

The Good Teacher from the Students’ Perspective: Investigation of the Views of Junior and General Senior High School Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the views of students regarding the characteristics of a good teacher, focusing on two dimensions, their work and their personality. Initially, a theoretical approach to the subject is made, giving importance to the role of the good teacher and, in particular, to the teaching, pedagogical and evaluative dimensions of their work, as well as to their personality, all of which contribute to the formation of students’ views on the good teacher. Afterwards, the methodology for investigating the subject is described. The research, which meets the criteria of reliability and validity, was conducted with the participation of students from the Junior High Schools and General Senior High Schools in Epirus Region, Greece. The findings are very interesting, especially those concerning students’ opinions on the ability of a good teacher to organize pedagogical communication with students and the teaching-learning process, to shape a pedagogical climate, to manage discipline in the classroom and to evaluate students’ performance.

Keywords: good teacher, student opinions, Junior High Schools, General Senior High Schools.

1. Introduction

It is commonly accepted that school constitutes a social institution and pedagogical organization, which has a defined structure, function and purposes. Furthermore, with its pedagogical and social mission, it contributes to the formation of a complete student personality in terms of communication and practice, in order for them to regulate and resolve personal and social issues rationally and effectively, without frustrating their expectations, as well as to the students’ smooth integration into society. Under this perception, the school performs the pedagogical – socializing, learning, evaluative and supervisory function and, subsequently, in case it achieves its mission, it is characterized as good and effective (Konstantinou, 2015).

In this direction, the teacher plays a leading role and is responsible for implementing the school’s mission. This means that the teacher performs the pedagogical and social functions of the school, namely of education, teaching, learning, evaluation and socialization. Therefore, the teacher assumes the individual roles that derive from these functions, namely that of the educator, teacher and evaluator (Konstantinou, 2015: 129). Undoubtedly, the work of the teacher is complex and intricate, as, in addition to their pedagogical and teaching responsibilities, they undertake to

carry out administrative and bureaucratic procedures, while often receiving pressure in order to meet the expectations of social groups, which change according to socio-economic, political, cultural, scientific and technological developments (Konstantinou, 2015: 122).

- Focusing on the pedagogical role of the good teacher.
- Recognition of the importance of the teaching skills of a good teacher for effective teaching.
- Formation of a positive pedagogical climate by the good teacher.
- Development of good relations between the good teacher and the students and pedagogical management of the classroom.
- Anti-authoritarianism, impartiality and fairness of a good teacher.

Consequently, a requirement of today's effective school is a good teacher who responds successfully and effectively both to the individual roles related to the dimensions of their work and to the social demands and expectations. At the same time, students expect to have a good teacher in their classroom, capable of adapting to the constantly changing social needs and demands, one who will contribute substantially to their education, teaching and socialization, in order for them to form a complete personality and professional identity, skilled enough to integrate into the social system.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the characteristics of a good teacher from the perspective of Secondary Education students and, in particular, Junior High School and General Senior High School students, which contribute to the quality of the provided education and, more specifically, to the successful academic learning, education and progress of students.

2. The good teacher

We start by defining and clarifying the meaning of a “good teacher”. In the present study the term a “good teacher” is perceived as a broader term, which incorporates the concept of an “effective teacher” and refers to the general concept of a positive image of a person. From this perspective, both subjective and objective criteria are included, which concern the effectiveness of the teacher regarding the mission and the roles that are performed. This means that we are referring to both the moralistic characteristics of the teacher and the teachers' effect on the cognitive, social, psycho-emotional development of students. In another wording, the "good teacher" effectively fulfills their pedagogical and social mission, which is inextricably intertwined with the processes of education, learning, evaluation and socialization and, therefore, effectively carries out their goals as a “good educator”, a “good teacher” and a “good evaluator” (Konstantinou, 2015).

The practices used by a good teacher in the pedagogical communication with their students play a decisive role in shaping the student’s behavior and, more broadly, their personality (Konstantinou, 2015; Konstantinou & Logothetis, 2022). Also, a good teacher is dedicated to pedagogical principles and methods, respects the student and seeks to achieve educational goals, acknowledging that they have a decisive effect on the formation of the student’s perceptions, attitudes, practices, expectations (Konstantinou, 2015: 109; Liakopoulou, 2020). Therefore, a “good teacher” is the one who contributes to the psychosocial development of the child, promotes their cognitive functions, teaches the lessons correctly and helps them to succeed in the exams (Fontana, 1995: 451-425).

Summarizing the research data, the characteristics of a good teacher in terms of the teaching, pedagogical and evaluative dimensions of their work, as well as their personality are (Kassotakis & Flouris, 2006; Konstantinou & Konstantinou, 2021; Konstantinou, 2015: 142-144-

Liakopoulou, 2020; McKnight et al., 2016; Brouzos, 2009; Xochellis, 2015; Raufelder et al., 2016; Trilianos, 2013; Whitaker, 2013):

- Respects the needs, interests and peculiarities of the student, when teaching, when educating, when evaluating, when communicating with the student.
- Develops a relationship of trust with the student.
- Strengthens their responsibility and autonomy.
- Delimits the student's behavior with rules that are co-shaped.
- Effectively organizes, from a methodological point of view, the teaching and learning process.
- Organizes educational communication and relationship with students.
- Evaluates the student with pedagogically appropriate practices, provides feedback in order to improve the students.
- Encourages and activates the student in the educational process.
- Avoids stigmatizing and insulting the student.
- Sets aside listening time for the student.
- Has empathy.
- Is characterized by enthusiasm, self-control, justice, equality, reliability, consistency, meekness, patience, composure, affability, confidentiality, honesty.
- Is friendly, flexible, pleasant, optimistic, kind and has a sense of humor.
- Finally, respects the personality of the student and, above all, serves the learning, educational and, in general, the pedagogical and social interests of the student.

3. Research purpose and methodology: Questionnaire

As mentioned above in the introductory part, the purpose of this specific research is to explore the views of Junior High School and General Senior High School students regarding the characteristics of a good teacher, focusing on their work and personality.

The present research was conducted in Junior High Schools and General Senior High Schools of Epirus Region (Prefectures of Arta, Thesprotia, Ioannina, Preveza). For the needs of the research, the multi-stage stratified sampling was chosen, which constitutes the most appropriate method of data collection and, at the same time, ensures the representativeness of the sample with respect to the general population. The sample size (N=1,017 students) is large and the conclusions that have been drawn can be generalized to the general population, as the sample is representative of the general population, which makes both the research and pedagogical value of the findings calculable and recognizable. We point out that the innovation of this specific research lies in the fact that the good teacher is researched in an up-to-date manner, as there is a relative lack of relevant recent-contemporary research in Greece at the level of Secondary Education, and takes into consideration the existing changes at the scientific, economic, technological, political and social levels. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions on a four-point Likert scale and was distributed in printed form during the period October 2023 to January 2024, after a pilot application was carried out on ten (10) Junior High School students and ten (10) General Senior High School students of Epirus Educational Region, in order to shape its final form. Filling in the questionnaire took approximately fifteen (15) minutes and was done in the presence of the researcher to clarify any questions the students had.

3.1 Statistical testing: Validity and reliability of research

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire we used the relevant theories that define the concept and characteristics of a good teacher. Also, the pilot application of the questionnaire further enhanced its validity.

For the reliability of the questionnaire, an internal consistency check was performed and the coherence or correlation of the questions was examined both among themselves and in relation to the subject of our research. The internal coherence and reliability of the questionnaire used in this study was evaluated by calculating the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient, which is greater than 0.7 and, specifically, its value is 0.923. Therefore, this value indicates a very high level of internal coherence and reliability of the questionnaire, which ensures the validity of the data, allowing the extraction of reliable and valid research results. Also, both the statistical analysis and processing of the research data were carried out with the SPSS statistical package.

