

Teacher Dimensions in Technical Higher Education – A Student Perspective

**Gabriel-Mugurel DRAGOMIR¹,
Liliana-Luminița TODORESCU²,
Anca GRECULESCU³**

¹Associate professor, Department of Teaching Training, Politehnica University of Timisoara, Timișoara, Romania, mugur.dragomir@upt.ro

²Lecturer, Department of Teaching Training, Politehnica University of Timisoara, Timișoara, Romania, liliana.todorescu@upt.ro

³Lecturer, The Faculty of Engineering in Foreign Languages, Politehnica University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania, anca.greculescu@upb.ro

Abstract: The current paper is based on a survey conducted on 321 engineering students studying at University Politehnica of Bucharest and University Politehnica of Timișoara. The research aims at outlining the profile of the teacher in technical higher education as depicted by engineering students. The study surveyed students' opinions regarding the teacher-student relationship, teacher's role as an evaluator, professional expertise, education in general, personality traits, teachers' roles and managerial skills. The results of the study highlight the importance of the student-teacher relationship, the teacher's roles as evaluator and examiner and his/her professional expertise. Teachers' personality traits, managerial skills and roles seem to be less important to students. Moreover, the t test data show significant statistical differences between the real and ideal teacher in technical higher education from a student perspective. Nevertheless, students and society as a whole have different perceptions of teachers. Regarding the dimensions of the teacher in technical higher education, based on the statistics, on a 1 to 5 scale, the results show similarities of the two models. For instance, students rank first intelligence and last elitism and competitiveness as teacher attributes. Furthermore, the present study also demonstrates that universities comply with the system proposed by Marlene and Lee Canter that allows teachers to apply positive support for students.

Keywords: *teacher, teacher-student relationship, education, teacher dimensions.*

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1. Context

Didactic planning and management within secondary and pre-tertiary education are teacher-oriented, the teacher being considered its „living tool”. (Surdu, 1999: 110). Over the course of time, the teacher has been considered the living tool of educational infrastructure and has faced permanent alterations and restructuring based on different assumptions about education. Subsequently, the teacher has been depicted as apostle, missionary, propedeutic (supplying the knowledge or discipline introductory), maieutic (eliciting new ideas from another, fostering the truth), hermeneutic (concerning interpretation of the truth), manager, consultant, advisor, assessor/evaluator, model, partner, agent, learning colleague (for the schoolchild), illuminated guide who descends from his/her pedestal to seek solutions and truths together with the educables. (Jinga & Istrate, 1998: 88; Surdu, 1999: 110)

Over the past quarter of the century, the teacher’s mission, roles and functions have constantly and significantly modified. Hence, in order to meet the economic, social, political and sustainable development (Sterling, 2010) requirements of the knowledge-based society and the needs and interests of both schoolchildren and students, there has been a change in their perception of the teacher’s characteristics within the pre-tertiary and higher education.

What is more, over the course of the past decades, within tertiary education, there has been a high focus on conducting research likely to outline a profile of the real university teacher as opposed to the ideal one from a student perspective. The aim of these studies is to underline the evolution of the real and ideal teacher’s profile in higher education. Thus, there is a constant interest in identifying the characteristics of the ideal teacher, considered important by students and in outlining the dimensions of the real university teacher (performing nowadays in tertiary system). As a consequence, the current studies deem fit to highlight the gap between real and ideal in profiling the higher education teacher. (Mannan & Traicoff, 1976; Harley, Barasa, Bertram, Mattson & Pillay, 2000; Arnon & Reichel, 2007; Rusu, Şoitu, & Panaite, 2011; Haamer, Lepp & Reva, 2012; Douna, Kyridis, Zagkos, Ziontaki, & Pandis, 2015; Nartgüna & Sezghin, 2015)

The literature aforementioned as well as studies conducted by Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2018; Kyridis, Avramidou, Zagkos, Christodoulou, & Pavli-Korre, 2014; Kyridis, Dinas, Vlachaiti, Ioannitou, & Lambropoulou, 2002; Kusto, Afful, & Mattingly, 2010; Leondari & Kyridis, 1999; Nurul, Sri, Nur, Chung, Ivanova, Mohd, Umami, Masitah, & Lawrence, 2014;) focus on

the personality traits that depict the ideal university teacher, his/her professional competences (specialized knowledge and a wide range of competences such as: methodological, communication, student-teacher relationship, technical and technological, psychological and social, evaluation and career management, research competences), poise and posture (outfit and social behaviour) as well as ethical behaviour. The results show that to students' mind, the ideal university teacher's profile is based on a series of variables with regard to gender, age and political beliefs.

