

# Perspective of High School Students and Teachers on Good Teaching: A Case Study

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## Abstract

There is a widespread interest in studying factors that contribute to improving educational quality, such as good teaching practices. For this reason, this article intends to analyze the perception of high school students and teachers, regarding the characteristics of good teachers, identifying pedagogical practices that, from the perspective of these educational agents, favor quality teaching and subsequent learning. of the student body A qualitative methodology, of the case study type, was chosen. As a data collection technique, 8 semi-structured interviews were carried out, 4 of them directed towards students and 4 towards teachers. Among the main findings, students and teachers highlight that good teaching is observed in a didactic-disciplinary domain, affective and value-based practices, effective evaluative competencies, the manifestation of optimal leadership, and contextualizing the teaching-learning process depending on the characteristics of the student body. In conclusion, being a good teacher implies having extensive pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge, which must be optimally submitted in the teaching-learning process, which demands a didactic domain. All this, placing contextualization and evaluation as key processes.

**Keywords:** faculty, formative process, good teachers, didactics

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the discussion of what factors influence the quality of teaching has increased, highlighting the studies that relate quality to measurement, performance, and the need for regular evaluations (Madani, 2019), decentralization, provision of resource technologies, expansion of teacher training, and improvement of school infrastructure (Gil-Flores et al., 2017). Other studies, on the other hand, analyze the factors that influence whether a teacher can carry out quality teaching processes and identify a list of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that promote good performance of the profession (Yasmeen et al., 2019). Among them, the relationship with students is in the first place, considering the increasing migration phenomenon (Santoro, 2009), and then the relationship with supervisors and colleagues. Extrinsic factors include wages, working conditions, and recognition by society (Jang, 2019; Ramnarain, 2016), but also new issues such as socialization in relation to gender issues (Kollmayer et al., 2020) and the use of play as a didactic tool (Partovi & Razavi, 2019). The increase in workload, the loss of professional autonomy and the indiscipline of students appear as unfavorable factors (Marcelo & Vaillant, 2019). In addition, there are elements related to the conditions of professional practice and the social recognition of the profession (Avalos, 2018; Ida, 2017; Kennedy, 2016).

Despite the differences between the level of education and the subjects taught, good teachers show similar practices. The literature reports that students' perceptions of a good teacher are related to his or her social practices and life history (Alzebaree & Zebari, 2021). Thus, a good teacher masters the content, chooses appropriate methods to present the topic, has a good relationship and interaction with students, and is engaged in teaching (Akyeampong, 2017; Baier et al., 2019; Devine et al., 2013; Gess-Newsome et al., 2019; Merellano-Navarro et al., 2016; Shulman, 2015; Vettori & Warm, 2017). On the other hand, some studies suggest that teachers must have recognition, prestige,

good working conditions, and adequate economic incentives to be effective and ensure motivation and good outcomes for their students (Tardif, 2013).

Some studies describe the knowledge that a good teacher must have and agree that it must be diverse (Hofer, 2017), including social knowledge acquired in the professional context and at different stages of the professional career (Benekos, 2016). As for pedagogical knowledge, it comes from professional training and is characterized by the acquisition of disciplinary and curricular knowledge, as well as experiential knowledge acquired in the daily work of teaching (Chan & Yung, 2018; Gess-Newsome et al., 2019). Good teachers are formed over time when they are allowed to live their experiences in conjunction with other knowledge to gain the necessary skills for good pedagogical practice (Akyeampong, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2017). Therefore, the importance of schools as a training ground for teachers is emphasized, as is the importance of initial and in-service training courses (Calogiannakis & Wolhuter, 2015; Capel et al., 2013; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017; Jin et al., 2019).

With the goal of improving initial teacher education, several studies have identified the areas that constitute a good teacher (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021; Devine et al., 2013; Merellano-Navarro et al., 2019; Vettori & Warm, 2017), however, it has been difficult to specify teacher behaviors in the classroom due to social and pedagogical complexity. For this reason, several researchers have gone into schools to investigate who the good teachers are at different educational levels and to identify their profile and practices. These studies make an important contribution to reflection on the process of developing teaching quality (Akyeampong, 2017; Devine et al., 2013; Paolini, 2015). However, there is still a need to address the characteristics that teachers and students believe can make a good teacher. In this context, the purpose of this study is to analyze secondary students' and teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of a good teacher and to identify pedagogical practices that, from the perspective of these educational stakeholders, promote quality teaching and subsequent student learning.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research Design*

The present study was developed within the interpretive paradigm, which aims to survey secondary school students' and teachers' perceptions of the qualities and characteristics of a good teacher. The methodological and analytical approach of the study is related to the field of qualitative research (Bailey & Bailey, 2017; Given, 2008). The case study method (Gokbulut et al., 2020) was used, and the case studied in this research corresponds to a public high school in Talca Province, Maule Region, Chile.