Subsequently, by using inductive statistics techniques, appropriate statistical tests were conducted for equality of position and dispersion parameters, in order to examine statistically significant differences in students’ responses based on demographic variables. The results of the above tests revealed the essential conclusions of the present study, highlighting new aspects regarding students’ views on the good teacher they want to have in their classroom, concerning teaching, pedagogical behavior, evaluation of students’ performance and teacher personality.

As a first step, a statistical test was performed to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in the responses of the students who participated in this study based on gender, using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. From this test, we found out that there is a statistically significant difference between the views of girls and boys on the following five (5) variables: “The behavior of the good teacher affects you in terms of your performance in the lessons”, “The teacher adapts teaching to the needs and level of students”, “The teacher has educational and teaching experience”, “The teacher is discreet”, “The teacher is calm and patient”. This specific statistical test revealed that the views of girls on the above responses statistically outweigh those of boys, i.e. girls agree more with these specific characteristics of a “good teacher”.

As a second control step, we examined whether there is a statistically significant difference between the students’ responses based on the type of school (Junior High School and General Senior High School), using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test. From this test, we found out that there is a statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in the opinions between Junior High School and General Senior High School students on five (5) variables. Specifically, in the following three (3) variables: “Uses a variety of methods and new technologies in teaching”, “Adapts teaching to the needs and level of students”, “Promotes teamwork and cooperation among students”, General Senior High School students agree more with the above characteristics of a “good teacher” compared to Junior High School students. On the contrary, in the following two (2) variables: “Prevents loss of teaching time and minimizes disruptions to the lesson”, “Behaves harshly towards repeatedly unprepared and indifferent students”, it was shown that General Senior High School students give less importance to these specific characteristics of a “good teacher”, i.e. the opinions of Junior High School students on the above two (2) variables are statistically higher than the opinions of General Senior High students.

Furthermore, as a third control step, we examined whether there was a statistically significant difference ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in the responses of the participants in this study, according to the urbanity of the school, based on two groups, urban and semi-urban schools, using the Mann-Whitney U test. From the audit, we found out that there is a statistically significant difference in the opinions between students from urban and semi-urban schools on the following six (6) variables: “The one who knows how to properly evaluate their students”, “Evaluates fairly,

objectively and, in general, correctly”, “Is a good listener and takes the time to listen to students”, “Has empathy”, “Creates a climate of cooperation and mutual communication”, “Behaves without discrimination and prejudice”. This specific statistical audit revealed that the students’ responses from urban schools to the above six (6) variables statistically outweigh the responses of students from semi-urban schools, that is, students from urban schools attach greater importance to the specific six (6) characteristics of a “good teacher” compared to students from semi-urban schools.

Additionally, as a fourth control step, we examined whether there was a statistically significant difference in students’ responses based on the previous year’s performance grade (“excellent”, “very good”, “good”, “almost good”), using the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test. From the audit, we found out that there is a statistically significant difference in the students’ responses based on the previous year’s performance grade in the following ten (10) variables: “The one who knows how to properly evaluate the students”, “The behavior of a good teacher affects your performance in class”, “A good teacher contributes to the transmission and acquisition of knowledge”, “Knows their lessons’ material”, “Takes the time to ask questions during class”, “Dedicates time for recapitulation at the end of the lesson”, “Implements the rules of behavior and operation of the classroom and the school fairly and consistently”, “They are strict when someone misbehaves”, “Properly informs parents about students’ performance”, “Seeks cooperation with parents and communicates with them when necessary”. Then, in order to distinguish among which pairs there is a statistically significant difference in the above ten (10) variables, we proceeded to a Bonferroni correction of the variables. Thus, in the above variables, a statistically significant difference was observed in the responses between students with grade “excellent” and grade “good”. Specifically, students with high performance, with grade “excellent”, evaluate these ten (10) variables higher in relation to students with lower performance, with grade “good”.

4. Overview of research findings

4.1 Demographics

This study involved 1017 students from the Junior High School and General Senior High School of Epirus Region (N=1,017). Specifically, 457 boys and 560 girls participated, representing 44.94% and 55.06% of the sample respectively. Also, the percentage representation of students in the Junior High School was 56.93% and in the General Senior High 43.07%. Furthermore, regarding the class of the participants, it is observed that the percentage of students in each of the three classes of the Junior High School and the three classes of the General Senior High School is approximately the same. Additionally, 58.7% of the students attended an urban school, while 41.3% attended a semi-urban school. Finally, regarding the participants’ performance grade in the previous class, the majority of students had an “excellent” grade (55.95%), a smaller percentage (32.55%) had a “very good” grade, while a few (9.93%) had a “good” grade and very few (1.57%) had an “almost good” grade.

