



## Professional and personal characteristics of excellent teachers

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### Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out about the perceptions of prospective teachers on professional and personal characteristics which make perfect teachers successful. Phenomenological research design which is one of the qualitative research methods was used in the study and the study group was comprised of the prospective teachers attending faculty of education of a public university during 2020-2021 academic year. An interview form was used as the instrument for data collection. The collected data was analyzed using content analysis method. Besides, cogency and transmissibility for validity of the study; consistency and verifiability criteria were used for reliability. According to the results of the analysis; the teachers' behaviors performed in the classroom and their characteristics were classified under two themes as "professional attitudes and values" and "professional qualifications and skills" based on the perceptions of the prospective teachers who were trained by these teachers during elementary or secondary education. Professional attitudes and values theme was consisted of subthemes such as; caring for each student, allocating time for students outside regular course time and being fair, having professional values and being a positive person. As for professional qualifications and skills, it contained subthemes as; being expert in the subject, managing classroom effectively, being talented to teach in an enjoyable way, using original approaches for teaching and learning process, using teaching materials effectively, using measurement and evaluation in a process driven way. It was suggested based on the finding of the study that policies should be developed in order to increase teacher's performance and success, educational contents related with professional attitudes and values should be improved during pre-service and in-service training.

**Keywords:** Teaching profession, excellent teacher, professional attitudes and values, professional skills, successful teacher's qualifications

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## 1. Introduction

In today's world, the facts like rapid technological developments, globalization, cultural shifts, and changes in people's living conditions affect lots of people and organizations in the society. Education is one of those organizations and changes would influence school and its components. The society of modern times is also called knowledge-based society and people at the present time are expected to have basic skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to unify knowledge and skills. It is also getting more essential for people to have higher level skills like creative thinking, digital literacy, using information technologies, effective communication, collaboration and teamwork skills. Therefore, it might be stated that the skills, qualifications and behavioral patterns expected from individuals have changed in time.

Teachers who shape educational process and become special role model for students with their personal characteristics, knowledge, individual skills, attitudes and behaviors play basic role on students' success. Thus, improving the quality of education system is directly related with increasing the power and quality of teaching profession (Maureen & Cabauatan, 2021). Teachers' professional experience is one of the most important factors influencing students' academic success (Gess-Newsome et al, 2019). It is emphasized that common point of education systems of outstanding countries in international exams and assessments is competent teachers (OECD, 2016). For this reason, training competent teachers is an indispensable educational policy for these countries (Darling-Hammond, 2017).

There are some professional skills and qualifications that teachers should have peculiar to teaching profession (Alashwal, 2019; Brookhart, 2011). Teacher has a significant position for educational process and quality of expected outputs based on his/her professional qualifications and attitudes (Guerrero, 2014). Professional qualification could be stated as the rules focusing on essential knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and personal characteristics in order to be successful in a profession (Deakin Crick, 2008). Teachers could continue their personal and professional improvement through closely following the professional developments and educational innovations (Avalos, 2011).

Personal qualifications of teachers are specified as follows in the related literature: managing change, being open-minded, solving problems, communicating effectively, ready for collaboration, maintaining quality social relations, creativity, tolerance, being fair, affectionate, developing empathy and valuing students as individuals (Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Paine et al., 2016; Sanger, 2017). Moreover, qualifications peculiar to teacher's subject mean having adequate cognitive knowledge in terms of quality and quantity in order to perform teaching skills (Bertschy et al., 2013).

Educational qualifications which teachers should have are stated by Pantic and Wubbels (2010) as; collaboration with stakeholders for the issues related with teaching and learning, finding new methods-techniques and being eager to implement them, being a good role-behavioral model for students, transmitting goals of school and educational program to students, being aware of students expectations. As for Arnon and Reichel (2007) guiding students for learning, facilitating learning process and using effective teaching methods are among these qualifications. What is more, internalizing continuous learning and professional development is one of the effective teaching qualifications that has positive influence on students' academic success (Akiba & Liang, 2016).

It is possible to describe tens of standards related with teachers' personal and professional qualifications. Only the teacher who are qualified enough to respond to the needs of the country and modern age could provide quality education to the students as the future of the society. A successful teacher shares his/her knowledge on his subject like an artist paying attention to individual diversity Teacher provides diverse learning models for students based on instructional diversity philosophy and ensures them to participate actively to the process. It is a known fact that teachers' behaviors influence students' behavioral changes. Teaching-learning process should not be seen as just a kind of knowledge transmission. Students' positive attitudes like healthy relationships with each others and society, love, respect and understanding etc. are all gained through teachers' behaviors. In this respect, teachers' influences are great on students to shape and improve their personalities.

