# TEACHER'S PERSONALITY TRAITS AND THEIR TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS: IMPORTANT FACTORS FOR STUDENT'S SUCCESS

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## ABSTRACT

This is a literature-based paper that tries to establish the fact that relationship exist between teacher's personality and their teaching effectiveness which has impact on student's success. The paper looked at the definitions of personality traits and its dimensions focusing on The Big Five Model; extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness. Teacher effectiveness was explored before exploring the relationship between teachers teaching effectiveness and teacher personality traits. The writer concludes the paper by highlighting how teacher's personality and their teaching effectiveness influences student's success. She then recommended that teachers must be consciously aware of the above fact. And also know that personality traits are not inborn and are not permanent as was the belief before because some studies have shown that these traits can be worked on and can be improved on and also be changed. They should therefore be able to have the ability and responsibility to develop and maintain a conducive atmosphere in the classroom that supports the students for effective learning since the climate of the classroom is largely dependent on the teacher's personality.

**Keywords:** Teachers, Personality Traits, Teaching Effectiveness and Student's Success.

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the important element in most of the nation's agenda. However, there has been no emphasis on personality of the people who are directly involved in education. The need to improve the teaching profession as discussed in many conferences, seminars and workshops shows the important role teachers play in realizing the Educational goals. A focus on the teacher's personality traits is important as it could lead to an effort in identifying factors that influence their performance in supporting the achievement of educational goals.

Many writers are of the opinion that relationship exist between teacher's personality trait and teaching effectiveness and some researches have also shown this relationship. For example, Robert, Luo, Briley, Chow, Su and Hill (2017) showed that teacher performance is influenced by teacher's personality characteristics. Layne (2012) was of the opinion that there are a lot of studies to prove that personality is an important predictor of effective teaching.

It is important to understand the relationship between personality of teacher and teaching effectiveness in other to identify the particular personality that influences their teaching effectiveness. This is essential because it will help them select the best teaching method that suits their personality to make their teaching more effective. It is obvious that effective teaching is dependent on the teacher's choice of teaching method among other things. As Harris and Fleming (2005) rightly pointed out selection of appropriate teaching methods are important because they determine the effectiveness and quality of teaching.

## Personality Traits

The term 'trait' was borrowed by early theorists from biology according to educational psychologist Richard Snow (1984) where it is still generally refers to hereditary, permanent, and physically based characteristics. Nobel laureate James Heckman also observed that the term transmits "a sense of immutability or permanence" (Heckman & Kautz, 2014) and some prominent sources exceptionally treat traits as "natural born" (Gregoire, 2014). Such perceptions of personality traits are different from the contemporary personality definition.

Contrary to previous beliefs that personality traits are set like cement, and will never become soft again is not what many believes today. It is believed that they can be altered by major life experiences that was the opinion of Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Lüdtke, & Trautwein, (2012) and Lüdtke, Roberts, Trautwein, & Nagy, (2011) and also Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, (2011) while Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, (2006) are of the opinion that they are not entirely constant through the life span. There are also new evidences that personality can be altered through intervention according to Roberts et al., (2017) and nonclinical according to Hudson & Fraley, (2015). It is essential therefore to note that in consideration of possible correlations between personality traits and teaching effectiveness, it is important to be aware of the fact that the traits in question are not unchangeable, inherited, or inborn.

## Dimensions of Personality (The Big Five Model)

Goldberg (1995) asserts that the five-personality construct has earned considerable empirical support and has received recognition as the trait personality model that can provide the desired personality variable consistency beyond samples and context. Mount and Barrick (2002) was of the opinion that many personality psychologists have agreed to the fact that five personality constructs, referred to as the Big Five, are fundamental and acceptable to explain the basic dimensions of normal personality. I will be discussing the Big Five Model in this paper since it is widely used to measure personality.

