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ABSTRACT

The debate about what constitutes good teaching in the industrialized countries of the world tends to be carried over into the developing world without examining ways in which social and cultural contexts of the originating countries differ from those of the receiving ones. This study explores differences in perceptions of elementary education students in four countries (Finland, United States, Botswana, and Zimbabwe) and the extent to which effective classroom practices and teaching methodologies interact with social norms and expectations. Teachers in training (N=279) from the four countries completed a two-part questionnaire identifying their own most effective and ineffective elementary school teacher and rank-ordering 14 teacher characteristics in terms of how important they thought each of these to have been in contributing toward making this teacher seem effective. Results indicate broad agreement among respondents with respect to effective and ineffective teacher characteristics; disagreement was reflected in terms of educational traditions and social and cultural contexts, which may lead to different philosophical assumptions about the role and purpose of education and teaching. (A summary of findings and rankings for each country is displayed in tabular form.) (Contains 32 references.) (LL)

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The debate about what constitutes good teaching is on-going and perennial in the industrialized countries of the world. Unfortunately, those same arguments and their attendant "common wisdom" tends to be carried over into the developing world without examining the ways in which the social and cultural contexts of the originating countries differ from those of the receiving ones. The extent to which "effective" classroom practices and teaching methodologies interact with the social norms and expectations of the recipient culture, has not been widely investigated; yet its importance would seem self-evident.

Studies of schooling in developing countries often note critically, for example, the dominance of didactic, lecture and fact-oriented teaching methods in the primary and secondary school classrooms (e.g., Prophet and Rowell, 1991; Vuliamy 1990; Fuller and Snyder, 1991; Fuller, 1987). Such methods are typically observed to provide little opportunity for meaningful interaction between students and teacher and to show little concern for developing a positive classroom atmosphere or for relating to students as persons Nevertheless, interventions in search of "improved effectiveness" tend to meet with mixed results at best and it is noted that "attitudes and ingrained habits change slowly" (Yoder & Mautle, 1991). Little is known about the reasons for such findings; nor about the reciprocal effects which teaching methodologies and the social, cultural and educational contexts in which they take place may have on each other.

It will be argued here that pedagogy is not context- nor culture-free and that it cannot be assumed that it's "truths" (if there are such) can be transplanted from one cultural and social context to another with impunity. In traditional African societies, for example, children have clearly defined social roles and for a child to speak out in the presence of a respected elder without being first recognized and asked to speak would be considered highly inappropriate. In the United States, on the other hand, the rules for social interaction between children and adults are very different and the child who does not initiate conversation with an elder may be considered shy, timid or lacking in self-confidence. It seems reasonable to believe that such differences (there are, of course, many others which could be mentioned) will influence the ways in which teachers in different social and cultural environments will evaluate the

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interactions which take place in their classroom and the selections they make from among alternate teaching strategies.

For purposes of this investigation, three broadly defined, (though overlapping) general approaches to improvement of teaching have been distilled from the accumulated literature on teaching. There is first of all the preponderate literature that focuses on instructional matters and teaching methodologies. Here the essence of effective teaching is in an arena broadly defined as instructional and focuses on teaching strategies and methods. The general assumption made in this literature is that the best teacher is the one who has selected and implemented the best *instructional method* (e.g. Kourilsky & Quaranta, 1987; Hudgins, 1970, Orlich, et al., 1985).

A second broad tradition in improvement of teaching is represented by those who focus on techniques for classroom management, discipline and establishing a positive classroom environment (e.g. Asiedu-Akrofi, 1981; Hurt, et al., 1978; Talmage, et al., 1984; Veenman, 1984). While this tradition does not discount the importance of good instruction it nevertheless assumes that skill in managing the class and the "climate" which prevails there (as exemplified in "good discipline") will have a determining impact on the effectiveness of the instruction.