Reviewing the related literature, it is seen that there are limited number of studies on successful teachers' characteristics and those studies have generally focused on professional qualifications instead of personal competencies (Kunter et al, 2013; Nessipbayeva, 2012). However, some studies on characteristics of ideal teacher (Ida, 2017) and characteristics of effective teacher (Lupascu et al., 2014) could be seen. Analyzing the studies carried out on this issue in the related literature; the studies on teachers' professional qualifications and characteristics of effective teacher were mainly quantitative kind of studies. It might be claimed that there are not enough studies describing characteristics of successful teachers using qualitative method and the existing study would contribute to the field in this respect.

### *1.2. The aim of the study*

In this study, it was aimed based on the students' perceptions to identify professional qualifications and personal characteristics performed during educational processes inside classroom or at school by the teachers who influenced their students' academic and social life, orientate their students' career becoming their role model, who are successful and impress their students positively. The findings of the study could be accepted as potential inputs to increase performance and success rates of current

teachers. Similarly, the findings could be expected to provide important inputs and contributions to the faculties training teachers because it describes successful and effective teachers' characteristics. One of the original assistances of the study is the chance of making comparisons between the perceptions of the students some of whom graduated from the fields related with numerical sciences at high schools and continued undergraduate programs related with numerical sciences; some of whom graduated from the fields related with social sciences and continued undergraduate programs related with social sciences. By this means, there would be possibility of presenting the similarities and differences between the perceptions of those students on the behaviors of successful teachers through qualitative descriptions.

## **2. Method**

In this study, phenomenology was decided as the research design due to the fact that the prospective teachers were asked to comment on their experiences about personal and professional characteristics of the perfect teachers which make them successful in their profession, build up the students' experiences in their own world and depict them (Christensen et al., 2013; Corbin & Straus, 2008), understand the phenomenon in their own point of views (Ary et al, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and because of the reasons like the participant role of the researcher, designing flexibility and inductive conclusions based on qualitative inputs (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The professional and personal characteristics which make perfect teachers successful were defined as the basic phenomenon in this study.

### *2.1. Study group*

The study group consisted of the students of education faculties attending to a public university located in one of the developed cities at the western part of Turkey. These students are the 1<sup>st</sup> graders studying at elementary mathematics teaching (EMT) and preschool teaching (PST) departments during fall semester of 2020-2021 academic year. Maximum variation sampling method was used to form the study group. Maximum variation sampling method is used to form somewhat smaller sampling group and to provide variation of the groups included in the sample. It is possible to discuss the problem from different point of views in this way (Suri, 2011). In addition to providing variation of the collected data, two different groups who were placed to undergraduate programs based on verbal or mathematical scores from university entrance examination participated in the study in order to compare their viewpoints. The study group finally consisted of 102 students defined taking variables like gender, department and class level from the education faculty.

Sixty-two prospective teachers (participant 1<sup>st</sup> graders) from EMT department described 89; 41 prospective teachers from PST department described 92 successful teachers. More than half of the prospective teachers from the both departments were

female and most of the described teachers were the ones working at secondary education (middle schools and high schools). The participants from EMT department generally described teachers teaching numerical subjects like math, physics, chemistry; and the participants from PST department generally described teachers teaching verbal subjects like history, geography and social sciences.

The participant students were placed to the departments where they have been studying based on the results of the two-stage central university entrance examination done in 2020 summer. Average score of the EMT department students was 416 while PST students' average was 309. As 2.296.138 students who entered the university entrance exam were sorted all together, the student who was placed to EMT department with the lowest exam score became the 96.162nd; the student who was placed to PST department with the lowest exam score became the 427.999th in the exam. With regard to the exam results, the students admitted to EMT department were far more successful in the central university examination compared to PST students.

## *2.2. Data Collection*

An interview form was used as the instrument for data collection in the study. Participants were asked to describe the behaviors performed by the teachers and the typical characteristics of the teachers that the students considered as successful in teaching profession, showed higher performance, influenced the students' lives in positive ways and impressed them taking all of the teachers who taught them throughout 12-year education period (elementary, middle and high school periods) into consideration. In this context, they were asked to write their responses to the related questions about those teachers. If that teacher was only one person, they were expected to write about only him/her or if they had such teachers were more than one, the students' responses were limited with three of those previous teachers.