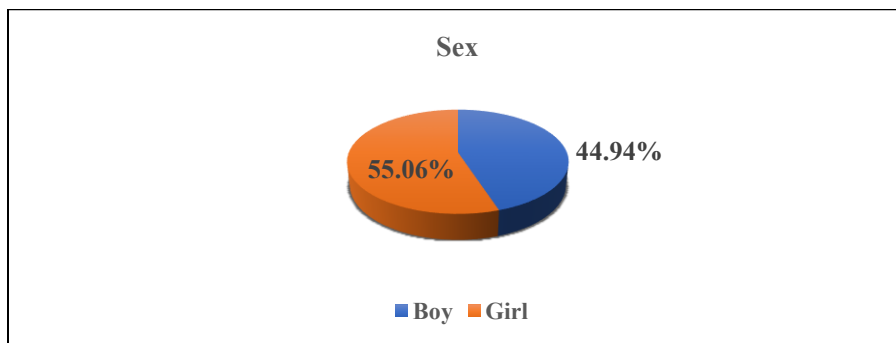


Figure 1. Sex of participants

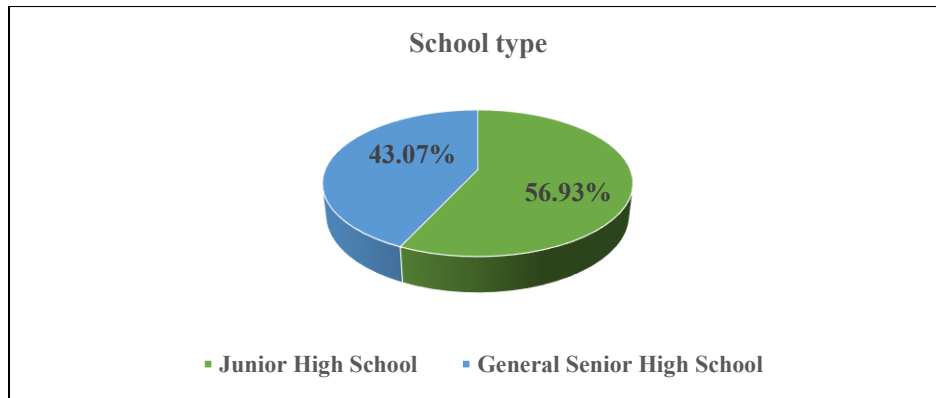


Figure 2. School type of participants

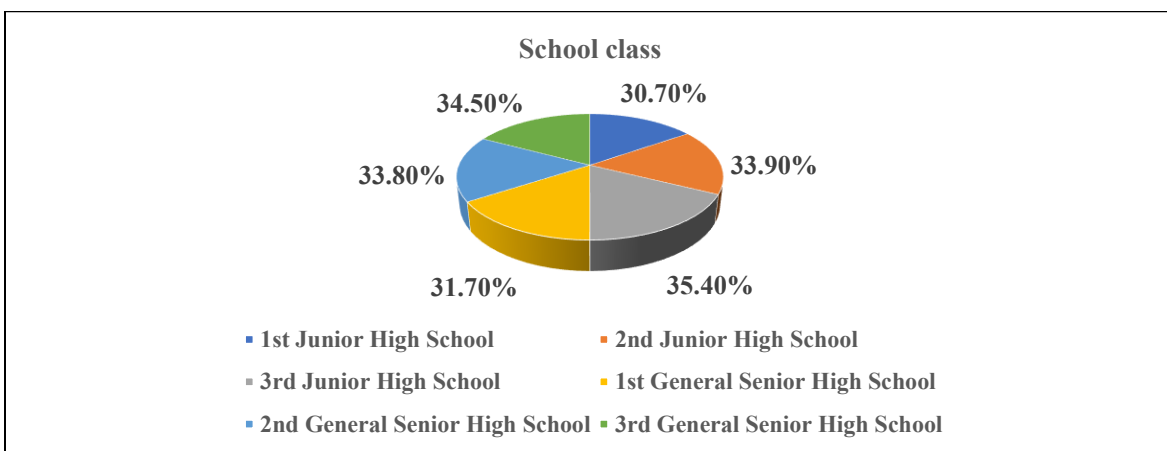


Figure 3. School class of participants

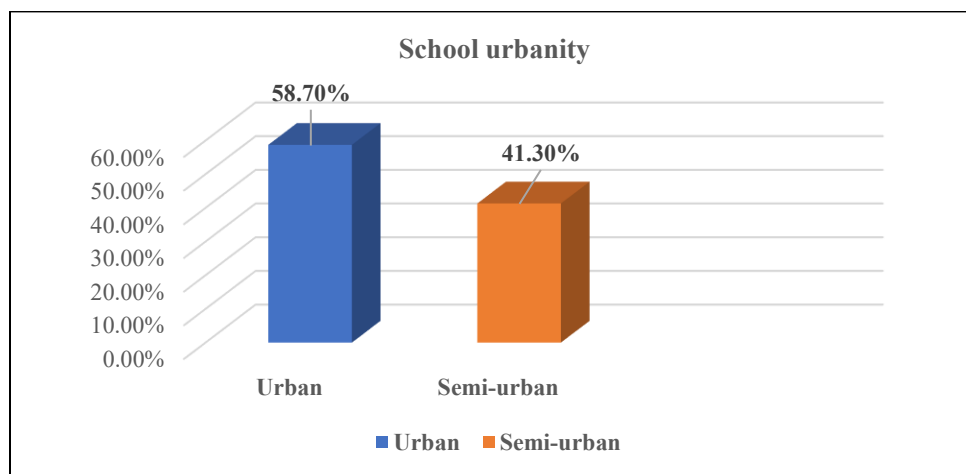


Figure 4. School urbanity of participants

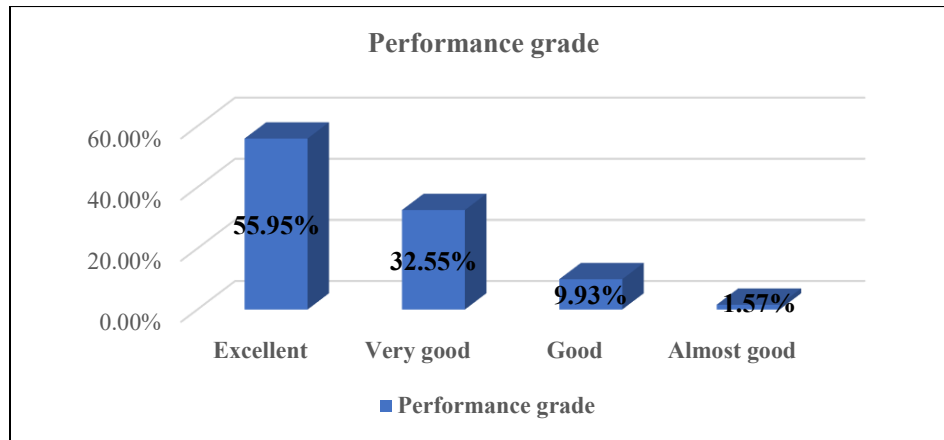


Figure 5. Performance grade of participants

4.2 Students' views on the good teacher

In the presentation of the research findings, we will structure the subsections based on the characteristics of the concept of a “good teacher” as well as the individual dimensions of the work of a good teacher, selectively presenting the most important findings.

4.2.1 Characteristics of the concept of a “good teacher”

As can be seen from the graph, regarding the concept of a “good teacher”, the majority of students rank the variable “The one who behaves correctly towards the students, that is, communicates correctly and develops a good relationship with the students” as their first preference at a very high percentage (78.56%), followed, in descending order, by a 11.90% of students who rank it as their second preference, a 6.88% as their third preference and a 2.65% as their fourth preference. Next, they rank the variable “The one who knows how to teach their lessons well” as their second preference, at a percentage of 53.69%, followed, in descending order, by a 21.73%, who rank it as their third preference, a 13.37% as their first preference, and a 11.21% as their fourth preference. Subsequently, the variable “The one who knows how to properly evaluate their students” occupies the third preference in the choices of most students, at a percentage of 46.02%, while it is followed, in descending order, by a 32.74% who rank it as their fourth preference, a 17.90% as their second preference, and finally, a 3.34% as their first preference. Finally, most students rank the variable “The one who is distinguished by their correct and balanced personality” as their fourth preference, at a 53.39%, followed, in descending order, by a 25.76% who classify it as their third preference, a 16.62% as their second preference, and a 4.23% as their first preference.

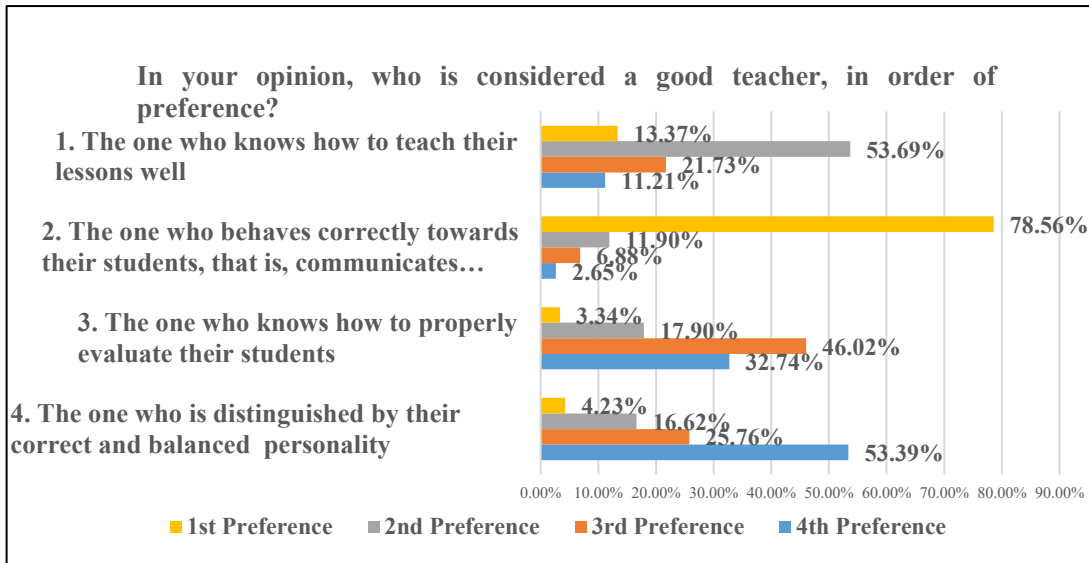


Figure 6.

4.2.2 Dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to their teaching skills and abilities for effective teaching

Regarding the question of who is the good teacher the students would like to have teaching subjects in their classroom, the following opinions of the students in the sample emerge.

Regarding the variable “Knows the material of their lessons”, the majority of students gave importance to the rating “enough” (46.31%), followed by an almost equivalent percentage of students (45.13%) who agreed “much”. There follow the ratings “a little” (8.36%) and “not at all” (0.20%).

