

THE PERCEPTIONS OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS ABOUT EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract – This study aims at investigating the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding effective teaching and effective teachers. The following research questions were addressed for this purpose: What are the dimensions of effective teaching? What are the characteristics of an effective teacher? The study is composed of two parts: a literature review, and empirical research. A questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions was administered to 153 pre-service teachers. Some findings are briefly discussed, including the key fact that pre-service teachers believe that the pedagogical skills of professional teachers should take precedence over the improvement of their theoretical knowledge of their subject matter.

Introducing the context

The structure of the present formal Turkish education system consists of preschool education, elementary education, secondary education, and higher education. Except for higher education, formal education is provided free of charge in the public schools even though private schools exist at all levels of education. Until recently, primary education had been the only compulsory education. In 1997, the period of compulsory education was increased from five to eight years, combining primary and middle schools. Secondary education encompasses general and vocational or technical high schools where, depending on the type of high school, additional three or four years of training take place after elementary education (Saban, 2003). Admission to higher education is centralized and based on a single-stage examination, named the Student Selection Examination, administered by the Student Selection and Placement Centre every year (Tekkaya *et al.*, 2004).

Since 1982, the responsibility for teacher education in Turkey lies with the universities that are governed by the higher education council (Sefereoglu, 2004). The Council of Higher Education is responsible for the planning, coordination and supervision of higher education. Teacher education programs were restructured bringing uniform curricula to replace the varied curricula of teacher education

program in all subjects which brought standardization to teacher education programs all over the country in terms of their curricula in 1990's (Seferoglu, 2004).

The reform of teacher education created the conditions for the government to launch of a new strategy in the training of teachers. Thanks to these reforms, it became imperative for teacher training institutions to change the curriculum by adding pedagogical courses, increasing the length of methodology courses, and devoting far more time to teaching the skills that are related to effective instruction (Simsek & Yildirim, 2001).

Pre-service teachers are trained through four-year undergraduate programs at the faculties of education. Pre-service teacher training is carried out by the faculties of education at university level. Preschool teachers, classroom teachers, upper primary (previously middle school), subject area teachers (mathematics, science, social sciences and Turkish) are trained through four-year undergraduate programs that offer subject area and pedagogical courses concurrently (Yildirim & Ok, 2002, p.262).

Extension of basic education to 8 years through the Basic Education Reform of 1997 has created a shift in emphasis in teacher education, which had previously given priority to training subject area teachers for secondary schools. In 1998, teacher education programs were restructured to give more emphasis to training subject areas, which presented the greatest number of teacher shortages in the 1990's. Today, teacher education program or a certification program is offered by Faculties of Education (Yildirim & Ok, 2002, p.262).

Effective teaching

Educators have discussed the teaching profession and agreed that teaching is a complex and difficult task. Teachers have ultimately important roles in order to make teaching effective and useful for learners in this context. Inevitably, the quality of teaching and teacher are an important factor for students' learning and their success in the learning process. There is a relationship between effective teaching and effective learning, since effective learning is the result of effective teaching. If teachers have effective strategies, they can enable children to learn and understand what is taught effectively. Effective teaching is also closely related to children's learning outcomes and their success. These outcomes could be in cognitive, affective and social domains.

Kyriacou (1997), for example, defined effective teaching as teaching which successfully achieves pupils' learning intended by the teacher. There are two things which should be considered with respect to effective teaching according to

Kyriacou: (1) the teacher must have a clear idea of what learning is to be fostered (2) the teacher sets up and provides a learning experience which achieves this. On the other hand, Berliner (1983) stated that effective teaching requires a set of executive skills and these skills are about planning, communicating goals, regulating the activities of the workplace, creating a pleasant environment for work, educating new members of the work group, supervising and working with other people, motivating those being supervised, and evaluating the performance of those being supervised.

