

## **Teacher Attributes & Teacher Effectiveness: Why some teachers are more effective than others? A literature review**

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### **Abstract**

*Reckoning the factors contributing to teacher effectiveness is a world-wide research and policy priority with the potential to influence teacher selection processes, enhances training and professional development and improving educational outcomes (Klassen,2014).The effectiveness of any educational system largely depends upon the effectiveness of teachers. Teacher is a basic agent who translates educational objectives and educational philosophy into knowledge and skills and accordingly transfers them to the students. The present study is aimed to provide a general review of the literature, taking into consideration common attributes of effective teacher. The study concluded that factors like personality, self-efficacy, teacher resilience, job satisfaction, teacher experience and pedagogical competence are all associated with teacher effectiveness.*

**Key words:** *Teacher effectiveness, Personality, Self-efficacy, Work-motivation, Job satisfaction, Teaching Experience, Teacher resilience and Pedagogical competence.*

### **Introduction:**

Teacher effectiveness is considered as an essential factor deriving variations in student academic achievement (Klassen, 2014), and is considered as more influential than class size, classroom compositions or previous academic achievement of students (e.g., Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Hindman & Stronge, 2009; Staiger & Rockoff, 2010).Teacher effectiveness is defined as the aggregated effects of a complex set of in-classroom teacher behaviours on student learning ( Seidel & Shavelson,2007, cited in Klassen, 2014),usually operationalized as measured students achievements or evaluations of observed teaching performance. Student achievement is considered as the gauge for teacher effectiveness (Doherty & Jacob; 2013), but what constitutes the student achievement is little elusive, commonly considered as increase in standardised test scores. Cohan & Goldhaber (2016) revealed that there are different dimensions by which a teacher can be reckoned “effective”. Teacher assists learner in myriad ways in service of various outcomes including social and emotional outcomes, even if we focus on the

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narrower construct of teacher effectiveness as assisting learners on the academic outcomes only, value-added (*Teacher effectiveness is sometimes referred as 'Value-added'*) estimates culled from a single test may only represent a portion of the broader construct of interest (p.380).

It has been accepted universally that teaching has always been an intellectually and emotionally demanding job, and is becoming even more so in present day learner centered, creativity oriented, outcomes driven and culturally diversified classrooms (Gu; 2014). Globally for many teachers, wide ranging-reforms of curriculum and the rapidly changing knowledge economy have put on extra pressure on their workload volume and complexity. The wide spread expectation is that teachers must become 'high level knowledge workers' who repetitively advance their own professional knowledge as well as that of their profession (OECD, 2012a, P.11). However researches across the globe are consistently showing that despite having these internal and external pressures on teachers, many of them have managed to uphold their passion and commitment to help children learn (e.g., Day & Gu; 2010, OECD; 2005; 2011).

Evaluating teacher effectiveness has changed over time and again along with the definition of what teacher effectiveness is, it has been defined in different ways by different authors throughout the years (e.g., Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijis & Robinson; 2003, Muijs; 2006, Seidel & Shavelson; 2007) and approaches for gauging teacher effectiveness have also changed as definitions and beliefs about what is important to measure have changed. So it is clear to mention that gauging teacher effectiveness has remained quite elusive because researchers have not reached up to a generally agreed-upon method for measuring teacher effectiveness. Besides a lack of clear consensus about what an effective teacher is and does, the author has tried to synthesise a literature review and find out the factors contributing to teacher effectiveness, because Klassen (2014) has rightly indicated that reckoning the factors contributing to teacher effectiveness is a world-wide research and policy priority with the potential to influence teacher selection processes, enhances training and professional development and improving educational outcomes.

## **Attributes of effective teachers**

### **1. Teacher effectiveness in relation to personality traits of teachers**

Personality is considered to be an enduring, relatively stable trait or set of traits with a possible neuropsychological basis (e.g. Judge, Klinger, Simon & Yang, 2008). Harris & Sass (2009) revealed that teacher effectiveness is significantly influenced by personality factors of teachers. Similarly as reported by *Visible Learning Plus* (2018) that

