

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352119970>

Attributes and Pedagogical Practices of Successful Teachers

Article · February 2021

CITATIONS

0

READS

429

2 authors:



Saroj Sharma

APGI

2 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Sona Ahuja

Dayalbagh Educational Institute

47 PUBLICATIONS 72 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Comparative Effect of Focused Attention and Open Monitoring Meditation Practices on Academic Achievement, and Working Memory of High Schoolers [View project](#)



Pedagogical Practices of Successful Teachers and its Effect on Analytical Ability, Application based Cognition, Academic Achievement and Consciousness [View project](#)

Attributes and Pedagogical Practices of Successful Teachers

Saroj Sharma⁵⁷
Sona Ahuja⁵⁸

Abstract

The term 'successful teacher' does not reveal the underlying attributes of such a teacher. Factors like pedagogical satisfaction of students, the extent of learning outcome achievement and expected competencies, ability to develop higher order thinking skills may be some of the measuring aspects of a teacher's success. However, the term 'successful teacher' is not yet explicitly defined. This study is an attempt to identify the attributes and pedagogical practices of successful teachers through interviews and classroom observations. 20 principals, 162 teachers, 270 students and 142 parents of students of middle schools were interviewed and classroom transactions of 30 identified successful teachers were observed. The thematic analyses of the responses revealed the attributes and significant pedagogical practices of successful teachers.

Keywords: Attributes, Middle School, Pedagogical Practices, Successful Teacher

Introduction

It is not easy to determine the success of teachers as there is no set definition of a successful teacher and there are no definite parameters or criteria for this. Therefore, it is important to know which tasks or set of behaviour or practices declare teachers as successful or what makes an ordinary teacher a successful teacher. Many factors are responsible for the teacher's success or on which the success of the teacher depends. There are some aspects of the personality of the teacher which is beyond teaching that makes him/her an extraordinary teacher and leaves a lasting impact on the lives of students. Those effective teachers who have a positive impact on students' minds are generally known as successful teachers in the students' community. Some researchers mention student achievement in the classroom as a teacher's effectiveness and focus on the high-performance ratings of many

⁵⁷ Research Scholar nuajee@gmail.com

⁵⁸ Associate Professor *Dept. of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra-282005, India* email: sonaahuja@dei.ac.in

teachers, and many times rely on the observations of supervisors, students, and administrators. Teacher quality is the most important factor in determining student achievement (Lovat, 2007).

Most teachers have the basic qualities of teaching, but some teachers use unique techniques to make their teaching more effective, which makes them successful among their students, peers, and administrators. Teachers who influence their students' activities and have cognizance of how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and how students share their experiences may be considered as successful. Teachers who have a positive impact on students' minds may be known as successful teachers in the students' community. Different researchers have different opinions on this subject. The purpose of the present study is to identify attributes and pedagogical practices of successful teachers which can be used to lead to significant student learning in the present scenario.

Literature Review

With the changing times, the objectives of education, needs of learners, and society are changing. To match this pace of change, policymakers and researchers are incessantly exploring required pedagogical strategies (Goodyear & Zenious, 2007; Toom, 2012). Pedagogy is a set of teaching practices and the primary goal of pedagogy is to build on student's prior learning and to stimulate students towards learning (Westbrook, Durrani, and Salvi, 2013). Pedagogy refers to synergistic relation between teachers and learners (Loughran, 2013). The quality of the relationship between students and teachers is considerably important factor in teaching (Opdenakker & Dammea, 2006; Lovat, 2007). A successful teacher identifies the students' reluctance to work, helps them think through their choices and brings academic momentum (Strahan, 2008). Teachers' personality, teaching ability, contextual attitude and professional knowledge are important aspects of quality teaching (Beizhuizen, Hof, Putten, Bouwmeester & Asscher, 2001; Arnon & Reichel, 2007). Some researchers report student achievement in the classroom as a measure of teacher's effectiveness and focus on the high-performance ratings of teachers, and rely on the observations of supervisors, students, and administrators. Certainly, subject mastery is a component of teacher professionalism, not only knowledge of professional skills, but also skills, attitudes, and motivational variables that contribute to students' learning (Guerriero, 2015). Good teachers are ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, expert, reflective, satisfying, diversity-responsive, and respected (Cruickshank and