### *2.2 Participants*

For the selection of the sample, the following inclusion criteria were considered: students belonging to the corresponding educational level, willingness to participate in the session, signature of assent and informed consent from the parents. For teachers, the inclusion criteria were summarized as having five years of experience in secondary school, willingness to participate and signature of informed consent. The confidentiality of the participants' names was guaranteed, taking into account their privacy and voluntary participation. Participants were informed about the purposes of the research and their authorization was requested to record the interview in order to safeguard the ethical aspects of the study, in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. In this regard, it should be noted that the project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidad Católica del Maule through Act N° 255/2020.

### *2.3 Instrument*

Four semi-structured interviews were conducted with facility teachers and four interviews with students, following the guidelines reported by Flick, (2018); Kallio et al. (2016). Study data were collected from September to November 2021 and transcripts were entered into NVivo 10 software.

### *2.4 Procedure and Analysis*

Content analysis was chosen to process the data (Graneheim et al., 2017; Lindgren et al., 2020), which includes three courses of action: summarizing the data, presenting the data, and developing/verifying conclusions. The data were analyzed using the inductive logic of theoretical categorization (Morse, 2015; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The research team conducted this phase through the following sequence of work: (i) the data were reviewed in their entirety in an open-ended manner, the information collected was regrouped into six classificatory categories, which were then developed with the following phases of coding; (ii) connections were made between the codes to form descriptive and explanatory categories (see Tables 1 and 2); (iii) finally, the last phase corresponds to the theoretical elaboration,

the purpose of which was to establish an explanatory framework that allows understanding the characteristics of good teaching in secondary education.

### 3. Results

The results are presented after the categorization and coding that were carried out on both students and teachers in order to achieve the objective of "characterising the most important areas that a good secondary school teacher must have, from the discourse of key informants". For this reason, the results are presented first from the students' perspective (see Table 1) and later from the teachers' perspective (see Table 2). The stories are presented for each category, indicating the code to which the object of study belongs.

**Table 1.** Student Perspective on the Expected Characteristics of a Good Teacher

Category	Descending Codes	Emerging Codes
Teacher Features	Knowing how to teach over content mastery, content mastery, dynamism, knowing how to teach, encouraging participation and willingness to learn	Didactic-disciplinary domain
	Close teacher, connection with students, empathy, understanding, concerned, emotional support, no favoritism	Value affective
Teacher Didactics	Authority, problem-solving, teacher commitment, teacher adaptability	Teacher leadership
	Role of evaluation, diversity of evaluation instruments, stimulate creativity, feedback, positive reinforcement, stimulate questions, innovation in evaluation	Evaluative scope
	Use of the game, innovation in the classroom, playful	Teaching dynamism

Source: Own Elaboration.

#### 3.1 Category: Teacher Features

From the students' perspective, the most important characteristics that make a good teacher are mainly in the didactic-disciplinary area. Although there are perspectives that favour the disciplinary domain over the didactic, there are other positions that favour the didactic domain over the disciplinary. However, some students believe that there must be a balance between the disciplinary and didactic domains. This is evident in the following story:

“A teacher who knows a lot about the subject he is teaching, but does not know how to explain it well, or does not know how to pass on his knowledge well to us as students, is not going to help us, no matter how much he knows about the subject he is teaching, but also, if a teacher uses a lot of techniques, but maybe does not have much to do with the subject, he still is not very good. That's why I say it's a mixture of both [...]” (Student 3)

The student body also expresses that the didactic-disciplinary area can be combined with affective and value aspects, which gives a greater transversality to the teaching activity. This transversality is even observed in the adaptation of teaching to the context. Both ideas can be seen in the following excerpts:

“A closer teacher, where there is a bond between teacher and student, is the best. We learn more with these teachers because you notice when a teacher is more satisfied and teaches a group of students [...] Also, that he does not only care about the content, for example, that at the end of the class he asks us how we are doing.” (Student 3)

Along with the above aspects, the student body addresses the teacher's leadership qualities by demonstrating his authority and commitment. So it is a balanced leadership that focuses not only on disciplinary aspects but also on problem solving areas.

