

# Qualitative analysis of the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher\*

## *Análisis cualitativo del perfil profesional del buen docente de educación secundaria*

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### Abstract:

Scientific literature has shown that teacher characteristics and skills are one of the main sources of variation in students' academic performance. This potential that teachers have in improving the quality of the education system justifies the importance of identifying the teacher-related factors that are positively related to student learning. This study aims to contribute to this purpose

by analysing the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher from the perspective of students, members of school management teams, and the teachers themselves. For this purpose, a qualitative research design was established based on an analysis of the views of the participants. Five focus groups were conducted with the participation of five members of school management teams, nine teachers and nine students. Through both the a priori

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and inductive coding of the content of these focus groups, the professional profile of a good teacher was identified. This profile was made up of three teaching skills and seven personal skills, specified in 79 actions. The integration of all the participants' perspectives enabled the creation of a comprehensive proposal of an effective teacher by capturing the nuances provided by each individual perspective. Based on this, new research and actions can be designed that contribute to improving the quality of initial and in-service training for secondary school teachers.

**Keywords:** teacher skills, teacher evaluation, focus groups, qualitative research, teacher effectiveness.

## Resumen:

La literatura científica ha demostrado que las características y competencias del profesorado constituyen una de las principales fuentes de variación del rendimiento académico. Este potencial de los profesores para mejorar la calidad del sistema educativo justifica la importancia de conocer qué factores asociados a los docentes se relacionan positivamente con el aprendizaje de sus estudiantes. Este estudio persigue contribuir a

tal propósito, al analizar el perfil profesional del buen docente de educación secundaria desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes, los miembros de los equipos directivos y los propios profesores. Para ello, se ha establecido un diseño de investigación cualitativa basado en el análisis de las percepciones de los informantes, mediante el cual se han conducido cinco grupos focales en los que han participado cinco miembros de equipos directivos, nueve profesores y nueve estudiantes. El proceso de codificación tanto apriorístico como inductivo del contenido de los grupos focales ha permitido identificar un perfil profesional del buen docente integrado por tres competencias pedagógicas y siete competencias personales que se concretan en 79 actuaciones. La integración de las perspectivas de todos los agentes permite establecer una propuesta comprensiva del profesor eficaz, al captarse los matices que aporta cada visión particular, sobre la que diseñar nuevas investigaciones y sugerir actuaciones que contribuyan a una formación inicial y permanente de calidad para el profesorado de educación secundaria.

**Descriptor:** competencias docentes, evaluación del profesorado, grupos focales, investigación cualitativa, eficacia docente.

## 1. Introduction

The characteristics and skills of teachers are one of the main sources of variation in students' academic performance. Empirical evidence has highlighted that, after controlling the variables associated with students and their families, teachers are

the main determining factor of students' academic results, showing a greater influence than classroom- or school-related factors (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2017; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017) and accounting for over half of the variation in said results (Hattie, 2003; Muijs & Reynolds, 2017).

With the firm belief that teachers are an essential part of improving the standard of education and that the quality of any education system is defined by the quality of its individual teachers, the Spanish Ministry of Education and Professional Training has recently (2022) focused the debate around 24 proposed improvements that will guide the reform of teaching in Spain. One of the aims of these proposed improvements is to ensure that all teachers have the necessary skills to perform effectively in the classroom. At the heart of the proposed teaching reform is the need to establish a framework of professional teaching skills, which requires an in-depth analysis of the professional profile of a good teacher.

From a skills-based perspective, a good or effective teacher would have the skills and abilities needed to make a positive contribution, through their teaching, to their students' learning (Smith & Gorard, 2007; Walsh, 2001). Although there is a certain degree of agreement in the literature as to this definition, there is no such consensus when it comes to identifying the specific skills and characteristics that define a good teacher. For example, García-García et al. (2017) identify 11 skills associated with high-quality teaching practice (in-depth and up-to-date subject knowledge, identification and integration of knowledge, adapting to differences, planning and organising work, communication, technology, emotional skills, ethical commitment, leadership, teamwork and the ability to make connections in the community). In turn,

Alonso-Sainz (2021) shows how personal skills, followed by teaching skills, emotional skills, social and civic skills and linguistic skills, are the hallmarks of a good teacher. In addition, a review carried out by Villaverde-Caramés et al. (2021) reveals that the defining traits of a good PE teacher are teaching ability, professional performance and commitment, personality traits and subject knowledge.

