Planning for Faculty Recruitment and Assessment in Higher Education: Considering Student Preferences for Faculty Characteristics in Poland and Switzerland

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ABSTRACT

When characterizing a professional academic teacher, we should consider all the expectations that university teachers face. These can relate both to their academic work, various forms of didactic work and the building of relations with students. Exploring and defining the factors relevant to the ways in which lecturers effectively influence the educational process seems to be indispensable, especially in the context of planning for the employment of professional academic staff with the appropriate competences and approach to work, and, above all, their positive attitudes toward students. It is therefore as important to plan the employment of academic staff, based on the information acquired in the evaluation process, as it is to plan well for courses adjusted to a given educational level. In this sense, it is very helpful to examine students' expectations of their teachers relating to teaching qualities and teacher-student relations. This knowledge can help teachers plan for specific forms of didactic work as needed, and adopt an approach that fosters the building of good relations with students, based on the well experienced master-pupil formula, involving mutual respect, understating and partnership. The purpose of the current study is to present the results of research regarding students' preferred characteristics of academic teachers. The study was conducted at the Faculty of Education, University of Rzeszow (PL) and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva (CH). The comparative research involved a sample of 413 full-time students, 268 from a Polish university, and 145 from a Swiss university. The result of data analysis indicated that as far as the characterization of an academic teacher is concerned, students from the two universities expressed different priorities. The differences are not even subtle as the two groups chose to give precedence to different qualities. A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that the variable that differentiated the significance of individual factors was the level of study.

INTRODUCTION

There is a great deal of discussion in today's world about the future of higher education, new curricula, educating students and the quality of education (Altbach, Androushchak, Kuzminov, Yudkevich, & Reisberg, 2013; Lambert & Butler, 2006; Rege Colet, 2010; Romainville, 2013; Sursock & Smidt, 2010; Thieme, 2009; Vijaykumar & Lavanya, 2014; Wit, 2011; Woźnicki, 2012; Zgaga, Teichler, & Brennan, 2013). It is postulated that a university should be a place in which people are able to achieve the goals of developing comprehensively to become ready and well-equipped for adult life, responsible and engaged in their surroundings with the knowledge, competences and attitudes appropriate to their social environment and the requirements of the job market. Academic teachers are to a large extent responsible for realizing these goals effectively (Calderhead, 1997; *Just-in-time teaching*, 2010; Lavoie & Roth, 2001; Saroyan & Frenay, 2010; Woźnicki, 2013). After all, the motivation to learn, their comprehensive development, future maturity and ability to adapt to the needs of an increasingly demanding world ultimately depends largely on the students themselves (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2004; Rhoades, 2012; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Lecturers play a significant role in preparing graduates for entry to the job market. Educational programs have the important tasks of teaching both theory as well as professional practice and, perhaps more than anything, competences in building interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding, which lead to an ability to cooperate in different aspects of life (Grygiel, Humenny, Rębisz, & Klimczak, 2010; Lenoir & Vanhulle, 2006; Tardif, Marcel, Dupriez, & Perisset Bagnoud, 2010).

Currently, among the most important elements of university development strategy are well operated human resources management and teacher evaluation policies, which can be used as tools in raising the quality of teaching. They are both factors to consider when introducing changes to the reorientation of universities towards initiating student-focus and building a competitive advantage over other institutions.

As Mischke (2006) observed, the process of academic teacher evaluation is a wide-ranging, difficult and often complicated task. The large number of scientific publications devoted to this issue is certainly testimony to its complexity. In fact, almost two thousand publications discussing related problems were available worldwide towards the end of the last century (McKeachie & Kaplan, 1996).

Charles Woodruffe (2000) distinguished three objectives of teacher evaluation: (1) choosing the best candidate for a vacant position, (2) selecting the best career path for a teacher already employed or evaluating a teacher's capacity for professional progress, as well as identifying teachers that should be dismissed, and (3) discussing a teacher's strengths and weaknesses for professional development.

The first two objectives are very similar, as the methods used in their application are designed to serve as an element of candidate selection through the evaluation of characteristic competences that every teacher employs to perform a specific set of tasks. This is a summative evaluation aimed at providing data to be used to decide on personnel issues, such as employment, promotion, salary and awards (Felder & Brent, 2004).

The third objective is grounded in so-called formative evaluation based on the information gathered from student questionnaires and/or observations by affiliated lecturers. It focuses on the diagnosis of a teacher's predispositions as well as strengths and weaknesses for professional development. The intention is to determine the most effective path for adjusting and developing teachers' personal didactic competences to the university's requirements. The main aim of teacher evaluation is not to help the university in making personnel decisions but to assist a specific academic teacher in meeting the teaching demands they are facing (Woodruffe, 2000). In formative evaluation, the didactic process itself is both the starting point and the goal (Felder & Brent, 2004). The twofold character of an academic teacher's work should not be ignored here. After all, academic and teaching functions require two different sets of competences, which require two different evaluation approaches (Mischke, 2006).

