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Competences and Competence Model of University Teachers

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Abstract

Competences represent a summary of key professional and personal skills/talents and behavioural patterns of an individual. They form the basis of any proficient working behaviour, and the level of their maturity is crucial for the successful performance of the profession concerned. From this point of view, the competences of university teachers are of exceptional importance, mainly because teachers constitute the basis for the creation of new knowledge and new values beneficial to the university as well as to students, and subsequently also to enterprises in the role of employers, who should be able to use reasonably and develop systematically the mature competences of their employees. The intention of the study is to analyse the professional-personal profile of university teachers and the competences they should have. The study also presents outcomes of a questionnaire-based survey conducted with a sample of 686 students of the University of Žilina, the Slovak Republic. The first stage of our survey (2012/2013, 395 students) focused on questioning as to which competences the teacher should have according to students. The second stage of our survey (2013/2014), which is dealt with in this study, focuses on defining the negative competences and characteristics of teachers, i.e. it focuses on the question as to which features the teacher should certainly not have. In addition to interesting outcomes of the survey, the most important part of the study is an originally created competence model of the university teacher. Such competence model should become a quality standard or a paragon of the positive indicators of the teacher’s working behaviour. The model also needs to clearly define the negative indicators (undesirable behaviour) which teachers should eliminate from their performance and behaviour. Persistence of such behaviour should be strictly penalised by the management of the faculty or university.

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1. Introduction

In the education system and under the European standards for higher education, a university teacher is the "most important study source, which is available to most of the students," (ENQA, 2009, p. 17). The teacher is interpreted as a professional who is qualified for theoretically profound and critical analysis of educational phenomena, processes in the teaching his study subject. This allows him to design the context and educational policies and procedures in the way so that they lead to the objectives set by the educational objectives without the teacher manipulating his students and therefore creating optimal condition for their moral development and self-development (Valica & Rohn, 2013, p. 866). In this connection, teach means to impart knowledge to or instruct (someone) as to how to do something; or to cause (someone) to learn, or understand something by example or experience; or to encourage someone to accept (something) as a fact or principle (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003, p. 1809).

The work of the university teacher has a great impact on development of knowledge and cognition in each society. It is very demanding work that requires professional competences and continual enhancing professional knowledge, social competencies, and also ability to develop them, ability in scientific research what is connected also with ability to transfer the science results to students in such a way to understand them and were inspiring for their future development (Kravčáková, Lukáčová & Búgelová, 2011).

A university teacher is in direct and permanent contact with the students. He provides them with information and knowledge, helps them acquire and improve their skills and develop their competencies. He tries to objectively assess their knowledge growth, to direct their future (often lifelong) development efforts so that they first of all properly build and then permanently maintain their professional authority and qualifications.

Actual results and contribution of teacher’s work, obtained objective evidence of their success in the relevant scientific discipline, declared outputs of scientific activities etc., are important. Each university teacher (including the guarantors of the subjects and guarantors of the study programs) always covers/provides for teaching of those subjects, for which he is professionally qualified (completed doctoral studies in the relevant or related field, habilitation or appointment proceedings successfully recognised in the relevant or related field), (Zákon, 2002).

Tokarčíková points out the existence of a bipolar view on the university teacher’s profile: “There are a variety of specific skills that are needed for education of large and small groups, and facilitation and preparation of the necessary materials (layouts). On the one hand, there is a school that requires the teacher works out more and more publications. On the other hand, there are students who require a high level of teacher’s presentation skills, abilities and art as to attract intention,” (2013, p. 2998).

It is very important to look at the university teachers’ successfullness thru a prism of their motivation and/or their cognitive capacity. Roets, Van Hiel & Kruglanski present this idea: “Although scholars might agree that the combined impact of motivation and cognitive capacity may be more than the sum of their individual effects, the exact nature of their interactive effects remained relatively undefined. It is assumed that high levels of motivation and capacity are simply better than low levels, and a potential interaction has merely been considered in terms of the degree to which high levels of one determinant might compensate for low levels of the other,” (2013, p. 262). It means when the level of teacher’s motivation is very high, this one can (to a certain extent) supplement an incomplete cognitive competence of the teacher. And vice versa, when the level of teacher’s cognitive capacity is very high, this one can renew the incomplete level of the teacher’s motivation (Blašková & Blaško, 2013, p. 10). In terms of the university’s overall development, attention needs to be paid to the proper definition and, in particular, to the systematic development of the competences of university teachers (Hartley, Hilsdon, Keenan, Sinfield & Verity, 2011).