These studies clearly show a wide spectrum of skills ranging from those most closely related to teaching to those associated with personal skills or the type of training that teachers receive. This results in a broad landscape of professional teaching skills that makes it difficult to establish a commonly accepted skills-based profile of a "good teacher". That said, a distinguishing feature of these studies is that they tend to focus on the more general skills that make a good teacher (the planning and implementation of teaching, classroom management, etc.) without homing in on the specific behaviours into which these skills translate (establishing learning objectives, selecting the right methods and activities, etc.). As a result, to understand which specific actions contribute to improving the academic results of students, we need to turn to studies that focus on specific skills or review-based studies like those carried out by Hattie (2009, 2017) or by Gutiérrez-de-Rozas et al. (in press). These studies allow us to identify both the teaching-related factors and the teacher-related factors that are associated with academic performance. The teaching-related factors include the positive influence of aspects

such as setting targets, planning, selecting the right methods and strategies and feedback. In turn, the teacher-related factors that contribute to better academic results include factors associated with establishing positive interactions with students, the possession of certain personal skills, such as clarity and credibility, and teacher training, especially the role of professional development.

In light of this, the aim of this study is to identify the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher from the perspective of students, members of school management teams and teachers themselves. To do this, starting with the pedagogical and personal skills associated with teaching, the study will then examine the specific actions performed by good secondary school teachers in order to meet the educational needs of their students. This paper is structured as follows: The first section introduces the professional skills that, as per the literature, are essential for teachers. This review will help establish the initial theoretical model used to guide the definition of the professional profile of a good teacher. The second section refers to the method and describes the methodological design created to fulfil the aim of this study and the chosen data analysis strategy. The next section presents the findings of the study, which are then discussed in the “Discussion and conclusions” section.

### 1.1. Professional teaching skills

In the analysis of professional teaching skills, there is a distinction in the literature between teaching skills and per-

sonal skills (Danielson, 2013; Marzano, 2007; Stronge, 2018; Stronge et al., 2011; The Wing Institute, 2019, among others).

Teaching skills cover abilities linked to the planning of teaching, the implementation of teaching, classroom management and organisation and evaluation. Effective *planning* of teaching is based on the correct formulation of learning objectives (Danielson, 2013); reflecting on content so it can be properly organised into lessons and units (Marzano, 2007; Shen et al., 2020); and creating timetables that allow for maximum teaching and learning time (Stronge, 2018). In addition, this last author highlights the positive effects of planning activities and material and of tailoring this planning to the specific needs of students. Good *implementation of teaching* is characterised by aspects such as communicating and discussing the learning objectives and expected outcomes with the students (Marzano, 2007; Williams, 2010); the flexibility to respond to diversity, meeting the individual needs of students (Tapani & Salonen, 2019); the introduction of student-centred activities to encourage the development of new knowledge (Marzano, 2007; Opdenakker & Damme, 2006); and the teacher’s engagement with and commitment to learning (Danielson, 2013). *Classroom management and organisation* is linked to planning and complying with the applicable rules and regulations (Marzano, 2007; Williams, 2010); encouraging respectful participation and interaction between

all members of the classroom —creating positive and safe learning environments that foster a sense of belonging and respect (Danielson, 2013; Iglesias-Díaz & Romero-Pérez, 2021; Tapani & Salonen, 2019; Williams, 2019)—; and the layout of space and students within the classroom. Lastly, teaching skills also cover the *evaluation* processes for all assessable aspects (Stronge et al., 2011; The Wing Institute, 2019), the proper planning of these processes (Marzano, 2007) and use of the most suitable evaluation tools and strategies (Williams, 2010). These evaluation processes must lead to the formation of value judgements based on pre-defined evaluation criteria (The Wing Institute, 2019) and the resulting adoption of improvement-related decisions (Williams, 2010).

In relation to the personal skills that characterise effective teachers, the key skills include those linked to professional development, guidance and orientation, leadership, communication, emotional skills and interpersonal relationships. *Professional development* skills are linked to the continuous development of teaching skills and knowledge (Danielson, 2013); personal reflection, the ability to innovate and adapt to change and professionalism (Williams, 2010); and to both knowledge of teaching and subject knowledge (Danielson, 2013). *Guidance and orientation* skills are based on knowledge of the students' skills and abilities, and knowledge of the nature of the education system as a whole and the learning environment (Tapani & Salonen,

2019), in order to provide a personalised response to the needs and interests of each student. *Leadership* skills involve participating in decisions that affect the school, the students, the curriculum and the teachers themselves (Shen et al., 2020). *Emotional* skills involve a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes that allow teachers to properly understand, express and regulate both their own emotions and the emotions of others (Bisquerra & Pérez, 2007; The Wing Institute, 2019). Lastly, *communication* is also a key aspect of the teaching/learning process, and it is important that teachers are able to clearly communicate learning content (Stronge, 2018) and to create interpersonal relationships and collaborate with others (Tapani & Salonen, 2019).

