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Arabic Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of the "Ideal Arabic Teacher"

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Abstract

In this study, prospective Arabic teacher's opinions about the ideal Arabic teacher characteristics were examined. The study was carried out according to the phenomenology study pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The study group of this research, which was carried out in the 2021-2022 academic year, was determined by convenience sampling; The study consisted of 63 freshmen and sophomore teacher candidates, 25 male and 38 female, studying in the Arabic Language Teaching Program of the Faculty of Education at Süleyman Demirel University. Document was used as a data collection tool in the research. Teacher candidates were asked to write an essay about the ideal Arabic teacher. The compositions of the students formed the documents of the research. Interpretation of the data was done by content analysis. The findings of the study showed that pre-service teachers' views on the ideal Arabic teacher were divided into three themes: "Personal Characteristics "Professional Characteristics" and "Field Competence."

1. Introduction

In a constantly developing and changing world, societies want to maintain their current positions and take firm steps towards the future. The development of the society is ensured by the inclusion of individuals in the qualified education system. The education system consists of three basic elements that are in constant interaction: the teacher, the student and the curriculum (Yetim and Göktaş, 2004:542). Ensuring continuity in the education system and the success of the program depend on the qualifications of the teachers who will implement this system. No training model can produce services above the qualifications of the personnel who will implement that model (Abazaoğlu, 2014:3). Goe (2007: 1) emphasizes that there is nearly global consensus that teacher quality is important in terms of student achievement.

Teaching is defined as "a special profession that takes on the education, training and related management duties of the state" in Article 43 of the Basic Law of National Education No. 1739. Başaran (1994:15), on the other hand, defines a teacher as a person who interacts with his students, gets parental support, uses different teaching and learning environments in the most efficient way, and specializes in both theoretical and practical fields. Kavcar (1999: 4), who states that teacher is the architect of the qualified education process, defines teacher as the "intellectual raising the people of the future" who has an important role in the construction of the future. In line

with these definitions, the characteristics that teachers should have is always come into question and it should be noted that special attention is given to teacher quality as a factor that affects students' learning (Walsh, 2001:8).

It is possible to see that many classifications are made in studies about what teacher competencies should be. However, in general, the competencies that the teacher should have are divided into personal, field and educational competencies (Çalışkan, Işık, & Saygın, 2013:576). However, just having these qualifications may not be enough for teachers to be defined as an ideal teacher (Müldür and Çevik, 2020:125). Korthagen (2004: 87) states that it is difficult to define the ideal teacher and emphasizes that there should be harmony between the teacher's environment, behaviors, competencies, beliefs, personality and identity. In The McNair Report prepared in 1944, four different qualities that should ideally be found in every teacher are mentioned. These four qualities are; to have general education from an education institute that will make the person a teacher, to have high knowledge and skills in the field, to have teaching ability, to evaluate the relationship of his/her own field with other fields of knowledge. Another view on the qualities that ideal teachers should have belongs to Lamm. According to Lamm (2000), the ideal teacher is a disciplinary expert who provides culture that ensures his/her student's acculturation. He/she is an agent of socialization who sustains social norms and protects the current social order. The ideal teacher individualizes his/her students in the position of developer, shaper and instructor, and he/she has the characteristics of being a professional expert in the field of study. (Lamm (2000) cited by Arnon and Reichel (2007:444). Miron (1983:51), on the other hand, gathered the ideal teacher characteristics to provide effective education in four groups in his/her study with the participation of university students studying in different faculties; presentation of the course (clear-intelligible explanation, concretizing the course, using appropriate teaching methods, providing thought development), assistance (transmitting information, motivation, developing creative thinking), counseling; "Quality of emotional and social interaction between teacher and student" (providing feedback, interest and encouragement, flexible, sincere, tolerant, honest and helpful), personal qualities (a pleasant appearance, sense of humor and friendliness). Özabacı and Acat (2005:214) state that in order to be able to perform the teaching profession successfully, it is necessary to determine the basic characteristics that teachers should have, as well as the teaching programs, methods and techniques, tools, and that these characteristics can be determined by institutions, individuals and groups related to the profession Ministry of National Education Republic of Turkey has divided the general qualifications of the teaching profession into three categories in order to determine the characteristics that teachers should have and to follow the new developments in the field of education (MEB, 2017: 14):