Based on all of the previous views and thoughts, the intention of this study has been to create a competence model of the university teacher, based on a brief theoretical presentation of views on the key competences of teachers and based on the outcomes of a counter-posed survey, concerning the identification of university teachers’ negative, i.e. undesirable characteristics with demotivational effects, which we conducted with a sample of 686 students of the University of Žilina.
2. Competence of university teacher

Competence (in terms of professional competence) can be defined as a summary of the key professional and personal skills/talents and behavioural patterns that an individual needs to have and demonstrate in order to successfully accomplish the defined professional goals and perform the relating professional tasks, duties and responsibilities (Blašková, 2011, p. 108). Competence can be defined as the capabilities of superior performers (Gibb, 2008, p. 56). Competence is defined as the proven ability to use knowledge (and) skills. It is also described in terms of responsibility and autonomy (Quendler et al., 2013). A different view can be applied to what is known as the general human competence, which, to a certain extent, reflects all of the human efforts within an organisation. For example, Plamínek & Fišer see the human competence as the summary of achieved performance (i.e. human work) and of the generated potential (i.e. human resources). If one of those components is missing, the competence as a whole is also missing (2005, p. 17).

Numerous authors deal with the definition of desirable and undesirable competences of university teachers, e.g. Boyer (1990); Laurillard (1994); Vašutová (2005); Elton (2006); Lueddeke (2008); Spilková (2011); Hartley, Hilsdon, Keenan, Sinfield & Verity (2011); Kucharčíková (2013); Hoidn & Kärkkäinen (2014); etc. Teacher’s competences are seen as capacities of excellence (Slavík et al., 2012, p. 74). According to authors, the university teacher’s competences can be divided into seven clusters: branch-specific; didactic and psycho-didactic; general educational; diagnostic and interventional; social, psycho-social and communicational; managerial and normative; professionally and personally cultivating. The skill of professional qualified improvisation can also be seen as an exceptionally important ability (2002, pp. 79–80). List of the teacher’s competence profile, worked out by Valica & Rohn, consists only of the following four components: expert/technical competences; moral and ethical responsibilities; pedagogical-psychological and didactic-methodological competences; self-developing competence (2013, p. 867).

List of competences, we worked out in the framework of the project Development of culture quality at the University of Žilina based on European standards of higher education – DEQUA (funded by European Union), is a little different from previous two lists. Our list has consisted of following 8 competences (DEQUA, 2012; Blašková & Blaško, 2012, p. 41):

- Moral and ethical competence;
- Technical (expert) competence;
- Scientific competence;
- Acclaimed author’s competence;
- Excellent teaching competence;
- Role model competence;
- Mature personality competence;
- Critically thinking competence;
- Communication competence;
- Motivation competence.

Based on the intuitive comparison of all of the three aforementioned lists of competences, those to be certainly useful and inspirational for the creation of the competence model (in addition to educational, professional and moral competences) include, inter alia, the competence in qualified improvisation, the competence of professional and personal cultivation, and the interventional competence, role model competence, mature personality competence, motivation and communication competence.

3. Methods

In compiling the competence model of university teachers, we decided, in addition to a theoretical analysis of the area researched and a questionnaire-based survey among students, which was focused on the required (positive) features/competences of teachers (2012/2013, a sample of 395 students), to focus the subsequent survey also on defining the negative characteristics.
3.1. Participants and characteristics of questionnaire survey

The second stage of our survey (2013/2014) was conducted with a sample of 686 students of the University of Žilina. The sample included students of bachelor´s as well as master´s studies, where most respondents were men (the university is usually ranked among technical universities). A more specific description of the participating respondents is available in Table 1.

