Kyung Ryung Kim, Eun Hee Seo
South Korea

Investigation into the Desirable Character of Korean Teachers Using the Delphi Technique

Abstract

The study explored the desirable character attributes of teachers and provided specific behavioral guidelines for being a good teacher in Korea. The Delphi method was used. Ten virtues and 88 behavioral guidelines were created from three rounds of surveys involving 22 Korean panelists. Results indicated that most of the virtues identified in this study were consistent with the results of Western studies. However, a sense of humor regarded as a desirable characteristic of teachers in previous studies did not emerge as a virtue from Korean panelists. Morality rarely mentioned in Western research was included in this study. The characteristics required of a Korean teacher seem to be based on Confucianism.

Keywords: *character, virtue, teacher, Korea, Delphi technique*

Introduction

The teacher's character is critical to the quality and effectiveness of education because it has a significant impact on students' cognitive, moral and character development (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The Korean Ministry of Education has recently reformed the teacher recruitment system to place more emphasis on the character required of the teacher. The reforms have included the introduction in teacher training institutions of a Personality Inventory, which evaluates pre-service teachers' characters. Pre-service teachers must complete this Inventory, or a similar test, twice and only those who pass them can qualify to become a teacher.

Although the personality traits considered as essential for being a good teacher are diverse, previous studies generally agreed that a good teacher should be witty (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Ramazani, 2014), flexible (Heydari, Abdi, & Rostami, 2013; Hotaman, 2010), and honest (Ahn, 2007; Sockett, 2006). Responsibility (Carr, 2007; Stronge, 2007), self-understanding (Sockett, 2006; Ulug, Ozden & Eryilmaz, 2011), emotional stability (Heydari et al., 2013; Sockett, 2006), kindness (Ahn, 2007; Bhargava & Pathy, 2011), and confidence (Bhargava & Pathy, 2011; Khodabakhshzadh & Shirvan, 2011) also have been identified as required characteristics of a good teacher.

Prior studies also emphasized the importance of the teacher's ability to form good relationships with students, most suggesting that teachers must love and respect their students (Bhargava & Pathy, 2011; Carr, 2007), be fair to students (Ghasemi & Hashemi, 2011; Sockett, 2006), pay attention to students' needs (Ramazani, 2014; Ulug et al., 2011) and be patient with students (Hotaman, 2010; Khodabakhshzadh & Shirvan, 2011).

Prior studies have contributed to identifying the virtues teachers should have. Unfortunately, most of these studies are based on Western culture which is quite different from Asian culture. While Western culture is generally regarded as an individualistic and low-context society (Rosenberg, 2004), Asian culture, including China and Korea, is considered as interdependent, collectivistic and high-context (Gao & Liu, 2013). The cultural background affects the teacher's attitude and character (Joseph, 2010). Gao and Liu (2013) found that Chinese pre-service teachers valued teachers' patience, agreeableness, caring, and friendliness more; whereas American pre-service teachers attributed more importance to teachers' adaptability, sense of humor, and responsibility. Teacher-student interactions are somewhat hierarchical and in China teachers usually supervise their students (Chan & Chan, 2005). Based on Confucianism, which has controlled the spirit of Korean people since the Joseon Dynasty from 1392 to 1910, the Koreans expect that teachers should have authority and benevolence and be a role model for their students (Park, Cheong, Kim, & Park, 2012). It can be inferred from these studies that desirable teacher characteristics in Korea might be different from those in the West. However, there are few studies regarding the character attributes required of a good teacher in Korea.

Specific guidelines, or a detailed explanation of each virtue, are needed in order to enable pre-service teachers to put these virtues into practice and to test whether their character is suitable for the teaching profession. Although some researchers have tried to suggest behavioral guidelines for being a good teacher, they have not described them fully and have failed to systematize them hierarchically.