Table 1: Teaching profession general competencies

A Professional Knowledge	B Professional Skill	C Attitudes and Values
A1. Content Knowledge	B1. Planning of Education and Teaching	C1. National, Spiritual and Universal Values
She/he has an advanced and critical perspective on theoretical, methodological and factual knowledge in his/her subject field.	She/he plans education and teaching processes effectively.	She/he observes national, moral and universal values.
A2. Content Educational Knowledge	B2. Creating Learning Environments	C2. Approach to Students
Has a command of the curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge.	She/he prepares appropriate teaching materials and builds an healty and safe learning environments, where effective learning can be achieved for all students.	She/he has an attitude that supports the development of students
A3. Knowledge on Legislation	B3. Managing the Learning and Teaching Process	C3. Communication and Cooperation
As an individual and teacher, she/he conducts her/himself	She/he manages the teaching and learning process effectively.	She/he establishes an effective communication and cooperation with

according to the legislation related to her/his duties, rights and responsibilities.		students, colleagues, families, and other educational stakeholders.
	B4. Assessment and Evaluation	C4. Personal and Professional Development
	Uses measurement and evaluation methods, techniques and tools in accordance with the purpose.	By carrying out self-appraisal she/heparticipates in personal and professional development activities.

Educating teacher candidates with the qualifications in the specified categories will enable them to adapt to the teaching profession and be successful when they start their professional life. (Yetim and Göktaş, 2004:543). The increase in the expectations of the society from educational institutions and teachers increases the differentiation of the roles of teachers and the importance of teacher training in the education system (Temizkan, 2008:463). In order to provide teacher competencies that will contribute to the increase in quality in educational institutions, it is necessary to provide appropriate teaching and practices to teacher candidates (Yanpar Yelken, Çelikkaleli, & Çapri, 2007: 205). Ideal teacher perceptions are of great importance as teacher candidates will be able to practice their teaching profession from the moment they complete their education. In addition, the perceptions of the candidates towards the teaching profession will affect how they will perform their profession and accordingly how they will train students (Atabek Yiğit and Balkan Kıyıcı, 2019: 21), and their training as ideal or near-ideal teachers will provide a positive direction to social life (Arıcı, 2021:681). In studies on the ideal teacher perceptions of pre-service teachers in Turkey, the role of teachers in transferring information is more prominent (Çakmak, 2011; Özabacı & Acat, 2005; Kara, 2020; Saban, 2004a); content knowledge or mastery of the subject area is at the forefront (Akbulut, 2004; Çetin, 2001; Gençtürk et al., 2012; Işıktaş, 2015; Kaya, Polat & Karamüftüoğlu, 2014; Taşkaya, 2012), the importance of communication skills is emphasized (Başaran & Baysal , 2016; Kaya et al., 2014).

When we look at the literature, it is thought that the study will meet the need in this field, since no study has been found in Turkiye about the ideal teacher perceptions of Arabic teacher candidates. In the literature researches, a study was carried out by Al-Muslim and his friends (2020) in order to determine the qualifications of the ideal Arabic teacher for students and teachers. In this study, the qualifications that Arabic teachers should have are divided into four categories. In terms of personality category, the Arabic teacher should be hardworking. Required qualifications in terms of knowledge and creativity category are language proficiency, content knowledge competence, commitment and professional dedication. In terms of sociability and communication category, the Arabic teacher should be interested, patient and sincere. According to the teaching category, the required qualifications are stated as competence in the use of learning and teaching techniques, clarity in the expression and being able to attract the attention of the students. From this point of view, in our study, it is aimed to determine prospective Arabic teacher's opinions about the ideal Arabic teacher. For this purpose, pre-service teachers were asked to write a text on the following subject.

- What do you think the ideal teacher should be?
- What do you think are the characteristics of an ideal Arabic teacher? In this direction, what kind of Arabic teacher do you want to be?

2. Method

2.1. Aim of Study

In this study, which aims to reveal prospective Arabic teacher's opinions about the ideal Arabic teacher, the phenomenology design was used in accordance with the qualitative research method and the structure of the research. Phenomenology studies, in which the common meaning of individuals' experiences with a concept are sought, focuses on defining the common characteristics of all participants who experience that concept (Creswell, 2016: 77).