## 2. Method

In order to achieve the aims of this study, a qualitative research design was created based on an analysis of the participants' beliefs, perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2016). To collect the necessary data, five focus groups were conducted with key figures in education such as teachers, members of school management teams and students. It is important to note that although in the Spanish education system, teachers and members of school management teams are usually one in the same, the role of school management teams, together with their broader perspective of the school as a whole, could contribute to providing a subtly different view of the profile of a good teacher.

## 2.1. Participants

The study participants consisted of five members of school management teams, nine teachers and nine students, organised into five focus groups, as shown in Table 1.

Participants were selected based on their accessibility. In phase one, the research team sent a letter to five secondary schools inviting them to take part in the study. The schools belonged to the group of education centres involved in the UNICEF Spain education programme, which had already expressed an interest in taking part in the study. The education centres involved in this programme strive to integrate the rights of children and global citizenship into both the centre's broader educational mission and the planning of classroom activities, with the aim of maximising the holistic development of each student, encouraging students to see themselves as people with rights

and responsibilities and helping create citizens who are aware of and care about the fulfilment of human rights (UNICEF, 2015). The only selection criterion for these schools was the Autonomous Community in which they are located, seeking to ensure the greatest possible geographical variation. The selected schools are in the following regions: Aragon, Catalonia, Castile and Leon, Murcia and Canary Islands. The letter of invitation presented the study and explained the purpose of the focus groups. In turn, it asked for the contact details of the people who would take part in the focus groups. This strategy resulted in the selection of the following participants: five members of school management teams, eight teachers and six students. In phase two, the number of teachers and students was increased to nine through the addition of one teacher and three students who, after learning about the study, wanted to get involved.

TABLE 1. Characteristics of the focus group participants.

<b>FG1 School management</b>	<b>FG2 Teachers</b>	<b>FG3 Teachers</b>	<b>FG4 Students</b>	<b>FG5 Students</b>
SM1 - Female, Castile and Leon	T1 - Male, Castile and Leon	T5 - Female, Castile and Leon	S1- Male, Castile and Leon	S5 - Female, Aragon
SM2 - Female, Aragon	T2 - Male, Ara- gon	T6 - Male, Aragon	S2- Female, Murcia	S6 - Female, Castile and Leon
SM3 - Male, Murcia	T3 - Male, Extre- madura	T7 - Female, Catalonia	S3 - Female, Canary Islands	S7 - Male, Castile and Leon
SM4 - Female, Catalonia	T4 - Female, Catalonia	T8 - Female, Catalonia	S4 - Female, Murcia	S8 - Female, Canary Islands
SM5 - Female, Canary Islands		T9 - Female, Canary Islands		S9 - Female, Castile and Leon

Source: Own elaboration.

The research team sought informed consent to take part in the study from all teachers and members of school management teams, and from the parents, guardians or legal representatives of the students.

## 2.2. Data collection

The group sessions were held in June 2021, using Microsoft Teams, and each session lasted for approximately 90 minutes. The five focus groups were recorded and then typed up. To guarantee the anonymity of study participants, all personal data or information was encoded.

The design of the script for the focus groups was based on the teaching skills and personal skills identified in the literature review. The format was semi-structured with 15 open-ended questions that guided the course of the sessions and covered all the skills referred to in this study. These questions also provided the flexibility for several extended responses and for the participants to voice all of the actions that they felt are characteristic of a good teacher. Annex 1 provides the dimensions (skills) that informed the design of the script and the associated questions.

## 2.3. Data analysis

The coding process followed a mix categorisation system split into two phases: a deductive phase and an inductive phase. Firstly, based on the literature review, a codebook was created that included the behaviours associated with each of the evaluated skills. Secondly, categories that emerged from the focus groups but that had not been identified in the initial stage

(emerging categories) were added to the a priori categories. Accordingly, the focus group content was coded using both a priori or deductive and open or inductive processes. Scientific rigour and the reliability of the results were ensured through researcher triangulation during the data coding and interpretation processes (Carter et al., 2014). As such, two researchers independently coded the interventions and subsequently shared their interpretations of the initial and emerging categories in order to develop an intersubjective understanding of the analysed data. The data analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti 9 software. The a priori and emerging categories are presented in tables 2–5 along with the study results.

## 3. Results

The follow section presents the actions of secondary school teachers that school management teams, teachers and students believe contribute to ensuring that the educational needs of students are properly met.

The results have been organised according to the four dimensions analysed in the study: planning and implementation of teaching, classroom management and organisation, evaluation of learning and personal skills. There is a table for each dimension showing the a priori and emerging actions identified by the three different groups of participants. The interpretation of this information is accompanied by representative quotes extracted from the participants' discussions. The results are presented accord-

ing to the different types of participants, meaning that the codes identified in the two focus groups with students are reported altogether, as are the codes extracted from the two focus groups with teachers.

### 3.1. Planning and implementation of teaching

An overview of Table 2 shows that the teachers identified the highest number of behaviours associated with the planning and implementation of teaching.

