



## Characteristics of a Capable Teacher to Teach Effectively from Students' Perspective at Shahroud University of Medical Sciences

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### Abstract

**Background:** In addition to educational conditions and facilities, the presence of a good and capable teacher is an effective factor in improving teaching and learning processes. The present study aimed to determine the characteristics of a capable teacher from students' perspective at Shahroud university of medical sciences.

**Methods:** The present cross-sectional study was conducted on 289 students at Shahroud university of medical sciences during the academic year of 2017-2018 using a multi-stage random sampling method. Data were collected by a questionnaire containing demographic characteristics and factors affecting the evaluation of capable teachers, including six domains, namely personal characteristics (10 questions), teaching method (14 questions), evaluation and personal communication skills (10 questions), teacher's scholarship (4 questions), and educational rules (5 questions). The data were then analyzed using SPSS.

**Results:** The maximum and minimum mean scores were related to teaching methods ( $61.9 \pm 6.5$ ) and teacher's scholarship ( $16 \pm 3.1$ ) respectively. There were significant relationships between evaluation skills and students' residences, the field of study, and six domains of teacher evaluation and academic level, and six domains of academic satisfaction, evaluation skills, and scholarship.

**Conclusions:** From the learners' perspective, the most important characteristics of a capable teacher included the teaching method, personal communication, and personal characteristics respectively. Awareness of learners' perspectives on education can help teachers to provide informed teaching planning. According to the results of the present study, the criteria of a capable teacher can be evaluated for achieving effective teaching.

**Keywords:** Capable teacher, Teaching, Student, Shahroud.

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take steps towards improving the scientific and research quality of faculty members and monitoring their performance.<sup>2</sup>

Various studies have found that, based on students' needs and learning environment, a good teacher should have characteristics such as general knowledge, professional competence, interpersonal communication, teaching skills, behavioral characteristics, more student contact, being a positive role model, encouraging communication, and good organization of activities, professional attitude towards students, and creation of a positive atmosphere for learning.<sup>3,4,5,6</sup> In general, a good teacher's criteria are classified into four domains, namely individual personality, scholarship, teaching method, and the ability to communicate and counsel.<sup>4,7</sup>

According to the design of an educational system at universities, teachers are the most essential factors for creating the desired success and achieving educational goals. In fact, the teacher's performance and abilities will lead to student learning and achievement of learning goals.<sup>8</sup> Understanding students' views in order to identify characteristics of a capable teacher can be effective in improving the teaching and learning process.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the teacher-student interaction can lead to the student's scientific and practical development in the teaching and learning environment of teachers as role models of students.<sup>10</sup>

The student poll is a common method in most countries, including Iran, to determine criteria for a capable teacher.<sup>11</sup> Some studies have found that students' views on teachers may be influenced by factors that are less relevant to the teacher's evaluation.<sup>12</sup> Understanding students' views as the main recipients of education in order to identify characteristics of a capable university teacher can be very helpful in improving teaching, professional development and enhancing the learning process.<sup>13</sup> The most important purpose of the evaluation is to help teachers improve teaching methods and activities, and help principals make better decisions in recruiting and promoting teachers.<sup>14</sup>

Considering different studies on characteristics of a capable teacher and not referring to common characteristics in the studies and considering that the teacher evaluation is in order to determine teachers' degrees of success in achieving educational goals, and on the other hand, the education in medical sciences has particular importance and sensitivity to human life due to the learners' responsibility, the present study was conducted at Shahroud university of medical sciences and health services.

## Introduction

Teaching learners is an important mission of universities, and teachers are the most important factors involved in the student education because they can affect others by sharing their thoughts and teachings;<sup>1</sup> hence, they play important roles in promoting the higher education, and scientific and research quality of teachers. Having a good and capable teacher is an effective factor in promoting teaching and learning along with educational opportunities and facilities. Therefore, universities

**Materials and Methods**

The present study was a cross-sectional research conducted at Shahroud university of medical sciences in 2016. The statistical population consisted of medical, health, paramedical, nursing, and midwifery students who were studying medical, public health, environmental health, occupational health, nursing, anesthesiology, operating room, and midwifery. The sample size was 289 according to the statistical population. The sample size was calculated in similar studies with 95% confidence and a maximum 1% error. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to complete the questionnaires, and each faculty was selected randomly according to the number of students in that faculty.

