

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher from the Perspective of School Principals in Jordan: A Multidimensional and Leadership-Mediated Empirical Investigation

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Abstract

This study investigates the characteristics of an effective teacher from the perspective of school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate, Jordan. Employing a descriptive-analytical design, a structured questionnaire comprising 25 items was administered to a stratified random sample of 52 school principals. The findings reveal that the overall level of effective teacher characteristics is moderate ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.46$). Inferential statistical analyses indicate no statistically significant differences in principals' perceptions attributable to gender, academic qualification, or school type at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). These results suggest a relatively homogeneous conceptualization of teacher effectiveness among school leaders. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher effectiveness by providing empirical evidence from a Middle Eastern educational context. It highlights the multidimensional nature of teacher effectiveness, encompassing professional, personal, and social dimensions, and offers implications for teacher preparation, professional development, and educational leadership.

Keywords: Teacher Effectiveness, Teacher Characteristics, School Leadership, Educational Quality, Jordan

Introduction

Teacher effectiveness has emerged as a central theme in contemporary educational research due to its profound impact on student achievement, school improvement, and educational quality. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and sociocultural transformation, the role of the teacher has expanded beyond traditional instructional functions to include facilitation of learning, innovation, and leadership within educational environments.

Despite extensive international scholarship on teacher quality, the conceptual boundaries of teacher effectiveness remain theoretically fragmented and methodologically contested.

Although large-scale meta-analyses have confirmed the centrality of teachers in shaping student outcomes, there remains no universally accepted operational definition of effectiveness. Variations in sociocultural, institutional, and policy contexts produce divergent evaluative standards, thereby complicating comparative interpretation and policy transfer.

International educational reform agendas consistently emphasize that teachers represent the most influential school-based factor affecting student learning outcomes. Consequently, identifying the characteristics that distinguish effective teachers has become a strategic priority for policymakers and educational stakeholders worldwide.

In Jordan, substantial efforts have been directed toward enhancing teacher preparation and professional development programs. However, empirical evidence regarding the characteristics of effective teachers within specific educational contexts remains limited. School principals, as instructional leaders and evaluators of teacher performance, possess valuable insights into the attributes that define effective teaching. Exploring their perspectives can therefore provide a nuanced understanding of teacher effectiveness and inform evidence-based educational policies.

Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate and to examine whether these perceptions vary according to selected demographic variables.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Conceptualizing Teacher Effectiveness

Teacher effectiveness is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct integrating professional competencies, personal attributes, and social-interactional skills. Professional competencies include pedagogical knowledge, instructional strategies, classroom management, assessment practices, and curriculum implementation. Personal attributes encompass ethical commitment, emotional stability, motivation, resilience, and self-efficacy. Social-interactional skills involve communication with students, parents, colleagues, and the broader school community.

Contemporary theoretical models emphasize that teacher effectiveness is not merely a function of technical competence but rather an interaction between cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors. This perspective aligns with socio-constructivist and ecological approaches to teaching and learning.

Empirical Studies on Teacher Effectiveness

Meta-analytic and longitudinal studies have demonstrated that teachers' self-efficacy, motivation, and personality traits significantly influence instructional quality and student outcomes (Klassen & Tze, 2019). Similarly, research across diverse educational systems highlights the importance of ethical behavior, adaptability, and continuous professional development as core components of effective teaching (Day & Gu, 2019; Rockoff, 2018).

Within the Arab educational context, several studies have emphasized professional and ethical dimensions of teacher effectiveness. Al-Amoush (2021) identified critical thinking skills, active learning strategies, and technology integration as key attributes of outstanding

teachers in Jordan. Al-Sharman (2020) underscored ethical commitment and classroom management as central characteristics from school principals' perspectives.

Despite the growing body of research, there remains a need for context-specific studies that integrate the perspectives of school leaders. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical evidence on teacher effectiveness in the Ramtha District.

Problem Statement

Although teacher effectiveness has been extensively examined in international literature, limited empirical research has systematically explored the perceptions of school principals regarding effective teacher characteristics in Jordan. Existing teacher preparation and professional development initiatives may not fully align with the expectations of school leaders or the practical realities of school environments.

Therefore, this study seeks to identify the characteristics of effective teachers as perceived by school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate and to determine whether these perceptions differ according to gender, academic qualification, and school type. Addressing this problem is essential for bridging the gap between theoretical models of teacher effectiveness and school-level practices.