| Table 1. Identification of questionnaire survey participants |
| --- |
| **Participants** | **[Number – % of all – average age]** |
| Male | 439 – 63.99% – 21.17 |
| Female | 247 – 36.01% – 21.27 |
| Level of study: Bachelor | 545 – 79.45% – 20.71 |
| Level of study: Master | 141 – 20.55% – 23.11 |
| First year | 128 – 18.66% – 19.71 |
| Male | 83 12.10% |
| Female | 45 6.56% |
| Second year | 297 – 43.29% – 20.79 |
| Male | 190 27.70% |
| Female | 107 15.60% |
| Third year | 120 – 17.49% – 21.58 |
| Male | 94 13.70% |
| Female | 26 3.79% |
| First year | 61 – 8.89% – 22.75 |
| Male | 31 4.52% |
| Female | 30 4.37% |
| Second year | 80 – 11.66% – 23.39 |
| Male | 41 5.98% |
| Female | 39 5.69% |

The effort was to obtain students’ replies to the following counter-posed question: “What should a university teacher not be like, i.e. which features, traits and competences should the teacher not have?” It was an open-ended question, where students had to put their comments in the questionnaire form.

3.2. Results and discussion

An interesting feature about our survey is that the students were very willing to engage in this questioning (all students we asked to fill in the questionnaire form did fill it in). They were pleased that we were interested in their views on the positive as well as negative teacher’s profile and that there was a targeted effort at the university to improve the teacher’s profile as well as the teaching process and the conditions of education.

The 25 most frequent negative characteristics concerning the (undesirable) profile of university teachers are included in Table 2. As we can see, both groups of respondents, i.e. male and female students, cited bias and unfairness in the first position. This undesirable characteristic was cited by up to 177 students, i.e. up to more than one quarter of all respondents. The evaluations in the other positions slightly differed but their essential features remained the same. As concerns the other major negative characteristics, not shown in Table 2, (male) students cited: intolerant (24th position in terms of frequency of male replies; this characteristic was cited by 20 males, i.e. 4.56%); reticent (25th position; 19 males, i.e. 4.33%). The other major negative characteristics cited by (female) students were as follows: slandering and ridiculing the students (18th position in terms of frequency of female replies; 16 females, i.e. 7.29%); hostile (22nd position; 13 females, i.e. 5.26%); not interested in students (25th position; 12 females, i.e. 4.86%).

| No | Negative characteristic/competence | Students Frequency % | Order | Men Frequency % | Order | Women Frequency % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Biased, unfair | 177 25.80 | 1. | 101 23.01 | 1. | 76 30.77 |
| 2. | Arrogant | 119 17.35 | 2. | 81 18.45 | 4. | 38 15.38 |
| 3. | Uneducated, unprofessional | 96 13.99 | 3. | 61 13.9 | 5. | 35 14.17 |
| 4. | Haughty, condescending | 96 13.99 | 5. | 52 11.85 | 2. | 44 17.81 |
| 5. | Unwilling | 91 13.27 | 7. | 47 10.71 | 2. | 44 17.81 |
| 6. | Boring | 84 12.24 | 6. | 50 11.39 | 7. | 34 13.77 |
| 7. | Conceited, proud | 79 11.52 | 4. | 56 12.76 | 11. | 23 9.31 |
| 8. | Vulgar, indecent, perverse | 73 10.64 | 8. | 47 10.71 | 8. | 26 10.53 |
| 9. | Capricious, spreading poor atmosphere | 68 9.91 | 15. | 33 7.52 | 5. | 35 14.17 |
| 10. | Prejudiced | 67 9.77 | 9. | 47 10.71 | 13. | 20 8.10 |
One of the first authors to deal with competence models has been McLagan (1980). She explored the possibility and opportunity of using the competence models in planning and human resource management. **Competence model**
includes an exhausting list of all relevant competences pertaining to the working role (Arnold et al., 2005, p. 134). The competence model represents the integrated set of competences required for excellent performance according to company’s fixed standards (Matuska, 2012, p. 131). Competence model, i.e. the profile of key or critical competences, represents the required personal characteristics, abilities, knowledge, skills, experiences, habits, attitudes, value orientations, motivations of the individual (Bláha, Mateiciuc & Kaňáková, 2005, p. 44). The competence model describes a specific combination of knowledge, skills and other characteristics of the personality that are required for the effective performance of tasks within an organisation. These characteristics are usually aggregated in homogenous units – competences (Kubeš, Spillerová & Kurnický, 2004, p. 60). A somewhat more technocratic view on the competence model is provided by Alexy, Boroš & Sivák: “The competence profile usually represents numerical and graphically presented professional requirements of a job position for human abilities,” (2004, p. 9). However, a competence model that is intended to be a qualitative standard or a comprehensive model for working behaviour should be prepared in greater detail, as a comprehensive written document, even explaining clearly enough the details of each of the key competences.

