rules and answers all the questions they have. In contrast, the university students especially valorise the professor's behaviours centred on helping the students understand the knowledge. Therefore, the professor needs to explain unclear aspects, to illustrate real life applications and to verify the understanding level of the students. Next, the university students appreciate the communication of the expectations and the incitement of the self initiative for the students.

As follows, the agreement differences between the high school and university students are analyzed (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Agreement difference between the high school and university students in respect with the items of the questionnaire.

The majority of the differences are small, under 10%. However, differences between the agreement of the university students and high school students in the range 10-20% are found for the items 26 (It is important for a teacher to insist with explanations on subjects that are not clear for the students by repetition, rephrasing or changing the approach) and 31 (It is important for a teacher to explain the real life applications of the notions he transmits). Students seem to be more aware of the importance of the explanations given by the teacher regarding the unclear aspects or the real life applications of the thought notions.

Differences higher than 20% between the agreement of the university students and that of the high school students are recorded for items 20 (It is important for a teacher to organize activities in which students work in small groups (3-6 persons) and 32 (It is important for a teacher to also give information complementary to the information found in textbooks). The group work is not very valorised by the subjects, high school or university students. The higher appreciation of the university students is based on the experience accumulated during the university studies where many activities are organized in small groups. The opinion difference in respect with Item 32 can be explained by the higher difficulty of the academic courses as compared to the high school courses. The university students require more support from their teachers, reason why they valorise the information complementary to the notions presented in the textbooks.

An opposite difference between the agreement expressed by the high school and, respectively, university students higher than 10 % was recorded for item 33 (The ideal teacher offers his students the opportunity to also attend out-of-school activities). The high school students appreciate more than the university students the out-of-school activities that offer them the possibility of profiting from a novel learning environment, more similar to the real life.



## 5. Conclusion

Many of the behaviours that depict the ideal teacher are similarly valorised by the high school and university students. As a consequence, it can be alleged that the ideal teacher of high school students slightly differs from the ideal teacher of the university students.

The analysis of the results ascertains that the ideal teacher clearly transmits his expectations to his students, encourages the self initiative for the learners and offers complementary information. The subjects also appreciate that the ideal teacher promotes the deep learning throughout various strategies: inquiry (answers the questions of the students), experiments, explanations (insisting on the unclear subjects, working algorithms and on the real life applications of the notions), graphical representations, and periodical verification of the students' understanding. Moreover the ideal teacher involves the students in out-of-school activities and group working activities. Likewise, the teacher grades the students correspondently to their knowledge. All these characteristics determine the subjects to think that the ideal teacher has to be preferred to a simple book studying process.

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