In contrast to Kyriacou (1997) and Berliner (1983), Slavin (2003) described key elements of effective teaching in four categories: quality of instruction, appropriate levels of instruction, incentive and time. Quality of instruction is about a product of the quality, organization and comprehensiveness of the curriculum and lesson presentation. In the second category, by appropriate levels of instruction, students are ready to learn a new lesson, having the necessary skills, background knowledge and material that are neither too easy nor too difficult. In the incentive category, students are motivated to work and learn. In the last category, classroom time is well used with adequate time for learning. All four elements must be attended to effectively if learning is to accelerate.

On the other hand, Giovannelli (2003) demonstrated that a reflective disposition toward teaching was related to effective teaching, especially in the domains of instructional behaviour, classroom organization and teacher expectation. Reflective disposition consisted of six components: the composite of effective teaching, reflection on what teachers should know and able to do, reflection on teaching, reflection on learning, reflection on what it would be like to be a teacher in the classroom. According to Giovannelli, effective teaching consists of five components: the composite of effective teaching, classroom management, instructional behaviour, and classroom organization and teacher expectations.

A perusal of the relevant literature also provides research findings which investigated effective teaching according to the considerations of teachers, student teachers, principals, and so on. Wilson & Cameron (1996), for instance, investigated student teacher perceptions about effective teaching. They examined whether student teachers' perceptions change or not during their pre-service programs and the results revealed the main points such as: (1) student teachers develop from a 'teacher centered' to a 'pupil centered' view of effective instruction (2) student teachers develop from a 'control' view to a holistic view of classroom management (3) student teachers develop from a personal to a professional/outcomes view of relationships with pupils.

On the other hand, Stanovich & Jordan (1998) investigated the performance of teacher behaviours associated with effective teaching. Teachers' and principals'

beliefs were taken into account in their study and data was collected in 33 classrooms from 12 schools by applying questionnaire to the participants. Teachers were also interviewed and observed regarding effective teaching behaviours. The results mainly showed that the strongest predictor of effective teaching behaviour was the subject school norm as operationalized by the principal's attitudes and beliefs about heterogeneous classrooms.

Effective teachers

What does research on an 'effective' and a 'good' teacher highlight? Researchers who study effective teaching indicate that one of the essential factors that determine effective teaching is an effective teacher. However, when the related research was reviewed, it was seen that some researchers describe the characteristics of 'effective' teachers whereas others describe characteristics of 'good' teachers. For instance, Clemson & Craft (1981) described the 'good' or the 'effective' teacher and attempted to clarify their meanings. According to them, most people regard 'good' and 'effective' as being synonymous whereas these concepts are not the same. To differentiate these concepts, two factors are important: teaching method and content. The content which includes knowledge, skills and attitudes will vary according to some factors such as pupil age, ability, and the perceived needs of society and so on whereas the basic criterion for the selection of method must be related to pupils' ability to learn more, to make them happy in the learning situation. As a result, the good teacher is always effective but the effective teacher is not necessarily 'good' according to their study.

Guskey (1985) investigated whether or not teachers who received training actually applied what they learnt to their instructional practice more effectively. The subjects were 96 intermediate and high school teachers. According to the results, after implementing mastery learning techniques in their classroom, teachers do attach significantly greater importance to behaviour factors in explaining teaching effectiveness and also attach less importance to personality factors.

Stanton (1985) also stated what makes a good teacher and explained that good teachers were often in the past simply accepted as those who knew their subject well and had strong academic qualifications. According to Stanton there are two approaches about what defines an effective teacher. One of the approaches suggests anyone with an interest in a subject and a desire to communicate with students will be able to teach effectively, another approach emphasizes that the subject matter expert is usually a poor teacher. Stanton claims that it is possible that the truth lies somewhere between these two viewpoints and both of them are necessary to be an effective teacher.

On the other hand, Perrot (1986) claimed that observational studies of teaching suggest that the effective teacher is one who is able to demonstrate the ability to bring about intended learning goals. Here are the two critical dimensions of effective teaching: intent and achievement. Similarly, Richardson & Stop (1987) indicated that good teachers have some the qualities of a good teacher as having different backgrounds shared characteristics among them even though they come from many different backgrounds, with various interests and experiences and they represent a wide range of personality types.