2.2. Study group

Creswell (2007: 83) recommends careful selection of people who will explain the phenomenon or situation in phenomenological studies. In this direction, Arabic teacher candidates participated in the research based on the aim of determining the ideal Arabic teacher perception. The study group consists of volunteer teacher candidates who continue their education in the Arabic Language Teaching Department of Suleyman Demirel University Faculty of Education in the 2020-2021 academic year.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the study group

Gender	Grade		
	Freshmen	Sophomores	Total
Male	14	11	25
Female	18	20	38
Total	32	31	63

According to Table 2, a total of 63 Arabic teacher candidates from 25 freshmen and 38 sophomores participated in the research voluntarily.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Document was used as a data collection tool in the research. In order to determine the perceptions of the teacher candidates about the ideal Arabic teacher, they were asked to write an essay about the ideal Arabic teacher. Students were asked to write these compositions, which would constitute the document of the research, on a voluntary basis. The data obtained through the documents were examined through content analysis. Content analysis is the detailed and systematic examination and interpretation of a particular material in order to identify patterns, meanings and themes (Berg & Lune, 2015: 380). The data written by the pre-service teachers in the composition were coded by the researcher and another expert, and these data were collected under some themes. The codes and themes obtained in the research are supported by direct expressions of teacher candidates. While coding, analyzing and quoting the expressions of the teacher candidates, codes were given to the teacher candidates (P1: Participant 1). Identity information of teacher candidates is kept confidential. In the analysis of the data, the similarity ratio between the codes determined by the researcher and the codes determined by another field expert was calculated (Miles, Huberman and Saldana 2014:29). According to the calculation, this rate was determined as 85%. In this case, it can be said that there is harmony between encoders.

3. Findings

As a result of the research, the characteristics that the ideal Arabic teacher should have according to the answers of the Arabic teacher candidates were examined in three themes: *"Personal Characteristics,"* *"Professional Characteristics"* and *"Field Proficiency."* The codes and participant views on these themes are presented under sub-headings.

3.1. Personality Characteristics of the Ideal Arabic Teacher

The first theme that emerged for the ideal Arabic teacher is the theme of personality characteristics. The codes and frequencies related to this theme are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Personality Characteristics of the Ideal Arabic Teacher

Codes	f	Codes	f
Patient	33	Idealist	6
Role model	23	Tolerant	5
Social/Communicable	22	Trustworthy	4
Open to improvement	21	Smiling	3
empathetic	20	Responsible	3

Fair	16	Sincere	3
Aimful	15	Devoted	3
Understanding	14	Bias-free	2
Hopeful	12	Determined	2
Self-confident	9	Respectful	1
Ethical	9	Creative	1
		Total	177

The personal characteristics that Arabic teacher candidates look for in an ideal Arabic teacher are shown in Table 3. According to the table, the most basic personality characteristic that prospective Arabic teachers expect from an ideal Arabic teacher is patience. In addition to the teacher's patient attitude, being a role model, social/communicative, open to development, empathetic, fair, aimful, understanding, hopeful, self-confident and ethical are among the basic characteristics that an ideal Arabic teacher should have.

Some statements of Arabic teacher candidates regarding the personality characteristics of the ideal Arabic teacher are given below:

"It should not be forgotten that s/he must be a patient person. Because language is a process. Learning takes place over time, and certain students learn in a short time, and certain students learn in a longer period of time, and if we are patient and instill this in the classroom environment, a pleasant learning process will occur" (P27).

"Since s/he is a role model for students, s/he should set an example for his/her students with his/her speech, behavior, sitting, standing, knowledge, curiosity and respect. This situation is not only valid for Arabic teachers, of course, it is also valid for teachers of other branches" (P16).

"An Arabic teacher should establish good ties with the student in every aspect. Must have good communication with students. There should be a teacher and trainer who the students do not hesitate to talk about and with whom they can communicate easily" (P7).

"Our people have a misconception about learning Arabic; When Arabic is mentioned, there is a religion-oriented perspective, so an Arabic teacher should convey to his/her students that it is a language education and training. It should be emphasized that an Arabic teacher should also have an idealistic personality."(P11).

3.2. Professional Characteristics of the Ideal Arabic Teacher

Table 4: Professional Characteristics of the Ideal Arabic Teacher

Codes	f	Codes	f
Making the lesson fun, facilitating learning, motivating student	19	Using materials suitable for the structure of the course	11
Loving his/her profession	17	Providing student-centered instruction	5
Having time management	17	Having technological knowledge	4
Paying attention to student psychology and individual differences	15	Being experienced	4
Being disciplined	13	Having clear speech and narration	2
Using effective methods or strategies	12	Being a fair assessor/evaluator	2
Being a lifelong learner	11	Total	132

Table 4 contains the professional characteristics that prospective teachers look for in an ideal Arabic teacher. Accordingly, the most basic professional characteristic that prospective teachers look for in an ideal Arabic teacher is to make knowledge fun and motivate students by making it easier. In this direction, the pre-service teachers stated that the Arabic teacher should teach the language by providing an enjoyable learning environment and in accordance with the level of the student. In addition, they emphasized that they should love the teaching profession and provide time management in their lessons. In addition, Arabic teacher candidates stated that an ideal teacher should pay attention to student psychology and individual differences and be disciplined. Using effective methods or strategies, being a life-long learning teacher, using materials suitable for the structure of the course, providing student-centered teaching, having technological knowledge, being experienced, having clear speech and narration

and being a fair assessor/evaluator is among other characteristics emphasized by the teacher candidates on professional knowledge.