The purpose of the studies conducted in the field of education is not to turn the real university teacher into an ideal one (since a teacher will never become an ideal, for an ideal is nothing else than the assumption of perfection never found in practice yet, hence, we are always on constant pursuit of it). The aim is to continuously bridge the gap between the real and the ideal teacher, both under ongoing change so as to comply with sustainable pedagogy and education as well as to constantly enhance the relationship between these two educational actors: professor-student. (Haamer, Lepp, & Reeva, 2012).

In pre-higher education, the teacher-student relationship is extremely important (Manyu & Stone, 2018), and higher education is just an extension since interpersonal relationships are the basis of coherent and sustainable education.

According to the grid of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969; Gavreliuc, 2002: 46) applied to the educational system, any social agent engaged in a relationship continuously negotiates the meaning of the situation in which he/she is part of. Hence, students and teachers act in compliance with:

- what they understand of each other;
- the rapport built within educational and social interactions;
- the meanings altered, renewed and passed over within educational interactions.

The above mentioned assumptions are also supported by related studies carried out in Romania. Rusu, Șoitu and Panaite (2011: 1019) assume that students from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, studying at the Humanities and the Faculty of Philosophy and Political Sciences respectively, attach significance to the teacher's ability to create rapport, considered one of the prerequisites for the ideal teacher (71. 42%). Among other characteristics of the teacher-student relationship mentioned in the research referred to: "...a sympathetic man, a second parent, who communicates with his students, to be a relationship based on trust and

genuine interest...”, “...a calm man, patient, temperate, gentle, who knows how to approach students, turning them into his own children...”.

Moreover, Voicu and Ciolan (2008: 7), in their study “The School as it is”, argue that “from schoolchildren’s point of view, the way a teacher relates to them is crucial”. “Indulgence, friendliness, fairness or patience are highly sought in a teacher by schoolchildren”.

The relationship teacher-student builds up in the classroom and it shapes a particular psycho-social, positive and negative environment, and a congenial atmosphere, respectively. Hence, it positively and negatively influences the teaching and learning quality process which can ensure high educational outcomes and possible low negative consequences at the same time. The literature in the field reveals a direct link between the positive teacher-student relationship and the positive learning environment (Cress, 2008), the students’ academic performance (Cress 2008; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya 2010; Umbach & Warwzynski, 2005), their high learning motivation (Groves, Sellars, Smith & Barber, 2015; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya 2010; Schwartz & Holloway, 2012; Zepke & Leach, 2010), personal learning satisfaction (Calvo, Markauskaite, & Trigwell 2010; Dobransky & Frymier, 2004), pride to be affiliated to the higher education institution (Vianden, 2015); high professional satisfaction (Docan-Morgan, 2011; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Watts & Robertson, 2011; Woods, 2010).

A positive teacher-student relationship implies commitment, passion, specialized knowledge, trust, respect, openness, authenticity, transparency, availability, responsibility, interest, engagement and equitable and fair treatment for each and every student. A teacher-student relationship characterized by the teacher’s inappropriate behavior, disinterested and unmindful of his/her relationship with the students, unavailable, unapproachable, unfair and biased and who teaches an unfamiliar difficult subject, whose outfit and posture are inappropriate, may have a negative impact on the didactic process and on the relationship between the educator and the ones to be educated. In higher education, teachers and students alike interact constantly and this interaction counts irrespective of any experiences. Unfortunately, the teacher-student relationship is still pending further research, since only few studies address this topic (Karpouza & Emvalotis, 2018).

Nowadays, another important feature of an ideal teacher, from a modern perspective, is his/her evaluation ability (Jinga & Istrate, 1998). Likewise, the study beforementioned conducted by Rusu, Șoitu and Panaite (2011: 1019), also emphasizes the teacher’s role as evaluator. Hence,

teachers' fair assessment ranks second in students' opinions by 66.23%, and third comes "knowledge of the subject" by 58.44%. The fourth place as importance in students' views is the teacher as a "facilitator of students' intellectual development" by 55.84%.

2. Research Methodology

The current survey addressed the teacher profile in Romanian technical higher education, from two different perspectives:

- teachers viewed and perceived by students in general;
- teachers viewed and perceived by the society as a whole.

The current survey was conducted by means of an sondaje platform on-line questionnaire, and targeted 321 students:

- 176 male students (54.8%) and 145 female students (45.2%);
- 207 (64.5%) students studying at University Politehnica of Bucharest and 114 students from University Politehnica of Timișoara (35.5%);
- respondents' age between 18 and 40.