On his part, Broadhead (1987) classified 'good teacher' characteristics as follows: (1) *professional behaviour*, which suggests that the 'good teacher' is reliable, punctual, co-operative and willing and committed to further professional training. (2) *personal characteristics* which suggests that the 'good teacher' is enthusiastic, hardworking, has common sense, is firm, intelligent, adaptable, tenacious, intuitive, sensitive, friendly, energetic, conscientious, imaginative, resourceful and able to command the respect of pupils and maintain excellent relations (3) *organizational attributes*, which suggests that the 'good teacher' is able to engage in long and short term lesson planning and able to gain access to teaching aids/resources for both self and pupils (4) *perceptive qualities* which suggests that the 'good teacher' is able to undertake the role of guide and mentor to pupils when required and is able to perceive and respond to individual pupil differences (5) have good *information gathering skills*, which suggest that the 'good teacher' is proficient at gathering information pertaining to individual pupils' progress and proficient at identifying reasons for failure.

Stephens & Crawley (1994) also pointed out the characteristics on how to become an effective teacher. According to them, becoming an effective teacher involves looking at what is good and what works. It is emphasized in their study that good teaching is related to style rather than content.

Further research was conducted by Kyriacou (1982). The PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate Education) students' perceptions were investigated by Kyriacou related to effective teachers of mathematics. The questionnaire was used to collect the students' perceptions and ninety-seven students responded to the questionnaire which included 38 teacher characteristics in the study. The highest mean ratings were the items: (1) explain points clearly and at pupils' level (2) pay attention to revision and examination technique (3) confident and at ease when teaching.

In their investigation, Kutnick & Jules (1993) made a large-scale survey of pupils' perceptions of a good teacher. According to them, knowledge of pupils' perceptions of a good teacher is important in order to highlight to following two points. Firstly, this knowledge helps teachers in their practice; secondly perceptions are the individual's private interpretation of interaction. An essay-

based, interpretative mode of research was used to identify these characteristics and 1633 students were asked to write a general essay on a 'good teacher'. 166 items were identified as a result of the content analysis and items were grouped under five sets: (1) physical and personal characteristics of the teacher (2) quality of relationships between teacher and pupil (3) control of behaviour by teacher (4) description of the teaching process (5) expected educational and other outcomes obtained by pupils due to teacher efforts. The findings also showed a variety of relationships between class level and main attributes acknowledged in children's perception of a good teacher. These results indicated that pupils desire a sensitive and supportive relationship with their teachers. In addition, Minor *et al.*, (2002) investigated the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of effective teachers. They took 134 pre-service teachers perceptions by using questionnaire. One of the interesting results of the study showed that more men than women endorsed teacher characteristics that were associated with effective classroom and behaviour management.

On the other hand, Beishuizen *et al.*, (2001) investigated the issue from a different perspective and they studied students' and teachers' cognitions about good teachers. They mainly aimed to deepen their understanding of what students think about good teachers in the study. Primary and secondary school teachers and students from different age groups (7, 10, 13 and 16 years of age) participated in the study and all of them were asked to write an essay about good teachers. Analyses of the essays indicated some important points that are as follows: (1) Primary school students described good teachers primarily as competent instructors, focusing on transfer of knowledge (2) Secondary school students emphasized relational aspects of good teachers (3) The type of the teacher that participants considered 'good' were the one who establishes personal relationships with their students.