Haefele, 2001). Several factors are attributed to good or effective teaching. Effective teachers must take into account the unique needs and characteristics of their students (VanTassel-Baska & Hubbard, 2016). Trilling and Fadel (2009) opined that to be an effective teacher requires a shift from teacher-directed to student-centered learning, direct instruction to interactive exchange with students, content knowledge to application of it, content to problem-solving activities, basic to top, facts and principles to search the questions and problems, theory to practices and working with real-life projects.

Arnon, Sara, Reichel, & Nittir (2007) examined different types of teachers according to students' perceptions. Two groups were formed one was pre-service teachers and the second was in-service teachers. The sample consisted of 89 students from two colleges. The analysis was qualitative and based on the open-ended questionnaire. Pre-service and in-service teachers have given equal importance to the personal qualities of the ideal teachers. In-service teachers attributed less importance to knowledge than the personal qualities of the ideal teacher. The findings of the research reveal two main categories, first was personal quality and the second was instructive knowledge of the subject. Both groups described the characteristics of the ideal teacher as empathetic, attentive, and knowledgeable.

Bullock (2015) conducted a study to identify the characteristics of good teachers and how good teaching affects the students. Students of fourth grade and teachers were included as samples. There were two groups one was of students (n = 21) and the other of teachers (n = 15). In this research, supportive, compassionate, flexible, and caring teachers for students were identified as good teachers. Kolesnikova, (2016) conducted an experimental study to compare the effect of traditional teaching methods and active learning with the traditional teaching method. It was concluded that the active learning plus the traditional teaching method is a feasible alternative to the traditional teaching method only. Thus, active learning can be one of the important factors to successful teaching-learning process.

Most of the researches reviewed have discussed the characteristics of effective and good teachers and teaching (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Bullock, 2015; Cruikshank & Hafele, 2001; Devine Arnon, Sara; Reichel & Nirit, 2007; Gargani, Strong & Hacifazlioglu, 2011; Gargani & Strong, 2014; Hardiman, 2012). In the present study, the attributes of successful teachers as opined by students, their parents, peer-teachers and principals have been explored.

Method

The qualitative research method was to identify the attributes and pedagogical practices of successful teachers. The related literature was reviewed and suggestions were sought from experts. The words related to successful teachers and successful teaching like the effective teacher, ideal teacher, good teacher, professional teacher, great teacher, expert teacher, quality teaching, effective teaching, good teaching, and creative teaching practice were included in the search. The sources and the measures used to collect data as in the study of Berk (2005) are mentioned in Table 1 and Table 2.

The experts interviewed to identify the attributes and pedagogical practices of successful teachers, included pedagogues, best teacher award winners and members of the Advisory Committee on Education - a think tank.

The questions asked to the experts were - “Who are successful teachers according to you?” and “What are the attributes of your ideal teacher that you still follow in your life?”. “What are the pedagogical practices of successful teachers?”. Interviewing with more experts was stopped when the responses reached saturation i.e. a similar pattern of responses was recognized. Total twenty-six experts were interviewed. The responses to these questions from experts are enlisted in Table 1 and Table 2.

The data was collected from other significant sources such as students, parents, peer-teachers, principals, and teachers. To identify the pedagogical practices of successful teachers, the classroom transactions of teachers were observed. The design of the study is outlined in figure 1. The prior permission was sought from the Dean and Head of the Institute, School Principal and parents to collect the data. It was assured in writing to all concerned that the identity of the participants will not be revealed and data will be used for the said purpose only.