TABLE 2. Planning and implementation of teaching.

Categories	Actions	SM	T	S
Effective lesson planning	Sets learning objectives		•	
	Defines the teaching methods and the learning activities to be carried out			
	Plans the teaching according to the prior knowledge of the students		•	
	Organises the syllabus into coherent lessons or teaching units	•		•
	Takes into account student diversity when planning lessons	•	•	
Communication of objectives and teaching methodology	Discusses and analyses expected outcomes with the students	•	•	•
	Informs students of the teaching methods and the learning activities to be carried out *		•	•
Flexibility in the implementation and development of learning in response to student diversity	Adjusts the implementation of learning for students with special educational needs (SEN)		•	•
	Effectively responds to the teaching and learning needs that arise in the classroom	•	•	•
	Tailors the pace of learning to the students' ability to assimilate the content		•	•
	Applies the most suitable methods depending on the learning objectives	•	•	•



Student-centred learning	Engages in facilitating active learning and guiding the work of students	•	•
	Connects classroom-based learning to real-life scenarios		•

\* Emerging category not included in the initial codebook.

SM: School management team member. T: Teacher. S: Student.

Source: Own elaboration.

The detailed analysis of these categories shows how the actions related to *effective lesson planning*, which largely focus on establishing clear, easy-to-understand and achievable objectives tailored to the characteristics of the students, were mainly referred to by the teachers. In turn, the students and members of school management teams highlighted the importance of organising the syllabus into coherent units. In addition, the students stressed the need for teachers to be flexible in their teaching and learning processes, in order to adapt the content to the specific needs of the learners.

Regarding the *communication of objectives and teaching methodology*, there were numerous comments that supported the two actions for this category — *discusses and analyses expected outcomes with the students and informs students of the teaching methods and the learning activities to be carried out* —. This second action was not included in the initial proposal but its presence in the focus groups with both teachers and students meant it was included as an emerging category. In any case, on the one hand, according to the students, a good teacher should ensure that students understand why they are learning and to what end, in addition to giving them an active role in decisions about

the organisation of learning content. On the other hand, the teachers focused on the need for students to understand both the objectives that guide their learning processes and the methods and timetable for achieving these objectives:

They need to know exactly what they're going to be asked to do, what the objectives are, what you're going to do and a minimum time frame. Saying: 'look, we're going to be doing this until such a date and you're going to be assessed on this' (T2).

The importance of ensuring *flexible implementation and development of learning in response to student diversity* was highlighted by all participants. There was also particular reference to the following actions: *Effectively responds to the teaching and learning needs that arise in the classroom and applies the most suitable methods depending on the learning objectives*. In this respect, all participants mentioned the importance of giving individual attention to each student and of adapting teaching methods and activities to the specific needs identified at any given time:

“They should go step by step and always adapt to the least able student in the class or, at least, spend a bit more time with them” (S1).

In turn, students agreed that good teachers often use active methods and do activities outside of the classroom that help them to learn better.

Lastly, behaviours associated with *student-centred learning* were identified in the focus groups with members of school management teams and, in particular, in the focus groups with teachers. Both these groups felt that a good teacher *engages in facilitating active learning and guiding the work of students*, so that students come to direct their own learning processes:

I think they have every right to be involved in what we're going to..., no I mean transfer to them: it's not so much now about teaching but about how to learn, so that they can be the true protagonists (SM3).

In turn, teachers alluded to the importance of *connecting classroom-based learning to real-life scenarios*, in relation to academic performance, as it allows students to appreciate the usefulness and appeal of the content:

Our students [...] what they are going to work on and see why it is useful, because if we start planning but, in the end, they don't see why it's useful, in a sense this dilutes the objectives that we've set (T8).

### 3.2. Classroom management and organisation

The results presented in Table 3 show the level of interest in this skill from school management teams, teachers and students. The majority of the actions associated with this skill were referred to in all of the focus groups.

TABLE 3. Classroom management and organisation.

Categories	Actions	SM	T	S
Rules and procedures	Establishes the rules and procedures to be followed in the classroom	•	•	•
	Checks that the rules are understood and accepted by the students	•	•	
	Monitors and requires compliance with the established rules and procedures		•	•
	Establishes mechanisms for students who do not follow the rules		•	•
Creation of a positive learning environment	Creates a learning-friendly working environment in the classroom	•	•	•
	Promotes an atmosphere of respect and confidence in the classroom	•	•	•
	Fosters intercommunication between students *	•	•	•
	Encourages collaboration between students *	•	•	•
	Motivates students	•	•	•

Layout of space and students within the classroom	Organises the layout of the classroom according to the scheduled content and activities	•	•
	Uses effective grouping strategies		

\* Not included in the initial coding.

SM: School management team member. T: Teacher. S: Student.