The data were collected through the completion of the interview forms in a week by the participant students from two separate classes during introduction to education course in the fall semester of 2020-2021 academic year. The data were obtained from the written responses in the interview forms given by the students.

## *2.3. Data Analysis*

Collected raw data were analyzed using content analysis method. With the content analysis, it is aimed to present the concepts and relationships explaining the collected data. Therefore, it needs arranging the data depending on the presented concepts and definition of the concepts thematically (Merriam, 2013). Concordantly, the collected data was analyzed using content analysis, themes and subthemes were created accordingly. Inductive content analysis was used while creating themes and subthemes. To do this analysis data are coded and themes and subthemes are reached in this way (Elo et al., 2014). While arranging the data, raw data are stacked (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

For this purpose, the data were represented using direct citations from the students' responses. During the analysis of the data, considerations of three teaching fellows who are competent in qualitative analysis were taken and themes and subthemes were put into the final form accordingly. Sample responses from the students and how they were coded were as given in the Table 1.

Table 1. Sample responses from the students and how these samples were coded

Student's statement (as he/she stated)	Code/codes of the statement
I also had a teacher impressing me in my life. The typical features which differed him/her from the others were: <i>being fair, treating equally to everyone (1), doing his job with love (2), keeping the distance between himself/herself and the students very well, disciplined (3), being sometimes strict and sometimes so affectionate, knowing how to behave in any case, never despising, warming our hearts with a warm smile (4), aiming our improvements in any ground, sharing our troubles (5) hoping us to learn the life not only the school courses (6) and striving for it.</i>	<p>1) Being fair, not discriminating between the students</p> <p>2) Loving his/her job/ not complaining/ professional devotion/ doing his job with passion</p> <p>3) Disciplined/ domineering</p> <p>4) Warm/ affectionate and being like a friend</p> <p>5) Caring for the students' private lives, listening to their problems, helping them</p> <p>6) Sharing his/her experiences</p>

#### 2.4. Validity and Reliability

Validity is used in qualitative studies to define the criteria related with persuasiveness and transferability of the data; reliability is used for coherence and verification (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2013). In order to provide persuasiveness some methods were used like long time interaction, diversification, expertization and participant confirmation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Thus, researchers were active and sustained interaction at each step of the study from the beginning to the end. Analyzers were diversified during data analysis process and codifications made by each researcher were all checked by the other two remaining researchers (Creswell, 2013). One of the reasons why the number of the researchers were more than one was to have the analyses made by these researchers in order to increase the validity and reliability of the findings.

Diversification of the analyzers were ensured to check the quality of the analyses, three experts as one doctor and two associate professors who are qualified in qualitative research were offered for consideration (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Codes, themes and subthemes were finalized based on the feedbacks from the experts. In order to prevent any kind of misunderstanding due to subjective assumptions and to confirm the

participants' views accurately the analyses were presented to five participants; they were asked to state their views on the accuracy of the analyzed statements. The participants' confirmation was asked in this way.

Within the scope of transferability, collected raw data were encoded by the researchers without any remarks and free from any possible prejudgments. During codification and organization of the themes raw data were abided. For this purpose, the collected data were described in detail by writing direct citations from the participants. Purposive sampling was used appropriate to the conventional qualitative research to realize data diversity (Gentles et al., 2015). With the intent of consistency of the collected data the steps regarding the forming codes, categories and themes were explained in detail (Shenton, 2004), qualitative data were checked, and consistency of the data was ensured. Raw data, tables formed related with analyzing process, findings and notes taken on the issue were all kept in case there would be a need for review (Gentles et al, 2015).

### **3.Findings**

In this part, two themes were defined regarding what the teachers' performed behaviors and characteristics of the perceived successful and impressive teachers based on the studentship experiences of the 1<sup>st</sup> graders of educational faculty during their elementary and secondary education. These themes were specified as; "professional attitudes and values" and "professional knowledge and skills". Professional attitudes and values comprised of three subthemes. These subthemes were: i) showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair, ii) having professional values, iii) being a positive person. Professional knowledge and skills comprised of six subthemes. These subthemes were: i) being educated in and having knowledge of the related subject, ii) managing the classroom effectively, iii) having the skill of teaching livelily and in an amusing way, iv) using unique approaches in teaching and learning process, v) using teaching materials effectively, vi) using measurement and evaluation in a process-driven way. The frequencies of the codes were given comparatively to be able to make comparisons between the views of EMT students who got relatively higher points from the university entrance exams and PST students who got lower points and the students views were given in diverse columns. Besides, direct citations (students' responses) regarding the codes with higher frequencies were generally given. In the Table 2, frequencies and percentages related with the "showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair" subtheme which was under "professional attitudes and values" theme were given.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional attitudes and values	Showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair	1) Being interested in their privacy, paying attention to their problems and helping them	20	20	40
		2) Being fair, not discriminating between the students	18	22	40
		3) Caring for each student, valuing them, encouraging them to participate	13	21	34
		4) Allocating time for the students outside regular course time, replying their questions	15	13	28
		5) Motivating them for success/ inspiring them	5	17	22
		6) Showing affection like father or mother, seeing the student like his/her own child	13	7	20
		7) Trusting student	9	6	15
		8) Giving advice/ Advising effectively to the student	9	3	12
		9) Not offending the student	3	4	7
		10) Communication with the parents	4	3	7
Total		109	116	225	