Q1. What three words would you use to describe teachers (in general)?

Table 1.

No. Crt.	Dimensions of teaching	Frequency	Percentage [%]	Total added percentage [%]
1	Teacher-student relationship	92	28.7	28.7
2	Teacher as an evaluator	68	21.2	49.9
3	Professional expertise	55	17.1	67
4	Educational background	53	16.5	83.5
5	Personality traits	28	8.7	92.2
6	Other aspects	14	4.4	96.6
7	Roles of the teacher	9	2.8	99.4
8	Managerial skills	2	0.6	100.0
9	Total	321	100.0	

3. Results

The results of the survey as shown in Table 1 illustrate the following:

- Students' top choice – *teacher-student relationship*, 92 respondents (28.7%), described as: „*nice, cool, active, intelligent, wise, respectful, empathetic, attitudinal, committed, dedicated, devoted, engaged, motivated, responsible, responsibility, communicative, disciplined, seriousness, stiffness, authoritative, patient, calm, friendly, kind, pleasant, funny, receptive, inventive, boring, disinterested, communism, superiority, elegance*”;

- Students' second choice – *teacher as an evaluator/assessor*, 68 respondents (21.2%), characterized by: „*studying, subject contents, courses, marks/grades, homework, assignments, tests, examination, evaluation, unfair, fair, to sit pass or fail, nervousness, stress etc.*”;

- Students' third choice – *teacher's professional expertise*, 55 respondents (17.1%), depicted in terms of: „*information, knowledge, culture, capability, professionalism, higher education, capable, smart, new stuff well explained, hardworking, expertise, literate, scholar, future, prosperity, engineer*”;

Students' last choices (ranking 7 or 8) – *various roles of the teacher*, 9 respondents (2.8%), described as: „*teacher, model, friend, advisor, parent, inspirational, guide, mentor*”; and *managerial skills*, 2 respondents (0.6%): „*planner, leader*”.

The *teacher-student* relationship ranks first in Romanian engineering students' opinions (28.7%), since it is regarded as highly important and teaching is by far a relational activity, one with psychological, social and didactic effects between two educational agents: the teacher and the educable (schoolchild or student). What is more, teaching plays a vital role in the quality assurance of the educational process.

By and large, didactic performance is substantially determined by the existing pedagogical relationships. Bad relationships between teachers and students can trigger learning difficulties, students' poor education and training, challenges of classroom management. As a consequence, students are aware of this and fairly appreciate the importance of their relationship with the teacher for the learning process.

It is worth mentioning that the current research reveals differences in respondents' opinions with regard to the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, on one hand, this is perceived as a relaxed, efficient relationship, since it is depicted in terms of „*respect, commitment, dedication, engagement, motivation, patience, discipline, seriousness, empathy, calmness, friendliness, understanding, inventivity, courtesy etc.*” On the other hand, it is perceived as a less positive and efficient relationship and it is characterized by: „*communism, boredom, superiority, disinterest, authority etc.*”.

In line with the latter general opinion, the school, the teacher and the teacher-student relationship are likely to be outdated and old-fashioned,

unlikely to overcome the old obsolete methods and attitudes, reluctant to new challenges and changes. It deems necessary to understand students' different opinions, since, over the course of their study years, they meet dozens of teachers with different personalities, different teaching styles and attitudes and different levels of training and education.

Engineering students' second choice – *teacher as an evaluator/assessor* (21.2%) –reveals the students' threat of evaluation and, especially, of the evaluator as well as the students' misunderstanding of the teacher's role as an evaluator. Traditionally, the teacher is considered the one who criticizes, evaluates and judges unfairly and this role is described in terms of „*marks/grades, tests, examination, unfair, to sit pass or fail, nervousness, stress etc*”.

Ranking third in students' views, by 17. 1%, the *teacher's professional expertise* means intellectual authority, possession of specialized knowledge, swapping of know-how with students and development of specialized competences necessary for students' future career. What is more, this opinion is expressed in terms of “*information, knowledge, expertise, culture, capability, professionalism, literate, scholar, capable, smart, new things well explained, hardworking, experience, future, prosperity, engineer etc*”.