Source: Own elaboration.

The analysis of the above-mentioned categories produced some interesting information. In relation to the *rules and procedures* category, all three groups of participants agree that a good teacher *establishes the rules and procedures to be followed in the classroom*:

For many of our boys and girls, school is the greatest source of structure. The most secure place, a place with boundaries, where they know: 'What's happening next? What do I do next? Who am I seeing next?' (SM4).

[A good teacher] needs to be quite demanding when it comes to the rules (S2).

According to the teachers, these rules should be established in agreement with students. In turn, both the teachers and the students stressed the importance of ensuring compliance with these rules and of establishing mechanisms for when the rules are not followed. In this respect, the students highlighted the need for teachers not to be too strict but to ensure that the main rules are followed and to guarantee respect in the classroom.

The behaviours for the *creation of a positive learning environment* were broadly supported by the participants,

and all actions were referenced by all three groups. Notable importance was given to the creation of an emotionally safe space that prioritises confidence, respect and zero judgement of mistakes, and to providing the right degree of motivation for students to feel they can successfully carry out the work assigned to them. In this category, two actions emerged from the focus groups that were not included in the initial coding: *fosters intercommunication between students* and *encourages collaboration between students*, which would justify the importance of teachers encouraging their students to express and share what they've learnt and to voice any concerns or doubts in a safe space:

... get everyone involved, create a really friendly environment (S2).

... creating an atmosphere in the classroom where everyone feels comfortable and secure, where they feel they can speak up and share without that added pressure (T8).

The ability to create a team, where they feel that the group is a team (SM2).

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the participants only referred to one of the actions related to the *layout of space and students within the classroom*. Specifically, it was the teachers and members of school

management teams who highlighted the need to organise the layout of the classroom according to the teaching content, the proposed activities and the specific needs of the students, within the limits of the organisation and layout of the school as a whole.

### 3.3. Evaluation of learning

The results presented in Table 4 show how, unlike the other two groups of participants, the teachers referred to practically all of the actions associated with this skill that had been identified in the literature review.

TABLE 4. Evaluation of learning.

Categories	Actuaciones	SM	T	S
Planning and communication of the evaluation process	Establishes an evaluation system for the subject which sets out the procedures to follow, the evaluation criteria and the tools to be used			•
	Shares the evaluation system (with students and their families)		•	•
Learning-centred evaluation	Encourages the self-assessment of learning	•	•	•
	Introduces co-evaluation mechanisms		•	
	Performs skills-based assessments	•	•	
Points in the evaluation process	Performs an initial assessment of the students' level of knowledge and their needs regarding the subject	•	•	
	Systematically records assessable events in the classroom and the students' attitudes towards the learning (continuous evaluation)	•	•	•
	Verifies the acquisition of new knowledge through a range of final evaluation tests		•	•
Evaluation tools	Selects (or designs) appropriate evaluation tools		•	
Making value judgements about the available information	Cross-references the collected information with the pre-defined evaluation criteria		•	
	Performs a qualitative assessment of the collected information		•	•
	Marks, gives a grade to, the students based on the results of the various evaluations		•	

## Qualitative analysis of the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher

Decision-making based on the evaluation results	Aligns the design of the syllabus with the interests and needs of the students in light of the evaluation results	•		
	Designs activities that allow students who have not met the planned objectives to overcome the detected learning obstacles	•	•	
	Goes back over pre-delivered content if it appears that students have not fully grasped the content	•		
	Adjusts the syllabus planning with a view to future academic years	•		
Communication of evaluation results	Provides students with regular information about their strengths and weaknesses, with associated suggestions for improvement			
	Reflects on the evaluation results with the students	•	•	•
	Shares the students' evaluation results with their families	•	•	
	Meets with families to discuss the evaluation results			•

\* Not included in the initial coding.

SM: School management team member. T: Teacher. S: Student.

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the *planning and communication of the evaluation process*, the teachers and students felt that a good teacher should be transparent about the evaluation process so that students are always aware of both the evaluation criteria and the established timetable.

In terms of the *learning-centred evaluation* category, all participants felt that encouraging the self-assessment of learning was a trait of an effective teacher, as it allows students to become more aware of their own learning process. In connection to this, the teachers also highlighted the importance of co-evaluation processes:

... and it was this idea of self-assessment that means that the students are aware of their achievements, what they've

accomplished, what they didn't know and what they've learnt [...] it's a truly motivating form of evaluation (SM3).

They assess themselves, they themselves based on an activity they know where they need to get to, what the objective is. They know how to evaluate themselves using assessment rubrics that we plan out (T4).

In terms of the *points in the evaluation process*, the three groups commented that a good teacher *systematically records assessable events in the classroom and the students' attitudes towards the learning*. This action, related to the continuous evaluation of learning, earned a broad consensus across the three groups as participants felt that, while exams were necessary, they should not be the only form of evaluation:

I think it's always good to evaluate someone based more on the effort put in rather than the exam results (S8).