When characterizing professional academic teachers we must bear in mind all the expectations they face, including demand for academic work, preferred forms of teaching and relations with students. Research shows that the stimulation of a student's learning interest depends on a lecturer's personal competences, the teaching style, teaching involvement, overall approaches, methods and other teaching aids used (Boyer, 1997; Herda-Płonka, 2013). Professional lecturers strongly engaged with students, create an appropriate environment for students to feel supported and more motivated to learn (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

The perception of a lecturer as a passionate teacher with a true vocation is important. Passion is understood as love for the subject and enthusiasm as a component of it, which later translates into force of persuasion (Fried, 2001). As Andrzej Rozmus says, "students will respond best to a lecturer who *is crazy about his subject area, or even just one of its elements, so the engagement of the lecturer with the subject is crucial"*(Rozmus, 2013, p. 126). This kind of involvement fosters a special teacher-student relationship, even capable of breaking through the students' lack of interest or challenging attitudes (Boyer, 1997; Dumont, Rochat, Berthiame, & Lanares, 2012; Piejka, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

The profession of academic teacher has been studied in Poland and other countries for years. These studies aim at defining the most useful personality traits, types, models and ideals and teaching styles as well as exploring the actual behaviors and attitudes. Research shows that students place varied demands on teachers, depending on their age and their experience in their studies. During their first year at university, students expected lecturers to introduce them to studying and to be familiar with the problems of young people. As far as teaching was concerned they expected the knowledge conveyed in the teaching process to be well selected and accessible. They thought that, at this stage, a lecturer should use examinations to review the taught materials and to display empathy and broad-mindedness rather than elevate expectations. The approach of more advanced students was different. They placed much higher demands on academic teachers in terms of their professionalism, breadth of knowledge supported by familiarity with the latest research and innovations, and their actual application (Rokitiańska, 2003).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Taking into account that students' expectations towards teachers differ by age and years of study and also considering their realization of their preferred qualities at a given stage of education, educational planners can plan for the needed format of teaching, adopting certain attitudes and building good relations with students on the basis of mutual respect. The objective of this paper is to examine the students' preferred characteristics of academic teachers in the context of: (1) relations with students, (2) performance of academic and teaching work, and (3) teacher personality traits in the Faculty of Education, University of Rzeszow and the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Geneva.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants and their demographics

Our research involved 413 full-time students from the BA and supplementary MA programs (268 from the Faculty of Education at the University of Rzeszów and 145 from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Geneva). We conducted our survey between November 2013 and June 2014. We chose purposive sampling with students participating on a voluntary and anonymous basis.

The specific educational character of the course determined the sex of our respondents: at the Polish university 95% (*n=255*) of the respondents were women, and at the Swiss university the equivalent figure was 88.3% (*n=128*).

The distribution of our respondents at the two universities, as far as the degree studied, showed that undergraduate students were slightly overrepresented (57.8%) at the Polish university in relation to post-graduate students (42.2%). The situation was reversed at the Swiss university, at which only 22.3% of respondents were BA students and 77.7% studied for their MA. Significantly, almost 80% of Polish respondents were students of the two higher years of a BA degree, whereas in the MA program, students of the last year represented 42.5% of all respondents. A similar situation occurred in Switzerland with almost 78% of respondents were from the higher years of a BA degree, with first year students representing only 22% of all respondents. The largest group of respondents among the students from Geneva (53% of all respondents) was those who had just began their MA course.

