

Investigating the Qualities of A Good Teacher from Students Perspectives:

(a Case study of learners of English Language at University of Holy Quran and Islamic studies.)

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Abstract:

This study investigated the qualities of good teacher from the perspectives of students at the University of Holy Quran and Islamic studies in Khartoum, Sudan. The core objectives of the study were to explore the beliefs and opinions of learners of the qualities of a good teachers. 35 students majoring in English at the University of Holy Quran and Islamic studies were sample of the study. The researcher used the questionnaire as a tool for collecting the data from the participants. 15 qualities were presented for students to express their opinions of their importance in a scale ranged from (very important) to (not important at all). The study concluded that all the qualities which presented to the students in the questionnaire are varied in it is importance. 7 out of 15 qualities are considered very important for a good teacher, whereas 8 qualities considered less important for a good teacher.

Keywords: Qualities, A good teacher, student's perspective, personality traits, case study.

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في صفات المعلم/ الأستاذ الجيد من وجهة نظر طلاب جامعة القرآن الكريم و العلوم الإسلامية، الخرطوم، السودان. أهم أهداف هذه الدراسة تتمثل في استكشاف آراء الطلاب و الدارسين في ماهية المعلم/الأستاذ الجيد. عينة الدراسة 35 طالبا من جامعة القرآن الكريم و العلوم الإسلامية تخصص (اللغة انجليزية)، استخدم الباحث الاستبيان كوسيلة لجمع البيانات. احتوي الاستبيان على (15) صفة/سمة و قد طلب من الطلاب تقييمها من (أكثر اهمية) إلى (اقل اهمية). خلصت الدراسة إلى عدة نتائج، أهمها: أن السمات/الصفات التي تعتبر مهمة أو أقل أهمية متفاوتة بين الطلاب.

Introduction:

The question of what qualities do a good teacher should pose has been a concern of many studies in the ELT literature. A substantial amount of studies throughout the history have tried to determine what qualities or traits that lead to “a good” or “effective “, or” qualified teacher?. The tendency of the researchers and educators on this particular topic comes from its significance and impacts of teachers on the lives of learners and the community as whole because” the teacher is one of the main factors that has a lot of influence on

students' achievement, performance and their success (Zainab Al Balushy, 2011 cited in Melek Koc, 2012). Prabhu (1990) pointed out that the characteristics of EFL teachers with positive attitudes and enthusiasm strongly correlated with increasing rapport between students and teachers, and appeared to promote productive learning. This indicates that the teacher's characteristics can both encourage and discourage the students' learning. In respect to the classroom atmosphere, this matter may be influenced by the teacher's characteristics as well.

The researcher has been a teacher of English over more than 15 years in different educational institutions; schools, language centres and universities, one thing the researcher found common among students; their views about teachers and these views affect their progress on the subjects which those teachers teach. Particularly the researcher impressed about students abilities in identifying easily “ the characteristics the good teacher and the bad teacher? May be not all of the characteristics they mention define the “good teacher” but yet their views matters. Qualities such as “ being friendly” ,” funny” , caring, “ knows how to communicate the with us”, “ and qualified”, these traits or characteristics are shared by most students I have encountered through my career. The researcher strongly believe that how students view teachers matter and knowing what “ make “ a good teacher will be of great benefits for teachers, educators , teachers’ trainers and policy makers. Adams and Pierce (1999) believe that having many years of experience doesn’t guarantee expert teaching; experience is useful only when the teacher continually engages in self-reflection and modifies classroom techniques to better serve the needs of students. skills that teachers need to have, personal traits are also equally important because they also play a vital role in the success of learning. It is important to study the perceptions of learners about learning and teaching. Their beliefs about language learning seem to have obvious relevance to understanding their expectations of the course, their commitment to the class as well as providing them with the opportunity to be

successful and satisfied with their language learning program (Horwitz, 1988).

As Parker Palmer summarized it in his way : Good teaching isn't about technique. I've asked students around the country to describe their good teachers to me. Some of them describe people who lecture all the time, some of them describe people who do little other than facilitate group process, and others describe everything in between. But all of them describe people who have some sort of connective capacity, who connect themselves to their students, their students to each other, and everyone to the subject being studied. (Palmer, p. 27 Therefore, the objective of the current study is to find out what are the most important characteristics that students believe are important from their perspectives?