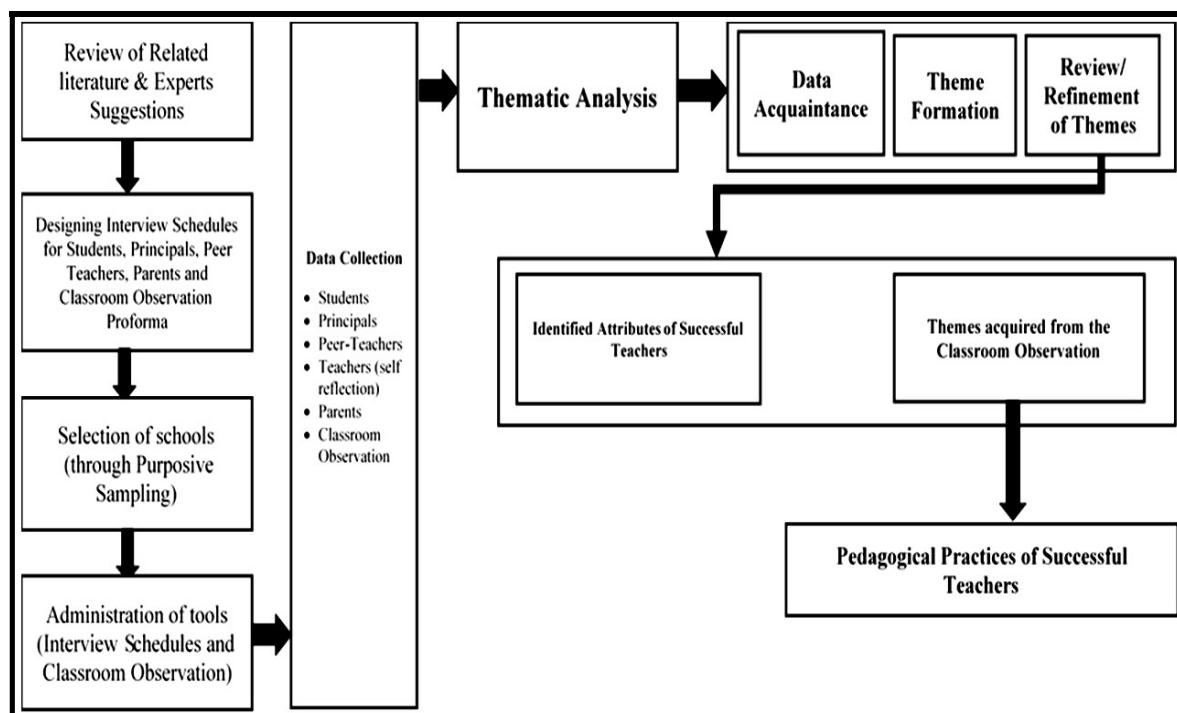


Figure 1: Design of the Study

Sample

The data was collected from eighteen schools selected using purposive sampling. The consent was sought from the school principals to interview/observe teachers, students and peer-teachers of middle school. In the study, middle school referred to grades 6, 7 and 8. The teachers, peer- teachers, students, and their parents were selected using purposive sampling. A total of 20 principals, 162 teachers, 270 students of middle schools, and 142 of their parents were interviewed. One common question was asked in the interview to the principals, peer-teachers, students, and their parents i.e. ‘Who is your favorite/successful teacher in school?’. The list of such teachers was prepared. The separate list was prepared from each source (students, parents, principals and peer-teachers). The final list of successful teachers was prepared with the condition that the name of teacher appeared in at least two more sources other than the students’ list. The final list had names of 30 teachers. A teacher's success can be identified by students' feedback. The opinion of students is considered to be the most influential and relevant source to identify the attributes of successful teachers. Therefore, the opinion of the students was given prime importance in this study. The identified successful teachers were interviewed to

further explore the attributes of successful teachers. The classroom transaction of these teachers was observed to identify the pedagogical practices used by them.

Data Acquaintance

A structured interview using open-ended questions was conducted with students, peer-teachers, parents, principals, and teacher's (self-reflection) to gather the data. The interview schedules were prepared to seek the opinion of experts, students, peer-teachers, parents, and principals. The observation proforma was prepared to study the pedagogical practices of identified successful teachers. In the first draft, items were based on the review of related literature. The first draft was distributed to experts for content validity. Based on suggestions of experts, some items were modified/restructured/deleted to (i) reduce the length of the sentence while retaining its meaning (ii) avoid the duplication of items (iii) avoid items conveying the same meaning. The questions included are as follow.