Some of the opinions of Arabic teacher candidates on the theme of professional characteristics are as follows:
"Arabic is understood by students today as a difficult language to learn. Some of the reasons for this are that the Arabic alphabet is different from the Turkish alphabet, it is difficult to read and write, and there are many grammar rules. But these are problems that can be overcome as you meet and learn Arabic. The teacher has a significant role in overcoming this process. The student, who is already unfamiliar with the language and approaches with anxiety, finds excuses to give up. But if s/he feels that s/he can succeed at the stage of learning the language, then the reasons for this problem are eliminated one by one. In this case, the most important task of the teacher is to make the target language popular, to make things that are difficult for the student simple and to teach them in a simplified form. I don't think a teacher who avoids doing these things has done his/her job properly. If we are teachers of Arabic, our job is to teach this language in its best form." (P.42)
"Language is constantly changing. The Arabic teacher should be able to keep up with this change, that is, s/he should be open to learning and hungry for knowledge, even if his/her education life is over. He should improve him/herself academically, constantly renew him/herself, and not forget that s/he was a student throughout his/her life." (P.25)
"If the physical conditions of the school are suitable, the Arabic teacher should create an Arabic class. Arabic class will contribute to students' willingness to learn languages. In this class, the teacher should draw the attention of the student to Arabic by using posters that encourage learning and interesting flash cards. If the physical conditions are not suitable for the Arabic class, s/he should hang frequently used words, conjunctions and speech patterns on corridor walls, boards, doors, stair steps. In addition, s/he should write the words to be taught with different colored pencils and teach the Arabic to the student using visual materials."(P.34)
"The ideal Arabic teacher should have reached a sufficient level in four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening." (P.50)
"Another characteristic that an Arabic teacher should have is fluent and intelligible pronunciation. Reading speed should be at a level that all students can follow the text."(P.12)

3.3. Field Competencies of the Ideal Arabic Teachers

Table 5: Field Competencies of the Ideal Arabic Teachers

Codes	f	Codes	f
Having sufficient field knowledge	31	Having a grasp of Arabic language	6
Being knowledgeable about Arab culture	14	Using a common language (English, etc.) in teaching Arabic	3
Loving Arabic and making others love Arabic	13	Being fluent in mother tongue	3
Having four basic skills of Arabic	13	Not using rote learning methods	3
Having good knowledge of Arabic vocabulary	10	Total	96

Table 5 shows the field competencies that teacher candidates look for in an ideal Arabic teacher. Accordingly, the most basic characteristic that prospective teachers look for in an ideal Arabic teacher is that the teacher has sufficient knowledge of the Arabic language. Having sufficient field knowledge is followed by characteristics such as having a grasp of the Arabic culture, liking and endearing Arabic, having reading, speaking, listening and writing skills, and having advanced vocabulary. In addition, Arabic teacher candidates are of the opinion that it would be beneficial for an ideal Arabic teacher to know a different language in teaching Arabic. Teacher candidates expressed some of their views on field competency as follows:
"In my opinion, an Arabic teacher should know the general rules of Arabic at least as well as the rules of the mother tongue. Thus, the teacher can best teach the rules of Arabic by showing the similarities and differences between the two languages to the students."(P:5)

"Another most important characteristic for me is his/her proficiency in Arabic language. S/he should have full grasp of the language s/he teaches. It should be at a level that can answer all kinds of questions about Arabic from students."(P:30)

"The teacher should make him/herself academically equipped and competent in terms of Arabic. S/he should learn Arabic comprehensively and be a really good educator on this subject."(P:7)

"It is not enough for the teacher to know Arabic very well. At the same time, s/he should know very well how to convey the knowledge to the student. Since every student's learning style and speed are not the same, the teacher should be aware of this aspect. (P:11)

"Instead of the rote-based learning method in teaching, studies should be carried out for students to understand and comprehend the logic of the language. Instead of the stereotypical perception of "language is difficult," it should be given the idea that "every language has its own logic, after sticking to that logic, learning and understanding are easier than we think." Besides, the student should be made to love the language. (P:2)