Research Focus

The objective of this study was to explore desirable teacher characteristics in Korea and to provide specific behavioral guidelines for each virtue

Research Methodology

Research Sample

We selected a 25-member panel, 22 of whom remained involved throughout the consultation. The panel comprised nine professors and five lecturers with doctorates in education, who had experience with teacher education, six in-service teachers with more than ten years of teaching experience, and two school commissioners with experience in research on educational administration and teacher evaluation as well as more than ten years of teaching experience in middle schools. All of the participants gave informed consent. There were 13 men (59%) and 9 women (41%) on the panel. The ages ranged from 34 to 64 years ($M = 47$, $SD = 9.25$).

Instrument and Procedures

The Delphi method, a structured, iterative consultation and survey process that typically includes two or more rounds or stages (Hanna & Noble, 2015), was used to collect opinions and compile a consensus on the required character of a good teacher. All questionnaires were distributed and collected by electronic mail.

In the first round, an open-ended questionnaire was used to elicit opinions about the desirable character required of a teacher at several levels: virtues and behavioral guidelines.

The second round questionnaire was based on the results from the first Delphi round. We asked the panelists to evaluate the importance of each virtue and behavioral guideline drawn from the first survey, using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not important to 5 = very important). Information about the number of panelists who had mentioned the item in the first round was presented next to that item.

The third round questionnaire was modified on the basis of the results of the second round survey. As in the second round, the panelists were asked to rate the importance of each virtue and behavioral guideline, using the same five-point Likert scale. The panelists were given information about other panelists' opinions in the form of the mean, standard deviation, and interquartile range for all the items.

Data Analysis

Data from the first survey were subjected to content analysis. Repeated or similar words and phrases were grouped into categories and this categorical organization was reviewed by two educational psychologists and an educational evaluation expert. Frequencies of responses to each item were also calculated in the data.

Data from the second and third round were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, interquartile ranges and frequencies, to estimate the degree of consensus among the panel.

The Content Validity Ratio (*CVR;* Lawshe, 1975) was used to construct a list of items based on the data from the second and third surveys. In Lawshe's formula, n_e represents the number of panelists who rated the item as 'important' (score of 4 or 5) and *N* represents the total number of panelists. When the number of panelists is 20~24, the minimum value of CVR is 0.42 (Lawshe, 1975). Therefore, only items with a CVR ≥ 0.42 were accepted. The reliability of the items was confirmed with Cronbach's α.

$$CVR = \frac{n_e - N/2}{N/2}$$

Research Results

Data from the first round survey identified 12 virtues and 700 behavioral guidelines representing the characteristics required of a good teacher. After similar or repeated items had been merged and unclear items eliminated, the list was reviewed by three experts. This resulted in a list of 12 virtues and 235 behavioral guidelines.

In the analysis of the second round responses, the content validity of items was calculated. According to the criterion of CVR minimum value, the following items were accepted: 10 out of 16 items in diligence (CVR = − 0.39~1.00), 10 out of 14 items in responsibility (CVR = − 0.39~1.00), 2 out of 10 items in intimacy (CVR = − 0.57~0.65), 7 out of 14 items in physical and emotional stability (CVR = − 0.57~0.91), 2 out of 11 items in self-understanding(CVR = − 0.13~0.91), 6 out of 8 items in a sense of community (CVR = − 0.57~0.65), 1 out of 4 items in cooperation (CVR = 0.39~0.74), 21 out of 33 items in communication skills(CVR= − 0.48~1.00), 40 out of 57 items in educational beliefs(CVR= − 0.39~1.00) and 40 out of 44 items in a passion for students(CVR= − 0.30~1.00). All 20 items in morality (CVR = 0.57~1.00) and 4 items in positive mind (CVR = 0.74~0.91) were

accepted. As a result, the opinions of the panel were represented by 12 virtues and 163 behavioral guidelines. Some virtues and behavioral guidelines were integrated and rephrased on the basis of the panelists' comments, resulting in a final list of 10 virtues and 88 behavioral guidelines.

