

# Differences and Similarities between Concepts of Good, Great, and Leading Teacher

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**Abstract**—Good, great, and leading teachers are expected to be the role models for students, society, professional community. Their role model includes expertise, trustworthiness, originality, facilitating, cooperation and communication. Teachers demonstrate their professional passion through their professionalism and professional attitudes. Usually, we call them teacher(s) leaders by integrating three notions such as good, great, and leading in a one-teacher leader. Here are described essences of three concepts: ‘good teacher,’ ‘great teacher,’ ‘and teacher leader’ as they are inseparable in teaching practices, teacher’s professional life, and educational interactions with students, fellow teachers, school administration, students’ families and school communities.

**Keywords**—Great teacher, good teacher, leading teacher, school, student.

## I. INTRODUCTION

TEACHERS are one of the main individuals in education, performing a number of significant functions for the society: directly influence human destinies by giving a good or bad education to the younger generation, acting as a role model for them [36]. However, there are teachers who not only do their job diligently or have excellent training, but somebody who can give more to both learners and society. They do it in a special way. They are highly productive, qualified and respected by others. These teachers are called great.

The analysis of the experience of such great teachers allow us to look at the learning process, teacher’s training and teacher’s personality from another angle [37]. These teachers can not only provide advice on how to avoid mistakes in teaching students, but also teach the secrets of working with learners, offer new techniques for working with students or outline new directions in learning. A number of factors causes the scientific interest to this problem. Firstly, there is not much research in the scientific literature regarding great teachers. Mainly research [27], [33] involved learners, their parents and other stakeholders to evaluate or give characteristics of great teachers. However, it is still not common to include the opinion of gymnasium teachers, who are recognized as great, to the description of the phenomenon of the great teacher. Secondly, the concepts of good and great teachers are often used interchangeably in the literature [6]. In fact, these concepts differ from each other and the concept of great teacher has other characteristics.

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## II. CONCEPT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Understanding of what it means to be a great teacher comes from the analysis of lived experiences of teachers. We think that reflection is the tool for understanding of these great teachers’ experiences. Moreover, reflection is the basis of such qualitative method as phenomenology. We used McKenna’s model of analyzing concept. This model is sufficient to qualitative research and gives us appropriate organizational template for analysis of concepts of good and great teachers [28]. The model includes nine steps, as:

1. select the concept of interest,
2. define the aims of the analysis,
3. identify meanings of the concept,
4. determine the defining attributes,
5. identify a model case,
6. identify alternative cases,
7. identify antecedents and consequences,
8. consider context and values
9. identify empirical indicators.

## III. A GOOD TEACHER

Teachers play the pivotal role in the educational. The problem is that only some of them become good teachers. Is it really the question of training or are there other aspects that play significant role in being good teacher, like: personality of the teacher, reflection, instruction that they received during studies at pedagogical universities, post-diploma institutions or at special courses [21].

The study aim was to clarify the concept of a good teacher by identifying its components to make it possible to differentiate it from other similar concepts and use it easily in future research.

The concept of good teacher includes personal and professional qualities in teaching [13]. A good teacher may be characterized by a state of harmony between the various levels: classroom management, preparation to lessons, individual development of every student [21]. Khang [20] outlines the definition for good teacher as a competent teacher who cherishes their students and holds them in unconditional positive regard. Harden & Crosby [15] define “good teacher” as a teacher who helps the student to learn and contributes to this in a number of ways. Thus, we understand and will use such definition of “good teacher” as: a teacher who has a number of personal qualities and professional characteristics that, on the

one hand, helps him/her following rules to be successful in teaching and, on the other hand, deserves respect from students.

The defining attributes differentiates the concept of good teacher from similar or related concepts [44]. Good teachers have personal orientation. It means that they are open-minded, an idea-person, flexible and have sense of humor [20]. Haider & Jalal [13] pointed out that every good teacher is spontaneous person in the classroom and has willingness to share a “personal side”. It means that good teacher has his/her own private life with interests that are not connected with school [5]. Good teachers have expertise, teaching, communication, professional and student orientations [20]. Besides that, good teachers instill confidence in order to make students succeed academically. They always set high expectations on their students. Good teachers modify their teaching strategies according to the particular students, subject matter and learning environment [41]. Good teachers are good listeners and competent in interaction with students. Good teachers are able to self-study/self-develop, fair (justice), have passion [20].

The most important feature for a good teacher is the personality of the teacher. The presence of such personal characteristics as enthusiasm, flexibility and love of students plays more significant role than any other in the concept of good teacher [21]. No instruction, training or coaching can help to become a good teacher. It comes from the nature of the teacher. Such kind of teachers has charisma, which cannot be acquired. These teachers are masters in making a difference to students' lives [29].