1. Literature Review

The question of good teacher or effective teacher has been killed by many researchers around the world. In an attempt to put a frame or a definition of what makes an affective teacher?. Researchers in the field have described “ effective teachers” as been “ active” who make use of the instruction time, present materials in ways to meet student needs, monitor programs and progress and plan opportunities for learners to apply newly acquired concepts and skills((Brophy & Good, 1986; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001).

According to Kounin(1970), effective teacher is the one who “accurately handle inappropriate student behavior, manage competing or developing events, more smoothly through instruction, maintain appropriate pacing, and maintain a group focus”(p.147).

According to Kounin (1970) the abilities accepted from an effective teacher are the ability to handle student misbehavior appropriately, to create and manage a stimulating competitive environment, to give clear instruction to pace and maintain a focused group work. He also points out that the most

The earliest research dates back to the 1930's conducted in Germany. In a study cited by Zagyváné , she mentioned that After interviewing 1000 students, the researchers drew the conclusion that the most respected teachers are joyful, patient, friendly, understanding, objective and fair in assessing students' achievements. The researchers continued collecting the personality traits. According to a comparative research in the Federal Republic of Germany, optimism, objectivity, patience, confidence, elegant and sportish appearance were considered to be the most important traits. The Polish believed the professional knowledge, high level of ethics, honesty, confidence, consistency, fairness, self-command and optimism made the good teacher.(Zagyváné, 2017).

In 1998, a study conducted a among students to investigates the characteristics of a good teacher, the study revealed that a good teacher is demanding but understanding, consistent, objective unprejudiced, direct, patient, respectful and well-educated. He is friend, a master and has excellent subject matter. (Zagyváné 2017)

Other studies in the same devour identified more personality characteristics that can best describe who is a good teacher. In a study done by Martin(Martin 2007), considered an average

teacher is obedient, respectful, responsible, realistic, down –to earth and empathic.

Other researchers, Rushton & others studied American teachers in order to find out what distinguish them from the others. They found that they are” idealists, advocates who are proud of their identity. They are energetic ,extrovert, optimistic, spontaneous and adaptive.(R. Szebeni,2010).

In a most recent trend in the area of teachers development, a new ideas emerged in defining the characteristics of a good teacher. This new trend believed that the “value added” to students' achievement by the teacher's work does not correlate to teachers' qualification, length of his practice and the courses and trainings which the teacher has taken In his professional development, but rather correlate to his personality traits such as caring, motivated, enthusiastic, cooperative and subject knowledge. These new trends allowed researchers to examine the concept of who is a good teacher in much broader context than previously; where now can include teachers' professional knowledge skills, intelligence, interpersonal relationship.

Students' beliefs are very important because they get along with their teachers every day and they can express their own opinions on good and bad teaching as well. These opinions can make the teachers understand their students' realities and change their everyday practice. According to Bullock, different student groups rate the importance of certain characteristics in a different way. Personality traits, ability and student-teacher relationship emerge with varying importance.

The importance of certain characteristics is different depending on age, students' academic self-concept and motivation, background and experiences [M. Bullock 2015]. The review of the literature makes us draw the conclusion that the question “What makes the good teacher?” is rather complex. The answer depends on not only the people who are asked but their social background and the time when they are asked. The teachers' personality traits, professional skills are as important as their attempts to maintain good student-teacher relationship. This study focuses on the students' beliefs on these three aspects

Moreover, investigation of the student beliefs about different behaviors in the language classroom is useful in informing teachers about different types of learners that need to be catered for (Cotterall, 1999). Good teaching is clearly important to raising student achievement, if teacher is not aware of the learner's expectation and needs related to the course, it will have negative outcomes regarding the students' performance.

Many studies tried to define a good teacher based on specific list of traits or characteristics. In this section, the researcher will go over some of the most influential lists that assume the “good teacher” should pose. Raymont and Welton(cited in Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, & Robinson 2004), developed a list of five major propositions that good teachers should have: Planning, teacher-pupil interaction, lesson structure, core teaching skills and the power of the individual teacher to teach. These propositions are interdependent, i.e they work as a unit.

In a study by Thompson, Greer, and Greer (2004 cited by Roya Zamani 2016)) explored the reflections of university students

regarding the characteristics of their favorite teachers from whom they were able to learn. Data collected from the students indicated that there are twelve common characteristics that emerged as central to what students conceptualize as good teaching. Those twelve characteristics were displaying fairness, having a positive outlook, being prepared, using a personal touch, possessing a sense of humor, possessing creativity, admitting mistakes, being forgiving, respecting students, maintaining high expectations, showing compassion, and developing a sense of belonging for students. They suggested that all those characteristics center on the theme of caring.