The third broad tradition discussed here, is one that focuses on teachers as persons and on the relationships they develop with their students (e.g. Brophy & Good, 1974; Maslow, 1954; Youngs, et al., 1970). Hawkins, et al., (1988), for example, investigated conditions under which the "social bonding" of low achieving students could be improved under the assumption that improved social bonding should lead to improved achievement. (The so-called "Humanistic Education Movement" rooted variously in persons such as Dewey (1933), Goodman (1964), Holt (1964), Kozol (1967), Neill (1960) and Rogers (1969) and others should doubtless also be included in this broad tradition, though there is obvious overlap with some of the other approaches.) The working premise here is that the teacher as a person and the relationship she or he develops with the students is a critical component of effectiveness. (It might be observed in passing that many of these persons would doubtless be unhappy with a definition of school effectiveness that focuses mainly on the academic).

The purpose of this study was to explore some of the differences in perceptions of education students in four countries about what constitutes "effective" and "ineffective" teaching. Two of the countries, Finland and The United States, were "Western" (i.e., "industrialized") while two, Botswana and Zimbabwe, were African (i.e., "developing"). It was hypothesized that the differences in the social, cultural and educational context of these countries would lead to differences in the ways in which "good teaching" is perceived (and implicitly defined) and therefore may influence notions about which pedagogies and teaching methodologies are considered normative or desirable. Though not directly

tested here, it is speculated that persistent differences in classroom practice (i.e., those that seem resistant to change or intervention) (see Psacharopoulos, 1986; Snyder & Ramatsui, 1990; Yoder & Mautle, 1991) may arise, at least in part, from such differences; and that these, in turn, are influenced the broad social and cultural milieu in which schooling takes place.

The Countries

Botswana

A former British protectorate with an historically underdeveloped educational system, Botswana has experienced a very high rate of development and expansion since achieving independence in 1966. The British roots of the educational system are evident in a variety of ways including the nationwide selection examinations (the "O Level" exams are administered directly by the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate) that are used to determine entry into successively more restricted places at each higher level of education. Less than one third of primary school leavers are able to find places in senior secondary school.

The urban areas have undergone rapid modernization since independence, and the country enjoys a high per capita gross domestic product (GDP) largely because of the discovery and commercial development of major deposits of high-grade diamonds. The rural areas remain largely traditional, however, and the majority of that population still engages in subsistence farming and herding, working in the informal sector or are unemployed. Large inequities of income and living standards, especially between urban and rural dwellers result. Social and cultural norms for the rural and uneducated population, in particular, remain traditional. Education is seen to be a major vehicle by which one may better oneself or "get ahead" (Chilisa, 1987).

The United States (California)

In the United States education, as it is known today, is comprehensive and school attendance is compulsory up to at least age 16. California is the most populous, and among the most rapidly growing, of the states. The educational system of California has come under great pressure in recent years as it has tried to accommodate mushrooming school populations that contain large numbers of non-white and first-generation Americans, with increasingly inadequate funds. Education that is appropriate to the individual has long been understood to be a fundamental right of each child.

Finland

Finland's history and geography have contributed to its occupying a sometimes shifting political and economic space somewhere between the former Eastern Block and Western Europe, especially during the first half of this century. During this time there have been several shifts of government and political orientation, nevertheless there has been a long tradition of formal education. Schooling is compulsory from ages 7-16 and the country enjoys nearly universal literacy. National examinations are administered at age 17-18 for selection into university or other advanced training.

Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) educational system, too, was inherited from the British but was adapted by the dominant white Rhodesians to fit their view of a separate society with separate educational systems for blacks and whites. In 1982, following a long struggle for independence by the country's black majority, Rhodesia became independent, black ruled, Zimbabwe.

Sweeping changes, including many educational reforms, followed. Still, economic hardship, high levels of unemployment and poverty continue to characterize many parts of the country, especially in the rural areas. Because of it's longer and more intense colonial experience, the present-day educational system is in some ways more established than that of Botswana, though it faces extreme pressure from demands for school places while struggling with very limited resources. Selection examinations are developed and administered by internal bodies. As in Botswana, and in spite of high unemployment among educated persons, education continues seen as the major vehicle by which one may "get ahead".