Rudduck & Flutter (2004, p.76) also investigated students' perspectives relating to what makes a 'good teacher'. They interviewed secondary school pupils in three schools and the following points were revealed. Good teachers are: (1) human, accessible and reliable/consistent; (they are fair, they are people you can talk to, they don't give up on you, they don't just remember the bad things you have done, they are consistent in their mood etc) (2) respectful of students and sensitive to their difficulties in learning; (they don't go on about things, they don't shout, they don't make fun of you or humiliate you in front of others, they are not sarcastic or vindictive, etc.) (3) enthusiastic and positive (they enjoy being a teacher, they enjoy teaching the subject, they enjoy teaching us, they give praise more than punishment etc.) (4) professionally skilled and expert in their subject (they make the lesson interesting and link it to life outside the school, they are knowledgeable in their subject but know how to explain, they find out who needs

help etc.) Rudduck & Flutter (2004) believe that the findings of their study reveal that the qualities most important to pupils is as much about how they are treated as how they are taught.

An interesting study has also been conducted by Moreira (2002). The researcher realized that high school students' (n=369) perceptions do not change largely when it is comprised with other research findings. In order to collect data, the researcher firstly asked students to complete an essay and found that students highlighted some characteristics of an effective teacher as follows: explains assignments, gives example and materials; does not take personal problems out on students; grades fairly; is honest and friendly; maintains control of the classroom; listens to students; helps students, does not ridicule students. In Moreira's study the following points might also be considered as interesting:

'Instructionally, students want classes to be more interesting and fun. This suggestion should come as no surprise to educators. What student doesn't want to have more fun in the classroom? Granted, it's not always easy to make learning fun, but according to students, the 'good teachers' do.'

Recently, Korthagen (2004) investigated what the essential qualities of a good teacher are and concluded that this question can not be answered in a simple way. On the other hand, the researcher also indicated that a 'good teacher' will not always show 'good teaching'.

In summary, some of the studies mentioned so far emphasize that some students want their teachers to help them and want learning to be fun, while others want their teachers to make the lesson easy for students to understand what is being taught. They also expect their teachers to be honest, smart, patient, and so on. However, it is obvious that these expectations may vary according to the students' level. For instance, the view of children at primary level might be different from the views of other students such as secondary or university level. Hayes (1993), for instance, indicates that at primary level teachers' role in particular is even more important than at other levels because they have a pivotal role to play as a central figure in the classroom and teachers' attitude and their reactions will help to shape each pupil's life.

It is essential to note that teachers should be aware of what their students expect from them in order to become more effective in their classes. This understanding enables teachers to know how students think about their educational experiences. As Tucker (1979) indicated teachers could learn a lot from students; therefore, they consider students' needs in the teaching context.

Teachers may have particular skills related to teaching and learning but it is suggested that teachers should also know how and when to use them. Being an effective teacher is not an easy task; however, teachers should consider different

points in teaching and learning such as motivating students, using time effectively, and students' characteristics. Brophy (1982) indicates this as follows:

'Teachers must take into account students' learning needs, time constraints, administrative mandates, and other considerations in making decisions about what to teach. Thus, to teach this content successfully, they must not only understand the material clearly themselves but also present it clearly and be prepared to recognize and correct their students' misconceptions.'

On the other hand, it can be asserted that being reflective is also one of the important points in being an effective teacher. McCollum (2002), for instance, states that reflective teachers develop the habit of thinking about their teaching. Giovannelli (2003) also noted that a reflective disposition toward teaching was related to effective teaching, especially in the domains of instructional behaviour, classroom organization and teacher expectation. Reflective disposition consisted of six components and one of them is effective teaching. According to the study, effective teaching consisted of five components: the composite of effective teaching, classroom management, instructional behaviour, classroom organization and teacher expectations.

Briefly, then, teaching is not a simple matter of transferring information (Lougheed, 1992). As Cooper & McIntyre (1998, p.3) note, people who work in classrooms already do not know everything regarding effective teaching and learning. However, effective teaching is a huge area and there are many issues to be considered which had been discussed earlier in this article.