Similarly, the participants’ responses to the variable “Knows the objectives of the lessons” are distributed as follows: most students (48.57%) expressed a preference for “enough”, followed by an equally significant percentage (40.02%) who answered “much”. There follows a smaller percentage (10.91%) with the option “a little” and, finally, the option “not at all” (0.49%).

On the contrary, in the next variable “Teaches the lesson in a pleasant way”, the vast majority of students, at a very high rate (79.35%), gave importance to the rating “much”, while a smaller percentage (17.99%) chose the rating “enough”. A small percentage of participants answered “a little” (2.46%) and “not at all” (0.20%).

Subsequently, the variable “Teaches the lesson in a transmissive manner” emerges as the most prevalent choice of students, as a very large percentage (70.60%) expressed a preference for “much”, followed by a smaller percentage (27.04%) who answered “enough”. This is followed by the option “a little” with a minimum percentage (2.36%), while the option “not at all” shows zero frequency.

Similarly, in the variable “Teaches the lesson in an understandable way”, a very high percentage (77.29%) of the participants said “much”, followed, in descending order, by a considerably smaller percentage (21.73%) who answered “enough”. A minimal percentage (0.98%) said “a little”, while no one has chosen the rating “at all”.

Finally, in the variable “Teaches their lesson effectively/properly”, a high percentage (64.11%) gave importance to the rating “much”, while there follows, in descending order, a smaller percentage (34.22%) who stated “enough”. Few answered “a little” (1.47%) and “not at all” (0.20%).

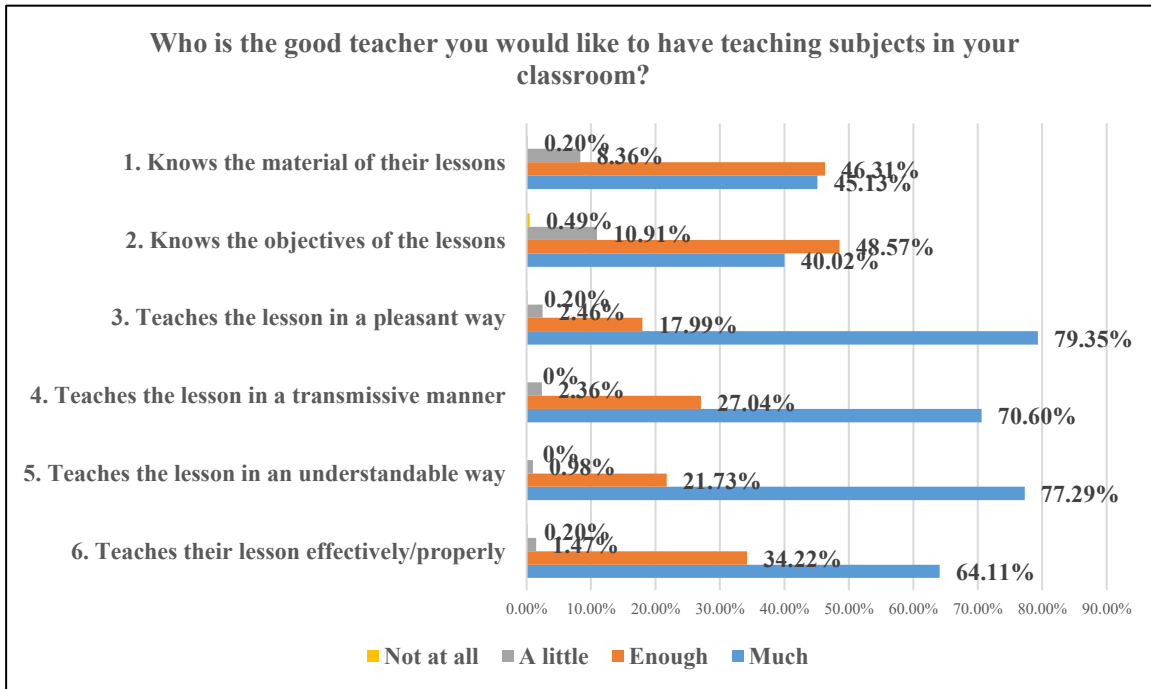


Figure 7. Teaching abilities and skills of a good teacher

4.2.3 Dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to their pedagogical skills and abilities

Subsequently, the views of the students were investigated, regarding the dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to their pedagogical skills and abilities. In particular, the dimensions of the pedagogical role of the good teacher were investigated depending on the importance they give to pedagogical communication with students, the positive pedagogical climate of the classroom, the development of good relationships with students and the pedagogical management of discipline. The central question for all the following subsections is: who is the teacher that students would like to have in their classroom in relation to their pedagogical behavior.

4.2.3.1 Pedagogical communication with students

As can be seen in the graph below, the most important characteristics that students want a good teacher to have in the classroom regarding the teachers’ pedagogical behavior and, in particular, regarding the importance that the teacher gives to pedagogical communication with students, are the following.

Regarding the variable “Respects the personality of students”, the vast majority of participants, at a very high percentage (72.76%), gave importance to the rating “much”, followed, in descending order, by a smaller percentage (26.84%) who agreed “enough”. The percentages of students who chose the ratings “a little” (0.29%) and “not at all” (0.10%) are negligible.

Subsequently, in the variable “Is a good listener and takes the time to listen to students”, just over half of the participants (58.21%) agreed “much”, while a smaller percentage (35.69%) “enough”. This is followed by the options “a little” (5.90%) and “not at all” (0.20%).

Similarly, regarding the variable “Has empathy”, a clearly large percentage (65.29%) attached importance to the rating “much”, while, with a significant difference, a smaller percentage (28.22%) chose the category “enough”. There follow the ratings “a little” (5.90%) and “not at all” (0.59%).

Next, regarding the variable “Accepts students with their unique characteristics”, the answers of the participants are classified as follows: the option “much” is the most prevalent at a high percentage (64.90%), followed, in descending order, by the option “enough” (29.89%), and, next, by the options “a little” (5.11%) and “not at all” (0.10%).

Similarly, in the variable “Is honest”, most of the participants, at a remarkable percentage (56.24%), expressed a similar preference and, in particular, chose the rating “much”, a smaller percentage (35.10%) said “enough”, while the rest answered “a little” (8.36%) and “not at all” (0.29%).

Finally, the vast majority of participants, at an extremely high rate (80.63%), agreed “much” with the variable “Avoids stigmatizing and insulting students”, while a much smaller percentage (16.72%) answered “enough”. There follow, in minimal percentages, the options “a little” (2.26%) and “not at all” (0.39%).