Participants

Two hundred and seventy nine teachers-in-training (some of whom had actually taught before entering their present teacher training) from four countries (Botswana, United States, Finland and Zimbabwe) were included in the study as indicated in Table One below. All had been, or were training to become, primary (elementary) school teachers.

Table One
Participants

Gender	Botswana		USA (California)		Finland		Zimbabwe	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	17	32%	12	17%	14	14%	36	67%
Female	37	68%	58	83%	87	86%	18	33%
Total	54	100%	70	100%	101	100%	54	100%
Age								
15-19	0	0%	1	1%	13	13%	0	0%
20-29	7	13%	59	84%	86	13%	33	61%
30-39	47	87%	8	11%	2	2%	19	35%
40-49	0	0%	2	3%	0	0%	2	4%
Total	54	100%	70	100%	101	100%	54	100%

Instrumentation

A two-part questionnaire, each with two sections, requested respondents, first of all, to identify, among their own primary school teachers, the specific teacher whom they considered to have been the most "effective" ("effectiveness" was explicitly left undefined). Demographic information about the selected (i.e., remembered) teacher was requested which included their gender and an estimate of the approximate age of the teacher at the time of having been taught by them.

Next, respondents were asked to rank-order fourteen different teacher characteristics (or teaching skills) in terms of how important they thought each of these to have been in contributing toward making this teacher seem effective. For the second section, respondents were asked to repeat the process, but this time with reference to their most *ineffective* teacher.

The teacher characteristics or skills to be ranked by the respondents consisted of fourteen statements, each of which could be clustered into one of three groupings, or categories, of teaching characteristics corresponding to the three broad "improvement of teaching" traditions noted above. These were Instruction variables (five) Personal variables (five) and Class Management variables (four). The statements were presented in random order on the questionnaire. The same fourteen characteristics were presented twice; once for ranking the effective teachers and again for ranking the ineffective teachers. For the effective teachers, the statements were usually presented in a positive form while for the ineffective teachers, the statements were presented in a negative form where appropriate.

Though the procedure requested participants to respond in terms of particular individuals that they remembered, it was nevertheless assumed that to a large extent, the responses would represent the participants' own views of "good teaching" -- indicated both in the persons they chose as exemplars and in the importance which they ascribed to statements describing their choice.

The questionnaire was administered in English for all samples except in Finland where it was translated into Finnish. (University and Teacher Education instruction in both Botswana and Zimbabwe takes place in English so there was no need for translation there.)

Results and Analysis

Descriptive/Demographic

A comparison of the gender and the age group of remembered effective and ineffective teachers is shown in Tables Two and Three.

Table Two
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Gender and by Country

	Botswana			California			Finland			Zimbabwe		
	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect
Male	67	76	50	33	30	17	81	35	46	87	83	81
Female	39	24	50	107	70	83	121	65	55	19	17	19
Total	106	100	100	140	100	100	202	100	100	106	100	100

N=Number of remembered teachers (including both effective and ineffective).
% Effect=Percentage of remembered effective teachers who were male and female, respectively (i.e. percent of column).
% Ineffect=Percentage of remembered ineffective teachers who were male and female, respectively.

A within-country chi square analysis comparing effective and ineffective teachers by gender yielded significant results ($p < .01$) for Botswana only, though results approached significance for California ($p = .07$).

Clearly, Botswana respondents were more likely to remember their more effective teachers as having been male notwithstanding the larger number of female teachers in Botswana primary schools (Fuller & Snyder, 1991). For the rest there was no clear pattern of differences between sexes.

Table Three
Percentage of Effective and Ineffective Teachers by Age Group and by Country

	Botswana			California			Finland			Zimbabwe		
Age	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect	N	% Effect	% Ineffect
20-29	0	0	0	75	24	83	14	9	5	24	20	25
30-39	19	10	28	45	49	14	73	43	30	56	65	41
40-49	54	64	39	12	15	3	70	35	33	24	13	34
50-59	31	26	33	8	12	0	45	13	32	1	2	0
Total	104	100	100	140	100	100	202	100	100	105	100	100

N=Number of remembered teachers (including both effective and ineffective).
% Effect=Percentage of remembered effective teachers at each age level (i.e. percent of column).
% Ineffect=Percentage of remembered ineffective teachers at each age level.