Certain differences were noticed in the context of students' place of origin. Most (over 88%) of our Polish respondents came from villages and small towns. The equivalent figure in Switzerland was much lower, 57.4%. Moreover, among Swiss respondents over 39% were residents of cities with over 100,000 inhabitants and the corresponding figure in the Polish context was only 7.1%. Parents' education is also a variable worth attention. The education of the parents of our Polish respondents from the University of Rzeszów is characteristic of this part of Poland and is well within general indicators. Most parents were educated to the vocational (46.1%) and secondary (24.2%) levels. College and higher education was represented at similar levels, i.e. 11.5%, whereas 6.7% of our respondents' parents were educated to the primary and incomplete primary level. It should be noted that the distribution of educational level of parents by sex is slightly different from the previously presented (averaged) results. The mothers of our Polish respondents were better educated than their fathers. Women were more frequently educated to higher, post-secondary or secondary level than men, i.e. almost 14% of mothers completed higher education compared to less than 9% of fathers; college education was completed by 13.4% of mothers and 9.7% of fathers and secondary education 28.7% of mothers and 19.8% of fathers. When it comes to the education of our Swiss respondents' parents, our data differ considerably from those of Poland, in spite of the fact that the Swiss model of vocational studies is very different from the Polish, vocational studies are popular in Switzerland. In fact, there are at present very few vocational schools in Poland and emphasis is placed rather on post-secondary general education (EU et al., 2012; European Commission, Education, & Eurydice (Brussels, 2013). Swiss youth have a whole array of vocational schools on offer which equip them with the knowledge and qualifications necessary from the point of view of the job market (Filliettaz, 2008; Strahm, 2010). In the case of the Canton of Geneva (French-speaking region), where we conducted our research, significantly more parents of Swiss respondents were educated to the higher education standard - almost 29%. Post-secondary and secondary schools were completed by 14.4% and 6.7% respectively. 37.5% of the Swiss parents completed vocational education, and 12.5% of all Swiss respondents admitted to their parents having finished primary school or not completing primary education. It should be noted that the distribution of the level of education by sex is also different from the previously presented (averaged) figures. The mothers of our Swiss respondents were less frequently educated to a higher education level than their fathers, i.e. 26% of women held degrees compared to 32% of men, whereas secondary education yielded similar results in case of both fathers (6.7%) and mothers (6.7%). Fathers were more frequently educated to the vocational level (40%) compared to mothers (slightly over 37%).

Measuring Instrument

The tool we used was a questionnaire prepared especially for the needs of our research, consisting of 36 proposed qualities that an academic teacher should have. The catalogue of teacher's personal qualities included in the questionnaire was created on the basis of similar lists commonly found in the literature on the subject (Bogusz, 1996; Das, Mpofu, Hasan, & Stewart, 2002; Dróżka, 2001; Dumont et al., 2012; Haber, 1996; Hatem et al., 2011; Kane et al., 2004; *L'évaluation de l'enseignement par les étudiants approches critiques et pratiques innovantes [Teaching Evaluated by the Students, Critical Approaches and Innovative Practices]*, 2009; Marczuk, 2001; McLean, 2001; Penar-Zadarko, Binkowska-Bury, & Marć, 2008; Rumiński, 1996; Serow, 2000). The 36 qualities have been divided into 3 groups: Group I – *preferred university teacher qualities in the context of relations with students* (8 qualities), Group II - *preferred university teacher qualities in the context of the teacher's own scientific/didactic work* (13 qualities) and Group III - *preferred university teacher qualities in the context of personality traits* (15 qualities) - see: Table 1.

Table 1. The breakdown of preferred university teacher qualities

Group 1 – preferred university teacher qualities in the context of relations with students	**Group 2 -** preferred university teacher qualities in the context of the teacher's own scientific/didactic work	**Group 3 -** preferred university teacher qualities in the context of personality traits
1. *respecting student rights*	1. *punctuality*	1. *self-confidence*
2. *kindness*	2. *objectivity*	2. *honesty*
3. *patience towards students*	3. *consistency*	3. *broad-mindedness*
4. *understanding*	4. *conscientiousness*	4. *modesty*
5. *availability (easy contact)*	5. *being always prepared for classes*	5. *intelligence*
6. *being challenging to students*	6. *having theoretical knowledge*	6. *self-control*
7. *having ability to motivate others*	7. *having practical knowledge*	7. *responsibility*
8. *respecting other people's arguments and views*	8. *creativity*	8. *authenticity*
	9. *being communicative*	9. *straightforwardness*
	10. *using foreign languages*	10. *prudence*
	11. *participation in the international scientific cooperation network*	11. *being cultured/well-mannered*
	12. *good appearance*	12. *ability to admit mistakes*
	13. *taking care of professional image and the image of the university*	13. *being cheerful/smiling*
		14. *having a sense of humor*
		15. *empathy*

The questionnaire was then entered to the Lime Survey software (on-line questionnaire), which was used as the data collecting tool. Students could assign a value to each of the 36 qualities using a sliding scale (from 0 to 100, where 0 meant insignificant and 100 very significant) by responding to the following questions:

1. *To what extent should these be qualities characteristic of the university teacher **in relations with students?*** (8 qualities)
2. *To what extent should these be qualities characteristic of the university teacher in the context of her/his **performance of scientific and teaching work**?* (13 qualities)
3. *To what extent should these **personality traits** characterize the university teacher?* (15 qualities)

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis

Data analysis enabled us to establish a general ranking of the qualities of academic teachers desirable among our Polish and Swiss respondents. Distribution of the ten most preferred teacher qualities by Polish respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Ranking of the 10 most preferred teacher qualities at the Faculty of Education of the University of Rzeszów (PL) in the opinion of students (*n=268*)