Horwitz (1987) warned of the dangers of ignoring student beliefs about language learning: “When language classes fail to meet student expectations, students can lose confidence in the instructional approach and their ultimate achievement can be limited” (p. 119). It seems that the concept of effectiveness is not following a generic pattern and different subjects may demand different patterns of effectiveness in the perceptions of the teachers of these subjects. English as a foreign language is no exception specific feature of an effective teacher is to keep students focused on learning and to reduce classroom disruption. Many studies have investigated the characteristics of effective teachers which most strongly influence students' learning and achievement (DemmonBerger, 1986; Koutsoulis, 2003; Lang et al., 1993; Lowman, 1997; Witcher et al., 2001). These studies asked students to identify effective teacher characteristics by means of self-report questionnaires or interviews. Stricland (1998) rather than defining ' the characteristics of an effective teacher ', has described 'bad teachers '

and referred to them as teachers who lack field knowledge and good classroom control, who cannot discover the learning problems of learners, who have obsessions on teaching and do not have certain goals. An effective teacher should also motivate the learners. In Walter (2000, cited in Melek Koc , 2012), it is indicated that giving students more control over the learning process increases motivation. Similarly, Dickinson (1987) comments as follows: “If the learner is prevented from using the favoured techniques, this is likely to seem to her to reduce her learning effectiveness and so be demotivating”(p.193).

Teacher effectiveness studies show that:

- a) Highly effective teachers are smart. They have deep content area knowledge and excellent verbal skills (elaborate vocabularies). Together these seem to lead to lesson clarity.
- b) Highly effective teachers are well-prepared. They know about lesson design and plan well-structured daily lessons. They have effective time management skills, are masters of student motivation, and know to meet the needs of students with special needs, English learners, struggling readers, other students at risk, as well as high-achievers.
- c) Highly effective teachers possess certain positive background qualifications, sometimes called dispositions, personality attributes, or attitudes. They possess something called high teacher efficacy, a belief in their ability to cause change with students. More effective teachers are also caring, enthusiastic, energetic, have positive THE GOOD TEACHER attitudes, and high- expectations.
- d) Highly effective teachers have excellent classroom management skills. Although all

teachers encounter students with issues and discipline challenges, highly effective teachers know how to get the students on their side, earn their respect, and minimize disruptive behavior. Good classroom management is largely the result of the first three factors identified—being smart, well-prepared, and possessing those itemized positive dispositions/attitudes/expectations. (Gordon’s (2012)vp. 2)

scholar Robert J. Walker (2008 cited in Martin Bernard.2015) in his study on the 12 characteristics of an effective educator recorded the statements of students who described their favorite teachers as the following: •

“She was always prepared.” (p. 63)

• “He was very positive.” (p. 63) •

“She had high expectations for me!” (p. 63) •

“She was the most creative teacher I have ever had!” (p. 63)

• “He was so fair!” (p. 63)

• “I liked her personal touch!” (p. 63)

• “I felt that I was a part of the class.” (p. 63)

• “She showed me compassion when my mother died.” (p. 63) •

“He was so funny!”... “

She taught her class in a fun way.” (p. 63) •

“I was never bored in his class.” (p. 63)

• “He gave all the students respect and never embarrassed me in front of the class.” (p. 63) • “She did not hold what I did against me!” (p. 63)

• “He was the first teacher I had who admitted that he had made a mistake” (p. 64)

• “She apologized to me” (p. 64)

Generally speaking, research suggests that successful teachers exhibit knowledge of pedagogical practices or techniques,

they get to know their students both on a personal and academic level, that are continuously monitoring and evaluating their students learning and progress, they are involved in the school community, reflect a healthy relationship with society, they are greatly familiar with curriculum and subject content, they practice and exhibit the behaviors and skills that they teach to their students such as collaboration, problem solving, and communication (Zhu, 2013)

In study conducted by Witcher(2003) regarding the opinions of college students on make a good teachers. 912 participants participated in the study from different majors in A midsouth University. The result showed that nine characteristics considered the most important from the students perspective: 1) students-centred teaching, 2)knowledge about the subject matter, 3-enthusiastic, 4-effective communication, 5-accessibel, 6-competent, 7-fair and respectful, 8-provide feedback 9)professional.