Within-country chi square analyses comparing effective and ineffective teachers by age group yielded significant results ($p < .001$) for all countries.

According to Table Three, Botswana respondents remembered almost all (ninety percent) of their effective teachers to have been forty years old or older. Ineffective teachers were distributed across all three represented age groups. California respondents, on the other hand, had strong memories of ineffective teachers as between 20-29 years old (more than eighty-five percent of the ineffective teachers were in this age group), though about one fourth of the effective teachers were also in that age group. Both Finland and Zimbabwe respondents tended to remember their effective teachers as having been younger than those they considered ineffective.

Tables Two and Three, then, indicate substantial differences in the ways in which respondents in the four countries viewed the relationship between both gender and age and effectiveness or ineffectiveness as teachers. Botswana respondents, for example, are more likely to have remembered their most effective teacher as male and between the ages of 40-49 in contrast to California and Zimbabwe respondents who were more likely to remember their most effective teacher as younger than forty. Finnish and Zimbabwe respondents agree that both ineffective and effective teachers are about as likely to have been one sex as the other.

It seems likely that the observed differences between the countries reflect, at least in part, different patterns of teacher recruitment and training, and different career patterns, for teachers in the respective countries. On the other hand, though the data do not permit conclusions, they raise questions about the extent to which these "memories" might have been colored by differences in cultural perspectives on gender and age.

Rankings of Effective Teacher Characteristics

Respondents were requested to rank order fourteen statements which, in their opinion, contributed most to the effectiveness of the teacher that they had selected (remembered). The mean of the rankings assigned by respondents were calculated for each characteristic and combined in an overall ranking by country. This ranking is presented in Table Four. Since the most important characteristics were ranked beginning with one, the lower the mean for each characteristic, the more important it was considered to be.

Table Six
Mean Rankings of Characteristics Which Contribute Most Toward Perceived Teacher Effectiveness by Teachers from Four Countries

Rank						Mean Ranking			
Bot	Cal	Fin	Zim	Characteristic	Var Cat	Bot	Cal	Fin	Zim
1	8	8	5	Knew a Great Deal About the Subject	Instruction	5.1	7.9	6.9	6.7
2	1	4	3	Had Friendly Personality	Personal	5.3	3.6	5.6	5.1
3	5	5	2	Planned Interesting & Motivating Lessons	Instruction	5.5	4.7	6.1	5.0
4	7	2	4	Made Difficult Subjects Understandable	Instruction	6.3	7.5	4.7	5.5
5	2	9	1	Cared about Individual Students	Personal	6.4	3.9	8.1	4.9
6	11	11	7	Extra Help for Slow Learners	Instruction	6.4	9.7	8.8	7.1
7	12	7	9	Demanded Hard Work	Class Management	7.0	11	6.8	7.7
8	3	1	6	Helped Students Feel Good About Being in Class	Personal	7.0	4.4	4.3	6.9
9	6	6	8	Had Good Class Control	Class Management	7.1	6.5	6.5	7.6
10	4	3	10	Related Well to Students	Personal	7.6	4.5	5.1	8.0
11	9	10	11	Was Fair in Grading & Evaluating	Instruction	8.7	8.9	8.3	8.8
12	10	13	12	Expected All to Perform Well	Personal	9.3	9.1	11	9.0
13	14	13	13	Exercised Strict Discipline	Class Management	10.1	12	12	10
14	13	12	14	Was Not Too Strict	Class Management	11.4	11	10	10

Bot = Botswana
Cal = California (USA)
Fin = Finland
Zim = Zimbabwe
Var Cat = Category of Variable into which teacher characteristic was clustered.

Spearman rank-order correlations of the mean country rankings of characteristics contributing to effective teaching yielded the matrix in Table Seven.