The same procedure was followed for the analysis of third round responses. The CVR values of all items were over 0.42. The 10 desirable virtues of a teacher were diligence (CVR = 0.91~1.00; α = 0.79), responsibility (CVR = 0.82~1.00; α = 0.70), morality (CVR = 0.55~1.00; α = 0.77), a sense of community (CVR = 0.55~1.00 ; α = 0.70), physical and psychological health (CVR = 0.82~1.00; α = 0.64), self-understanding (CVR = 0.91~1.00; α = 0.75), teacher efficacy(CVR = 0.91~1.00 ; α = 0.79), communication skills (CVR= 0.64~1.00; α = 0.80), educational beliefs (CVR= 0.73~1.00; α = 0.82) and a passion for students (CVR= 0.82~1.00; α = 0.89). The final items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The final list of the desirable character of teachers

Virtues	Sub-concepts		Behavioral guidelines
Diligence	Diligence in teaching	1	Develops professional expertise by subject content research and preparation for class
		2	Endeavors to devise effective teaching methods
	Diligence in class management	3	Instructs students enthusiastically
		4	Has an interest in character education
		5	Offers students guidance in broader aspects of lifestyle
Responsibility	Responsibility in student guidance	6	Takes charge of everything that happens in the classroom
	Responsibility in job performance	7	Is aware of a teacher's roles and responsibilities
		8	Makes an effort to teach knowledge, attitude and skills
		9	Completes work on time
Morality	Honesty	10	Does not accept unfair benefits
		11	Adheres to a stricter ethical code than the general population
	Information security	12	Keeps students' information confidential
	Political neutrality	13	Does not attempt to influence students' political opinions
	Integrity	14	Does not accept any valuable gifts from parents
		15	Does not discriminate against students and parents based on their background
	Obedience to the law	16	Keeps promises made to students, officials and others
		17	Observes the code of conduct for teachers

Virtues	Sub-concepts		Behavioral guidelines
Sense of community	Social skills	18	Is agreeable and maintains friendly relationships with other people
		19	Greets colleagues in a friendly manner
		20	Cooperates effectively with colleagues
	Development of a sense of community	21	Has a service ethic
		22	Makes decisions in a democratic manner
		23	Cooperates in creation of a school culture with a strong sense of community
Physical and psychological health	Mind and body health	24	Tries to maintain good physical and mental health
		25	Controls his or her emotions and expresses them appropriately
	Emotional control	26	Controls negative emotions
		27	Relieves his or her negative emotions effectively
		28	Is aware of his or her emotions
		29	Identifies the causes of his or her emotions
Self Understanding	Reflection	30	Reflects on his or her teaching
	Infinite self-development	31	Strives for personal improvement
		32	Thinks about his or her personal life and happiness
Teacher efficacy	Confidence	33	Has self-respect and confidence
		34	Is confident about teaching
		35	Is confident in his or her professional knowledge and skills
	Pride	36	Acknowledges that teachers can change students' lives
		37	Has a sense of pride in dealing with people
		38	Takes pride in the teacher's role in societal change in changing society
		39	Is proud and happy to be a teacher
	Positive mindset	40	Perceives difficulties as a challenge to be overcome
		41	Believes in his or her ability to teach effectively
		42	Is able to deal with the most difficult students
		43	Believes that a competent teacher depends more on attitude than technique
Communication skills	Listening carefully	44	Listens to students without prejudice
		45	Spends sufficient time listening to students
		46	Listens attentively to colleagues
		47	Listens to parents' comments and communicates effectively with them
		48	Makes students feel comfortable talking to teachers, while maintaining authority

Virtues	Sub-concepts		Behavioral guidelines
Communication skills	Accepting others' opinions	49	Embraces and responds to students' opinions
		50	Accepts advice and criticism from colleagues
	Using appropriate language	51	Uses I-message rather than you-message
		52	Uses positive vocabulary and expressions
		53	Uses appropriate language
Educational beliefs	Trust about the value of the teaching profession	54	Believes that teachers' vocabulary and behavior affect the student's words
		55	Believes that teachers should and can change students
		56	Believes that teachers can and should be positive role models
		57	Believes that teachers should practice the values and beliefs they teach
	Sense of duty	58	Regards teaching as his or her vocation
		59	Believes that the best way society can show its appreciation for teachers is by trusting and respecting them
		60	Enjoys teaching and believes that teaching is the most valuable thing
		61	Believes that teaching is more significant to him or herself than others
		62	Has established his or her professional identity
	Respect for students	63	Does not disregard students even if they are young
		64	Respects students' social, cultural and religious background
		65	Respects students' privacy
		66	Respects students' dignity
		67	Considers students as active participants and respects their autonomy
		68	Evaluates and treats students fairly, without discriminating against them based on their background
		69	Recognizes individual differences between students
		70	Gives all students equal opportunities
		71	Does not use corporal punishment
Passion for students	Attitude to public education	72	Recognizes the importance of public education
	Affectionate attitude	73	Treats students with love
		74	Thinks about students' pursuits of happiness
		75	Gives enthusiastic and frequent compliments

