

Qualities of Effective Teachers

by James H. Stronge

Þetta er bók þar sem lögð er áhersla á kennarann. Áhrif kennara á nemendur sína eru geysilega mikil. Kennarar hafa bein áhrif á hvernig nemendur læra, hvað þeir læra, hve mikið og hvernig nemendur koma fram við hvern annan. Þar sem kennarar hafa slík áhrif á nemendur þá er mikilvægt að skilja hvað kennarar ættu að gera til að hafa sem mest jákvæð áhrif á líf nemenda.

Bókin gerir grein fyrir þeim algenga bakgrunni og gerir grein fyrir sameiginlegri hegðun sem einkennir virka og árangursríka kennslu.

Introduction

The focus for this book is the teacher. The content is presented within the context of a person—the teacher—as opposed to viewing teaching skills as isolated processes. The book is research-based, and the style and format are designed to be user-friendly providing easy-to-use summaries and tools for teacher effectiveness.

If finding or becoming an effective teacher were simple, this book would not be needed. If a single method for developing an effective teacher existed, such a teacher would be in every classroom. Nonetheless, there are common attributes that characterize effective teachers.

Teachers have a powerful, long-lasting influence on their students. They directly affect how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and the ways they interact with one another and the world around them. Considering the degree of the teacher's influence, it is important to understand what teachers should do to promote positive results in the lives of students—with regard to school achievement, positive attitudes toward school, interest in learning, and other desirable outcomes. This understanding should be based both on what experts and stakeholders think teachers should do and on what educational research has shown to be significant in the preparation and practice of effective teachers.

Qualities of Effective Teachers chronicles the common background and identifies the common behaviors that characterize effectiveness in the classroom. Based on a comprehensive review and synthesis of research related to effective teaching, the book serves as a resource for teachers, administrators, and others interested in improving the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.

Defining an Effective Teacher

Effectiveness is an elusive concept when we consider the complex task of teaching. Some researchers define teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement. Others focus on high performance ratings from supervisors. Still others rely on comments from students, administrators, and other interested stakeholders. In fact, in addition to *effective*, we vacillate on just how to refer to successful teachers. Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) noted that good teachers, at various times, have been called *ideal*, *analytical*, *dutiful*, *competent*, *expert*, *reflective*, *satisfying*, *diversity-responsive*, and *respected*.

A teacher's influence is far reaching, so it is challenging to define what outcomes might

show effectiveness and how those outcomes should be measured. In addition, many variables outside the teacher's control also affect each of the potential measures of effectiveness.

Despite the various complexities and regardless of what we call them, we can agree that effective teachers do make an extraordinary and lasting impact on the lives of students. In recent years, as the field of education has moved toward a stronger focus on accountability and on careful analysis of variables affecting educational outcomes, the teacher has proven time and again to be the most influential school-related force in student achievement. Consequently, in an attempt to develop an understanding of what teachers do to cause significant student learning, researchers have begun to focus on the specific characteristics and teaching processes employed by the most effective teachers.

The growing body of research concerned with teacher effectiveness has reinforced the notion that specific characteristics and behaviors matter in teaching, in terms of student achievement as well as other desirable outcomes. Although looking across studies yields some inconsistencies in defining elements of effectiveness, careful exploration of the research, nevertheless, helps confirm which practices are most important and which require further investigation. Commonalities highlighted in *Qualities of Effective Teachers* include characteristics of the teacher as an individual, teacher preparation, classroom management, and the way a teacher plans, teaches, and monitors student progress. Put these jigsaw pieces together and a portrait of an effective teacher takes shape.

Overview

Qualities of Effective Teachers sheds light on the elusive concept of teacher effectiveness by summarizing research results accumulated across several decades to define specific teacher behaviors that contribute to student achievement and other measures of effectiveness. The book was developed by focusing specifically on the *teacher* and her or his preparation, personality, and practice, rather than on other influences such as student demographics, school and district administration, or organizational decision-making outside the teacher's control. The sources considered in creating this synthesis of teacher background and behaviors include broad-based studies of teacher practice as linked to student achievement, case studies of teachers identified as effective within specific contexts, surveys and interviews among stakeholders, meta-analyses of teacher effectiveness studies, and other reviews of research.