“I think so, because they do their teaching well and without complications. When a teacher has a problem, he solves it immediately, he looks for a solution to the problem immediately, and I think that is very important.” (Student 1)

#### 3.2 Category: Teacher Didactics

The perspectives expressed by the student body range from evaluation to pedagogical contextualization. Regarding

the first emerging code, the use of different assessment tools and techniques is considered, in addition to innovation, creativity, and positive reinforcement.

“One of my best teachers used different methods, both for teaching and assessment, because sometimes assessment is like answering alternatives and someone who doesn't manage to reflect much of their learning in that kind of assessment, so I like it when they do different activities for us.” (Student 3)

In addition to the use of different strategies, tools, and/or assessment techniques, the student body highlights the dynamic nature of the classroom and addresses features such as innovation, the use of games, and recreational activities.

“I think it's good to use different strategies because a teacher can have the knowledge but if I don't understand what he's explaining to me and he doesn't use different methods to teach me, I won't understand anything at all, it's better that he uses many strategies and that he can explain it to me and I can understand it.” (Student 2)

However, for the student, the didactic domain is relevant, which can be completed by the graduality and contextualization of learning. In this sense, it's considered more relevant to address a content in a good way and subsequently progress curricularly.

“I prefer the teacher to be late and go over something small than to go over all the material and I don't understand it and do poorly on the assessment, I prefer him to take more time on the topics that are difficult for me.” (Student 1)

**Table 2.** Results Matrix, Phase 2. Axial Coding. Faculty Perspective

Category	Descending Codes	Emerging Codes
<b>Teaching preparation</b>	Planning from diversity, knowing the context, adaptation and diversity of methodologies	Contextualized planning
<b>Didactic Display</b>	Rules within the class, diverse class climate Content mastery, safety when teaching Challenging didactic strategies, innovation and transformation, engaging in learning Evaluation of the process, learning through error, meeting the needs of the context Learning that transcends, Impact in life Inserted in learning Learning as a result, Importance of the process	Leadership and regulations Disciplinary didactic domain Evaluative scope Significant learning Learning process
<b>Teacher-student relationship</b>	Affectivity, practice of values, teacher-student bond, relationship of trust and respect Position yourself as a teacher	Affective-value teacher identity
<b>Teacher role</b>	Teacher leadership, recognized by peers and students, clear rules, pedagogical responsibility, horizontal relationship Transversal impact, transversal pedagogical work, complex vision of the educational phenomenon, collaborative work, learning mediator	Teacher leadership Educational transversality
<b>Personal Characteristics / Values</b>	Responsibility, build trust reflective, human quality, respect, fair, promoting a healthy environment Hygiene, self-critical Dialogue, communicative Reflexive, constant evaluation of the process, open to criticism, updated Collaboration with peers, experience	Affective-Valoric Self-care Communication Metacognitive process Collaborative work

Source: Own Elaboration.

### 3.3 Category: Preparation for Teaching

The teaching perspective focuses on contextualized education that addresses individuality and diversity, both in the selection and use of different methods and in the characteristics that distinguish each person.

“A good teacher prepares, plans, coordinates in some way, knows the context in which he works or where he will arrive. He knows the particular characteristics of the students, the group of people in which he will work, the spaces it has, the socio-cultural context, the learning that the children already have, that is, he incorporates the experiences that the children already have.” (Teacher 4).

### 3.4 Category: Didactic Presentation

In relation to didactic presentation, teachers highlight different aspects that characterize a good teacher. Among others, they refer to aspects related to the discipline of the students, rules and the search for an optimal class climate.

“The way of speaking is important, the way of reaching the students, giving them clear rules from the beginning, the rules of good coexistence, working with them, listening to them. I know when I come to the class there is an atmosphere of respect, and the students cooperate well” (Teacher 1)

Leadership and rules are complemented by didactic and disciplinary competence. The latter is understood from the curriculum, but not from behavior. Teachers invoke mastery of content, confidence in teaching expressed in adaptation, innovation and pedagogical transformation.

“Teachers sometimes plan very nicely on paper, and then in reality we find that I have actually only managed to do half of it, but it depends on how the students take my planning [...] So we have to be more flexible with the content, the learning that we want, the modality, the reality that we are in, suddenly take it out of context and play a different game until we realize that the student is engaged in the class.” (Teacher 3)

However, the didactic and disciplinary domain must also be complemented by evaluative aspects, considering this instance as a formative process. That is, they should be considered as instances that promote learning rather than actions that involve negative stimuli.