Before becoming a good teacher, good teachers have a certain background in teaching. They have already developed strong and positive relationships with stakeholders of educational process, especially with students [40]. Also, these teachers have a practice in implementing classroom management on by setting up proper rules and procedures and upholding them. The last important thing is becoming competent in picking up as many pedagogical tools as possible so that students learn efficiently.

A good teacher can provide stimulation for school environment to become better, diagnose fields for improvement, give advice for parents how to become better parents or to understand the student, inspire other teachers not stop in their personal and professional growth [32]. As for long-term impact, Bennett [3] considers that good teachers give added value for their students. For instance, they can significantly improve students' perspective in career and family success. These students will remember such good teachers all their life [14].

There are different groups of contextual factors, which are likely to be significant in influencing good teachers. They are the following [22, p.87]:

- social (e.g., different types peer relationships and external community relationships);
- political (e.g., initiatives at the national/federal, state/provincial, district, and school levels);
- cultural (e.g., localized and school cultures, issues of diversity);
- personal/individual (e.g., personal and individual concerns,

self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence).

Also, the context can be reflected in twelve roles in which a good teacher needs to be competent, and it would be uncommon to expect that one person has all required competences. These roles are the following [8], [15]:

- the teacher as information provider (the lecturer, practical teacher, etc.);
- the teacher as role model (on-the-job role model, model as a teacher, etc.);
- the teacher as facilitator (the learning facilitator, the mentor, etc.);
- the teacher as assessor (the student assessor, the curriculum assessor, etc.);
- the teacher as planner (the curriculum planner, the course planner, etc.);
- the teacher as resource developer (the resource material creator, the study guide producer, etc.).

The combination of aforementioned factors creates the context in which the concept of good teacher exists.

The values of good teacher have been stated as follows [24]: patience, honesty, respectfulness, kindness, fairness. Thus, a set of values helps to become the teacher good. This good teacher needs to correlate his/her personal features with political, cultural or social contexts. Also, good teachers know that they need to be competent in different competences and work as an information provider, role model, facilitator, assessor, planner or as a resource developer.

While the concept of good teacher is understood differently; therefore, measuring an individual good teacher's impact is very difficult. Khang [20] offers two main instruments which help to identify the good teacher: observations on personal characteristics (e.g., effective communication skills, capability of being tolerant of others' ideas and views, respects, being warm and friendly, a good sense of humor, self-confidence). Competence in pedagogical, psychological and subject aspects (e.g., knowledge about the subject matter, the ability to adapt to student needs, the ability to explain material clearly, providing a comfortable learning atmosphere, motivation students to do their best, the appropriate amount and level of assignments).

Good teacher is a teacher who has a number of personal qualities and professional characteristics that, on the one hand, helps him/her following rules to be successful in teaching and, on the other hand, deserves respect from students.

The personality of the teacher and his/her background are main antecedents in the occurrence of the concept of good teacher. Also, good teachers have short-term and long-lasting impact on the lives of students. The good teacher needs to correlate his/her personal features with political, cultural or social contexts.

#### IV. A GREAT TEACHER

Teachers matter more in the educational system than schools or curriculum [33]. Every year parents choose schools focusing more on the teacher for their students. They want to know that their students will have an outstanding teacher [36]. Some of parents do it intuitively, while others know that by high school,

the effect of the strong teacher would become too great [33]. It is what parents expect from this teacher and what they wish for their students.

The aim was to clarify the concept of great teacher by identifying its components to make it possible to differentiate it from other similar concepts and use it easily in future research.

Great teachers are individuals who show that they are committed to intellectual and personal development of students, teach them to think deeply about simple things and help young people come to know themselves and the power they have to change the world [6]. Great teacher is a person who creates a balance between curricular knowledge and the ability to build relationships with students [45]. Great teacher leads to improved student achievement using outcomes that matter to their future success [9]. This future perspective is the main feature in this definition [18] of great teacher. Great teachers work in terms of the long-term effects on their students. This type of teachers consistently and passionately starts or move students' minds along a path, prepares them for the journey and pushes them into the future [18].

The defining attributes differentiate the concept of great teacher from similar or related concepts [44]. The concept of great teacher can be divided into two groups: the teacher as an individual and teaching practice [1]. The concept of great teacher has to include six main orientations: personal, expertise, student, teaching, communication and professional [20]. The concept of great teacher involves pedagogical content knowledge, quality of instruction, classroom management, teacher beliefs and professional behavior [9]. Five distinct "awarenesses" are main in defining attributes of the concept of a 'great teacher': awareness of the self as a teacher, awareness of the teaching process, awareness of the student, awareness of interaction, and awareness of context [35].