As seen in the Table 2, the most repeated and appeared codes among the characteristics that the teachers had who were perceived as successful by their students under “showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair” subtheme were “being interested in their privacy, paying attention to their problems and helping them” (f= 40) and “being fair, not discriminating between the students” (f= 40). These two codes showed quite similar results for EMT students and PST students. According to the students’ perceptions, the main characteristic which the successful teachers had was “being interested in their privacy, paying attention to their problems and helping them”.

Statements of the students from PST department as; “He/She was always with his/her each student morally and materially.” and “I would go near him whenever I got worried, felt difficulty or got stuck in a problem.” and statement of a student from EMT department as; “If a student had a big problem, he/she would particularly talk with his/parents and do the best as much as he/she can to solve the problem” showed that the successful teachers cared about their students’ private lives and tried to solve their problems. When a comparison made between the participants’ departments in this subtheme, it was indicated that PST department students’ code was more frequent than EMT department students related with the teachers’ inspiration about success persuading the students to the success. Teachers’ showing affection to the students like fathers/mothers was stated more frequently by EMT department students than PST



department students. In the Table 3, frequencies and percentages related with the “having professional values” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under having professional values subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional attitudes and values	Having professional values	1) Loving his/her profession / not complaining about professional issues / professional commitment/ professional devotion / doing his/her job passionately	20	19	39
		2) Improving professionally	14	10	24
		3) Caring for his/her profession / being on time for work / doing the lesson in time	6	6	12
		4) Being idealist	6	4	10
		5) Being hardworking	4	-	4
		6) Being very fond of reading	-	3	3
		7) Having distinct point of views	1	-	1
Total			51	42	93

Seen in the Table 3, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “having professional values” subtheme were “loving his/her profession / not complaining about professional issues / professional commitment/ professional devotion / doing his/her job passionately” (f= 39) and “improving professionally” (f= 24). The statement by a PST student as; *“My high school teacher also impressed me in all respects and I am sure that I was not the one, he/she deeply influenced the others. He/She always said that he/she loved teaching, and this ensured the success in the profession”* showed that successful teachers loved their profession performed it passionately. The code related with the successful teachers’ being hardworking was only noted by the EMT students while the code related with the successful teachers’ being fond of reading was noted by PST students. The frequency of the code related with the teachers’ caring for his/her profession / being on time for work / doing the lesson in time was 6 and stated of the students of both departments evenly.

In the Table 4, frequencies and percentages related with the “being a positive person” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under being a positive person subtheme

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional attitudes and values	Being a positive person	1) Giving positive energy and having a smiling face	19	22	41
		2) Being warm, affectionate and friendly	16	20	36
		3) Being patient	5	10	15
		4) Being understanding, tolerant and affectionate	11	2	13
		5) Being determined and stable	-	10	10
		6) Being energetic	-	5	5
		7) Being trustable	4	-	4
		8) Being merciful	-	3	3
		9) Get the students adopt reading as a habit	-	3	3
		10) Having higher self-confidence	-	2	2
		11) Not imposing his/her philosophy of life and political view	-	1	1
		12) Being forgiving	-	1	1
Total		55	79	134	

Seen in the Table 4, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “being a positive person” subtheme were “giving positive energy and having a smiling face” (f= 41) and “being warm, affectionate and friendly” (f= 36). The statements of PST students as; *“He/She would give positive energy to everyone and sparkle since he/she was smiling, positive and funny.”* and *“In spite of his/her smiling face, intimate embracement, endless love and sincerity, her authority which she established in the classroom and his/her listening to us carefully and caring about our thoughts made me really happy.”* another statement by a EMT student as; *“Sefa teacher was really cheerful and smiling.”* were the expressions supporting that successful teachers give positive energy to the others.