The place in the ranking	Preferred teacher qualities
1.	*having practical knowledge* (93.15)
2.	*respecting student rights* (92.86)
3.	*honesty* (92.37)
4.	*respecting other people's arguments and views* (91.76)
5.	*being a cultured/well-mannered person* (91.57)
6.	*being communicative* (91.46)
7.	*being able to admit mistakes* (91.30)
8.	*intelligence* (89.43)
9.	*objectivity* (88.84)
10.	*kindness* (88.25)

Note: Quoted in brackets are the mean values of the quality - from 0 to 100, where 0 meant insignificant and 100 very significant

The following, on the other hand, were considered to be the least important features (the place in the ranking is given in brackets): *participation in international scientific cooperation networks (36), use of foreign languages (35), good appearance (34), modesty (33), being demanding (32) and straightforwardness (31).*

Our Swiss respondents considered the following ten qualities to be most important in university teachers as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Ranking of the 10 most preferred teacher qualities at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Geneva (CH) in the opinion of surveyed students (*n=145*)

The place in the ranking	Preferred teacher qualities
1.	*being communicative* (91.93)
2.	*respecting other people's arguments and views* (90.44)
3.	*being able to admit mistakes* (89.67)
4.	*respecting student rights* (88.80)
5.	*always being well prepared for classes* (87.24)
6.	*having theoretical knowledge* (87.20)
7.	*objectivity* (87.14)
8.	*having practical knowledge* (86.97)
9.	*having the ability to motivate others* (86.51)
10.	*honesty* (86.23)

Note: Quoted in brackets are the mean values of the characteristic - from 0 to 100, where 0 meant insignificant and 100 very significant

The least important features were thought to be (the place in the ranking is given in brackets): *good self-presentation (36), use of foreign languages (35), taking care of professional image and the image of the university (32) and modesty (31).*

Main analysis

In order to simplify the interpretation of results we used exploratory factor analysis, which allows for a reduction in the number of dimensions subjected to further analysis. This analysis allows us to discern "deeper" structures i.e. factors, which are the source of answers given by the respondents. An essential element of this analysis is to determine the number of factors. The criteria which can also be used in this regard are the eigenvalues of factors greater than 1.0 and a scree plot. The determining criterion should always be the factual interpretability of the results obtained (Agresti, 2009; Ostasiewicz, 1999; Yanai & Ichikawa, 2006).

For the analysis of data obtained in the Faculty of Education, University of Rzeszów the scree test indicated a choice of five factors, and eigenvalues greater than 1.0 of seven factors. A five-factor solution seemed to be a better choice for the substantive interpretation of the results. The factors convey over 55% of the information included in the evaluation of 36 questions. The model matrix for the Polish respondents is presented in Table 4.

The five factors can be interpreted as:

- **Factor 1 – *Self-presentation - interpersonal attractiveness*** (good appearance, use of foreign languages, participation in international scientific cooperation networks, prudence, taking care of professional image and the image of the university, responsibility, self-confidence, modesty, straightforwardness, self-control, authenticity, having theoretical knowledge);
- **Factor 2 – *Creating and maintaining relationships with students*** (understanding, kindness, patience with students, availability/easy contact, respecting student rights);
- **Factor 3 – *Compliance with previously imposed formal requirements*** (consistency, punctuality, conscientiousness, objectivity, being demanding, always being well prepared for classes);
- **Factor 4 – *The ability to build sympathy and trust*** (the ability to admit mistakes, being cheerful, smiling, being cultured/well-mannered, having a sense of humor, honesty, having respect for other people's arguments and points of view);
- **Factor 5 - *Expertise and professionalism – practical approach*** (creativity, having practical knowledge, being communicative, intelligence, empathy, ability to motivate others, being tolerant).

Table 4. Model matrix - Polish respondents (*n=268*)