The last ranks in the current research belong to *the roles of the teacher* (2.4%) and *managerial skills* (0.6 %), labelled as “*teacher, model, advisor, friend, parent, inspirational, guide, planner, mentor*”. This explains the existence of an environment in which the teacher still plays traditional roles and acts less as a planner, guide or facilitator. At the same time, it becomes worth mentioning the new modern roles performed by the teacher in line with nowadays educational dynamics: advisor, guide, inspirational, facilitator of learning, planner and organizer. Hence, the focus is gradually shifted from knowledge-based product to knowledge-based process, the teacher attaching greater importance to the students' learning needs, motivation, guidance and disregarding the delivery of prefabricated knowledge.

Q2. How do you think teachers are perceived in Romania?

Table 2.

University	Students'opinions on teachers (statistical mean)	Society opinion on teachers (statistical mean)
University Politehnica of Bucharest	3.64	2.86
University Politehnica of Timișoara	4.02	3.01
Representative sample	3.78	2.91

Taking into consideration students' answers to the above question, it deems fit to notice their high appreciation of teachers provided the direct contact with them (also shown from the statistical means in Table 2), whereas the rest of society reveals unfair low appreciation of teachers. The difference is statistically significant as proved by the test $t = 75,360$ ($p < 0,01$).

Therefore, direct contact and relationship that students have with the educational system and teachers bring about students' empathy to their trainers, thus, appreciating their effort and commitment likely to assist them in becoming specialists in various domains. On the contrary, those who have lost contact with education and teachers will no longer consider this profession important and, unfortunately, they become unmindful of the importance of teaching and teachers considered the basis of all professions and jobs. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that further development of society relies heavily on teachers and their dedication.

Q3. To what extent do you think the following attributes fit to the real/ideal teacher's profile?

Table 3.

No.crt.	Attributes	Real	Ideal	Comparison
1	3.1 Flexible	3.32	4.12	$t=58.41$; $p<0.01$
2	3.2 Efficient	3.59	4.36	$t=64.73$; $p<0.01$
3	3.3 Logic	3.69	4.37	$t=60.33$; $p<0.01$
4	3.4 Sincere	3.75	4.21	$t=58.10$; $p<0.01$
5	3.5 Tolerant	3.23	4.02	$t=49.41$; $p<0.01$
6	3.6 Credible	3.66	4.24	$t=61.41$; $p<0.01$
7	3.7 Modern	3.39	4.22	$t=53.85$; $p<0.01$
8	3.8 Transparency in actions	3.36	3.93	$t=57.91$; $p<0.01$
9	3.9 Responsible	4.07	4.44	$t=76.03$; $p<0.01$
10	3.10 Funny	3.49	4.17	$t=55.12$; $p<0.01$
11	3.11 Performant	3.76	4.33	$t=64.92$; $p<0.01$
12	3.12 Competitive	3.19	3.53	$t=49.91$; $p<0.01$
13	3.13 Distinguished	3.39	3.93	$t=58.67$; $p<0.01$
14	3.14 Unique	3.39	3.97	$t=46.99$; $p<0.01$
15	3.15 Trustworthy	3.91	4.45	$t=68.18$; $p<0.01$
16	3.16 Approachable	3.16	4.00	$t=45.88$; $p<0.01$

17	3.17 Creative	3.45	4.27	t=55.96; p<0.01
18	3.18 Elitist	3.21	3.59	t=53.54; p<0.01
19	3.19 Intelligent	4.35	4.61	t=88.70; p<0.01
20	3.20 Good communicator	3.80	4.57	t=62.61; p<0.01
21	3.21 Patient	3.42	4.25	t=54.79; p<0.01
22	3.22 Passionate	3.87	4.44	t=69.40; p<0.01
23	3.23 Good organizer	3.63	4.29	t=65.05; p<0.01
24	3.24 Punctual	3.94	4.22	t=64.84; p<0.01

There are statistically significant differences for all attributes listed in Table 3, regarding the profile of the real and the ideal teacher in technical higher education from a student perspective. On one hand, the results show the real is not tantamount to ideal, since the ideal does not exist in practice, it is more a target to be achieved. On the other hand, there is always room for teaching development inasmuch as we are well aware of the students' preferences and opinions about the characteristics of their desired teacher or trainer. Therefore, there is a constant need to bridge the gap between real and ideal, provided a clear profile of the teacher as outlined by students. As a consequence, the teacher's future behaviour is likely to change so as to fit properly into the educational and instructional processes. Moreover, this is likely to bring about alterations of the curricula for future teachers' psychopedagogical training.