Paunonen and Ashton (2001) were of the opinion that the Big Five personality dimensions have been widely studied and have been associated with an array of work attitudes and behavior. These five personality dimensions are broad dimensions that are theorized to contain most narrowly focused personality traits. As observed by Harris and Fleming (2005), the Five Factor Model is popular in the field and the Five personality traits simultaneously classify the higher-level personal temperament of an individual according to the Five Factor Model. I will be discussing the five-factor model one after the other below.

### *Extroversion*

Costa and McCrae (2017) stated that extroverts are excitement seekers, gregarious, assertive and activity-oriented individuals. Mount and Barrick (2017) also towed the same part when the said that extraversion is most often described as the degree to which an individual is sociable, gregarious, talkative, assertive, adventurous, active, energetic and ambitious. According to Harris and Fleming (2005), extroversion means various aspects such as being sociable, affable, assertive and talkative. However, Salgado (2003) opined that extroversion is about the extent to which people are comfortable in social relationships. George, Heller and Mount (2002) were of the opinion that extroverts' need for power and recognition may also make them take more risks in the job and would anticipate the organization to help and reinforce their work activities. Furthermore, George, Heller and Mount (2002) observed that people high in extroversion are most times high performers and devoted to their organization and their work. They reflect psychological contracts that show their hard work, devotion and readiness to work with others.

### Agreeableness

Costa and McCrae (2017) again defined agreeableness as the need for intimacy. They went further to explain that it is a recurrent preference in thought and behavior for experience of warm, close and communicative interactions with others and that individuals high in agreeableness trust others, they are coordinated, philanthropic in nature and flexible. Robertson-kraft and Duckworth (2014) said that high agreeable individuals may in their quest of amicable relationships generate more definite ascription to otherwise aggravating behavior than low-agreeable persons would do.

Judge et. al (2002) said that agreeable individuals have high motivation to achieve interpersonal relationship, on the other hand, Harris and Fleming (2005) were of the opinion that aagreeableness illustrates the courteous, sympathetic, tender-hearted and kind attributes. Furthermore, Roberts (2018) opined that people who are low in agreeableness are usually antagonistic, competitive, cynical, callous, ruthless and cruel, and also tend to show hostility.

Agreeableness is about the intensity of people's sensitivity and responsiveness towards others. This also includes the extent to which they will yield to them. Agreeable people are seen as good-natured, cheerful and caring individuals, they are warm, kind and cooperative while the opposite disagreeable individuals are seen to be distrustful, cold and selfish. Highly agreeable people tend to control the frustration that often arises from interpersonal interactions effectively and try to maintain harmonious relationships with others.

### Conscientiousness

The characteristics of conscientious individuals are but not limited, hardworking, dependable, self-disciplined, determined, and coordinated. Costa and McCrae (1992) also confirmed these characteristics when they said that conscientiousness consist of the specific traits of competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline and deliberation. Wright (2003), was of the opinion that people high in conscientiousness have a sense of duty and obligation to their work and have high job performance, career success, motivation and job satisfaction. Robertson-kraft and Duckworth (2014) said that conscientious is about the number of goals that an individual seeks and the extent which they pursue them in a focused way. He went further to explain the two extremes that are spontaneous individual, who chases many goals but in an unfocused way and the conscientiousness individual, that chases fewer goals and does so in a more direct, controlled and organized way.

Conscientiousness is said to be firmly associated with long life, educational attainment, job performance, and stability in marriage and skeptically associated with misdeed, smoking, and unemployment. Highly conscientious people follow social norms, and are able to delay fulfilment in order to achieve long-term goals.

### Neuroticism

Mount and Barrick (2002), defined neuroticism as the extent to which a person is emotional, insecure, nervous, fearful and apprehensive. Neuroticism persons are limited in social skills and do not keep long-term relationship. This is collaborated with Roberts (2018) when they said that the neurotic individuals are not likely to establish long-term relationships that demand commitments, social skills and trust in others. Neuroticism is an aadjective that describes highly nervous, discontented, and tense individuals.