It was found out that EMT students and PST students have differing views in “being a positive person” theme except for the first four codes. Considering the summation of the frequencies based on the students departments, PST students attached more importance to the behaviors related with the successful teachers’ performing positive behaviors than EMT students. In the Table 5, frequencies and percentages

related with the “Having education and knowledge on the subject” subtheme which was under “professional knowledge and skills” theme were given.

Table 5. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under having education and knowledge on the subject subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Having education and knowledge on the subject	1) Being an expert in the field	16	17	33
		2) Knowing the student, having information on the student’s psychology and behaving accordingly	8	18	26
		3) Knowing and providing student motivation	10	10	20
		4) Sharing life experiences	3	13	16
		5) Having higher general culture, giving information on general culture	4	6	10
Total			41	64	105

Seen in the Table 5, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “having education and knowledge on the subject” subtheme were “being an expert in the field” (f= 33) and “knowing the student, having information on the student’s psychology and behaving accordingly” (f= 26). A PST student’s statement as; “*My history teacher M. G. Aytekin was a really sophisticated teacher. He always improved himself and tried to learn also in the other fields.*” showed that the successful teachers were experts in their subjects. And a statement by a PST student as; “*He/She would analyze the students very well and know how to approach them.*” revealed that the teachers would know their students and have information about their psychology. It was found out that PST students attached more importance to codes such as; “knowing the student, having information on the student’s psychology and behaving accordingly” and “sharing life experiences” compared to EMT students. In the Table 6, frequencies and percentages related with the “managing classroom effectively” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 6. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under managing classroom effectively subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Managing classroom effectively	1) Disciplined/Having the authority	19	14	33
		2) Having effective communication and diction skills	11	12	23
		3) Classroom management/Keeping the class under control	9	6	15
		4) Rewarding students properly	7	1	8
		5) Making eye contact	4	2	6
		6) Starting class in a different way (reciting a poem, music etc.)	1	3	4
		7) Starting class with a conversation		2	2
		8) Using body language effectively	1		1
		9) Keeping students' names in mind (having a retentive memory)	-	1	1
Total			52	41	93

Seen in the Table 6, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “managing classroom effectively” subtheme were “disciplined/having the authority (f= 33) and “having effective communication and diction skills” (f= 23). As it might be noticed in the Table 6; considering the similarities between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> codes and analyzing these codes together, the focal points in this subtheme for the successful teachers were having authority in the classroom, maintaining discipline and controlling the classroom. The statements by EMT students as; *“I can say that he/she was really good at discipline the classroom”* and the statements by PST students as; *“We did not have such problems during Vecdi Teacher’s class. Everyone, even the naughtiest ones, would listen to him attentively. They would behave as if they had listened when they did not. Because Vecdi teacher had private relations with each of us.”* emphasized that the successful teachers maintained discipline in the classroom and had authority. In the Table 8, frequencies and percentages related with the “having the skills to teach in an enjoyable and pleasurable way” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Seen in the Table 7, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “having the skills to teach in an enjoyable and

pleasurable way” subtheme was “teaching enjoyably and wittily, telling jokes” (f= 41) and “teaching fluently and pleasurablely” (f= 14). As it might be noticed in the Table 7; considering the similarities between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> codes and analyzing these codes together, the focal points in this subtheme for the successful teachers were teaching enjoyably, wittily, fluently and pleasurablely.

Table 7. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under having the skills to teach in an enjoyable and pleasurable way subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Having the skills to teach in an enjoyable and pleasurable way	1) Teaching enjoyably and wittily, telling jokes	22	19	41
		2) Teaching fluently and pleasurablely	10	4	14
		3) Making the course attractive	5	4	9
		4) Teaching as if he was living/excitedly and eagerly	3	6	9
Total			40	33	73