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
good appearance	.764	.143	-.132		
prudence	.691		.124	.143	
use of foreign languages	.658			-.332	.220
participation in international scientific cooperation networks	.658			-.404	.182
responsibility	.594		.167	.347	
taking care of professional image and the image of the university	.586	.193	.167		
straightforwardness	.541			.170	
self-confidence	.537	-.111			
modesty	.529				
self-control	.459	.159		.273	.104
authenticity	.392		.232	.278	.192
having theoretical knowledge	.336		.134		.163
understanding		.802	-.145		
patience with students		.726	-.178		.162
kindness		.683		.183	-.172
availability/easy contact		.534	.206	-.236	
respecting student rights	-.117	.338	.115	.115	.138
consistency	.141	-.122	.690		.158
punctuality	.189		.638		
conscientiousness	.225	.143	.577		
objectivity	-.114	.224	.553	.214	
being demanding		-.130	.518		.128
always being well prepared for classes	.281		.370		.156
having respect for other people's arguments and points of view		.211	.264	.240	.135
the ability to admit mistakes				.497	.325
being cheerful, smiling	.293	.135	-.324	.435	.266
being cultured/well-mannered	.322		.214	.413	.116
having a sense of humor	.280		-.386	.401	.298
honesty	.138	.118	.224	.400	.236
creativity		.119		-.128	.751
having practical knowledge			.108		.599
being communicative		.218			.516
empathy	.265	.152	-.123	.117	.380
intelligence	.197		.109	.165	.380
ability to motivate others		.151	.264		.368
being tolerant	.250	.196		.161	.256

Note: $p < 0.05$

The same statistical analysis was applied to the replies given by respondents from Switzerland. Considering the data obtained at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Geneva, the scree test indicated a choice of five factors, and eigenvalues above 1.0 were attained by eleven factors.

It is important to note at this stage that a five-factor solution was also adopted in this case for better interpretation of the analysis, having taken the evaluation of 35 qualities into consideration. Unfortunately, one of the features – *having theoretical knowledge* – was omitted from the analysis as factor loadings at this feature were higher than 1 ($\Lambda > 1$)).

The 5 factors mentioned above convey almost 48% of all information included in the evaluation of 35 qualities. The model matrix for our Swiss respondents is presented in Table 5. These five factors can be interpreted, similarly to the Polish circumstances, as:

- **Factor 1 – *Self-presentation - interpersonal attractiveness*** (use of foreign languages, participation in international scientific cooperation networks, taking care of professional image and the image of the university);

- **Factor 2 – *Creating and maintaining relations with students*** (being tolerant, respecting student rights, kindness, empathy, patience with students, understanding, respecting other people's arguments and views, self-control, availability/easy contact, good appearance);
- **Factor 3 – *Compliance with previously imposed formal requirements*** (conscientiousness, responsibility, punctuality, being demanding, self-confidence, always being well- prepared for classes, objectivity);
- **Factor 4 – *The ability to build sympathy and trust*** (having a sense of humor, being able to admit mistakes, authenticity, being cultured/well-mannered, being cheerful, smiling; honesty, prudence, straightforwardness, modesty, intelligence);
- **Factor 5 - *Expertise and professionalism – practical approach*** (creativity, being communicative, having the ability to motivate others, having practical knowledge).

Table 5. Model matrix - Swiss respondents *(n=145)*

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
having a sense of humor	.757		.116		-.161
being able to admit mistakes	.566	.131	.152	-.277	.221
authenticity	.534	.152		.114	.114
being cultured/well-mannered	.516			.203	
being cheerful, smiling	.497	.217	.136		
honesty	.457				.415
prudence	.429	.262			.142
straightforwardness	.415		.177		.391
modesty	.397		.148		.349
intelligence	.334			.182	
being tolerant	.144	.605			
respecting student rights		.600	-.133		
kindness		.588			-.160
empathy	.186	.562		.234	-.178
patience with students		.557	.133		
understanding	.204	.501	.136		-.101
respecting other people's arguments and views		.432	.104		.207
self-control		.398	.118		.348
availability/easy contact	-.149	.288			.225
good appearance		.261		.172	.131
creativity	.294		.691	.115	-.188
being communicative			.668		-.124
having the ability to motivate others		.133	.563		
having practical knowledge			.462		.180
use of foreign languages				.748	
participation in international scientific cooperation networks			.116	.683	
taking care of professional image and the image of the university	-.164	.196	.128	.274	.200
conscientiousness				.301	.559
responsibility	.257	.120			.522
consistency					.480
punctuality	.101		.112	.112	.438
being demanding		-.128	.169	.169	.417
self-confidence		.135	-.146		.369
always being well- prepared for classes			.357		.363
objectivity			.162		.298

Note: $p < 0.05$

It is worth noting that the groups of characteristics that comprise each factor are to a large extent similar in both surveyed populations. A few of the features that have been included in the factors separated in the Swiss research complement the proposed name of the factor.

The reliability analysis has been carried out for the scales comprised of characteristics for which factor loads have been at their highest for a given item. The scales are characterized by good reliability. In most of them Cronbach's alpha is close to 0.8. Only in factor 4 for the answers of our Swiss respondents Cronbach's alpha was a little lower at 0.6. This is resulting from the fact that the scale is made of only 3 items (See Table 6).