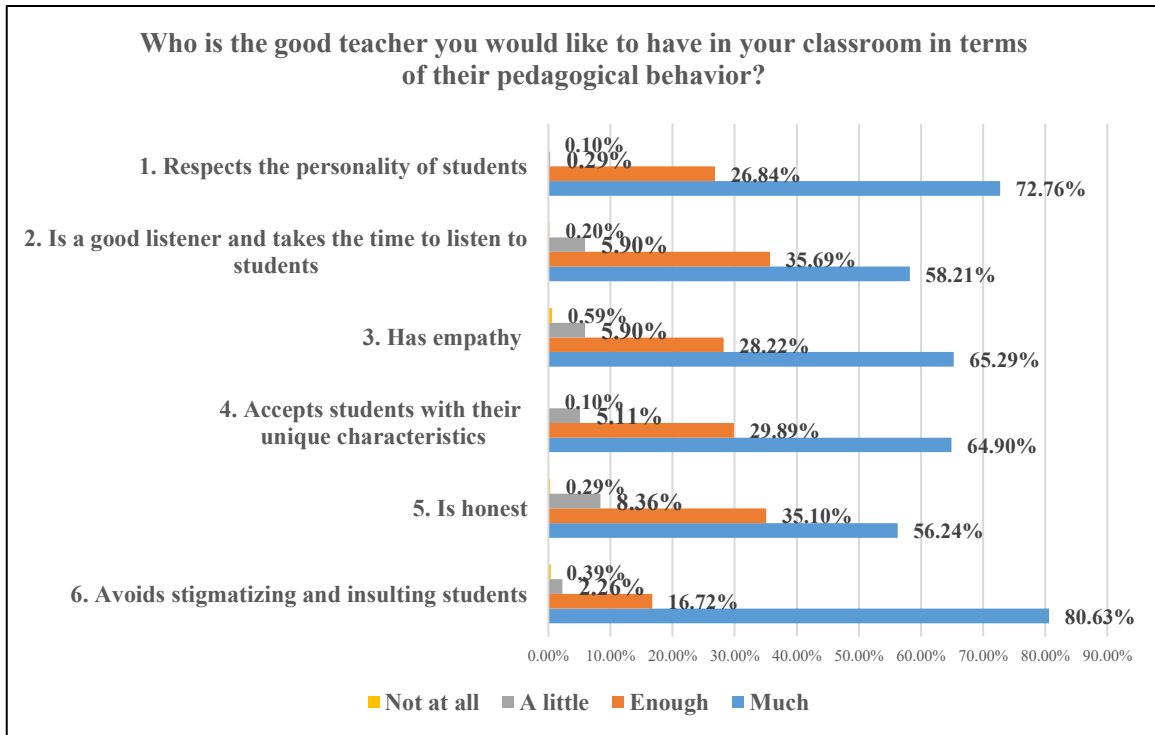


Figure 8. Pedagogical communication of a good teacher with students

4.2.3.2 Positive pedagogical climate in the classroom

As can be seen in the following graph, the most important characteristics that students want a good teacher to have in the classroom in relation to his/her pedagogical behavior and, in particular, in relation to the importance the teacher gives to the positive pedagogical climate of the classroom are the following.

Regarding the variable “Creates a pleasant atmosphere during the lesson”, we found out that the majority of participants, at a very high percentage (68.93%), agreed “much”, followed, in descending order, by a clearly smaller percentage of students (29.11%) who stated “enough”. Very few students chose the rating “a little” (1.97%), while the option “not at all” is zero.

Subsequently, the answers of the participants regarding the variable “Develops a friendly and familiar atmosphere and students feel comfortable in the classroom” are distributed as follows: the majority of the participants, at a very large percentage (69.22%), gave weight to the rating “much”, while there follows, in descending order, a smaller percentage (30.19%) who answered “enough”. There follow the options “a little” (0.49%) and “not at all” (0.1%).

Next, regarding the variable “Makes jokes and has a sense of humor”, the answers of the participants are classified as follows: the most prevalent, with a high percentage (62.93%), is the choice “much”, followed, in descending order, by the choice “enough” (29.11%) and the options “a little” (7.18%) and “not at all” (0.79%).

Finally, in the variable “Behaves without discrimination and prejudice”, the vast majority of participants, at a very high rate (75.32%), expressed a similar preference and, in particular, agreed “much”, followed, in descending order, by a much smaller percentage (22.03%) who answered “enough”. Next are the options “a little” (2.26%) and “not at all” (0.39%).

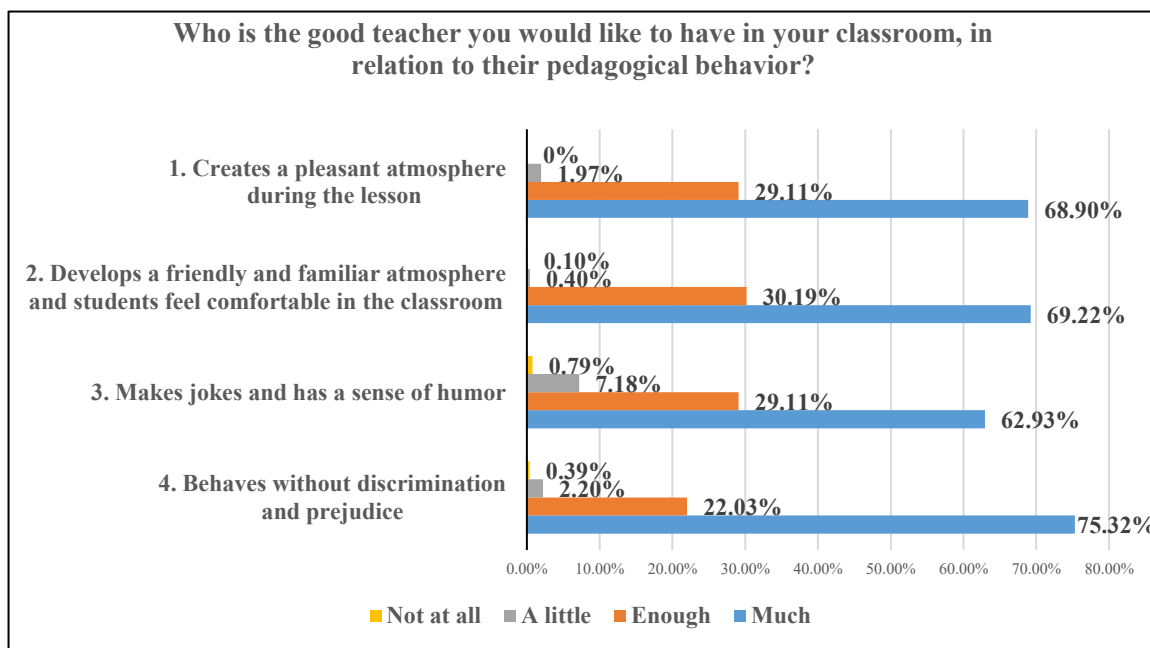


Figure 9. Formation of a positive pedagogical climate in the classroom by the good teacher

4.2.3.3 Developing good relationships with students

Regarding the characteristics students want a good teacher to have in the classroom in relation to their pedagogical behavior and, in particular, in relation to the importance the teacher gives to the development of good relationships with students, the following emerge as the most important, as can be seen in the graph below.

We notice that, regarding the variable “Is approachable/friendly and polite”, the vast majority of participants, at a very large percentage (71.88%), gave weight to the rating “much”, followed, in descending order, by a smaller percentage (26.65%) who chose the rating “enough”. Few of the respondents said “a little” (1.18%) and “not at all” (0.29%).

Similarly, regarding the variable “Respects the needs, interests and peculiarities of students”, the choice “much” is the most prevalent, at a high percentage (65.29%), followed by the option “enough” at a smaller percentage (33.33%), and then by the option “a little” at a minimal percentage (1.38%). Finally, the rating “not at all” was not preferred by anyone.

A similar preference was expressed by the majority of participants (63.32%) who agreed “much” with the variable “Develops trusting relationships with students”, followed by a smaller percentage (33.33%) who stated “enough” and a minimal percentage (3.34%) who answered “a little”. Notably, the “not at all” option is zero.

Finally, the vast majority of participants, at an extremely large percentage (82.10%), gave weight to the rating “not at all” regarding the variable “Does not accept criticism from students, considering themselves an authority”, while a much smaller percentage (10.82%) stated “a little”. Few chose the options “enough” (4.03%) and “much” (3.05%).