Every thing's taken into account: day-to-day work, who does their homework, effort, respect, enthusiasm for the subject, the challenges they face [...] I don't think you just evaluate on any one given day: I think nearly all of us or all of us agree that we evaluate our students every day (T2).

In contrast, the *evaluation tools* category was barely touched on by the participants, nor were the actions linked to *decision-making based on the evaluation results* or *making value judgements about the available information*. The only reference made in relation to this category was the importance of providing a qualitative evaluation of the collected information, which would allow students to understand their mistakes and improve future performance.

Lastly, in relation to the *communication of evaluation results*, the three groups expressly referred to the importance of teachers reflecting on the evaluation results with their students. The participants (especially the students) stressed the need for teachers to address students individually when talking to them, preferable on a one-on-one basis, about their evaluation results. This action came up in the different focus groups, with some very significant comments:

You see, I like to feel a close relationship with my teacher, they call you over, you grab a chair, sit down face to face and they

explain what mark you got [...] they say: 'Now, your exam...'. They look at it with me, tell me what mark I got, what I need, what I have to learn, etc. They treat me like I'm someone special (S7).

... speaking personally with the students, as individually as possible, grabbing a quick five minutes with each of them to explain how they've been doing over the term (T2).

### 3.4. Personal skills

A lot of the focus group content is centred around personal skills (Table 5), and the importance of these skills in the profile of a good teacher is reflected in the volume and variety of the actions that emerged from these sessions.

As expected, it was the members of school management teams and, especially, the teachers who identified the most actions associated with *professional development*. On the whole, these were related to aspects such as ongoing training and adaptation to change resulting from societal developments and, ultimately, the needs and interests of students. All three groups agreed on several actions, including that a good teacher *has up-to-date knowledge of their subject* and *shows a permanent commitment to the teaching profession*. There was a broad consensus that a good teacher should love their job and believe in it, transmitting a sense of enjoyment in the classroom. In this respect, the participants highlighted that a good teacher must "fully believe in their work" (T9), have a "passion for their job" (S2) and a "willingness to serve" (SM3).

TABLE 5. Personal skills.

Categories	Actions	SM	T	S
Professional development	Shows an interest in their professional development (attends courses, shares experience, etc.)	•	•	
	Transfers the knowledge gained from their training to the classroom		•	
	Adopts new teaching techniques and methods (educational innovation)			
	Reflects on their teaching practice and educational ideals	•	•	
	Displays an ability to adapt to change in their role as a teacher		•	
	Shows a permanent commitment to the teaching profession	•	•	•
	Has strong digital skills and incorporates technology in the development of educational processes	•		
	Has up-to-date knowledge of their subject	•	•	•
Guidance and orientation	Displays extensive pedagogical knowledge		•	
	Finds out about the personal, social and family circumstances of their students, as well as their academic and professional skills and interests.	•	•	•
	Coordinates with other professionals in order to contribute to the academic, personal and professional guidance of students *	•	•	
	Informs and advises students about different academic and professional options		•	•
	Plans the transition between different educational stages	•		
	Offers individual attention to students and their families	•	•	•

Leadership	Participates in decisions about the running and management of the school	•	•
	Participates in decisions about things that affect the life of students at the school	•	•
	Participates in decisions about the curriculum, instruction and evaluation		• •
	Participates in decisions about things that affect the teaching staff	•	•
Communication	Clearly communicates content to students		• •
	Makes an effort to ensure that challenging content is understood		•
	Adapts use of language depending on different situations and who they are communicating with		•
	Shows good questioning skills		
	Communicates with enthusiasm		• •
Emotional skills	Considers the needs, motivations and interests of students and acts accordingly	•	• •
	Listens to students and builds trust with them		• •
	Seeks to understand the complex reasons behind certain behaviours	•	•
	Shows concern for the physical and emotional wellbeing of students	•	• •
	Is tolerant of the mistakes of others		•
	Is interested in understanding their own emotional wellbeing	•	



## Qualitative analysis of the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher

Interpersonal relationships	Forms positive relationships with students	•	•	
	Works as a team with other teachers	•	•	•
	Establishes direct contact with families	•	•	•
	Collaborates with other members of the education community outside of the school setting			
Professional ethics	Acts fairly in evaluations *		•	•
	Treats all students in a fair and respective manner, making no distinctions *			•
	Shows consistency between what is transmitted in the classroom and how they act *	•	•	•

\* Not included in the initial coding.

SM: School management team member. T: Teacher. S: Student.

Source: Own elaboration.