In order to highlight a few essential teacher dimensions regarding the real and ideal model in higher education, we have observed the results of the research as illustrated in Table 4 below. In this sense, one observation is that on a 1 to 5 marking scale, intelligence ranks first for both teacher models, real (4.35) and ideal (4.61). More than anything, for students, intelligence is crucial when it comes to their teachers. And this is because teaching, as a profession, makes the teacher face challenges, deal with diverse and unexpected situations in the classroom, never encountered before. Hence, intelligence, as a superior form of optimal and efficient adaptation to new difficult puzzling situations, by means of restructuring of previous experiential data, proves a prerequisite for any teacher likely to overcome this kind of predicament.

Second in the ranking comes responsible/ responsibility (4.07), proving students' perceptions of the real teacher as a responsible person who shows respect for the profession and assumes consequent

responsibilities and duties. Punctual ranks third (3.94), which explains students's perceptions of the higher education teacher regarded as a person mindful of efficient time keeping in the classroom. With regard to didactics, punctuality is considered a form of respect for the educables and their efficient training alike. Ranking fourth, the attribute of trustworthy (3.91) underlines the importance for keeping one's promise and taking the teacher's words for granted.

As far as the ideal teacher is concerned, the following attributes rank second and third: good communicator (4.57) and trustworthy/a person of his/her word (4.45). Thus, students highly appreciate a teacher who is a good communicator, who is able to efficiently transmit specialized information so as to make himself/herself clear to the students, who is able to create rapport with them and create a congenial positive interpersonal atmosphere likely to stimulate and support each and every student in their learning process. To students' mind, the ideal academic teacher is capable of understanding their needs, behaviour, a trustworthy person, of his/her word, never changing mind or ideas, demands or expectations, nor mood. Responsible, as an attribute of the ideal academic teacher, ranks fourth (4.44).

Passionate is next in ranking, on the fifth position, the real teacher model (3.87) and the ideal (4.44) respectively. In fact, in this case, the real is tantamount to ideal in the sense that students would prefer a passionate academic teacher both in practice and theory. Passion implies a calling for this profession, vocation, dedication, hard work and commitment. It is worth mentioning the positive aspect of this students' observation.

In the aftermath of the aforementioned, the first five positions of the ranking concerning the attributes assigned to the academic teachers, both profiles of the real and ideal teacher share 4 common characteristics (intelligent, responsible, trustworthy, passionate), two of them being placed on the same position in both models (intelligent – first rank and passionate – fifth rank). As a consequence, there is a huge similarity between the students' expectations from a higher education teacher and the way they perceive their real teachers, surprisingly and encouraging at the same time.

Among the last ranking adjectives are elitist (3.21), competitive (3.19) and approachable (3.16). This fact illustrates that students do not consider the higher education teacher an elitist, a distinguished superior and competitive person, in the pursuit of professional affirmation. Nor is the academic teacher perceived as approachable. Hence, even if the teacher is intelligent, responsible and punctual (the first three ranked attributes), they

are not available off-duty and ready to provide students with additional information, nor likely to offer learning support for their students.

With regard to the adjectives assigned to the ideal academic teacher, the last three ranking positions are occupied by transparency in actions (3.93), elitist (3.59) and competitive (3.53). We can assume that a transparent teacher in actions is not important for students. Furthermore, for them, it does not matter whether their teacher is an elitist, cultivated, superior or prone to self-sufficiency or competitive.

We notice that 2 adjectives (elitist and competitive) are common for both the real and ideal models, hence such a teacher is neither wanted nor does he/she exist in reality.

Table 4.

	Attributes	Real	Attributes	Ideal
1	3.19 Intelligent	4.35	3.19 Intelligent	4.61
2	3.9 Responsible	4.07	3.20 Good communicator	4.57
3	3.24 Punctual	3.94	3.15 Trustworthy/of their word	4.45
4	3.15 Trustworthy/of their word	3.91	3.9 Responsible	4.44
5	3.22 Passionate	3.87	3.22 Passionate	4.44
6	3.20 Good communicator	3.8	3.3 Logical	4.37
7	3.11 Performant	3.76	3.2 Efficient	4.36
8	3.4 Sincere	3.75	3.11 Performant	4.33
9	3.3 Logical	3.69	3.23 Good organizer	4.29
10	3.6 Credible	3.66	3.17 Creative	4.27
11	3.23 Good organizer	3.63	3.21 Patient	4.25
12	3.2 Efficient	3.59	3.6 Credible	4.24
13	3.10 Funny	3.49	3.24 Punctual	4.22
14	3.17 Creative	3.45	3.7 Modern	4.22
15	3.21 Patient	3.42	3.4 Sincere	4.21
16	3.7 Modern	3.39	3.10 Funny	4.17
17	3.13 Distinguished	3.39	3.1 Flexible	4.12
18	3.14 Unique	3.39	3.5 Tolerant	4.02
19	3.8 Transparent in actions	3.36	3.16 Approachable	4
20	3.1 Flexible	3.32	3.14 Unique	3.97
21	3.5 Tolerant	3.23	3.13 Distinguished	3.93

22	3.18 Elitist	3.21	3.8 Transparent in actions	3.93
23	3.12 Competitive	3.19	3.18 Elitist	3.59
24	3.16 Approachable	3.16	3.12 Competitive	3.53

Q4. To what extent do you agree with the following assumptions about the real higher education teacher?