personality of teacher is linked with student learning and Klassen and Tze (2014) also revealed that teacher personality is linked with teacher effectiveness. The presage and process aspects of teaching bears direct relationship to teacher's personality and teacher pupil interaction (Evans, 2006). Literature review by Barr (1952) noted a general consensus that teacher's personality was connected with learning success, although the establishment of new personality frameworks such as Big Five and Myer-Briggs type Inventory has seen a resurgence of research. Big Five personality domains of teachers have strong links with teacher effectiveness (John et. al, 2008), teachers with high level of conscientiousness domain of Big Five personality framework are inclined towards being achievement –focussed, highly responsible or organised, organisation and planning are also considered as important personal characteristics for effective teacher (Klassen, 2017). Results of empirical studies also indicated that teacher conscientiousness is positively related with teacher effectiveness and job performance (e.g. Kim et.al, 2018, Kim & Maccann, 2018, Barrick et.al, 2001). Teachers with high level of emotional stability are calm, secure and tolerant of stress (John et.al, 2008). Teachers are usually regarded as emotional contagions i.e. emotions displayed by the teacher in the classroom can be transmitted to students (Frenzel et.al, 2018). According to Social Learning theory of Bandura students are usually coping the behaviour of teachers, so students can too become anxious and nervous when observing an anxious and nervous teachers, in turn learner's overall development may get affected. Thus we believe that emotional stability is positively linked with teacher effectiveness. Higher level of extraversion domain of Big Five personality framework can assist teachers to display their energy outwards (Fielden et.al, 2015), which is significantly related with higher levels of communications, sensitivity, disclosure and provision of social support. As teaching is a face to face interaction, it requires assertiveness and social interaction for which gregariousness and social ability could be an advantage. Thus we expect that extraversion domain of personality will be positively linked with teacher effectiveness. Teachers with higher levels of agreeableness are found to have qualities like kind, caring and helpful (John et.al, 2008), such attributes can be very handy to create positive and warm environment, which is essential for teaching-learning process (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). Also teachers with higher levels of openness are curious and generous (John et.al, 2008). The capability to be flexible in teaching and engaging with learner's ideas and opinions are highly rated quality in teachers. Many researchers use Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) classifications to categorize teachers into personality types. MBTI judges a participants preference on four dimensions viz, Extraversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuitive, Thinking- Feeling and Perceiving –Judging .Convincing evidence suggests that extraversion dimension of personality is predictor of teacher effectiveness and those

teachers who were more extraverted were found to be less liable to the teacher burnout which steers them to be more effective (e.g. Ghorpede, Lackitz, & Singh, 2007, Tallman & Bruninga, 2008).

## **2. Teacher effectiveness in relation to work-motivation and job satisfaction**

A set of beliefs that influence people's movements towards attainment of a valued goal is motivation (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). As for teacher motivation, Sinclair (2008) defined it in terms of attraction, retention and concentration as something that determines 'what attracts individuals to teaching, how long they remain in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching profession, and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the teaching profession' (2008, p. 37). A plethora of related studies shows a strong relationship between teacher motivation and teaching effectiveness (e.g., Bakker & Bal, 2010). Teacher's personal motivation to teach plays an important role in learning experience of students (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2016). It predicts teacher's day-to-day engagement and teaching quality (Rimm, Kaufman & Hamre, 2010) and is conceptually closer to teacher effectiveness than are teacher's personality traits (Rockoff, Jacob, Kane & Staiger, 2008). It is an important factor to improve classroom effectiveness (Carson & Chase, 2009). Recent evidences has indicated that teachers interpersonal style and feedback may contribute to improve learners motivation towards their studies and advances aspects like deep learning, positive emotions and better performance( e.g. Orsini, Binnie & Wilson, 2016, Orsini, Binnie & Jerez, 2019). It is also indicated that teachers suffered from higher levels of professional stress and lower levels of motivation more than any other professional group (de Jesus & Lens, 2005), teachers poor performance in terms of realising the teaching objectives, negative attitude to work and poor teaching habits have been linked to poor motivation (Ofoegbu, 2004). While discussing the relationship between students achievement and motivated and demotivated teacher, it is revealed out that a demotivated teacher is one who was once motivate but lost interest due to some reason ( Kiziltepe, 2008) and demotivation was concerned with negative elements that nullifies the existing motivation (Dornyeie & Ushioda, 2011), and the negative view and disbelief of a demotivated teacher in students' abilities, progress and outcomes enabled him to feel the need to be in control and the difficulty to be enthusiastic about learners, as matched with motivated teacher, reported enthusiasm about teaching and students work (Atkinson, 2000). Highly motivated teachers may be more likely to promote a learning environment which enhances student's optimal motivation. (Sheldon & Filak, 2008, Deci & Ryan, 2000), and it is a vital incentive to proliferate work performance and job satisfaction, which in turn is essential factor for classroom effectiveness as well as for school improvement (Santisi et.al, 2014).