Great teachers have expertise characteristics, student orientation, they are deep understanders of students, respect students and motivate them to grow through learning [6], [20]. Great teachers have their own adjustment regarding the teaching process [6]. These teachers are experts in managing their classroom and have clear objectives regarding lessons, students' engagements or assessments [33].

Great teachers have orientation to interactions [35]. They are professionally oriented [45]. Great teachers are skilled leaders, who focus on shared decision-making and teamwork, as well as on community building and convey this sense of leadership to students [6]. In addition, great teachers constantly reflect on what they are doing and adapt accordingly [33]. Great teachers have their own teacher beliefs and they set high expectations for all students. They convince students that they are capable of more and believe in their powers [45].

The concept of great teacher is constructed by different factors. The first group is those who believe that natural factor plays the most important part in constructing of great teacher. It means that ability to demonstrate compassion, the emotional constancy, the courage to take risks and not to be vulnerable make the personality of great teacher [35]. Others [45] define that the concept of great teacher is socially constructed. Where the teacher is, what kind of students he/she is teaching, what

kinds of communities he/she has, the cultural background of the teacher make the foundation for the educator to become the great teacher [45]. The third and the last group is those who identify that the combination of natural and social factors help the person to become a great teacher. It means that the emergence of great teacher at school demands on how competent the teacher is in his/her school subject, in questions of curriculum and national standards of education, classroom management and learning, how enthusiastic and caring this teacher is and whether the teacher has the desire to make a difference in the lives of young generation. Besides personal characteristics, cognitive capabilities, social, cultural and emotional competences and communicational skills, the person needs to have motivation, attitudes, beliefs and expectations towards the students, high level of self-efficacy, self-reflection and collegiality in order to become a great teacher [1].

The specific feature of great teachers is that they can combine short-term and long-term influence inside and outside the school and their students. Short-term effect can be resulted in higher competence of students in different school subjects, teacher well-being and school outcomes (e.g., community engagement) [1]. Great teachers have specific short-term effect, which contributes to positive academic, attitudinal and social outcomes for their students. It can be resulted in regular attendance of students, on-time promotion to the next grade, on-time graduation, self-efficacy or cooperative behavior [23]. Great teachers working in terms of long-term effects on their students consistently and passionately prepare students for the journey in real life and push them into the future [18]. It means that such kind of teachers charge students on academic success, inspire them to work harder or pursue a certain goal, become a trusted source of advice for students and teach them important life lessons that will help students succeed after the graduation of the school.

Researchers [2], [4], [8] identify the directions in which great teachers can work. These directions associate with contexts. First, great teachers are school leaders taking part in hiring, teacher evaluation, creating networks inside and outside of their school. Second, great teachers are academic leaders working as mentors, coaches, curriculum specialists, workshop leaders, data specialist, etc. Third, they do administrative tasks inside the school coordinating schedules or providing learning resources. Fourth, great teachers are engaged in the curriculum development, national standards of education or other activities outside the school [43].

The emergence and actions from great teachers provide values for the environment inside and outside the school. They are the following:

- Knowledge: great teachers inspire and engage students in loving the learning process and searching for knowledge that are relevant for them.
- Hard work: great teachers value hard work and show through their own example for students how to work hard and confirm them why it is so important for them.
- Courage: great teachers educate students what is courage, how to overcome own fears and practice it in private life.
- Decisiveness: great teachers value and encourage students

to make difficult choices firstly within their school subjects and later in students' own lives.

- Joy of living: great teachers show and confirm that how wonderful the process of learning is in particular and life in general [4].
- Perseverance: great teachers instill this value in their students encouraging to learn constantly and getting pleasure from it.
- Compassion: great teachers encourage their students to have compassion for one another by educating them to listen to and value others' opinions inside and outside of the classroom.

The empirical indicators are "explicit referents for appraising or measuring the existence of the concept" [44, p.159]. While the concept of 'great teacher' is understood differently by scholars, measuring a great teacher's impact is very difficult.

#### V. TEACHER LEADERSHIP: CLASSROOM, SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Teacher leadership is not a new concept. Teacher leadership within the professional and school practices experienced three evolutionary stages [37]:

- 1) Teacher leaders perform their managerial roles by serving as department heads, critical colleagues for other teachers. They are leaders in instruction and curriculum development.
- 2) Teacher leaders became instructional leaders or curriculum developers.
- 3) Teacher leaders worked with fellow teachers/colleagues to improve professional practices through redesigning schools, mentoring colleagues, solving school-wide problems, and engaging in professional development activities.

