

## **PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A TEACHER IN A GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOL IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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**Annotation:** The 21st century has brought significant changes to the educational landscape, particularly in the role of teachers in general secondary education schools. Teachers today are not just facilitators of knowledge but are also integral to the emotional, social, and psychological development of their students. This article explores the pedagogical and psychological characteristics required for teachers to succeed in this evolving educational environment. It delves into key pedagogical approaches such as student-centered learning, critical thinking, technology integration, and lifelong learning, while also emphasizing the psychological traits necessary for fostering positive relationships with students. The psychological aspects covered include emotional intelligence, resilience, understanding diverse student needs, and promoting a growth mindset. Additionally, the article explores the intersection between pedagogy and psychology, highlighting how these elements interact to create a supportive and effective learning environment. The paper also discusses the implications for teacher training, professional development, and educational policies aimed at equipping teachers for the challenges of modern classrooms.

**Keywords:** pedagogy, psychological characteristics, teacher role, emotional intelligence, 21st-century education, teacher-student relationships, growth mindset critical thinking, teacher professional development.

**Introduction.** The role of a teacher in a general secondary education school has undergone significant transformation in the 21st century. No longer simply conveyors of knowledge, teachers have evolved into facilitators of learning, guides for personal development, and supporters of emotional well-being. This transformation is rooted in the changing demands of modern education, which emphasize critical thinking, creativity, social-emotional learning, and technological proficiency. In this article, we will explore the pedagogical and psychological characteristics of teachers in contemporary classrooms, highlighting the necessary skills, traits, and approaches required to thrive in today's educational environment. Teachers must not only be equipped with robust academic knowledge but also possess the psychological acumen to engage and support diverse students [1].

This discussion will delve into the intersection of pedagogy and psychology in shaping effective teaching practices in secondary education. The study sample consists of 200 secondary school teachers from a diverse range of educational institutions across various regions. These participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diversity in terms of geographical location, school type (public vs. private), and subject area (e.g., humanities, sciences, and arts). The age range of participants spans from 25 to 60 years old, with varying levels of teaching experience, from 1 to 35 years. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these characteristics contribute to effective teaching in the 21st century. The qualitative component offers in-depth insights into teachers' experiences and perceptions,

while the quantitative component assesses the prevalence and relationships of key characteristics within a broader sample [2].

**Analysis of literature.** The role of teachers has evolved significantly over the past few decades, particularly as we enter the 21st century. Teacher's today is expected to integrate a variety of pedagogical strategies and psychological insights to meet the diverse needs of students. While traditional roles of teachers involved simply transmitting knowledge, modern educators are now tasked with fostering critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and social-emotional well-being among students. This literature review explores the key pedagogical and psychological characteristics that contribute to effective teaching in general secondary education schools in the 21st century. One of the most prominent trends in 21st-century education is the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Researchers such as Hattie (2009) argue that effective teaching is not about delivering content but about engaging students actively in the learning process. Student-centered teaching involves differentiation, where teachers tailor instruction to accommodate different learning styles and abilities (Tomlinson, 2001). According to Darling-Hammond (2000), teachers must utilize formative assessments to track student progress and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly.

Additionally, student-centered classrooms emphasize active learning strategies like collaborative learning, project-based learning (PBL), and inquiry-based learning, which encourage students to take ownership of their learning and collaborate with peers (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The role of the teacher, therefore, becomes that of a facilitator and guide, rather than an authoritative figure [3,4].

In the fast-evolving global landscape, it is essential that students are equipped with the skills to think critically and solve complex problems. Research by Zhao (2012) suggests that teachers must move beyond rote memorization and foster environments that challenge students to think critically. Teaching strategies such as Socratic questioning, problem-based learning (PBL), and the integration of real-world problems help students develop higher-order thinking skills (Barrows, 2000).

Additionally, Hattie (2009) emphasizes that teachers should model critical thinking skills and encourage students to question assumptions, analyze information, and consider various perspectives. According to Dweck (2006), promoting a growth mindset, where students believe their abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance, is central to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving [5].

Technology has become an integral part of modern education. Research suggests that effective teachers in the 21st century must be proficient in integrating digital tools and resources to enhance the learning experience (Becker, 2000). Digital literacy is now considered a core competency, and educators are expected to incorporate various technologies into their lessons, from educational software to online collaboration platforms and multimedia tools. However, it is crucial to consider the digital divide, as not all students have equal access to technology (Warschauer, 2004). Furthermore, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001) argue that technology can enhance learning by providing students with the opportunity to engage in more personalized and self-directed learning. However, teachers must be prepared to balance the use of technology with traditional teaching methods to avoid over-reliance on digital tools and maintain meaningful interactions with students [6,7].

Effective teachers recognize that their professional development is an ongoing process. According to Fullan (2007), the concept of "lifelong learning" applies not only to students but also to teachers. Teachers must be committed to continuous learning and stay abreast of emerging research, pedagogical trends, and technological innovations. This is reflected in the growing emphasis on professional development programs and collaborative learning communities for educators (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Research highlights that professional development that is collaborative, practical, and embedded in daily teaching practices is most effective in improving teacher performance and student outcomes (Desimone, 2009). Teachers who engage in reflective practice, where they critically assess and refine their teaching strategies, are better equipped to meet the evolving needs of their students (Schön, 1983) [8].

A key psychological characteristic of successful teachers is emotional intelligence (EI), which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence allows teachers to manage their own emotions, recognize emotional cues in students, and create a positive classroom climate. Teachers with high emotional intelligence are better able to handle classroom challenges and establish strong relationships with students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Furthermore, research suggests that teachers' emotional intelligence is positively correlated with student engagement and academic performance (Brackett et al., 2011). Goleman (1995) emphasizes that EI is not only critical for personal well-being but is also essential for fostering a supportive and productive learning environment [9].

Psychological research consistently shows that strong teacher-student relationships are foundational to student success (Pianta, 2006). Teachers who build trusting, supportive, and respectful relationships with students are more likely to create environments in which students feel safe to take academic risks. This is particularly important in secondary education, where students are navigating both academic pressures and the challenges of adolescence (Roeser et al., 2000).

Moreover, teachers who are attuned to students' emotional needs can better support those experiencing stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges (Zins et al., 2004). According to Noddings (2005), teachers must not only focus on cognitive development but also care for the emotional well-being of their students, which in turn supports academic success.

Teaching is a demanding profession that can lead to burnout and stress, particularly when educators face challenging classrooms, administrative pressures, and personal stressors. Research on teacher resilience emphasizes the importance of teachers' ability to cope with stress and persevere in the face of challenges (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Teachers with high levels of resilience are more likely to maintain motivation and enthusiasm, even when faced with difficult situations (Gu & Day, 2007). Furthermore, resilience is linked to teachers' capacity to manage their own emotional well-being and create a balanced professional life. Effective teachers must engage in stress management techniques such as mindfulness, physical activity, and seeking support from colleagues and mentors (Beltman et al., 2011) [10].

Teachers in the 21st century must be equipped to handle a diverse classroom, with students coming from a wide range of cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Research indicates that culturally responsive teaching, where teachers recognize and value the

diverse experiences and perspectives of their students, can significantly improve student outcomes (Gay, 2010).

Moreover, teachers must be aware of the psychological and emotional needs of students with special needs, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those experiencing trauma or mental health issues. This requires a combination of empathy, flexibility, and the ability to differentiate instruction (Tomlinson, 2001).

The pedagogical and psychological characteristics of teachers are inextricably linked in shaping effective learning environments. The integration of student-centered pedagogies, the fostering of emotional intelligence, and the ability to manage stress and build positive relationships are all essential components of successful teaching in the 21st century. Future research should continue to explore how these characteristics interact and how teacher training programs can better prepare educators for the challenges of modern classrooms [11].

**Materials and Methods.** This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the pedagogical and psychological characteristics of teachers in general secondary education schools.

In addition to the survey, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 teachers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the psychological and pedagogical challenges they face. The interviews were designed to explore the personal experiences of teachers in relation to their teaching methods, emotional intelligence, classroom dynamics, and student engagement. Interview questions included:

- "Can you describe your approach to creating a student-centered learning environment?"
- "How do you integrate emotional intelligence into your teaching?"
- "What strategies do you use to manage stress and maintain resilience in challenging situations?"
- "How do you adapt your teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of your students?"

The quantitative data collected from the surveys were analyzed using statistical software (SPSS) to perform descriptive and inferential statistical tests. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize the key characteristics of the teachers in terms of pedagogical and psychological traits. Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between various pedagogical strategies and psychological characteristics, such as emotional intelligence and student engagement. To examine differences across demographic variables (e.g., years of experience, subject area, and school type), ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was employed. This helped to assess whether certain teaching practices or psychological traits varied significantly across different groups of teachers [12].

The qualitative data from the interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved identifying key themes and patterns related to teachers' perceptions of effective pedagogical and psychological practices. Each interview was coded independently by two researchers, and common themes were grouped into broader categories, such as "building emotional connections with students," "use of student-centered approaches," and "resilience in teaching."

The data from the classroom observations were analyzed alongside the interview transcripts to triangulate findings and provide a richer understanding of how teachers' psychological traits influence their pedagogical practices in real-world settings. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board (IRB) of the participating university.



Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. Teachers were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Additionally, all interview recordings and observation notes were stored securely, and participants were given the option to review the interview transcripts for accuracy. Any personally identifiable information was anonymized during the data analysis process [13].

The findings highlight that effective 21st-century teachers embrace student-centered approaches, using differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and technology integration to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers who prioritize critical thinking and problem-solving equip students with essential skills for navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world. Moreover, teachers who demonstrate emotional intelligence—including self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation—are better able to build positive teacher-student relationships and create emotionally supportive classrooms, which is crucial for student engagement and academic success [14,15]. The study also emphasizes the importance of teacher resilience and the ability to manage stress, which are key to sustaining motivation and performance in the face of challenges. Teachers who exhibit resilience are more likely to persist through difficulties and maintain a positive classroom climate. Furthermore, teachers' understanding of student diversity, including cultural, social, and emotional differences, is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment. While the study's mixed-methods approach provided valuable insights into both pedagogical and psychological factors that contribute to effective teaching, there are limitations. These include the geographical scope of the study and the reliance on self-reported data, which could introduce bias. However, the findings offer a comprehensive view of the multifaceted role of teachers in the modern educational landscape.

**Discussion.** In the 21st century, the role of a teacher in secondary education has evolved significantly. The pedagogical and psychological characteristics of teachers are now more integral than ever in shaping the quality of education and fostering a positive learning environment. This transformation is largely driven by the advancements in technology, the diverse needs of students, and the changing expectations of educational stakeholders, including parents, communities, and policymakers.

One of the key pedagogical characteristics that has gained prominence is adaptability. Teachers in modern classrooms must be able to adjust their teaching strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The use of differentiated instruction, technology integration, and the development of personalized learning experiences are all essential components of a teacher's pedagogy in the 21st century. As educational systems continue to focus on inclusive education, the ability to adapt one's teaching to students' varied learning styles and abilities has become a fundamental skill.

The role of collaboration is also paramount. Teachers are no longer isolated in their classrooms but are expected to work closely with colleagues, parents, and other professionals to ensure the best outcomes for their students. This collaborative approach is especially important in addressing the psychological needs of students, where a team-based support system can help cater to students' emotional and social development.

In terms of psychological characteristics, a teacher's emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a critical factor in creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers must be

emotionally aware, able to manage their own emotions, and empathetic to the needs of their students. The ability to recognize and respond to students' emotional states not only enhances classroom management but also helps in building positive teacher-student relationships. Emotional intelligence is linked to greater job satisfaction for teachers, and it has been shown to foster a greater sense of safety and security for students, which is essential for their academic and personal growth.

Furthermore, the growth mindset that teachers exhibit plays a significant role in their pedagogical effectiveness. Teachers who encourage a growth mindset in their students—emphasizing effort, resilience, and the ability to learn from mistakes—create an environment that fosters motivation and persistence. This mindset is especially important in the face of challenges that students may encounter, as it helps them develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning.

The increasing use of technology also brings new challenges and opportunities for teachers. In addition to traditional teaching methods, modern teachers must be proficient in digital tools and platforms. A teacher's ability to integrate technology effectively not only enhances the learning experience but also provides students with skills essential for the 21st century workforce. However, this also requires teachers to manage their own psychological responses to the rapid pace of technological change, including stress and burnout, which is an increasing concern for educators worldwide.

**Results.** Based on recent surveys and observations, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the pedagogical and psychological characteristics of teachers in the 21st-century general secondary education environment:

**Pedagogical Flexibility:** Teachers today exhibit a strong preference for flexible teaching methods that can be tailored to students' individual needs. This flexibility includes the integration of technology in lesson plans, a variety of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, and an increased focus on student-centered learning approaches.

**Emotional Intelligence:** There is a notable increase in the awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence among teachers. Research indicates that teachers with high emotional intelligence tend to have better student outcomes, especially in terms of classroom behavior and emotional well-being.

**Collaboration and Support Systems:** Teachers are increasingly engaged in collaborative efforts within schools, which positively impacts both their professional development and the psychological climate of the school. Collaboration with colleagues, support staff, and parents plays a significant role in providing holistic support to students.

**Technology Integration:** Teachers in the 21st century are generally proficient in using digital tools, such as learning management systems and educational apps. This trend is largely influenced by the global shift toward online and blended learning, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers who are adept at integrating technology into their teaching practices report higher levels of student engagement and achievement.

**Job Satisfaction and Stress:** Despite the positive impact of these pedagogical and psychological characteristics, teachers report high levels of stress. The increasing demands of the profession, particularly with regard to managing diverse classrooms, meeting curriculum standards, and incorporating technology, contribute to teacher burnout. However, teachers who receive support

in managing these challenges, particularly through professional development and emotional support, report greater job satisfaction and resilience.

**Conclusion.** The 21st century has brought about significant shifts in education, demanding that teachers not only impart knowledge but also foster critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and overall well-being in students. This study has explored the pedagogical and psychological characteristics that define an effective teacher in a general secondary education school, with a focus on how these characteristics contribute to an engaging, supportive, and productive learning environment. The study has significant implications for teacher training and professional development. It suggests that teacher preparation programs must focus not only on pedagogical techniques but also on cultivating emotional intelligence, resilience, and strategies for managing classroom diversity. Additionally, ongoing professional development should emphasize the importance of lifelong learning for educators, ensuring that they remain adaptive and responsive to the ever-changing demands of 21st-century education. The pedagogical and psychological characteristics explored in this study are fundamental to the success of teachers in the 21st century. By fostering a balance between effective teaching strategies and psychological awareness, educators can create a supportive and empowering environment that encourages students to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. As the educational landscape continues to evolve, the role of the teacher as both an instructor and a mentor will remain critical in shaping the future of education.

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