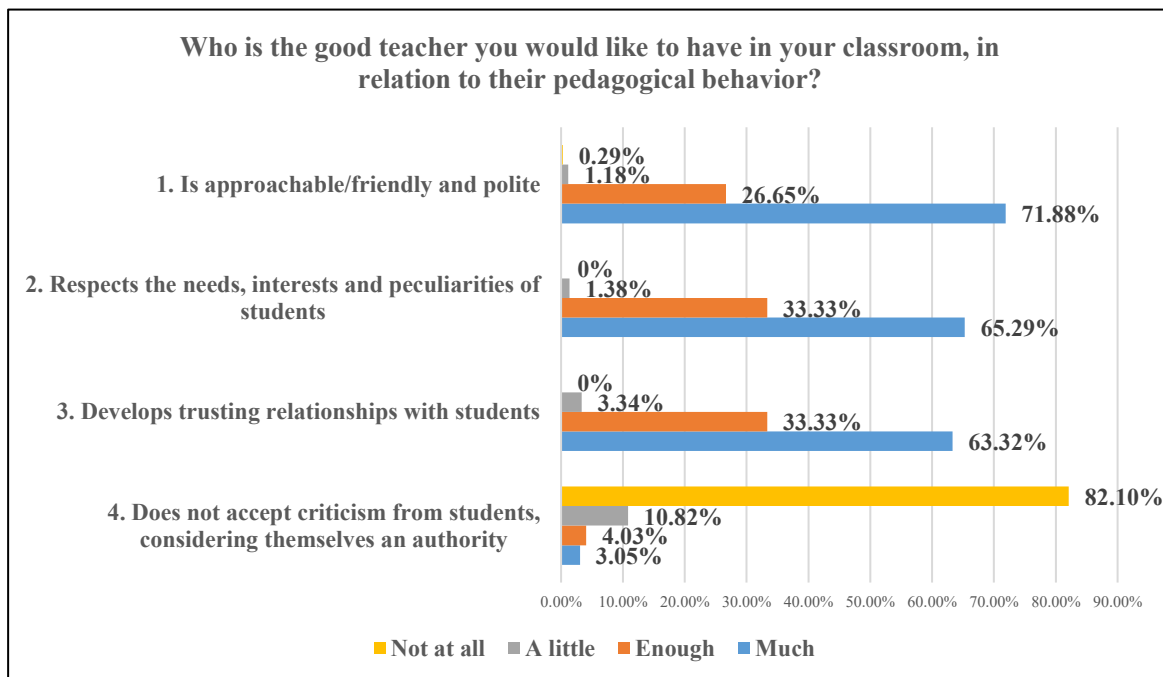


Figure 10. Developing good teacher-student relationships

4.2.3.4 Pedagogical management of discipline

Regarding the characteristics of the good teacher students want to have in the classroom in relation to their pedagogical behavior and, in particular, in relation to the importance the teacher gives to the pedagogical management of discipline, the following emerge as the most important, as can be seen in the graph below.

The majority of the participants, with regard to the variable “Manages classroom discipline in a proper manner, e.g. with advice”, stated, at a high rate (63.91%), that they agree “much”, followed by a smaller percentage (34.22%) who answered “enough” and a few who said “little” (1.57%) and “not at all” (0.29%).

Similarly, the most prevalent choice of participants in the variable “Is impartial and fair” is found in the rating “much”, at a high percentage (64.80%), followed by a lower percentage (33.14%) who answered “enough”. There follow the options “a little” (1.97%) and “not at all” (0.10%).

On the other hand, concerning the variable “Is strict when someone misbehaves”, the participants’ answers are almost equally distributed in the ratings “enough” (35.10%) and “a little” (33.92%), followed by the options “much” (18.39%) and “not at all” 12.59%.

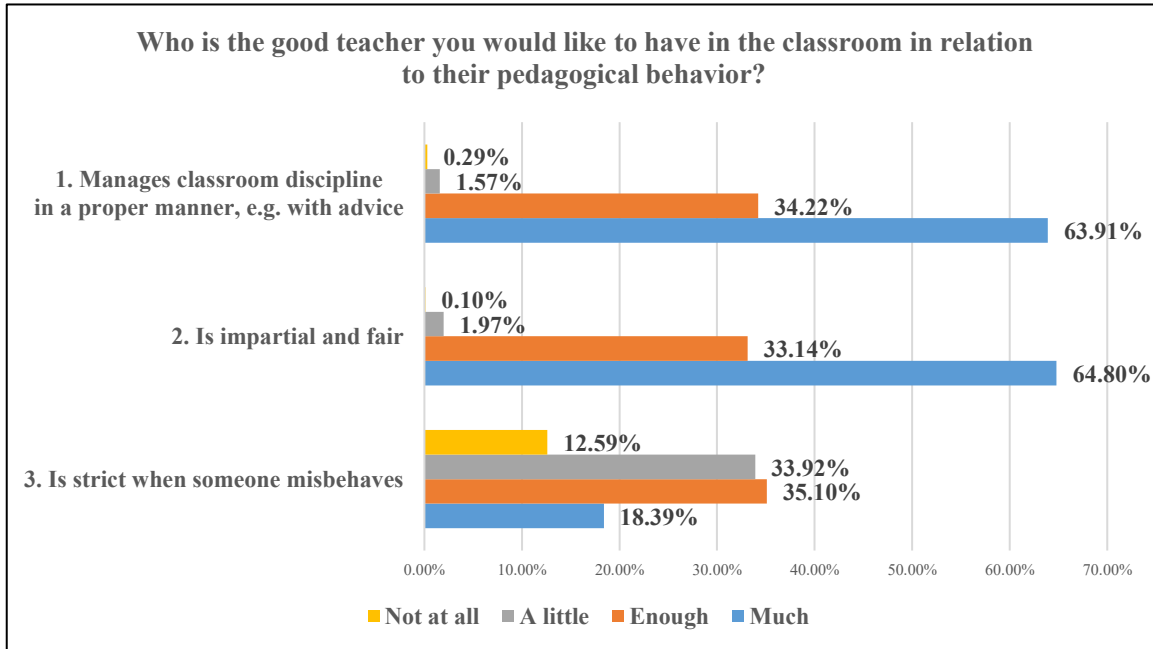


Figure 11. Pedagogical management of discipline by the good teacher

4.2.4 Dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to the evaluation of student performance

Subsequently, the students’ views on the dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to the evaluation of student performance were investigated. More specifically, the students’ opinions are presented with regard to who is the good teacher they would like to evaluate them in class.

Concerning the variable “Evaluates fairly, objectively and, generally, correctly”, we find out that the vast majority of participants, at a very high percentage (72.76%), agreed “much” and a smaller percentage (26.94%) “enough”. A negligible percentage (0.29%) answered “a little”, while the option “not at all” is zero.

On the other hand, regarding the variable “Uses evaluation as a means of punishment”, the vast majority of participants gave weight to the rating “not at all”, at an extremely large percentage (84.66%). There follow, in a smaller percentage (11.80%), the rating “a little” and, at very low percentages, the ratings “enough” (1.97%) and “much” (1.57%).

Regarding the variable “Evaluates students strictly”, we observe that most participants (43.56%) answered “not at all”, while a smaller percentage (35.59%) agreed “a little”. There follow a small percentage (14.06%) and a minimal percentage (6.78%) who answered “enough” and “much” respectively.

On the contrary, in the next variable “Behaves harshly to repeatedly unprepared and indifferent students”, students’ responses are distributed almost proportionally across all ratings, with the highest concentration of answers in the “a little” rating (36.58%). This is followed, at smaller percentages, by the ratings “enough” (26.35%), “not at all” (22.81%) and “much” (14.26%).

Finally, regarding the variable “Avoids inappropriate and critical comments about students’ performance”, it is found that the majority of participants (64.31%) gave weight to the rating “much”. This is followed, in descending order, by a smaller percentage (27.04%) who answered “enough”, while a few (7.08%) said “a little” and very few (1.57%) “not at all”.