##### *Classroom*

Teachers as leaders must manage the teaching and learning challenges. The lack of the literature on teacher leadership in a classroom is empirical evidence detailing the leadership activities and perceptions of teachers in their role as instructors of their students. The lack of empirical research on teachers' perceptions and understanding regarding their leadership shows that they do not see the teaching as a part of their leadership at school or in a classroom [17], [31].

The leader identity is the internalization of an identity of teacher's self as a leader. Identity may be self-claimed by the teacher or be granted by others - students, fellow teachers, school administration, school community [39]. The leading role of a teacher is overcrowded with variety of roles at school and teachers do not see themselves as leaders at school and beyond [42]. The leader identity of a teacher is a progression resulting from them not initially recognizing teaching as a leadership role [16]. Teachers maintain their professional identity as a teacher while preparing to be leaders [7], what shows that teachers distinguish teaching and leadership and do not mix these two concepts. It means that teachers mostly are not granted a leader identity in their role of teaching and they exercise leadership with their colleagues, but they exercise teaching with

their students in a classroom. Thus, leader identity teachers experience when they engaged in leadership roles outside the classroom [42].

Self-regulation in teacher's leadership incorporates the control of psychological, cognitive and social aspects, for example, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, expectations and etc. [11], [31].

Self-determination in teacher's leadership is realized through decision-making and engaging into professional goals-related activities [34]. When the teacher identifies the self as a leader then s/he is capable to express the self-determination as the premise to improve teaching and learning flexible [31].

Implementation intentions in the context of teacher's leadership are related to acting in order to facilitate students' learning [31].

Teacher leaders through role-modeling at school influence organizational culture and organizational behavior [38]. Thus, teacher leaders influence students' thoughts, perceptions, behavior, values and attitudes [25], [31].

##### *Outside the Classroom*

Teacher's leadership is part of everyday professional activities. Teachers perform a lot of leading roles at school in regard to teaching, students' learning, curriculum development, instructing etc. [12]. Teacher leadership roles are performed at school and outside the school, in a classroom and beyond.

##### *School*

Teacher leadership is related to collaboration and cooperation with the school community through developing and constructing thoughts, ideas, projects, teaching and learning methods and models and etc. Teacher leadership is based on horizontal rather than vertical relationships.

Teacher's expertise at school is the organizational resource [10]. Non-recognition of the teacher's leadership in the school shows the limited attitudes of the school administration towards the potential of teachers' professional activity and expertise, which is directly related to the school culture, where the teacher has difficulty proving his competence and professionalism [26]. Schools need teachers and teacher leaders focusing on student success [4]. School administration do not implement all the leadership roles and teachers in this context play the important roles [26], [27]. School administration must support the teacher leadership at school and outside it, because teachers are the main professional leaders who know how to work best with students in a classroom [10].

The role of teacher leaders in professional learning communities with the goal of student learning is one of the priorities in school life. The success of professional learning communities requires school administration to share power, authority, and decision-making with teachers. Another dimension is the identification of student learning needs that are related to teaching methods. When teacher leaders have support from professional learning community at school it can be transformed and learning co-creation between the teacher and students can be implemented [19], [30].

Teachers use their expertise-based knowledge and knowing

for implementing the leadership potential for teaching and students' learning [10]. Through professional learning communities and other operational strategies, teachers build partnerships and there a key to these partnerships is empowerment [26]. Teacher leaders develop collaborative relationships [45]. Teachers are energized and engaged productively with their colleagues as they develop their expertise [2].

The concepts of 'good teacher' and 'great teacher' have similarities and differences. The key similarities between these concepts are that teachers are outstanding educators and belong to the minority in their schools. They can have similar personal and expertise characteristics, both are oriented to student, teaching, learning, educational interaction, also these teachers have short- and long-term impacts on students; they combine personal interests with social, political or cultural contexts of the school and its community; great and good teachers have the same roles to perform (information provider, role model, facilitator, assessor, planner and resource developer) and can be measured through similar empirical indicators. Having various behaviors, for instance, in roles, reality, perspectives or learning and having different attitudes towards, for example, expectations, vision, productivity and students, make the huge difference between 'good' and 'great' teachers. Moreover, the concept of a 'great teacher' is broader notion and is more abstracted than the concept of a 'good teacher'.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

'Great teachers' are 'great teacher' leaders who are capable to educate, inspire, influence their students. Being a good or great teacher is connected to teacher leadership through expression of personal features to others (being open to others), employing the emotional labor (being empathetic), understanding values (being faithful to educational values), sustaining mission (being loyal to school mission), collaborating (co-creating learning with students), and providing feedback (assessing the experience and learning form it).

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