Virtues	Sub-concepts	Behavioral guidelines	
Passion for students	Trust and expectation about students	76	Discovers positive non-academic characteristics in students
		77	Values each student's potential as well as his or her achievements
		78	Encourages students to pursue their interests
		79	Has positive expectations of students
	Attention to students	80	Makes an effort to solve students' problems
		81	Tries to guide students' broader development
		82	Is interested in students' personal lives
		83	Is interested in students' development
		84	Is interested in students' careers
	Care for students	85	Cares for isolated students more
		86	Does not suppress students
		87	Empathizes with students
		88	Understands students' situations and environment

Discussion

This research investigated the personality traits required to be a good teacher in Korea and suggested specific behavioral guidelines on the qualities desirable in the teacher. Our results showed that good teachers should possess characteristics such as diligence, responsibility, morality, a sense of community, physical and emotional stability, self-understanding, teacher efficacy, communication skills, belief in the value of education and a passion for students. Most of the virtues identified in this study were consistent with the results of previous studies: diligence and responsibility (Carr, 2007), morality (Bhargava & Pathy, 2011), a sense of community (Dahlgren & Chiriac, 2009), physical and emotional stability(Heydari et al., 2013), self-understanding (Stronge, 2007), teacher efficacy (Bhargava & Pathy, 2011), communication skills (Ulug et al., 2011), belief in the value of education (Fullan, 2007) and a passion for students (Reed & Bergemann, 1992) as necessary characteristics of a good teacher. The finding partially supports the study of Liu and Meng (2009) who found that Chinese perceptions of effective teacher personalities were similar to American perceptions.

However, interestingly, a sense of humor, which was often mentioned in Western research and regarded as a top personality trait that contributes to teacher

effectiveness (James, 2007), did not emerge as a virtue from our Korean panelists. It is consistent with the study of Gao and Liu (2013). This might be so because the concept of a sense of humor was not perceived by our panelists as an aspect of character which is defined as the sum of the moral and mental qualities, or it might be due to the belief in Korea that teachers should be serious-minded. According to Park et al. (2012), Korean teachers are expected to be authoritative rather than witty.

On the other hand, the study indicated that morality, which has rarely been regarded as a desirable character attribute of teachers in Western studies, was one of the virtues which Korean teachers should have. It might be influenced by Confucianism; this philosophy advocates the basic concepts of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and sincerity. Righteousness, which is one of the basic concepts of Confucianism, may have a strong effect on the teacher's morality. As role-models for students, teachers are expected to be morally perfect in Korea (Park et al., 2012).

Other virtues might also be based on Confucianism. Benevolence is likely to affect the teacher's passion for students. With humanity as the foundation, Confucian scholars focus on love between the teacher and the student (Park et al., 2012). Propriety also seems to influence a sense of community and communication skills; 'greet colleagues in a friendly manner', one of the guidelines of a sense of community, which has not been mentioned in previous research, is related to this ethical idea. Sincerity seems to have an influence on the teacher's educational beliefs, diligence and responsibility. A teacher should believe in the integrity and value of the teaching profession and work hard for students. The results indicated that, although times have changed, people's perception of teachers in Korea is still conservative and expectations are perhaps unrealistically high.

The study had some limitations. First, we did not include students or their parents in our panel. Future Delphi surveys of teachers' desirable characteristics need to use a more diverse panel. Second, the acceptability of the behavioral guidelines was not considered in this study. An instrument for evaluating the teacher's character needs to be developed in the future.