The examples given by an EMT student as; “His/Her most important characteristic feature was his/her class was so fluent and pleasurable.” and PST student as; “I was impatiently waiting for the history class which I had not liked to attend before. He/She would teach history like a story, so it made the class more fluent and his/her repetition of the topic made it more recallable for me.” proved that the teachers taught their subjects fluently and enjoyably. Besides, the statement by a PST student as; “He/She would teach history as if he had experienced the adventures.” expressed that the teachers taught the subjects excitedly and lively as if they had lived the things they told. In the Table 8, frequencies and percentages related with the “using original approaches in teaching/learning process” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 8. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under using original approaches in teaching/learning process subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Using original approaches in teaching/learning process	1) Using different methods and techniques in teaching process	5	10	15
		2) Focusing on teaching except for grading	5	8	13
		3) Giving examples, relating with daily life	7	5	12
		4) Being prepared for the course	3	5	8
		5) Making logic of mathematical formulas understandable	7	-	7
		6) Teaching proper with the students' academic levels	5	2	7
		7) Doing extracurricular activities during class time	1	2	3
		8) Encouraging inoffensive competition between the students	-	3	3
		9) Relating with prior learning	1	-	1
		10) Concretizing abstract contents	1	-	1
		11) Finishing the course with a meaningful words to live by	-	1	1
		12) Teaching not only through making the students take notes	1	-	1
		13) Making the students work in groups	-	1	1
		14) Making the students take notes when necessary	-	1	1
Total		36	38	74	

Seen in the table 8, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “using original approaches in teaching/learning process” subtheme was “using different methods and techniques in teaching process” (f= 15), “focusing on teaching except for grading” (f= 13) and “giving examples, relating with daily life” (f= 12). The statements by a PST student as; “*Vecdi Teacher would give examples from daily life and that made the things more recallable.*” indicated that the successful teachers gave examples in their classes related with daily life.

The basic difference in this subtheme between EMT and PST students was that EMT students who attended a department weighed courses related with numerical

sciences during secondary education explained that the successful Math teachers pointed out logical inferences about mathematical formulas they taught. It was an interesting finding of the study that compared with EMT students PST students, who attended verbal or equally weighed departments giving less class time for Math classes, did not make any statements on logical inferences by the successful Math teachers. In the Table 9, frequencies and percentages related with the “using teaching materials effectively” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 9. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under using teaching materials effectively subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
			(f)	(f)	(f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Using teaching materials effectively	1) Using necessary and different materials for the course	8	9	17
		2) Having special materials and questions for the course and using Xeroxed course notes	4	1	5
		3) Using video clips	3	1	4
		4) Giving the student his/her own course book	-	1	1
		5) Using blackboard effectively	-	1	1
		6) Turkish teacher’s bringing different novels/storybooks for each course	-	1	1
Total		15	14	29	

Seen in the Table 9, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “using teaching materials effectively” subtheme were “using necessary and different materials for the course” (f= 17) and “having special materials and questions for the course and using Xeroxed course notes” (f= 5). It was found out in this subtheme that both EMT and PST students had similar views on the successful teachers’ skills and behaviors related with using teaching materials.

Finally, in the Table 10, frequencies and percentages related with the “using measurement and evaluation process focused” subtheme which was under “professional attitudes and values” theme were given.

Table 10. Frequencies and percentages related with the codes set under using measurement and evaluation process focused subtheme

Theme	Sub theme	Codes	EMT	PST	Total
			Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)	Frequency (f)
Professional knowledge and skills	Using measurement and evaluation process focused	1) Solving question during the class	11	4	15
		2) Checking homework regularly and giving feedback	5	2	7
		3) Finishing the course with short reviews and asking evaluation questions	-	5	5
		4) Giving high marks by asking simple questions	1	-	1
		5) Asking intermediate level questions	1	-	1
		6) Asking hard questions	1	-	1
Total			19	11	30

Seen in the Table 10, of the characteristics which the students saw in successful teachers the most repeated codes under “using measurement and evaluation process focused” subtheme were “solving question during the class” (f= 15) and “checking homework regularly and giving feedback” (f= 7). A statement by an EMT student as; *“He/She always walked in the classroom and asked us questions.”* showed that the successful teachers made their students solve problems during class time. In this subtheme, PST students had the perception about the successful teachers that some of those teachers finished their course with short reviews, while EMT students underlined the features of the exams determining their success or failure in the class. Furthermore, EMT students restated that the successful teachers solved more questions during the class.