Table 5.

No.	Assumptions	Statistical mean
1	Teachers successfully overcome didactic and professional challenges in educational and instructional activity	3.6
2	Teachers encourage students to speak their mind freely	3.57
3	Teachers are concerned about quality assurance in teaching	3.55
4	Teachers do not make vulgar remarks to students	3.43
5	Teachers show enthusiasm for the taught subject	3.4
6	Teachers provide students with feedback on evaluation	3.3
7	Teachers use interactive teaching methods	3.24
8	Teachers put theory into practice in teaching	3.22
9	Teachers lack methodology and structure in teaching	2.63
10	Teachers do not objectively evaluate students	2.61
11	Teachers are arrogant and treat students condescendingly	2.6
12	Teachers are unavailable off-duty	2.56
13	Teachers are not open to communication with students	2.33
14	Teachers lack updated specialized knowledge	2.26
15	Teachers miss appointments with students	2.24
16	Teachers make sexist or misogynistic remarks to female students	1.93

The new correlation of factors (Rotation Matrix)

Table 6.

	Assumptions about academic teachers	Communicative-pedagogical dimension	Factors	
			Motivational dimension	Moral dimension
1	Teachers do not make sexist or misogynistic remarks to female students	0.757		
2	Teachers possess updated specialized knowledge	0.678		
3	Teachers are open to communication with students	0.654		
4	Teachers are not arrogant and treat students fairly	0.649		
5	Teachers are methodical and structured in teaching	0.604		
6	Teachers are unavailable off-duty	0.603		
7	Teachers evaluate students objectively	0.551		
8	Teachers are concerned about quality assurance in teaching		0.763	
9	Teachers put theory into practice in teaching		0.740	
10	Teachers show enthusiasm		0.735	
11	Teachers use interactive teaching methods		0.710	
12	Teachers encourage students to speak their mind freely		0.709	
13	Teachers provide students with feedback on evaluation		0.621	
14	Teachers do not make vulgar remarks to students			0.757
15	Teachers attend appointments with students			0.574

The items listed in Q4 were analyzed according to the correlations of all the 16 selected assumptions. Three factors with values higher or equal to 1.00 were selected. The rotation of factors led to the structure provided in the previous table. The first factor counts for 21.66% of the variant, the second for 21.61% and the third for 7.36% of the variant. Summing up, the four factors count for 50.65% of the variant.

Factor 1 (Communicative-pedagogical dimension) correlates with the initial variables as follows: teachers do not make sexist or misogynistic remarks to female students (0.757); Teachers possess updated specialized knowledge (0.678); Teachers are open to communication with students (0.654); Teachers are not arrogant and treat students fairly (0.649); Teachers are methodical and structured in teaching (0.604); Teachers are available off-duty (0.603); Teachers evaluate students objectively (0.551).

Factor 2 (Motivational dimension) correlates with the initial variables as follows: Teachers are concerned about quality assurance in teaching (0.763); Teachers put theory into practice in teaching (0.740); Teachers show enthusiasm (0.735); Teachers use interactive teaching methods (0.710); Teachers encourage students to speak their mind freely (0.709); Teachers provide students with feedback on evaluation (0.621).

Factor 3 (Moral dimension) correlates with the initial variables as follows: Teachers do not make vulgar remarks to students (0.757); Teachers attend appointments with students (0.574).

Q5. To what extent do you agree with the following assumptions about the real higher education teacher?

Table 7.

