

3B

Practice section

“Good teaching” from the students’ point of view: results of a small survey

Based on questionnaires from the HLT classes of Sakine Koç, Dragana Dimitrijević, Valeria Bovina, Nexhmije Mehmetaj and Nexhat Maloku, evaluated by Basil Schader.

As a practice-oriented complement to Part A of this chapter, and following a suggestion by its author, Prof. Helmke, a small survey was initiated in five HLT classes in Switzerland. The goal was to contrast the research and scientifically-oriented perspective in Part A with the views of the directly -affected, that is, the students. In your view, what makes “a good teacher”, what are the characteristics of good classroom teaching?

The survey makes no claims to be representative or scientific in nature in terms of the composition of the samples and the circumstances of their application; the results can therefore only serve as an atmospheric picture.

Concerning the collection of survey data –which occurred unfortunately during the already stressful weeks before the summer holiday 2014 – participating HLT instructors were asked to administer in their classes a survey sheet (a master copy was supplied) to be filled out (with indication of age and gender):

“please complete the beginnings of the following sentences:

- A good teacher for me is...
- Classroom teaching is good for me, when...
- The following comes to mind when I hear the term (word), «teacher» or «schoolmasterly» ...”

Four classes with a total of 76 students filled out the sheets concerning the teachers and classroom instruction in general; another class modified the survey on their own and listed the answer to the question “What are the criteria for good HLT instruction?”

Surveys with three sentence beginnings (see above, for classes)	lower grade (8–9 years)		middle level (10–12 years)		upper level (13–15 years)		Total
	f	m	f	m	f	m	
Turkish HLT Canton of Zurich (S. Koç)	7	3	3	1	0	0	14
Serbian HLT Canton of Aargau (D. Dimitrijević)	4	0	3	3	7	1	18
Italian HLT Canton of Zurich (V. Bovina)	0	0	6	5	0	0	11
Albanian HLT Canton of Jura; (N. Mehmetaj)	4	0	10	7	10	2	33
Total	15	3	22	16	17	3	76

The additional 29 sheets with the answers to the question about good HLT classroom instruction are from two HLT classes belonging to Nexhat Maloku in Zurich (only middle and upper level). The indications to age and gender unfortunately are missing.

In the following compilation of a few noticeable results, we are focusing first on the 76 sheets with the completed sentence beginnings only. In categorizing the answers, the following areas were inductively formulated (e.g. "characterization of pedagogical attitude") and subordinate categories (e.g. "is funny, tells jokes"). Systematic comparisons as to age, gender or language group are not possible in light of this insufficient data base.

"A good teacher for me, is a teacher who can help me"

(Milos, 10 yrs.)

The answers to the prompt "A good teacher for me is..." can be grouped into three different areas:

	Number of mentionings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referencing general characteristics ("nice", "smiles", "good"): 	26 (17f / 9m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referencing pedagogical attitude (with 9 subordinate categories) 	76 (54f / 22m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referencing didactic and professional competences (3 subordinate categories) 	40 (30f / 10m)

The most frequent response (29x) concerning the qualities of a good teacher can be summarized with adjectives such as "helpful, supportive, patient". In second place are general characteristics ("nice" etc., 26 mentionings). Almost as frequently mentioned (25x) in terms of the didactic-professional competence was the response "teaches us something"; followed by "explains clearly, helps well" and "is strict, can also be funny" respectively, "doesn't rant and shout" (each 10x).

The referenced sequence pertains to the total of all groups; within them, it varies somewhat (as with the Turkish and Serbian students who listed the general characteristics first and the characteristic "helpful" only in second place).

"Good classroom teaching is when you learn something new" / "...when I understand it"

(Simona, 10 yrs.; Rodolfo, 11 yrs.)

The answers to the beginning of the sentence or the prompt, respectively, of "classroom teaching is good for me, if..." fall into five areas, or criteria, with 0-4 subordinate categories:

	Number of mentionings:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion learning efficiency ("when I learn something new") 	35 (30f / 5m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion methodology and didactics (with 4 subordinate categories) 	35 (27f / 8m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion instructional/class climate (2 subordinate categories) 	17 (12f / 5m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion pedagogical aspects *) (2 subordinate categories) 	13 (9f / 4m)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criterion social aspects (meet friends, break, etc.) 	6 (3f / 3m)

*) The criterion "pedagogical aspects" frequently elicited the same responses as the impulse "a good teacher is..."

By far the most frequently mentioned (35x) characteristics refer to learning efficiency ("that I learn something [new]"). With considerably less frequency (13 each) follow the responses "when it is interesting/cool" and "when we also have fun, when I feel happy, when the mood is good". In third place comes the response "when we play games"; and from 10 of these characterizations, 8 emanate from the lower level. In fourth place with 8 references each concerning the pedagogical aspect, "when the teacher explains everything well" and the criterion "varied lessons".

There are subtle differences as well in this respect; Turkish students, for instance, list the criterion "varied lessons" and "play games" in first place, followed by learning efficiency in second.

“The HLT teacher must be setting an example, and not do anything inappropriate”

(Demet, 11 yrs.)

The prompt “to the notion of <teacher> or schoolmasterly, occurs to me>...” yielded far fewer responses than the first two impulses. The namings were assigned to four areas with 1–5 subordinate categories:

	Number of mentionings:
• Character aspects of the teacher (3 subordinate categories)	19 (13f / 6m)
• Associations to teachers' pedagogical approach	4 (2f / 2m)
• Profession-related methodological –didactic aspects (2 subordinate categories)	17 (12f / 5m)
• Diverse associations (5 subordinate categories)	53 (38f / 15m)

The most frequently named association in terms of “teacher” is hardly surprising: “school, learning, various subjects” (24x), followed by “homework assignments, tests, monitoring, grades” (23x) and “someone who can teach us something” (17x). The most interesting aspect, perhaps, is that in the area of “character aspects” 12 out of 19 responses (“role model”, “respect” etc.) were submitted by the Albanian group from the Canton of Jura. This is represented by the statement of the 17 year old Behar from Sweden in chapter 2 B.4, who lived and attended school in his native Kosovo/a until the age of 10: “In Kosovo, discipline is much better, because teachers are respected. Here in Sweden, there are many conceited students who are disrespectful. (...)”. To draw conclusions from culture-specific interpretations of the idea of respect would, of course not be accurate, as it would require a much more thorough in-depth study.

“A class outing to the Europapark! Camping!!”

(student in the Albanian HLT)

The 29 sheets with answers to the above referenced criteria about a good HLT (filled in by Albanian students from the middle and upper levels in Zurich) are significantly more strongly focused on the methodological-didactical aspects of teaching than the others.

It is interesting to see how aspects of teaching and learning that evidently are familiar to the students from their regular classes, are now also demanded in HLT classes.

Accordingly, many students also demand more games/playful learning activities, more group work, more (group) presentations, working with forms of the school theatre, less didactic monoculture (“not always repeat the same idea [namely: read a text and answer questions about it]”, more exciting lessons, instructional trips/excursions/museum visits, work on the computer, watch films together). In addition, the same points are raised as in the above survey: the teacher must help/support/have more time for individual students/must be more strict, give more tests, etc.

The teacher of the classes concerned – an admittedly highly engaged and distinguished educator – came to the conclusion that students probably should and could be more involved in the planning aspect, but that the restricted framework of two hours per week in multilevel classes simply will not accommodate otherwise entirely desirable features.