In Turkey, there are also some studies that investigate effective teacher (cf. *inter alia*, Çakmak, 2001; Küçükahmet, 2002; Bulut, 2003). Çakmak (2001) analysed the research on effective, good, ideal teacher concepts and noted that there is a broad terminology used by researchers. Küçükahmet (2002) looked for the answer of 'how ideal teachers behave'. Student teachers were asked to write an essay about this. The results showed that student teachers pointed out physical, intellectual, social characteristics of teachers, competence on subject matter, classroom management, having a good communication with students, and so on. This result is also similar to other research findings. Slightly different from other researchers, Bulut (2003) investigated pre-service teachers' views on effective teaching and effective teacher of mathematics. The research indicated similar points to other research findings such as the importance of personal characteristics. However there were also some interesting points raised in this research, for example the usage of educational materials and resources, preparing a challenging, enjoyable and supportive classroom atmosphere were the most popular factors for effective teaching according to them. However there is still a need for more research in terms of innovations in the education system in Turkey,

investigate effective teaching which suggests that more details on this broad area can be studied.

In the light of the discussion presented above, it can be stated that researchers use two different terms to define teachers, i.e. being ‘good’ and being ‘effective’—a point that was also stressed at the outset in this present article. One could even claim that there is a conflict relating to the use of the terms ‘good teacher’ and ‘effective teacher’.

From all the above, we can say that characteristics of good teachers include reliability, enthusiasm, sensitivity, friendliness, respectfulness, an easy-going nature (cf. *inter alia*: Richardson & Stopp, 1987; Broadhead, 1987; Stanton, 1985; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). On the other hand, effective teachers can be described as people who have effective classroom management skills and who emphasize not only what is good and what works, but also what is effective in instructional practice (e.g. Guskey, 1985; Kyriacou, 1997; Minor *et al.*, 2002).

The literature reviewed thus far shows that there have been numerous research findings on what makes teaching strategies effective and an effective teacher. This extensive literature review implies that:

- There is a variety of terminology in order to identify the characteristics of an ‘effective teacher’. The concept of ‘good teacher’ was also often used in the research studied on effective teaching and teacher.
- There are many studies on effective teaching—in particular, on what it means to be an effective teacher. It should be noted that it is not so easy to put forward a definition of an effective teacher since there are different views presented by researchers.
- Different types of research methods were used to define who an effective teacher is. Different methodologies such as surveys, essays, and literature-based methods were used in the studies of understanding effective teaching and a teacher being successful which suggest that both qualitative and quantitative research methods are available to study this subject.

From a historical view, researchers generated a list of competencies that are part of the make up of a ‘good teacher’ or an ‘effective teacher’, as viewed from different perspectives, including, in particular, from the point of view of students. Although many researchers have investigated this topic, it seems that there is a need to study this issue from the view point of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers’ beliefs, their knowledge and their ideas on this issue should also be considered by teacher education programs. There are some studies which indicate that teaching can be affected by the factor of experience. For instance, some studies (e.g. Veenman, 1984; Reed, 1989) highlight that in particular; at the beginning of their career, teachers encounter many serious classroom discipline problems.

The study

The present study sets out to provide further insights into effective teaching characteristics and characteristics of teachers who are perceived as 'effective' by pre-service teachers. The relevant literature suggests that 'effective teaching' means more than teacher behaviour (cf. *inter alia*, Harris, 1998), and that perceptions are critical in the construction of professional identity. This study therefore aimed to focus on the perceptions of pre-service teachers, in order to see what their views are, and how such views impact on teacher training and professional development. The study therefore concerned itself with the following key questions, addressed to pre-service teachers:

1. Which are the three most important characteristics of effective teaching?
2. Which are the five most important characteristics of an effective teacher?
3. What were the three most positive points you have observed in teachers during your teaching experience?
4. What were the three most negative points you have observed in teachers during your teaching experience?

Methodology

Data collection was carried out using a survey, which was considered to be the most appropriate one given the goals of the study, i.e. to collect pre-service teachers' perceptions on what constitutes 'effective teaching' and what makes an 'effective teacher'.

153 pre-service teachers participated in the study, all of whom were taking their final year education course at the Educational Faculty of Gazi University, in Ankara. The questionnaire was conducted among pre-service teachers from the following departments: mathematics, philosophy, chemistry, and science teaching.