A competence model as a written document should include not only the positive (preferred, desirable) indicators pertaining to every key competence but also the negative indicators (undesired behavioural demonstrations) of those competences, which employees and managers should remove from their working behaviour, and should not use them at work (Blašková, 2011).

It is necessary the creation of competence model should accept responsibly also the viewpoint of wider interest of the European conditions. The European Countries accept the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), that in cooperation with the European University Association (EUA), the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education has elaborated the file of standards and regulations for ensuring the quality in the European High Education Area. These standards and regulations are elaborated in so way to be usable for all the European universities and agencies regardless of their structure, function, size, and national system (Lusková & Hudáková, 2013, p. 477).

Competence model of university teacher should consider also new, progressive and relevant educational strategies. For example, a problem-based learning, in particular, has gradually become an increasingly popular student-centred approach in higher education teaching and learning across disciplines (Hoidn & Kärkkäinen, 2014, pp. 14–15). Problem-based learning (PBL) offers an attractive alternative to traditional approaches by shifting the emphasis from what is taught to what the student learns. PBL is designed to develop transferable skills along with the appropriate discipline-specific knowledge, while knowledge is learned in the same context in which it is used later on (Barrows, 1985; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). In addition to tangible resources, principally the intangible resources are important – the cultural transition of students and faculty from traditional approaches to PBL might also be difficult (Hoidn & Kärkkäinen, 2014, p. 35). It means it is important that faculty who teaches in PBL approach has the appropriate skills as well as opportunities for professional development for the teachers (e.g. Fukami, 2007).

Another interesting approach to teaching and learning is a constructivist education. It is a form of collaborative and cooperative learning, underpinned by a following principles: learning should take place in authentic and real-world environments; students should be encouraged to become self-regulatory, self-mediated, and self-aware; teachers serve primarily as guides and facilitators of learning, not instructors; teachers should provide for and encourage multiple perspectives and representations of content (Dolittle & Camp, 1999). Socio-constructivist approaches to education represent a radical turning point in how the learning process is regarded as a process of discovering, constructing and reconstructing knowledge, attitudes, competence and values on the basis of one’s own activity and existing experience with the help of the teacher and in cooperation with classmates (Spilková, 2011, p. 118). Another approach, a scholarship of integration, moves beyond traditional boundaries to involve a variety of scholarly trends including those that are interdisciplinary, interpretive and integrative (Boyer, 1990, p. 21). The scholarship of teaching means that scholars are also learners. Teaching not only involves transmitting knowledge but also involves transforming and extending it. What is needed is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar – recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice and through teaching (Boyer, 1990, p. 24).
It means the teachers should consider new and innovative teaching strategies (Tokarčíková, 2013, p. 497). Teaching innovations are defined as small changes in pedagogy that enable students to more quickly convert time to knowledge (Allgood, 2001). “Teachers need to know more than just their subject. They need to know the ways it can become understood, the ways it can be misunderstood, what counts as understanding; they need to know how individuals experience the subject,” (Laurillard, 1994, p. 6). Teachers could adopt a research-led learning paradigm (ask – investigate – create – discuss – reflect) in which students work collaboratively and study concepts, principles, issues or problems in some depth (versus surface learning), (Lueddeke, 2008, p. 8). Elton distinguishes between the need for universities to move from the position of simply ‘doing things better’ (essentially conservative) to ‘doing better things’ (essentially innovative). Here is needed a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning; the integration of generic and discipline specific issues; the use of radically different teaching and learning strategies such as enquiry-based learning (2006).