According to Harri and Sass (2014) It is positively related to cardiovascular disease, alcohol abuse, and the presence of many types of psychopathology (e.g., eating disorders,

schizophrenia) and according to them it is negatively correlated with competency, subjective well-being, and relationship satisfaction. Highly neurotic people is said to often have the feeling of self-consciousness, insecurity and acts impulsively when upset.

Watson and Clark (2000) defined negative affect as the propensity to view the world in a negative emotional state. People with high in negative affect focus more on the negative attitudes of themselves and others. This opinion is in collaboration with Gregoire (2014) when he said that individuals high in negative affectivity, a concept related to the neuroticism accepts a negative view of themselves and the world around them. It also agrees with the characteristics of neuroticism described by Roberts et. al (2017) where they said that neuroticism is composed of several characteristics including low self-esteem and negative affectivity.

### *Openness*

Harris and Fleming (2005) defined openness to experience or creativity as personal characteristics such as being imaginative, original and curious. Manning et. al (2006) also towed the same path when they said that openness is about a person's openness to new experience which is exhibited in such things as breadth of interests, level of creativity and intellectual qualities. There are two extremes in this discussion, at one extreme is the conventional individual, who by comparison closed to new experiences and open individual who is open to such experiences.

People who are open are independent, creative, adaptive and accepts change easily. Furthermore, George et al (2002) have the same view when they opined that open individuals are most times able to understand and adapt to new perspectives. Costa and McCrae (1992) said that openness to experience is related to active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, intellectual curiosity, and independence of judgment. Openness to eexperience is an aadjective that describes the following qualities imaginative, creative, and curiouss while the adjective for those scoring low on openness are unsophisticated, unreflective, and uninquisitive among others.

Openness can be said to be positively associated with appreciating art, divergent thinking, and political liberalism but negatively associated with authoritarianism, racism, prejudice, religiousus intolerance etc. Highly open people are good at recognizing other people's emotions, they seek out novelty and originality, and are also attracted to other highly open people.

### Teaching Effectiveness

It is an obvious truth that every parent all over the world would want to have the assurance that all their children are being thought in a way to prepare them for college, future work and for a 21$^{st}$ century life. For us to achieve this, we need to make sure that the teachers that teach our children include the qualities of effective teaching in their professional lives. The bottom line is we need every teacher to be an effective teacher.

The current shift in research and thinking from the concept of a highly qualified teacher in the classrooms and the need for highly effective teachers in the classrooms is a welcomed development and the needed evolution in our understanding of improvements in the way teaching and learning should take place in our schools.

Teaching effectiveness is not a new topic in educational research even though recently there has been a focus on it due to much study and writings on the topic. Even when there are little

differences on models and studies for teacher effectiveness but all of them agreed to that fact that the measure for teacher effectiveness is student learning.

Effective teachers have the following characteristics; they have deep understanding of the subject matter and the learning theories, they have the ability to reflect and are continuously developing themselves, they understand student differences and classroom instructional strategies among other things.

Teaching effectiveness can be said to be an ability to help students achieve success. Solgado (2003) said that teaching is largely an occupation in which teachers operate both within their classroom and as a member of the larger school organization, something that has been recognized for teachers as a dual loyalty to both the school and students. He went further to say that teaching effectiveness is the degree to which one has facilitated student achievement of educational goals.

The measurement of teaching effectiveness according to Layne (2012) is based on two criteria. First is the selection of good teaching method and second is the suitability of the teaching method with the personality.  He went further to explain that in term of selection of good teaching method that teachers need to focus on the best teaching method in their process of teaching and learning. Roberts et. al (2017) stated that it is important to select appropriate teaching methods because they determine the effectiveness and quality of the teaching, they went further to say that teaching methods and instructional strategies used by teachers are the teachers' means and ways to help students clarify and understand the texts.