Barnes (2010) examined the students' beliefs about the attributes of effective EFL teachers. 105 first year Korean university students taking EFL classes at a women's university in Korea were asked to write the attributes of effective EFL teachers in their own language. The results of the study were framed under five categories including rapport, delivery, fairness, knowledge and credibility, and organization and preparation. Students considered rapport and delivery as very important characteristics of an EFL teacher. Particularly, rapport attributes were viewed as the most important in Korean university contexts where students had anxiety in English language learning.

After reviewing the literature, there seems to be consensus around the qualities of an effective or good educator.

2. Methodology:

3.1.Question of the study:

What are the qualities of a good teacher from student's perspectives?

3.2.Instrument:

As the purpose of the study is to identify the characteristics or the qualities of a good teacher, a questionnaire was used as a mean to collect the study data. the researcher has chosen 15 qualities which have been identified in the literature review as been most important to define who is a good teacher. For this aim, the researcher designed a questionnaire around these qualities and asked the respondents to rank what qualities they consider are the most important quality for a teacher to have. The researcher use the scale of 1 5-rank scale ranged from" most important-to not important at all. The questionnaire has two sections. In the first section, the research asks participants to rank the characteristics of a good teacher in a closed-ended format and in the second the section one open-ended question was written asking participants to write what characteristics THEY think are the most important for them?

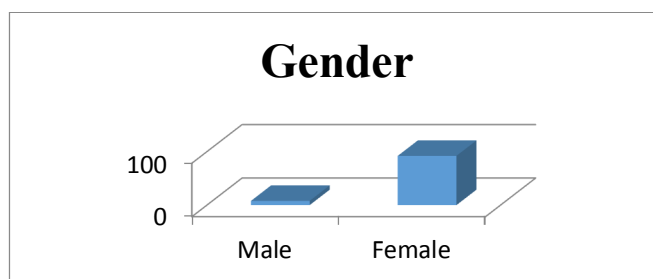
3.3.Procedures:

After designing the questionnaire, the researcher distributed 10 copies for English learners at a training center (ESL centre-Sudan) as test for the questionnaire validity & reliability. The result of this small sample showed that the questionnaire is valid and reliable as the participants were fully understood the questions without any help from the researcher.

After that the researcher presented the questionnaire to his students at the college of education, English section, of University of Holy Quran & Islamic studies in Sudan, where the researcher works as an assistant professor of English. The researcher distributed 50 copies for his students after explaining the purpose of his study and gave elaborate discussion and explanation of the traits or characteristics which are presented to them in the questionnaire.

Table No (1) **Frequencies and percentages in terms of Gender:**

Answer	Frequency	Percent
Male	3	7.9
Female	35	92.1
Total	38	100%

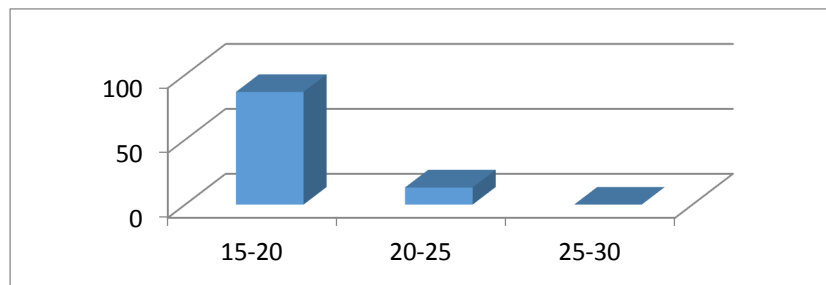


From table and figure above we notice that (35) person with percent (92.1%) from the population were females, while (5) person with percent (7.9%) were males.