Table 6. Reliability of the scales based on the factor analyses

	Cronbach alpha (PL)	Cronbach alpha (CH)
Factor 1 – *Self-presentation - interpersonal attractiveness*	0.89	0.85
Factor 2 – *Creating and maintaining relations with students*	0.77	0.78
Factor 3 – *Compliance with previously imposed formal requirements*	0.81	0.70
Factor 4 – *The ability to build sympathy and trust*	0.83	0.60
Factor 5 - *Expertise and professionalism – practical approach*	0.79	0.75

In order to capture the differences in the importance attributed by the different groups of respondents to individual factors (groups of academic teacher's qualities), we have conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The analysis allows for the verification of hypothesis about the existence in the population of variations in the level of researched phenomenon in the studied groups (Dodge, 2008; Rubacha, 2008).

The results of our own research conducted at the University of Rzeszów show that the respondents at the Faculty of Education, University of Rzeszów indicated mainly those qualities that refer to high level of expertise and professionalism of academic teachers (Factor 5) and their ability to build and maintain good relations with students (Factor 2). Among the 10 most frequently mentioned qualities, the most popular was *having practical knowledge* (standard significance of this characteristic on a scale from 0 to 100, 0 indicating negligible, and 100 very important, was slightly more than 93 points). It is also worth noting that the top 10 most desirable qualities involved as many as 6 related to the ability to maintain good relations with students (Factor 2), including developing mutual liking and building trust (Factor 2). Among them (the place in the ranking is given in brackets): *respecting student rights (2), honesty (3), respecting other people's arguments and views (4), being cultured/well-mannered (5), ability to admit mistakes (7), kindness (10).*

The univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicates that the variable that differentiates the attributing of significance ($p < 0.05$) to individual factors (groups of features) is the level of study (Table 7). At the undergraduate level (BA), the respondents assigned more importance to the qualities conveyed by Factor 1 - *self-presentation, interpersonal attractiveness* ($p < 0.001$). The importance of these features decreases noticeably with every year of study. Students of the final years of MA studies assigned more weight to the qualities grouped in Factor 3 - *compliance with previously imposed formal requirements* ($p < 0.001$).

Table 7. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) – Polish respondents

	Level of study	N		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Factor 1	BA	155	Between groups	.104	1	.104	.114	.736
	MA	113	Within groups	241.865	266	.909		
	Total	268	Total	241.969	267			
Factor 2	BA	155	Between groups	2.166	1	2.166	2.556	.111
	MA	113	Within groups	225.422	266	.847		
	Total	268	Total	227.588	267			
Factor 3	BA	155	Between groups	17.356	1	17.356	21.997	**.000**
	MA	113	Within groups	209.878	266	.789		
	Total	268	Total	227.234	267			
Factor 4	BA	155	Between groups	1.870	1	1.870	2.335	.128
	MA	113	Within groups	213.045	266	.801		
	Total	268	Total	214.915	267			
Factor 5	BA	155	Between groups	.893	1	.893	1.067	.303
	MA	113	Within groups	222.638	266	.837		
	Total	268	Total	223.531	267			

Note: $p < 0.05$; Factor 1 – Self-presentation - interpersonal attractiveness; Factor 2 – Creating and maintaining relations with students; Factor 3 – Compliance with previously imposed formal requirements; Factor 4 – The ability to build sympathy and trust; Factor 5 - Expertise and professionalism – practical approach

Also in case of the Swiss students, in order to capture the differences in the importance attributed by the groups of respondents to individual factors (groups of academic teacher's characteristics), we also conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) (Dodge, 2008; Rubacha, 2008).

The respondents from Geneva, similarly to the Polish students, indicated mainly those qualities that refer to the academic teacher's expertise, professionalism (Factor 5) and the specification of formal requirements (Factor 3). On the other hand, they also noted the value of features responsible for building and maintaining trust (Factor 4) and good relations with students (Factor 2). Out of the 10 most frequently mentioned qualities, *being communicative* comes first (standard significance of this trait on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 meant irrelevant, and 100 very important, amounted to almost 92 points). Given the linguistic diversity of Switzerland and the existence of the four official languages of French, German, Italian and Romansh, it seems that the highest position of this characteristic in the case of Swiss respondents is understandable (Rege Colet, 2010, pp. 43–60). It is also worth noting that out of the first 10 qualities most desirable in academic teachers four were linked with the teacher's expertise, professionalism (Factor 5) and clarity of formal requirements – Factor 4 (the place in the ranking is given in brackets): *always being well prepared for classes (5), objectivity (7), having practical knowledge (8), having ability to motivate others (9).* The next 4 features in the first 10 are related to maintaining good relations with students (Factor 2) with developing mutual liking and trust (Factor 4). Among them were *respecting other people's arguments and points of view (2) being able to admit mistakes (3) respecting student rights (4),* and *honesty (10).*

The univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) performed on the Swiss data indicates that the only variable differentiating the attributing of significance ($p < 0.05$) to individual factors (groups of features) is also, as their Polish counterparts, the level of study (Table 8). At the undergraduate level (BA), the respondents from Switzerland, in contrast to their colleagues from Poland, assigned more importance to the characteristics conveyed by Factor 2- *Creating and maintaining relations with students* ($p < 0.027$) whereas the importance attached to these qualities decreases with every year of study.