Data were designed and used using a researcher-made questionnaire and questionnaires of several other studies.<sup>15,16,17</sup> The questionnaire consisted of two parts; first, including demographic characteristics such as gender, age, the field of study, college, educational level, residence place, and status. The second part consisted of 43 questions about criteria of a capable university teacher in six domains, namely personal characteristics (10 questions), teaching methods (14 questions), evaluation and personal communication skills (10 questions), teacher's scholarship (4 questions), and educational rules (5 questions). The content validity of the questionnaire was examined by experts from different medical science universities, and its reliability was also examined and the contingency coefficient of R = 0.83 was also confirmed. The researcher-made questionnaire was approved by Siamian et al. 18 at Mazandaran university of medical sciences by measuring the Cronbach's alpha (a = 0.8).

The questionnaire had a five-point Likert scale including unimportant, less important, relatively important, and very important, with scores of 1 to 5 respectively. The number 5 had high importance and number 1 had the least importance. A total score of 100 was considered to assess students' views on each domain, and a score of 5 was assigned to determine their points of view. Therefore, the whole of questions in each domain was summed up and divided into the highest score that anyone could obtain from the domain and then multiplied by 100. The samples were divided into two groups of the second semester and lower and the third semester and higher in order to compare students' viewpoints.

The survey data were analyzed using SPSS-v20 and descriptive statistical tests, independent t-test, and one-way analysis of variance. The statistical significance level was considered to be 0.05.

**Results**

From 289 students (table 1), 107 were males (37%) and 182 females (63%). 58 students (20%) were studying medicine. 80% were master's students, and about 88% lived in dormitories. Most students (about 73%) were in their third semester or higher.

The highest and lowest scores were related to the teaching method (61.9 ± 6.5) and teachers' scholarship (16 ± 3.1). From male students' views, the highest and lowest scores on characteristics of a capable teacher were related to teaching method (61.7 ± 6.4) and scholarship (15.9 ± 3.1) respectively.

From female students' views, the highest score belonged to the teaching method (62.2 ± 6.7) and the least score was related to scholarship (16.1 ± 3.2) respectively (table 2). The characteristics of a capable teacher did not show any significant difference in any field in terms of male and female students' viewpoints. Of all studied students, 255 (88%) were residents in the dormitory. Dormitory students had more positive views on teachers' evaluation skills than non-dormitory students, and the difference was statistically significant (Pvalue = 0.004), but there was no significant difference in other fields. In general, the dormitory students' mean scores of evaluation skills, scholarship, and teaching methods were higher than non-dormitory students, while mean scores in three domains, teacher's personality, interpersonal communication, and educational rules were higher for non-dormitory students.

A significant correlation was observed between different fields of study and teacher's characteristics. There were significant differences between mean scores of teaching methods in nursing, midwifery, operating room and public health (Pvalue < 0.05). Furthermore, there were significant differences in mean scores of individual personality in all the disciplines except for the operating room discipline (Pvalue < 0.05). Mean scores of teacher evaluation skills in medicine showed a significant difference with all fields except for environmental health discipline (Pvalue < 0.05). Mean scores in teacher's scholarship in the operating room discipline were significantly different from medical, nursing, public health, environmental health, and anesthesiology disciplines (Pvalue < 0.05). There was a significant difference between mean scores of interpersonal relationships and teaching rules in medicine with all disciplines (Pvalue < 0.05).

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between mean scores of six domains in professional doctorate and bachelor's students. The highest and the lowest mean scores belonged to teachers' teaching methods and scholarships in both grades respectively. In terms of the semester, the highest mean score was related to the teaching method, and the lowest mean score belonged to the teacher's scholarship. The mean scores of domains did not differ significantly with the semester.

**Table 1. Characteristics of the students surveyed**

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
– Boy	107	37
– Girl	182	63
Field of study		
– Medical	58	20
– Nursing	50	17.3
– Midwifery	32	11.1
– Anesthesia	33	11.4
– surgery room	22	7.6
– Health professional	34	11.8
– Environmental health	28	9.7
– Public health	32	11.1
Grade		
– Doctor	58	20
– Masters	231	80
Place of residence		
– Dormitory	255	88.2
– No dormitory	34	11.8
Semester		
– Second and lower	74	25.6
– Third and higher	215	74.4

**Table 2. Shahroud university of medical sciences students' viewpoints about the characteristics of a powerful professor**