Table Seven
Correlation of Mean Ranking of Effective Teacher Characteristics

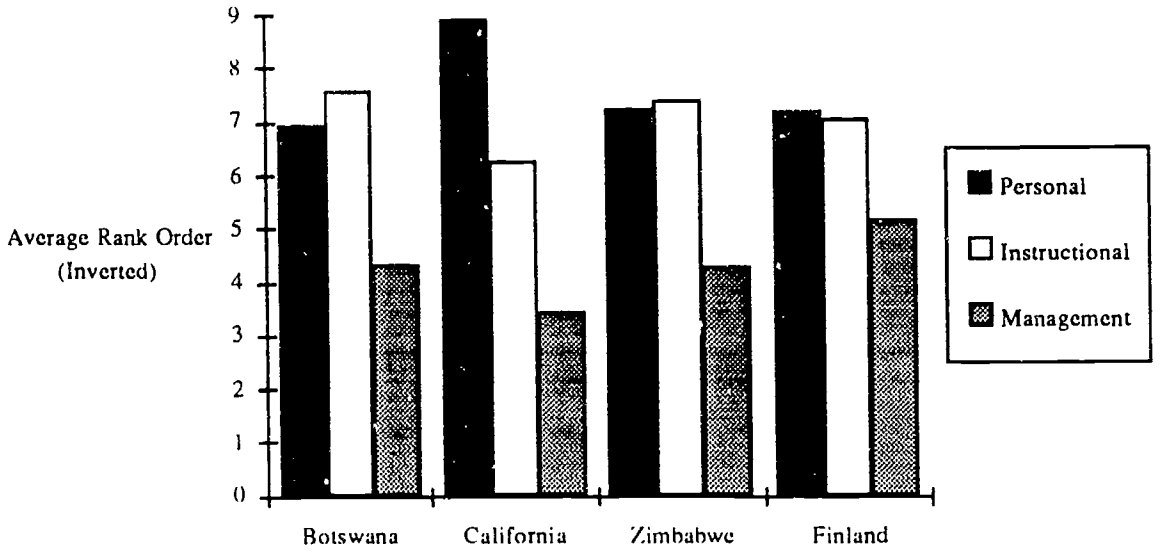
	Botswana	California	Finland
California	.56		
Finland	.52	.72	
Zimbabwe	.90	.75	.58

Examination of the matrix suggests two, perhaps contradictory, observations. First, it seems notable that four groups of teachers, from four disparate countries, respond so similarly to questions about factors contributing to good teaching. The range of the correlation values in the matrix, from a low of .52 to a high of.90, seems to indicate clearly that there is a broad consensus on the relative importance of many of the teacher characteristics in the questionnaire. (It is of course, an open question whether such uniformity reflects values that are indigenous to the cultures in question or whether they reflect the effects of broad acculturation to the commonly held, western, norms of schooling.)

The second observation is that while there was particularly strong agreement between the African countries on the relative importance of the listed characteristics, the western rankings (i.e., those of California and Finland) were more like each other than like the African responses. In general, the Africans seem more concerned about the "instructional characteristics" of the "good teacher" with Botswana and California, respectively, anchoring the opposite ends of the continuum. Three of the four top characteristics from Botswana, for example, are concerned with the Instructional aspects of teaching (with "knowledge of the subject matter" appearing to be particularly important). California respondents on the other hand, ranked the teacher's "personality" first in importance, with "subject knowledge" ranking eighth. California respondents, in fact, placed no Instructional characteristic higher than fifth place.

As a further analysis, the mean rankings for the items pertaining to each of the three categories of characteristics were aggregated by category into an inverted rank (so that a higher number now indicates a higher rank; i.e., a "one" would now become a "fourteen" and vice versa) and compared by country. Figure 1 shows the result.

Figure One
Inverted Mean Ranks of Effective Teacher Characteristics by Category



The polar positions of the California and Botswana respondents is again evident. California respondents considered Personal factors to be of considerably greater importance than did the respondents from any of the other countries. Botswana respondents (and to a lesser extent those from Zimbabwe) on the other hand, considered Instructional characteristics to be of more importance, though Personal characteristics were not considered *un*important. All four groups agreed that class management characteristics were of least importance.