No. crt.	Assumptions	Statistical mean
1	Teachers successfully overcome didactic and professional challenges in educational and instructional activity	3.6
2	Teachers encourage students to speak their mind freely	3.57
3	Teachers are concerned about quality assurance in teaching	3.55
4	Teachers do not make vulgar remarks to students	3.43
5	Teachers show enthusiasm for the taught subject	3.4
6	Teachers are methodical and structured in teaching	3.37
7	Teachers provide students with feedback on evaluation	3.3
8	Teachers use interactive teaching methods	3.24
9	Teachers put theory into practice in teaching	3.22
10	Teachers do not make sexist or misogynistic remarks to female students	3.07
11	Teachers attend appointments with students	2.76
12	Teachers possess updated specialized knowledge	2.74
13	Teachers are open to communication with students	2.67

14	Teachers are available off-duty	2.44
15	Teachers are not arrogant and treat students fairly	2.4
16	Teachers evaluate students objectively	2.39

The profile of the real academic teacher has been outlined by means of a range of assumptions with regard to the didactic activity, the teacher-student relationship extra school hours and students' evaluation methodology.

This has led to a hierarchy of answers ranked on a 1 to 5 scale, in a decreasing order from 3.6 to 2.39. The average is set to range between 2.74 and 3.24, namely around 3.

The top ranking address the following assumptions:

- Teachers successfully overcome didactic and professional challenges in educational and instructional activity (3.6) ;
- Teachers encourage students to speak their mind freely (3.57);
- Teachers are concerned about quality assurance in teaching (3.55) ;
- Teachers do not make vulgar remarks to students (3.43) ;
- Teachers show enthusiasm for the taught subject (3.4) ;
- Teachers are methodical and structured in teaching (3.37) ;
- Teachers provide students with feedback on evaluation (3.3).

These research findings reveal students' appreciation for their teachers' openness, the quality of the subjects taught and their feedback on evaluation. Moreover, there is positive appreciation for the other aspects mentioned, to be investigated in further research: communication with students during breaks or off-duty and extra school hours, arrogant attitude towards students and lack of objective evaluation.

Q6. To what extent do you agree with the following rights and obligations of teachers and students alike?

Table 8.

No. crt.	Rights and obligations of teachers and students	Statistical mean
1	Students are entitled to an optimum learning environment	4.48
2	Teachers are entitled to use clear, calm and firm voice and eye contact	4.4
3	Students are entitled to expect appropriate behaviour from their teachers	4.37

4	Teachers are entitled to expect appropriate behaviour from their students	4.32
5	Students are entitled to individual attention from their teachers – salutations, small talk, encouragement, understanding, smiles, friendly eye-contact etc.	4.19
6	Teachers are entitled to influence students’ behaviour without threatening or shouting	4.03
7	Teachers are entitled to use gestures likely to support oral communication	4.02
8	Efficient teachers will set high expectations and standards and assist students in meeting	3.85
9	Teachers are entitled to set and pursue expectations from students’ behaviour	3.74
10	Students are entitled to special observations – from comments on papers to graduation theses.	3.69

Another objective of the current study is to sustain Marlene and Lee Canter’s suggestion that teachers should display positive attitude. Therefore, the questionnaire also addresses some rights and obligations of teachers and students in line with Canters’ proposal (Stan, 2006: 58-78):

Teachers’ fundamental rights:

- to ensure an optimum learning environment;
- to expect appropriate behaviour from their students;
- to expect appropriate support from parents and school administration if need be.

Students’ fundamental rights:

- to have a teacher likely to assist them in developing and prevent them from self-destruction due to inappropriate behaviour;
- to receive support from the teacher so as to acquire appropriate behavior;
- to adopt a certain type of behaviour provided previous awareness of their choice and subsequent consequences.

The rights of both academic parties (teachers and students) as formulated by the Canters are validated as follows:

Teachers

Table 9.

No. crt.	Teachers' rights	Statistical mean
1	Teachers are entitled to use clear, calm and firm voice and eye contact	4.4
2	Teachers are entitled to expect appropriate behaviour from their students	4.32
3	Teachers are entitled to influence students' behaviour without threatening or shouting	4.03
4	Teachers use gestures to support verbal affirmations	4.02
5	Teachers are entitled to use gestures likely to support oral communication	3.85
6	Teachers are entitled to set and pursue expectations from students' behaviour	3.74

Students

Table 10.