“Be constantly in a process of assessment, not punishment. Not from a punitive perspective, but from a learning perspective, i.e., a formative perspective.” (Teacher 4)

Teachers are committed to the process and generation of meaningful learning outcomes that extend both beyond the classroom.

“Transcendent learning and linking that child's learning to the content, to the work that is given in the classroom, in the class. By this I mean renewing, improving, extending what already exists. Involving the student, involving him, making him the protagonist of his learning, based on his own experiences [...]” (Teacher4)

### 3.5 Category: Teacher-Student Relationship

From the teaching perspective, a good teacher emphasizes the affective and value components that she demonstrates daily in her professional practice. This is demonstrated in the concern, respect, commitment and promotion of relationships with and between students.

“In my opinion, if there is not a good relationship, we have to start with: talking, talking, showing interest, listening to the students. You have to know their concerns, their experiences, their reality, because that has a great impact on the world they live in and what you want to teach them. This relationship, this connection must be quite fluid and continuous [...]” (Teacher 3)

“A good teacher also starts from the affective in a certain way to achieve the learning of all students [...]” (Teacher 4)

### 3.6 Category: Teacher Role

According to the teaching perspectives, they categorize their role as a conjugation between the pedagogical multidimensionality and the professional and personal tools that each teacher presents. Knowledge of the content is a key aspect that expresses not only leadership but also mastery of the curriculum. However, this area must be complemented by the didactic area.

“Good teachers absolutely master what they are going to present, they master the content very well. The teacher I am referring to in this case is a teacher who has mastered the content, he can give a lecture on what he is teaching, he has studied and deepened the subject, and for the students this is very important.”

(Teacher 2)

Leadership is a relevant skill from the teacher's point of view, which is also related to the way teachers view the educational process. On the one hand, they advocate cooperative and transversal teaching. On the other hand, they tend to promote the development and application of aspects related to metacognition.

“The good teacher, of course, must know his subject, but he must put it on a par. He must know how to teach, because he can have the knowledge, but if he does not know how to teach, I think that's better. He has to go beyond the fact that he just knows the content very well. He has to link it in such a way that the student integrates it in some way and makes it part of his experience [...]” (Teacher 4)

As part of collaboration and in conjunction with internal reflection processes, a good teacher considers critical and self-critical aspects that contribute to the improvement of his own pedagogical practice.

“Self-criticism or accepting the criticism that comes from others, that costs. There are many people who do not like to be criticized, who perceive it as an attack. And if we all understood that criticism serves to understand that you do not always do everything well, and that you can always improve.” (Teacher 1)

### 3.7 Category: *Personal Characteristics/Values*

In relation to teacher characteristics and in line with the previous categories, teachers emphasize values, self-care, affective, reflective, and communicative aspects that enable them to make connections with and between their students.

“Always exhibit respectful and responsible behavior. The teacher has an open, communicative, receptive, and dialogic attitude that ultimately enables them to create good interactions. Strengthening the student-teacher bond. Always out of respect, but also out of trust. Communication and dialog, reflection are key.” (Teacher 4)

Finally, respect for others and collaboration are also emphasized, encompassing a variety of aspects. For example, being strict, being demanding, being a leader, fostering a classroom climate conducive to learning, collaboration, respect, adaptation, and more.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

Student- and teacher-reported accounts of the good practices that distinguish teachers provide information that broadens the view of what makes a good teacher. The findings of this study are consistent with other research indicating that a good teacher must possess an optimal didactic-disciplinary domain (Akyeamong, 2017; Devine et al., 2013; Gess-Newsome et al., 2019; Shulman, 2015). However, the literature focuses not only on mastery of content, but also on how it is taught, taking into account affective and social aspects (Alzeebaree & Zebari, 2021). This positions teachers as professionals who adapt to circumstances and promote learning (Webb et al., 2019). This is consistent with the empirical data collected in this study, which indicates that content mastery is as important as knowing how to teach. The reason for this is that the absence of tools that promote good teaching does not affect learning.

This creates a duality as the literature aligns with the empirical data gathered in this study, suggesting that both content mastery and teaching skills are equally important. The absence of effective teaching tools would have a minimal impact on the learning outcomes of secondary school students (Alzeebaree & Zebari, 2021). In summary, the study's findings emphasize the potential need to reconstruct the perception of teaching. Consequently, it presents an opportunity to incorporate pedagogical-didactic training that focuses on updating the skills of practicing teachers or strengthening curricular activities related to teaching in teacher education (Merellano et al., 2016).