Table 8. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) – Swiss respondents

	Level of study	N		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Factor 1	BA	87	Between groups	.059	1	.059	.070	.792
	MA	58	Within groups	120.513	143	.843		
	Total	145	Total	120.571	144			
Factor 2	BA	87	Between groups	3.694	1	3.694	4.631	**.033**
	MA	58	Within groups	114.071	143	.798		
	Total	145	Total	117.766	144			
Factor 3	BA	87	Between groups	.712	1	.712	.903	.344
	MA	58	Within groups	112.776	143	.789		
	Total	145	Total	113.488	144			
Factor 4	BA	87	Between groups	.788	1	.788	1.021	.314
	MA	58	Within groups	110.335	143	.772		
	Total	145	Total	111.123	144			
Factor 5	BA	87	Between groups	.445	1	.445	.549	.460
	MA	58	Within groups	116.087	143	.812		
	Total	145	Total	116.533	144			

Note: $p < 0.05$; Factor 1 – Self-presentation - interpersonal attractiveness; Factor 2 – Creating and maintaining relations with students; Factor 3 – Compliance with previously imposed formal requirements; Factor 4 – The ability to build sympathy and trust; Factor 5 - Expertise and professionalism – practical approach

It needs to be emphasized that despite the over-representation of women among our respondents (95% of the Polish and 88.3% of the Swiss respondents were women) data analysis taking into consideration this category of variable (sex) has not yielded a statistically significant difference between the opinions of students of both levels in the institutions investigated. This also regards other categories of variables (parents' education and place of residence). The variable differentiating the ascribing of significance to factors (groups of qualities) was only the level of study.

DISCUSSION

The comparative nature of this research prompted us to carry out a brief comparative analysis of the results obtained in the Polish and Swiss context. To capture the statistically significant differences in the responses, we used the univariate analysis of variance method. The collected data were compared in three sub-categories: features that should characterize an academic teacher in relations with students, in scientific and didactic work and the teacher's personality traits.

The conclusions yielded by the analysis of our research materials demonstrate that students from the two universities expressed different priorities in the characterization of an academic teacher with the initially proposed characteristics. The differences are not even subtle as the two groups chose to give precedence to different qualities.

In the Polish University these are mainly: *having the practical knowledge, respecting student rights, honesty, respecting other people's arguments and views, and being a cultured/well-mannered person*. They prefer the model of a university teacher who possesses practical knowledge applicable in everyday life, behaves respectfully towards students and is cultured and well mannered. Furthermore a vast majority of students expect their relationships with teachers to be close and friendly based on mutual understanding and trust. Our research also shows that the significance of a teacher's qualities preferred by the Polish students changes with each year of their education. The more senior and experienced they are, the less importance they attach to *self-presentation – interpersonal attractiveness* (Factor 1), attributing more relevance to the characteristics linked with knowledge, skills and competences which will help them be competitive in the job market in the future (Factor 3).

The students surveyed in Switzerland, however, considered *being communicative, respecting other people's arguments and views, being able to admit mistakes, respecting student rights and always being well prepared for classes*, as their preferred qualities of an academic teacher. It seems that the fact that our respondents from the University of Geneva attached more importance to the quality of "being communicative". This can be explained in terms of the tradition of the political system and specific character of Switzerland. It is obvious that in a country with a political culture based on direct participation of the population in cantonal and federal decision making, with its four official languages,communication is the principal, necessary and essential issue. This is even more so where the University of Geneva is concerned, as it is often chosen not only by students from different cantons, but also from other countries. In this context also the appreciation of a quality such as *respecting other people's arguments and points of view* fits in the context of the deeply rooted tradition of political culture of Switzerland and its direct democracy.

Furthermore most of the students surveyed in Switzerland, contrary to their Polish counterparts, wished for their relations with lecturers to be based on the old academic master–pupil model, with well-preserved mutual trust and respect. The significance of the qualities preferred in academic teachers changes with each year of study for the Swiss students too. More senior students attached less importance to features relating to *creating and maintaining good relations with students* (Factor 2) and more to their teachers' knowledge and professionalism (Factor 5).