The Students

“What is the name of your favorite teacher?”, “Why is he/she your favorite teacher?”, “Any special quality of the teacher, which makes him/her different from others?”, “According to you, what are the qualities of successful teachers?”

The Peer-Teachers

“Who is a successful teacher in this school?”, “According to you, why is he/she a successful teacher?”, “Which practices can be included in teaching to make teachers successful?”, “How is the behavior of the teacher with the students in the class?”, “How much is he/she passionate about teaching?” “What efforts does the teacher make to solve the personal or academic problems of the students?” “If the teacher is not able to solve the problems of the students, does he/she make an effort to solve it by discussing with a peer teacher or others?” and “Any special quality of the teacher which makes him/her different from others?”

The Parents

According to you, “Who is a successful teacher according to you?” “Who is the favorite teacher of your ward?”, “Which type of information your ward passes to you about that teacher?”, “What are the extra efforts by the teacher for teaching to your ward?” and “Any special quality of this teacher, which makes him/her different from others?”.

The School Principal

“Who is a successful teacher according to you?”, “Who is a successful teacher in this school?”, and “Any special quality of this teacher, which makes him/her different from others?”

The Teacher (Self - reflection)

The thirty teachers identified from the above-mentioned process were also interviewed. The questions asked from them were - “What is the most challenging factor in classroom teaching”? “How do you deal with slow learners”? “How do you prepare your lesson plan”?, “Which method do you use for teaching a topic which is found to be difficult by students?”, “Which teaching methods do you usually use in teaching?”. “How often do you use teaching aids in the classroom?”, “What strategies do you adopt to make teaching effective?”, “How do you solve the problems of the students in the classroom?”, “What are the attributes of a successful teacher according to you?” ‘Which pedagogical practices do you adopt in the class for optimum student learning?’

Classroom observation

The classroom transaction of teachers was observed using an observation proforma. The aspects included in the observation proforma were - Introduction of the lesson; Development of the lesson (preparation of lesson, use of the developmental questions, variation in questions, use of different techniques and methods); Use of teaching-learning aids (Audio, video, any other media/technology); Blackboard work (writing, font size, sketching, organization); Explanation of teaching points; Non-verbal communication of teachers; Classroom management (Sitting arrangement of the impaired students, and rotation process, discipline); Student involvement in classroom activities; Summarization of the lesson/recapitulation; Relating topic to daily life/experiences/practical utility of the lesson; Quality of questions given for the assignment, the personality of the teacher and any other.

Thematic analysis of Attributes of Successful teachers and Their Pedagogical Practices

In order to prepare the exhaustive list of identified attributes of a successful teacher, the thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected through the interview was done. The objective of thematic analysis was to recognize patterns and relationships through the dataset of attributes collected after interviewing teachers, parents, experts, students, peer teachers, and principals. The main themes identified from the literature review were teaching practices, attributes, and conclusion statements of the participants. The patterns are described through a standardized process - data acquaintance, theme formation, and review as mentioned in figure 1.

Themes formation

The themes were formed after aggregating the collected data. All attributes were entered into the MS Excel database for analysis. The data was systematically arranged for categorization of unique attributes and were put together under a theme for possible similar facts. The attributes of successful teachers identified from various sources are mentioned in Table 1 and Table 2.

Review

This phase involved the refinement of various attributes identified. Some attributes collapsed into other attributes. The data was read and re-read till meanings and patterns were identified such as 'Students can easily share their problems with him/her' is finally converted into the attribute 'Approachable', motivates students as 'Motivational', Uses soft language to talk as 'polite' and so on. The attributes identified from the review of responses are mentioned in Table 1 and Table 2.

Findings

The interview with various stakeholders and administrators like students, parents, principals, peers, and teachers themselves opened up several attributes and pedagogical practices that were associated with the term 'successful teachers'. These attributes and practices were summarized using thematic analysis. The twenty-eight attributes and five aspects of pedagogical practices of successful teachers were found from the analysis.

Attributes of Successful Teachers

Twenty-eight attributes of successful teachers were identified. The attributes of successful teachers that emerged through this process are depicted in Figure 2.