In addition to the adaptability that a good teacher must have, as proposed in the literature (Herman et al., 2020), there is the perspective of teachers and students who agree with this approach, complementing it with characteristics focused on reflection and criticism. In this context, they point out that a good teacher focuses, on the one hand, on knowing the context in which he/she carries out his/her curricular activities and, on the other hand, on analyzing, evaluating and organizing his/her actions in order to align them with the content, teaching strategies and value-related/affective aspects.

A good secondary school teacher criticizes and reflects on his or her work in a formal and intentional manner. On the other hand, according to key informants, they move from individual analysis to a collective analysis, contrasting experiences with their peers and involving their own students. In view of the above, Bacus & Alda (2022), expose the concern for the effects of teaching on students. Likewise, critical and reflective aspects can focus not only on

practical analysis, but also on questioning the dominant models (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018) and thus contextualize the educational process.

The results suggest that a good teacher synchronizes curriculum content in relation to the characteristics of the student body and has knowledge of different epistemologies (Hofer, 2017) that favor teacher-student interaction (Baier et al., 2019; Merellano-Navarro et al., 2016; Vettori & Warm, 2017). In addition, the good teacher demonstrates didactic competence by resorting to strategies and/or tools that are consistent with the proposed pedagogical-curricular goals. The results are similar to those of other studies that point out the need for good management of pedagogical strategies, which can be complemented by the teacher's intention to engage in the teaching-learning process (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021; Deng, 2018).

Good teachers also adapt their content and strategies to their students' needs and link them to their own learning process in terms of experiential knowledge (Chan & Yung, 2018; Gess -Newsome et al., 2019). Social knowledge, referred to by Tardif (2013), is also needed during teachers' professional careers to deepen their theoretical-practical knowledge. Now, during this socialization learning, other aspects such as values and affective aspects are added. These aspects, according to the findings reported in this article, are crucial for the student body as they foster a connection that allows for a relational connection between students and teachers. The literature is consistent with these data in that it suggests affective bonding as a component that promotes good classroom practice (Alzebaree & Zebari, 2021).

In relation to affective and value aspects, Ragusa et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of incorporating and intentionally practicing soft skills in the training of future teachers. It is not enough to simply include soft skills in the teacher training curriculum; there must be a deliberate effort to apply these skills. This approach can help bridge the gap between theory and learning in the secondary classroom (Pischetola, 2022).

The discussion of good secondary teachers needs to make the connection between the personal and professional dimensions in establishing teachers' identities. The point is not to exclude the debate about the competent teacher, but to insert elements that contribute to interpret the teaching practice in its social and pedagogical essence. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that building competence does not mean turning one's back on knowledge, nor does it mean mobilizing only common sense and practical knowledge; it is not possible to be competent without knowledge. According to the findings of the present study, understanding and mastering one's subject is not enough to become a good teacher. In order to teach effectively, the teacher must understand the subject, its concepts and structure; then he must transform it, that is, prepare the subject, equip himself with a repertoire of representations (analogies, metaphors, examples, etc.) and choose the appropriate teaching strategies; then he must adapt all this to the characteristics of his students, taking into account prejudices, difficulties of the students, motivations and other aspects that shape the teaching and learning process.

The research focused on understanding the perceptions of the main actors of the teaching-learning process about what is meant by a good secondary school teacher. Systematizing the dimensions of work and identifying the performance characteristics of a good secondary school teacher allow us to contribute to the reflection on the training of new teachers and the effectiveness of their work in the classroom.

Finally, it is important to highlight that this study aims to provide insights that can help reshape the understanding of what makes a good secondary school teacher. It is crucial to consider the interplay between students' and teachers' perspectives, as this allows us to assert that a good teacher is not solely defined by their mastery of the subject matter. Instead, a good teacher is someone who truly knows their students, understands them, and appreciates the emotional, ethical, and societal aspects of effective teaching.

## 5. Limitations

Regarding the limitations of the study, it is suggested to increase the sample size by considering a second educational institution or perhaps a larger number of participants. For future studies, it is suggested that other data collection techniques, such as classroom observation, be included to triangulate the data that comes from key informant discourse.

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### **Authors contributions**

Dr. AAF and Dr. JAM were responsible for the writing, design, data collection, and revision of the manuscript. Dr. EMN was in charge of data analysis and discussion. Dr. RSC drafted the conclusions and revised the final manuscript. All authors read and approved the manuscript and all authors contributed equally to the study.

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