Rankings of Ineffective Teacher Characteristics

The same 14 characteristics were repeated for consideration as factors contributing toward making the so-identified teachers seem ineffective. In most cases, the statements were reworded into a negative rather than positive format. Where a particular statement could be viewed as either negative or positive, it was phrased the same for both the effective and ineffective teachers. Table Eight presents the rankings for the Ineffective Teachers.

Table Eight
Mean Rankings of Characteristics Which Contribute Most Toward Perceived Teacher Ineffectiveness by Teachers from Four Countries

Rank						Mean Ranking			
Bot	Cal	Fin	Zim	Characteristic	Var Cat	Bot	Cal	Fin	Zim
1	3	11	1	Unfriendly Personality	Personal	4.9	6.0	5.8	7.3
2	2	1	4	Unable to Make Students Feel Good About Being in Class	Personal	5.4	4.2	3.7	5.9
3	5	2	5	Lessons Were Uninteresting/ Not Motivating	Instruction	5.8	6.3	4.1	6.4
4	9	7	8	No Extra Help For Slow Learners	Instruction	5.8	8.2	7.6	7.2
5	6	3	3	Could Not Make Hard Subjects Understandable	Instruction	5.8	6.8	5.4	5.9
6	4	6	2	Did Not Care about Individual Students	Personal	6.0	6.0	7.3	5.8
7	1	4	7	Did Not Relate Well to Students	Personal	6.8	3.6	5.5	6.6
8	13	10	10	Knew Little About the Subject	Instruction	7.6	10	7.9	8.6
9	10	12	6	Exercised Strict Discipline	Class Management	8.2	8.7	10	6.6
10	7	5	9	Had Poor Class Control	Class Management	8.2	7.2	6.5	9.6
11	12	14	13	Was Not Too Strict	Class Management	9.4	10	11.2	10
12	11	9	12	Unfair in Marking/ Grading	Instruction	9.6	9.3	7.8	9.6
13	8	8	13	Did Not Expect Good Performance of All	Personal	9.9	7.8	7.7	10
14	14	14	11	Demanded Hard Work	Class Management	10.2	10	11	8.8

Bot = Botswana
Cal = California (USA)
Fin = Finland
Zim = Zimbabwe
Var Cat = Category of Variable into which teacher characteristic was clustered.

Spearman rank-order correlations of the country rankings of characteristics contributing to ineffective teaching are indicated in Table Nine.

Table Nine
Correlation of Mean Ranking of Ineffective Teacher Characteristics

	Botswana	California	Finland
California	.69		
Finland	.53	.73	
Zimbabwe	.83	.72	.58

As shown in Table Seven, the correlation matrix for characteristics of ineffective teaching suggests a similar pattern of relationship as was seen for effective teaching. In this matrix, Botswana has moved slightly toward the California position. The two African countries, nevertheless, continued to agree with each other, though at a slightly lower level, while Finnish respondents remained nearest to those from California and most (relatively speaking, of course) unlike those from Africa. Once again, both the extent of the agreement as well as the differences seem notable.

The actual ranks assigned to specific characteristics of ineffective teaching showed several departures from those for effective teaching though many similar patterns reappeared. Overall, Personal characteristics appeared to be considered somewhat more important than in the rankings for effective teacher characteristics. The Botswana respondents, for example, gave Personal characteristics both first and second place rank (their highest Instructional characteristic was in third rank). The Finnish respondents, on the other hand ranked a Personal characteristic first but followed immediately with two Instructional characteristics while Zimbabwe respondents placed Personal characteristics in all three of the top ranks. California respondents continued to give major emphasis to Personal characteristics, with their highest ranked Instructional characteristic appearing only in fifth place. Class management characteristics continued to occupy a relatively low place. These observations can be made more clearly from Figure Two which again shows the aggregated mean ranks for items relating to each of the three categories. (Again inverted so that a higher number indicates a higher rank.)