As for *guidance and orientation*, the three groups felt that a good teacher should find out about the characteristics, skills and interests of their students and offer individual attention to students and their families. In this respect, the participants agreed on the importance of listening to and understanding the needs of students. Interestingly, there was one action that was not included in the initial theoretical model but that was identified by two members of the focus groups with school management teams and teachers: *coordinating with other professionals in order to contribute to student guidance*. Lastly, both the students and the teachers felt that a good teacher informs and advises their

students about the different academic and professional pathways that are available to them and that are best suited to their needs and interests:

A good teacher knows you; they know more or less what you're good at and what you're not so good at. So, they should know how to advise you and know if you're better at science or humanities, for example, and tell you if next year you'd be better off taking one route or another (S2).

In terms of *leadership* skills, it was the teachers who mentioned the most actions, and these actions were mainly associated with the importance of teachers *participating in decisions about the running of the school*. In contrast, the students only

alluded to the need for a good teacher to *participate in decisions about the curriculum, instruction and evaluation*, highlighting that it was important for teachers to choose which textbooks they will be using in the classroom.

A detailed analysis of the results for *communication* shows how members of school management teams made no reference to any of the actions associated with this skill. In contrast, the student focus groups referred to all of the actions associated with this skill, except for *shows good questioning skills*, which was not mentioned by any of the three groups. Actions associated with *clearly communicating content* and *communicating with enthusiasm* were identified in the focus groups with teachers and, mainly, with students, producing comments such as: “...that they tell it with passion and know how to communicate it to students” (S2), “...that they know how to properly explain the subject” (S6) and that they know how to “communicate with enthusiasm and joy” (T1).

The various actions that make up *emotional skills* received a lot of attention, with a focus on the importance of aspects such as trust, listening and caring about the students’ problems. In addition, there was a broad consensus on the following two actions: firstly, *considering the needs, motivations and interests of students and acting accordingly*, with empathy and closeness emerging as especially valuable skills; and secondly, *showing concern for the physical and emotional wellbeing of students*. It was

the students who went into most detail on both these aspects:

Teachers should realise and say: ‘hey, are you okay?’ This question makes a big difference. When someone sits down to talk to you [...] and they ask: ‘Are you okay? Would you like some help? Did you understand what we looked at in class? Do you want me to talk to your parents? Do you want me to do anything?’ Even if you don’t take them up on the offer or you don’t even answer them, this makes you feel so good (S8).

As for the behaviours of an effective teacher in relation to *interpersonal relationships*, the groups highlighted, on the one hand, *working as a team with other teachers*, in indicating that a good teacher should coordinate with others and work collaboratively; and, on the other hand, *establishing direct contact with families*. In this respect, all participants stressed the importance of establishing “more direct contact with parents” (SM1) and an “ongoing connection between families” (T8).

The final section of the analysis of personal skills looked at the *professional ethics of teaching*, which were not initially considered but ended up encapsulating a range of behaviours that emerged from the focus groups. Some of these were broadly supported, such as *showing consistency between what is transmitted in the classroom and how teachers act*. In this respect, the participants stressed the importance of a good teacher setting an example for the students’ development of their own personal values.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

Taking a holistic approach, with the participation of three key groups in the education process, this study explored the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher. The qualitative analysis of the views of students, members of school management teams and teachers about the profile of a good teacher enabled a range of characteristic behaviours to be defined for the figure of this teacher. As such, checking the initial theoretical model against the empirical data collected from the five groups gave rise to 79 effective actions associated with three teaching skills (44 actions) and seven personal skills (35 actions).

The results show that most of the behaviours associated with being a good teacher that were identified during the literature review were supported empirically through the comments in the focus groups. This reflects the strong empirical correlation of the initial theoretical model, adding weight to the study proposal. In turn, the extensive analysis of the focus group discussions resulted in the inclusion of various behaviours that were not initially considered but which emerged directly from the focus groups. Those associated with professional ethics are of particular note, having received a broad consensus across all three groups. These findings coincide with the findings of the study by Reoyo et al. (2017), where personal ethics are identified as a characteristic skill of effective teachers. A final subgroup of behaviours associated with a good teacher would cover the a priori

behaviours that, having emerged in the literature as characteristic of effective teachers, were not supported with empirical evidence from the focus groups. This was the case with the following behaviours: defines the teaching methods and the learning activities to be carried out (Stronge, 2018), uses effective grouping strategies (Williams, 2010), provides students with regular information about their strengths and weaknesses, with associated suggestions for improvement (Stronge, 2018; Williams, 2010), adopts new teaching techniques and methods (Reoyo et al. 2017; Tapani & Salonen, 2019), shows good questioning skills (Stronge, 2018) and collaborates with other members of the education community outside of the school setting (Tapani & Salonen; 2019). This does not necessarily mean that these behaviours should be discarded as characteristic of a good teacher, as the fact that they did not emerge in the focus groups in this study is no obstacle to them being considered as defining traits of good teaching practice. Complementary and representative studies would be required to form any conclusions in this respect.