"It is not possible for an Arabic teacher to be fully proficient in Arabic only with the knowledge of syntax and grammar. Most importantly, s/he must do this job with enthusiasm, otherwise s/he will get bored after a while and cannot continue. First of all, s/he has to love this language himself so that s/he can make his/her students like it too."(P:16)

"In my opinion, the most effective learning is achieved through practice. For this reason, an Arabic teacher should not just lecture and leave the lesson, but should provide plenty of practice. The teacher should not give the rules and wait for the students to memorize, and plenty of activities should be done. Arabic should not be learned only by learning it in class, but by living and gaining experience in daily life."(P:52)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study aimed to determine the perceptions of Arabic teacher candidates towards the ideal Arabic teacher. The findings of the research were discussed within the framework of the Ministry of National Education's general qualifications for the teaching profession (2017) and other related studies.

In the research, the opinions of teacher candidates about the ideal Arabic teacher were gathered under three themes: *"Personal Characteristics," "Professional Characteristics"* and *"Field Competence."* It has been observed that the characteristics in these themes overlap with the characteristics specified in the subcategory of the Ministry of National Education's teaching profession general competence areas " *Professional Knowledge," " Professional Skills"* and *"Attitudes and Values."*

Among the themes, it was observed that the teacher candidates mostly produced ideas for the "*Personality Characteristics*" theme, which was not specified within the scope of the Ministry of Education's general qualifications for the teaching profession (2017). It was seen that the theme that the candidates expressed the least opinion was the theme of *"Field Competence*." The teacher candidates did not express any opinion on the "Knowledge on Legislation" sub-competence in the "*Professional Knowledge*" category.

Teacher candidates stated that the most important personal characteristics they want an ideal Arabic teacher to have are *patience, role model* and *openness to social/communication.* In addition, the candidates think that teacher should be *tolerant, idealistic, reliable, open to development, smiling, empathetic, responsible, fair, sincere, goal-oriented, altruistic, understanding, unprejudiced, hopeful, determined, self-confident, respectful, moral* and *creative*. These statements given by the teacher candidates about the personal characteristics of the ideal teacher are similar to the ideal teacher personality characteristics stated in the studies of Arıcı (2021), Köse and Demir (2014), Çalışkan, Işık, Saygın (2013), Pozo-Munoz, et al., (2000).

While describing the professional characteristics of an ideal Arabic teacher, the pre-service Arabic teachers mostly included the expressions that make the lesson fun, facilitate learning, motivating students, loving their profession, and having time management. Other characteristics stated by the candidates are; *using materials suitable for the structure of the course, providing student-centered instruction, having technological knowledge, paying attention to student psychology and individual differences, being experienced, being disciplined, having clear speech and narration, using effective methods or strategies, being fair evaluator, being lifelong learner.* In the research, all the findings obtained in the theme of professional characteristics overlap with some sub-categories

of Teaching Profession General Competencies stated in Table 1. These categories were determined as managing the teaching and learning process, assessment and evaluation, and creating learning environments.

According to teacher candidates, an ideal Arabic teacher should have sufficient field knowledge, be fluent in the Arabic language, be knowledgeable about Arab culture, use a common language (English, etc.) while teaching Arabic, love Arabic, make other love learning Arabic, be fluent in mother tongue, have four basic skills in Arabic, not apply rote learning methods and lastly should have good knowledge of Arabic vocabulary in terms of field competencies. Al-Muslim et al.'s (2020) study found out that knowledge and creativity, language proficiency, content knowledge competence, commitment, professional dedication were Arabic teacher qualifications. In line with this study, the field qualifications of the ideal Arabic teacher of the Arabic teacher candidates in the present study were compatible with Al-Muslim et al.'s (2020) study.

When the research is evaluated as a whole, it is seen that the teacher candidates are aware of the characteristics that the teachers they will take as models should have in terms of personality, professional and field competence. However, it was determined that the prospective teachers who participated in the research and who were in the first years of teacher education had deficiencies in the knowledge of legislation and it is thought that studies should be carried out to eliminate these deficiencies.

In addition, it is thought that it would be beneficial to include studies that determine the ideal teacher perceptions of teacher candidates studying in the Arabic Language Education departments of education faculties in other universities. Besides, it may be beneficial in terms of self-evaluation to conduct a study on how teachers who work as Arabic teachers within the Ministry of National Education and private institutions evaluate themselves by taking their opinions about the ideal Arabic teacher.

In this study, data were collected through compositions written by teacher candidates. It is thought that quantitative researches to determine the characteristics of an ideal Arabic teacher will contribute to the field.

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