Figure Two
Inverted Mean Ranks of Ineffective Teacher Characteristics by Category

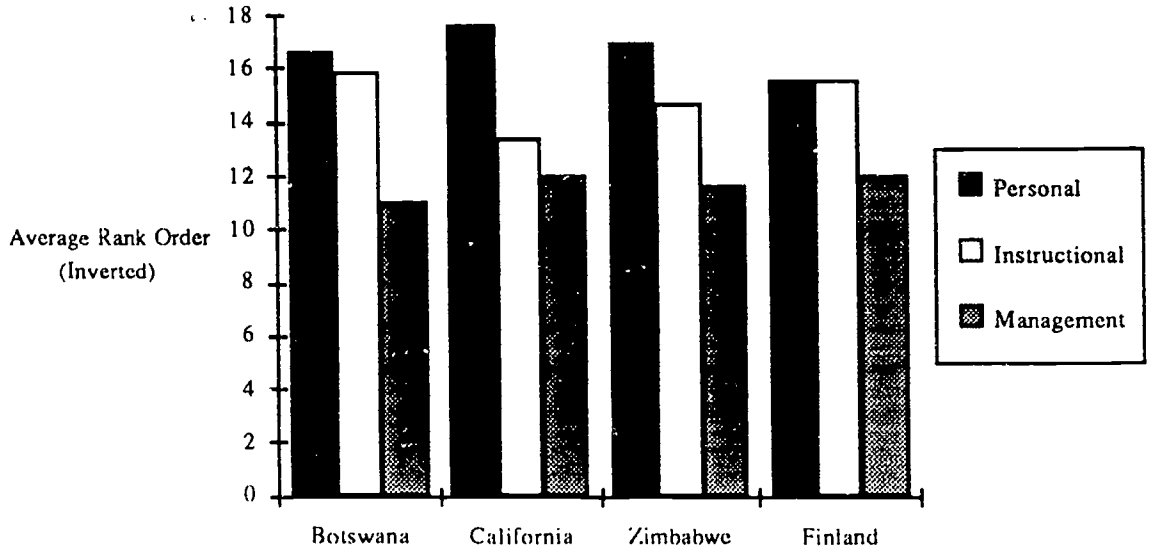


Figure two suggests that when considering factors contributing toward *ineffective* teaching, Botswana responses (and to a lesser extent those from Zimbabwe) are somewhat more similar to those of California than when considering *effective* teaching, in that greater importance for ineffectiveness was placed on personal characteristics. Finnish respondents, on the other hand, were unique in continuing to consider the absence of positive Personal and Instructional characteristics as contributing about equally toward ineffectiveness. The high level of importance attached to Personal characteristics by California respondents continues to be clearly visible from the figure.

Summary of Findings from Rankings

Overall, it seems clear that Botswana respondents placed significantly greater emphasis on Instructional skills (i.e knowing the subject matter and being able to teach well) than Personal skills or characteristics (i.e., being friendly, relating well, caring about individual students) as contributors toward good teaching. However, Personal characteristics were more important (by their absence) as contributors toward being considered *ineffective*. That is, it would appear that for Botswana respondents, good Personal characteristics are a necessary but not sufficient condition for being considered effective.

For California respondents the major factors in being considered either effective or ineffective seem to be Personal characteristics. For these respondents, instructional skill would appear to be secondary. (An alternative explanation for this observation, could be that California respondents took for granted

some basic level of instructional competence and therefore paid little attention to it -- an assumption that could not necessarily be made by the African respondents.) The finding that California respondents considered the more personalistic qualities of teaching to be most important seems consistent with the observations of Treffers (1987) who found that American teachers-in-training were much more likely to offer "pupil oriented" reasons for becoming a teacher (e.g. enjoying and wanting to work with children) and as "qualities of a good teacher" (e.g., "empathetic," "caring and liking children") than were their Dutch counterparts who were more likely to offer "task oriented" responses to the same questions.