Table No (2) **Frequencies and percentages in terms of age:**

Table No (2) shows the population's Answer	Frequency	Percent
15-20	33	86.8
20-25	5	13.2
25-30	0	0
Total	38	100%

Figure No (2) Frequencies and percentages in terms of age:

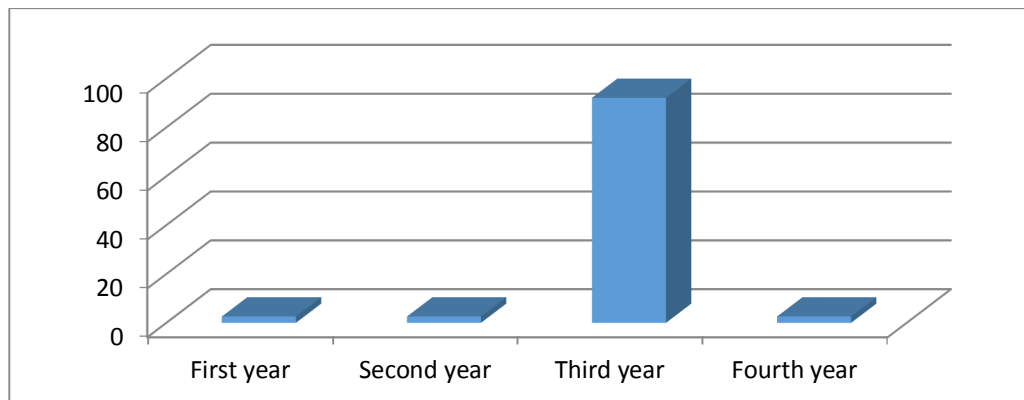


From table and figure above we notice that (33) of the population with percent 86.8%) aged 15-20 years old, while (5) of the population with percent (13.2%) aged between 20-25 years old.

Table No (3) Frequencies and percentages in terms of study level at the University:

Answer	Frequency	Percent
First year	1	2.6
Second year	1	2.6
Third year	35	92.1
Fourth year	1	2.6
Total	38	100%

Figure No (2) the population's Answer of the question two:



Result of the analysis

Qualities of A good Teacher	Very important		Important		Neutral		Less important		Not important at all		T
	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%	F	P%	
Knowledge about the subject matter	36	94.7%	2	5.3%	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
Effective communication skills	26	68.4%	12	31.6%	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
Enthusiastic about teaching	21	55.3%	14	36.8%	3	7.9%	0	0	0	0	38
Well-preparation for each class	16	42.1%	14	36.8%	0	0	7	18.4%	1	2.6%	38
The ability to adapt to student needs	23	60.5%	11	28.9%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	2	5.3%	38
Capability of being tolerant of others ideas and view	17	44.7%	16	42.1%	3	7.9%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	38
Respects	28	73.7%	6	15.8%	3	7.9%	0	0	1	2.6%	38
Being warm and friendly	20	52.6%	8	21.1%	7	18.4%	1	2.6%	2	5.3%	38
A good sense of humor	21	55.3%	12	31.6%	4	10.5%	1	2.6%	0	0	38
Self-confidence	26	68.4%	7	18.4%	4	10.5%	0	0	1	2.6%	38
Having concernce about student learning	27	71.1%	6	15.8%	2	5.3%	1	2.6%	2	5.3%	38
The ability to explain material clearly	24	63.2%	7	18.4%	5	13.2%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	38
The instructor's accessibility outside of class	19	50.0%	11	28.9%	6	15.8%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	38
The appropriate amount and level of assignments	19	50.0%	14	36.8%	3	7.9%	1	2.6%	1	2.6%	38
The appropriate evaluation method	22	57.9%	10	26.3%	5	13.2%	1	2.6%	0	0	38

4. Results:

Table (4) Result of Top qualities of good teachers from student's perspectives

Rank	Quality	Percentages
1	Knowledge about the subject matter	94.7%
2	Having concerned about student learning	71.1%
3	Effective communication skills	68.4%
4	Self-confidence	68.4%
5	The ability to explain material clearly	63.2%
6	The ability to adapt to student needs	60.5%
7	Enthusiastic about teaching	55.3%

Ranking of Least Important qualities of good teachers from student's perspectives

Table(5) Result of least important qualities

Rank	Quality of a good teacher	Percentages %
1	Well-preparation for each class	42.1%
2	Capability of being tolerant of others ideas and view	44.7%
3	The instructor's accessibility outside of class	50.0%
3	The appropriate amount and level of assignments	50.0%
4	Being warm and friendly	52.6%

5. Discussion

Responding to the questionnaire items about the qualities of a good teacher, 36 out 38(94.7%) from the participants believed that if the teacher/instructor should have " **Knowledge about the subject matter**" is very important quality. This result is similar to the findings of previous studies. Stronge (2018) proposed this to be a basic prerequisite to effective teaching. He argued that high quality teachers must have a strong foundation in the concepts, principles, methodology, and generalizations within their subject matter. He also stated that high quality teachers are continuously striving to stay current on their subject matter and are deepening their understanding in order to determine pedagogical thinking and decision making. Also Gay (2012) asserted that when teachers have a deep understanding of the content they are teaching they essentially become the curriculum rather than relying on the curriculum. He went on to conclude

that high quality teachers look for ways to develop their content knowledge intentionally.