Variable	Personality	Evaluation skills	Research knowledge	Teaching method	Interpersonal communication	Educational rules
<b>Sex</b>						
- Girl	41.7 ± 5.6	27.5 ± 4.5	15.9 ± 3.1	61.7 ± 6.4	43.1 ± 5.5	20.8 ± 3.4
- Boy	41.9 ± 5.7	27.7 ± 4.4	16.1 ± 3.2	62.2 ± 6.7	43.2 ± 5.5	21 ± 3.2
- Pvalue	0.789	0.683	0.718	0.541	0.911	0.571
<b>Place of residence</b>						
- Dormitory	41.8 ± 5.5	27.8 ± 4.5	16.1 ± 3.1	62 ± 6.4	43 ± 5.5	20.9 ± 3.2
- No dormitory	41.9 ± 6.7	25.8 ± 3.5	15.2 ± 3.2	60.8 ± 7.5	44 ± 5.2	20.2 ± 3.9
- Pvalue	0.935	0.004	0.148	0.386	0.310	0.208
<b>Field of study</b>						
- Medical	38.5 ± 5.1	25.4 ± 4.3	14.7 ± 3.2	59 ± 7.2	39.3 ± 6	19.7 ± 3.1
- Nursing	43.2 ± 5	28.2 ± 4.7	16.3 ± 3.8	63.6 ± 6.2	44.8 ± 4.5	21.4 ± 3.5
- Midwifery	43 ± 4.5	29.1 ± 4	16.4 ± 2.6	63 ± 6.1	43.8 ± 6.6	23.1 ± 3.4
- Anesthesia	42.7 ± 5	28.3 ± 3.2	16 ± 2.6	62.6 ± 6.8	43.6 ± 3.8	21.7 ± 2.8
- surgery room	40 ± 5.7	29.2 ± 4.9	17.9 ± 1.5	61.4 ± 5	42.9 ± 5.2	20.5 ± 2.9
- Health professional	44.5 ± 4.2	28 ± 3.6	16.4 ± 2.8	64.1 ± 4.8	45.2 ± 3.9	21.6 ± 2.4
- Environmental health	42.2 ± 6.8	26.4 ± 5.6	15.3 ± 3.1	60.7 ± 8	43.8 ± 5.6	20 ± 2.6
- Public health	41.5 ± 5.8	27.9 ± 4.6	16.2 ± 3.5	61.7 ± 5.5	43.5 ± 5.2	21 ± 3.6
- Pvalue	0.001	0.001	0.004	0.005	0.001	0.027
<b>Grade</b>						
- Doctor	38.5 ± 5.1	25.4 ± 4.3	14.7 ± 4.2	59 ± 7.2	39.3 ± 6	19.7 ± 3.1
- Masters	42.6 ± 5.4	28.2 ± 4.2	16.3 ± 3.1	62.6 ± 6.2	44.1 ± 5	21.1 ± 3.2
- P-Value	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.003
<b>Semester</b>						
- Second and lower	41.6 ± 5.6	27.9 ± 4.6	15.7 ± 3.4	62 ± 6.6	44 ± 5.1	20.9 ± 3.7
- Third and higher	41.9 ± 5.6	27.5 ± 4.4	16 ± 3	61.8 ± 6.5	42.8 ± 5.6	20.8 ± 3.1
- Pvalue	0.772	0.547	0.476	0.821	0.107	0.884
<b>Course satisfaction</b>						
- Yes	41.6 ± 5.5	27.4 ± 4.3	15.8 ± 3.2	61.7 ± 6.5	43 ± 5.4	20.8 ± 3.2
- No	43.4 ± 7.2	29.7 ± 5.3	17.2 ± 2.9	63.7 ± 6.8	43.6 ± 6.1	21.5 ± 3.2
- Pvalue	0.266	0.015	0.047	0.171	0.646	0.282
<b>Interest in the field of study</b>						
- Yes	41.7 ± 5.7	27.6 ± 4.4	16 ± 3.1	61.8 ± 6.5	43.1 ± 5.6	20.9 ± 3.2
- No	43.2 ± 4.5	28.1 ± 5.5	15.6 ± 3.4	63.1 ± 7.7	44 ± 3.9	20.6 ± 4.2
- Pvalue	0.226	0.731	0.643	0.530	0.418	0.831
<b>Total score</b>	<b>41.8 ± 5.6</b>	<b>27.6 ± 4.5</b>	<b>16 ± 3.1</b>	<b>61.9 ± 6.5</b>	<b>43.1 ± 5.5</b>	<b>20.9 ± 3.3</b>

The mean score of evaluation skill (Pvalue = 0.015) and teacher's scholarship (Pvalue = 0.047) was significantly different between students, who were satisfied with their disciplines, and those who were not satisfied with their disciplines. The mean scores of other domains were not significantly different from students' satisfaction with disciplines. Among the students interested and disinterested in disciplines, the highest mean score was related to the teaching method and the lowest mean score belonged to the teacher's scholarship. The mean scores of domains were not significantly different from students' interest in disciplines.