A further contribution made by this study is the integration of the views of members of school management teams, teachers and students. This offers an additional dimension as it means certain behaviours can be identified that would only be perceptible from the viewpoint of the teachers themselves and of what they feel makes a good teacher. In this respect, a key finding is the signif-

icant number of behaviours associated with academic evaluation that emerged, exclusively, from the focus groups with teachers. The identification of these behaviours could shed light on the behind-the-scenes work of a “good teacher”, often neglected in research projects that analyse the profile of an effective teacher from a broader perspective. This approach does not often allow for an analysis of all the behaviours associated with the evaluated skills and does not often consult the main parties involved. In addition, the focus group with members of school management teams led to the identification of behaviours associated with the students’ transition through different stages of education, the digital skills of teaching staff and the wellbeing of teachers. This group’s focus on these behaviours could be due to its organisational outlook and its concern with the overall running of the school. The last two behaviours could also be linked to the adaptation and restructuring required due to the health crisis caused by COVID-19. Lastly, the students were the only group to refer to establishing an evaluation system that provides full details of the evaluation procedures, criteria and tools, and to the need for teachers to make the content understandable and to adapt their use of language. All these behaviours are linked to daily school life and experiences (what is expected of me and what I need to learn), which appears to be of singular importance to the students.

The individual opinion of each member of the education community as to what

makes a “good teacher” requires scientific research to consider the perspective of all relevant audiences. Studies that focus on the views of a particular group will produce a biased portrayal of an effective teacher that fails to draw on other highly significant perspectives. The complexity of the professional profile of an effective teacher requires in-depth studies that take in the big picture and respond to the reality of teaching and the particular circumstances under which teachers work. Although this study has attempted to provide this broad overview, it is not without its limitations. For example, certain criteria, such as age, gender or ownership of the school were not considered in the selection of participants. The inclusion of these criteria would have allowed for an analysis of potential nuanced differences based on the specific characteristics of the participants. On the other hand, the number of focus groups in the field work of the study was established a priori and, as such, data saturation was not tested. That said, the vast majority of the categories established a priori were covered in the groups and not many new categories emerged from the discussions. This could well point to a high degree of saturation, which would need to be tested in future studies. Although the qualitative research design of this study does not allow any generalisations to be made about the professional profile of a good secondary school teacher, it does provide an interesting point of reference for further research and for reflecting on the qualification and professional training of teachers in order for them to best encourage and facilitate their students’ acquisition of knowledge.

ANNEX 1. Initial dimensions and questions included in the script.

Dimension (Skill)	Questions
Planning and implementation of teaching	<p>1. What do you think a good teacher would do when planning and implementing their teaching? <i>Planning of teaching:</i></p> <p>2. What strategies would a good teacher use to plan their teaching? <i>Implementation of teaching:</i></p> <p>3. What type of things would a good teacher do to ensure that this planning can be adapted to the students' pace of learning and the teaching or learning needs that arise in the classroom?</p>
Classroom management and organisation	<p>4. What things would a good teacher consider when managing and organising the classroom in order to encourage learning?</p> <p>5. How can a good teacher set rules and procedures for the classroom and ensure that students abide by these rules? How can a good teacher promote participatory and respectful interaction among all members of the group?</p> <p>6. How can teachers effectively design different learning environments according to the activities to be carried out?</p>
Evaluation of learning	<p>7. What elements related to the evaluation process should a teacher consider to make sure that evaluation is a means of improving academic performance?</p> <p>8. When should evaluation take place? What could be some effective strategies for gathering information about student performance?</p> <p>9. How should information about the evaluation system be shared with students? And how should the results be shared?</p>
Personal skills	<p>10. What personal skills do you think a good teacher should have? <i>Professional development:</i></p> <p>11. What actions associated with a teacher's own development and professional training could have a positive impact on their teaching practice and, consequently, on their students' results? <i>Guidance and orientation:</i></p> <p>12. What can teachers do to guide and advise their students through their learning processes? <i>Leadership:</i></p> <p>13. Which decision-making processes do teachers need to be involved in considering the potential repercussions of these decisions on the students' academic performance? (For example, decisions about the running of the school, student life, selection of teaching material, etc.) <i>Communication / Emotional skills / Interpersonal relationships:</i></p> <p>14. Other personal skills associated with a good teacher include their ability to communicate clearly, to understand the emotions and needs of students and to form effective interpersonal relationships with other members of the education community. What elements associated with these skills could have, in your opinion, the biggest impact on the learning of students?</p>
Other skills	<p>15. What other skills or traits in teachers do you think could have a positive effect on the academic results of students and, as such, could enhance their learning?</p>

Source: Own elaboration.

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