Table 1

Responses Collected from Experts/Principal/vice-Principal and Identified Attributes of Successful Teachers

Source	Responses Collected	Identified Attributes
Experts’ /Principal/Vice principal’s Opinion	Understands students' problems	Understanding
	Tries to solve problems related to students	Helpful
	Guides students as and when required	
	Identifies their weaknesses & helps accordingly	Compassionate
	Has impartial behavior with students	Impartial
	Friendly behavior with students	Friendly
	Builds good relationship with students	
	Students can ask questions without hesitation from such a teacher	Approachable
	Works with dedication	Dedicated
	Works efficiently	Efficient
	Has strong work ethics	Ethical
	Works with dedication	Punctual
	Works efficiently	Righteous
	Has strong work ethics	Innovative
Completes the work on time	Exemplary	
Demonstrates moral values		
Implements innovative teaching methods	Ardent	
Has exemplary personality as a teacher		
Identifies and nurtures the innate ability of students		

Creates a congenial learning environment
Takes interest in solving problems of students

Further, the attributes conveying similar meaning were clubbed together. For example, friendly was used for attributes helpful, understanding, empathetic, approachable and interactive; Ardent was used for ardent and dedicated; Motivational was used for cheerful, motivational; outcome-oriented was used for constructive and outcome-oriented; Ethical was used for ethical and punctual; Righteous was used for impartial and righteous. These clubbed attributes are presented in Figure 3. Thus, 28 attributes were reduced to 12.

Table 2

Responses Collected from Teachers, Students and parents, Identified Attributes of Successful Teachers

Source	Responses Collected	Identified Attributes
Teachers	Supports academically weak students	Cooperative
	Understands the psychology of students and treats them accordingly	Understanding
	Satisfies students' learning needs	
	Strong presenter of ideas	Eloquent
	Provides new information to students	Updated
	Uses new patterns of teaching	Creative
	Focused on learning outcomes	Outcome-oriented
	Develops and assesses critical thinking among learners	Interactive
	Promotes interaction with students	Approachable

Inspires the intelligent students to support the weak student and works collaboratively with students Collaborative

Students	Creates a fearless atmosphere in the classroom and students can easily share their problems with him/her	Approachable Co-operative
	Gives chance to everyone for answers and is impartial	Impartial
	Can create interest in learning and motivate students	Motivational Empathetic
	Does not humiliate students in class and listens to them patiently	Understanding
	Does not get irritated if students ask questions many times	Patient Cheerful
	Wears smile and listens patiently to the problems of students	Polite Constructive
	Uses soft language to talk	
	Shares mistakes of students without being rude and Gives constructive feedback	

Parents	Well-wisher of students	Generous
	Helps academically weak and needy students	Helpful
	Motivates students to learn and creates interest in learning	Motivational
	Is not partial to anyone	Impartial