### **3. Teacher effectiveness in relation to teacher's self-efficacy beliefs**

The concept of self-efficacy beliefs was introduced by Bandura in 1977. It is an assessment of one's capabilities to attain a desired level of performance in a given endeavour. As stated by Bandura (1977), that among the factors of personal agency, nothing is more important or dominant than, the individual's own belief (self-efficacy) about his / her power to have control over the circumstances. Self-efficacy impacts teacher's instructional practice, enthusiasm, commitment and teaching behaviour and also helps teacher to increase persistence in working with challenging students (e.g. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Research evidence indicated that teachers self-efficacy is linked to job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010) and level of stress (e.g. Klassen & Chiu, 2011).

Convincing evidences revealed that teacher's self-efficacy impacts students learning (e.g. Campbell et.al, 2003), it has also been found that self-efficacy predicts multiple cognitive, affective and behavioural responses (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008), including, protects teacher from job strain, burnout and emotional exhaustion (Shwarzer and Hallum, 2008, Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Teachers self-efficacy beliefs would be linked to teacher's efforts investing in teaching, the goals they set and their resilience in overcoming the problems during stressful and challenging situations (Tschannen Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998). Subsequently teacher effectiveness mainly relies on teachers personal agency, the quality of teachers to be self-regulating, self-organising, self-reflective and practical in their approach- that determines the significance of self-efficacy as an important factor of teacher effectiveness. Research evidences have revealed that teachers with higher level of self-efficacy can produce superior students achievements (e.g. Ross, Hogaboam-Gray & Hanay; 2001) and can also led to student's sense of efficacy, promoting the habit of, more active participation of students in class room activities ( e.g. Ross, Hogaboam-Gray & Hanay, 2001). Research findings have also indicated that teacher's self-efficacy beliefs plays an important part in regulating their commitment to school as well as in their job satisfaction( e.g. Caprara, Barbaranelli, Petitta et. al, 2003). It is expected that self-efficacy accompanies job satisfaction, which in turn leads to sustain their efforts towards maximal students' academic achievement.

### **4. Teacher effectiveness in relation to teaching experience:**

Teacher experience is significantly linked with student's achievement gains. Increases in teacher effectiveness linked with teacher experience are most steep in teacher's initial years, but continues to be significant as teacher reach the second and third decades of their carrier (Kini & Podolsky, 2016) and as the teacher becomes experienced, the learners not merely acquires more but they are expected to perform better on other dimensions of success, e.g. school attendance (Kini and Podolsky;

2016). Research outcomes indicated that the effects of teaching experience on learning outcomes of students have shown a strong association between teaching experience and teacher effectiveness, conclusive evidences revealed that inexperienced teachers are less effective than experienced or senior teachers (e.g. Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2000). Anne Podolsky, Tara Kini and Linda Darling-Hammond (2019) have reviewed thirty research studies, examining the impact of teaching experience on learner success, they concluded that out of thirty studies twenty eight studies are showing that teaching experience is significantly and positively linked with teacher effectiveness.

Although teachers in the first year of teaching are significantly less effective than more experienced teachers (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007), however beyond a teachers third year of teaching, returns to experience are generally flat (Boyd et.al, 2006, Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008, & Staiger & Rockoff, 2010). This view was also supported by King & Rice (2010), they indicated that the influence of teaching experience is higher during the early few years of profession, then after, the marginal return diminishes, they also revealed that the magnitude of teacher experience effects varies, based on teacher's level of education and subject area, were as some other studies are unable to identify reliable and statistically significant links between teacher experience and student achievement (e.g. Blomeke, Olsen, & Suhl, 2016, Gustaffsson & Nilson, 2016). But to cap it all, well documented evidences from numerous studies showed that, on average, a brand new teachers are less effective as compared to those with some experience (e.g. Clotfelter, 2006, Hariss & Sass, 2011, Ladd & Sorensen, 2017).