The research findings and recommended practices identified in this book should seem like old friends to many teachers. For these effective teachers, the book should serve as a review and reminder for continued improvement. For others, the same findings serve to build awareness as they take steps to enhance their effectiveness. By focusing on teacher effectiveness, our ultimate goal is to improve the educational experiences and achievement of the students we serve in our schools.

Organization of the Book

Qualities of Effective Teachers is designed to serve as a resource and reference tool for educators. It identifies elements of effective teaching within broad categories and points readers interested in further exploration to the research studies and reviews used in the

preparation of the text. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 focuses on the research useful in developing a profile of what an effective teacher is, and Part 2 contains myriad resources.

The first six chapters address major categories of teacher effectiveness. The first two chapters explore the teacher as an individual and as a professional.

- Chapter 1 investigates prerequisites of effective teaching, focusing on the influence of a teacher's background and professional preparation. The implications of verbal ability, content knowledge, educational coursework, and teacher certification are explored.
- Chapter 2 examines what the effective teacher is like as a person, focusing on a teacher's nonacademic interactions with students and on the aspects of a teacher's behavior that make her loved, respected, and remembered by students as personally effective. This chapter also explores the significance of the teacher's professional attitude. This discussion emphasizes dedicated and reflective practice among effective teachers. Chapters 3 through 6 focus more specifically on aspects of a teacher's job responsibilities and practices.
- Chapter 3 considers the management and organizational skills an effective teacher displays, with emphasis on the establishment of an effective learning environment in which routines and discipline are established and maintained to serve as a backdrop for instruction and student engagement.
- Chapter 4 investigates organization for instruction with a focus on maximizing the amount of time allocated for instruction, communicating expectations for student achievement, and planning for instructional purposes.
- Chapter 5 focuses on implementation of instruction with an emphasis on communication and complexity of instructional content by using appropriate questioning techniques and supporting active learning.
- Chapter 6 examines monitoring student progress and potential through discussing the importance of homework and applying findings of student learning outcomes, as well as responding to and meeting the individual needs of special populations within the classroom.

Within each chapter, information is organized into categories of characteristics or behaviors that are supported by the existing research as important aspects of teacher effectiveness. Summaries of research are provided in a straightforward manner in each chapter, with a list of key references to guide the interested reader to further information on the topics. Chapter 7 contains a brief conclusion on what an effective teacher is and how teacher effectiveness can be improved.

Part 2, the final section of the text, includes teacher skills assessment checklists, behaviors to look for in effective teacher performance, an annotated bibliography of selected sources, and a complete reference list. This portion of the book focuses on helping teachers improve—whether the improvement is self-diagnosed or the result of supervisor assistance. In particular, the checklists and qualities should be helpful in

converting research findings into improved practice.

Uses for the Book

By closely aligning the attributes of high-quality teaching with curricula and assessments, we can be better equipped to identify links between classroom processes and desirable student outcomes. Thus, *Qualities of Effective Teachers* is aimed at improving the quality of teacher performance and learning opportunities for students. In this effort, the book can be a valuable resource for the following audiences:

- Teachers who desire to improve their own performance through analysis and reflective practice.
- Teacher leaders who are engaged in mentoring, peer coaching, and collaborative school-wide improvement.
- School administrators and department heads who supervise and evaluate teachers.
- Staff development specialists who plan and deliver training focused on improving instruction.
- Human resource specialists who are responsible for recruiting and selecting high-quality teacher applicants.
- Teacher and administrator educators who can employ the book's research synthesis in their teacher training and instructional leadership programs.
- Policy makers and their staffs who are responsible for developing tools and strategies for state or district teacher development and evaluation processes.

Each group contributes to the education of students and has a vested interest in their success.

Key references:

Archer, 1998; Cawelti, 1999a; Cotton, 1999, 2000; Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2000; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), no date; Olson, 1997; Stronge & Tucker, 2000; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997.