### 3. Conclusion and Discussion

As the result of the analysis, three diverse subthemes were found under “professional attitudes and values” theme; and six subthemes were found under “professional knowledge and skills” theme. The students were required to describe three successful teachers at most who they met during their academic life at primary or secondary schools. Within the scope, the students from EMT department gave information on 2.3 teachers, PST department students gave information on 1.44 teachers on the average. Considering 12-year-education periods of the students from both of the departments and considering the number of the teachers who taught them were



approximate, one of the interesting and expected results of the study was that EMT students who got higher scores from university entrance exams described more successful teachers in terms of number and ratio. PST department students who were placed to university with relatively low exam scores described fewer successful teachers in terms of number and ratio. In this context, the students' performances from standardized achievement tests highly used to reflect the quality of their educational background as stated in the related literature (Ballard & Bates, 2008, 560). In the study carried out by Opdenakker and Damme (2006) titled "Teacher characteristics and teaching styles as effectiveness enhancing factors of classroom practice", it was asserted that teachers' characteristics and teaching styles could be the factors increasing efficiency in classroom practices. Teachers have powerful influence on their students, they are the ones to define their students' learning, what and how they learn. Additionally, teacher quality is one of the basic elements and important determinants of students' academic success (İlğan, 2014). Especially good teachers have control over their classrooms. They are fair, helpful to their students, kind and respectful (Murphy et al., 2004). Harslett et al (2000) stated that teachers' skills of motivating, encouragement, being tolerant, caring for their students always inspire them, provide positive educational experiences and this would contribute to their prospective future success in their lives. The other way round, if teachers are not able to provide these positive experiences, schools would be negative and useless for their students.

Analyzing the subjects of the successful teachers who impressed EMT students in their lives, more than half of the subjects were seen to be Math and Science, one third of these successful teachers' subjects were found out to be Math. It was one of the expected findings of the study that EMT students who generally took courses related with numerical sciences perceived the Math teachers as the examples of the successful teachers, this might influence their preferences at university in terms of the department to get higher education. It was seen that teachers whose subjects were Social Sciences, Turkish and Turkish Language and Literature were perceived as successful teachers by PST students who were the other participant group of the study. It could also be regarded as another expected finding of the study that PST students who studied at a kind of verbal sciences field perceived the teachers who taught generally verbal sciences and saw them as examples. The reason why EMT students regarded mostly their Math teachers from high schools and PST students regarded mostly their Turkish language and Literature teachers as more successful ones could be those students' taking such courses more intensively in terms of their weekly schedules at high schools. Teachers' behaviors are influential on students' interest in the course. If teachers' behaviors bring about some kind of decrease in students' expectation of success, students will not be influenced by teaching process and they will mentally drift away from the course in time. On the other hand, teachers' valuing the students who take a course, caring about them and allocating time for them might increase students' interest in the course, students consciously and

consistently study to be successful in that course (Tella, 2008). Increasing the time allocated for teaching is another effective variable on students' academic success rates since it includes possibilities of increasing students' academic performances (Lezotte, 2010). The teachers' effective behaviors, allocating longer period of time for the mentioned courses and using the time sufficiently might be influential on the students' perceptions about those teachers. Besides, another interesting and different finding of the study was the students' definitions about the teachers who was working at private teaching institutions where the students attended to be prepared for the university entrance exams. Within the scope of the study, EMT students gave information on 6 teachers (6.5%) while PST students gave information on 13 teachers (14.5%). It is noticeable that PST students described more successful teachers working at private teaching institutions compared to EMT students. Considering these private institutions give courses to prepare students university entrance exams and earn money in return, higher performance from the teachers working at such institutions is an expected outcome. In the previous it was found out that the teachers working at private teaching institutions compared to the ones working at public schools are expected to show higher performance and the teachers at private institutions improve their performance accordingly to fulfill the expectations (Podgursky & Springer, 2007). The students' definition of the teachers working at private teaching institutions as successful ones instead of public school teachers might be due to the fact that those teachers make an effort to meet the expectations for higher performance.

Regarding the professional seniorities of the successful teachers, the number of the teachers with professional seniorities lower than five years were regarded as the successful teachers less frequently but the frequency of the remaining groups' seniorities were similar. Besides, it was seen that there were not any significant differences between EMT and PST students in terms of the seniorities of the successful teachers described by them. In some of the previous studies (Burroughs et al., 2019; Ladd & Sorenson, 2017), it was revealed that the increase in the teachers' seniorities would positively influence their professional performance and success rates. On the other hand, it might be stressed that influence of the teachers with lower seniority levels on students is rather limited (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Based on the findings it was appeared that caring for each student, allocating time for each student outside regular course time, not discriminating between the students and being fair were of the leading characteristic features of the successful teachers. Similarly, in the studies carried out on characteristics of effective teachers there were prominent findings related with such characteristics like; showing special interest in the students, spending time with the students outside class time (Stronge, 2007) and not discriminating between students and being fair (Lupascu et al., 2014; Stronge, 2007). It might be asserted that the findings of the study was consistent with the related literature.