Having concerned about student learning as quality that teachers should poses, 71% of learners believe it's Important. In fact this very similar to the result of the previous studies. Rubie (-Davies et al., 2001) explained One such motivational strategy was the success of teachers who protect the self-esteem of the learner. Student self-esteem is better protected when a teacher has a strong self-efficacy. A direct and positive impact on instructional practices that lead to learner success can be correlated with teachers that have strong beliefs in the capability of themselves as teachers and in the capability of learners (Rubie-Davies et al., 2001). Also Helm(Helm, 2007) believed an integral teacher trait for student success is a caring disposition that truly invests in the belief of the success of each individual student

.Another important quality which learners believe it is important for a good teacher is **Effective communication skills**, 68.4% of participants think a good teacher should be a good communicator. this result is similar to the findings of the previous studies. Stronge (2018) postulated that effective teacher communication skills assist in the development of critical thinking skills, collaboration skills, and higher order thinking skills in students. High quality teachers build these skills in students through consistent, positive, reinforcing, and specific feedback. 55.3% of learners think a good teacher should be **Enthusiastic about teaching** . This result supports the findings of the previous studies as Keeley et al. (2016) concluded that passion is the highest indicator of excellent teaching based on surveying teachers. And Palmer (2017). He discovered that passionate teaching is a valuable factor in the success of students. 52.6% of learners think that “**Being warm and friendly**” is important. This result is similar to the findings of the previous studies. Prabhu (1990) pointed out that the characteristics of EFL teachers with positive attitudes and enthusiasm strongly correlated with increasing rapport between students and teachers, and appeared to promote productive learning.

In the least important qualities that learners believe its not very important for a good teacher are **Well-preparation for each class** and **Capability of being tolerant of others ideas and view**, where they received 42.1%, 44.7% respectively. It is not clear for the researcher why did learners think this way neither this result support the previous studies findings. The only explanation the researcher could offer for this result might be that most learners

are not aware of the huge work that is done by the teachers for preparing the materials , lectures and references for his subject.

6. Summary and Conclusion.

This study investigated the qualities of good teacher from the perspectives of students at the University of Holy Quran and Islamic studies in Khartoum, Sudan. The core objectives of the study was to explore the beliefs and opinions of learners of the qualities of a good teachers.35 students majoring in English were the sample of the study. The researcher used the questionnaire as a mean for collecting the data from the participants. 15 qualities were presented for students to express their opinions of their importance in scale ranged from (very important) to (not important at all). The study concluded that all the qualities which presented before the students in the questionnaire are varied in it is importance. 7 out of 15 qualities considered very important for a good teacher, whereas 8 qualities considered less important for a good teacher.

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Appendix : Questionnaire.

Qualities of a good teacher from students' perspective: a case study of Students of English language of University of Holy Guran & Islamic studies.

Basic information:

Please Put a tick in from the option that best describe you.

Sex: Male Female

Age 15-20 20-25 Yrs. 25-30Yrs

Which year you are studying at the University?

First Year Second Year Third Year Fourth Year.

Qualities of A good Teacher

Below is a list of 15 qualities of a good Teacher. Rank these qualities according to their importance for you from (very important-important-neutral-less important –not important at all). Please answer as sincerely as possible.

Qualities of A good Teacher	Very Important	important	neutral	Less important	Not important at all
1-knowledge about the subject matter					
2-effective communication skills,					
3-enthusiastic about teaching					
4-well-preparation for each class					
Qualities of A good Teacher	Very Important	important	neutral	Less important	Not important at all
5-the ability to adapt to student needs					
6-capability of being tolerant of others' ideas and views					
7-respects,					
8-being warm and friendly					
9-a good sense of humor					
10-self-confidence					
11-having concerns about student learning,					
12-the ability to explain material clearly					
13-the instructor's accessibility outside of class					
14- the appropriate amount and level of assignments					
15-the appropriate evaluation methods					



In Your Opinion, who is a good Teacher? Write the qualities YOU think are necessary to make a good Teacher:
