

## THE ROLE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS - A CASE STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TETOVA

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### Abstract

University is a challenge for newly enrolled students. They come and face a new environment, new friends, duties, and obligations. There are students that cannot handle this challenge and drop-out. One of the factors that influences the easiest response to challenges is good relationship with the teachers. The purpose of this study is to investigate the teacher-student relationship at our university. The questionnaire is used as a research instrument, which collected data from teachers, on one hand, and students from the University of Tetova, on the other. This research has also confirmed the hypothesis that student attitudes to teacher-student relationships do not depend on the success, year of study, and faculty the students study in. Overcoming differences in student - teacher responses will also lead to overcoming possible misunderstandings in the student-teacher relationship, which can also lead to increased student success, which is the task of each educational institution.

*Keywords:* teaching, learning, individuality, teacher-student relationship

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### 1. Introduction

Teaching is a process by which a person(s) enables other persons to study. The person who does this is the teacher and the person(s) who are trained to absorb the knowledge and learning are the students. To be a teacher, you need to have acquired a set of skills, be trained, and be officially licensed to carry out this profession (Iljazi.T&Alija.S, 2013). According to Stanford C. Ericson (1985) “Good teachers select and organize worthwhile course material, lead students to encode and integrate this material in memorable form, ensure competence in the procedures and methods of discipline, sustain intellectual curiosity and promote independent learning”. Some of researchers have come to the conclusion that an effective teacher must have some of the following characteristics: human skills, expertise in the relevant field, managerial and assessment skills. Under human skills we understand: interactivity skills, meaning the ability to listen when the student communicates, i.e. to have mutual respect. First and foremost, teachers should focus on their relationship with the students, because without that bond, there is little chance of managing the classroom efficiently. Students should be aware that the teacher wants them to be successful both in and out of the classroom (Backes & Ellis, 2003). The best way for teachers to show students this desire is to exhibit a personal interest in all aspects of the students’ lives (R.J. Marzano, J.S. Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). A personal interest can be revealed by a variety of simple tasks, including cheerfully greeting students in the hallway (Backes & Ellis, 2003), talking informally with students before and after class, attending various extracurricular activities.<sup>3</sup> It takes more than knowing the content to be a good teacher. One of the most important aspects of teaching is building relationships with your students. Teacher-student relationships influence how a student develops. The relationship can relate to a wide range of school adjustment outcomes, including liking school, work habits, social skills,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Teacher-Student-Relationships-F3CYCPNZVJ>

behavior, and academic performance. In order to be successful you need to know what pedagogical strategies work with your students. Not all strategies will work in every classroom or with every student. Teachers need to fulfill an important attachment by providing students with a secure base and surroundings. Teachers need to work together to better serve their students (Simon, 2001). Noddings (1984), a researcher and theorist in the field of education, defines care as a kind of relationship with others. The care she describes is something done by someone for the relationship with the other one, and not as a set of particular behaviors. She holds the view that any relationship provides the opportunity for care or lack of care in that relationship. Care is not a program or strategy, but is a way how to relate with students and their families that is characterized by respect, understanding, compassion, and interest (Noddings 1988). Teachers must know about students' prior experiences and build on them with new learning experiences (Noddings, 2007). It is the role of the teacher to initiate relationships with students. Teachers need to actively engage and learn about the students. Also, according to Valenzuela (1999) they need to learn likes, dislikes, hobbies, experiences, anything that will make a connection between the teacher and student.

A teacher needs to design ways for all students to participate fully, even the shy or quiet ones. Also, a teacher should avoid polarization, and explore all aspects of a topic. Teachers need to support students in their opinions and encourage them to shift their opinion if warranted. Finally, they need to teach the tools of discussion not just the content of the discussion (Simon, 2001).

As a teacher we need to provide and create learning opportunities, encourage peer mentoring and discussion, and encourage collaboration and sharing of knowledge. They should allow space for individual approaches to learning. They should be flexible and develop cooperative learning environment. As teachers we need to allow students to take responsibility for their own learning and act as the student's facilitator, not just lecture based on our own knowledge. Our role as a teacher is to work with students, not to tell students what to do. While we want to be a facilitator, we are still in a position of power; teaching requires authority. The students need to be aware that we are in a relationship where we, the teachers, have the authority in the classroom. Teachers must be aware and not abuse power in their relationship with students. While it is essential to gain respect from our students, educators must also respect the students. They cannot mistake the role of the facilitator for a dictator. It is the teacher's responsibility to be respectful towards their students. Together, we can build a secure relationship with respect and care. Students can like us without respecting us or seeing us as the authority figure. Teachers and students alike need to display authentic caring, that emphasizes relations of reciprocity between one another. Teachers need to genuinely care for their students and their wellbeing. They cannot base their relationship on what academic achievements the student makes (Valenzuela, 1999). There is a great importance that the students see their teacher as a person. Noddings suggests that a proper relationship is a caring relationship, in which the unique needs of both sides are honored. Both parties have a responsibility toward each other. It is the role of the teacher to make sure that they and their students honor their responsibilities (Bryzzheva, 2008).

Although this work may contribute greatly to educators in general, it may eventually contribute to the whole teaching classroom. There is potential to provide strategies for maintaining a good relationship between teachers and students, and using communicative approach and cooperative learning strategies, since teaching affects and improves students' performance. Teachers must think in different ways and employ strategies to improve achievement in the classroom. We are convinced that as teachers, each one of us will contribute in many different ways to help the efficiency of the teaching process.

Through the literature review and surveys, it was obvious that a supportive relationship between teacher and students benefits the learning process. Students feel that they perform better when the teacher holds a supportive relationship with them.

## 2. Research Methodology and Results

This research was conducted in parts. The first part of the research was based on the results of the questionnaire applied to 262 students of the University of Tetova, of three different faculties: Faculty of Pedagogy, Faculty of Philosophy, and Faculty of Philology, while the second part of the study was based on the results of the questionnaire conducted with 34 teachers, who are teaching in these three UT faculties. The survey was done in the end of summer 2017/2018. The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions where, among others, there were questions relating to the teachers' care towards students (the teacher-student relationship), to be filled out both by teachers and by students. In this research, we did a description and statistical analysis, to see the teacher-student relationship at the University of Tetova. From the processed data, we can see that the surveyed students are as follows: 86.3% female and 13.7% male, out of which 32.8% are first year students, 22.9% second year students, 26.3% third year students, and others are fourth year students. Their dispersion into faculties is as follows: 43.9% from the Faculty of Pedagogy, 25.2% from the Faculty of Philosophy, and 30.9% from the Faculty of Philology. Based on students' success rate (GPA) the categorization is as follows: 9.5% of the surveyed students have 6-7 GPA; 42.4% of the surveyed students have 7-8 GPA, 28.6% surveyed students have 8-9 GPA and 19.5% of surveyed students have 9-10 GPA, which is better illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Student categorization according to gender, faculty, year, and GPA

	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	36	13.7
	Female	226	86.3
<b>Faculty</b>	Pedagogy	115	43.9
	Philosophy	66	25.2
	Philology	81	30.9
<b>Year of study</b>	First	86	32.8
	Second	60	22.9
	Third	69	26.3
	Fourth	47	17.9
<b>GPA</b>	6-7	25	9.5
	7-8	111	42.4
	8-9	75	28.6
	9-10	51	19.5

The answers to the questionnaire realized with the students, about their opinion concerning the student-teacher relationship, in their faculty in UT, are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Students' opinion on teacher-student relationship

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
Teachers who teach you-do they know your name		2.57	0.848
	No one	7.6	
	Some of them	43.5	
	Majority of them	32.8	
	All	16	
Do teachers know the place where you are from		2.07	0.858

	No one	27.9		
	Some of them	42.4		
	Majority of them	24.4		
	All	5.3		
Teachers who teach you-are they interested in your success			1.87	0.838
	No one	37.8		
	Some of them	42		
	Majority of them	15.6		
	All	4.6		
Teachers who teach you-are they ready to help you when you have a need			2.9	0.865
	No one	4.2		
	Some of them	30.2		
	Majority of them	37		
	All	28.6		
Teachers who teach you-are they replying to your e-mails on time			2.58	0.887
	No one	9.9		
	Some of them	38.5		
	Majority of them	34.4		
	All	17.2		
Teachers who teach you-are they making a pleasant and open atmosphere			2.65	0.766
	No one	3.8		
	Some of them	41.2		
	Majority of them	40.8		
	All	14.1		
Teachers who teach you-are they informing you on time about midterm exams, results			3.30	0.806
	No one	2.7		
	Some of them	13.7		
	Majority of them	33.6		
	All	50		
According to you, does your teacher affect your presence, commitment, and success on the course			2.87	0.952
	No one	8.4		
	Some of them	27.1		
	Majority of them	33.2		
	All	31.3		
Teachers who teach you-are they helping you after classes			2.01	0.83
	No one	28.6		
	Some of them	46.2		
	Majority of them	20.2		
	All	5.0		
Teachers who teach you-do they consider students' ideas			2.64	0.862
	No one	7.3		
	Some of them	46.2		
	Majority of them	20.2		
	All	5.0		
How do you assess the teacher-student relationship at your faculty			2.97	0.68
	Very bad	5		
	Bad	9.5		
	Good	68.7		
	Very Good	16.8		

From the data processing, the average concerning the teachers' impact in participation, commitment, and success in a course is 2.87. Also, the average concerning the teachers' informing on time about midterm exams or results is 3.3, which represent the highest averages.

The lowest average results score the question: how much are teachers interested in students' success, which is 1.87, and the question: to what level are teachers interested to help students after classes, which is 2.01. (where 1=no one, 2=some of them, 3=majority of them, 4=all). From the data processing, the average concerning the students' opinion about the teacher-student relationship in their faculty is 2.97 (where 1=very bad, 2=bad, 3=good and 4=very good). Also according to the results students think that teachers are not interested about their success.

The second part of the study was based on the results of the questionnaire conducted with 34 teachers that are teaching in the same three UT faculties. From the processed data, we can see that the surveyed teachers are as follows: 50% female and 50% male, out of which 38.2% are teachers at the Pedagogical Faculty, 32.4% are teachers at the Philosophical Faculty, and 29.4% are teachers at the Philological Faculty. Out of these, 11.8% of teachers had experience of teaching from between 1-5 years, 8.8% of teachers had experience of teaching from between 5-10 years, 20.6% of teachers had experience of teaching from between 10-15 years, 17.6% of teachers had experience of teaching from between 15-20 years, 41.2% of teachers had experience of teaching for more than 20 years. This can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Teachers' general characteristics

	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	17	50
	Female	17	50
Faculty	Pedagogy	13	38.2
	Philosophy	11	32.4
	Philology	10	29.4
Experience of teaching	1-5 years	4	11.8
	5-10 years	3	8.8
	10-15 years	7	20.7
	15-20 years	6	17.6
	More than 20 years	14	41.2

Answers to the questionnaire realized with teachers, about their opinion concerning the care they give to their students, are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Teachers' opinion about the care they give to students

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St.Dev.</b>
Do you know the name of the students that you teach		2.91	0.621
	No one	2.9	
	Some of them	14.7	
	Majority of them	70.6	
	All	11.8	
Are you interested to know from where your students come from		2.91	0.792
	No	2.9	
	Sometimes	26.5	
	Majority of cases	47.1	
	Yes	23.5	
Are you interested to know the success of the students		2.76	0.889
	No	5.9	
	Sometimes	35.3	
	Majority of cases	35.3	
	Yes	23.5	
Do you help your students when they have a need		3.79	0.41
	No	0	
	Sometimes	5.9	
	Majority of cases	23.5	
	Yes	70.6	

Do you replay to the students' e-mails on time		3.5	0.788
No	2.9		
Sometimes	8.8		
Majority of cases	23.5		
Yes	64.7		
During your teaching, do you make a pleasant and open atmosphere		3.61	0.551
No	0		
Sometimes	2.9		
Majority of cases	32.4		
Yes	64.7		
Do you inform your students on time about midterm exams, results		3.73	0.665
No	2.9		
Sometimes	2.9		
Majority of cases	11.8		
Yes	82.4		
Do you influence the presence, commitment, and success in the course		3.5	0.564
No	0		
Sometimes	2.9		
Majority of cases	44.1		
Yes	52.9		
Do you help students after classes		3.41	0.741
No	0		
Sometimes	14.7		
Majority of cases	29.4		
Yes	55.9		
Do you allow students to present their ideas		3.85	0.359
No	0		
Sometimes	0.		
Majority of cases	14.7		
Yes	85.3		
According to your opinion how is the teacher- student relationship at UT		3.29	0.523
Very bad	0		
Bad	2.9		
Good	64.7		
Very Good	32.4		

In this research, it is interesting to compare the students' and teachers' answers, about the relationship between them. The results are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Comparison between students' and teachers' answers about their relationship

<i>Students' answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Teachers' answers</i>
<b>Teachers who teach you, know your name</b>		<b>Do you know the names of the students that you teach</b>	
No one	7.6	2.9	No one
Some of them	43.5	14.7	Some of them
Majority of them	32.8	70.6	Majority of them
All	16	11.8	All
<b>Do teachers know the place you come from</b>		<b>Are you interested to know where your students come from</b>	
No one	27.9	2.9	No
Some of them	42.4	26.5	Sometimes
Majority of them	24.4	47.1	Majority of cases
All	5.3	23.5	Po

<b>Are the teachers who teach you interested in your success</b>		<b>Are you interested to know the success of your students</b>	
No one	37.8	5.9	No
Some of them	42	35.3	Sometimes
Majority of them	15.6	35.3	Majority of cases
All	4.6	23.5	Yes
<b>Are the teachers who teach you ready to help you when you have a need</b>		<b>Do you help your students when they have a need</b>	
No one	4.2	0	No
Some of them	30.2	5.9	Sometimes
Majority of them	37	23.5	Majority of cases
All	28.6	70.6	Yes
<b>Are the teachers who teach you replaying to your emails on time</b>		<b>Are you replaying on time to the students' emails</b>	
No one	9.9	2.9	No
Some of them	38.5	8.8	Sometimes
Majority of them	34.4	23.5	Majority of cases
All	17.2	64.7	Yes
<b>Are the teachers who teach you making a pleasant and open atmosphere during the class</b>		<b>During your teaching class is there a pleasant and opened atmosphere</b>	
No one	3.8	0	No
Some of them	41.2	2.9	Sometimes
Majority of them	40.8	32.4	Majority of cases
All	14.1	64.7	Yes
<b>Are the teachers who teach you informing you on time about quizzes, mid-term exams, results</b>		<b>Do you inform on time students about the results of midterm exams, quizzes</b>	
No one	2.7	2.9	No
Some of them	13.7	2.9	Sometimes
Majority of them	33.6	11.8	Majority of cases
All	50	82.4	Yes
<b>According to you, do teachers affect your presence, commitment, and success in the course</b>		<b>Do you influence the students' presence, commitment, and success, in the course</b>	
No one	8.4	0	No
Some of them	27.1	2.9	Sometimes
Majority of them	33.2	44.1	Majority of cases
All	31.3	52.9	Yes
<b>Teachers who teach you-are they helping you after classes</b>		<b>Do you help students after classes</b>	
No one	28.6	0	No
Some of them	46.2	14.7	Sometimes
Majority of them	20.2	29.4	Majority of cases
All	5	55.9	Yes
<b>Teachers who teach you-do they consider students' ideas</b>		<b>Do you allow students to present their ideas</b>	
No one	7.3	0	No
Some of them	46.2	0	Sometimes
Majority of them	20.2	14.7	Majority of cases
All	5	85.3	Yes
<b>How do you assess the student care that teachers give at your faculty</b>		<b>How do you assess the student care that you give at your faculty</b>	
Very bad	5	.00	Very bad
Bad	9.5	2.9	Bad
Good	68.7	64.7	Good
Very good	16.8	32.4	Very good

The results show that there is a difference between the responses of students and teachers. The main areas of difference are in emails, pleasant atmosphere, considering students' ideas, readiness to help. Regarding the key question of how students evaluate the care that teachers give to their students in their respective faculty, the students declare very good and good with 84.5%, as opposed to teachers who declare with 97.1%. The dependence between variables, such as faculty of study, year of study, success, and student responses about the care in which a value is given, according to Pearson coefficient, is shown in the table below.

		faculty	Year of study	Success	relationship
faculty	Pearson Correlation	1	-.093	.166**	.119
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.134	.007	.055
	N	262	262	262	262
Year of study	Pearson Correlation	-.093	1	.131*	.127*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.134		.035	.039
	N	262	262	262	262
Success	Pearson Correlation	.166**	.131*	1	.056
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.035		.366
	N	262	262	262	262
relationship	Pearson Correlation	.119	.127*	.056	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.055	.039	.366	
	N	262	262	262	262
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					
From the results of Table 6 we can accept the null hypothesis:					

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The attitude of the students on the teacher - student relationship does not depend on the students' faculty. (Pearson coefficient 0.119)

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The attitude of the students on the teacher - student relationship does not depend on students' success. (Pearson coefficient 0.056)

**H<sub>03</sub>:** The attitude of the students on the teacher - student relationship does not depend on students' years of study. (Pearson coefficient 0.127)

### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the results of the study, we can conclude that the University of Tetova pays attention to the student-teacher relationship, where 84.5% of the students assess their teachers' care with good and very good. On the other hand, 97.1% of teachers evaluate the students' care as good and very good. The results show that there are significant differences between the views on teacher-student relationships from the perspective of the students, on the one hand, and that of teachers, on the other. The biggest difference is observed in the responses to the question about the help given to students after school hours, where only 5% of students think that all teachers help them after classes, while 55.9% of teachers think that they help their students even after classes. Only 5% of students think that all of their teachers consider their ideas, while 85.3% of teachers think that they allow their students to present their ideas. Only 17.2% of students think that their teachers are responding on time to their e-mails, while 64.7% of teachers claim that they respond on-time.

From this study, the data collected, the results and findings, we have gained a very useful comparative analysis, which will help us to be more successful in our mission of achieving quality and excellence. For the teachers, it is recommended that the level of student-care increases, with particular emphasis on helping them after school hours, responding on time to e-mails, creating a pleasant atmosphere during the class, encouraging the students to feel more



relaxed, have confidence to communicate and participate in the development of society, and supporting their ideas and success. The results of such a survey could be very useful for the university and faculties in order to improve quality.

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