The aforementioned progressive strategies and elements of university education certainly need to be integrated into the contemplated competence model of university teachers. In addition to them, the competence model must also include the desirable forms of a particular working behaviour (education-science-publication) of teachers. Likewise, in an effort to maintain the standard content of competence models in the other sectors of social and economic life, the model must also encompass the negative, undesirable and undesired behavioural-working demonstrations by the teacher (Table 4). Naturally, these should only serve as the negative, eschewed and rejected components. Such demonstrations of the teacher’s behaviour must always be duly penalised. Otherwise, they might take root and turn into long-term educational-professional habits of the teacher, and consequently put at risk the strategic success of the university in the education market.

Table 4. Competence model of university teacher

| Competence model of job/work position: | UNIVERSITY TEACHER Indicators of behaviour |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
|                                      | Positive:                                |
|                                      |  - He/she has the excellent command of his/her professional background, masters the latest knowledge and trends. |
|                                      |  - He/she ensures that science and practice are constantly interconnected and permeated, appropriately applies abstraction and concreteness. |
|                                      |  - He/she assists his/her colleagues in developing their knowledge, and ensures that students are professionally mature and proud. |
|                                      | Negative:                                |
|                                      |  - He/she neglects the latest knowledge, and fails to pursue his/her professional development. |
|                                      |  - He/she cannot combine theoretical knowledge with real practical needs in a harmonised manner. |
|                                      |  - He/she fails to inculcate students with the need of constant professional improvement and with the responsibility for their professional image. |
| Professional competence              | Positive:                                |
|                                      |  - In relation to students, he/she acts as an active facilitator and contributor to their growth. |
|                                      |  - He/she adapts the content, methods and escalation of teaching to the intellectual and absorption capacity of students. |
|                                      |  - He/she permanently cultivates his/her educational skills. |
|                                      | Negative:                                |
|                                      |  - He/she is cold and reticent towards students. |
|                                      |  - He/she fails to reflect generational differences and educational-intellectual capabilities of students. |
| Educational competence               | Positive:                                |
|                                      |  - He/she has the excellent command of his/her professional background, masters the latest knowledge and trends. |
|                                      |  - He/she ensures that science and practice are constantly interconnected and permeated, appropriately applies abstraction and concreteness. |
|                                      |  - He/she assists his/her colleagues in developing their knowledge, and ensures that students are professionally mature and proud. |
|                                      | Negative:                                |
|                                      |  - He/she neglects the latest knowledge, and fails to pursue his/her professional development. |
|                                      |  - He/she cannot combine theoretical knowledge with real practical needs in a harmonised manner. |
|                                      |  - He/she fails to inculcate students with the need of constant professional improvement and with the responsibility for their professional image. |
The person motivates others through each of his/her action, every lecture or seminar; sees motivation as the key element of any process, work, effort or relationship; respects the dynamics of the motivation of individuals (students, colleagues) as well as groups (study groups, departments); identifies and strictly eliminates any demonstrations of his/her as well as someone else’s unethical, dishonest and demotivational behaviour; has the self-motivating and self-keeping ability and the ability to surmount obstacles, to draw and deliver energy in a beneficial manner.

The person has great communication skills, notably assertiveness, empathy, active listening, persuasion and meta-communication; appropriately combines those communication skills and uses them in his/her educational activities; prevents communication misunderstandings (with students and colleagues alike); his/her written as well as spoken language is always distinguished and fair; he/she sees and uses communication as an instrument to build trust.

The person is a mature, highly creative, inventive, resourceful and courageous personality; is always tolerant, empathic, accommodating and helpful to others (students and colleagues alike); sees his/her mission as the accomplishment of his/her personal qualities, and permanently strives to cultivate them; educates students and colleagues in close participation with them, respecting and developing their personalities.

The person is a zealous, responsible, relentless, resourceful and highly competent scientist and researcher, either at the level of a cooperating solver or an owner/guarantor of scientific projects; his/her scientific efforts and creative research contribute to knowledge development; he/she reveals and subsequently provides others with knowledge and outputs that are always up-to-date, true, useful and inspirational; sees science and research as the driver and concurrently as the inevitable determinant of good higher education and of the progress of society; refines his/her competence in carrying out valuable scientific research in his/her scientific field.

The person publishes his/her outputs (publications) in such quality, periodicity and originality that these do the author valuable credit, being of high scientific, social and educational significance (both local-language and foreign-language monographs; higher education textbooks drawing from national as well as international basis).

- He/she neglects and fails to develop his/her educational skills.