Students from the University of Geneva thought their ideal teacher should be respectful of students and their rights and have extensive theoretical and practical knowledge. Such a teacher should be ideally mature, responsible and self-reflective.

Generally speaking, what distinguishes students from Poland and Switzerland is not an individual feature or quality but a group of features which comprise a broader context, consisting of the character of the relations that the surveyed students prefer to have with their academic teachers and the student's attitude towards a teacher's personality. For Polish students an academic teacher is not only treated in terms of professional relations involving the conveying of knowledge and making sure it is well assimilated. A teacher is also a companion for discussions who should both respect students and appreciate their point of view. Polish students also wish for their teachers to be well mannered and honest. It is worth noting that the choices made by the Polish subjects with regard to the characteristics of academic teachers demonstrate their maturity, ability to think critically and expression of their free views. In other words, students participate actively in the process of education, as the students from the University of Rzeszów prefer academic teachers who have knowledge that is applicable in everyday life and who respect students and are well cultured and mannered.

It seems, on the other hand, that students from the University of Geneva keep a certain distance as far as their teachers are concerned, being aware that they hold a lower position in the academic hierarchy and are recipients of the knowledge held and conveyed by experts. This might be the results of the regional cultural traditions (Weber, 2004). The Swiss students present an ideal academic teacher who is communicative and respectful of students and their rights with both theoretical and practical knowledge. They expect their lecturers to be professional, with a mature professional outlook that, in a sense, consolidates the traditional relations between a lecturer and a student based on the old master-pupil pattern. In this sense the approach of students from Geneva is more conservative than that of their Polish respondents.

PLANNING IMPLICATION FOR FACULTY RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Educational theorists agree that among the various factors influencing the quality and effectiveness of university education, it is undoubtedly the university teacher who plays the most important role in university development (Przybylski, Rudnicki, & Szwed, 2010; Strykowski, 2005; Zhang, Yu, Yang, & Du, 2014). This requires that the management of higher education institutions should pay particular attention to selecting appropriate employees from among academic teachers who can meet the development mission of the university in the scope of teaching, research and public service (Zhang et al., 2014).

A young person who chooses a subject of study at the university level does so deliberately and purposefully, with a specific expectations, ideas and attitudes as related to the character of the studies concerned, and with a general idea of what university teachers should be like in terms of their roles, functions, tasks, personality traits and competences (Penar-Zadarko et al., 2008; Ramsden, 1992). This idea of a university teacher is certainly a derivative of the needs, expectations and requirements to be gained at the university and the quality of teaching it offers (Dunn & Griggs, 2000; Harland & Pickering, 2011; Kane et al., 2004; Montilla, 2006; Rege Colet, 2009).

Taking into consideration the fact that academic teachers combine the role of experts who pass on knowledge and develop skills, and pedagogues who help forming attitudes towards values, an essential element of their work is self-evaluation to enable the development of teaching skills (Brown, 2004; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005; Wilson & Scalise, 2006). In the evaluation process, the teacher is capable of recognizing students' needs and the effectiveness of the teaching methods used. This opens the way to self-improvement and the raising of teaching competences. The professionalization of teaching skills, combined with the knowledge of students' expectations, helps teachers create an appropriate teaching environment in which to provide proper interaction based on mutual respect, understanding and partnership.

Defining the factors relevant to influencing young people's educational process effectively seems necessary, especially in the context of planning the employment of professional academic staff with the attitudes and competences required (Zhang et al., 2014) or – perhaps more than anything – a specific attitude towards students (Kane et al., 2004; Rhoades, 2012; Roth, 1999; Rozmus, 2013; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). It is therefore as important to employ professional lecturers based on this information as it is to plan well for courses and adjust them to the level of education. In this sense, college teachers should find the information from this study very helpful in planning to work with students. Knowledge of students' expectations, their preferred teacher qualities, anticipated teacher-student relations, and student age and year of study differences can certainly be very helpful. Research clearly shows that students learn more from teachers who are well-liked and appreciated rather that those who are less valued in this respect (Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Gregory & Chapman, 2007; Tucker & Stronge, 2005). This factor, among others, is decisive in the student's involvement in the learning process, and the gaining of knowledge and competences (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Failure to meet students' expectations may pose threats, such as failing to meet planned educational results. Besides, it is important to remember that the process of higher education makes sense only when it involves professional academic teachers who will not only determine the kind of knowledge that students will need in the future but also the values that they will adhere to. The most important task ahead of academic teachers today is to learn from the findings of this study to plan to work with young people to acquire habits leading to life-long learning which benefits the rest of their lives (Harland & Pickering, 2011; Rumiński, 1996). This study offers significant findings for educators to consider in planning for elements involved in the recruitment of new faculty and assessment of their current faculty in higher education.

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