Finnish respondents were the most consistent of the sample in ranking both effective and ineffective teacher characteristics; indicating nearly equal importance for both Instructional and Personal characteristics as contributors to both effectiveness and ineffectiveness. Zimbabwe responses tended to fall between the Botswana responses and those of the Finns. Nevertheless, as indicated by the strong correlations between their respective rankings there is a marked tendency for Botswana and Zimbabwe respondents to rank the characteristics contributing to both effective and ineffective teaching similarly. California respondents occupy a space at the opposite end of that spectrum. All four of the national groups agreed that the class management characteristics were of least importance in comparison to the other two categories.

Discussion

Conclusions and interpretation must be tentative, since the instrument has only face validity and the restricted sample from each country cannot necessarily be regarded as representative and the findings themselves not unequivocal. Nonetheless, at some risk of over generalization, the findings lead to several propositions.

At the most basic level, it seems clear that notions about factors that contribute to "good" and "poor" teaching" are both similar and different when comparing the countries represented in this sample. Thus, while there is broad agreement about which of the listed characteristics contribute toward effective and ineffective teaching, there are important differences. It seems reasonable to speculate that the social, cultural and (perhaps especially) educational contexts of these countries lead to different (probably implicit) philosophical assumptions about the role and purposes of education and schooling and, by extension, to notions about the role and function of teaching. It is predictable, then, that ideas about what contributes to good and poor teaching would likewise differ. In the African countries, for example, where many, if not most, persons in the educational system are the first generation of their immediate family and social group to have been able to complete even primary school, education is perceived as a vehicle to enhanced personal opportunity -- hence the concern about learning content as

reflected in the focus on the instructional competence and subject knowledge of the teacher. It seems reasonable to believe that the African respondents, especially in contrast to those from California, may view education more instrumentally; i.e., as means to an end -- qualification for the next higher level of education and an eventual place among the economically and socially elite. Thus the "good teacher" is one who contributes significantly to mastery of subject content and to good performance on the exams which are the ultimate arbiters of educational progress in those countries. How one "feels" about the educational experience in these circumstances is then less important.

In California and Finland, on the other hand, schooling has been not only available but compulsory for generations and may be perceived as less directly tied to personal advancement. It would appear that California respondents, in particular, consider the "process" of schooling to outweigh the content. (Suggesting, among other things, a markedly different perspective on the age-old debate of whether we teach "children" or "subjects"?).

The findings may similarly reflect different sets of assumptions about the fundamental purposes of education and the nature of teaching which grow out of their respective societal and educational traditions. Though education in both Botswana and Zimbabwe has undergone very rapid development that has been accompanied by significant changes in attitudes and educational philosophy, vestiges of the highly selective, meritocratic system of colonial education inherited from the British nevertheless remain. In such a system, the ability to advance into higher level careers and social status is directly determined by the level and the quality of the schools to which one is able to gain admission; and one of the basic purposes of education seems to be that of "sorting" and more or less permanently labeling people on the basis of how far they have managed to rise in the educational system. Thus it is critical that the school enable one to be "successful" in terms of content mastery. Teachers in such settings may be slow to change from their more didactic approach because they fear that such a change would compromise mastery of content and thus restrict opportunities available to their students. (Not to mention that the teachers' own competence is frequently evaluated on the basis of how well their students perform on the selection examinations.) The California respondents, on the other hand, are the product of an education system in which the historically expressed aims have been pointedly egalitarian. Such aims have been foundational in that system for many years. It may be that in such a setting the concerns about the subjective experience of schooling outweigh concerns about the more objective "content."

From the above, then, it follows that discussion about what constitutes "good teaching" (and by implication, about what should be considered normative pedagogical wisdom) needs to take into account the social and cultural contexts of the schools in question. The findings seem clear in their implication that notions about the universality of characteristics of good teaching should not be

accepted without question, that prescriptions for improvement of teaching must consider the context in which it is to take place and that, in any case, efforts to improve educational practice in developing countries must begin with an understanding of the interaction between the broad social, cultural and educational context and the proposed interventions.

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