**Positive:**
- He/she permanently boosts his/her own motivation.
- He/she ethically discerns and sensibly boosts the academic as well as professional motivation of students.
- He/she motivates colleagues towards mutual cooperation, partnerships and creation of motivational climate at the faculty.

**Negative:**
- He/she is negative about self-motivation.
- He/she does not at all see the motivation of students as important, and fails to respect the variety of student motivations.
- His/her lax or hostile attitude demotivates colleagues at the department as well as at the faculty.

**Positive:**
- He/she always communicates his/her intentions, decisions and matter taught in a clear, understandable and inspirational manner.
- He/she identifies communication imperfections and prevents them from occurring.
- He/she gives positive feedback to students.

**Negative:**
- He/she cannot communicate clearly, fails to combine verbal and non-verbal communication elements appropriately.
- He/she keeps improper expressions in his/her communication language, and disregards the quality of his/her language.
- He/she fails to respond to questions or proposals from students and colleagues.

**Positive:**
- He/she permanently cultivates his/her personal characteristics.
- The quality of his/her personality serves as a positive role model for students and colleagues alike.
- He/she assists students in developing their personalities.

**Negative:**
- He/she disregards the development of his/her personal competences.
- He/she is hostile, overly dominant, egoistic, narrow-minded and dishonest in relation to others.
- He/she fails to contribute to students’ personal growth.

**Positive:**
- He/she transforms his/her creative energy into valuable and socially beneficial scientific projects.
- He/she responsibly and originally reveals the specificities, tendencies as well as predictions in the scientific field.
- He/she creatively involves other colleagues and students into scientific projects and empowers them.

**Negative:**
- He/she fails to demonstrate the desirable interest in and enthusiasm for science and research activities.
- He/she only sees any scientific efforts as an element for developing his/her own image rather than as an element beneficial to the society.
- He/she fails to share the outputs of his/her scientific activities with others.

**Positive:**
- He/she publishes valuable and original outputs on a national as well as international basis.
- He/she consistently follows the principles of honour as an author.
- The quality of his/her publications inspires colleagues.

**Negative:**
5. Conclusion

The motivation competence of the teachers is crucial in our study. It is basic predetermination of all pedagogic and expert activities and their satisfactory level. “Academic motivation can be depicted as the total of the skills, achievements and effectiveness shown by the individual under the circumstances he is exposed to,” (Aslan & Kirikkanat, 2013, p. 309). According Ferreira, Cardosob & Abrantesc, motivation is the force that drives us to carry out activities. We are motivated when we feel like doing something and we are able to sustain the effort required during the time required to achieve the objective we set ourselves. Motivation should be considered carefully by teachers, trying to mobilize the capabilities and potential of each student for academic success (2011). Motivation increases initiation of and persistence in activities. Students are more likely to begin a task they actually want to do. They are also more likely to continue working at it until they’ve completed it. Motivation increases students’ time on task and it is an important factor affecting their learning (Larson, 2000).

In this connection, according Schüler, Brandstätter & Sheldon, the competence satisfaction is important for all individuals. The achievement motive moderated the positive effects of competence satisfaction. Individuals with a high achievement motive benefited more from competence satisfaction and suffered more from need frustration than individuals with a low motive score. The achievement motive moderates the effects of competence satisfaction when predicting domain-specific flow and well-being, but not general flow and well-being (2013, p. 491).

This means that we see motivational competence as the most important element of the created competence model of the university teacher. The motivational influence or, by contrast, the demotivational impact on students, on the other teachers, as well as on the managers of the faculty and the university potentially poses the greatest benefits and concurrently the greatest risks. Recipients of university education – students, or younger colleagues – teachers, or managers – heads of departments, etc. will either openly, with pleasure and enthusiasm, accept the provided knowledge, offered assistance, and the performance of comprehensive professional duties, or they will be demotivated, fed up and disappointed at the negative educational, scientific, publication and other outputs of the teacher. Our experience has shown us that if the teacher makes efforts, i.e. is highly motivated to work with students responsibly and zealously, he or she also supports the other teachers in such motivational efforts; moreover, the teacher sensitively and correctly influences the motivation of students, acts as a positive role model for them, and leaves a significant and inspiring impression on their lives.

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