Conclusions

Overall, the results of the study imply that, although many of the desired personality traits required of a Korean teacher are the same as in Eastern and Western cultures, there are distinct characteristics required of Korean teachers. In order to

fulfill these requirements, the behavioral guidelines of each virtue identified by the study might form a useful and concrete tool to enable pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect on and develop themselves.

References

Ahn, G.H. (2007). A content analysis on the teachers' characteristics that students prefer. *Journal of Educational Administration, 25*(4), 117–140.

Bhargava, A., & Pathy, M. (2011). Perception of students teachers about teaching competencies. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 1*(1), 77–81.

Chan, K.L., & Chan, C.L.W. (2005).Chinese culture, social work education and research. *International Social Work, 48*(4), 381–389. doi:10.1177/0020872805053461

Carr, D. (2007). Character in teaching. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 55*(4), 369–389.doi:10.1111/j.1467–8527.2007.00386.x

Dahlgren, D.A., & Chiriac, E.H. (2009). Learning for professional life: Student teachers' and graduated teachers' views of learning, responsibility and collaboration. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 991–999.doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2009.3.019

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005).*Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M.(2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.

Gao, M. & Liu, Q. (2013). Personality traits of effective teachers represented in the narratives of American and Chinese preservice teachers: A cross-cultural comparison. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3*(2), 84–95.

Ghasemi, B., & Hashemi, M. (2011).The study of the characteristics of successful English language teachers from the view point of the English language students of Islamic Azad University, Hamedan Branch. *Social and Behavior Science, 28*, 411–415. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.078

Hanna, K., & Noble, B.F. (2015).Using a Delphi study to identify effectiveness criteria for environmental assessment. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal, 33*(2), 116–125. doi:10.1080/14615517.2014.992672

Heydari, H., Abdi, M., & Rostami, M. (2013).The survey of relationship between the degree of mathematics anxiety in high school students and the personality characteristics of their mathematics teachers. *Social and Behavioral Science 84*, 1133–1137. doi:10. 1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.714

Hotaman, D. (2010). The teaching profession: Knowledge of subject matter, teaching

skills and personality traits. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2*, 1416–1420. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.211

James, D. (2007). A need for humor in online courses. *College Teaching, 52*(3), 93–94.

Joseph, A.C. (2010). *Examining the perceived role of teachers' ethnic identity, empathy, and multicultural sensitivity on teacher burnout*. Unpublished doctoral degree dissertation, University of Fordham University, New York.

Khodabakhshzadeh, H., & Shirvan, M.E. (2011).Discovering Iranian EFL teacher's personality traits through their conceptions of effective teaching. *Canadian Social Science, 7*(4), 21–33.

Lawshe, C.H. (1975). A quantitative approach to content validity. *Personnel Psychology, 28*(4), 563–575.

Liu, S., & Meng, L. (2009). Perceptions of teachers, students, and parents of the characteristics of good teachers: A cross-cultural comparison of China and the United States. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation, & Accountabilities, 21*, 313–328. **doi**10.1007/s11092–009–9077-z

Park, S., Cheong, D., Kim, Y., & Park, J. (2012).An exemplary teacher in a Confucian scholar. *Journal of the Korea Academia-Industrial Cooperation Society, 13*(11), 5076–1082. doi:10.5762/KAIS.2012.13.11.5076

Ramazani, M. (2014). Mismatches in Beliefs between Teachers and Students, and Characteristics of Effective English Teacher: An Iranian Context. *Social and Behavioral Science, 98*, 1518–1527. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.573

Reed, A.J., & Bergemann, V.E.(1992). *In the classroom : An introduction to education*. Guilford, CT: Dushkin.

Rosenberg, S. (2004). Face. In G. Burgess & H. Burgess (Eds.), *Beyond Intractability*. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Retrieved from http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/face/.

Sockett, H. (2006). *Teacher dispositions: Building a teacher education framework of moral standards*. Washington D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Stronge, J.H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers* (2th ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Ulug, M., Ozden, M.S., & Eryilmaz, A. (2011).The effects of teachers' attitudes on students' personality and performance. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 30*, 738–742. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.144