The questionnaire, which was devised by the authors of the paper, included open-ended largely derived from the related literature. A pilot study was carried out with a different group of students. Content analysis was used in analysing responses to open-ended questions. All responses for each question were typed, and then categorized for data reduction purposes, following the strategies proposed by such researchers as Strauss & Corbin (1990) and Miles & Huberman (1994).

Results and discussion

In response to research question one—i.e. ‘Which are the three most important characteristics of effective teaching?’—pre-service teachers referred to several different characteristics. The most commonly referred to can be seen in the Table 1.

TABLE 1: The factors pre-service teachers (n=153) thought most important for effective teaching

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| 1. | Good communication skills with students (38) |
| 2. | Classroom atmosphere (36) |
| 3. | Teacher (34) |
| 4. | Teachers’ subject knowledge (27) |
| 5. | Classroom management skills (27) |
| 6. | Motivation (25) |
| 7. | Teaching techniques and strategies used by teacher (23) |
| 8. | Student (22) |
| 9. | Teachers’ pedagogical-content knowledge (19) |
| 10. | Students’ enthusiasm towards to teaching (15) |

Other important factors that are not presented in Table 1, but which also featured in the responses to the open-ended questions; include: ‘materials’ (14); ‘students’ knowledge as a background’ (11); ‘content’ (9); ‘class size’ (8); ‘teachers’ enthusiasm towards to teaching’ (7); ‘school’ (7); ‘curriculum’ (7); ‘teachers’ attitudes’ (7); ‘financial factors’ (6); ‘socio-economic environment’ (6); ‘teachers’ personal characteristics’ (5); ‘connection with real life’ (4); ‘teaching experience’ (5); ‘teacher-parent relationships’ (4); ‘teaching students according to their cognitive level’ (3); ‘sincerity’ (2); ‘being careful’ (2); ‘teachers’ status’ (2); ‘student centered education’ (1); ‘authority’ (2); ‘openness to new developments and technology’ (2); ‘students’ active engagement to lesson’ (2); ‘time management’ (2); ‘planning’ (2); ‘being lovely to students’ (1); ‘consistency’ (2); ‘student interaction with each other’ (1); ‘patience’ (1); ‘practical’ (1); ‘being fair’ (1); ‘grouping students according to their abilities’ (1).

If we had to consider the items most often stressed by pre-service teachers, and compare them to the literature on the subject as referred to in earlier sections of this paper, and as represented by the work of such researchers as Rudduck & Flutter (2004) and Kutnick & Jules (1993), then we can note a match. On the other hand, there are some researchers (*inter alia.*, Kyriacou, 1997) who emphasize that

children’s learning outcomes is one of the important indicators of effective teaching—a view which is different from that which comes across in the responses to our survey.

The second question directed to pre-service teachers was ‘Which are the five most important characteristics of an effective teacher?’ The responses to this question are presented schematically in Table 2:

TABLE 2: The five key factors pre-service teachers (n=153) thought most important to define an effective teacher.

1. Having a competent knowledge of the subject (57)
2. Having friendly and good relationships with pupils (41)
3. Personal characteristics such as being creative, honest, positive (35)
4. Using various teaching methods and techniques (20)
5. Using classroom management skills effectively (17)
6. Having enthusiasm for teaching (11)
7. Developing students’ interests towards the lesson (motivating students) (10)
8. Continuous self-improvement(10)
9. Being fair (9)
10. Being systematic and good at planning (7)

Other factors that student teachers referred to in their responses included: ‘is capable of connecting with where the student is at, and understandable’ (7); ‘uses various evaluation and assessment techniques’ (6); ‘applies pedagogical knowledge to teaching’ (5); ‘is patient when dealing with students’ (5); ‘is consistent’ (5); ‘uses time effectively’ (4); ‘makes use of various teaching materials’ (3); ‘is experienced’ (2); ‘uses his or her voice effectively’ (2); ‘is flexible and natural’ (1); ‘has natural skills for teaching’ (1); ‘uses questions to develop students’ understanding’ (1) ‘is understanding’ (1).