### **5. Teacher effectiveness in relation to Pedagogical competence**

Another, less studied, indicator of teacher quality is the pedagogical knowledge of teachers. Pedagogical knowledge refers to the specialised knowledge of teachers for creating effective teaching and learning environments for all students (Guerriero, 2014). Well documented evidences indicated that teachers pedagogical knowledge is linked to better instructional quality (e.g. higher cognitive activation, better instructional pacing, better rapport building between teacher and students), along with better student achievement (e.g., Konig, 2014, Konig & Pflanzl, 2016). Pedagogical content knowledge is regarded as one of the main cognitive component of teacher competence (Blomeke et.al, 2015, cited in Konig & Kramer, 2016), this view was also supported by Ingvarson & Rowley (2017) they analysed that pedagogical content knowledge was an important factor for recognising potentially effective new teacher candidates. It is referring to the knowledge teacher need to prepare, structure and evaluate lessons (Structure), to motivate and support students as well as manage classroom (Motivation and classroom

management), to deal with heterogeneous students in the classroom (Adaptivity), and to assess students (Assessment) (Konig et al., 2011).

Content pedagogical knowledge is an essential factor for teacher effectiveness as well as for mounting constructivist beliefs in teaching and learning process (Kunter, Klusmann, et al., 2013). A growing number of studies have indicated that more effective teachers, set realistic goals, try and give reinforcement to learners for learning, use various teaching methods, apply participative methods of teaching, present information in a clear manner, maximise teaching time through systematic measures, observe and assess the students' progress and provide feedback at the proper time (e.g., McBer, 2000). There is a general consensus that content-specific knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge are extremely linked for effective teaching. Teachers need a broad repertoire of teaching methods to cater for the student diversity and to build a suitable teaching-learning environment (Oser & Baeriswyl, 2001). Pedagogical knowledge competencies must be mastered by the teachers for directing and managing learning interactions in the classroom.

## **6. Teacher effectiveness in relation to Teacher resilience**

Commonly resilience is understood as the capacity to cope, adapt or bounce back from adverse events or situations (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011). Teacher resilience as defined by Gu & Day (2013) is "the ability to cope-up the inexorable uncertainties of teaching...driven by teachers educational purpose and moral values...". The demands of teaching suggest that factors that determine commitment and resilience in the face of adversity might play a significant role in determining teacher effectiveness (Stanford, 2001). Teacher's role has become largely more stressful, making resilience progressively more significant as it is attached to teacher effectiveness (Beltman, Mansfield & Harris 2016; Gu & Day, 2007), and teacher retention (Richards et al., 2016). As Gu & Day (2013) has pointed it out that "resilience" is a prerequisite condition for a teacher to be successful. Building resilience in an organisational setting places a lot of significance on the effectiveness of organisational context, it is important for organisations to know how to best support and foster resilience among teachers. Present day teachers are facing a lot of challenges that require greater resilience in order to be effective and have carrier stamina (Avey et al. as cited in Sautelle, Bowles, Hattie, & Arifin, 2015, p. 56).

### **Overview:**

The study was aimed to find out the general attributes of teachers contributing to *teacher effectiveness*. The study suggests that *teacher effectiveness* is a combination of different traits or factors like teacher's self-efficacy, motivation to teach, teacher

resilience, pedagogical competence, personality traits and teaching experience. So therefore for a teacher to be effective, they need to have a balanced personality, because *teacher effectiveness* is significantly influenced by personality factors of teachers (Harris & Sass, 2009). Teacher's personal motivation to teach plays an important role for a teacher to be effective. Highly motivated teachers are more likely to promote a learning environment which enhances student's optimal motivation. (Sheldon & Filak, 2008, Deci & Ryan, 2000). Similarly self-efficacy impacts teacher's instructional practice, enthusiasm, commitment and teaching behaviour and also helps teacher to increase persistence in working with challenging students (e.g. Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). It was also found that teachers pedagogical knowledge is linked to better instructional quality, along with better student achievement (e.g., Konig, 2014, Konig & Pflanzl, 2016). Teacher resilience was also found out to be a significant factor contributing to *teacher effectiveness*. To cap it all, well documented evidences from numerous studies showed that, on average, a brand new teachers are less effective as compared to those with some experience (Clotfelter, 2006, Hariss & Sass, 2011, Ladd & Sorensen, 2017).

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, we must say, that the success or failure of any educational system mainly depends up on the teachers. As rightly stated by National Education Commission (1964-66), that "among all the different factors which influences the quality and contribution of education to national development, the character, quality and proficiency of teachers are absolutely the most significant". So the effectiveness of any educational system largely depends upon the effectiveness of teachers, therefore it is important for them to have higher standards of professional efficiency and effectiveness in order to meet the demands of higher complexity and specialisation.

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