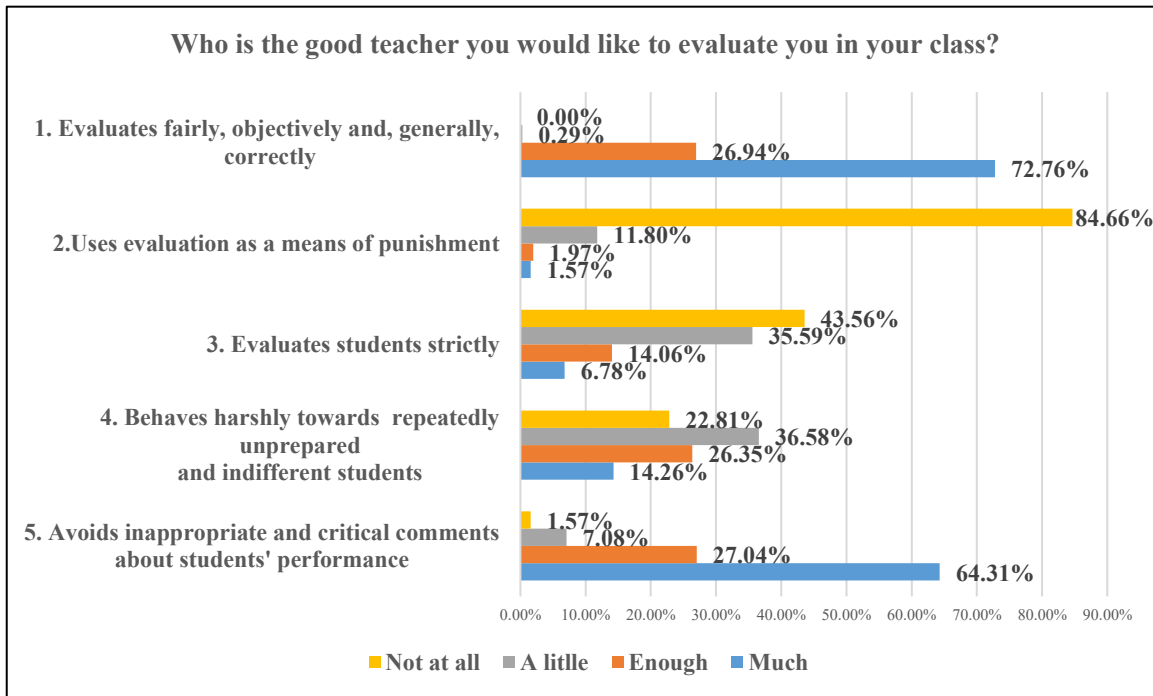


Figure 12. Evaluative abilities and skills of a good teacher

4.2.5 Dimensions of the work of a good teacher in relation to their personality

Subsequently, the most important views of the students are presented as regards the personality traits of the good teacher they want to have in the classroom.

In particular, regarding the variable “Kind personality”, the vast majority of participants (70.89%) gave weight to the rating “much”, while a smaller percentage (27.63%) to the rating “enough” and very few to the choice “a little” (1.38%) and “not at all” (0.10%).

A similar preference of “much” was expressed by the vast majority of participants, at a very high percentage (74.04%), regarding the variable “Pleasant personality”, while a smaller percentage (23.89%) stated “enough”, very few (2.06%) answered “a little”, while the option “not at all” is zero.

Similarly, in the next variable “Enthusiasm and dedication to their work” we observe that the majority of participants, at a high percentage (66.76%), agreed “much” and a smaller percentage (28.71%) “enough”, while very few stated “a little” (4.33%) and “not at all” (0.20%).

Finally, regarding the variable “They are self-critical and admit their mistakes”, it has been found that the vast majority of participants agreed “much”, at a high percentage (69.03%), followed, in descending order, by a smaller percentage (27.63%) who answered “enough”. Very few answered “a little” (2.85%) and “not at all” (0.49%).

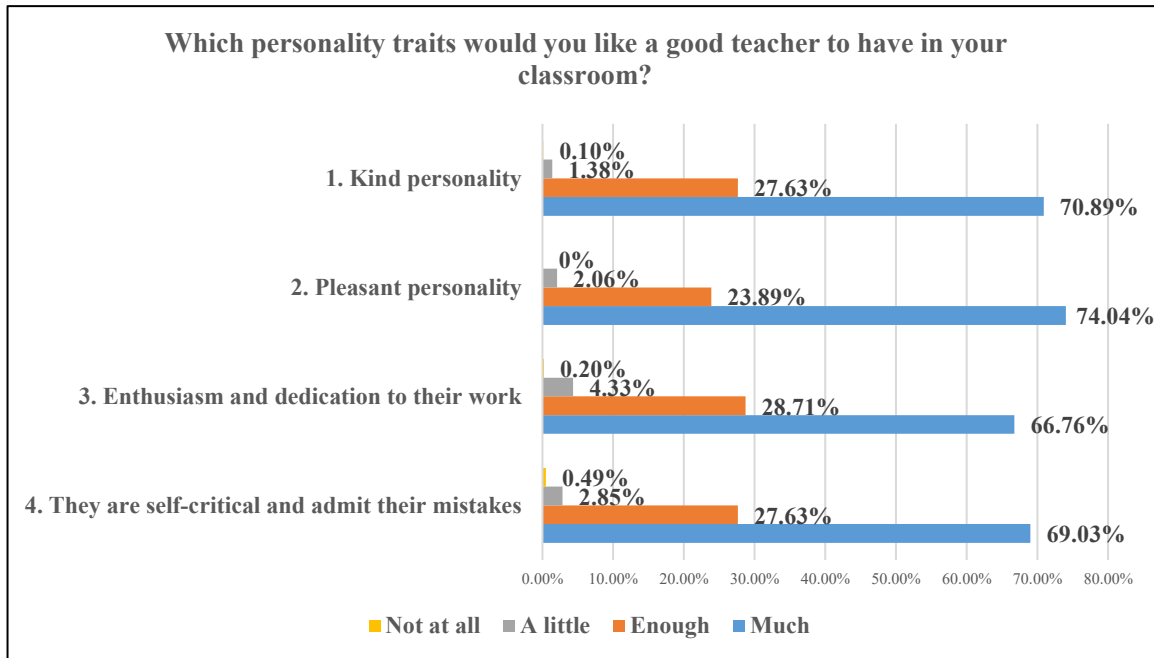


Figure 13. Elements of the personality of a good teacher

5. Interpretation of findings and final conclusions

The main purpose of this research was to explore students’ views on the good teacher, regarding the characteristics they expect them to have, focusing on the dimensions of their work and their personality.

We will start the first observations from the data revealed by the statistical control of students’ opinions. The first finding concerns the comparison of the views of the two sexes, in which a statistically significant difference was found between them in relation to five (5) variables. In particular, according to the participants’ responses in these variables, it is shown that girls consider the specific characteristics of a good teacher more important than boys. These variables relate to the following characteristics: “The behavior of the good teacher affects you in terms of your performance in the lessons”, “Adapts teaching to the needs and level of students”, “Has educational and teaching experience”, “Is discreet”, “Is calm and patient”. In other words, girls attach more importance to these traits of a good teacher. In these comparisons, we particularly focus on one feature and, specifically, on the one concerning the effect of the behavior of a good teacher on the performance of the students in lessons. In particular, girls recognize the behavior of a good teacher as a very important factor influencing their performance in relation to boys, placing more emphasis on interpersonal relationships and the quality of communication with the teacher, resulting in the good teacher’s behavior having either a positive or negative impact on their performance.

A second finding, which emerges from the comparison of the students’ views in the two types of schools, i.e. Junior High School and General Senior High School, is the following. The statistical audit showed that there is a difference of opinion in five (5) variables. In particular, in the following three (3) variables, it has been found that General Senior High School students agree

more with the specific characteristics of a good teacher than Junior High School students: “Uses a variety of methods and new technologies in teaching”, “Adapts teaching to the needs and level of students”, “Promotes teamwork and cooperation among students”. However, in the following two (2) variables, it was observed that Junior High School students agree more with these characteristics of a good teacher than General Senior High School students: “Prevents loss of teaching time and minimizes disruptions to the lesson”, “Behaves harshly to repeatedly unprepared and indifferent students”. From these comparisons, we particularly highlight the views of the students of the General Senior High School regarding the methodology of teaching, the use of new technologies and the adaptation of teaching to the needs of the students, as they give special importance to these characteristics of a good teacher compared to the students of the Junior High School. These findings highlight, on the one hand, the need of General Senior High School students for the subject to be adapted to the contemporary requirements and developments and, on the other hand, the increased and high demands on teaching in order to achieve their admission to higher education more effectively.