### Discussion

According to our findings, the teaching method and then communication skill, and the personal characteristics were the most important characteristics of a capable teacher. Therefore, the results were consistent with studies by Peyman et al. at Ilam university of medical sciences,<sup>17</sup> Navabi et al. at Babol university of medical sciences,<sup>19</sup> Mazloumi et al. at Yazd Shahid Sadoqi university of medical sciences,<sup>20</sup> and Ghorbani et al. at Semnan university of medical sciences<sup>21</sup> in terms of teaching method, but not in the field of scholarship. It can be influenced by factors such as study time, different research environments, and different research examples. Many studies have reported the teacher's mastery of teaching subject,<sup>22,23</sup> and mastery of the subject and new and updated presentations,<sup>9</sup>

which are criteria of teaching methods as the most important features of a capable teacher. Many studies have reported the mastery of science and teaching methods as the most important attributes of a good and capable teacher.<sup>23-28</sup> Studies at Iranian universities of medical sciences have revealed differences in the characteristics of a capable teacher. According to studies at Kerman university of medical sciences<sup>29</sup> and Ilam,<sup>17</sup> teaching method was an important characteristic of a capable teacher; however, studies in Ahvaz<sup>30</sup> and Qazvin<sup>23</sup> universities of medical sciences indicated that the most important criteria of a capable teacher were educational behavior and performance, and personal characteristics.

The ability to establish a proper communication between teachers and learners is an important skill of a capable teacher, and if this relationship is established properly, educational goals will be more easily transferred to learners.<sup>20</sup> Studies by Kutnick et al.<sup>31</sup>, and Bazrafkan et al.<sup>32</sup>, and Asghari et al.<sup>33</sup> indicated that the ability to communicate is a criterion and characteristic of teacher acceptance by learners. A study in Taiwan also indicated a significant difference between individual characteristics and human relationships of successful and unsuccessful teachers.<sup>34</sup> It seems that the teaching process at universities is not only dependent on academic and research experience of teachers, but individual personality and communication with learners also affect better and effective learning,<sup>35</sup> and communication with learners as a basis for

proper training<sup>20</sup> should be considered in workshops by education development centers.

In the present study, there was no significant difference between learners' gender and domains of a capable teacher. Similar studies have been conducted, including Moezi et al. at Shahrekord university of medical sciences,<sup>36</sup> Dargahi et al. at Tehran university of medical sciences,<sup>37</sup> Peyman et al. at Ilam university of medical sciences,<sup>17</sup> Rad et al.<sup>38</sup>, Gashmard et al.<sup>9</sup>, and Zohoor et al.<sup>29</sup>, and they found no significant difference between male and female learners' viewpoints and characteristics of a capable teacher.

The results indicated that there was a significant difference between mean scores of six domains in professional doctorate and master's students. The highest and lowest mean scores belonged to teachers' teaching methods and scholarships at both grades respectively. In a study by Peyman et al.<sup>17</sup>, the most important characteristics of a teacher were their educational background and scientific ability.

The results of our study indicated that the highest mean score belonged to teachers' teaching methods, and the lowest mean score was in the field of scholarship in terms of the semester. The mean scores of domains did not significantly differ from the semester. However, results of studies by Beigzadeh et al.<sup>13</sup>, and Mazloomi et al.<sup>20</sup> were consistent with the present study, while in studies by Salehi et al.<sup>39</sup>, and Ramezani et al.<sup>40</sup>, higher semester students gave higher scores to a capable teacher's traits.

Awareness of learners' views on education can help in informed planning for teaching activities. According to the results of the present study, the criteria of a capable teacher can be evaluated for teaching effectiveness. Therefore, the criteria, namely the mastery over the subject, power of expression and transmission of educational content, and interest in teaching should be evaluated and improved continuously in all teachers. In fact, it is expected that medical education development centers of universities of medical universities of Iran will introduce characteristics of a capable teacher to faculty members by conducting training workshops in order to take effective steps towards developing teachers' behavioral and educational models.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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