Discussing the two basic two methods which are widely used in learning and teaching processes; teacher-centred and student-centred, Roberts et. al (2017), defined teacher-centered method as the teacher's sole participation in a classroom whereby the teacher is considered the custodian of knowledge having the whole class period to talk and the students relied fully on them and expected the teachers to give them everything. He went further and explained that student-centred method is a positive learning environment that is created to facilitate the success of students. Mount and Barrack (2002) stated that the use of a learner-centered approach in teaching enables the teacher to be more effective and perform better.

It is important to note that suitability of the method to the teacher and the suitability of the teacher to the method are essential in achieveing maximum teaching effectiveness. Besides, Heckman and Kautz (2014) also discussed the suitability between methods with the teacher which he called personality of teacher himself, he is of the opinion that by understanding the personality of teachers, it would help to understand the suitability between their personality and their teaching method which lead to their teaching effectiveness.

**Relationship Between Teacher Teaching Effectiveness and Teacher Personality**
This relationship can be identified in the relationship between personality and job performance which leads to the achievement of teaching effectiveness. Some reviews show that there are positive relationships between personality traits of conscientiousness with job performance. For example, Barrick and Mount (1991), were of the opinion that conscientiousness had consistent and positive relationship with job performance across a variety of occupational groups. This is in agreement with the study by Paunonen and Ashton (2001) where they found general intelligence and conscientiousnesss to be valid predictors of training and job performance. Barrick and Mount (1993) in their meta-analysis study, found that conscientiousness undoubtedly predicted job performance in five occupations. In most of the

studies, it is observable that among the Big Five, consciousness has been consistently found as the most reliable predictor of job performance.

However, according to Salgado (1997) the other personality traits that have relationship with job performance are openness and agreeableness. He especially found them as valid predictors of training proficiency. Thoreson, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, and Chermont (2003), found significant true-score correlations between work attitudes and dispositions and personality traits. Curtis and Liying (2001), stated that teacher performance is influenced by teachers' personality characteristics and went further to explain that the personality had an effect on teaching practices as well as teaching effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are numerous studies showing that personality is a significant predictor of effective teaching. Personality plays a role in the way teachers are rated on their being effective in teaching. In terms of personality characteristics that influence the teaching effectiveness, it is observable that the behavior attributed to good teaching corresponds with certain personal characteristics such as being kind, appreciative, friendly, approachable, warm, and inspiring. The content of teacher effectiveness also includes some aspects of teachers' personality that are; being warm, tolerant, friendly, having a good sense of humor, and being concerned about students.

Also, in a study carried out by Zhang (2000), it was observed that personality types such as critical thinking inclination, judicial thinking and intrapersonal intelligence results in a more reliable outcome in reflective teaching and mastery performance. From the above reviews and discussions, we can see that there are relationships between personality and teaching effectiveness. As stated by Curtis and Liying (2001), teacher performance is influenced to a large extent by the teachers' personality characteristics. Teachers' personality traits are reflected not only in their classroom performance, example in their selection of instructional activities, materials, strategies, and classroom management techniques but also in their interactions with students as well. Personality aids teaching, for communication takes place between the teacher and the learner— even in the absence of the spoken word (nonverbal communication). The teacher whose personality helps create and preserve a classroom or learning environment in which students feel contented and in which they are provoked to learn is said to have an enviable teaching personality.

Emphasis on teachers' personality is based on the premise that the teacher as a person is a significant figure in the teaching-learning process. Personality influences the behavior of the teacher in diverse ways and sstudents learn from a teacher's personality even if there is no formal interaction between student and teacher.

Therefore, teachers must be consciously aware of this fact. They should also realize that personality traits are not inborn and are not permanent or cannot be changed as was the belief. Studies have shown that these traits can be worked on and can be improved on and also be changed. They should therefore be able to have the ability and responsibility to develop and maintain a conducive atmosphere in the classroom that supports the students for effective learning because the climate of the classroom is largely dependent on the teacher's personality.

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