No. crt.	Students' rights	Statistical mean
1	Students are entitled to an optimum learning environment	4.48
2	Students are entitled to expect appropriate behaviour from their teachers	4.37
3	Students are entitled to individual attention from their teachers – salutations, small talk, encouragement, understanding, smiles, friendly eye-contact etc.	4.19
4	Students are entitled to special observations – from comments on papers to graduation theses.	3.69

4. Conclusions

The current study addresses the profile of the teacher in technical higher education in Romania and it was conducted at University Politehnica of Bucharest and University Politehnica of Timișoara. The target group consisted of 321 interviewees, 176 male students and 145 female students. The survey was based on an on-line questionnaire. The results of the research illustrate the following:

- Students rank first the *teacher-student relationship* (28.7%), thus explaining their rapport based on continuous interaction between the two educational agents. To students' mind, the relationship between the trainer and the trainee, between the master and the apprentice is more important than the knowledge provided;

- The *teacher as an evaluator* ranks second (21.2%) and argues for the stress students experience during examination periods. Moreover, it underlines the evaluator's authority bound to certify the competences of the one who studies and who wishes to obtain a „trip ticket”, that is the diploma likely to ensure confidence in your own capacity and career opportunities;

- The *teacher as knowledge provider* ranks third. The teacher is depicted in terms of know-how, expertise, culture and considered a reliable and worthy icon for students;

- The students who are directly engaged in the educational and instructional process and in their relationship with the teachers are likely to appreciate them more than the ones who have lost contact with the teachers;

- The ranking of attributes assigned to academic teachers emphasizes *intelligence*, in case of the real teacher the statistical mean is (4.35) and for the ideal one (4.61). Furthermore, the last three positions tackle adjectives such as *elitist* and *competitive*, hence students will look for intelligent higher education teachers, capable to face professional challenges. Nevertheless, they should not be bound to elitism, perfection, self-sufficiency nor competitiveness or on a constant pursue of self-affirmation.

- The current research is in line with the model proposed by Marlene and Lee Canter who advise teachers to take on a positive attitude in education, thus observing the fundamental rights of teachers and students alike.

- The challenges of the current study are the limited sample of the target group and the application of the questionnaire to both schoolchildren and engineering students, at the same time.

With the advent of modern technology, the importance of teacher-student relationship prevails (as shown by the findings of the current research). Moreover, such a face-to-face teacher-student, trainer-trainee relationship is endangered, nowadays, by the excessive threat of technology in all educational aspects. Thus, our assumptions are not against information technology and communication within the scope of education, on the contrary, we deeply understand its importance as well as its benefits for the development and consolidation of educational systems worldwide and its contribution to the development of certain digital competences –

prerequisites of a knowledge-based society for graduates. Nevertheless, we must raise awareness about the constant tendency to undermine interpersonal relationships within educational process nowadays. In the aftermath of ongoing advancement of technology and communication, students' high appreciation of interpersonal relationships comes by surprise. This proves they may have become aware of the problematics of technology to human alienation. As a result, information technology and communication prove a *sine qua non* condition for educational systems as long as their impact on students and learning process is positive.

Ranking second in the current study, teacher's role as evaluator unveils the fear and stress such an assessment process may cause as well as the inappropriate manner evaluation is conducted at present. Evaluation must be perceived as a crucial aspect of the educational process, an extension of the teaching-learning activity and, thus, it must be planned by the teacher well in advance and in collaboration with the educables. Students and school children alike should not be afraid of evaluations, the language of assessment should not remain in the realm of judgement. The teacher must not criticize or give negative appraisals of their professional performance. Consequently, they must get accustomed to evaluations and understand that evaluation is an essential element in the learning cycle, likely to provide feedback useful for their professional development. Teachers are thus recommended to include formative evaluation in their activity. It is worth mentioning that formative evaluation proves efficient when it leads to self-assessment and corrects and guides further learning. Corrective advice is ensured through students and not through the teacher's didactic strategies. Furthermore, the students themselves are capable of self-correction, self-evaluation and further self-planning of learning. They are capable of self-autonomy in learning, they set their learning objectives and improve their performance based on the results of the evaluation. By conducting formative evaluation, teachers are likely to ensure its therapeutic benefits and enhance the positive impact of evaluation on the educables. Viewed as a therapy, assessment is no longer a diagnosis. It becomes the springboard for solid projects and plans likely to overcome any educational predicament in education.

The teacher's professional expertise ranks on the third place in the current study, stressing the importance of specialized knowledge. In modern times of technology and computers, the teacher still plays the vital role of information provider as compared to artificial intelligence. Although teachers and students alike may easily resort to artificial intelligence for

educational purposes, it is human intelligence that makes the difference between man and machine, man and computer, man and technology.

We must argue that teachers must undergo continuous training in order to acquire and develop multidimensional competences and successfully tackle educational challenges and queries.

Students' willingness to show a pro-active attitude towards their teachers in class is commonsensical. The teacher as a human being is the one to create the educational atmosphere the student needs. By way of conclusion, the ideal teacher is intelligent, multidimensional, fair and a humane evaluator, an expert in his/her field of expertise and capable of ensuring a congenial learning environment.

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