As for the least frequently coded themes; these codes were seen to be “using teaching materials effectively” (f= 29) and “using measurement and evaluation process focused” (f= 30). These findings might be interpreted as the successful teachers did not frequently use teaching materials or if they used those materials, they did not catch the students’ attention. Moreover, it might be claimed that the frequency of the process focused measurement and evaluation activities was less often and the students’ level of awareness was low concerning the teachers’ exam questions or they did not have the chance to observe their teachers’ performance related with this theme. At the same time it might be remarked that the teachers’ qualifications regarding process focused measurement and evaluation (Benzehaf, 2017) and using teaching materials effectively might be poor (Mupa & Isaac, 2015) and all these poor conditions could lead to such a conclusion.

Taking all the codes analyzed in the study into consideration, the codes related with the successful teachers’ characteristics with 20 or above frequencies were: “giving positive energy and having a smiling face” (f= 41), “teaching enjoyably and wittily, telling jokes” (f= 41), “Being interested in their privacy, paying attention to their problems and helping them” (f= 40), “loving his/her profession / not complaining about professional issues / professional commitment/ professional devotion / doing his/her job passionately” (f= 39), “being warm, affectionate and friendly” (f= 36), caring for each student, valuing them, encouraging them to participate” (f= 34), “being an expert in the field” (f= 33), “allocating time for the students outside regular course time, replying their questions” (f= 28), “knowing the student, having information on the student’s psychology and behaving accordingly” (f= 26), “improving professionally” (f= 24), “having effective communication and diction skills” (f= 23), “motivating them for success/ inspiring them” (f=22), “showing affection like father or mother, seeing the student like his/her own child” (f= 20) and “knowing and providing student motivation” (f= 20).

Reviewing the related literature, there are studies on the successful and effective teachers’ characteristics like: giving positive energy to the students and having a smiling face (Ansari & Malik, 2013), caring about students’ private lives, being fair towards students, not discriminating between students (Lupascu et al., 2014; Toraman, 2019), loving teaching profession, being devoted to the profession, doing the profession with passion (Fogelgarn & Burns, 2020), being warm, affectionate and friendly (Lupascu et al., 2014), caring about each students, valuing the students, stimulating the students for participation (Aktan et al., 2021; Chen & Lin, 2009), being an expert in the field (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), being disciplined and having authority (Stronge, 2007), spending time with the students outside class time, solving their problems (Stronge, 2007), knowing the students and being informed about their psychology (Kim et al., 2019), providing self-professional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Stronge, 2007), having effective communication and diction skills (Sieberer-Nagler, 2016), making the students believe in the success, inspiring them for success (Lupascu et al., 2014),

approaching to the students affectionately and accepting them like his/her own child (Blazar & Kraft, 2017), knowing about the student motivation and motivating the students (Hornstra et al., 2018). The students' definitions about successful and effective teachers' behaviors and characteristics based on the experiences related with their background education were similar to the ones mentioned in the related literature and the findings of the previous studies. Furthermore, the teacher behaviors described by the students involved professional knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which formed qualifications of teaching profession.

## **5. Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study;

- 1) Policies might be developed to increase teacher performance and success, to encourage them to have academic career and to increase the number of perfect teachers.
- 2) Regulations might be made to provide the students to be taught at least a perfect teacher throughout their 12-year-compulsory-education.
- 3) It is suggested that professional attitudes and values should be of the criteria while the students' admissions to education faculties and could be included in pre-service and in-service trainings.
- 4) Nine subthemes were set within the scope of the study and the most repeated one was "showing private interest in the students, spending time with them and being fair". Therefore, arrangements could be suggested to provide teachers' to show private interest in students, allocate time for them and listen to their problems outside regular class time.
- 5) Based on the most repeated codes set in this study, teachers could be suggested to:
  - Be positive and smiling during class time,
  - Teach their subjects pleurably, wittily and tell jokes etc. when students' lose their concentrations,  
Be fair to their students, not discriminate between them,
  - Love his/her job and do it with passion,
  - Have warm, kind relations with their students and be friendly,
  - Be experts in their subjects,
  - Be successful in classroom management (discipline, class control).

## **6. Limitations**

The existing study which considered the views of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students of education faculty, carried out based on their experiences at elementary and secondary schools and

tried to determine characteristic features of successful and effective teachers was limited with the findings reached through using phenomenological design of qualitative research. The study group was limited with 1<sup>st</sup> graders from two departments of education faculty. Another limitation was using only qualitative data collection instruments and not being able to provide data diversity.

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