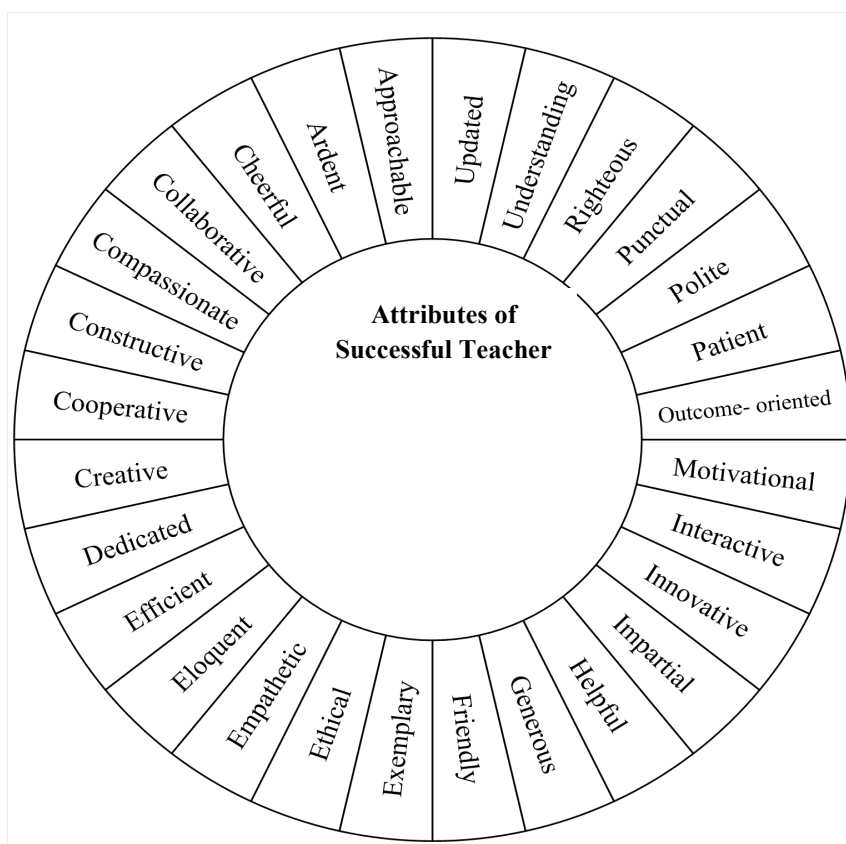


Figure 2: Identified Attributes of Successful Teachers

Attributes of Successful Teachers		
Efficient	Friendly	Ardent
Innovative	Motivational	Eloquent
Outcome-oriented	Polite	Ethical
Updated	Righteous	Exemplary

Figure 3: Identified Attributes of Successful Teachers (After clubbing)

Table 3

Pedagogical Practices of Successful Teachers

Pedagogical Aspects	Pedagogical Practices of Successful Teachers
Classroom Pedagogy (Student-Centric pedagogy)	Orchestral immersion: Develops an educational environment of real experiences for students to learn from themselves
	Uses updated content
	Uses scientific/technical terminology
	Opportunity provider (Keeps students engaged through open-ended questions for sharing their ideas)
	Encourages critical thinking
	Encourages deep thinking, discussion with peers and shares new ideas in the class
	Uses approaches like Inductive-Deductive, Analysis-Synthesis, Heuristic, etc.
	Encourages Inquiry-based classroom activities
	Adopts learning by doing approaches
	Follows maxims of teaching like concrete to abstract, simple to complex, parts to whole or vice-versa
Caters to needs of differently-abled/special children in the class	
Develops positive relationships with students within or outside the classroom	
Teaches according to learning levels of students	
Effectual process (Ensures active participation of all students in the class)	
Behaves unbiased and maintains equality in the classroom	
Use of TLM	Uses visuals (like charts/models/specimen/labelled diagrams on blackboard/audio-visual aids for explanation)
	Uses teaching-learning material for demonstration and practical

	learning.
Creation of a learning environment	Uses contemplative activities to regulate students' attention Creates a fearless environment (motivates to students to share their ideas)
Closure of the lesson	Summarises the lesson Provides guideline to students for preparing the assignment
Assessment Strategies	Uses application-based questions and questions that foster critical and deep thinking

Conclusion

The overall analysis reveals that successful teachers have passion for their profession. On interviewing successful teachers, the most common observation was that they had a positive and caring attitude towards students. They did not complain about students rather had an understanding attitude for their students. Another significant attribute that surfaced from interviews was the enthusiasm and dedication towards the teaching profession. Teachers who positively influence their students' activities are conscious of how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and how students share their experiences. The optimal student-teacher interaction was found to be the key pedagogical practice of a successful teacher.

The effectiveness in teaching of teachers becomes vital to face the emerging challenges of globalization and liberalization on the one side and mushrooming growth of the educational institutions on the other side. The schools should give recognition to such teachers and motivate them for their teaching endeavours. This research was initially aimed at identifying the pedagogical practices of successful science teachers; however, the results did not reveal any subject-specific pedagogy or the attributes of the successful teacher. The identified attributes are applicable to all teachers irrespective of their teaching subject. Future research can focus on differentiating subject-specific pedagogical practices of successful teachers.