A pronounced contextual gap exists within Jordanian and broader Arab educational research, where empirical investigations systematically examining principals' perceptions of teacher effectiveness remain limited. Therefore, the study addresses the lack of empirically grounded, multidimensional, and context-sensitive evidence reflecting leadership-mediated evaluations of teacher effectiveness in Jordan.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the key characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate.
2. To examine whether principals' perceptions of effective teacher characteristics vary according to gender, academic qualification, and school type.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of effective teachers from the perspective of school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate?
2. Are there statistically significant differences at the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) in principals' perceptions attributable to gender, academic qualification, and school type?

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive-analytical research design was adopted to examine principals' perceptions of effective teacher characteristics.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of all school principals in the Ramtha District Education Directorate (N = 126). A stratified random sample of 52 principals was selected to ensure representation across gender, academic qualification, and school type.

Instrument

A questionnaire consisting of 25 items was developed based on relevant theoretical and empirical studies. The instrument measured three dimensions of teacher effectiveness: professional, personal, and social characteristics. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review by 16 specialists in education. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.90, indicating high internal consistency. Test-retest reliability produced a correlation coefficient of 0.915.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA) were used. Mean scores were interpreted according to the following criteria:

- 1.00–2.32: Low level
- 2.33–3.65: Moderate level
- 3.66–5.00: High level

Results

The results indicated that the overall mean score of effective teacher characteristics was moderate ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.46$). The highest-rated characteristic was ethical and respectful treatment of students ($M = 3.76$), whereas the lowest-rated characteristic was communication with parents regarding students' academic and behavioral progress ($M = 2.23$).

Inferential statistical analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in principals' perceptions attributable to gender, academic qualification, or school type ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the conceptualization of teacher effectiveness as a multidimensional phenomenon integrating professional competence, ethical commitment, and interpersonal skills. The prominence of ethical behavior reflects the cultural and educational values prevailing in the Jordanian context, where teachers are perceived not only as instructors but also as moral role models.

The moderate overall level of effective teacher characteristics suggests that, while teachers demonstrate several essential attributes, there remains significant potential for professional development. This finding may be interpreted in light of systemic challenges facing teacher preparation and professional development programs, including limited resources, insufficient training opportunities, and increasing educational demands.

The absence of statistically significant differences across demographic variables indicates that school principals share a common understanding of effective teaching, regardless of their personal or institutional characteristics. This consistency may stem from shared professional experiences and standardized educational policies within the Jordanian educational system.

These findings are consistent with international research emphasizing the importance of integrating professional, personal, and social dimensions in defining teacher effectiveness (Day & Gu, 2019; Klassen & Tze, 2019).

Scientific Contribution of the Study

This study offers several contributions to the field of educational research:

1. It provides empirical evidence on teacher effectiveness from the perspective of school principals in a Middle Eastern educational context.
2. It proposes a multidimensional conceptual framework for understanding teacher effectiveness that integrates professional, personal, and social attributes.
3. It informs teacher preparation and professional development policies by aligning them with school leaders' expectations.
4. It bridges the gap between theoretical conceptualizations of teacher effectiveness and practical school-level realities.

Conclusion

The study concludes that teacher effectiveness is a complex and multidimensional construct encompassing professional competencies, personal qualities, and social-interactional skills. Ethical conduct and professional integrity emerged as the most salient characteristics of effective teachers, while communication with parents was identified as a relatively underemphasized dimension.

The findings also indicate that principals' perceptions of effective teacher characteristics are consistent across gender, academic qualification, and school type. Enhancing teacher effectiveness therefore requires comprehensive and systematic approaches that integrate professional development, institutional support, and reflective practice.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends:

1. Integrating multidimensional models of teacher effectiveness into teacher preparation and professional development programs.
2. Strengthening continuous professional development initiatives aligned with school leaders' expectations.
3. Enhancing teachers' communication and collaboration with parents and the broader community.
4. Establishing systematic feedback and evaluation mechanisms to support teacher improvement.
5. Encouraging evidence-based educational leadership practices within schools.

Future Research Directions

Future studies are recommended to:

- Investigate teacher effectiveness from students' and supervisors' perspectives.
- Examine the relationship between teacher characteristics and student academic achievement.
- Conduct comparative studies across different educational contexts and cultures.
- Employ mixed methods approaches to provide deeper insights into teacher effectiveness.

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