A third finding regarding the statistical control is related to the comparison of students’ opinions based on the urbanity of the school. This audit revealed six (6) differences in students’ responses between urban and semi-urban schools. In particular, students of urban schools consider the characteristics of a good teacher in the following variables to be more important than students of semi-urban schools: “The one who knows how to properly evaluate their students”, “Evaluates fairly, objectively and, generally, correctly”, “Is a good listener and takes the time to listen to students”, “Has empathy”, “Creates a climate of cooperation and mutual communication”, “Behaves without discrimination and prejudice”. From the above comparisons, we realize that students of urban schools rate the variables related to the pedagogical skills of a good teacher higher than students of semi-urban schools. Therefore, differences in the priorities and needs of students are observed depending on their socio-cultural and educational environment. More specifically, students of urban schools have increased demands on their teachers in the pedagogical field in relation to students of semi-urban schools. Possibly, this reflects their need for communication and contact with the teacher.

A fourth finding that emerges from the statistical audit concerns the comparison of students’ opinions based on the criterion of the performance of the previous class. This audit revealed ten (10) differences. Students with a lower grade (“good”) have a different perception of the following variables than students with a high grade (“excellent”): “The one who knows how to properly evaluate their students”, “The behavior of a good teacher affects your performance in class”, “A good teacher contributes to the transmission and acquisition of knowledge”, “Knows the material of their lessons”, “Takes time to ask questions during class”, “Dedicates time for recapitulation at the end of the lesson”, “Applies fairly and consistently the rules of behavior and operation of the classroom and school”, “Is strict when someone misbehaves”, “Properly informs parents about student performance”, “Seeks cooperation with parents and communicates with them when necessary.” In particular, students with an “excellent” grade believe that a good teacher should have the above characteristics as opposed to students with a low performance grade (“good”). The differences underline the connection between academic performance and students’ perception of the role of a good teacher. At the same time, we conclude that excellent students recognize the importance and contribution of the good teacher more than the low performance ones, highlighting their expectations for high standards of educational quality.

Considering the overall picture of the findings, we come to the following conclusions.

The majority of the students in the sample approach the term a “good teacher” conceptually, primarily, in its pedagogical aspect. More specifically, they perceive a “good teacher” as the one who behaves properly to their students, that is, communicates correctly and develops a good relationship with them. Thus, students give more weight to the pedagogical role of the good teacher (“good educator”), indirectly implying the students’ demand for rationalization of the

pedagogical mission of the teacher and, more broadly, of the school. Secondly, they also consider as a “good teacher” the one who knows how to teach their subjects well (“good teacher”), giving importance to the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, as well as the cultivation of critical and creative thinking, while, thirdly, the one who knows how to properly evaluate their students (“good evaluator”) and, fourthly, the one who is distinguished for their correct and balanced personality. Therefore, students consider a “good teacher” to be one who combines pedagogical skills with the ability to teach effectively and evaluate fairly, objectively and correctly, while having a balanced personality, which promotes learning in a positive, supportive and inclusive learning environment, contributing to academic success.

The importance of the teaching skills and abilities of a good teacher for the realization of effective teaching is recognized and, at the same time, the role of the “good teacher”, who contributes to the cognitive development of students, is highlighted. In particular, it is highly recommended that a good teacher teach the subject in a pleasant and understandable way, then in a transmissive manner and, subsequently, with the right method, i.e., effectively.

A basic prerequisite for effective teaching is considered by the majority of students to be the scientific and educational competence of a good teacher. In this sense, a good teacher must have knowledge of their subject, that is, they must know the syllabus and the objectives of their lessons, ensuring proper guidance and learning.

It is recognized that a good teacher must give importance to the pedagogical communication with students. More specifically, demonstrating respect for the personality of the students, avoiding stigmatizing and insulting the students, as well as their role as a counsellor, that is to have empathy, to be a good listener, to accept their students as they are and to be honest, are emphasized as extremely important qualities of a good teacher.

Students expect a good teacher to have skills and abilities in terms of creating a positive pedagogical climate in the classroom, achieving effective learning and communication. In particular, they express a clear preference for creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom, developing a friendly and familiar environment. At the same time, it is underlined as an important quality of a good teacher, from a pedagogical point of view, to have humor and create a relaxed and intimate atmosphere by making jokes.

Regarding the importance that a good teacher attaches to the development of good relations with students, it is recognized that to be approachable/friendly and polite, to respect the needs, interests and peculiarities of students, to develop a relationship of trust with them and to be open to student criticism without considering themselves an authority are extremely important characteristics.

An interesting picture of the good teacher emerges regarding the skills and abilities of the pedagogical management of discipline. More specifically, most students express a high preference for a good teacher to be anti-authoritarian, to impose and manage discipline in a democratic and pedagogically correct way. It is also preferred as an extremely important pedagogical asset of a good teacher to be impartial and fair in order to ensure equal learning opportunities for all without discrimination.

It is emphasized by the majority of students as a slightly important trait of a good teacher to be strict when someone misbehaves. In this sense, students want a good teacher not to be too strict, that is, not to cross the boundaries of authoritarianism and oppression. On the contrary, they expect strictness to be characterized by moderation and sensitivity when it comes to behavior, in order to ensure order and discipline in the classroom.

High priority is given by students for a good teacher to be a “good evaluator”. More specifically, it emerges, undoubtedly, as a top characteristic of a good teacher to be a fair and objective judge, who evaluates in the right way, without instrumentalizing evaluation as a means

of punishment and authority. This position reflects the students’ desire for the evaluation of their performance to be conducted in a pedagogically appropriate way.

Avoiding inappropriate and critical comments regarding student performance is an extremely important trait of a good teacher for the majority of students. Therefore, the expectation to be characterized by courtesy, discretion and sensitivity, showing respect for their students, is indirectly emphasized.

On the one hand, students recognize strictness on the part of the good teacher as justified and imperative, when it concerns the repeated lack of preparation and indifference of students, indirectly expressing the expectation of setting boundaries and imposing consequences, in order to ensure consistency, responsibility and commitment in the learning process. On the other hand, when it comes to performance, they prefer the teacher to evaluate them leniently, but fairly, impartially and objectively.

A pleasant and polite personality emerge as special features of a good teacher, while the necessity to have enthusiasm and dedication to their work is also emphasized. Students especially prefer a good teacher who is self-critical, recognizes and admits their mistakes and possesses emotional intelligence.

In summary, a good teacher from the perspective of the students is, above all, a "good educator", while their role as a “good teacher” and a “good evaluator” is also recognized and, overall, the one who has a personality that combines human approach, pedagogical skill and professional excellence is greatly appreciated.

In conclusion, evaluating the findings of the research as a whole, the clear message that emerges from the answers of the students of the Junior High School and the General Senior High School is that a good teacher must have all the required skills, scientific, pedagogical and didactic, as well as a multifaceted, pleasant and kind personality characterized by justice, objectivity, equality, empathy, honesty, understanding, affability, kindness, humor, enthusiasm for their work and a self-critical attitude. At the same time, students highlight as a prerequisite for the pedagogical effectiveness of a good teacher his/her ability to organize communication with students in a pedagogically correct way, to give importance to the formation of a positive pedagogical climate in the classroom and the development of good relationships with students, to focus on the pedagogical management of discipline, to organize and plan the teaching and learning process in a correct and effective way and to evaluate the performance of students using pedagogically appropriate criteria and methods.

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