To improve the quality of education, there is a great need to spend considerable resources on teacher training, which can lead to quality education in the future. This research will be helpful for research

administrators, academicians, and teacher education institutions. This study is also an effort to highlight the factors which affect the quality of education imparted to students. It can be of help to teachers, parents, educationists, and administrators to execute the plans and work towards improvement by enhancing the positive factors revealed in the study. Through the teacher, students learn the right way to gain knowledge, but it also requires teachers to continue their professional development and learning.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

References

- Arnon, S., & Reichel, N. (2007). Who is the ideal teacher? Am I? Similarity and difference in perception of students of education regarding the qualities of a good teacher and their own qualities as teachers. *The Journal of Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 13(5), 441-464.
- Berk, R.(2005). Survey of 12 Strategies to Measure Teaching Effectiveness, *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 17(1), 48-62.
- Beishuizen, J.J., Hof,E., van Putten, C. M., Bouwmeester, S.,& Asscher, J.J. (2001). Students' and teachers' cognitions about good teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 71, 185-201.
- Bullock. M. (2015). What Makes a Good Teacher? Exploring Student and Teacher Beliefs on Good Teaching, *Rising Tide*, 7, 1-27.
- Cruickshank, D. & Hafele, D.(2001). Good Teachers, Plural. *Educational Leadership: Journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development*, N.E.A 58(5), 26-30.
- Devine, D., Fahie, D., & Gillicuddy, D.(2013). What is 'good teaching'? Teacher beliefs and practices about their teaching, *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(1), 83-108. doi: 10.1080/03323315.2013.773228
- Hardiman M,M (2012). The brain-targeted teaching model for 21st century schools. CA: Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks.
- Kolesnikova, I. V. (2016). Combined Teaching Method: An Experimental Study. *World Journal of Education*. 6(6). 51-59.

- Gargani, J., Strong, M., & Hacifazlioglu, O. (2011). Do We Know a Successful Teacher When We See One? Experiments in the Identification of Effective Teachers, *The Journal of Teacher Education*, 62(367). doi: 10.1177/0022487110390221
- Gargani, J., & Strong, M. (2014). Can We Identify a Successful Teacher Better, Faster, and Cheaper? Evidence for Innovating Teacher Observation Systems, *The Journal of Teacher Education*, 65(5), 389–401. doi: 10.1177/0022487114542519
- Goodyear, P., & Zenios, M. (2007). Successful Teacher Teams in Change: The Role of Collective Efficacy and Resilience. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55(4), 351-3368.
- Loughran, J. (2013). Pedagogy Making Sense of the Complex Relationship Between Teaching and Learning. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1). doi: 10.1111/curi.12003
- Lovat, T. J. (2007). Values education and quality teaching: two sides of the learning coin. In *Values education and quality teaching: the double helix effect*, Edited by: Lovat, T. J and Toomey, R. 1–12. Sydney: David Barlow Publishing.
- Opdenakker, M.C., & Damme, J.V. (2006). Teacher characteristics and teaching styles as effectiveness enhancing factors of classroom practice, *The Journal of Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(1), 1-21. doi :10.1016/j.tate.2005.07.008
- Strahan D. (2008). Successful teachers develop academic momentum with reluctant students. *Middle School Journal*, 39(5), 4-12.
- Toom, A. (2012). Considering the artistry and epistemology of tacit knowledge and knowing. *Successful Teacher Teams in Change: The Role of Collective Efficacy and Resilience, Educational Theory*, 62(6), 621–640. doi:10.1111/edth.12001
- Trilling, B. & Fadel, C. (2009). *Century Skills: Learning for life in Our Times*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- VanTassel-Baska, J., & Hubbard, G. F. (2016). Classroom-based strategies for advanced learners in rural settings. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 27(4), 285–310.
- Westbrook, J., Durrani, N., Brown, R., Orr, D., Pryor, J., Boddy, J., & Salvi, F. (2013). *Pedagogy, Curriculum, Teaching Practices, and Teacher Education in Developing Countries*. <https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Portals/0/PDF%20reviews%20and%20summaries/Pedagogy%202013%20Westbrook%20report.pdf?ver=2014-04-24-121331-867>. *****