From pre-service teacher’s responses, it is possible to see that ‘having a competent knowledge of the subject’ is considered by them to be a very important quality defining an effective teacher. This finding is also consistent with the related literature. For instance, some researchers (*inter alia* Clemson & Craft, 1981; Stanton, 1985) emphasized that having a strong knowledge of the subject is important for teachers whereas recently some researchers (such as Beishuizen *et al.*, 2001) stress that personal relationships between teachers and their students is important. Others (such as Minor *et al.*, 2002) claim that effective classroom management skills are crucial for teachers.

The third question directed to pre-service teachers was ‘What were the three most positive points you have observed in teachers during your teaching experience?’ The pattern of responses can be seen in Table 3:

TABLE 3: *The most positive points observed in teachers by pre-service teachers (n=153)*

1. Having competent subject knowledge (71)
2. Effective communication skills (44)
3. Using effective classroom management strategies (30)
4. Making efforts to recognise the needs of the students (18)
5. Making the subject understandable by using a variety of examples (13)
6. Making students active in the classroom (12)
7. Motivating students (11)
8. Being experienced (10)
9. Being an effective planner (11)
10. Effective use of time in the classroom (8)

The importance accorded by pre-service teachers to strong subject knowledge and effective communication skills is very clear in the responses presented in Table 3. It is significant that research in effective teaching in fact emphasises different factors to these ones, and that in this regard it is important to highlight the fact that perceptions held by pre-service teachers are likely to have a strong impact on their teaching practice in the future.

The fourth question directed to pre-service teachers was ‘What were the three most negative points you have observed in teachers during your teaching experience?’ Table 4 shows the responses to this question:

TABLE 4: *The most negative points observed in teachers by pre-service teachers (n=153)*

1. Lack of classroom management skills (70)
2. Lack of competence in using various teaching methods (25)
3. Lack of competence in motivating students (20)
4. Poor communication skills (17)
5. Lack of ability in the effective use of voice (16)
6. Lack of competence in using time effectively (15)
7. Lack of motivation towards teaching (13)
8. Unfair behaviour (10)
9. Lack of competence in the use of materials and technology (9)
10. Lack of subject knowledge (8)

Other negative characteristics that pre-service teachers identified in teachers included ‘being authoritarian’, ‘not being ready for lessons’, ‘always doing routine things’, ‘not giving homework to the students’, and so on. It is clear, though, that ‘lack of classroom management skills’ is ranked very highly as a negative trait by pre-service teachers.

Conclusion

This study, while limited in scope given that it focused on a sample of pre-service teachers from the same university in Turkey, does provide us with some insights into how such a group constructs an understanding of effective teaching. It is clear, for instance, that the respondents to the survey value such characteristics as good communication skills, the ability to create a positive classroom atmosphere, relating well to students, and personal qualities in the make-up of a teacher’s personality. Such findings reinforce those of other researchers, such as Broadhead (1987), Kutnick & Jules (1993) and Moreira (2002).

Pre-service teachers also put a great deal of emphasis on competence in subject matter, as well as on effective classroom management strategies. They are especially critical of teachers who are not skilled in maintaining order, in using a range of teaching methods, and in motivating learners. In many ways, they seem to give more importance to competence in teaching than in mastery of subject matter, though clearly both are considered to be valuable—a point that has also been discussed by other researchers, such as Veenman (1984) and Reed (1989). Such student teacher perceptions of what constitutes effective teaching are important, because ‘prior beliefs’ condition the reception that pre-service teachers give to what they are exposed to during teacher training courses. Awareness of—and systematic engagement with—pre-service teacher values can facilitate professional development in ways that are more enduring, and that are more supportive of the management of change (Smittle, 2003). Effective teacher education is a key to promoting transformed learning environments for the younger generations (Tekkaya *et al.*, 2004), and therefore deserves to be developed in ways that address—and respond to—the images and constructs that novices bring with them into the profession.

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